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YOUR AWARD-WINNING, INDEPENDENT, NONPROFIT SOURCE OF NEWS AND VIEWS

Marking MIDWINTER



COURTESY PHOTO

Brattleboro

Winter

Carnival

continues

apace —

and evolves

— after

68 years

A young carnivalgoer enjoys sugar on snow, served just as it has been served for 68 years.

By Fran Lynggaard Hansen
The Commons

BRATTLEBORO—A tradition carries on this week with the start of the Brattleboro Winter Carnival's 68th year.

Since 1993, Carol Lolatte has brought her organizational talents to the committee organizing the

celebration, and Lolatte, who by day works as recreation and parks director for the town, has served as president for the last three years.

"I have the hat that I wear for the [Recreation and Parks] Department and the hat I wear for the senior citizens in town. Helping run Winter Carnival fits nicely with what I do for a living," Lolatte said.

"I like that there is something special

to look forward to in the middle of the winter — it provides cabin fever relief," she says. "We're indoors, and we're outdoors, and the Carnival provides something for everyone."

The sugar on snow event, held in the Harmony Parking Lot on Feb. 17, certainly proved that point.

Sugar on snow — where maple syrup heated to 235 degrees F turns into a

■ SEE CARNIVAL, A2

WSESD board approves its FY25 budget at \$65.8 million

Education tax cap under legislative scrutiny as bill fast-tracked; district votes March 19

By Virginia Ray
The Commons

BRATTLEBORO—The Windham Southeast School District (WSESD) school board has approved a proposed \$65,846,891 budget for fiscal year 2025. That represents a 3%, or \$1,927,036, increase over this year's budget.

A public informational meeting is set for Tuesday, March 12. The warrant article had to be approved by the school board at its Feb. 13 meeting in order to post the warrant in time for the March 19 annual meeting, when voters from Brattleboro, Dummerston, Guilford, and Putney will cast their budget ballots.

■ SEE WSESD BUDGET, A6

A new generation says it's ready to step up

Now that 16- and 17-year-olds can vote — and run for office — in town elections in Brattleboro, they voice their concerns at a BUHS event

By Joyce Marcel
The Commons

BRATTLEBORO—To save the democratic process, people need to become involved — and the earlier the better.

Brattleboro has become the first municipality in the state — and one of only a handful of cities and towns in the country — to allow 16- and 17-year-olds to participate in local elections and, if elected, to serve on the Selectboard.

But as the high school students who filled an auditorium at Brattleboro Union High School heard on Feb. 12, the importance of their engagement goes deeper than that.

"It's not just so that we can say that x percentage of Vermonters voted," Secretary of State Sarah Copeland Hanzas told them. "It's so that we can say that every Vermonter knows how to petition their government to fix the problem that's too big for them to fix Selectboard."

■ SEE YOUTH VOTE, A5

Owners plan pharmacy opening in June

Former Bellows Falls pharmacists plans to reopen a new enterprise to replace their former business in their building

By Robert F. Smith
The Commons

BELLOWS FALLS—Ever since it closed on Sept. 29, 2023, due to a bankruptcy, former Greater Falls Pharmacy owners Gina and Marc Cote have stated that their goal was to reoccupy the building and reopen.

"As soon as we get our building

back," they told *The Commons* this past September, "we will get ready to reopen, with a new name, a new business model, and with serving our community with optimal pharmacy care at the heart."

Those plans have started to fall into place, and the Cotes say they are hoping to open the new business at 78 Atkinson St. — the old location — under the new name Fall Mountain Pharmacy on June 1.

A 20-year history

The Cotes originally opened the pharmacy in 2003 and ran it successfully for 15 years. In 2018, the couple sold the pharmacy to Michelle and Donald Laurendeau, of Westminster, who had been longtime employees.

The Cotes planned for Marc, with his 30 years of pharmaceutical experience, to be a mentor to

■ SEE PHARMACY, A6



MICHAEL MOORE

Slovenian flyer Nejk Zupančič takes to the air over the 2024 Presidents Day weekend at Brattleboro's Harris Hill Ski Jump.

Ski jump offers giant leap for women

Female flyers were welcomed at Harris Hill nearly a century before they could compete globally, but more bumps remain on the slope to equality

By Kevin O'Connor
VtDigger

BRATTLEBORO—Before the late Fred Harris unveiled his namesake ski jump in this town a century ago, the Vermont Sports Hall of Fame inductee shared a test run with his less publicized but more prized adviser.

His sister, Evelyn. Ever since the latter Harris tried out what's now Vermont's sole Olympic-size hill in 1922, women have flown off the

90-meter slope — the only one of its height in New England and just one of six of its stature in the nation — long before they were allowed in the Winter Games just a decade ago.

This Presidents Day weekend, a Harris Hill crowd of 5,500 spectators cheered athletes from six U.S. states and three European countries at the landmark's annual tournament. But in the field of 33 jumpers, the three female competitors were outnumbered by their male counterparts

10 to 1. "It's pretty sad, but it's pretty usual," said Kai McKinnon, the sole U.S. woman alongside two international peers.

The volunteers who maintain Harris Hill, facing a tall series of hurdles, nonetheless are aiming to change that.

Although ski jumping was one of the original sports at the first Winter Olympics in 1924, the global games prohibited female flyers from competing as

■ SEE WOMEN JUMPERS, A2

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 Recognizing that a vigorous exchange of ideas and information allows democracy to function and is the lifeblood of a community, Vermont Independent Media:
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 We welcome story ideas and news tips. Please contact the newsroom at news@commonsnews.org or at (802) 246-6397.

VOICES
The Commons presents a broad range of essays, memoirs, and other subjective material in Voices, our editorial and commentary section. We want the paper to provide an unpredictable variety of food for thought from all points on the political spectrum.
 We especially invite responses to material that appears in the paper.
 We do not publish unsigned or anonymous letters, and we only very rarely withhold names for other pieces. When space is an issue, our priority is to run contributions that have not yet appeared in other publications.
 Please check with the editor before writing essays or other original submissions of substance. Email: voices@commonsnews.org.

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In memoriam:
 Alan O. Dann, Judy Gorman, Mia Gannon

Carnival

FROM SECTION FRONT

taffy-like confection when drizzled onto a bowl of snow — is one of the original events created by the founder of Winter Carnival, Fred Harris, a Dartmouth graduate who wished to emulate and bring to his hometown of Brattleboro his experiences at the Dartmouth College Winter Carnivals of his youth.

That first year, in 1957, Harris and his Carnival Committee created a three-day event that piggybacked the nationally renowned Harris Hill ski jump competition with a snow sculpture contest, sugar on snow, a well-attended downtown parade, torchlight skiing, fireworks at Living Memorial Park, the first Winter Carnival Queen Pageant, and other activities.

Brattleboro native Betty Henry remembers those early carnivals. “I can well remember standing on Main Street, watching the big Carnival parades,” remembers Henry with a sigh and a smile.

She remembers “a float for each queen contestant,” each “built with chicken wire and napkin stuffing.”

“To a young child, it was magical,” Henry says.

The highlight of Winter Carnival was the crowning of the Carnival Queen. The first year saw 32 candidates vying for the crown.

For years, both married and single women were contestants. And in the earlier years, the public could vote for the candidate of their choice, which, in turn, was figured into the process of judging.

Henry used to attend the Saturday night event.

“As a teenager, we used to get a group of girls together and go to the pageant, usually held in the [Brattleboro Union High School] gymnasium. First, we’d vote downtown,” she says.

“There were points given for talent, interview, [and] evening gown, and instead of a swimsuit competition, there was the ‘playsuit’ competition,” Henry continues. “We thought it was great fun.”

Both the Queen’s Pageant and Princess Pageant for children ended in 2017.

Lolatte is pleased that the Carnival continues to change with the times.

“Those beginning Carnivals centered around downtown and the Queen’s Pageant,” she says. “There have been a lot of different events come and go as time and traditions change.”

But some things never change. “Sugar on Snow, the Variety Show, and the events at Living Memorial Park are all still with us,” Lolatte says.

“We work hard to make the week either free or very affordable for all attendees,” she adds, “It’s pretty incredible that we’ve had this continuous tradition in our town for all these years.”

The morning of the Sugar on Snow event on Saturday found Lolatte looking around at the many volunteers and businesses who still support the event.

More than 253 servings of sticky goodness were served up, under the organizational charm of Milt Gilman, who for more than 40 years has corralled his team of 25 or so Brattleboro

Rotarians who volunteered to serve the event.

Together, people of all ages consumed approximately 20 gallons of maple syrup donated by the Robb Family Farm of West Brattleboro and 20 dozen homemade doughnuts from the Guilford Country Store.

As one walked through the service line, there were only smiles.

First came the snow in paper bowls topped with fragrant, sticky hot syrup, followed by the doughnut. Finally, a dill pickle was placed on the side of the bowl — the very same way it has been served for 68 years.

Brattleboro Rotarian and local business owner Greg Worden was pleased.

“This was the biggest crowd we’ve had in years,” he said with a huge smile.

As times have changed, the Winter Carnival Committee goes with the flow.

This year the committee is pleased that the Windham Philharmonic has joined the group offering a free concert on Monday.

“From the Windham Philharmonic to the Chamber Series, from the Brattleboro Music Center, to the Ice Kings and Queens Drag Show — and that’s just the music!” she says with a laugh.

“Talk about something for everyone,” she says.

Throughout the week, the Carnival features events all through town, from pancake breakfasts at the Elks Club to tours of decorated ice shanties, from the Thirsty Goat Bar at Retreat Farm (where Vermont craft brews are served) to a life-sized Candy Land game at Brooks Memorial Library.

One thing that hasn’t changed has been the level of community support through both individuals and businesses in town.

The first Carnival was sponsored in part by the Brattleboro Outing Club and the Women’s Evening Club, along with several businesses in town. The program for the Queen’s Pageant was sponsored by the All States Cafe on lower Main Street, which burned down in the Barrows Block fire in 1977.

The regular Carnival program was sponsored by The Latchis Hotel.

“Latchis Hotel is one of the very few Modern Hotels in New England,” the ad reads. “It is equipped with the finest beds... the building of fireproof steel and concrete construction and every room with private bath and telephone,” the ad read.

Locals will remember many of that other sponsors listed in that first program, which included Red Circle Auto Supply on Elliot Street, Tom Thumb Snack Shop, Frances Stores, and the Royal Diner, all on Main Street; H. Margolin & Co., manufacturer of leather purses; and the Estey Organ Company, among many others.

Local sponsorship is also something that hasn’t changed.

“We partner with so many businesses that help keep our Carnival affordable,” Lolatte says. Just as it has always done, the Winter Carnival’s 17-member committee of volunteers will meet in April to select officers. In September, the work for the Carnival will begin in earnest.

“It’s about the many partnerships with businesses and organizations throughout the community, who every year provide winter fun for the entire community,” says Lolatte. “I think Fred Harris would still be proud.”

For more information and a schedule, visit brattleborowintercarnival.org.



KEVIN O'CONNOR, VTDIGGER.ORG

Brattleboro’s Harris Hill Ski Jump welcomed several present and aspiring female flyers during the 2024 Presidents Day weekend, including (from left) Paisley Rancourt, Leila Fey, Kai McKinnon, Ava Joyal, Nejka Zupancic, Maple Billings, and Lara Logar.

Women jumpers

FROM SECTION FRONT

late as 2010.

“To be very honest, at least at the moment, very few ladies are really good in jumping,” Gian Franco Kasper, the former head of the International Ski Federation, said in 2005, adding the sport “seems not to be appropriate for ladies from a medical point of view.”

Enter Tara Geraghty-Moats, a Harris Hill alum from West Fairlee whose campaign for women’s inclusion attracted the attention of the Vermont Legislature.

“As citizens of a state that has been home to women’s ski jumping competition and home-grown ski jumpers, Vermonters can readily identify with the injustice that is being done,” lawmakers wrote in a 2009 resolution. “The General Assembly supports the effort of women ski jumpers for athletic equity.”

Geraghty-Moats saw the Olympics finally welcome female flyers in 2014, then went on to win the first-ever women’s World Cup event for the Nordic combined sports of jumping and cross-country skiing in 2020.

In comparison, women have competed at Harris Hill throughout its 102-year history — only to find that leaping off a launchpad 30 stories high at speeds of 60 mph to be the least of their challenges.

Take sisters Dorothy and Maxine Graves of nearby Greenfield, Massachusetts, who were disqualified from the Brattleboro jump in 1938 after judges learned they were not registered with the U.S. Eastern Amateur Ski Association. Undeterred, Dorothy competed again after the event’s World War II hiatus.

“The crowd’s favorite,” the *Brattleboro Reformer* declared in 1946 when she finished fifth in a field of 22.

In the decades since, Harris Hill has hosted such visiting up-and-comers as Lindsey Van, who went on to become the first-ever World Ski Championships jumping gold medalist in 2009.

The venue also is nurturing its own talent through a new junior training program.

“Feels like I’m flying,” participant Maple Billings, 6, of Brattleboro said of the sport.

As for obstacles, her older brother throwing snowballs is just the start. The younger Billings is the lone girl in her age group — a fact understood by 11-year-old local jumper Ava Joyal, who has to travel out of state to find peers in Paisley Rancourt, 13, of Lebanon, New Hampshire, and Leila Fey, 11, of Lake Placid, New York.

Slovenes sweep Harris Hill events

BRATTLEBORO— The 102nd Harris Hill Ski Jumping competition came to a close on Feb. 18 with the Fred Harris Memorial Tournament.

The jumper who wins the Fred Harris Memorial Tournament three times retires the famed Winged Trophy, unique to Harris Hill Ski Jumping. The winner in the Men’s Open class was Uhr Rosar of Slovenia, with a jump of 98 meters. On the women’s side, the Open class was won by Nejka Zupancic of Slovenia. Additional winners of the day included Americans Max Fey in the Men’s U16 division, Jack Kroll in the Men’s U20 division, and Ole Henning Holt of Norway for the Masters division.

“I was so impressed with the overall caliber of jumpers this weekend, including how many jumps exceeded 90 meters,” said Todd Einig, Harris Hill Ski Jump director of competition, in a news release. “With Ozbej [Kotnik’s] second place finish today, he didn’t win another step towards the Winged Trophy yet, but his teammate

Uhr [Rosar] did, and hopefully both will return to compete here next year.”

The weekend’s competition included a Nordic Combined event, with the cross-country ski component run on the nearby Marlboro Nordic Ski Club trails. Participants from the Nordic Combined used their Feb. 18 jumps as part of that event.

It was a sweep for the Americans, with U.S. Cup women’s winner Kai McKinnon, U.S. Cup men’s winner Caleb Zuckerman, and senior men’s winner Tim Leuxe.

Athletes who competed on Feb. 17 in the U20 division also generated points for the U.S. Cup, part of the USA Ski Jumping circuit. The U20 women’s was won by McKinnon (USA); Henry Loher (USA) won the men’s.

Loher also won both Target Jump competitions. The Open class competed for the Pepsi Challenge, which was won by Kotnik in the men’s event and Zupancic for the women’s event for another Slovenia sweep.

In turn, Joyal and her two friends have found inspiration in Van, whom they trained with last summer, as well as McKinnon, the sole American woman to compete in Brattleboro over the weekend.

“When I was a kid,” said McKinnon, 15, of Lake Placid, “I always liked jumping off random things, so my parents thought they’d put me into something a little more productive.”

McKinnon just returned from competing in the Nordic Junior World Ski Championships in Slovenia, only to see herself jumping at Harris Hill alongside Slovenian athletes Lara Logar and Nejka Zupancic. The latter two, having traveled 4,000 miles for the tournament, noted that female flyers face speed bumps worldwide.

While women can now jump at the Olympics, for example, they still cannot add cross-country skiing to win a Nordic-combined medal like their male counterparts.

“Guys have more competitions than we do,” Zupancic said. “And the prize money, it’s a huge difference.”

Women receive up to 80% less than men at most events. Harris Hill, in contrast, uses the same tiered system to reward winners of both sexes — the result of a Brattleboro ski jump organizing committee of which two-thirds of the members are women, including Sandy Harris, the daughter of the venue’s late founder.

Female flyers also receive help from several male supporters.

Todd Einig, who first jumped Harris Hill as a student in 1986, is now chief of competition and coach of the junior training program. Complementing the entire

field on Sunday, Einig noted that the two Slovenian women “easily outjumped a large majority” of the men.

Then there’s Spencer Knickerbocker, the 31-year-old who gladly relinquished his longtime status as the sole local jumper upon the weekend debut of Spencer Jones, the 13-year-old Putney great-grandson of the late U.S. Sen. George Aiken. Jones finished sixth in the men’s U16 event, completing two jumps of 46.5 and 50 meters.

Knickerbocker appreciates Harris Hill’s history of welcoming women. But as director of the nearby Marlboro Nordic Ski Club, he wants the sport to do more to promote equality.

“People have always said, ‘There’s just not that many women competing,’ but how do you grow something if you don’t hang that carrot out there?” Knickerbocker said. “For so long, women have heard ‘you can’t do this sport’ or ‘compete against the men.’ Everyone should have an opportunity.”

The next generation agrees. Joyal has jumped a 50-meter practice slope, while her friends Fey and Rancourt have tried a 65-meter one.

The three are working their way up to the 90-meter Harris Hill, but know they need more time, more training, and more support for all women in sports.

“We need more people who are going to believe in and work for us,” Rancourt said.



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SCAN ME

AROUND THE TOWNS

Senior lunch served in Dummerston

DUMMERSTON — Evening Star Grange and Senior Solutions will present their next Dummerston Senior Lunch on Wednesday, Feb. 21, with take-out available from 11:30 a.m. until 1 p.m. and an in-house meal served at noon. The menu for this luncheon will be meatloaf and a vegetarian, plant-based meatloaf option, mashed potatoes with gravy, and corn casserole, and mixed fruit cobbler for dessert. Reservations are strongly suggested and can be made by calling the Grange at 802-254-1136 and leaving name, phone number, number of meals wanted, veggie or meat option, and whether the meals are for eating in or taking out. A donation of \$3 for those 60 and older and \$4 for the younger folks is suggested.

Breakfast and a movie at Williamsville Hall

WILLIAMSVILLE — On Thursday, Feb. 22, from 8 to 10:30 a.m., stop in for Williamsville Hall's monthly breakfast. The homemade pancakes, pastries, tea, coffee, and orange juice are complimentary (donations for the Hall are appreciated) and open to everyone. The Hall's Friday Night Movie is *To Be or Not to Be* on Feb. 23 at 7:30 p.m. This 1983 film, a remake of the 1942 version, was directed by Alan Johnson and produced by Mel Brooks. It features Brooks, Anne Bancroft,

Tim Matheson, Charles Durning, Christopher Lloyd, and José Ferrer in a funny and far-out spoof of World War II. Brooks plays the head of a small theater ensemble in Warsaw, which attempts to stop the Nazi High Command from getting a list of the Polish underground. Refreshments will be served. Admission is by donation and will raise funds for Williamsville Hall. The film is rated PG and the running time is 107 minutes. The Hall, which is ADA compliant, is located at 35 Dover Rd. For more information, email williamsvillehall@gmail.com or visit williamsvillehall.org.

WSESD candidate forum Monday

BRATTLEBORO — A forum for candidates for the Windham Southeast School District Board will take place Monday, Feb. 26 at 6:30 p.m. in the Brattleboro Area Middle School Multi-Purpose Room, 109 Sunny Acres Rd. The public can participate in the forum — moderated by Cindy Jerome, Dummerston town moderator, and with participation of the *Brattleboro Reformer* and *The Commons* — in person or via Zoom (bit.ly/753-wsesd-forum).

'Breakfast for Dinner' served at Newfane Church

NEWFANE — Newfane Congregational Church, 11 Church St., hosts a "Breakfast for Dinner" fundraising meal on

Saturday, Feb. 24, at 5:30 p.m. The menu includes pancakes, scrambled eggs, bacon, sausage, coffee cake, muffins, coffee, tea, and juice. The cost is \$10 per person and \$5 for children under 12. Doors will be open at 5:15 p.m. for seating inside. Take out meals may be ordered by calling the church at 802-365-4079 by noon on Thursday, Feb. 22, and let them know how many meals will be picked up.

Guilford hosts pre-town meeting and candidate night on Feb. 27

GUILFORD — Broad Brook Grange, in collaboration with the Guilford Selectboard, will hold the annual Pre-Town Meeting on Tuesday, February 27, at 6:30 p.m. The event will be livestreamed on BCTV, but those interested in participating should attend at Broad Brook Community Center, 3940 Guilford Center Rd. Town Moderator Rick Zamore will facilitate the Feb. 27 session. Town Meeting itself will convene at 10 a.m. on Tuesday, March 5, at Guilford Central School. Australian ballot will again be used to elect town officers, with polls open at the school 10 a.m. to 7 p.m.

At the Pre-Town Meeting, the Selectboard will present and discuss the articles to be voted at Town Meeting, and will answer questions and receive comments from townspeople present. In

addition, candidates for town offices, and Guilford's open seat on the WSESD Board, are urged to attend to introduce themselves to the voters. This is the only time before the vote for the public to meet and hear the candidates together.

Those interested in declaring as a write-in candidate should take this sole opportunity to appear before a group of voters. Refreshments will be served. The meeting will be held upstairs, now accessible by elevator.

Sunrise Rotary launches annual dinner raffle

BRATTLEBORO — The Brattleboro Sunrise Rotary Club is selling tickets for their annual Dinner Raffle to raise funds for Project Feed the Thousands and other projects.

There are multiple chances to win one of four prize packages, including the first prize of four \$100 gift certificates each to the following Brattleboro area restaurants: Peter Havens, Echo, The Marina, and A Vermont Table, plus a Latchis movie and stay package worth \$200.

Second place prize is a \$100 certificate each to the Marina, Vegan AF, and Bar 580, plus \$50 each to TJ Buckley's and Martucci's and \$20 to the Saxtons River Distillery. Additional third and fourth place prizes include certificates to Vermont Shepherd, Ramunto's, Terrazza, Vermont Country Deli, Whetstone, Ninety-Nine, Latchis Pub,

Fat Crow, and Saxtons River Distillery.

Tickets are five for \$20 and may be purchased from any Brattleboro Sunrise Rotarian or by contacting 802-338-6286. Members of the public can also purchase tickets on Wednesday mornings from 7:15 to 8:30 a.m. at Ramunto's in Brattleboro during the Sunrise Rotary's weekly meeting. The raffle drawing will be held on Wednesday, March 13.

Tech Time Tuesdays at RFPL

BELLOWS FALLS — The Rockingham Free Public Library will host Tech Time Tuesday classes and drop-in sessions in the Youth Programming Room at 2 p.m. every Tuesday during the month of March. Sessions are first come, first served. Participants are encouraged to bring their personal devices; however, library laptops will be available for class use.

March 5 and 19 will feature Drop-In Tech Help. No registration is required; librarians will work with walk-ins for 5 to 15 minutes each to answer tech questions.

The March 12 session offers help with the Library Edition of *Ancestry.com*. March is Irish

American Heritage month, a good time for those who have Irish ancestry to get started on their family tree using this library resource, say staff.

Tech Time turns into Tax Time on March 26, with a session covering online tax forms. The library can help find and print necessary forms. All forms are free.

For more information, email reference@rockinghamlibrary.org, call 802-463-4270, go to rockinghamlibrary.org, or stop by the library at 65 Westminster St.

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Rockingham awarded federal grant for restoration of Meeting House

ROCKINGHAM — The town of Rockingham has been awarded a \$360,000 Save America's Treasures (SAT) grant from the National Historic Preservation Fund, administered by the National Park Service, Department of the Interior. Together with a matching sum from the town, the grant will partly fund Phase I of the Rockingham Meeting House Preservation Project.

According to a news release, the purpose of the project is "to make sure the meeting house stands proudly for future generations. Built in 1787 and declared

a National Historic Landmark in 2000, it is recognized as the largest intact 18th-century public building remaining in Vermont still in its original material form and in active use. The last major preservation of the building was done in 1906 and 1907."

The project has been divided into three phases. The first focuses on drainage, stabilizing the foundation, window restoration, and roof repair. Current estimated cost of this stage is \$980,000.

In addition to the SAT grant and town match, Phase I construction is made possible with

funding from the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation and a generous donation from BF Trades.

Building condition assessment and preconstruction planning have been underway since 2022. Preliminary construction work is slated to begin in late summer and fall of 2024 and continue through 2025.

Phase II will focus on plaster and exterior woodwork conservation. Phase III will focus on restoration of the box pews, a fundamental defining characteristic of an 18th-century meeting house, as well as life safety and

ADA compliance. Current estimates for this work is \$1.1 million, yet to be raised.

Questions and comments about the Save America's Treasures grant, the preservation project, and continued fundraising may be directed to the Rockingham Historic Preservation Commission, Rockingham Town Hall, P.O. Box 370, Bellows Falls, VT 05101 or clg@rockbf.org. Updates can be found at the Municipal Projects webpage at rockinghamvt.org.



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HELP WANTED



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Vermont Independent Media, publisher of *The Commons* newspaper, is looking for an **Operations Assistant** to help with the organization and running of our administrative operations.
For more information, please contact kate@commonsnews.org



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Family Service Worker White River Junction

Southeastern Vermont Community Action (SEVCA), the designated anti-poverty agency in Windham and Windsor Counties, is currently seeking a community-minded individual to work in our White River Junction outreach office. This person will help clients avoid eviction, obtain safe and affordable housing and keep their homes heated by accessing emergency programs. This individual will assess clients' needs and help resolve crisis situations by providing application assistance, coordinating community services, providing information, referrals and advocacy. The Family Services Worker helps clients understand their options and access the services that they need.

Qualified candidate must be able to establish and maintain positive and respectful relationships with clients, community resources and other agencies. They must possess excellent organization, communication and problem-solving skills. Experience in the Human Services field is preferred. Full Time M-F. Benefits Pkg.

Resume and cover to: Pat Burke, Family Services Director, SEVCA, 91 Buck Drive, Westminster, VT 05158, pburke@sevca.org, EOE

HELP WANTED: ROAD CREW MEMBER

The Town of Marlboro, Vermont is accepting applications for road crew member.

This position requires knowledge and operation of a variety of construction equipment including pick-up trucks, dump trucks, snowplows, sanders, salt trucks, loaders, light rollers, road rakes, excavators, backhoes, and the various tasks associated with road maintenance.

Other duties include equipment maintenance, cleaning ditches & culverts, installation of culverts, pothole patching, installing culvert posts, guard rail posts, installing street signs, brush cutting, as well as any other duties as assigned by the Road Supervisor, or/and Select Board.

A current Commercial Driver's License is a huge plus, but for the right applicant the Town will set up and pay for the State of Vermont CDL-B Training. This position requires: the applicant to pass a pre-employment drug and alcohol screening, as well as random drug and alcohol screening as an employee; the ability to work a flexible schedule with holidays and weekends as necessary due to weather and other factors; and a willingness to abide by safety rules and regulations.

The pay rate (\$19.00 - \$21.00/hr) will be based on experience. Benefits included health insurance, Life Insurance, Short-Term Disability (as needed), and VT Municipal Employee Retirement program.

To apply, please provide a cover letter and resume (due by February 29, 2024) either by US Mail (address: PO Box 518, Marlboro, VT 05344), drop off in person at the Marlboro Town Office (510 South Road, Marlboro, VT 05344 - there is a locked "drop-box" outside the office should the office be closed), or via email to the Marlboro Road Supervisor Andrew Richardson at marlborovthighwaydept@gmail.com or by calling (802) 257-0252.



WE ARE HIRING!

Shelter Advocate

Be a part of the team supporting the Emergency Shelter for Families with Children set to open in March on the Winston Prouty Campus. Multiple positions open: part-time/full-time, evenings/weekend/awake overnight shifts.

Early Interventionist/Developmental Educator

Join an interdisciplinary team of health, early childhood mental health, education, and social service professionals building families' capacity to support their children. Work with children birth to age 3 and their families, supporting child development at home and in the community. Part-time and full-time positions available.

Part-Time Assistant Teacher

In partnership with the toddler and preschool teaching teams, plan and implement a Reggio-inspired emergent curriculum that promotes children's cognitive, social, emotional and physical development and learning. Hours are Monday-Friday, 12:00-5:00pm

Learn more about these job opportunities at www.wintonprouty.org/jobs

The Winston Prouty Center for Child and Family Development in Brattleboro, VT has been providing inclusive education and family support to promote the success of children and families since 1969.



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MILESTONES

Births, deaths, and news of people from Windham County

College news

The following local students at the Community College of Vermont were honored for academic achievement in the fall 2023 semester. Named to the President's List, which recognizes full-time students with a 4.0 GPA...

to a brain tumor at age seven. They had two other children, Alicia (born 1984) and Matthew (born 1986). In 1989, they moved to Brattleboro. Jill continued her education at the Community College of Vermont...

rediscovered his artistic self and began a prolific four decades of wood sculpting and painting. Herb said he learned how to sculpt by finishing the work of his late uncle/mentor, George Warrek...

and time there. Outside of Sonnox, Josh worked at the Bellows Falls Opera House for many years, where he interacted with the community frequently...

baking for the church and her friends. She also loved travel and swimming. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: A funeral service will be held on Friday, Feb. 23, at 11 a.m., at First Congregational Church...



George Henri Schneeberger, 92, of Wilmington. Died Feb. 9, 2024 at Baystate Medical Center in Springfield, Massachusetts.

George was born June 27, 1931 in Moutier, Switzerland to Emile and Germaine (Romy) Schneeberger. During his childhood, he lived and attended schools in the French speaking town of Court. He initially became familiar with the machining trade while working at his father's shop which specialized in making parts for the Swiss watch industry...

Kennesaw, Georgia, Mary DeCourcy of Merrimack, New Hampshire, Thomas Shelc of Nashua, New Hampshire and Dianne Quigley and her husband Donald of Goffstown, New Hampshire; grandchildren, Mark DeCourcy, Christopher DeCourcy, Patrick Shelc, Elizabeth Shelc, Brian Quigley and Jennifer Quigley; and great-grandchildren Layla, Matthew, Ruby, and Janessa DeCourcy. She is also survived by many nieces and nephews. Grace was predeceased by her siblings Albert, Bernard, Ernest, Harold and Joseph Bushway, Gladys Hindes, and Rose Cloutier, and son-in-law Edward DeCourcy. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: A funeral Mass was held Feb. 14 at St. Charles Church in Bellows Falls...



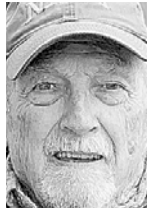
William G. 'Bill' Staats Jr., 93, of Newfane. Died peacefully, surrounded by his family and with his wife of 71 years, Florence, by his side, on Jan. 31, 2024 at Grace Cottage Hospital in Townshend. Bill was born in Brooklyn, New York on Oct. 14, 1930, the son of William G. Staats, Sr. and Martha (Donnelly) Staats. A proud veteran, he served his country in the Marine Corps during the Korean War. Following his honorable discharge, he returned home to Brooklyn. On Dec. 6, 1952, in Brooklyn, he married the love of his life, Florence Schafer. They moved to Jamaica, where they raised their family, and later moved to Newfane where they resided for 40 years in the home they built. Survivors include his wife of 71 years, his children William III, Barbara Bourne, Thomas Staats, Michael Staats, Dolores Clark, Steven Staats, Jean Wilde, and Jenna Staats. Additionally, he leaves nine grandchildren, seven great-grandchildren, and nieces Liz and Kristine. He was predeceased by his infant daughter Diane, brother Richard Staats, and sister-in-law Mary Staats. Bill will be greatly missed. He was an inspiration to his wife and children, a most rare and beautiful relationship. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: In keeping with his final wishes, there are no formal funeral services scheduled. Because of his love for animals, especially cats, donation may be made to the Windham County Humane Society, P.O. Box 397, Brattleboro, VT 05302, or to Grace Cottage Hospital, 185 Grafton Rd., Townshend, VT 05353. To offer condolences, visit atamaniuk.com.

born in Brattleboro on Dec. 10, 1939, the daughter of Carroll and Ethel (Dorr) Rice. She attended Brattleboro public schools. For more than 35 years, she was employed as a school bus driver, as well as the bookkeeper for her husband's logging business. For numerous years, Nancy worked different jobs to help support the family. Nancy held membership in the American Woodsman Association, was a former member of FFA (Future Farmers of America), and was a member of the Eastern Draft Horse Association. While raising her family, she served as a Cub Scout leader, and supported her boys when they moved on to the Boy Scouts. Nancy loved to plant all kinds of gardens, and she was still growing fresh vegetables up until last year. Her greatest joy was showing her children and grandchildren the joy she found working with her hands. Crafting, sewing, quilting, canning, making jams, and most of all, cooking; she was always happy to share the kitchen. From an incredibly early age, Nancy enjoyed being outdoors; hunting and fishing were great pastimes she loved and shared with her entire family. A strong woman of faith, she was a member of the Church of Jesus Christ, Latter Day Saints in Keene. On August 16, 1980, in Brattleboro, she married to Percy F. Powling, who predeceased her on Jan. 7, 2023. Nancy is also survived by one daughter, Wanjeta Powling, and her husband, Mark of Williamsville, as well as 14 grandchildren, 16 great-grandchildren, and three great-great-grandchildren, as well as countless nieces and nephews. She was predeceased by her sons Leon Knapp, Jr., Milo Knapp, Sr., and Alonzo "Kpet" Gilbert, Jr.; a sister, Beverly "Chris" Matteson; brothers Carroll Rice, Jr. and Paul Rice; and a grandson, Jason Gilbert, who died in infancy. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: There will be no calling hours. Graveside services will be held at the family lot in the South Newfane Cemetery in the springtime when the cemetery reopens. Donations to Newton Brook Fire & Rescue, P.O. Box 77, Newfane, VT 05345, or the Windham County Humane Society, P.O. Box 397, Brattleboro, VT 05302. To offer condolences, visit atamaniuk.com.



Hugh William Whitney, 86, of Marlboro. Died peacefully, in the comfort of his home, on Feb. 9, 2024. Hugh was born at home in Brattleboro on Oct. 4, 1937 to J. Perry and Pearl (Elmer) Whitney. In his early years, he spent time between Marlboro, where the family kept animals, and Brattleboro, their main residence. He attended schools in Brattleboro. After graduating from Brattleboro Union High School in 1955, Hugh enlisted in the Army and served three years before being honorably discharged in 1958. On May 25, 1957, in Hinsdale, New Hampshire, he married Joyce Ethridge, who survives. They lived their entire 66 years together in Marlboro. He worked as a mason for O'Bryan Construction in Brattleboro, then owned and operated, with his family, Whitney's Marlboro Grocery on Route 9. He also drove a school bus for the Marlboro School District. In semi-retirement, he worked for Southeastern Vermont Community Action, owned and operated Marlboro Glass & Supply, and continued to work and do other odd jobs and services for people in the community. Hugh was a member of the Marlboro Volunteer Fire Department and Marlboro Historical Society. He also served the town of Marlboro as a Lister and Weigher of Coal. He was a proud life member and 32nd Degree Mason, Brattleboro Lodge #102, F&AM, Scottish Rite Bodies, and was a member of the Mt. Sinai Temple Shrine of Montpelier. Hugh loved the outdoors. Hunting, fishing, walking in the woods, and cutting and whittling canes were just a few of his many interests and hobbies. He cared a great deal for animals and had many throughout the years. His favorite were the teams of oxen he raised and trained. Hugh was also very interested in history, particularly local history and family genealogy. The thing he enjoyed most was family and the times spent together. He is survived by his wife and his daughters: Lynn Lundstedt (Martin) of Marlboro, Kathleen Coulombe (George) of West Halifax, and Deborah Osowski (John) of Northfield, Massachusetts; and a brother-in-law, Norman Hewes. He is also survived by six grandchildren, seven great-grandchildren, nieces, nephews, and cousins. He was predeceased by his sisters, Susan Margaret O'Connell, Catherine Emond, and Barbara Hewes. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: Graveside services will be conducted later in the spring in Center Cemetery in Marlboro with officers and members of Brattleboro Lodge #102 conducting their Evergreen service. Donations to the Marlboro Volunteer Fire Department, P.O. Box 69, Marlboro, VT 05344 or the Marlboro Historical Society, P.O. Box 242, Marlboro, VT 05344. To offer condolences, visit atamaniuk.com.

Gabrielle Beal of Wilmington was named to the fall 2023 Dean's List at the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, Massachusetts. Carly Gallivan of West Dover was named to the Dean's List for the fall 2023 semester at Emerson College in Boston. Cassandra Espinoza Heimann of West Dover was named to the fall 2023 Dean's List at Coastal Carolina University in Conway, South Carolina. Cassidy A. Fusco of West Wardboro and Emeline L. Stewart of Wilmington were named to the Dean's List for the fall 2023 semester at Fairfield (Conn.) University. Jonathan Terry of Bellows Falls, Nicholas Campbell and Rachael Rooney of Brattleboro, and Olivia Lauricella of Saxtons River were named to the fall 2023 Dean's List at the University of New England in Portland, Maine.



Herbert Hayes, 94, of Brattleboro. Died at his home on Feb. 13, 2024, surrounded by family. His earliest years, during the Great Depression, were spent in Waterbury, Connecticut. His father was lucky enough to have a job, but Herb still remembered cardboard in his shoes and how he'd dance a jig when getting a new pair. When the family moved to nearby Wolcott, he helped build their house near Hitchcock Lake — and, most significantly, near the Chase golf course. There he caddied and learned the game which would become a lifelong passion. Indeed, he played up until opening day 2023, long and well enough to shoot his age twice. After graduating Crosby High School in 1947, the family saved enough for him to attend Worcester Polytechnic Institute. But that money ran out, and he felt so grateful to secure full scholarships. He washed dishes and gave haircuts for pocket money, when not practicing with the diving or track team, and earned a degree in aeronautical engineering. In his senior year at WPI, Herb met his wife of 65 years, Patricia Loveys of Lake George, New York. He soon enlisted as an Aeronautical Engineering Officer in the Navy. The Korean War was still on, but he and Pat ended up in Jacksonville, Florida, in the aircraft repair department for three years, bearing two of four children in the barracks — right next to the 10th hole of another golf course! Herb reflected often about all he learned as a very young officer, and wore his Navy hat with pride. For the next 33 years, Herb worked for Pratt & Whitney Aircraft and, with Pat raised four children in Wethersfield, Connecticut (with little time for golf!) He helped develop and then support the JT9D turbofan engine for the famed Boeing 747 Jumbojet — and he was aboard its inaugural flight from the U.S. to Australia. In 1976, Pratt & Whitney sent him to Florida, where he spent more time in a boat than when in the Navy, braving the famously dangerous Jupiter Inlet to fish in the Atlantic. Though proud of his work keeping jets airborne, traveling around the globe to do so, Herb became dismayed with corporate America, and his role in it. He decided to retire early, and set up a place for family on Lost Mile Road in Newfane. For the next 20 years, he brought the old Betterly Homestead back to life, rebuilding stone walls, building a shop and barn, cutting ski trails, and farming asparagus, berries and Angora goats. Most significantly, he

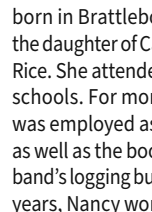


James Kendall 'Jim' Lucy, 71, of Hinsdale, New Hampshire. Died Jan. 25, 2024, in the comfort of his home, with his family by his side, following a lengthy period of declining health. Jim was born in Townshend on March 25, 1952, the son of Kendall and Arlene (Tuttle) Lucy. He was raised and educated in West Dummerston, attending local schools that included Brattleboro Union High School. For much of his career he worked as a carpenter for several local contractors, eventually establishing his own business. Under the name of Jim Lucy R & R, he renovated and remodeled several Southern Vermont properties and local businesses. Later on in his career, he would travel between Vermont and Arizona, eventually relocating to Ajo, Arizona, where he owned and operated Ajo Home Improvements, LLC. Jim was an accomplished artist, especially with pen and ink, and watercolor. In the late 1980s he started Jim Lucy Designs, a gift card business featuring the covered bridges, churches, and other interesting architecture of New England. He was a history buff of national, regional, and local history. He also enjoyed listening to music and was an avid Beatles fan. He was first married to Cheryl Butler of Vermont, who predeceased him. He later married Cynthia Lucy of Florida, who also predeceased him. He then had a third marriage, to Dawn Knopp of Oklahoma. Survivors include a daughter, Jamie Lucy, and partner, Thomas Niles, of Virginia; a son, James Lucy, of Brattleboro; a brother, Kendall Lucy, of Hinsdale; sisters Anna Lucy and Evelyn Lucy, both of Massachusetts; a grandson, Casey Kent, of Virginia; and several nieces, nephews and cousins. He was predeceased by one son, Jesse Lucy; and a sister, Donna Phillips. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: In keeping with his final wishes, there are no formal funeral services scheduled. Donations to the charity of your choice. To offer condolences, visit atamaniuk.com.

Joshua Mosher, 45, of Bellows Falls. Died suddenly at his home on Feb. 10, 2024. Josh was born on Dec. 29, 1978, in Bellows Falls to Gary and Kelly (Young) Mosher. Josh graduated from Bellows Falls Union High School in 1997, having worked at Green Mountain Herbs and Fletcher's during and immediately after graduation. He had just celebrated his 22nd anniversary at Sonnox Industries in January, 2024, where he worked across many divisions and greatly enjoyed his



Nancy (Rice) Powling, 84, of Williamsville. Died unexpectedly on Feb. 10, 2024, following an extended period of declining health. Nancy was born in Brattleboro on Dec. 10, 1939, the daughter of Carroll and Ethel (Dorr) Rice. She attended Brattleboro public schools. For more than 35 years, she was employed as a school bus driver, as well as the bookkeeper for her husband's logging business. For numerous years, Nancy worked different jobs to help support the family. Nancy held membership in the American Woodsman Association, was a former member of FFA (Future Farmers of America), and was a member of the Eastern Draft Horse Association. While raising her family, she served as a Cub Scout leader, and supported her boys when they moved on to the Boy Scouts. Nancy loved to plant all kinds of gardens, and she was still growing fresh vegetables up until last year. Her greatest joy was showing her children and grandchildren the joy she found working with her hands. Crafting, sewing, quilting, canning, making jams, and most of all, cooking; she was always happy to share the kitchen. From an incredibly early age, Nancy enjoyed being outdoors; hunting and fishing were great pastimes she loved and shared with her entire family. A strong woman of faith, she was a member of the Church of Jesus Christ, Latter Day Saints in Keene. On August 16, 1980, in Brattleboro, she married to Percy F. Powling, who predeceased her on Jan. 7, 2023. Nancy is also survived by one daughter, Wanjeta Powling, and her husband, Mark of Williamsville, as well as 14 grandchildren, 16 great-grandchildren, and three great-great-grandchildren, as well as countless nieces and nephews. She was predeceased by her sons Leon Knapp, Jr., Milo Knapp, Sr., and Alonzo "Kpet" Gilbert, Jr.; a sister, Beverly "Chris" Matteson; brothers Carroll Rice, Jr. and Paul Rice; and a grandson, Jason Gilbert, who died in infancy. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: There will be no calling hours. Graveside services will be held at the family lot in the South Newfane Cemetery in the springtime when the cemetery reopens. Donations to Newton Brook Fire & Rescue, P.O. Box 77, Newfane, VT 05345, or the Windham County Humane Society, P.O. Box 397, Brattleboro, VT 05302. To offer condolences, visit atamaniuk.com.



Sylvia M. Renfrew, 91, of Brattleboro. Died Feb. 8, 2024, at Vernon Green nursing home. She moved from her beloved mobile home in August 2018 to Holton Home in Brattleboro until requiring the more skilled nursing that Vernon Green provided. Sylvia was fortunate to be able to play Bingo, cards, and dominoes until the end. She always said "they like me here because I don't complain." She really didn't, and she always smiled a lot. She was born on January 3, 1933 in Brattleboro, to the late Clayton R. and Florence (Ame) Renfrew. She attended Academy School with her neighbor George Martin, meeting her best friend Jeane when she married George. She was the "go to" babysitter for many families in Brattleboro for many years. Although she never married and had no children of her own, Sylvia always thought of the kids she sat for as her kids. She talked about those days with many fond memories. She was active at First Congregational Church in West Brattleboro, participating in many activities, such as Friendship Club and Thursday Night Club. She especially enjoyed cooking and

Obituaries



Ruth Ann 'Jill' Hardy, 73, of Brattleboro. Died on Feb. 7, 2024. She was a beloved mother, grandmother, and great friend to many. Born in Oakland, California, on July 26, 1950, she moved as a child with her family throughout the country, from Anchorage, Alaska, to Rome, New York, before settling in Berkeley, California, where she graduated high school in 1968. Jill briefly attended Merritt College in Oakland, studying art history, Third World women, and the history of Indian religion. In 1971 she married Philadelphia native John Swartz. The couple moved to Ludlow, Vermont, in 1972. They worked producing maple syrup in Andover and built a house there. It was there that Jill experienced the greatest tragedy of her life with the loss of her first son, Jason John Swartz,

great friend to many. Born in Oakland, California, on July 26, 1950, she moved as a child with her family throughout the country, from Anchorage, Alaska, to Rome, New York, before settling in Berkeley, California, where she graduated high school in 1968. Jill briefly attended Merritt College in Oakland, studying art history, Third World women, and the history of Indian religion. In 1971 she married Philadelphia native John Swartz. The couple moved to Ludlow, Vermont, in 1972. They worked producing maple syrup in Andover and built a house there. It was there that Jill experienced the greatest tragedy of her life with the loss of her first son, Jason John Swartz,

Milestones are published as community news at no cost to families, thanks to financial support of our members and advertisers. Send them to news@commonsnews.org. Though we ask that content for this column be sent by Friday at 5 p.m., we will do our best to include late obituaries. Please alert the newsroom at 802-246-6397 for post-deadline urgent submissions. We will always do our best to accommodate contributors in their time of grief.

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thy black neighbor
thy atheist neighbor
thy religious neighbor
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thy asian neighbor
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thy latino neighbor
thy addicted neighbor
thy progressive neighbor
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Youth vote

on their own.”

Copeland Hanzas was joined by U.S. Rep. Becca Balint, D-Vt., and Brattleboro Town Clerk Hilary Francis in encouraging students to register and vote.

They also wanted to learn what the students, as first-time voters and future voters, are thinking about.

The students held nothing back.

They told the elected officials they are concerned about their safety on the streets, about the drug problem that has already taken several students, about services for people with autism, about artificial intelligence and deep fakes, and about other mental health issues.

Besides joining the Selectboard, young voters may also serve as representatives to the town's Representative Town Meeting.

The voting age was lowered because of a town charter amendment approved by the Vermont Legislature, which overrode a veto by Gov. Phil Scott. This is the first year it will take effect.

The three officials sat on the stairs leading to the stage and talked into hand mics; then they took questions from the approximately 125 students who attended.

Some of the students joined the conversation because participation allowed them to be excused from class. Some dribbled in, in groups. Some teachers brought their whole class. And some students came alone simply because they were interested in what the three leaders had to say.

Now that young people have the vote, the three officials said, it was time to learn how to get involved in politics.

“All three of us care so deeply about making sure that young people vote,” Balint said. “I was in the Legislature along with Sarah when we first started working on this charter change for Brattleboro. And it didn't get locked in the first time, so we had to take another run at it.”

She continued: “I don't want to get in the weeds as to why that was, but the most important thing for us was knowing that the sooner you get Americans interested in voting, the more likely they are to continue to vote.”

Scott vetoed the legislation in 2022. The House voted to override the veto, but the Senate missed the two-thirds majority threshold, thus sustaining it.

Balint told the students that when she was their age, she already knew that she wanted to be in elected office.

“I knew that I wanted to help build policy to make life better for people,” Balint said. “It just took me a long time to get there. Because I didn't know anyone in politics. I didn't have direct communication with anyone who represented me.”

So, she continued, “if you feel in your heart that public service is something you're interested in, please take full advantage of the fact that you have not just a congresswoman here in Vermont that you can talk to, but I live right here in Brattleboro. I want to be a resource for young people who want to have a life in politics.”

Copeland Hanzas told the students that before she was elected secretary of state, she served for 18 years in the House and was chair of the Government Operations Committee that “moved the charter change.”

“It was my honor and my privilege,” Copeland Hanzas said. “It was a really unique conversation to have, because it's unusual for a community to welcome 16- and 17-year-olds to vote.”

She found it “really inspiring about Brattleboro asking for a charter change because it was student-led.”

“I think it's important for your voices to be a part of this community and a part of the team of what Brattleboro does in the future,” Copeland Hanzas said. “I want you to also get involved at the state level. And at the federal level.”

Francis explained that the deadline had passed for being on the ballot for this year's election, but students can definitely begin write-in campaigns. A pamphlet outlining the ways to participate can be obtained from the Municipal Center, she said.

“If you become a Town Meeting representative, you get to vote on your town officers, the moderator, the listers, and the list goes on,” Francis said. “And then you also get to vote on things like the town budget. You get to vote on appointing different people to serve on different committees, as well as what citizen petitions there are.”

She pointed out that “if somebody was interested in voting on something that the Selectboard didn't want to put on the ballot, citizens could go around and get petitions and put that on the ballot.”

Vermonters love Town Meetings, whether they are Representative Town Meetings

— like Brattleboro's, which is unique in the state — or Zoom meetings or all-day events, Francis said.

“We love Town Meetings because we love the idea of getting into a debate,” Francis said. “That's where democracy happens. Being able to amend an article, amend the budget up or down — this is important to us. And those are the types of things that happen at Representative Town Meeting.”

Most of Vermont's Town Meetings are held the first Tuesday in March. Brattleboro's Representative Town Meeting will take place on Saturday, March 23.

Right now, there are empty seats where representatives should be.

“We always need more Town Meeting members,” Francis said. “The Brattleboro charter requires that if you want to be a write-in candidate, you simply have to contact my office before the close of polls on Election Day and declare that you want to be a write-in candidate. You need a minimum of 10 votes. So if you encourage your peers to register, it should be pretty easy to get those 10 votes.”

Engagement is everything

Balint said her job is to be “the eyes and ears for Vermonters in Congress.”

Her main concerns have been housing, mental health, reproductive rights, workforce development, citizen engagement, and how to bring people to the polls. But she said that she has been hearing from her constituents at every level and in every part of the state that “people are exhausted.”

People are tired from the pandemic. And they are tired of what came after the pandemic.

“They are tired of the partisanship,” Balint said. “They turn on cable news and get people screaming at each other. People are tired of being shoved into one algorithm or another and feeling like they don't understand a broad perspective.”

This makes communication difficult, she said.

“This is a challenge because we know only a small percentage of Americans right now are watching the news,” she said. “A small percentage are engaging with newspapers of any kind.”

And a “huge swath of the electorate is only getting their news from TikTok and YouTube,” Balint said.

“And how do we have meaningful, substantive conversations around voting and around engagement when the traditional platforms of how you engage voters have changed dramatically in the last five years?” she asked.

A huge percentage of the electorate is older now and still reads newspapers and direct mail political advertising. Younger people do not share those media choices.

“There is no one medium that you can use right now to engage voters that will hit all the different groups of people,” Balint said.

The scariest thing is that a lot of people have just checked out, she said.

“I don't blame them,” she said. “I know how bad it is, because I am in the middle of those sometimes really dysfunctional screaming fits in Congress.”

But, she continued, “I also know that if we disengage, we become much more cynical and hopeless and despairing. Then we lose our creativity and our capacity to solve problems. And I'm really interested in solving problems.”

Continuing on the topic of engagement, Copeland Hanzas shared a much-quoted political aphorism: “If you aren't at the table, you're probably on the menu.”

“Let that sink in for a minute,” she said. “Maybe you're concerned about climate change; maybe you're concerned about gun violence, or substance abuse. These are all issues that you should be engaging on with your peers and then engaging with candidates for elected office. Ask them what their beliefs are, what their action plan is, what they are going to do about it.”

Substance abuse concerns

One of the students' first questions concerned the terrible toll that drugs are taking in Brattleboro.

“I taught in four different public schools in Vermont before I was in politics,” Balint said. “The number of former students that I've talked to who have lost friends or family members is soul-crushing. The human toll in this state is absolutely devastating. And I know Brattleboro has been really hard hit.”

Balint said that the problem was so overwhelming that she worried if Vermonters weren't losing their compassion and becoming injured to suffering.

FROM SECTION FRONT

“We have to make the connection between education and housing in particular,” she said. “We have to make sure we increase the [number] of people who are able to do drug counseling and mental health counseling.”

She called those measures “some of the most important work that we can do for your generation.”

“And we're going to have to move a lot of different levels of levers to make progress here,” said Balint, adding that congressional caucuses are studying the problem, especially in rural states like Vermont.

“We need to get more providers who are able to prescribe methadone and buprenorphine, two methods for people to get into treatment,” Balint said. “And we have to continue to work on the stigma of talking about it openly.”

People sometimes have to go through several rounds of treatment “to get on the other side,” she said.

“That's not a moral failing. That's not a personal failing,” she said. “There are drug companies that have made a tremendous amount of money off of opioid addiction. This keeps me up at night. But we need more federal resources on this front.”

Copeland Hanzas, who also taught school before she ran for office, said she signed up to teach science at a local substance abuse facility once she got into the Legislature because she wanted to stay connected to young people.

“I would go in every Monday, work on science lessons with the students who were there in treatments, and then Tuesday through Friday, I'd go to the Legislature,” she said. “But so many times, from one week to the next, I would come in to find a completely different group of young people in front of me.”

Kicking substance use is difficult, she said.

“These are extremely powerful chemicals that communicate with your brain in a way that makes it really hard to turn off,” she said. “And one week is not enough time for a young person to make their way through addiction and into recovery.”

For some of these young people, insurance will pay for only two weeks of treatment.

“It is very disheartening, the extent to which the science of addiction and recovery has not yet been able to communicate with the people who write the budgets and the policymakers who set the policies on how we're going to fund these,” Copeland Hanzas said.

“And, to me, this is one of the biggest issues that we need to solve together,” she continued. “Because if you are suffering from substance use disorder, you don't have the ability to fix that by yourself. This is not a bootstrap kind of a problem.”

Mental health issues — including loneliness and connection, and their connection to substance use — are concerns for Vermont's entire congressional delegation, which includes U.S. senators Bernie Sanders and Peter Welch, Balint said.

“All three of us talk about mental health and connection, and a crisis of loneliness and how it relates to substance use disorder,” Balint said. “We need to give people the opportunity to get reconnected within their communities.”

Balint said that people serve in the public sector “because we care deeply about our communities and about our constituents.”

“And we need to gather collectively to think about how to solve this problem,” she said.

Other concerns

One student asked if there were things happening around autism awareness at the state or federal level.

“I really, really appreciate that question,” Balint said. “One of my own children is on the autism spectrum. And it is incredibly important to me that all of the work that we do to connect young people involves folks who are neurodiverse. It has to be part of the work that we do.”

Francis said that her office was working on ways to communicate clearly so that information is available to people with all kinds of brains, including for people on the spectrum as well as for people for whom English is a second language.

Another student asked about what can be done about misinformation coming from social media and what might happen with artificial intelligence and “deep fakes” — still images, video, and audio representations of people doing or saying things they have never actually done or said.

Conversely, the possibility of such technology also gives unscrupulous politicians cover to dismiss the legitimacy of actual news.

“A session we did in Congress last week on deep fakes discussed

Brattleboro Area Hospice offers Bereavement Program volunteer training

BRATTLEBORO — Brattleboro Area Hospice (BAH) has openings for its 30-hour training for new Bereavement Program volunteers.

The training is set to begin on Saturday, April 6, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., and will continue on Tuesdays, 5 to 8 p.m., April 9 through May 28. The training will take place in person at the BAH office, 191 Canal St.

Bereavement volunteers provide emotional support and

companionship to individuals grieving the loss of a loved one.

Applications for the training are being accepted until March 20. An online fillable application is available at brattleborohospice.org/how-you-can-help/volunteering or you can contact the office to receive one by email or through the U.S. Mail.

No experience is needed and space is limited. They ask for a \$40 contribution to cover the cost of materials. Scholarships

are available. Following the 10-week training, volunteers are expected to commit to one hour per week spent with a bereaved individual.

For more information, contact Lars Hunter, Bereavement Program Coordinator, at 802-257-0775, ext. 104, or lars.hunter@brattleborohospice.org.

lars.hunter@brattleborohospice.org

how much potential there is in AI, but in terms of politics, how many scary aspects of artificial intelligence there are,” Balint said.

“And I'm going to be really honest with you,” she continued. “We're playing whack-a-mole right now.”

The capabilities and malicious potential of today's software have exceeded “what Congress really imagined, even just a few years ago,” Balint said. “And so we're playing catch-up.”

The good news, she said, is that Congress is aware of the power and dangers of AI.

“And we understand that this is work that we can't do without Big Tech, working with us and not fighting us on these issues,” Balint said. “So that is some of the work that I'm doing in the House Judiciary Committee as we try to take on some of the worst actors in terms of social media companies that know that they are spewing misinformation and disinformation, allowing it to go around the world before you know the truth.”

Balint said that students have told her that they know they are being manipulated by technology companies, whose social media algorithms are engineered to keep them engaged.

“They said, ‘We know we're addicted to the dopamine rush,’” Balint said. “‘We know we're staying on our phones many more hours than we should. We try to put them away, but we can't. Our parents tell us to put them away, but we see our parents just as addicted as we are. And that's the reality of what we are dealing with.’”

The next presidential election can be easily manipulated by bad actors using this kind of advanced technology, Copeland

Hanzas said.

“I just got back from Washington, D.C., where we had a gathering of the National Association of Secretaries of State,” Copeland Hanzas said. “Most of us oversee elections in some way or another. And one of the big concerns comes after having watched the 2016 election.”

She established that “foreign governments were using the algorithms of our social media to drive disinformation about political candidates in order to divide us into factions.”

People divided into factions come to distrust other people.

“And what happens when we are divided?” Copeland Hanzas said.

“It becomes easier to take power over a divided group of people. So many of these foreign actors, many of these people who are using AI and are creating these ‘deep fakes,’ are doing this because they want to tell you that you shouldn't trust that person over there. *That person is different. That person is ‘The Other.’ You shouldn't trust them.*”

“We are falling into it by using social media and getting into that dopamine hit of staying on too long,” she said.

One female student told Balint that she does not feel safe at night on the streets of Brattleboro. Balint brought Francis into the discussion.

Later, *The Commons* asked Francis what actions they had suggested.

“There were conversations about whether she had been to any of the Selectboard meetings, to voice her concerns,” Francis said.

“The Selectboard is constantly hearing voices from both sides. Some people believe there should

be more security and more police,” she continued. “Other people feel that more police is not the answer, and that it would make them feel unsafe.”

The Selectboard members, she explained, “also hear both sides regularly about putting security cameras downtown. So I think that for the Selectboard, hearing safety concerns from our high school students is very important.”

After the conference, a voter registration drive in the lobby yielded 38 new voters. Approximately 15 or 16 of them came under the new charter resolution.

A few days later, *The Commons* asked Balint to sum up the conference.

“Speaking to high school students in my hometown of Brattleboro gives me hope,” Balint said. “These students are excited to engage in the political process and have their voices heard as young voters. I'm encouraged by their openness to dialogue about youth mental health and their eagerness to implement real change for their futures.”

It's not the voting that's democracy; it's the counting.

—TOM STOPPARD

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Pharmacy

the new owners as he remained a part-time employee at the pharmacy, and that arrangement was built into the terms of the sale.

Also, the Cotes wanted a plan to assess how the pharmacy was doing by having access to its books and records.

The Cotes said that, under those conditions, they willingly financed 100% of the sale.

According to the Cotes, the pharmacy collateral — the business, its inventory and the customer base — would return to them if the Laurendeaus failed to keep the pharmacy operating.

Gina Cote, under the name GMS Family Partnership, is the legal owner of the building where the pharmacy operates.

Shortly after the sale, the Scrapbook Nook portion of the business, which Gina Cote ran and thought she would continue to run separately through an informal agreement, began to change. The Cotes thought it might be phased out.

When they removed some of the scrapbooking material from the building, the Laurendeaus terminated Marc Cote on Oct. 2, 2018, just 45 days after the sale agreement.

In 2019, the Cotes unsuccessfully hired a lawyer to try to get access to the pharmacy's business records. They never saw the financial records up to the bankruptcy.

Since 2018, the Laurendeaus regularly made their payments on the business loan, and they stayed current on their rent for the pharmacy space.

But the Cotes said that they were surprised to find out that the pharmacy would be closing and that the Laurendeaus would be filing for bankruptcy.

They learned of the impending closure only after a notice appeared on the pharmacy door on Sept. 8, 2023 notifying customers of the Sept. 29 closing and advising them to find a new pharmacy.

The Cotes unsuccessfully filed a restraining order that same day to try to prevent the bankruptcy and the pharmacy closing.

On Oct. 29, 2023, a month to the day after the pharmacy closed, the Cotes changed the locks and took over the building through a plan devised by their attorney. Though they assumed that all the pharmaceuticals had been removed by that date, as required by law, that was not the case.

They did not access the locked pharmaceutical portion of the building. A week later, a qualified third-party pharmacist accessed the pharmacy and reported that they removed \$73,300 in pharmaceuticals that had been left in the building.

According to state administrative rules of the Board of Pharmacy, all drugs must be transferred to another pharmacy,

returned to wholesalers, or destroyed within 30 days of a pharmacy's closing.

The return of equipment, such as the computers in the building, is still being worked out.

Greater Falls Pharmacy Inc. filed for Chapter 7 bankruptcy protection in November 2023, declaring \$403,000 in assets and \$2.2 million in liabilities, including \$593,000 to Marc Cote.

The Laurendeaus also submitted a personal bankruptcy petition to the Vermont Bankruptcy Court on Jan. 3. Attorney Todd Taylor of Burlington is representing the couple in both petitions.

The Commons asked the Laurendeaus for comment on this story. They declined to do so.

Looking ahead

Rather than dwell on the difficult past few years, the Cotes say that they want to focus on getting things in place to reopen in a few months. They said they haven't been able to inspect the building for the past five years, and they plan to make some upgrades.

It will take time, Marc said, to acquire all the licenses and contracts with pharmaceutical firms required to reopen.

Operating an independent pharmacy is a challenge in the current culture of national chains. The Cotes say they are going to focus on niche areas in the field that their type of operation would

be more suited to.

Among those things is non-sterile compounding, where a pharmacist works directly with a doctor and patient to prepare custom medications, such as salves or powders, on site for human or animal patients. Chain pharmacies do not do compounding.

The Cotes said they will focus more on wellness, including doing onsite point-of-care testing, including for strep throat, HIV, diabetes, and cholesterol. Their wellness work will also include helping with issues like sleep and physical flexibility.

They will also focus on patient education around chronic diseases such as diabetes, high cholesterol, blood pressure, and seizures, and they will administer vaccines, which most doctors' offices no longer do.

They plan for the pharmacy to resume local deliveries.

Fall Mountain Pharmacy will also be working with long-term care facilities in an approximately 30-minute radius and offer long-term care for people still in their homes. These services include automatic prescription refills and custom blister packaging of medications.

They plan to hire a second pharmacist. Hours will be Monday to Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Saturday from 9

FROM SECTION FRONT



ROBERT F. SMITH/THE COMMONS

Former Greater Falls Pharmacy owners Gina and Marc Cote.

a.m. to 5 p.m. They will be closed Sundays, but they will offer emergency services.

"We are elated to be back," Gina Cote said. "We didn't sell

the pharmacy to have something like this happen. We're coming back more knowledgeable, more prepared, and stronger."

WSESD budget

FROM SECTION FRONT

As adopted, 49% of the budget would go to direct instruction; 19% to special education, central administration, and busing; 14% to operate and maintain facilities; 8% to students and co-curricular buses; 6% to school administration and board services; and 4% to instruction.

Major drivers contributing to the budget increase are salaries for nine new employees in FY 2024 and one new employee in FY 2025, for health insurance, and for special education costs that outpaced what the state is reimbursing the district.

There is no debt service since the final payment of a \$55 million bond for Brattleboro Union High School improvements was made in November. For capital improvements from FY24 through FY27, \$14,616,804 has been budgeted.

Questions continue

The big wrinkle is that the state Legislature is widely expected to vote to remove the existing 5%

education property tax cap. If that action is taken, the district could face a 9.5% increase.

If approved, bill H.850 would replace the current 5% homestead property tax cap with a new, 1%, discounted rate for school districts whose tax rates are adversely affected by that law. It is intended to then be phased out over five years.

The House Ways and Means Committee agreed to sponsor the bill and it has moved to the House Committee on Appropriations.

The bill adjusts funding to conform to a new state law, Act 127, which has already changed how students are weighted regarding poverty and English as a second language vis-a-vis state revenue. In addition, tuition money from other districts is no longer part of education spending as far as the state is concerned.

WSESD Business Administrator Frank Rucker, saying he's "never seen such volatility in the state's statistics," told the school board Jan. 23 that he expects to do "what we always do."

Specifically, Rucker said, the district will present "a plan that meets our student needs where they're at and knowing where we have been, and where our strategic plan needs to go, addressing our learning loss or learning needs, and all of those programs that we've been talking about."

At the Tuesday, Feb. 13 Finance Committee meeting, Rucker said, "This is a heck of a storm we're hitting, but we do have reasonable reserves."

The district will "get through this, but it's really challenging to convey," he said, noting that the WSESD is "100% dependent on the Legislature."

Finance Committee Chair Shaun Murphy noted the district will receive about \$200,000 from the state as a reward for the 2019 merger.

At the Feb. 13 school board meeting, lengthy discussion about changing the annual meeting date took place, with the board ultimately agreeing to hold to the March 19 date.

"Our plan is based on student need, and we are in the process of getting through the pandemic and addressing our 20-year capital plan," Rucker said, calling the 3% increase a "reasonable financial commitment."

"We've been in situations many, many times over the years where there's some wrinkle or development that puts into question what will be the tax impact in June, in July, once we're through the process," Rucker said.

He added that he has "never seen there be a benefit to jeopardize our ability to retain our staff by delaying employment contracts and putting into question all the bids [...] to repair our roofs and upgrade our old last boiler."

"We must retain those contractors now," he said.

Rescinding the 5% education property tax rate cap, "incentivizes districts to either reduce spending or identify additional revenues," Rucker said, adding that the Legislature's "retroactive changing the law the whole state used to develop the school budgets" is "pretty unprecedented."

If the 5% cap is withdrawn, Rucker said, the "assumption is that [the Legislature] will be able to substantially reduce the yield, which would reduce the CLA tax rate."

In May or June, the Legislature will decide the annual yield, which "can be thought of as the per-pupil amount of spending that can be supported with a uniform homestead tax rate of \$1.00 on homestead value or 2% of household income," according to the state website (legislature.vermont.gov).

Rucker and others noted that the district has no wish to foist an unbearable increase in the tax burden on taxpayers, and that the WSESD can make adjustments on the revenue side to protect them.

But, Rucker said several times, "we need to retain our excellent educators, reduce the amount of uncertainty. We need to move forward. We are resilient on a financial basis. We can make this adjustment in the storm."

He explained that if the cap is removed and districts that put additional reserves into the budget because the cap paid for them — which the WSESD did not do — "the Legislature will know and that money can be put back into the education fund as a resource, which then allows the yield to be adjusted, which lowers everybody else's tax rate."

The school budget can be amended on the town meeting floor, but only the total amount to spend, not any specific line item.



**Support your neighbors:
become a volunteer!**

Two new trainings this spring...

Serious Illness Volunteers support their neighbors who are learning to live and thrive while they adjust to the changes that a serious illness brings. This is a new program launching later this spring. This training begins in March. For more information contact Eileen Glover at (802) 257-0775 x106 or eileen.glover@brattleborohospice.org.

Bereavement Volunteers provide emotional support and companionship to their neighbors who are grieving the death loss of a loved one. This training begins in April. The first day is Saturday, April 6, 10-5pm, with subsequent sessions on Tuesdays, 5-8pm, April 9 - May 28. For more information, contact Lars Hunter at (802) 257-0775 x104, or lars.hunter@brattleborohospice.org.

To apply for either training, go to this website page below, or click the QR code

<https://brattleborohospice.org/how-you-can-help/volunteer-training-application>




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ARTS and CALENDAR
appear this week on pages B2-B3



COURTESY PHOTO



COURTESY PHOTO

Ruth Tilghman of St. Michael's Episcopal Church is the facilitator and volunteer coordinator at Loaves & Fishes in Brattleboro.

David Treadwell, left, is one of the volunteers at Loaves & Fishes in Brattleboro.

Meal sites feel pressure as need from hungry Vermonters doubles

At Loaves & Fishes, volunteers scramble to keep donations of dollars and ingredients on track for more hot meals

By Annie Landenberger
The Commons

BRATTLEBORO—At Loaves & Fishes, one of the region's enduring meal services for those in need, volunteer cook David Treadwell says that "the demand has doubled."

The number of meals prepared and distributed every Tuesday and Friday out of the vast kitchen, prep, serving area in the basement of Centre Congregational Church (CCC) has gone from 100 per day a year ago to 250 every Tuesday and 200 on Fridays, says Loaves & Fishes facilitator and volunteer coordinator Ruth Tilghman of St. Michael's Episcopal Church (SME).

One needs look no further than downtown Brattleboro for evidence of the current conditions nationwide (ers.usda.gov).

After 2021, the rate of food insecurity among low-income households in the U.S. increased to 37% in 2022 (higher than pre-Covid pandemic levels) and 44% in July 2023.

Moreover, according to a June 2023 U.S. Commerce Department report (commerce.gov/news/blog/2023/06), income inequality continues to rise dramatically in the U.S., while inflation, though dropping slightly to its lowest point since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, is still now at the fourth highest rate of the last 10 years. That's been painfully evident at the supermarket.

As the website of Hunger Free Vermont (hungerfreevt.org) explains, "Hunger exists in every community in America, and in Vermont. It's not always visible, but thousands of people in Vermont struggle to afford enough food for themselves and their families every day. This struggle is not new. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, 1 in 10 people in Vermont faced hunger."

But the pandemic, the organization explains, "has put significant pressure on households

across the country; nearly half of American adults have experienced economic hardship during this time. Hunger and economic hardship go hand-in-hand, and in Vermont, 1 in 3 of us have faced hunger at some point during the last two [plus] years."

Moreover, the Families First Coronavirus Response's Act 3SquaresVt food assistance ended a year ago, and for two years, Vermont has had the second-highest per-capita rate of homelessness in the U.S.

Four decades of helping

Food insecurity is hardly a new challenge: Forty years ago, Centre Congregational Church in downtown Brattleboro inaugurated Loaves & Fishes as one of its ministries, joining forces with St. Michael's Roman Catholic Church (SMRCC) and other food distribution efforts, including those at Agape Church and Trinity Lutheran Church.

Today, SMRCC's own St. Brigid's Kitchen and Loaves & Fishes prepare and serve meals to the community, adhering to the mission, according to Tilghman, "to feed anyone who is hungry and food insecure."

Early on at Loaves & Fishes, the late Dorothy (Dodo) Rice, a SME member, joined the ministry and helped to grow the program, which endures today as a joint ministry between Centre Church and SME.

Support for Loaves & Fishes comes from the Vermont Foodbank, from an occasional fundraising event, from individual donations of money and food, through grants from local agencies and banks, and from area businesses.

"Project Feed the Thousands is a big supporter," Tilghman said. "Centre Congregational does a plate offering four times a year, and SME encourages ongoing donations of food and funds, gives through its mission and outreach committee, and donates all proceeds from its annual tag sale to



COURTESY PHOTO

On Sundays, Ian Earle sets up tables at Brattleboro Transportation Center to serve meals he has cooked at Centre Congregational Church to those in need.

Loaves & Fishes. Last year that donation was \$10,500."

She said that the project sees daily signs of "the miracle of Loaves & Fishes" in the form of discarded food from Market 32 or "massive quantities of Foodbank cases and the generosity of neighbors."

Through those generosity, Tilghman said, "our meal is created."

Prior to the pandemic, Loaves & Fishes served the community in need in situ; in recent years, though, they prepare and move some 450 meals out into the community each week.

Each week, they also prepare and distribute 35 bags of groceries to shut-ins, which include fresh, frozen, boxed, and canned food.

On Tuesdays and Fridays, prepared meals are sent to Groundworks and to its food shelf, Foodworks; food is distributed in boxes to people living in public or subsidized housing in Brattleboro, including those at The Chalet, Red Clover Commons, the Elliot Street High Rise, Hayes Court.

In addition, those in hospice care and their families are delivered meals, and some 50 to 80 meals are served out the door.

Volunteers make it happen

Marshall Patton has been volunteering at Loaves & Fishes for about 11 years. An Army

■ SEE LOAVES & FISHES, B4



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- Tuesday and Friday: Loaves & Fishes, 193 Main St. (Centre Congregational Church). Bagged lunches and pantry items are available from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

- Sunday groceries are available at Agape Christian Fellowship, 30 Canal St., and, supported by Loaves & Fishes and Brigid's Kitchen, Ian Earle serves lunches at the Brattleboro Transportation Center, 49 Flat St.

- Foodworks, the food shelf by Groundworks Collaborative at 141 Canal St., is open Monday through Friday. Contact them at 802-490-2413 or email Foodworks@GroundworksVT.org.

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arts & community CALENDAR

THURSDAY

22

Performing arts

BRATTLEBORO "Thorn In My Side" - Game Show: This original award-winning show was created by Ben Stockman, Colin Hinckley, James Gelter, Jesse Tidd, Shannon Ward. Each month, three contestants compete in bizarre challenges that fit that month's theme.

- ▶ 8 p.m. Show is aimed for adult audiences.
- ▶ Tickets are by donation - \$10 is suggested.
- ▶ Hooker-Dunham Theater, 139 Main St. Information: 802-281-3232; hookerdunham.org.

Kids and families

PUTNEY Sandglass Theater presents "Rock the Boat" (access Vimeo Channel from home): Poet in a boat, alone at sea, stuck in rut of writer's block. Observing daily routines, he finds his home filling with new characters seeking shelter/safety. Through evocative visual scenes each has fled disaster: war, fire, flood. As Poet and newcomers navigate life on the vessel, they meet conflict, generosity, kindness, questions about who each other are. The Poet's poems become richer/deeper and the unlikely collection of be-

ings learns to steer threatening waters together.

- ▶ *Rock the Boat* aims to get young audiences thinking about relocation, displacement and the interconnectedness of racial, climate and social justice. The production addresses attitudes about acceptance of those who come from other countries and cultures, and provides a narrative in which there's room for everyone in an inclusive society.
- ▶ Through Thursday, February 29.
- ▶ \$15 for 24-hour rental.
- ▶ Sandglass Theater, 17 Kimball Hill. Information: Vimeo channel link: tinyurl.com/5ekd9wn8.

BRATTLEBORO Kids Cooking Class: Winter Carnival Corn Dog Muffins: Let's celebrate Winter Carnival together by making corn dog muffins! Gluten and meat-free options are available, please mention your needs when signing up. All ages up to age 14 with parent or caregiver.

- ▶ 8:30-11:45 a.m. or choose 11:30 a.m.-2:45 p.m. Enter on Canal Street.
- ▶ Brattleboro Food Co-op Community Room, 7 Canal St. Information: Space is limited - registration recommended: BrattleboroFoodCoop.coop/events.

Community building
BRATTLEBORO Brattleboro Selectboard Candidates Forum (In Person/Live Streaming): Featuring the candidates: Peter Case, Richard Davis, Oscar

Heller, Franz Reichsman, Jaki Reis. To submit questions for the candidates email kate@commonsnews.org. Forum broadcast live on Comcast Channel 1079 (BCTV's Government/Education channel), streamed live on BCTV's Facebook Page and YouTube Channel, and available on brattleborotv.org. To submit questions for the candidates email kate@commonsnews.org.

- ▶ 6-8 p.m. in the Select Board Meeting Room. Limited seating for live event.
- ▶ Free.
- ▶ Municipal Building, 230 Main St.

Community meals

PUTNEY Putney Monthly Free Produce Distribution: The Vermont Foodbank and Putney Foodshelf co-sponsor this monthly food drop of free produce and some non-perishables. All are welcome.

- ▶ 9 a.m. - 9:45 a.m. 4th Thursday of every month. This is a drive-up service - bags provided. Located on Alice Holloway drive (in front of Putney Meadows - white building across from the Putney Coop and Putney Fire Station.).
- ▶ Free.
- ▶ Putney Foodshelf, 10 Christian Sq. Information: 802-387-8551.

WILLIAMSVILLE Breakfast at Williamsville Hall: This monthly breakfast, offered by Friends of Williamsville Hall, is open to everyone. Enjoy homemade pancakes, pastries, tea, coffee, and orange juice.

- ▶ 8-10:30 a.m. Hall is ADA compliant.
- ▶ Free - donations appreciated.
- ▶ Williamsville Hall, Dover Rd. Information: 802-365-7772.

FRIDAY

Activism
BRATTLEBORO Vigil: Ceasefire Now! In Gaza and Israel: Tim Stevenson: "This vigil will continue every Saturday till Ceasefire." Stevenson's newly published book is: "Transformative Activism: A Values Revolution of Everyday Life in a Time of Societal Collapse."

- ▶ 12 noon - 1 p.m. Bring flags and posters.
- ▶ Brattleboro Post Office, Main St.

SUNDAY

25

Local history
WESTMINSTER WEST Lecture on The History of the Haywards' House and Garden: Using power point presentation, the Haywards talk about three sources of inspiration as they began to develop the early stages of their new garden around their restored house. Subject of this lecture is that a living garden grows out of the lives of the gardeners as well as the place where they garden. Presented in support of Congregational Church in Westminster West.

- ▶ 6:30 p.m. 1st: Elements remaining of the original 450'x150' farmyard created by the Ranneys in late 1700's into early 1800's: perimeter stone walls, remaining foundations of the barns, silo and milking parlor, plus viewlines from window/doors of the house. 2nd: Farms Mary and Gordon grew up on starting in the early 1940s: Mary's past in a centuries-old stone farmhouse on a 144-acre mixed farm - sheep and arable crops - in the hamlet of Hidcote Boyce outside Chipping Campden in North Cotswold Hills of England. Gordon's past in a 1776 settler's house in New Hartford, CT on his family's 140-acre farm within which is a 20-acre orchard of apple, peach, pear trees which his father started planting in 1930. 3rd: Hidcote Manor Gardens (started around 1908) - a world-famous garden designed by an American literally across field from Mary's hamlet of Hidcote Boyce, a hamlet recorded in "The Domesday Book."
- ▶ Free.
- ▶ Congregational Church of Westminster West, 44 Church St. Information: 802-387-2334; westminsterwest.org.

FRIDAY

23

Visual arts and shows
BRATTLEBORO Exhibition: Eileen Christelow - "Telling Stories Through Pictures": Eileen Christelow is a writer and illustrator of popular picture books for children, both fiction and non-fiction. She was born in Washington DC and grew up there and in CT. She now resides and works in VT. CX Silver Gallery is delighted to present an exhibition of Eileen's work and process.

- ▶ 2/24, 1-3 p.m.: Opening Reception.
- ▶ Through Monday, May 1, 2023.
- ▶ Free.
- ▶ CX Silver Gallery, 814 Western Ave. Information: 802-257-7898; cxsilvergallery.com.

SATURDAY

24

Community building
VT State Rep Mike Mrowicki (Windham 4 District Putney/Dummerston) & Senator Wendy Harrison (Brattleboro) (Zoom): The 2024 Legislative session is approaching its half-way mark in the 18-week session, which is also the Crossover mark when bills have to pass one body of the Legislature over to the other body to be considered by both bodies for full passage before sending a bill to the Governor. These local legislators will update you on what's current

SUNDAY

in the Statehouse and take any questions or suggestions.

- ▶ 11:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.
- ▶ Free.
- ▶ Zoom. Information: For log-in information to participate in this Zoom room, email mmrowicki@leg.state.vt.us.

Dance
GUILFORD Brattleboro Bal Folk: Fun, easy French dancing: Fun, accessible French and European traditional dances. No experience or partner necessary. Dances range from beautiful to raucous. Even if you've never tried anything like this before, come on over! Feel free to listen and watch from the sidelines or jump in. We'll teach you everything you need to know and the crowd has a reputation for being welcoming, eager to draw newcomers into the fun. We offer variations and new dances to keep the experienced dancers engaged!

- ▶ 6:30-9 p.m. Live music & dance instruction by Eloise & Co. Becky Tracy (fiddle) & Rachel Bell (accordian). Masks welcome but not required. Please stay home if you feel ill or test positive for Covid-19. Share our video with friends to whet their appetite: http://tinyurl.com/2bhtv75y.
- ▶ \$12 to \$25.
- ▶ Broad Brook Community Center/Grange, 3940 Guilford Center Rd. Information: Organizer: 716-378-0943, rachel@rachelbellmusic.com.

TUESDAY

27

Instruction
BELLOWS FALLS Tech Time - "Drop-in Tech Help" hosted by Rockingham Free Library: Just walk in and spend 5 to 15 minutes with a librarian to ask your tech questions. No registration is required.

- ▶ February is National Library Lovers' Month! Love your library more by learning how to access eBooks, films, and television for free through our online library resources!.
- ▶ Free.
- ▶ Rockingham Free Public Library, 65 Westminster St. Information: 802-463-4270; rockinghamlibrary.org.

Well-being
BRATTLEBORO Brattleboro Walk-In Clinic: Primary medical treatment for patients ages 18 to 64 in our community who do not have health insurance or who cannot afford their high deductibles or co-insurance.

- ▶ 5 - 6:30 p.m. on Tuesdays.
- ▶ Brattleboro Walk-In Clinic, 191 Clark Ave. Information: 802-251-8484; brattleborowalkinclinic.com.

Community building
GUILFORD Guilford Pre-Town Meeting (Live-stream): Presented by Guilford Selectboard in partnership with Broad Brook Grange. BCTV will live-stream this gathering. It is not a hybrid meeting. Residents are invited to gather in person.

- ▶ 6:30 p.m. - 9 p.m. This is not a hybrid meeting. Residents are invited to gather in person.
- ▶ Free.
- ▶ Broad Brook Community Center/Grange, 3940 Guilford Center Rd. Full agenda: https://guilfordvt.gov/guilford-selectboard-in-partnership-with-broad-brook-grange-pre-town-meeting/802-451-0405; broadbrookcommunitycenter.org.

WEDNESDAY

28

Music
BRATTLEBORO Old Fashioned - Acoustic Folk and Rock: Comfy classics and acoustic instrumentals.

- ▶ 6 - 9 p.m.
- ▶ Free.
- ▶ Bar 580, 580 Canal Street. Information: 802-490-2223.

The written word
PUTNEY Discussion of "The Healing Power of Human Connection in a Sometimes Lonely World": This book is written by former Surgeon General Vivek H. Murthy M.D. who makes a case for loneliness as a public health concern - root cause and contributor to many of epidemics sweeping the world today: alcohol/drug addiction to violence to depression and anxiety. Cultivating Community Book Group will gather once a month to discuss tips/strategies/activities offered in each book and brainstorm ways to put these ideas into practice in our lives.



- ▶ 6:30-8 p.m. Dr. Murthy says loneliness affects not only our health but also how children experience school, how we perform in the workplace, sense of division/polarization in society. But at center of our loneliness is innate desire to connect. We've evolved to participate in community, forge lasting bonds with others, help one another, share life experiences. We are, simply, better together.
- ▶ Free.
- ▶ Putney Public Library, 55 Main St. Putney Library cardholders can pick up a copy. 802-387-4407; putneylibrary.org/events.

Ideas and education
PUTNEY Landmark College Hosts Talk with Young Min Moon: "The After Effects of War on Contemporary Korean Art": South Korean popular culture has taken the world by storm, from glamorous K-pop bands to award-winning filmmakers as household names. But many are not aware of the darker influence of the Cold War on Korean culture and art. With the Cold War as context, Moon introduces his artwork and shows how other contemporary South Korean artists navigate the difficult historical legacy of the Korean War and the two Koreas, North and South.

- ▶ 5 p.m. Young Min Moon is an artist, critic, Distinguished Prof. at University of Massachusetts Amherst; a Guggenheim Fellow and Joan Mitchell Foundation Grant recipient whose work reflects his migration across cultures and the hybrid nature of identities forged amid the complex historical and political relationships between Asia and North America.
- ▶ Free.
- ▶ Landmark College, Lewis Academic Bldg., O'Brien Auditorium, 1 River Road South. More information/questions about venue accessibility, contact Solvegi Shmulsky at sshmulsky@landmark.edu Driving directions, campus map, more info about Speaker Series: landmark.edu.

To submit your event: calendar@commonsnews.org
 Deadline: 5 p.m. Friday

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Four arts organizations will award annual Vermont Prize

BRATTLEBORO—Four Vermont contemporary art organizations are teaming up for the third year in a row to award The Vermont Prize. Launched in 2022, The Prize is a collaborative initiative of the Brattleboro Museum & Art Center (BMAC), Burlington City Arts (BCA), the Hall Art Foundation, and The Current, intended to celebrate and support outstanding visual art being made in Vermont today.

“There is an astonishing variety of exceptional visual art being created in Vermont today,” BMAC Director Danny Lichtenfeld said in a news release. “The Vermont Prize aims to draw attention to that fact and provide recognition and encouragement to Vermont’s visual artists.”

The Vermont Prize is awarded to one artist annually. In 2022, visual artist, graffiti scholar, and educator Will Kasso Condry of Brandon received the inaugural prize. In his Afrofuturist art, Condry weaves what he describes as “the rich and layered stories of the African diaspora” in an exploration of the Black imagination and of Black joy.

In 2023, the prize was awarded to Terry Ekasala of West Burke. Describing her work, Ekasala said, “If we have to fit ourselves into a category I would say I am an intuitive painter, as I really don’t prepare a work with sketches or even a general subject beforehand. For years I worked, for the most part, abstract ... Suddenly and surprisingly figures or figurative images began to appear!”

The winner of The Vermont Prize receives \$5,000, and their work is showcased and archived at vermontprize.org. The competition is open to individuals as well as collaborating artists currently living and working in Vermont. Artists working in any visual medium are welcome to apply. There is no application fee. The application deadline is March 31. The winner will be selected on the basis of artistic excellence, regardless of career stage, and will be announced on June 30.

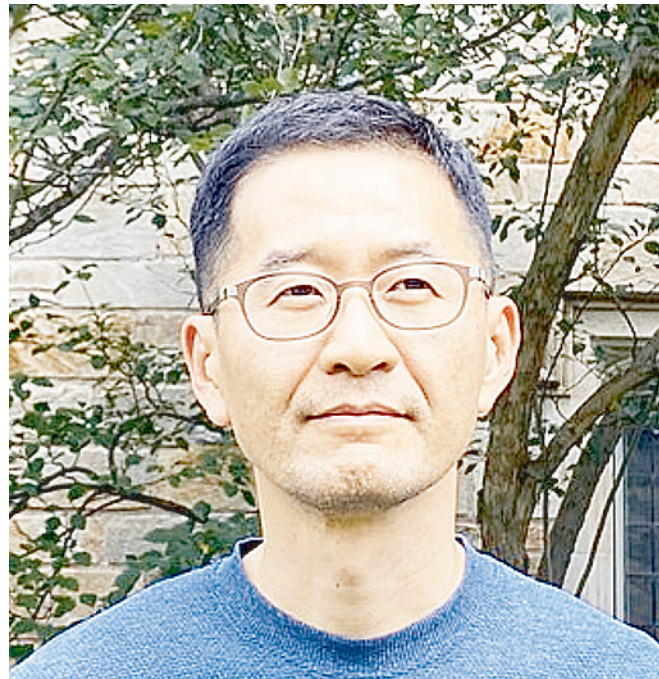
The Vermont Prize is juried by one representative from each of the four partner organizations, plus a special guest juror. This year’s guest juror is Phong H.

Bui, an artist, writer, independent curator, and co-founder and publisher/artistic director of the Brooklyn Rail.

Bui has organized more than 80 exhibitions since 2000, including “Artists Need to Create on the Same Scale that Society Has the Capacity to Destroy,” an ongoing curatorial project that was exhibited in 2019 as an official Collateral Event of the Venice Biennale, and “Singing in Unison” at eight venues across New York in 2022–23.

From 2007 to 2010 Bui served as Curatorial Advisor at MoMA PS1. He received an honorary doctorate from University of the Arts in 2020 and the American Academy of Arts and Letters’ Award for Distinguished Service to the Arts in 2021.

The four other jurors are Maryse Brand, Director of the Hall Art Foundation, Heather Ferrell, Curator and Director of Exhibitions at Burlington City Arts, Sarah Freeman, Director of Exhibitions at BMAC, and Rachel Moore, Executive Director of The Current.



Young Min Moon

Landmark College hosts talk about contemporary Korean art on Feb. 28

PUTNEY—The spring 2024 Landmark College Academic Speakers Series hosts artist Young Min Moon for a presentation entitled “The Aftereffects of War on Contemporary Korean Art” Wednesday, Feb. 28, at 5 p.m. in the Brooks M. O’Brien Auditorium/Lewis Academic Building.

“South Korean popular culture has taken the world by storm,” say organizers, “from glamorous K-Pop bands to award-winning filmmakers as household names.” However, many people are not aware of the influence of the Cold War on Korean culture and art. With the Cold War as context, Moon will introduce his own artwork and show how other contemporary South Korean artists navigate the difficult historical legacy of the Korean War and the two Koreas, North and South.

Young Min Moon is an artist, critic, and distinguished professor at the University of

Massachusetts at Amherst. A Guggenheim Fellow and Joan Mitchell Foundation Grant recipient, Moon reflects in his work his migration across cultures and the hybrid nature of identities forged amid the complex historical and political relationships between Asia and North America.

This event is free. For additional information or questions about venue accessibility, contact Solvegi Shmulsky at sshmulsky@landmark.edu. Driving directions, a campus map, and more information about the Landmark College Academic Speaker Series are available at landmark.edu.

Brattleboro Women’s Chorus welcomes new singers for spring session spotlighting Black composers

BRATTLEBORO—The Brattleboro Women’s Chorus extends an invitation to new singers to join their upcoming spring session, dedicated to showcasing the music of Black composers.

This inclusive ensemble, open to individuals at least 10 years of age who identify as female or non-binary and possess a vocal range that comfortably includes the A in the middle of the treble staff, invites voices of all backgrounds to join in this celebration of music from the African diaspora.

“From stirring spirituals to contemporary compositions, the repertoire will offer a captivating journey through a range of styles and genres, highlighting the richness and depth of Black musical heritage,” organizers wrote in a news release.

On Mother’s Day at the Latchis Theatre, the Chorus will offer a concert of thanks and appreciation for all the richness given by the composers, named and unnamed, with African roots.

Their music this spring includes songs by Ysaye Barnwell, Bobby McFerrin, Melanie DeMore, Rollo Dilworth, and Stevie Wonder. Local artist Samirah Evans will be the featured soloist.

“Under the direction of esteemed conductor Becky Graber, the Brattleboro Women’s Chorus provides a welcoming and supportive environment for singers of all levels to come together and share their love of music,” organizers said.

“Our spring session is an opportunity [...] to hold discussions around what it means to be a predominantly white community singing this music,” says Graber. “We welcome singers of all backgrounds to join us as we come together in song.”

To put their repertoire into some historical context, they will welcome DeMore, a vocal activist from California, to lead a virtual workshop for all registered singers on Feb. 26.

The Chorus will host an open rehearsal Thursday, Feb. 29, and participants choose whether to attend the morning session from 10 a.m. to noon at the Brattleboro Music Center, or from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. at the First Congregational Church in West Brattleboro. These rehearsals will provide an opportunity for prospective members to experience the joy of singing with the chorus firsthand.

Continuing beyond Feb. 29, evening sessions are for the “concert singers,” who commit to

attend rehearsals and work on assignments between them.

Morning rehearsal sessions will offer “relaxed singing” for those who want to sing together without the pressure of working between sessions and without an attendance requirement. They will sing some (but not all)

of the same songs as the evening sessions, and they may sing in the concert on some songs, if they choose to.

While attendance at the open rehearsal is open to all, registration is required. To register and learn more, visit brattleborowomenschorus.org.

EOS Project is ‘Untethered’ on Feb. 25

BRATTLEBORO—The Brattleboro Music Center’s EOS (Educate, Open, Strengthen) Project presents “Untethered, Music for Violin and Cello,” on Sunday, Feb. 25, at the BMC.

The 4 p.m. concert will feature music for unaccompanied violin and cello, exploring themes of connectedness. Audience members are invited to bring a sketch pad to draw or color during the performance.

Performing will be Heather Sommerlad on violin and Julie Carew on cello. Works will include “Three Question Marks” by Eric Lacy, “Shades for Cello” by Daijana Wallace, Baroque

Suite for Unaccompanied Cello by Dorothy Rudd Moore, and other pieces contributing to the theme.

“When we think about unaccompanied music for violin and cello,” explained Sommerlad in a news release, “we immediately think ‘Bach.’ There’s a feeling of connectedness around the tradition of learning and performing unaccompanied Bach because everyone does so, like a rite of passage.” “Untethered” aims to challenge the white, Euro-centric tradition, and urges the audience to “let go of what feels comfortable and embrace the vulnerability of learning.”

The EOS Project was created

at the BMC in the spring of 2020 “to open new doors and allow our community to explore what and who we’ve been missing—namely, composers who are Black, Indigenous, and People of Color as well as those who identify as anything other than cis male.”

EOS, under the direction of Sommerlad, and with the participation of BMC faculty and area musicians, seeks to study and perform this music in “a spirit of social justice and a desire to add to our understanding of great art.”

Tickets are \$20 in advance via bmcvt.org, 802-257-4523, or info@bmcvt.org, or \$25 at the door (info@bmcvt.org).

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Brattleboro veterans group chapter disbands

Dwindling numbers and an aging membership forces the local chapter of Vietnam Veterans of America to join with the Chester chapter

By Randolph T. Holhut
The Commons

BRATTLEBORO—After 23 years, Brattleboro Chapter 843 of Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA) is disbanding. Its final meeting is set for March 14.

Leonard Derby of Brattleboro, who has been the chapter's president for the past 22 years, said he recently decided to step down, and "no one was willing to take over the chapter. Our membership is aging and several members are [disabled]. That makes it tough to carry out our mission."

Derby said VVA Chapter 843, which also has members from neighboring New Hampshire and Massachusetts, had more than 30 members when it was founded in 2000, but it dropped to as few as 11 after about two years.

"Through much recruiting work, we got our membership up to 27," he said. "With a recent death, we are now at 26, and we needed to maintain at least 25 members."

Last year, the members of VVA Chapter 843 unanimously voted to disband, and its members were given the option to transfer to one of the five other VVA chapters left in Vermont.

Derby recommended the Chapter 843 members shift their memberships to VVA Chapter 723 in Chester.

"They have vowed to go to the last man standing," he said. "Most of our members do belong to other Veteran organizations such as the VFW, the American Legion, and the Marine Corps League. I believe most of our members will stick to another VVA chapter or go at-large."

VVA is a veterans service organization that was chartered by Congress in 2000 to serve Vietnam War-era veterans and change the public perception of them.

"I feel we did just that," said Derby, who served in the Army from 1967 to 1968 in an aviation brigade.



RANDOLPH T. HOLHUT/COMMONS FILE PHOTO
Len Derby, president of Chapter 843 of the Vietnam Veterans of America, recently announced that the Brattleboro-based veterans organization will be disbanding in March due to a dwindling number of members.

"I'm proud of our members that we have signed on over the years," he said. "Carl Greenwood did most of the leg work getting us started; he served as chapter president for the first year, and I served as vice president. I took over as president in our second year and served ever since."

Derby said that perhaps the proudest accomplishment of Chapter 843 was bringing the Vietnam War Moving Memorial Wall to Brattleboro in 2021. Working with other local veterans organizations, as well as many community members, Derby said that the undertaking was a huge success.

Chapter 843 was one of eight original VVA chapters formed in Vermont. Derby said that if Essex Chapter 829, which also contemplating disbanding, follows Brattleboro's lead, only four chapters will remain in the state.

The aging out of the generation that served in the military

in the Vietnam era was inevitable, as most Vietnam veterans are now in their 70s and 80s. Derby said that has made it more difficult for the remaining VVA chapters to continue their work.

At the same time, he said, "it appears to be as much work closing down a chapter as it was to get the chapter started."

Derby said Chapter 843 is nonetheless finding ways to carry out its legacy.

"We have decided to place \$1,100 into a trust fund to assist with our flag maintenance program at the Vermont Veterans Cemetery in Randolph," he said. "With some of the remaining funds, we may donate to an organization of our choosing."

And, "on top of all that, we plan to purchase materials to build a chest to store our chapter archives and some Vietnam War artifacts," Derby said. "We want to preserve information of our chapter for future generations."

Loaves & Fishes

FROM SECTION FRONT

veteran, originally from St. Louis, Missouri, he's lived in Brattleboro for 30 years working a few jobs, including Amtrak station manager and parking meter maintenance staffer.

When asked what he got out of volunteering at Loaves & Fishes, he curmudgeonly said, "I hate people, but I will help them. I just like helping people."

Treadwell has been volunteering "not quite three years." He was drawn to it, he says, by Tilghman, who frequently—and successfully—scouts for volunteers among SME's parishioners.

"In the ennuui of lockdown, I was looking for something to do; Mary [Lindquist, SME rector] knew that, and she gave my name to Ruth, who called to say, 'How'd you like to spend maybe an hour a week doing deliveries?'"

That's where he started. "Then they discovered I can cook a little, so they graduated me from delivery to outside the kitchen chopping carrots."

And so it went, he said: "I soon moved on to cooking: It went from one hour a week to 15."

Treadwell, a chemist who retired to Brattleboro from Texas, said, "I love the people; I like cooking; I like feeding people"—literally and metaphorically, he added.

"This is something I do to give back to the community that has welcomed me with open arms once I moved here four years ago," he said. "I don't want to be a burden, don't want to be useless around here. This makes me a part of the Brattleboro community."

In addition to Loaves & Fishes and St. Brigid's Kitchen, other efforts spring up in the community, and those needing a meal can

find one every day of the week in Brattleboro.

"One of our volunteers, Ian Earle, is doing meals over at the Transportation Center on Sundays. He's 30-something, homeless; he cooks food [at CCC] Sundays and takes it over" to serve to those in need.

"There are so many people who come in here and do different things and they don't really get any attention," another volunteer, Cliff Wood, points out.

Volunteers bag the groceries and bake desserts every week. "There's another group that comes in Monday and Wednesday," to do any heavy lifting required, he said. "We also get four people with disabilities who help weekly and, in the summer, we get college students who volunteer through SME," as does Wood.

"What started as a couple hours a week has grown to a two-day weekly commitment, from 6 a.m. to 1 or 2 p.m., but I love it," Wood said.

Tilghman has been with Loaves & Fishes for 17 years, most recently at the helm. "I do it," she says, "because it gives me purpose in life, and when you get older, your purpose can go down the tube. I have a community here that I value. And this is something that is really important in life—that we don't forget those who don't have. That we do the Jesus thing."

"This is all about community and being in community—those served, as well as those who serve, numbering some 25 per week," Tilghman added.

"We have volunteers who come from agencies in town and from Black Mountain Assisted Living. This is his job," she said, nodding

toward a volunteer seated next to an aide. "He's bagging flour as we speak."

"This is important to the people who want to give back to the community in whatever way they can," Tilghman said.

'The need won't go away'

In addition to the grocery distribution and the meals served, Loaves & Fishes has responded to refugees' need for a market which carries foods they can eat.

Tilghman said a "nice start-up grant was received from the Foodbank" and so the Afghan and Refugee Market was established. With support, too, from individual donations as well as the Windham County NAACP, "we figured what they needed and we have food for them. Folks from African countries are coming in now, so we had to look up foods [that suit their diets]." A lot of research was done.

Addressing the doubling of meals needed and served over the past year, Tilghman stresses that income has not doubled to match the increased demand.

"The need won't go away," Tilghman said.

It does indeed take a village to sustain a service like Loaves & Fishes. Volunteers are needed as bakers of desserts and breads, packers of meals, delivery people, cooks, and helpers to receive deliveries from the Vermont Foodbank and Market 32. Those interested in volunteering should contact Tilghman at ruthtilghman@gmail.com.

To donate to Loaves & Fishes, visit secure.myvanco.com/L-ZJJ8 or send a check to Loaves & Fishes, 193 Main St., Brattleboro, VT 05301.

Forum on Feb. 22 to feature Brattleboro Selectboard candidates

BRATTLEBORO—The public is invited to attend a forum featuring the candidates running to serve on the Brattleboro Selectboard.

The event will take place on Thursday, Feb. 22, from 6 to 8 p.m., in the Selectboard Meeting Room at the Municipal Center, 230 Main St.

The forum will be broadcast live on Comcast Channel 1079 (BCTV's Government/Education channel), streamed

live on BCTV's Facebook Page and YouTube Channel, and available on brattleborotv.org. Limited seating will be available in the Selectboard Meeting Room.

Five candidates are running for three open seats.

Peter Case and Oscar Heller are vying for one three-year term. Franz Reichsman, Richard Davis, and Jaki Reis are competing for two one-year terms.

Profiles of the candidates appear in this week's *Commons*.

This free event is sponsored by Brattleboro Community Television (BCTV), the *Brattleboro Reformer*, and *The Commons*.

Voters with questions for the candidates, or seeking more information about the debate, should submit them to Kate O'Connor, executive director of Vermont Independent Media, at kate@commonsnews.org.

Dog, wolf-hybrid licenses available in Brattleboro

BRATTLEBORO—Annual dog and wolf-hybrid licenses are available for the 2024 licensing period. Vermont dog and wolf-hybrids 6 months of age and older must be licensed annually on or before April 1, and a current, unexpired rabies vaccination is required, according to Vermont State Statute Title 20.

All current dog owners have been mailed a renewal notice in early February. To renew an existing dog license, owners must return the renewal notice, updated rabies vaccine information, and payment.

Owners should check that the rabies vaccination is not expired before sending a payment. An animal is not considered licensed without proof of unexpired rabies vaccination and a payment.

Dog and wolf-hybrids licenses issued after April 1 include a penalty charge. Any owner failing to license their dog or wolf-hybrid may be fined up to \$100 and the animal may be impounded.

Licensing fees before April are \$19 for neutered dogs, \$23 for unneutered dogs. If proof of spay and neuter is not printed on the rabies certificate, dog owners can submit an additional certificate for proof. If proof of spay and neuter is not provided, the unneutered fee applies.

Specially trained assistance dogs may be eligible for a reduced licensing fee. Contact the Town Clerk's office for more information.

This year, there is a new option to license dogs through an online portal that can be accessed through the Town's updated website. Dog license renewal forms

can still be returned in person at the Town Clerk's office, in the drop box in the Municipal Center parking lot, or through the mail.

If this is the first time a dog is being licensed, owners must provide proof of current rabies vaccination from a veterinarian or clinic and a New Animal License application, which is available at brattleboro.gov/dog-licensing and at the Town Clerk's office.

If an animal licensed last year has died or been given away, contact the Town Clerk's office at 802-251-8157, Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., or townclerk@brattleboro.gov.

SEVCA's free tax return preparation program expands access

WESTMINSTER—Southeastern Vermont Community Action (SEVCA) is offering free tax assistance via the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program (VITA).

In-person services will be provided at eight locations in Windham and Windsor counties. New and revived VITA locations include sites at the Old Firehouse in Wilmington, the Winston Prouty campus in Brattleboro, the Springfield Town Library, the Ludlow Community Center, Townshend Town Hall, and St Paul's Episcopal Church in White River Junction.

Appointments and drop-off services can also be found at SEVCA's main office in Westminster, the Springfield Library, and the Windsor Resource Center.

SEVCA's efforts are led by Emily Strasser, VITA Program Coordinator, who was a VITA volunteer last year when all the returns were prepared remotely.

"I am glad we are able to return to meeting with people in person and that we can do it in new locations that make it easy for people to find us," she said in a news release. "It is important to me that everyone understands their taxes and can make informed decisions about things like how much is

being withheld from each paycheck. For some people, this is an easy way to save up a large amount of money—but for others, they could be taking home more money on payday."

In-person services are preferred by people using VITA and are preferred by volunteer preparers. Strasser said that most people "are interested in learning about their taxes, and for the volunteers, this educational process is so rewarding. It is a lot easier to do this when working together on a return."

VITA services are available to people who generally make \$64,000 or less; persons with disabilities; and limited English-speaking taxpayers.

VITA volunteers come from all backgrounds and undergo a comprehensive training program. Tax preparers must pass annual certifying exams to prove their understanding of relevant tax laws and proficiency of e-filing and tax preparation methods using IRS-approved software.

If you are interested in having your taxes prepared by a VITA volunteer, more information about VITA locations and how to make an appointment can be found at sevca.org or 802-428-3032.

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It is useless for the sheep to pass resolutions in favor of vegetarianism, while the wolf remains of a different opinion
—WILLIAM INGE

A common man, even like myself, I don't know how to pay my taxes
—KID ROCK

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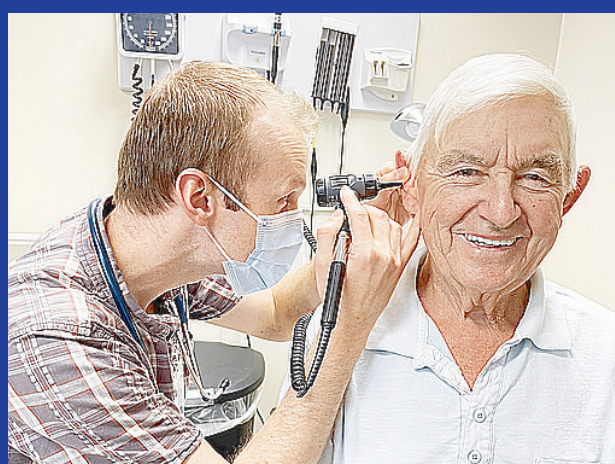
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RESPONSE



MAP: ARCGIS.COM
Wabanaki homelands, from ancient times to present day.

The Abenaki Nation has collective rights in their unceded homelands of Vermont

Canadian Bill C-53 would undermine Indigenous fundamental rights and sovereignty

RICH HOLSCHUH, the chair of the Vermont Commission on Native American Affairs, recently published an opinion piece ["AFN's rationale concerning C-53 has implications of political overreach in Vermont," *VtDigger*, Jan. 11] alerting Vermonters about the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) statement on a proposed Canadian law, conflating the AFN with the Indian Act and characterizing it as an apparatus of the colonial federal government.

Both in his writing and during his recent talk ["Vt. Abenaki talk about controversy over legitimacy," *News*, Jan. 31], Holschuh supported this bill — C-53 — by saying that without it, federally recognized tribes and First Nations in Canada may have "overreach" into Vermont — because the Abenaki nations of Odanak and Wôlinak are supported by the AFN.

Holschuh's views are inaccurate on multiple points and dangerously mislead Vermonters who do not have a background in Indigenous history and governance, while at the same time they advocate for an Indigenous termination policy.

Here's why.

Brattleboro

JESSICA M. DOLAN earned her Ph.D. in anthropology at McGill University, with a specialization in environment and Indigenous studies. She has worked for Indigenous communities on both sides of the Canada-U.S. border for the last 16 years, researching Indigenous environmental philosophy, history, and governance — first as an academic and then as an employee of Indigenous governments, non-government organizations, and universities. She is currently a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Guelph.

THE ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS (AFN) is an assembly of chiefs and political leaders of First Nations in Canada that is structured like the general assembly of the United Nations and advocates for protection of Indigenous treaty rights and sovereignty in the areas of health, education, culture, language, and political autonomy.

As an organization, AFN emerged from the National Indian Brotherhood, an organization of Indigenous leaders in the late '60s through the '70s, which lobbied for changes to Canadian federal and provincial policies in support of Indigenous rights and sovereignty.

These organizations have worked with the United Nations Economic and Social Council and the United Nations Permanent Forum on the Rights of Indigenous Issues,

among other entities, to fight termination of their nations and advance political and human rights of Indigenous peoples.

Canada's political parties are different from those in the United States. Its government is modeled on the British parliamentary system, with multiple political parties such as the Progressive Conservatives, the Liberal party, the New Democratic Party, the Green Party, and others.

Leaders of the parties become elected when the platform of that party receives the majority of votes in their ridings (electoral districts). In Canada, like in the U.S., there are members of political parties, particularly on the so-called right and center of the spectrum, who believe that the government should be run more "efficiently"

■ SEE CANADIAN BILL C-53, C2

RESPONSE

Can we doubt the meaning of 'from the river to the sea'?

Israelis are traumatized by the massacre, grief-stricken over the hostages, and worried about their soldiers. They see huge hate rallies from every corner of the globe denigrating them for defending themselves.

THE ANTI-ISRAEL letter from Jewish Voice for Peace, published in *The Commons* recently, contained fallacies, omissions, and inaccuracies.

Accusing Israel of genocide is a provocative indictment unsupported by facts. It diminishes real acts of genocide — such as those that occurred in the Holocaust and against Armenians and in Rwanda.

RHONDA WAINSHILBAUM is an artisan and a civic volunteer, living and working in Massachusetts, just over the Vermont line. This piece is in response to "Letter values fear of antisemitism 'above Palestinian lives that have been taken by Israel's genocide'" [*Letters*, Jan. 24].

Since their creation in 1948, Israelis have sought to live in peace with their Arab neighbors. Yet they have had to endure repeated attacks from every surrounding Arab country for their right to exist. Hamas and its supporters have vowed to repeat the atrocities of Oct. 7 until every Jew is dead.

Israel's actions are aimed at destroying Hamas, not the Gazan people. Surely JVP knows that Hamas intentionally puts its own people in harm's way, fires rockets from densely populated areas, and hides among civilians in a cynical strategy to maximize civilian casualties.

Hamas hopes that the world will blame Israel. In fact, it is Hamas that is directing genocide against its own people by using them as human shields.

Israel evacuated Gaza in 2005 in hopes for peace. What would Gaza look like today had Hamas focused on building a society instead of

lining its pockets and building a war machine with billions of stolen humanitarian aid dollars? Check out this video (bit.ly/753-hamas) by a man who belonged to Hamas.

JVP states that there should be no caveats to a ceasefire, indicating that it is fine if Hamas rearms itself for its next murder-fest. Where is their call for the return of the hostages and for Hamas to lay down their arms? Why do they focus only on Israel's response to Hamas's well-funded terror campaign?

Israel cannot go back to the status quo of massacres, destroyed homes and farms, and daily rockets fired upon their civilians. Moreover, the Gazans, themselves, are brutalized by Hamas.

JVP's letter states that the phrase "from the river to the sea" is "an expression of Palestinian freedom." But

■ SEE ISRAEL, C2

ESSAY

Finding home

'Despite all obstacles, I got to make music alongside a majestic lake with friends I loved, encouraged by adults who saw promise in me and applauded for my gifts by strangers'

Putney

YESTERDAY, I forgot — and not for the first time — that I had a soup boiling on the stove, and then I forgot that it was my turn to take out the trash.

I also almost forgot that the Yellow Barn Music Festival, right across the road from where I live, was having a concert of chamber music that evening, showcasing advanced students in their summer program, and it was free!

So I changed into a clean T-shirt, washed my face, and ran out the door and through the woods, arriving at the barn just as the young musicians were lining up to go on stage.

CAROLYN NORTH (carolynnorthbooks.com) is a writer of books that address "the interface between matter and spirit."

I watched from the edge of the clearing, my eyes tearing up as I remembered how it felt to be one of them, my flute in hand as I took in a nervous last breath before stepping out with the others onto that long-ago stage at Deerwood, the summer music camp that I believe saved my life all those many years ago.

Deerwood woke me out of the dazed nightmare of my childhood in a family of hysterical people at a terrifying time in the world, a time of depression when beloveds

had not "come back from the war" and those at home became literally paralyzed or went mad.

How I ever got to Deerwood in the first place and against all odds was the first miracle — it was my ticket out to safety, and it let me take my first steps of independence away from a seriously disturbed household.

My parents' objections to my going had been overruled by the director himself, who took me in hand and faced off with them after I offered to work in the kitchen for free so I could study dance there.

Bless Sherwood Kains forever. I was 15 years old.

I found home there and friends for life,

■ SEE FINDING HOME, C3



Cheerful and comfortable with a "nestle-yourself-right-in" feeling! Thoughtfully designed by owners who loved to travel and host family/fellow travelers. Attention was given to create rooms for gatherings, guest/family visits, hobbies, office work and quiet contemplation. Just enough outdoor area for putting and raised bed gardening. Situated on a dead end street, with woods and Kettle Pond on the back border. A neighborhood filled with the lively energy of the high/middle schools, hospital, professional offices, pharmacies, banks, restaurants, a grocery market, a bookstore and Oak Grove Elementary School are all a short walk away! Interstate 91, Exit 1, is nearby. The first floor has a very spacious, light filled living/dining room with wood floors, bookcases, pocket doors, a brick hearth w/wood stove, a deck with views to the woods and pond. The galley kitchen has deck access. Two bedrooms and a full bath complete this level. The upstairs offers a sizable front bedroom w/many windows, a large closet and an adjoining study/office. The bedroom at the back has a skylight, a balcony looks to the woods/pond. Off the hall, a full bath with skylight, soaker tub and large shower. The lower level has radiant floor heat and a separate entrance. A kitchenette/living room, a full bath, office/bedroom. Mudroom to garage. Rinnai heater in garage. Detached 2 car garage w/loft storage.

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Canadian Bill C-53

— like a corporation.

Thus, there are members of the Canadian government who, through generations, seek to “terminate” the inalienable and inextinguishable Indigenous rights of First Nations and Inuit, through federal and provincial law and policy — to assimilate them into the Canadian population as municipalities.

This racist political orientation is always about money and land. With each generation and each election cycle, we inevitably see politicians who have interest in real estate development, extractive industries, or the like who seek to eliminate the processes and cost of consulting with First Nations about use of their land.

This warrants explanation. In Canada, Section 35 of the Constitution Act of 1982 outlines a duty to consult and accommodate First Nations ([bit.ly/752-section35](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov2/feature/752-section35)). This was a hard-won victory for Indigenous sovereignty and treaty rights, after three decades in the mid-20th century of it being illegal in Canada for Indigenous peoples to hire lawyers to advocate for their own rights in Canadian courts.

First Nations still have to carefully guard and uphold this part of Canadian Federal law, as policy leaders often seek to evade it or find loopholes.

Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, a federal agency, supports the Canadian government’s duty to consult, offering two national engagement processes on consultation and accommodation.

Separately, individual First Nations also outline their protocols and ethics for nation-to-nation relationships with Canada, through their own Indigenous laws, ethics, and processes.

It is important to remember that there is always political pluralism within each First Nation, Métis, and Inuit community. Like settler governments, states, and communities, Indigenous peoples have a diversity of political philosophies within their own cultures and communities about governance, development, education, health, and the like.

SO IT IS INACCURATE to characterize the AFN as a colonial apparatus of the Canadian Federal Government or as working through the Indian Act. It is a living body of Indigenous leaders who have varying relationships with Canadian federal and provincial governments and policies, and who lobby for Indigenous sovereignty.

For example, the great Shuswap Nation political leader Arthur Manuel co-chaired the AFN Delgamuukw Implementation Strategic Committee, which developed a national strategy to compel the Canadian federal government to respect the Supreme Court decision on Aboriginal (Indigenous) rights and title.

Manuel wrote extensively about how to make section 35 meaningful and about Indigenous economy and lands. His father, George Manuel, president of the National Indian Brotherhood, worked extensively against Pierre Trudeau’s “White Paper,” a proposed Indigenous termination legislation during the 1960s.

Similarly, Russell Diabo,

a political analyst from the Mohawk Nation of Kahnawà:ke, who has spoken out against Bill C-53, has both criticized the AFN and served within the AFN. The history of Indigenous advocacy through the AFN is far more complex than Holschuh’s characterization in his article.

Bill C-53 is the most recent “termination legislation” that attempts to turn First Nations into municipalities, and Indigenous peoples into Canadian citizens, by weakening their status as rights-bearing members of their own nations.

Remember, there is a duty to consult and accommodate First Nations in the Canadian Constitution Act. Federal, Provincial, and Municipal governments must go through additional processes that engage Indigenous governments as separate, rights-bearing, and decision-making entities.

Many political leaders don’t like this because it takes time, costs money, and takes away some of their power in decision-making regarding land and development. Many people believe that Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and his liberal party are taking up his father Pierre Trudeau’s legacy of his “White Paper” by creating land claims settlement opportunities that are “final,” and legislation that effectively extinguishes Aboriginal title, and turns First Nations, Métis, and Inuit into municipalities of Canada.

INDIGENOUS LEADERS from across political spectra have for decades criticized the Indian Act, yet maintained that they do not want to get rid of it because it is a record of the settler government’s systemic racism and genocide, a map of the Canadian history of attempting to legislate away the existence of entire Indigenous societies.

Indigenous nations do not want to become Canadian or U.S. citizens — they want to uphold and live within their distinct societies, in their homelands.

Indigenous leaders going back through the last century and beyond, back to when Europeans began their settler-colonial battles in North America, have upheld and maintained their Indigenous title, their rights, and their responsibilities to their homelands — all fundamentally inalienable and inextinguishable, because they were never ceded and because they flow intergenerationally through the hereditary lines of traditional governance.

These leaders uphold the treaty agreements and international diplomatic relationships they attempted to negotiate with settler governments, even while settlers violated those agreements for hundreds of years.

Currently, Indigenous leaders have spoken out against Bill C-53 as a form of modern colonization and as another attempt to undermine Indigenous sovereignty and Aboriginal title. They charge that it would create a loophole for the federal government to grant non-historic Métis communities rights to land and to use consultation only with non-historic Métis to represent consultation with all Indigenous peoples.

FROM SECTION FRONT

IT MAY NOT BE CLEAR from Holschuh’s commentary that Indigenous rights are collective, historical, unique, and are inherited through kinship within Indigenous families. They flow from inherent rights of the Indigenous nations who were here first, before European invasion.

Recognition and honoring of these rights on the part of settler societies is not complete and has been decades in the making, since the genocidal invasion of the first two centuries of European settler-colonialism, and then the subsequent 150 years of assimilation policies that were developed by the American and Canadian governments.

Similarly, the Métis Nation in Canada is a historic specific community of French and Cree people around the Red River Settlement in Winnipeg, Manitoba who intermarried, developed a distinct language (Michif), and fought to live as a distinct nation and society, under the leadership of Louis Riel.

The mixed-heritage people who are attempting to form new nations are not the Métis Nation, nor do they have these rights. Suffice to say that Indigenous rights and membership remain historic, unique, and separate from Canadian and U.S. citizenry, hereditary, and sovereign. They should not be conceived as something that anyone can take up if they decide they want to form an interest group and become an independent “nation.”

HOW DOES THIS relate to the Grand Council of the Waban-Aki and Abenaki Nation?

The Grand Council of the Waban-Aki is comprised of the chief and council of the Odanak and Wôlinak nations; they have a relationship with the Government of Canada that is recognized by Section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982.

The council describes this nation-to-nation relationship as asserted under the historical treaty agreements of the Treaty of Swegatchy (1760), and the Treaty of Caughnawaga (Sept. 15 and 16, 1760). These historic and contemporary nation-to-nation relationships encompass the Canadian portion of their homelands.

However, other historic treaties might apply to the relationship between the Grand Council of the Waban-aki, their people, and the U.S. federal government and states of their homelands on the U.S. side of the border.

Those treaties acknowledging Indigenous rights to freely traverse the border and for Indigenous people from the “Canadian” side to live in their homelands are the Jay Treaty of 1794 and the Nonintercourse Act, which encompasses six statutes passed by United States Congress in 1790, 1793, 1796, 1799, 1802, and 1834, which regulate the inalienability of aboriginal (Indigenous) title in the United States.

These acts apply to unceded Abenaki homelands here in Vermont and protect their inalienable and inextinguishable rights and traditional title to their homelands here, regardless of relatively recent state projects to “recognize” people of purported Indigenous descent.

ADVOCACY FOR Canadian Bill C-53 undermines Indigenous fundamental rights and sovereignty, to create further pathways and loopholes for colonization.

This advocacy includes inventing political entities that may impede nation-to-nation relationships, by enabling non-Indigenous people to claim Indigenous identities, and to benefit from Native peoples’ hard-won rights, territories, fiduciary trusts, and relationships with federal, state, and provincial governments.

Abenakis from the Canadian side of the border have inalienable, fundamental rights to their unceded homelands in Vermont and New England, which supersede state recognition and jurisdiction and which are, thankfully, recognized and protected by both Canadian and U.S. federal law.

Holschuh’s commentary further plays on conservative-leaning suspicions about things coming from Canada, which is also an inaccurate characterization, since there is an equal amount of political pluralism in Canada as there is in the United States.

Holschuh also does not disclose that he himself is benefiting greatly financially, politically, and land-wise from the hard-fought political advocacy of generations of Abenaki and Indigenous leaders across North America

VIEWPOINT

A problem in our own backyard

If you are disturbed by what is happening in Gaza, it’s time to fight for prison abolition in the U.S., too

Winchester, NH
BACK IN 2008, when I started as a freshman in college, I was quickly introduced to the plight of the Palestinian people by members of my college’s BDS (boycott, divest, and sanction) movement.

At the time, it was a relatively niche progressive interest to speak up about justice for Palestinian people, but the movement at my college was strong and well-organized, and in 2009 we became the first college in the U.S. to divest financially from Israel.

Since October, I have been disturbed to watch the crisis in Gaza unfold and increasingly hopeful to see so many progressive people speaking out about this issue.

Younger people may be frustrated by the lack of progressive movement in the face of what appears to be attempted genocide, but I can say from experience that it is a big deal that such large pockets of our society care about this issue and are pushing for change.

Alongside the energy we put into this global political work, I believe it is critical that we spend an equal amount of time and energy fighting against the problems in our own backyards — especially because what happens in the U.S. is frequently pushed out into the world on a large scale.

Gaza is consistently referred to as an “open-air prison,” which is both a horrifying and evocative descriptor. This is also not new thinking, as the scholar and activist Angela Y. Davis has published a book, *Freedom Is a Constant Struggle: Ferguson, Palestine, and the Foundations of a Movement*, on the intersections of the treatment of the Palestinian people and a variety of freedom struggles in the U.S., including prison abolition.

IN CASE YOU haven’t been introduced to some of the disturbing facts about the U.S. prison system, I think it is important to provide some context.

According to the Prison Policy Initiative, 1.9 million people were incarcerated nationwide in 2023. This is about three times the population of Vermont being held in prison facilities. Of these humans, 427,000 have not been convicted of any crime — they are being held pre-trial.

About 13% of the U.S. population is Black, while a staggering 37% of incarcerated individuals are Black.

— by representing himself as Indigenous.

Spiritual values of relationships-in-place and relationships with other species are great values and practices to embrace no matter what your background is — and Vermonters do.

But placing that appeal above real concerns about Indigenous

GRACE DUGAN is a freelance writer and career advisor who grew up in New Hampshire. She lives in the woods with her husband, cats, chickens, and a lizard.

Similarly disturbing statistics can be found for Indigenous people and other people of color as compared to white people.

While the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that about 1 in 4 Americans (about 25%) has a diagnosed disability, the Bureau of Justice Statistics reported in 2016 that 38% of imprisoned people are disabled.

These numbers are unlikely to include those in mental institutions and behavioral health facilities that, while not technically labeled prisons, often hold people against their will and have many overlapping problems with prisons.

The 13th Amendment to the Constitution abolished slavery in most contexts, yet carved out a legal space for slavery within the prison system. As of a 2022 report by the American Civil Liberties Union, 800,000 incarcerated humans worked in prisons.

There are essentially no legal protections for these workers who do not have to be paid a minimum wage or work within conditions that don’t meet basic safety standards.

One example is the use of prison labor in California to fight wildfires, a job that potentially earns inmates between \$2.90 and \$5 per day, with slightly higher wages paid during active fires, according to *Smithsonian* in 2022.

PART OF THE PRISON SYSTEM’S impact on our cultural imagination is its tacit inclusion of sexual violence as a punishment on top of the incarceration of humans.

Sexual assault and rape are so baked into our cultural understandings of the prison system that they have been frequently relegated to a space of humor — a frightening thought in and of itself.

In Manchester, New Hampshire, we have the ongoing unfolding of the lawsuit against the Sununu Youth Services Center, a youth detention facility or child prison, where close to 1,000 people allege physical, emotional, and sexual abuse during their time at the facility.

This is one of many

examples of the ways psychological, physical, and sexual abuse are actually supported by the prison system as an institution.

Any one of these facts should be enough to inspire a local and national movement to fight for prison abolition.

PEOPLE WHO ARE already deeply disturbed by the situation in Gaza may be able to have a larger local impact on this issue through progressive organizing within abolitionist movements.

That being said, I know that many people will respond with the question: “If we abolish prisons, what will we do about rapists and murderers?”

The fact of the matter is that our current prison system doesn’t do anything in its design to prevent rape and murder in our communities.

As described above, frequently prisons normalize rape and violence as forms of effective punishment in and of themselves. We know just from a brief review of recent events, like the Brock Turner case, that violent criminals frequently get away with their crimes with minimal punishment — sometimes, even when they are convicted of their crimes.

In 2024, prisons are not nearly solving the violence that we experience in our communities and instead are siphoning resources from needed services like free, quality mental and physical health care, equitable public school systems, and free and low-cost housing.

According to the Vermont ACLU, Vermont spends \$95,000 per year for each individual that it incarcerates. In New Hampshire, \$144 million was spent on the prison system in 2023, compared to \$7 million in 1983.

These staggering amounts of money could have hugely positive impacts on our communities and are instead being siphoned into an abusive system.

We now have the people power and political momentum to work towards change, so I ask that the people who have been fighting for a free Palestine also fight for freedom in our communities through prison abolition.

Further Reading

- *Are Prisons Obsolete?*, by Angela Y. Davis
- *We Do This ’Til We Free Us: Abolitionist Organizing and Transforming Justice*, by Mariame Kaba

about Indigenous rights and governance from diverse sources, as many of the things Holschuh has published in the press and in his recent talk at Living Earth are inaccurate — and actually serve to undermine Indigenous sovereignty and autonomy across Turtle Island (North America).

FROM SECTION FRONT

Israel

“from the river to the sea” implies the destruction of Israel and is understandably terrifying to many of us.

After Oct. 7, can we have any doubt as to what it means? And has JVP considered what will happen after Hamas tortures, rapes, mutilates, and murders 6 million Israelis? They will create another corrupt, barbaric, cruel theocracy on the dust heap of what was a thriving, vibrant, innovative democracy.

THE JVP LETTER continues: “750,000 Palestinians were violently expelled from their homes by Jewish militias. Palestinians have a word for that event: the Nakba, or Catastrophe. In Hebrew, we have a special word for the Holocaust: the Shoah, or Calamity. The cognitive distortion required to avoid these parallels is astounding.”

There is astounding between the systematic gassing and murder of 6 million Jews solely because they were Jewish,

and Arabs who became refugees as the result of a war that Arabs started.

In 1947, the United Nations proposed a two-state solution, calling for an Arab state next to a Jewish state on their ancestral land, where Jews could return after millennia of genocidal exile. Jewish leaders accepted the plan, but Arab leaders rejected it.

On May 14, 1948, the state of Israel declared independence. The next day, five Arab states launched a war of aggression against the tiny, fledgling Israel that left thousands dead on both sides.

Many Palestinians were encouraged by their leaders to flee their homes, with promises that they could return to occupy the homes of defeated Jews. Some of them stayed (and today their descendants comprise about 21% of the diverse Israeli population). Some were driven out by Jewish militias.

About 850,000 Jews were also expelled from Arab countries.

Israel welcomed these Jewish refugees, but Arab countries refused (and continue to refuse) to absorb their brethren.

ISRAELIS ARE traumatized by the massacre, grief-stricken over the hostages, and worried about their soldiers. They are in a frightening war in Gaza, and the threat of annihilation from Hezbollah in the North looms large.

They see huge hate rallies from every corner of the globe denigrating them for defending themselves. They see 250,000 evacuees from the North and the South who have moved from harm’s way to the center of the country.

Recently, there was another barrage of rockets on Tel Aviv. They are shocked and bewildered by the betrayal of their comfortable cousins in the diaspora who have compassion only for their enemies.

To paraphrase the great Rabbi Hillel: If we are not for ourselves, who will be for us?

GOT AN OPINION?

(Of course you do! You’re from Windham County!)



Got something on your mind? Send contributions to our Letters from Readers section (500 words or fewer strongly recommended) to voices@commonsnews.org; the deadline is Friday to be considered for next week’s paper. When space is an issue, we give priority to words that have not yet appeared elsewhere.



PETS AVAILABLE FOR ADOPTION

WINDHAM COUNTY HUMANE SOCIETY 916 West River Rd, Brattleboro, VT 802-254-2232 • wchs4pets.org



Hi there, I’m **Domino!** I am a sweet energetic boy, who needs an active home. A home without small kids would be best. Cats would be too much for me. I’m house broke, and have basic training, and will do anything for a treat. I seem to get along good with other dogs, but a meet and greet here at the shelter would be required.



Hi, my name is **Sasha!** My adoption fee has been sponsored by one of my admirers. I am very sweet and outgoing! I seem to do ok with other laid-back dogs, but I would do best in a home without any. I am not a fan of cats and should not live with any. I do very well with kids and should be able to live with respectful kids.



Hi, I’m **Guacamole!** I am a sweet girl looking for my forever home. I came from a home with other cats, and kids, so if introduced properly I should be able to live with others. Dogs would be new to me, so a slow introduction would be best. If I sound like the best fit for you, come meet me today!

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Finding Home

and I was tutored by grown-ups who found me worthy of their efforts. There, I finally felt it was safe to come alive in my skin, with my own voice.

THIS ALL CAME back to me last night in a rush of emotion at the Yellow Barn, when this new generation of young people walked out onto that stage with their instruments, nervous but ready, bowed to their audience, and then played their hearts out, like angels.

I wondered how many among them had been saved by someone who recognized an artist in a shy young person and reached out a hand to help.

Oh, how glorious their talent and energy. Their music took my breath away. They are beautiful, and brilliant and coming from a whole new gene pool that had barely existed when I was their age.

One young woman told me later, when I asked, that her mother was from Colombia and her father from India, and when I wondered how ever they met, she answered, “At work,” as if it were the most natural thing in the world. Which, in fact, it now is.

I see them as “the new people” and am heartwarmed by their beauty and brilliance, as if we have collectively been refreshed by a new infusion of minds and talents in our midst, and I listened to them in thrall.

Their technique and depth of interpretation bowled me over, and I kept holding my breath so I would not miss one note of their music.

IN THE 1950s at Deerwood, the students and the faculty were mostly all Caucasian — even those others who were Jewish, like me. But there was a wonderful family of African-Americans who ran the kitchen — three meals a day, with snacks.

And then there was Donald McKayle, our dance teacher, a tall, dark Apollo in his prime, who we were all in love with.

Oh, the memories of those early-morning classes on the outdoor stage, the warmups in the morning chill, stretching everything out before going into the ballet routine at the barre.

For me, it was what life was all about — and it was mine!

We took ourselves seriously and worked hard by the most beautiful lake I had ever seen in my life. And, surrounded by beauty day and night, of course we fell dramatically in and out of love with one another wherever it struck. And then we gossiped back in our cabins about all the little dramas that followed.

Donny McKayle, needless to say, with his long, muscled legs and gorgeous torso, took all of our young hearts, and we watched in thrall as he demonstrated running leaps across the floor, his rich voice counting out the beats.

Donny would later become a well-known performer and choreographer, showcasing themes of the Black diaspora with his racially mixed company, all of which was new and uncommon in the day.

His work had a quality most of us had never experienced before, work that today I might call “indigenous genius.” It woke up something very deep in me, and I recognized it as birth-right even though I had never before even known it existed.

It was my heart’s language and, both fearing it and treasuring it, I knew I belonged to it.

And when his classes morphed from Modern Dance into Indian mudras and African rhythms, I came totally alive! I learned to let loose and to trust myself, body and soul, and that is where I have tried to remain. We all did, whatever our level, because we were all set free by the dancing and totally smitten with him.

But, while it was acceptable for students to worship their teachers, it turned out not to be acceptable when a white cello student and the son of our Black cook got together, because then all hell broke loose! Suddenly, race was an issue!

Donny, himself married to a white woman, intervened behind closed doors and managed to talk the young couple into toning down their public relationship to restore some peace in the community. None of us students were privy to any of these negotiations, but my fear of personal loss went deep because my personal paradise was in danger. So I went down to the kitchen after meals to help with the washing up.

Full-out racism, I knew about — we all did — but the more subtle kinds were still way above my head, and I was terrified that Deerwood, like everything else I had ever loved, would disappear out from under

me just as I was finding my place in it.

So I haunted the kitchen and, in retrospect, I believe that the mama who ran the kitchen understood what this girl needed, and she mothered me.

Thank you, dear woman.

RECENTLY, READING the autobiography that Donny wrote much later in life, I learned that the racial incident at Deerwood had pierced deep for him — too deep for him to return to teach there.

The place that had been a saving grace in my own life had been, for him, a disappointing disgrace to which he would never return.

The reality of that still hurts.

That summer’s angst only heightened my sense of rightness and wrongness, and I began to have the courage to trust my own instincts and create my own kind of beauty, with my own mind and heart, and my own non-dancer’s body.

I began looking for people who spoke my language and dreamed dreams that resonated with my own. It grew me up, revealing both the beauty and the desperation of the world I would inhabit as I grew into an adult.

And yes, I came back to Deerwood for the next three summers to be on the lower staff, making it my own — not as a dancer, but as a flutist. A beginner — again — but so what?

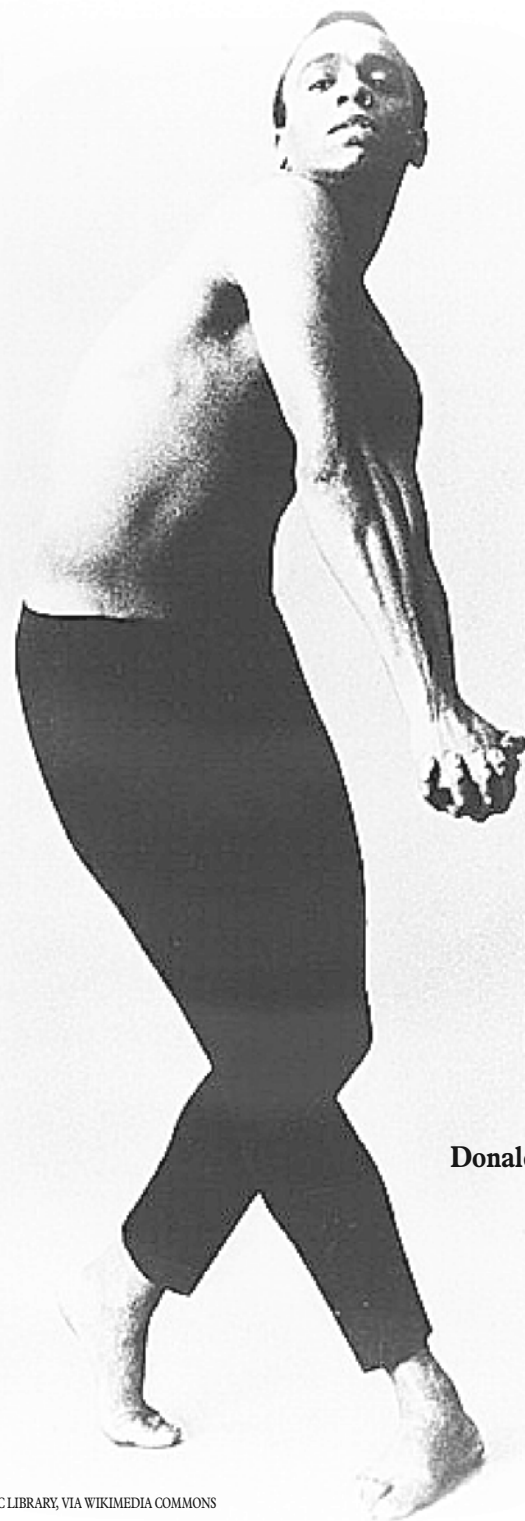
Finding my place and feeling my way forward, I gradually grew up.

I WILL NEVER FORGET the cry of the loons over the lake at sunset during chorus rehearsals in the boathouse. Singing the Fauré Requiem in thrall, and falling into Philip’s arms after the final *amen*. Gazing across the lake to the mist over mountains while someone practiced the violin nearby. Flute lessons with Ethan Stang, who taught me way more than just the flute.

Huge rainstorms when we would gather around the fireplace at the Lodge. Philip playing a whole opera on the piano and singing all the parts, his falsetto impeccable and the rest of us in stitches. Sleeping on top of Mt. Marcy with my friends after climbing the mountain for days. Seeing the world from above for the first time in my life.

It all came back to me last night at the Yellow Barn, watching these brilliant young people making music as if they were making love to one another, feeling that heart-filled high of shared performance that reached out to us in the audience, and knowing that once I had been one of them — young and passionate and in love with the world, as they were.

And then afterwards, their



Donald McKayle

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FROM SECTION FRONT

VIEWPOINT

Anything but compassionate and responsible

‘Unlike recent media spin, the controversy in Putney is not between those who care about these folks and those who don’t, but about what, precisely, constitutes authentic caring, safe homes, and fiscal responsibility’

Putney

MARK BORAX, an international best-selling writer and astrologer, is a Putney resident.

OVER RECENT MONTHS, local press has stirred the kind of controversy that sells newspapers regarding the so-called “affordable housing project” in downtown Putney.

But let’s be clear: Regarding the need to house our indigent, at-risk, homeless, and poverty-stricken members of the community, there is little conflict here.

Most agree that these vulnerable members of society are desperately in need of safe, dependable homes that they can afford. Unlike recent media spin, the controversy is not between those who care about these folks and those who don’t, but about what, precisely, constitutes authentic caring, safe homes, and fiscal responsibility.

The Windham-Windsor Housing Trust, the fifth-largest landowner in the county, recently purchased the land and professes to “care deeply about where you live, and how you live” — a noble claim that leaves many residents of existing WWHT facilities speechless.

Pending lawsuits make me think that once a WWHT facility goes up it might be easier to get blood from a stone than to get the corporation to listen to tenant complaints and take action.

Most WWHT buildings have no onsite management: No live-in superintendent, janitor, or building manager: every at-risk tenant is on their own.

The downtown Putney parcel wasn’t zoned for housing this many people and was illegally driven through in defiance of public opinion. In fact, Josh Laughlin, who was

co-owner of the parcel, actually was a Selectboard member! (Anyone see a conflict of interest here?)

While recent articles have painted the opposition to this project as heartless and uncaring, trying to make it seem as if Putney residents are against helping the poor, the truth is that a building full of at-risk folks hastily crammed into a project by a corporation known for unresponsive management, who is currently tangled up in court cases, in a town with few social services, no inexpensive groceries, and limited mass transit, next to a highway exit on an interstate known for high drug trafficking, is anything but compassionate and responsible.

PROponents of the project insist it’s economic and progressive, but its construction of 25 units on 0.9 acres tops out at \$11.7 million, which breaks down to \$468,000 per apartment — so outrageous as to be beyond belief.

Fortunately, the state of Vermont is offering a unique alternative to such pork-barrel projects. Any homeowner wishing to build low-cost housing in their own backyard will get a substantial grant — money that doesn’t need to be paid back.

If we really care about the welfare of our most vulnerable members, we must rethink the long-term solutions for affordable housing and step up ourselves to provide it, rather than make billion-dollar corporations richer.

PUBLIC NOTICES

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Public Hearing Notice

Notice is hereby given that the Brattleboro Development Review Board will hold a public hearing on Wednesday, 3.20.2024 at 7:00 PM in the Selectboard Meeting Room, Municipal Center, 230 Main St., Brattleboro, VT; the meeting will also be held on Zoom.

Meeting ID: 881 4045 1917 Passcode: 190450. 2024-1 Tri-Park Cooperative Housing, Inc.; RN District; request for Site Plan, Local Act 250, and Flood Hazard Overlay Conditional Use Approval to construct an infill project with new roads, utilities, relocated maintenance building and pads, and remove and decommission 25 home sites located in the Special Flood Hazard Area in Mountain Home Park; TMP #60159.200; Pursuant to 24 VSA §§ 4464(a)(1)(C) and 4471(a), participation in this local proceeding is a prerequisite to the right to take any subsequent appeal.

NOTE: Meetings are open to the public. For specific accommodations please call the Planning Services Department at 802-251-8154. Application materials are available at brattleboro.gov/development-review-board Additional materials may be submitted up to the time of the meeting and will be uploaded to the above address.

STATE OF VERMONT

SUPERIOR COURT PROBATE DIVISION
Windham Unit Docket No.: 23-PR-07325
In re the estate of George P. Moser, Jr.
Late of South Newfane, Vermont

NOTICE TO CREDITORS

To the Creditors of George P. Moser, Jr. late of South Newfane, Vermont.
I have been appointed to administer this estate. All creditors having claims against the decedent or the estate must present their claims in writing within four (4) months of the first publication of this notice. **The claim must be presented to me at the address listed below with a copy sent to the Court. The claim may be barred forever if it is not presented within the four (4) month period.**
Dated: February 14, 2024 Address: 3740 S. 11th Street
Administrator: Susan B. Moser Sheboygan, WI 53081
Name of Publication: The Commons 802-390-6884
Publication Date: February 21, 2024 katmai.sue@gmail.com
Name of Probate Court: Vermont Superior Court, Probate Division
Address of Probate Court: 30 Putney Road, Brattleboro, VT 05301

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LETTERS FROM READERS

Town Meeting Day is Tuesday, March 5

Heller has made effort to engage students in the civic process

Recently turned 18. Besides the thrilling new privileges of being able to rent an Airbnb, go to federal prison, get drafted, and go to federal prison for dodging the draft, I am now able to vote.

When I exercise my exciting new ability this March, I am proud to announce that I will be casting my vote for Oscar Heller as he runs for a three-year term on the Selectboard.

I've found that Oscar and I share a passion for the climate crisis, and as a younger guy with similar interests he understands and supports me as a youth involved in civic action.

His investment in the youth voice was recently exemplified when he approached me about setting up a voter engagement effort at the high school for newly eligible 16- and 17-year-old voters. So far, he is the only candidate in the upcoming election who has made an effort to engage students in the civic process, and this should not go unnoticed.

I met Oscar somewhere in the doldrums of 2020, when I joined the Brattleboro Energy Committee. Interpersonal activism had gone into a Covid hibernation, and I was looking for a new medium for climate action. Municipal legislation seemed like an interesting place to pour some effort.

I will not lie and say that my dreams of cutting green energy deals like an environmentalist Dick Cheney on the committee were fulfilled; I immediately became frustrated at how lugubrious the process of municipal bureaucracy was. However, I quickly learned

from experienced members like Oscar not to be consumed by the slow pace of things. Oscar was then the chair of the committee, and I was immediately struck by his calm and driven presence as a leader (even over Zoom).

Unfazed by what seemed to me impossible bureaucratic gridlocks, he was able to skillfully navigate the complicated system of bureaucracy rather than battling it, using his legal and political knowledge to maintain a steady pace of proposals and projects.

Oscar is competent, motivated, and knowledgeable. I trust him not only as someone who is genuinely concerned with issues such as climate crisis, housing shortages, and public transit availability, but also as someone with the strategic and organizational aptitude to deal with them.

He will bring a deep level of civic experience to his seat on the Selectboard, having served for five years on the energy committee, five years as a Town Meeting rep, and four years on the Representative Town Meeting Finance Committee.

I know that Oscar is not one to be battered to apathy by the tedious side of politics as many are, and I am excited to see what he will be able to pull off in a position of higher executive capacity. I cannot endorse him more.

Django Grace
Brattleboro

Brattleboro race: reach out to wisdom, youth, and culture

I write to share one person's opinion regarding the upcoming Brattleboro Selectboard March 5 election.

My opinion is as an "interested neutral." While we still maintain our town home, we now live in the Pioneer Valley.

We love Brattleboro and Windham County. At this precarious time, it really needs intelligent, compassionate stewardship from its leaders.

Fortunately, in looking around Brattleboro's areas of leadership, I've observed that the very best station of leadership where the integrity is both wide and deep is the Selectboard. And the race for the three seats is truly competitive in the best sense — having enthusiastic devoted town leaders vying for seats civilly, like civic musical chairs.

So, while I believe everyone running is competent and some room will be vacated after Selectboard Chair Ian Goodnow's term expires, it's important to send important messages for the Selectboard to steward and lead the way.

I hope people choose wisdom, youth, and diversity. To the two out of five I omitted, it's with the recognition that they are already so active with service and activism that they are fully invested even without Selectboard election.

I recommend the wisdom of Dr. Franz Reichsman; the "youth" at youthful middle age, Oscar Heller; and the cultural diversity of Jaki Reis.

Peter "Fish" Case and Richard Davis are energetic, talented, and committed town-folk. Consistent with Ian Goodnow's quote — "I'm excited to give some new people an opportunity and to look for other ways to serve my community" ["Races are on for three seats on Brattleboro Selectboard," News, Feb. 14] — it's time to modestly and judiciously shake things up enough to reach out to wisdom, youth, and culture.

Michael Hoffman
Amherst, Mass. and
Brattleboro

Heller: 'I commend him to you'

I have served on the Representative Town Meeting Finance Committee with Oscar

Heller for three years, during one of which he served as chair, and I can enthusiastically recommend his candidacy for a three-year seat on the Brattleboro Selectboard.

Oscar is a flatlander who came to Vermont as a camper and then counselor at Camp W in West Brattleboro. Those summer experiences made him commit to Brattleboro as a place where he wanted to make his life and his work (which is in web design and marketing).

Brattleboro's budget provides for the services residents receive, is the foundation for addressing problems facing the community, and determines the taxes we pay. Because of his dedicated work on the Finance Committee, Oscar has deep knowledge of the budget, and he can work the numbers.

He has also been a member of Representative Town Meeting for five years and served for five years on the Energy Committee, including as chair.

Oscar has progressive values, and yet is responsible and thoughtful. He talks less than others and listens more but, when he speaks, after politely but with determination getting the important information, he does so incisively and with a view that is focused on making decisions that serve the public. I commend him to you.

F. David Levenbach
Brattleboro

Heller: Perfect for the job

Talk about laboring in obscurity!

Last week, I found myself discussing a \$3.4 million gift that Brattleboro had received. When should we spend it? What should we spend it on? And who should decide?

That's when we got hung up for a good 20 minutes on the finer points of jurisdiction within the town government. Also, the finer points of pickleball.

Nope, it doesn't get wonkier or weirder than the meetings of the Representative Town Meeting Finance Committee. I often think we understand the town budget better than certain

members of the Selectboard do.

Speaking of which, one of my favorite people — and a fellow committee member — is running for the three-year Selectboard seat this year. I'm excited to share why I'll be voting for him on March 5, and why I hope he'll win. (I'll leave pickleball out of it... for now.)

Oscar Heller — in addition to being an all-around lovely guy — has three qualities that make him perfect for this job.

1. Oscar listens. Think about it: How many people do you know who genuinely hear what comes out of other people's mouth-holes? Yup, that's right: Most of us just tune out and start formulating a rebuttal. But Oscar is one of those rare folks who keep their mind and heart authentically open to other points of view before settling on their own.

2. Oscar takes the town's work seriously. People in our community are hurting. Climate change is threatening our economy, our infrastructure, and our very lives. Costs are rising, but the Grand List isn't growing. Also: OMFg with the sidewalks.

Oscar gets it: A leader's choices make an actual difference for actual fellow humans. That's probably why he's committed five years to the Energy Committee and four to the Finance Committee (and has chaired both). Time for a promotion, I'm thinking!

3. Oscar knows his shit. He looks at things systemically, yes, but he also somehow keeps track of the details, where all the gods and devils are. He really gets how Brattleboro ticks, and from so many angles — that of a tenant; a Town Meeting rep; a kid at summer camp; an entrepreneur; a downtown shopper; a landlord; and a thoughtful, compassionate citizen.

So yeah, I'm going to miss him so much on the Finance Committee. But it's time for Oscar to stop laboring in obscurity and start helping run this place!

P.S. Oscar plays tennis — not pickleball. (Ew.)

Paula Melton
Brattleboro

Heller: Expertise, commitment, and a younger cohort

I encourage Brattleboro residents to vote for Oscar Heller for the contested three-year Selectboard seat.

I had the pleasure of working with Oscar on the Representative Town Meeting Finance Committee, where he paid close attention to financial details and wrote clear, concise reports for our citizens. He also served on the Energy Committee and has been an elected Town Meeting representative for five years.

Oscar and his local partners own two small Brattleboro businesses (web design and digital marketing). He started visiting the area in 2002 as a summer camper and moved to Brattleboro 10 years ago, first as a renter and next as a landlord. These 10 years have given him

a clear understanding of the many complex housing issues.

In addition to his expertise and commitment, I am pleased that he represents a younger cohort and believe we should support these newer faces.

Mary White
Brattleboro

Eastes: integrity and experience

We are writing to urge Guilford voters to re-elect Zon Eastes for Selectboard.

We are fortunate that Zon is willing to run for another term when our communities are hungry for civic energy. We need his integrity and experience in town governance, tapping into state and federal assistance, and the nitty-gritty work of town budgets.

Guilford has experienced some challenges over the past few years. We have watched the hard work and dedication of the current Selectboard with Zon's leadership.

We're voting for Zon and urge our Guilford neighbors to do the same.

Chuck and Mary Collins
Guilford

Carter: Dedication, enthusiasm, and attention to detail

Chip Carter will have my vote in the Selectboard race in Guilford.

When he and Laurie moved to Green River village, he immediately and enthusiastically took up work in the community. He has put in lots of time raking and hauling away brush, but he has also gathered information and lore about the place he has chosen as home.

When Addie Minott died last spring, we lost not only our longest living resident but the humble de facto mayor for the village. She could be depended on to lead tours and regale visitors with the history of this beautiful hamlet.

When the community planned a series of summer events in the village, I assumed that, without Addie, a lot of history was gone, and I despaired of the possibility of filling her shoes.

But, true to his nature, Chip had gathered much information from Addie and her husband Addison over his years here and had done a great deal of his own research. When the time came to host a tour of the village, Chip stepped up to the plate and proved to be an enthusiastic, knowledgeable, and eloquent leader.

All this is to say that Chip studies issues carefully and exhaustively, and he is articulate in presenting these issues to others. He is a team player with a sense of humor. I think he has learned a great deal about our town since moving here, and that he will undertake the job of Selectboard member with his usual dedication, enthusiasm, and attention to detail.

Nancy Detra
Guilford

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Hear from the Candidates before you Vote!

Brattleboro Selectboard Candidates Forum

Thursday, February 22nd • 6-8 pm

FEATURING THE CANDIDATES
Peter Case, Richard Davis, Oscar Heller,
Franz Reichsman, Jaki Reis

The forum will be broadcast live on **Comcast Channel 1079**
(BCTV's Government/Education channel),
streamed live on BCTV's Facebook Page and
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Limited seating for the live event is available
Selectboard Meeting Room - Municipal Center
230 Main Street, Brattleboro

To submit questions for the candidates
email kate@commonsnews.org.


This event is brought to you by:





Election Day is Tuesday, March 5th.
Voting in Brattleboro will take place at the
American Legion, 32 Linden Street.

Be Sure To Check Our Full Program Schedule @ brattleborotv.org



LOCAL PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Feb. 19-25

CHANNEL 1078 CHANNEL 1079

PLEASE NOTE NEW CHANNEL NUMBERS!

<p>Here We Are - Evie Kiehle, Author, BUHS Student: Mon 8p, Tues 3:15p, Wed 9p, Thurs 1:15p, Fri 6a, Sat 12:15p, Sun 5:15p</p> <p>The World Fusion Show - Ep# 172 - Payton MacDonald: Mon 5:30p, Tues 8p, Wed 9a, Thurs 10:30a, Fri 9:30p, Sat 2p, Sun 4p</p> <p>Harris Hill Ski Jump 2024 - Saturday: Fri 1p, Sun 6p</p> <p>Harris Hill Ski Jump 2024 - Sunday: Sat 9a, Sun 9p</p> <p>At BMAC - Artist Conversation: Fawn Krieger, David B. Smith with Wendy Vogel: Mon 10a, Tues 8:30p, Wed 9:35p, Thurs 9a, Fri 4p, Sat 2:30p, Sun 9:30a</p> <p>Root Social Justice Center - Families United Meeting 1/26/24: Mon 1p, Tues 9a, Wed 3:30p, Thurs 9:15p</p> <p>Couch Potatoe Productions - Abenaki Forum 1/21/24: Thurs 1:55p, Fri 9:55a, Sat 8p, Sun 12:30p</p> <p>Deliberate Drift - S: A Rookery of Chinstraps: Mon 11:30a, Tues 6:30a, Wed 12:45p, Fri 5:30p, Sun 2:45p</p> <p>Brattleboro Reformer Presents Windham County's Got Talent 1/25/24: Mon 6a, Thurs 4p, Sat 5p</p> <p>Energy Week with George Harvey & Tom Fimmel: Mon 9a, Tues 5p, Thurs 11a, Sat 7p</p> <p>Vermontitude - Weekly Episode: Tue 11:30a & 6:30p, Wed 6a, Thu 1p, Sat 12p, Sun 5p</p> <p>News Block: WTSA News: Mon-Fri 12p & 6p Reformer News Break: Mon-Fri 12:05p & 6:05p BUHS-TV News: Mon-Fri 12:20p & 6:40p</p> <p>St. Michael's Episcopal Church - Weekly Service: Wed 2p, Sat 7:30a, Sun 11a</p> <p>Trinity Lutheran Church - Weekly Service: Wed 10a, Thurs 7a, Sun 3p</p> <p>Guilford Community Church - Weekly Service: Wed 6:30a, Fri 8p, Sun 8a</p> <p>St. Michael's Catholic Church Mass: Sat 4p (LIVE), Tue 6:45a & 2p, Thurs 8p</p>	<p>Brattleboro Selectboard Mtg. 2/20/24: Tues 6:15p (LIVE), Thurs 1p, Fri 11:45a, Sun 8:30p</p> <p>Meet the Candidates - Brattleboro Selectboard Candidate Forum 2/22/24: Thurs 6p (LIVE), Fri 8:30p, Sat 6a, Sun 12p</p> <p>Vernon Selectboard Mtg. 2/20/24: Thurs 8:30p, Fri 6a, Sat 12p</p> <p>Newfane Selectboard Mtg. 2/20/24: Fri 6p, Sat 8:30a, Sun 2:30p</p> <p>Windham Elementary School District Board Mtg. 2/20/24: Sat 6p, Sun 8:30a</p> <p>Putney Selectboard Mtg. 2/21/24: Sun 6p</p> <p>Dummerston Selectboard Mtg. 2/21/24: Sat 8:30p, Sun 6a</p> <p>Guilford Selectboard Mtg. 2/12/24: Thurs 11a</p> <p>West River Education District Board Mtg. 2/12/24: Mon 7:30p</p> <p>Jamaica Selectboard Mtg. 2/12/24: Mon 6p</p> <p>Townshend Selectboard Mtg. 2/13/24: Thurs 5p</p> <p>Windham Southeast School District Board Mtg. 2/13/24: Mon 2:30p</p> <p>Brattleboro Planning Commission Mtg. 2/5/24: Fri 8:30a</p> <p>River Valleys Unified School District Board Mtg. 2/5/24: Tues 4:30p</p> <p>Town Matters - Weekly Episode: Mon 6p, Wed 4:45p, Thurs 11a, Fri 11:30a, Sat 5p</p> <p>The David Pakman Show: Mon 8a, Tue 9a, Wed 5p, Fri 10:30a, Sun 5p</p>
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Note: Schedule subject to change.

View full schedule and watch online at brattleborotv.org

BCTV's Program Highlights are sponsored by **The Commons**. BCTV's municipal meeting coverage helps **Commons** reporters stay in touch. Read about it in the Town & Village section at www.commonsnnews.org.

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Eastes: Guilford lucky to have him

I support Zon Eastes for a two-year term on Guilford's Selectboard.

Zon is passionate about public service, and in his time on the Selectboard he has gained much knowledge and experience about Vermont statutes and town governance.

In addition to serving as Selectboard chair, he is also the liaison to the Planning Commission, on which I serve. He hasn't missed a single meeting and shows up in person, volunteering to set up the Zoom equipment, and he oversees the process by politely cueing the members when they should hold a vote or call to adjourn conforming to the many rules involved with a holding a legal public meeting that our Planning Commission volunteers aren't seasoned in yet.

His leadership was invaluable in guarding Guilford's interest during legal allegations and suits, staff transitions in the town office, increasing transparency, and overseeing the transfer of federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) dollars by forming a committee to identify shovel-ready projects to fund.

He is a great neighbor and land conservationist who loves his land and the character of Guilford's pristine countryside. He welcomes hikers and skiers to enjoy his piece of nature.

Zon is a great listener, meeting facilitator, and overall public servant. I believe Guilford has been fortunate to have had him.

Two more years with Zon as a Selectman will only continue to be positive for the town's future.

**Julie Holland
Guilford**

Eastes: a colleague with dedication, leadership, and fairness

I am writing to endorse the re-election of Zon Eastes for Selectboard. I have had the privilege of serving alongside him for the past four years, and his dedication, leadership, and fairness have consistently impressed me.

As chairman, Zon has guided the board with a steady hand, fostering collaboration and achieving positive outcomes for our community. His even-handed approach has built trust and consensus, even during challenging situations.

I personally witnessed his dedication with his willingness to put in extra time and effort, ensuring that every issue receives careful consideration.

Zon is a valuable asset to our community. He exemplifies the qualities we seek in our leaders: fairness, collaboration, and dedication to public service.

**Rusty Marine
Guilford**

The writer is a member of the Guilford Selectboard.

Carter: Plunged right into community work

I am pleased to be supporting Chip Carter for the three-year opening on the Guilford Selectboard.

I take it as a good sign when people arrive in town and plunge right into work for a community organization, as Chip has done with the Green River Village Preservation Trust.

Being on a town Selectboard has become a demanding and

complex job, and it is important, if we want to preserve this form of small-town government, that we continue to find talented people — including our current chair, Zon Eastes — who are willing to devote their time to the position, as Chip Carter will do.

Guilford voters will be able to meet the candidates at the Pre-Town Meeting on Tuesday, Feb. 27, at 6:30 p.m. at Broad Brook Community Center. Vote for Chip on the Australian ballot at Town Meeting on Tuesday, March 5 at Guilford Central School, or ahead of time by contacting the town office or by going to the Vermont Secretary of State's site (bit.ly/753-vt-sect-state-elections).

**Don McLean
Guilford**

Carter: Will be real asset to Guilford Selectboard

I enthusiastically endorse Chip Carter in his bid for a three-year term on the Guilford Selectboard.

Chip moved to Green River in Guilford eight years ago and was immediately introduced to our strong culture of volunteerism by Addie Minott. She recruited him to serve on the Green River Village Preservation Trust and eventually he chaired the board very ably. He also volunteers for Guilford Cares. Chip and his wife, Laurie, both grew up in New England and were excited to move to Guilford in 2016.

Chip loves this community and is ready, willing, and able to bring his skills to the Selectboard. He has a strong work ethic, an ability to dig deeply into an issue, to research, and listen to all points of view. He is an excellent communicator, having worked in communications for his entire career. His ability to research and understand complex issues will be a real asset to the board and our community.

**Anne Rider
Guilford**

Newfane can send a message to lawmakers about need for ceasefire

Town Meeting voters in Newfane will be debating a resolution that calls for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and calls on the Vermont Congressional delegation to support Sen. Bernie Sanders' Resolution 504, currently tabled in the U.S. Senate.

Resolution 504 calls on the State Department to certify that U.S. weapons are not being used to commit war crimes. If the State Department cannot certify that within 30 days, then the arms shipments must be stopped.

U.S. weapons and ammunition are part and parcel of the indiscriminate bombing of Gaza, which have led to more than 29,000 civilian deaths, including more than 10,000 children. More than 10 children a day lose limbs because of the onslaught.

Sen. Peter Welch and Rep. Becca Balint have both expressed a desire that Israel not kill civilians indiscriminately, but neither has done anything within their power as members of the U.S. Congress to work towards that goal.

As Johanna Gardner, one of the Newfane residents who gathered signatures for the Town Meeting warning, said, "Those of us putting forth this resolution deplore the wanton

killing of civilians in Gaza. We want to see our representatives do all they can to stop the bloodshed."

Gardner added, "Furthermore, we do not want our tax monies to be used for killing, especially when on our home turf we have myriad problems that languish without tax dollars to solve them. If money is to be sent to Israel, we want to know that American equipment or money will not be used in any way that would be a violation of human rights."

Even if congressional reps. don't respond to the hundreds and thousands of individual calls for ceasefire that they have received, Newfane organizers hope that a vote by the entire town will have more of an impact on them.

**Dan DeWalt
Newfane**

Rockingham voters gather on March 4

To my fellow Rockingham voters: It's that time of year again. All year long we enjoy the Freedom and Independence as individual citizens, but on March 4 and 5 comes the Unity part, where we must come together to debate the common good for our community.

The Town Meeting warning is now available on the Town Clerk's website at rockinghamvt.org. Because of the vote at last year's meeting, we must attend in person at 7 p.m. Monday, March 4 in the Town Hall Main Theater for the town portion of the meeting.

The school budgets and election of officers will be decided on Tuesday, March 5 by secret ballot at the Masonic Temple. The town portion has 30 articles this year because, as we

do every few years, each of the "social service" items must have individual votes.

In addition, several other articles deserve your support.

The Rockingham Meeting House needs structural repairs. Our ancestors created this great symbol of our history, and now it is our turn to preserve it for the next generation. (Say yes to articles 23 and 24.)

For those of us who live beyond the paved roads, the highway grader is a lifeline for us. Please support Article 26.

We are fortunate to still have train service. I once met a couple of Australian tourists who came to town just because they could take the train after they flew into New York City. Let's support the work on the station.

Our town library is a gem that is the envy of other towns around us; there are programs for our youngest whippersnappers all the way to our oldest

curmudgeons. Some programs are in person, and some are online. If you haven't done so in a while, check out a book or a magazine or maybe a movie. It's a great resource, and I hope the "ayes" have it for Article 23.

Every registered voter can participate in Town Meeting. If you are a Rockingham resident and need to register, go to the town clerk's office.

There is also an online voter registration system on the Vermont Secretary of State website, olvr.vermont.gov. Town Meeting registration ended Feb. 15, but for the elections you may register to vote up to and including the day of the election. To be sure you will be on the registered voter checklist when you go to vote, register by Thursday, Feb. 29. (The Town Clerk's office is not open on Fridays.)

**Wayne Blanchard
Rockingham**

Next week's paper is the last issue before Town Meeting Day. Send your letters by Friday, Feb. 23 — please, no later! — to voices@commonsnews.org.

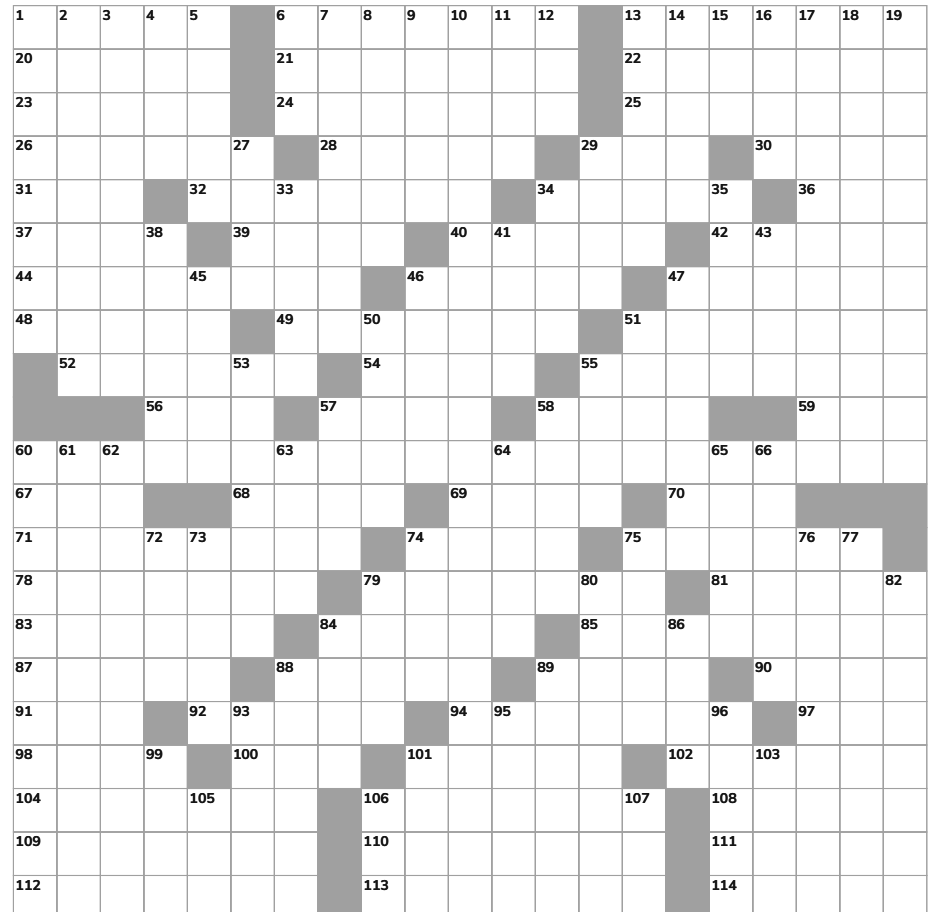
BRENDAN EMMETT QUIGLEY

THE COMMONS CROSSWORD

"Themeless Challenger"

Across

1. Benicio's bestie
6. Appeared on an episode
13. Little suckers
20. Song's radio edit
21. "The Covenant of Water" author Verghese
22. Singleton for everybody
23. Work space
24. Outlook users
25. Having a meal in a cubicle, say
26. NBA stats
28. Have the throne
29. Org. that looks through your luggage
30. Campground sight
31. "20/20" channel
32. Less crowded
34. "Har har!"
36. Wet, spongy ground
37. Rested (on)
39. "Let me guess ..."
40. Dutch cheeses
42. Shoulder wrap
44. Track-shaped
46. Does perfectly
47. Fashion designer McCartney
48. Pizzeria purchase
49. Spicy cuppa
51. Christmas tree decorations
52. Shows disdain for "...?"
55. They were burnt often in the '90s
56. "Where is the ___?"
57. Title said with a tip of the hat
58. Clairvoyant
59. Time of your life
60. "Everyday people do good deeds"
67. Macrogametes
68. Hourglass fill
69. Civil disorder
70. Millions of moons
71. Zoom meetings, e.g.
74. Ride to Logan, maybe
75. Rightly or wrongly
78. By and by, in verse
79. Piña colada flavor
81. It may come with an attachment
83. Expensive furs
84. Maverick man
85. Becomes involved with
87. With a player in scoring position
88. Illegal firing
89. Bad word
90. Security network, for short
91. Doc. signed before some sensitive meetings
92. Give the short version
94. Sinus-clearing device
97. Little chuckle
98. Wine stopper
100. Face on a die
101. Group of 13
102. Piano adjusters
104. Squared things
106. Brought back
108. Michaels of "SNL"
109. Spanish sheep
110. Right on the money
111. Folding phrase
112. It'll hopefully get some



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- column inches
113. White toy dog
114. Pains in the neck

Down

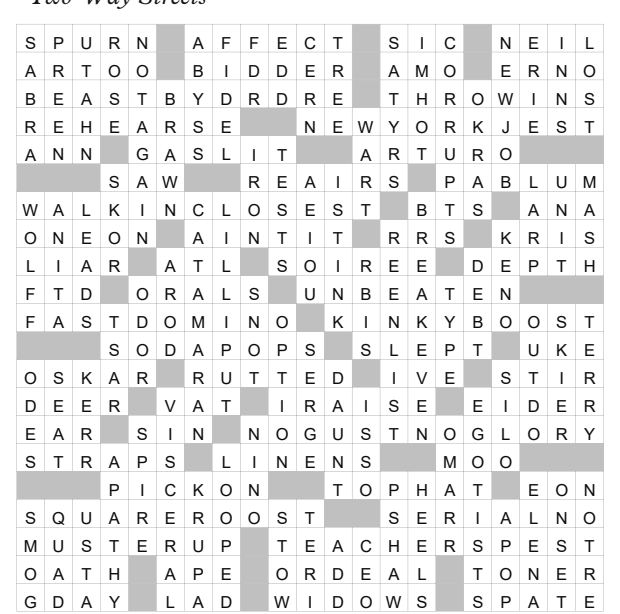
1. Places where you might get the big picture
2. Spaghetti topping
3. Moronic
4. Desert lizard
5. Jumps on blades
6. Heating choice
7. Loaded and then some
8. "Frank and ___" (comic strip)
9. Actress Sink of "The Whale"
10. "Moby-Dick" or "Adventures of Huckleberry Finn"
11. Tackle in
12. Pings on X, for short
13. Fund-raising dinners
14. It's a relief
15. It added "dap" in 2023: Abbr.
16. Face up to
17. Diamond topper
18. Recognize
19. They're good for a quick drink
27. Rotisserie rotator
29. ___ of Maine (toothpaste)
33. New Balance rival
34. Big party
35. "Vindicta" star Sean
38. Humza's predecessor as first minister of Scotland
41. Losing platform?
43. Dickens
45. Jeopardy
46. Guangzhou greeting
47. Traumatized
50. Blue ribbon, e.g.
51. Intestinal parts

53. Wrestling holds
55. Borscht vegetable
57. Department store department
58. Faint
60. 1964 Susan Sontag essay
61. Repeatedly
62. Secret revealers
63. Chill out
64. Light entertainment game?
65. Yachts' havens
66. Kind of weak
72. Cockney greeting
73. "Fargo" brothers
74. Timber wolf
75. Depleted
76. Huevos ___

77. Kola or hickory, e.g.
79. Astrological border
80. Repellent quality
82. 6-0, 6-0, etc.
84. Central point
86. Relaxed running pace
88. In the thick of
89. Singer Nicks
93. Ointment label words
95. Kick out
96. Turkey's national flower
99. Put in stitches
101. Michael of "Barbie"
103. Seward Peninsula port
105. African grazer
106. Dashboard abbr.
107. Don't start?

Last issue's solution

"Two-Way Streets"



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COLUMN | Sports Roundup

Bears do well in SVL freestyle races

It's tough to be a nordic skier during a winter with very little snow. As a result, the Brattleboro Bears nordic ski team hasn't had many opportunities to train on their home course at the Brattleboro Outing Club's trails at the Brattleboro Country Club.

"It's hard to keep a ski team going when there's no natural snow," said Bears head coach Amanda Dixon.

Warm weather and rain forced cancellation of Brattleboro's lone home meet on Jan. 26. Fortunately, when it was time for Brattleboro to host the Southern Vermont League's freestyle championships on Feb. 14, the Bears could move the event a few miles west to the Marlboro Nordic Ski Club's trails on Potash Hill, the former home of Marlboro College.

Thanks to the hard work of Spencer Knickerbocker, the Marlboro course was in fine shape — firm and fast on a sunny, blustery afternoon — and the Bears turned in some solid performances at their home away from home. Four Bears placed in the top 10 in the boys' race, while three Bears finished in the top 10 in the girls' race.

With Mount Anthony and Rutland unable to field full teams, and Woodstock unable to compete due to a bomb scare at the school that day led to the cancellation of all activities, the girl's race was a two-team event between Brattleboro and Burr & Burton, which the Bears won, 12-24.

Mount Anthony's Tanis White was the individual winner, covering the 5-kilometer course in 19 minutes, 4 seconds. Brattleboro's Katherine Normandeau finished fifth in 20:32, with teammates Maevae Bald (sixth, 21:16) and Maayan Coleman (seventh, 22:18) not far behind. Addison DeVault (11th, 25:46), and Evie Kiehle (14th, 30:26) rounded out the Bears' scoring.

As has been the case in boys' races all season, Mount Anthony's Luke Rizio was much the best, scorching the course in 14 minutes, 14 seconds to finish first and lead the Patriots to a team victory, with 12 points to runner-up Brattleboro's 26, followed by Burr & Burton (42), and Rutland (75).

Nico Conathan-Leach was the first Bear to finish with a time of 15:35 that was good enough for fourth, followed by teammates Willow Sharma (fifth, 16:24), Gabriele Jeppesen-Belleci (eighth, 17:02), and Oliver Herrick (ninth, 17:05). Also finishing for the Brattleboro boys were Desmond Longsmith (18th, 18:34), Eben Wagner (25th, 19:39), and Galen Fogarty (27th, 20:50).

At press time, the SVL relay event was scheduled for Feb. 20 at Mountain Top Resort in Chittenden. The state Classic Championships are scheduled for Feb. 27 at Rikert Outdoor Center in Ripton, while the Freestyle Championships are scheduled for March 1 at Craftsbury Outdoor Center.

Bowling

Brattleboro completed the league portion of its schedule on Feb. 17 with a four-team match at Brattleboro Bowl. Windsor narrowly defeated the Bears, 2-1, to win the match, with Fair Haven finishing third and Hartford fourth.

Bears coach Will Bassett said he was pleased with his team's performance despite his team being shorthanded. Thomas Bell led the way with a 208 game and a 226 game. He closed out the 208 game with five consecutive strikes, and



RANDOLPH T. HOLHUT, deputy editor of this newspaper, has written this column since 2010 and has covered sports in Windham County since the 1980s. Readers can send him sports information at news@commonsnews.org.

finished his second game with six straight strikes.

Austin Pinnette had a 200 in his first game, finishing with three straight strikes, and also had a 123 game, while Charlie Forthofer had games of 122 and 154, Cayden Gilson had games of 134 and 131, and Nick Carnes had games of 88 and 125.

In Baker team play, Brattleboro swept its semifinal games against Fair Haven, 164-156 and 178-169, to advance to the final against Windsor. Brattleboro lost the first game, 188-158, but won the second game, 198-126, to force the third and deciding game, which Windsor won, 176-171.

Bassett said the Bears have had an average score of 167 in Baker play, so this match saw an improvement over that figure. "Windsor just bowled great," he said.

Up next for the Bears are the state individual championships on Feb. 24 at Rutland Bowlerama. Brattleboro will then defend its state title with at the team championships on March 2 at Spare Time in Colchester.

Boys' basketball

The regular season in Vermont wrapped up last week, and our local teams learned their destinations for the first round of the playoffs. Only Twin Valley avoided a long trip north, as Brattleboro, Bellows Falls, and Leland & Gray will all be on the road.

Twin Valley finished with a 12-8 record to earn the No. 5 seed in Division IV. The Wildcats were scheduled to host No. 12 Arlington (4-15) on Feb. 20. TV finished the regular season with a 63-43 loss at Woodstock on Feb. 13 and a 55-38 win over Leland & Gray on Feb. 16.

Leland & Gray ended up with a 3-17 record and the No. 13 seed in Division IV. The Rebels were scheduled to face No. 4 Williamstown (13-7) on Feb. 20.

Brattleboro finished with a 7-12 record and the No. 11 seed in Division I. They were scheduled to face No. 6 Burlington (11-9) in a first-round game on Feb. 20. The Bears finished the season with a 62-41 win over visiting Mount St. Joseph on Feb. 13 and a 52-48 loss at Burr & Burton on Feb. 16.

Bellows Falls ended its regular season with a seven-game winless streak to finish with a 6-14 record and the No. 13 seed in Division III. The Terriers are scheduled to play No. 4 Winooski (16-3) on Feb. 21. BF finished with a 51-42 loss at Windsor on Feb. 13 and a 78-58 loss to Fair Haven on Feb. 17.

Girls' basketball

Brattleboro heads into the final week of the season with a 10-7 record and the No. 9 ranking in Division I after a 39-23 win at Burr & Burton on Feb. 14 and a 41-37 loss to Rutland at the BUHS gym on Feb. 17.

At 13-5, Bellows Falls has a firm hold on the No. 5 spot in the Division III standings. The Terriers beat Leland & Gray, 43-35, on Feb. 12 and lost at Rivendell, 53-33, on Feb. 15.

Leland & Gray entered the final week at 9-10 after the loss



Brattleboro's Katherine Normandeau finished fifth overall to lead her team to a win in the Southern Vermont League nordic freestyle championships on Feb. 14 at the Marlboro Nordic Ski Club.

to BF and a 68-39 loss at White River Valley on Feb. 15.

Winless Twin Valley lost its 16th straight game, 61-17, to Long Trail School on Feb. 12.

Ice hockey

On Jan. 3, the Brattleboro boys had a 1-5-1 record. Since that date, the Bears have improved greatly, going 8-1-2 to moved the Division I standings to the No. 5 spot with a 9-6-3 record.

On Feb. 14 at Withington Rink, the Bears beat Harwood, 7-5, as Evan Wright became only the fourth player in the last 16 years to reach the 100-point mark for his Brattleboro career. Wright, a junior forward, got three goals and three assists against Harwood to join Eric Libardoni, Andy Harris, and Will Taggard as the other Brattleboro players that achieved that milestone since 1998.

Andy Cay also had three goals in the victory and Rowan Loneran chipped in a goal, while Rylan Ernst, Gabe Alexander, Carter Mialkowski, Dylan Sparks, and Henry Schwartz were all credited with assists.

The Brattleboro girls fell to 2-16 after a 7-3 loss at Rutland on Feb. 14. The Bears got goals from Lily Carignan and Alex Gregory, despite being outshot 42-7 by Rutland.

Four local players named to Vermont Shrine team

Rosters have been announced for the 71st annual Shrine Maple Sugar Bowl, the annual all-star game that features the top recently-graduated high school football players from Vermont and New Hampshire.

Brattleboro will send three players to the Vermont squad — tight end/linebacker Jackson Emery, lineman Sam Madow, and running back/defensive

back Noah Perusse. Bellows Falls has one representative — running back Walker James.

Other Bellows Falls or Brattleboro players may be added to the roster as alternates to be called in the event that players on the original roster are unable to play for any reason.

The Vermont head coach is Hartford's Matt Trombly and the New Hampshire coach is Sanborn's Josh White. Players will report to Shrine training camp on Sunday, July 28, to begin formal practices.

The Shrine Maple Sugar Bowl, which is played for the benefit of the Shriners Children's Hospitals, is set for Saturday, Aug. 3, at 11:30 a.m., at Vermont State University-Castleton's Dave Wolk Stadium.

Vermont won the 2023 game,

28-6, ending a three-game winning streak by New Hampshire in the series that began in 1954.

Senior bowling roundup

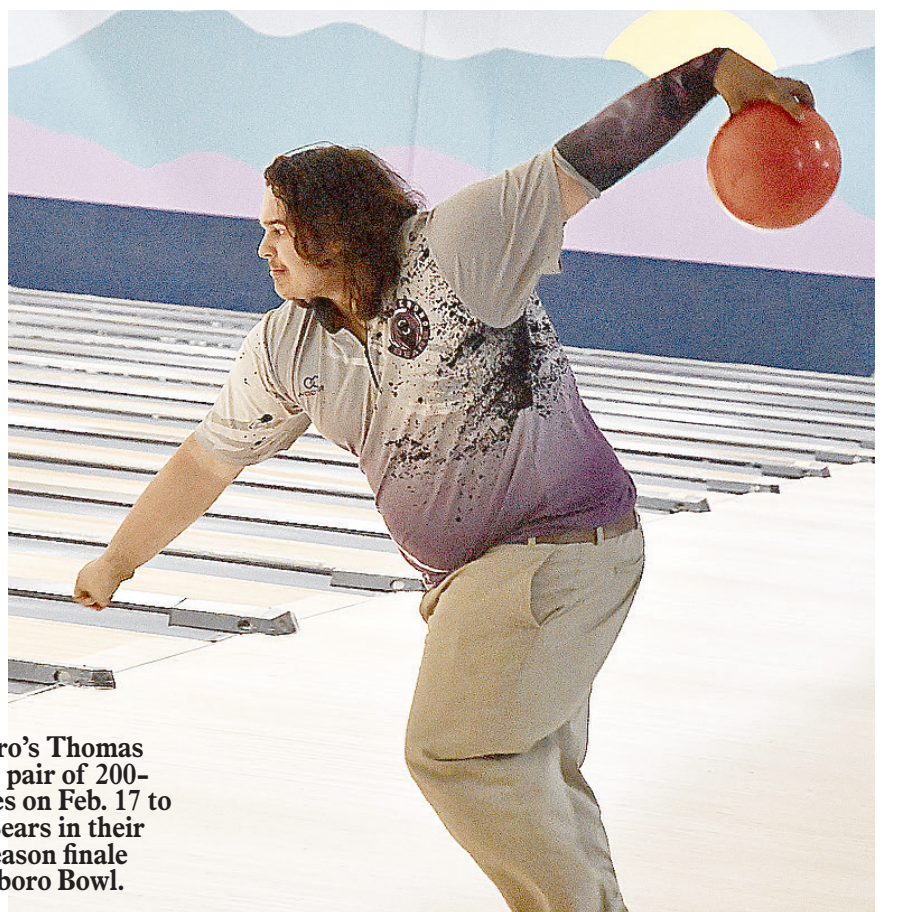
Week 7 of the winter/spring season of the Brattleboro Senior Bowling League at Brattleboro Bowl on Feb. 15 saw High Rollers (25-10) remaining in first place, followed by Good Times (19-16), Stepping Stones II (17-18), Stayin' Alive (16-19), Hairiers and Four Seasons (both 14-21), Four Pins (13-22), and Slow Movers (10-25).

Pam Greenblott had the women's high handicap game (250) and series (718), while Warren Corriveau Jr. had the men's high handicap game (270) and Stan Kolpa had the high

handicap series (670). Stepping Stones II had the high team handicap game (896), while Stayin' Alive had the high handicap series (2,544).

Corriveau had the men's high scratch series (604) with a 256 game. Robert Rigby had a 601 series with games of 219, 197, and 185, while John Walker had a 513 series with a 208 game. Peter Deyo had a 514 series with a 200 game, Rick Westcott had a 510 series with a 186 game, and Charlie Marchant had a 501 series.

Carol Gloski had the women's high scratch series (497), with games of 170 and 168. Nancy Dalzell had the high scratch game (187), while Greenblott had games of 171 and 169.



Brattleboro's Thomas Bell had a pair of 200-plus games on Feb. 17 to lead the Bears in their regular season finale at Brattleboro Bowl.

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