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



Sally Fegley helps light a candle at a April 7 vigil she helped organize to mourn the death of Leah Rosin-Pritchard, the shelter coordinator at Morningside House in Brattleboro who was slain on April 3.

Lawmakers get ready for a busy final month

With just a few weeks left in the 2023 session in Montpelier, members of the Windham County legislative delegation look at what has been accomplished and what's still to be done

By Joyce Marcel
The Commons

Our state legislators. We elect them, they disappear into rented Montpelier apartments, they get assigned to committees, they have meetings in the State House, they write — or help write — legislation, they send out newsletters.

And meanwhile, the rest of us go about our daily lives and wonder: What exactly are they doing up there?

Now that they are in the final weeks of the 2023 session, *The Commons* thought it would be interesting to see what Windham County legislators have accomplished. We asked them all a few simple questions in an email, and we were flooded with email responses. Here is what they have done so far in Montpelier and what they anticipate doing.

Paid family leave

One of the most powerful of the Windham County legislators is undoubtedly Emilie Kornheiser, P/D-Brattleboro, the chair of the House Ways and Means Committee. Her biggest priority going into the session was advancing a universal paid family leave bill. And she did!

"I'm incredibly proud of the passage of H.66, the Universal Family Medical Leave Insurance Bill, out of the House of Representatives," Kornheiser said. "Vermonters know that the health and resilience of our families and communities are integrally connected. Last year, we put these values into action when we passed the historic child tax credit and expanded the earned

income tax credit (EITC).

"We're ready to build on that commitment by enacting legislation that strengthens our capacity for care: universal family and medical leave, child care funding, and universal school meals," she continued. "When caregivers are supported and kids' basic needs are met, we're stronger as a state."

Cary Brown, executive director of the Vermont Commission on Women, said her organization has been working "for decades" to get a family leave bill through the Legislature. She's thrilled with the bill that came out of Kornheiser's committee.

"The paid family and medical leave bill in the Legislature right now is a very, very strong one to provide the kind of needs that people need the most," Brown told *The Commons*. "It would provide really comprehensive paid leave for people who need to take time off when they have a new child, when they have to care for someone who's sick or injured, or when they themselves are sick or injured."

Right now, most Vermont workers are allowed to take 12 weeks of unpaid leave time (**bit.ly/710-labortlaws**) for serious personal issues. For parental leave, they must work at firms that employ 10 or more workers who work an average of 30 hours a week; for unpaid family leave time, their company must employ 15 or more such workers.

All workers would be covered in the new legislation, including part-time, full-time, self-employed and seasonal workers. They would get at least 12 weeks covered without gender

REMEMBERING, and trying to CARRY ON

Friends and co-workers gather for a vigil to honor memory of Leah Rosin-Pritchard as Groundworks pauses to recover from the shock of the Morningside shelter manager's violent death



Leah Rosin-Pritchard

By Randolph T. Holhut
The Commons

BRATTLEBORO—After a nightmarish week for Groundworks Collaborative, friends, clients, and co-workers came together on April 7 for a candlelight vigil to honor the memory of Leah Rosin-Pritchard as the agency announced a three-week pause in operations to allow staff "time and space for our healing to begin."

The community was shocked by the April

3 death of Rosin-Pritchard, shelter coordinator at Morningside House, at the hands of a shelter resident who has since been arraigned on charges of first-degree murder.

Groundworks runs the 30-bed Morningside House shelter on Royal Road, where the vigil was held. The nonprofit also operates a daytime drop-in center and 34-bed overnight shelter on South Main Street and the region's most-used food shelf, Foodworks, on Canal Street.

In a news release, Groundworks said it

■ SEE VIGIL, A6

Covering the costs

With Table 7, a worker-owned coffee shop honors cooperative principles with a program to offer food and drink to those who can't afford it — no questions asked

By Robert F. Smith
The Commons

BELLOWS FALLS—The Flat Iron Cooperative at 51 The Square has just created a new program to help provide food, coffee, and a welcoming space to members of the community who might need a little help.

The new Table 7 fund will accept contributions that will fund food and drink for customers who might not be able to pay.

They can come into the coffeehouse and ask for "Table 7." They can then order what they want, and as long as funds in the program will cover it, the food is provided without cost or question.

The Flat Iron is a worker-owned coffeehouse that also functions as an informal Internet cafe and meet-up spot. It is not unusual to find half a dozen locals working on laptops on any given day, or people gathering for work-related interviews or discussions.

In addition to coffee-type drinks, the coffeehouse also offers a wide variety of fresh baked sweets and desserts, along with homemade soups, frittatas, and quiche.

The Flat Iron's worker/owners, Susan Sheffer and Larisa Demos, are determined to honor the set of seven core principles and values that the international cooperative movement has adopted.

Number seven on that list, according to the International Cooperative Alliance, is "Concern for Community."

Cooperatives work for the sustainable development of their

■ SEE TABLE 7, A5



Susan Sheffer, left, and Larisa Demos, worker/owners at the Flat Iron Co-op in Bellows Falls, have created Table 7, a new program to let people who need a cup of coffee or some food to get it — no questions asked.

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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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- promotes local independent journalism,
- fosters civic engagement by building media skills through publication of *The Commons* and *commonsnews.org*, and through the Media Mentoring Project.

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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.orgEditorials represent the collective voice of *The Commons* and are written by the editors or by members of the Vermont Independent Media Board of Directors.

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In memoriam:
Alan O. Dann, Judy Gorman,
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Crossover

distinction.

"This bill would mean that people could actually get paid, or at least I think it's 90 percent of their pay, up to a certain limit," Brown said. "So they'll get a certain amount of wages for that time. We are in support of that bill. We would love to see it happen."

For Kornheiser, the bill means people can take care of their loved ones without sacrificing their financial well-being.

"All Vermonters will need to take time to recover from an illness or injury, bond with a new child, or care for a loved one at some point in their life," Kornheiser said. "Ensuring we can each do so without falling behind financially is the right thing to do, and it's good public policy."

According to Kornheiser, 65% of Vermonters don't have access to paid family and medical leave. This includes a disproportionate share of low-wage workers, people of color, and parents. The bill's inclusive programs also cover military family needs and "safe time" for people impacted by intimate partner violence.

"These workers are forced to either come to work sick or injured, delay or cancel necessary treatments, forgo critical bonding and recovery time with a new child, or take unpaid leave that jeopardizes their family's financial security," Kornheiser said. "We must do better."

"The adequate wage replacement would be high enough to ensure all workers can afford to take the leave they need, including low-income workers who need as much of their income as possible to pay their bills," Kornheiser said. "We are looking at 100 percent replacement for workers making at or less than the average weekly wage in Vermont."

This raises the question, of course, is who will pay for this program.

"We are paying for this program with insurance premiums paid by all workers, exempting the pay of our lowest-wage workers," Kornheiser said. "The cost for a Vermonter making average weekly wages is approximately \$125 per year. For that cost they

will have access to 90 percent wage replacement for 12 weeks of needed leave."

Vermont Public's Peter Hirschfeld called it "the most generous paid leave benefit in the United States."

"What's also interesting about this bill is that it would create a whole new layer of bureaucracy in state government to actually administer the paid leave insurance system," Hirschfeld said. "Gov. Phil Scott favors a voluntary paid leave program. He also says Vermont should enlist a private-sector insurance company to run the program. He says this is complicated stuff that's best left to established experts in the field."

The Child Tax Credit

During the current tax season, the Vermont Commission on Women as well as state officials are calling attention to the Child Tax Credit (CTC), legislation passed last year that allows any family with children under 6 to receive \$1,000 per child. The upper wage limit is \$125,000, and there are adjustments if wages are higher.

Families get the money by filing a tax return, even if their incomes are too low to require filing.

Oddly, the Vermont Senate just passed a bill (S.56) eliminating the tax credit in order to fund other improvements in child and family care. But even if S.56 becomes law, people eligible for the \$1,000 credit can still get it this year.

However, eliminating the Child Tax Credit is an unpopular move, according to Brown and Kornheiser.

"The Senate Finance Committee has proposed eliminating that child tax credit as one way to save some money," Brown said.

"Instead of spending that \$1,000 in the child tax credit, they would spend it on something else to help with child care, which will be taking it away from the families that are already in need of help and need more help," Brown added. "Because \$1,000 a year doesn't go very far. It's certainly not going to cover the cost of child care. For the families

FROM SECTION FRONT

who are currently receiving the child tax credit, they need that money. And they also need additional help to pay for child care."

Sen. Nader Hashim, D-Dummerston, is one of the sponsors of S.56, the child care bill that calls for eliminating the credit. He said his most important accomplishment so far this session has been getting the bill successfully voted out of the Senate.

"This bill provides a significant investment to child care providers and families so that we can create more access to affordable and quality child care, while also ensuring we pay child care providers a livable wage," he said.

During his campaign, Hashim said he heard from both businesses and families, as well as people across the political spectrum, that child care is essential.

"While our work is certainly not done, we have taken a big step toward investing in child care, and I know this bill will have a positive impact on families and businesses in Vermont," he said.

That puts Hashim at odds with Kornheiser.

"The repeal of the child tax credit was added by the Finance Committee, after the bill left the Health & Welfare Committee, as part of the tax package to fund the large increase in spending on child care," Hashim said.

"The other portion of funding is an implementation of a new payroll tax," he continued. These funding sources would fund a substantial increase in the Child Care Financial Assistance Program, raising eligibility for the program from 350% to 600% of the federal poverty level for families, and increase the payments to child care providers by 38.5% in 2024.

"This is a major investment that needed a consistent funding source," he said.

Hashim suggested that the Child Tax Credit was only meant to be temporary.

"One of the arguments for it was that it would help people pay for child care because it was focused on children 5 and under," he said. "The removal of this credit for use within child care is offset by the very substantial investments that are being made to make child care accessible to more people, and affordable, and also provide child care providers with a livable wage so that we'll have more providers available."

Kornheiser, however, vows to fight to protect the Child Tax Credit.

"It is one of the most powerful pieces of policy we've passed in Vermont and we've passed nationally," Kornheiser said. "Policy-wise, it is one of the best lessons learned from the pandemic that we can carry forward, and other states all across the country followed our lead after we passed this."

She says that the CTC has created "a clear and significant message in our tax code that Vermont is a place that supports families."

"We cannot — and will not — sacrifice this groundbreaking new policy in the midst of the first year of success," Kornheiser said.

In many ways she supports S.56, but in many other ways, she doesn't.

"But we are just beginning our work on it in the House, and I'm confident/hopeful that we can find a more progressive funding source and make changes to some of the policy pieces before the bill gets sent to the governor," Kornheiser said.



State Sen. Wendy Harrison, D-Brattleboro.



State Rep. Michelle Bos-Lun, D-Westminster.

Statewide home appraisals

Kornheiser is also sponsoring a bill that would put home appraisals, now done by listers in each town, into the hands of the state government.

Vermont, she said, might be one of the few states that haven't done this.

"This bill begins a multi-year project with the Department of Taxes, town clerks, listers, and assessors to address the strains in our current appraisal system and to create equity and consistency in our grand lists by shifting the responsibilities for property reappraisal from local towns to the state Department of Taxes," Kornheiser said.

She suggested that it has been more than a decade since half of Vermont's municipalities have conducted a reappraisal.

"The wild fluctuations of the housing market of the past few years have strained our property

reappraisal systems," Kornheiser said.

"Reappraisals are triggered when the state determines that the property values on a town's grand list no longer accurately reflect what properties are selling for," she explained.

With the wild housing market, "the vast majority of towns are now under a reappraisal order and due to limited availability among local assessment firms, they are struggling to hire reappraisal firms to complete the work in a timely manner," Kornheiser said.

As Kornheiser's Ways & Means Committee studied the issue, they increasingly came to believe in professionalizing and consolidating the appraisal process.

"Most other states conduct reappraisals at the county or state level with appraisals conducted on a rolling schedule," Kornheiser said. "Given that property taxes in Vermont are raised at the state level, we need consistency, clarity, and equity in our grand lists."

Transportation

One of the big money bills that the House writes each year is the Transportation Bill. Sara Coffey, D-Guilford, is the new head of that committee, and she's very proud of the "T Bill," as it is called in Montpelier, and how it addresses climate change in Vermont and continues working to develop a "21st Century transportation system that is clean, accessible, and affordable."

The bill, H.479, is designed to boost electric transportation be it cars, buses, or e-bikes. One highlight is an incentive plan for new plug-in electric vehicles, the MileageSmart and the Replace Your Ride programs.

"We included some changes to broaden eligibility and increases in incentives to help expedite both Vermonters getting into more fuel-efficient cars and to accelerate EV adoption," Coffey said.

The bill is designed to reduce dependence on single-use vehicles.

It creates an incentive for entities with vehicle fleets to convert them to electric vehicles. It continues funding for e-bikes, "with some changes to the eligibility to ensure that they reach the people who need them and are helping to reduce emissions," Coffey said.

The bill also includes funding for public transit. As for one thing, it supports public bus service as well as experimental

■ STORY CONTINUES ON FACING PAGE

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Rep. Mollie Burke, D-Brattleboro, also sits on the transportation committee. Every biennium she and her climate change caucus create an ancillary transportation bill (H.101) containing a wish list of programs and projects. Some of the aspects of her bill, like the on-call bus trials, made it into the transportation bill.

Burke said she was very pleased that a number of proposals from H.101 found a home in the transportation bill.

She is pleased that, among other initiatives, the T-Bill ties the efforts of the Agency of Transportation to implement the federal carbon reduction program to the mandates of the Global Warming Solutions Act and the Climate Action Plan.

Public health issues

Rep. Leslie Goldman, D-Rockingham, a family nurse practitioner, serves on the House Health Committee.

"We have focused our time and research in making recommendations for the FY24 budget," Goldman reported. The committee has proposed increasing Medicaid reimbursements to primary and specialty care, emergency medical services, long-term care, dental, and mental-health systems of care.

"These chronically underfunded services have put tremendous strain on our health care system and have reduced services available to Vermonters," Goldman said. "These increases will help stabilize our health care system."

She said her committee continues to support forgiving educational loans for students in nursing, mental health, and dental hygiene if the student serves in Vermont for each year of the loan. "The design is to encourage students to continue working in these fields in Vermont," she said.

Goldman is also excited by the proposal to create an Unused Drug Repository. Such programs "collect, inspect, and redistribute prescription medication from hospitals, long-term-care facilities, and other locations to those individuals who need them at no cost," she said.

"The program will help Vermonters access critical medications, reduce environmental contamination of unused drugs that require disposal, and reduce system cost," she added.

Her committee is also working to create ways to assess emergency medical services (EMS) in Vermont.

"EMS is the first step in the continuum of care when one of us is sick or injured, and it needs to be reliable," Goldman said. "Chronic underfunding has led to a workforce shortage that is crucial to address. I will also follow through the Senate the provisions we added to the budget to support the EMS. There is funding for a study to do a deep dive into the system, funding for training, as well as budget recommendations to increase reimbursements to EMS providers."

In the last portion of the session, Goldman will be busy working with her committee "to develop legislation protecting consumers and independent pharmacies from the practices of pharmacy benefit managers, a little known player in the pharmacy world. This work aims to reduce the cost of prescription drugs."

This is especially important for independent pharmacies. The predatory pricing of the pharmacy benefit managers was a large factor in the recent closing of Brattleboro's beloved Hotel Pharmacy ["I had nothing left": The closing of Hotel Pharmacy marks the end of family-run drugstores in Brattleboro — thanks, its owner says, to insurance and pharmaceutical industry pricing practices that made it impossible not to lose money," News, Jan. 25].

A new senator reports a housing bill

Over in the Senate, where Harrison and Hashim are both in their first terms, things were also starting to move quickly. Harrison is one of five members of the Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs Committee. She reports — no surprise here — that housing is one of the top four issues of the Senate. Her committee worked for weeks on a housing bill.

The bill has many moving parts and addresses many of the causes of the housing crisis, including state regulations, local regulations, energy codes, emergency shelters, rental housing, ownership housing, accessory dwelling units, access to funding, and discrimination, among other topics.

"Bills generally are not self-explanatory," Harrison explained. "They are the language necessary to change the law, and they don't normally explain the purpose of the change or how the change compares to the existing law. At the second reading of the bill, the reporter explains in a speech to the Senate what problem the bill is addressing and how the bill will accomplish that goal."

Harrison said that because of her experience with local government and municipal management,



RANDOLPH T. HOLHUT/COMMONS FILE PHOTO
State Rep. Mollie Burke, D-Brattleboro.

Incarceration for healing and recovery

Windham County has two representatives sitting on the Corrections & Institutions Committee: Tristan Roberts, D-Halifax, and Michelle Bos-Lun, D-Westminster.

"Vermont's 110 female incarcerated persons reside in the Chittenden Regional Correctional Facility (CRCF) in South Burlington," Roberts said. "The facility is aging and out of step with current standards. The Legislature has been planning to replace it since 2018, and we took a big step forward in the two-year Capital Construction Bill that passed the House."

One change that the committee wrote into the Capital Bill is that all spending on design, planning, and construction for correctional facilities must incorporate "trauma-informed design practices."

That means "correctional facilities must be safe and secure environments," Roberts said. "But experience in Vermont, and in places from Norway to Maine, has demonstrated that a punitive living environment with bright, 24/7 lighting, clanging doors, and zero privacy is counterproductive to our goals."

Bos-Lun, along with Sen. Wendy Harrison, D-Brattleboro, has been touring correctional facilities in Vermont and Maine to understand what might be needed. She said agrees with her committee on the importance of environmental factors.

"We heard a lot of testimony about how physical space can impact rehabilitation: how more natural light, elements of nature, gentle colors can actually promote an environment more conducive to healing and recovery," Bos-Lun said. "Since 80% of the women at CRCF are in recovery and over 90% have been victims of sexual abuse or domestic violence, promoting a healing environment is an important direction for Vermont's Department of Corrections to move towards, and my committee is helping support that."

The committee also wants to ensure that the Department of Corrections "will be required by statute to build a facility and to support it with programming that is centered on restorative justice, and also to support the successful re-entry of justice-involved individuals into the community, once they have paid their debt to society," Roberts said.

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Harrison said that because of her experience with local government and municipal management,

she was asked to step in and report the housing bill.

That was not the original plan. The committee is chaired by Sen. Kesha Ram Hinsdale, who was planning to report the bill on March 29.

"But she is expecting her first child on May 9. Her water broke on March 28, and she is confined to the hospital for the foreseeable future," Harrison said. "Although she could participate via Zoom, someone had to report the bill on the floor."

Harrison said she was "honored and honestly, somewhat daunted."

"I had reported twice so far, [first] on my resolution to urge the U.S. Government to honor its commitments to Afghan Refugees and on S.102, an anti-discrimination bill, and had plenty of time to prepare for both of them. In this instance, the combination of the magnitude of the bill and the time to prepare made the experience especially intense."

Harrison said she was able to report the bill successfully.

"In the end, I was able to explain my sections so that the Senators knew what we were proposing and were able to decide whether or not to support it," Harrison said. "The bill ultimately passed 27-2, and now it goes to the House. I'll find out how I can support the changes and programs in the bill as it goes through the process."

Legislation addresses sheriff misconduct

Because Hashim was once a trooper with the Vermont State Police, he has insight into new legislation that, if it becomes law, will rein in what many consider

unjust practices by the various county sheriff's departments.

"These changes are being made due to the numerous and recent instances of sheriff misconduct around the state," Hashim said. "Many of the provisions have not been updated in years, and it is important to modernize our laws related to all sectors of government."

The changes include elimination of the sheriff's personal 5% bonus; uniformity of the contract pay across towns; a requirement to provide at least one deputy to support courthouses; creation of a task force to explore accountability and future reform; and the inclusion of gross negligence, willful misconduct, and abuse of powers in "Category B Conduct" in 20 VSA 2401.

Following legislation in the Senate

The Legislature is now in high gear with Senate bills passing into the hands of House committees and vice versa. The Windham County delegation has that to work on, plus plenty of other projects.

Kornheiser plans to spend her time protecting the Child Tax Credit, continuing to support the House's Family Medical Leave Insurance Bill as it makes its way through the Senate, and supporting her colleagues as they "dive into a comprehensive housing bill."

She also said that she was "incredibly heartened" by the "meaningful harm reduction and opioid treatment work" in "An act relating to reducing overdoses" (H.222), which was passed out of the Committee on Human Services and is now in the Senate.

Since addiction is a major problem in Windham County, this bill is a very important one. According to Kornheiser, it decriminalizes buprenorphine, a drug that is used in the treatment of heroin and methadone dependence.

The proposed legislation also removes barriers to treatment for Vermonters on Medicaid, removes some zoning barriers that will allow recovery housing "as a permitted use for single family dwellings," establishes a state-wide syringe disposal program, and funds services through updated fees on pharmaceutical manufacturers which are deposited into a special fund dedicated to substance use disorder.

"However, our community needs more," Kornheiser said. "I'm hoping that we can take the next step of establishing an integrated treatment court, and establishing safe use programs in Brattleboro. I know all of our community agencies are ready to collaborate to make this a reality."

Coffey is interested in supporting the child care bill as it moves through the Senate. Also, over the summer, she met with a group of Windham County veterans and

learned about something that impacts them negatively.

"When there is an error on a veteran's death certificate, it interferes with surviving spouses accessing benefits that they are entitled to," Coffey said. "To address this issue this session, I introduced H.59, a bill that would help make it easier for the families of a deceased veteran to correct or amend a death certificate to accurately record that the death was caused or hastened by a service-connected injury or illness."

Harrison, who also belongs to the Institutions Committee, is finalizing recommendations for the two-year Capital Budget prepared by the governor and now amended by the House. The committee will also be examining the plan to replace the Women's Correctional Facility in Burlington; that plan just came out of the House.

In the Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs Committee, Harrison will be working on the Vermont Employment Growth Incentive (VEGI), online sports betting, the Basic Needs Budget ("a market-based analysis that accounts for estimated monthly living expenses in Vermont," according to a report from the Legislative Joint Fiscal Office), and the Working Communities Challenge) which "advances local collaborative efforts that build strong, healthy economies and communities in Vermont's rural towns, regions, and smaller cities," according to the Vermont Council on Rural Development (vtrural.org/working-communities).

A 'safe, affordable, and friendly place to live'

Hashim said he will be working to make sure future negotiations with the House on bills will be "smooth, deliberate, and meaningful. Both chambers have hard decisions and conversations ahead of us, but the general assembly is fully capable of cooperation and compromise in order to ensure we manifest our top priority — to make Vermont a safe, affordable, and friendly place to live."

One of Hashim's other top priorities will be working with the Education Committee to solve the problem of how LGBTQ+ students can be protected if or when private schools, many of which are religious, are allowed to receive public money ["Supreme Court changes put state school choice in flux," News, March 22].

"We will soon be discussing how to manage public taxpayer dollars that go to private institutions, and we will also discuss the challenges related to private institutions that utilize discriminatory practices in their enrollment

process or how they treat staff," Hashim said.

Another priority for Hashim is ensuring that universal school meals continue for students and that the state continues testing and remediation for PCBs, toxic industrial chemicals that were banned in 1979 but still linger in the environment with devastating consequences.

Roberts is concerned with how much things cost. "The top concern I'm hearing from Vermonters is the cost of living," he said. "We feel especially vulnerable around cost increases associated with basics like food, gas and automotive costs, and home heating fuel. This is an ideal time for the Legislature to take strong action toward more environmentally sustainable energy sources, and a more reliable electrical grid."

Roberts would also like to convince the Legislature to spend more time on protecting LGBTQ+ youth.

"Seeing 28 LGBTQ+ youth speak on the Statehouse steps during a rally [on March 31], I was struck by how it continues to be hard in Vermont to simply be oneself," he said.

Goldman will continue to work with the Health Care Committee to develop legislation to protect independent pharmacies and consumers from pharmacy benefit managers, as well as work on the Shield Bill, which protects abortion providers, which came to her committee from the Senate.

"I will also follow through the Senate the provisions we added to the budget to support the Emergency Management System in Vermont," Goldman said. "There is funding for a study to do a deep dive into the system, funding for training, as well as budget recommendations to increase reimbursements to EMS providers."

Goldman said she was very pleased with the work that the Legislature has done so far this year.

"The House has passed 66 bills so far that include the approximately \$8 billion budget bill," Goldman said. "We have tackled issues like paid leave, homelessness, and housing. We have passed a budget that funds workforce development in health care and trades, two crucial sectors that are facing a crisis."

As the bills wend their way through committee, language will change and debates will continue. "These last weeks of the legislature are extremely busy, with long days and often nights on the floor of the House," Burke said. "We are trying to enact policies that help Vermonters in a variety of ways."

PUBLIC NOTICES
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Proposed Invasive Plant Control Measures
The Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation proposes to conduct treatments to control invasive exotic plants on properties owned by the State of Vermont in Windsor and Windham Counties. The proposed treatment area will not exceed 130 acres in size. Application will include foliar and cut stem methods utilizing Round-up, Rodeo or Triclopyr. Treatment will occur between 4/20/2023 and 11/30/2023, and each site will have signage displayed for additional public notice.
For specific locations or more information, please contact State Lands Forester Aaron Hurst at aaron.hurst@vermont.gov, or 802-279-8625.

STATE OF VERMONT
SUPERIOR COURT Probate Division
Windham Unit Docket No.: 22-PR-06850
In re ESTATE of: Edward Fenton, Jr.
NOTICE TO CREDITORS
To the Creditors of: Edward Fenton, Jr. (Decedent) late of Dummerston, Vermont (Decedent's town of residence)
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: April 4, 2023 26 Carney Street
Charles Fenton, Administrator Medford, MA 02155
781-507-4911
Name of Publication: The Commons
Publication Date: April 12, 2023
Name of Probate Court: Vermont County Superior Court, Windham Unit
Address of Probate Court: 30 Putney Road, 2nd Floor, Brattleboro, VT 05301

STATE OF VERMONT
SUPERIOR COURT Probate Division
Windham Unit Docket No.: 22-PR-04909
IN RE ESTATE of: Sarah Bernard
LATE OF Jacksonville, Vermont
NOTICE TO CREDITORS
To the Creditors of: Sarah Bernard, late of Jacksonville, 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: April 6, 2023 252 Riverdale Rd.
Michael Bernard, Administrator Townshend, VT 05353
Name of Publication: The Commons 802-365-4245
Publication Date: April 12, 2023 lcrispe@crispe.com
Name of Probate Court: Vermont Superior Court, Windham Unit, Probate Division
Address of Probate Court: 30 Putney Road, Brattleboro, VT 05301

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MILESTONES

Births, deaths, and news of people from Windham County

Transitions



• Brattleboro Savings & Loan recently promoted Michele Hackett to the position of vice president, culture officer, and Michael Levoch to the role of assistant vice president, network engineering officer.



Levoch to the role of assistant vice president, network engineering officer. Hackett has been with BS&L for almost 14 years and has worked as the bank's human resource manager for much of that time, handling much of the hiring and payroll requirements.



• Vermont Adult Learning (VAL) recently named Jackie Trepanier as regional director for Windham County overseeing the Brattleboro Learning Center.

Obituaries

• Lloyd Michael "Mikey" Austin, 62, of Readsboro. Died on March 29, 2023. He was born on June 2, 1960 to Lloyd and Sally (Graves) Austin in Brattleboro, and attended Brattleboro Union High School before enlisting in the Marine Corps in 1980.

the largest water and air pipeline snowmaking system in the United States and was trained in the installation and building of pipelines as well as working with explosives. His life was filled with adventures in hunting, fishing, and mischief making, while quieter times were spent watching films, putting food by, and being with friends and family.

• James Lyman Barre, 87, formerly of Brattleboro. Died March 3, 2023 in hospice care in Wilmington, North Carolina, just days after being diagnosed with lung cancer. He was surrounded by his beloved wife Carol and his children.

weathered many hurricanes. In September 2003, he began a clinical pastoral education program at New Hanover Medical Center and upon graduation, became part of the Chaplaincy program there for two years. Jim will be remembered as a masterful and dramatic preacher, an extremely learned and profoundly philosophical man, a voracious reader, proud father, and caring husband, and will be deeply missed.



• Sarah Reynolds Edwards, 70, formerly of Brattleboro. Died peacefully in her home in Plainfield, Vermont on March 15, 2023, with her husband and children by her side. Sarah was born Jan. 31, 1953, in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, daughter of Joan Edgar and Jackson Lane Edwards Jr.

bringing awareness to sustainable businesses and connecting people in Columbus. In 2019, Sarah and Blake moved back to their beloved Vermont, into an apartment in the home of her daughter Elizabeth and son-in-law Timothy. In 2021, she was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer and her immediate reaction was "whaddya gonna do?"



• Terri L. Garland, 59, of Wardsboro. Died unexpectedly March 26, 2023 at her home. Terri was born in Townsend on Jan. 26, 1964, the daughter of the late M. Lee and Inez (Streeter) Bills. She attended Wardsboro Elementary School and graduated from Leland & Gray High School in Townsend.

• Eric Lambert, 33, of Rockingham. Died March 26, 2023 at the Jefferson Torresdale Hospital in Philadelphia, with his family by his side. Eric was born on August 26, 1989 to David and Priscilla Clough Lambert in Springfield.

needed help, he immediately responded and assisted with the task. He taught everyone valuable lessons about love and caring for others and how precious life is. Eric was predeceased by his maternal grandparents, Arthur and Priscilla Fisher Clough; his paternal grandparents, Ernest and Claire Boudreau Lambert; and his uncle, John M. Lambert.

• Melvin Bruce Leitman died gently in his sleep at Brattleboro Memorial Hospital on April 5, 2023 of cancer. A unique man, he was born into a "chaotic household" of parents, siblings, and neighboring cousins in Yonkers, New York.

leaves his brother Marshall, his devoted brother Spencer and his wife Arnel, and their children. His beloved companion and friend Ed O'Neil predeceased him by 5 months, but was pleased to know that Melvin would be buried beside him.



• Gary Russell Edwin O'Neal, 71, of Ashuelot, New Hampshire. Died March 8, 2023. He was born on April 14, 1951 and, as was written in his Hinsdale High School yearbook, "Gary will go to UNH where he will travel, see the world, then come home and learn how to make toilet paper."

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.

PETS AVAILABLE FOR ADOPTION. WINDHAM COUNTY HUMANE SOCIETY. 916 West River Rd, Brattleboro, VT 802-254-2232 • wchs4pets.org. Includes photos and descriptions of Bailey, Rebel, Lola, and Arden.

■ STORY CONTINUES ON FACING PAGE

the founder of the highly successful Winchester Pickle Festival, private chef and caterer of the Dog Daze Café, and so many countless—often quiet—charitable gestures and gifts for those in need or for those Gary knew had potential and just needed someone to believe in them. His efforts did not go unnoticed. He received a New Hampshire Volunteer of the Year Award from then-governor Jeanne Shaheen during her final year in office and was a recipient of the New Hampshire Business Committee for the Arts Award for his selfless support of the arts. His main love and driving force was his home “Crestwood,” a Scofield Mountain estate in Ashuelot which he considered to be a sanctuary for himself and anyone that came to visit. He hosted year-round weddings, private events and established New Hampshire’s smallest bed and breakfast, entertaining guests from throughout the country. It was not uncommon to hear a helicopter picking up or dropping off guests on his perfectly manicured lawn that faced beautiful sunsets at what was truly a magical place created by Gary. In between these events, his home and hearth and his bountiful meals were always there for friends and family. 2009 was the beginning of several health challenges which Gary faced head on. He was quick to respond to one medical issue with the famous 18th century “This Little Piggy” nursery rhyme. Following his toe amputation, he remarked that he no longer had his roast beef toe and with all the toes removed he no longer had a piggy market. Gary’s strength during his last few years was possible due to his unflappable sense of humor and the innate ability to see the other side of misfortune as the next step in a good and meaningful life. Gary’s final act was peaceful, sitting center stage in his leather wing-back chair in the kitchen with his loving sister Marilyn by his side. One can imagine him saying, “Ah, the show must go on.” You know Gary already had the script for his next act, way beyond Broadway! Gary leaves behind his sister Marilyn O’Neal George, her husband Stephen Hellus of Brattleboro and his Aunt Marilyn (Emily) Harding of Burlington, Massachusetts. Gary was predeceased by his father and mother, Russell and Eleanor O’Neal.

MEMORIAL INFORMATION: There will be a celebration of life on June 24 at the Winchester (N.H.) School from 1 to 4 p.m. Gary would be honored if you donated to the “Gary O’Neal Musical Theatre Scholarship” supporting student performers who have the talent, work ethic, and technique required to achieve in the triple threat (acting, singing, and dancing) in musical theater. Donations may be sent to The University of New Hampshire Foundation, 9 Edgewood Rd., Durham, NH 03824.

• **Natalie A. Patrick, 94**, of Westminster. Died peacefully at her home on April 3, 2023. She was born on May 25, 1928, in Randolph, the daughter of Forrest C. and Mildred (Shaw) Aikens of Bethel. Natalie graduated from Whitcomb High School in 1945 and later graduated from the University of Vermont, where she studying music education. She was a gifted musician and artist. On Sept. 28, 1951, she married Vermont State Police Lt. Roger K. Patrick of Richmond. They were happily married for 35 years until his death in 1986, and enjoyed their home and many friends throughout the years. Natalie was a beloved kindergarten teacher in Saxtons River for many years and she also taught music in the district. Natalie was also employed at Kurn Hattin Homes for over 42 years. Music, art, and teaching were always a huge and happy part of her life through which she touched many lives. She was loved by everyone who knew her. Natalie was a kind and gentle soul with a fabulous sense of humor and a wonderful smile. She enjoyed summer days at the ocean in Maine, camping, and playing her piano. Natalie is survived by her daughter, Gail (Robert); her son, John (Julie), granddaughters Jill (Jeb) Interlandi and Justine Anderson, and grandson, Sam (Kayla) Atwood. Natalie became a great-grandmother in December 2022, when she was blessed and overjoyed with her new twin great-grandchildren. **MEMORIAL INFORMATION:** Graveside services will be held on Saturday, April 15, at 10 a.m., at Oak Hill Cemetery in Bellows Falls. Donations to the Jada Spaulding Doyle Memorial Scholarship Fund, in care of Myriah Clark, Falls Mane Salon, Bellows Falls, VT 05101.

• **Leah Caitlin Rosin-Pritchard, 36**, of Westminster. Died suddenly on April 3, 2023 at her place of work. After Leah graduated from North Kingstown (R.I.) High School in 2004, she went on a wonderful journey of education, entrepreneurship, travel, horticulture



Forbes columnist discusses learning disability disclosure

PUTNEY — Landmark College will host a free public talk by author, journalist, and business consultant Denise Brodey on Wednesday, April 12, at 7 p.m. in the Brooks M. O’Brien Auditorium, located in the Lewis Academic Building. Brodey’s talk, entitled “LD Disclosure: Pros, Cons, and Personal Stories,” addresses the weighty decision that students with learning differences (LD) — such as dyslexia, ADHD, or autism — must make about disclosing their LD when entering the workforce. The talk will cover her personal experience, as well as those of others, to help audience members gain a deeper understanding of how to create a psychologically supported and enjoyable environment for employees with LD. Denise Brodey is a *Forbes* senior contributor and the founder of the Boston-based boutique consulting firm, Rebel Talent, which creates impact reports and interactive workshop materials for Fortune 500 companies interested in hiring unconventional talent. Her research shows leaders and managers how to create high-performing teams that embrace

Table 7

communities through policies supported by the membership. Sheffer and Demos have applied that principle in a number of ways, most recently by the development of the Table 7 program, named for core principle seven. “We created a fund so that people can come in here and get what they want, even if they might not be able to pay,” explained Demos. “And we’re not talking about passing on leftover food or what we’re about to throw out. People in need should be treated as well as people with means.” To that end, Sheffer and Demos have worked to make the Flat Iron a “community hub where people feel welcome, where they can come and make connections,” said Demos. Community contributions to the Table 7 fund from individuals and organizations at this point have provided support far beyond the initial demand. The Bellows Falls Rotary Club, which has provided startup money for the program, “has a long standing tradition of collecting ‘Happy Dollars’ from members at the beginning of each meeting,” explained Rotary member Marty Gallagher. “You pay to share your happy events with other members. The monies collected are then used at the discretion of the club.” After hearing about Table 7, the Rotary “found the concept very much in line with our kind of community focus, and knew they would likely need seed funding,” Gallagher said. “We voted to donate our Happy Dollars for the months of March, April, and

and culinary mastery — living in Pennsylvania, Colorado, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Vermont, and Rhode Island. Leah coached volleyball at Middletown (R.I.) High School, owned and operated Leah’s Recipe, LLC, produced medical cannabis, taught adult cooking classes, cooked regularly for the community at the MLK Center in Newport, Rhode Island and co-founded the Jamestown (R.I.) Farmers’ Market. Leah went on to earn her Bachelor’s in Social Work from Rhode Island College, and earned her MSW degree from Tulane University with a certificate in disaster and collective trauma. Leah dedicated her life to the service and betterment of others, most recently as a shelter coordinator at Groundworks Collaborative’s Morningside House. Leah grew up in Jamestown, Rhode Island. She and her family home were an integral part of the island community, always welcoming a broad group of friends, and family members with an open door. Leah excelled at academics, always graduating in the top tier of her class and clearly bound to make a difference in the world and leave an impact. She poured her seemingly endless energy into many jobs, activities, events, and hobbies, always keeping busy while still somehow managing to bake everyone’s birthday cakes, drop off care packages and stay up-to-date on newly released music for her sidebar DJ career. Service to others was a core part of Leah’s upbringing, and when she realized her calling into social work, it was a natural fit and progression of her life’s mission. She spent the last couple years of her life working serving the Brattleboro community, where she strove to

neurodiversity. Landmark College is requesting people RSVP at landmark.edu/brodey to help with planning light refreshments.

Craft market, barbecue benefit Marlboro firefighters

MARLBORO — On Saturday, April 15, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., there will be a craft market and barbecue to benefit the Marlboro Volunteer Fire Co. It will take place both inside and outside the Marlboro Community Center/Marlboro Meeting House at 510 South Road. There will be unique crafts and art works for sale, along with baked items and other goodies, and the fire department will be onsite, cooking up their famous barbecue. If you have questions, or if you would like to rent a table, contact Amy at 802-579-6145.

NAMI Vermont offers mental illness and recovery workshop

BRATTLEBORO — The National Alliance on Mental Illness of Vermont (NAMI Vermont) is offering a free Mental Illness and Recovery workshop for any community member who wants to learn more about mental

illness, recovery, and available resources for those dealing with mental health challenges. This daylong workshop will be held on April 22, from 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., at Brattleboro Memorial Hospital, 17 Belmont Avenue. Pre-registration is required to reserve a seat. Mental Illness and Recovery is a program developed by NAMI Vermont to provide education and information about mental health conditions. Any interested community member is encouraged to attend, including but not limited to healthcare providers, individuals with mental illness, and friends and family members of those with mental illness. Participants will learn basic information about major mental illnesses including schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, major depression, panic disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, and borderline personality disorder. The workshop also provides an overview of effective treatments for mental illness, accessing services throughout the state, evidence-based practices available in Vermont, coping strategies and crisis prevention, recovery, and next steps for making progress. Light refreshments will be provided at the workshop. There will be a lunch break (lunch not provided). The NAMI Vermont Mental Illness and Recovery

workshop is free and made possible by a grant from the Vermont Department of Mental Health. For more information or to register, visit namivt.org/mir, call Laurie at 802-876-7949, ext. 101, or email program@namivt.org.

Putney Community Cares needs drivers PUTNEY — Putney Community Cares is seeking volunteer drivers. This is a critically important service and, most commonly, volunteers drive clients to medical appointments. Their clients are older adults, individuals with young families, and anyone in Putney who needs a ride. Volunteers will need to fill out an application, including a background check. One can volunteer as needed and available. If interested, contact coordinator Ruby McAdoo at 802-387-5593 or coordinator@putneycommunitycares.org.

Furniture donations needed for fundraiser

BRATTLEBORO — St. Michael’s Episcopal Church on Putney Road has been holding Terrific Tag Sales since 1973. The event this year is scheduled

for Saturday, May 6, and will be a fundraiser for two important local organizations: Groundworks Collaborative, which helps local unhoused folks with shelter, food, healthcare, and social services, and the Windham County Heat Fund, which offers fuel assistance to people who need it. They have recently begun accepting furniture donations, and ask that people keep the Tag Sale in mind if they have any items they no longer need. Wooden items (tables, chairs, shelves, bed frames, etc.), should be actual wood, not particle board, and in good, usable condition. Photos of what you have would be very helpful. Upholstered furniture needs to be in excellent condition, and they will need to check it over in person before accepting it. Those who wish to donate any items and can’t deliver them may arrange for larger or multiple pieces to be picked up. Contact the coordinator at 802-254-7060 before 9 p.m. or email ebethvick@gmail.com to discuss your possible donations, schedule a “look over” of upholstered furniture, and to make arrangements for dropping off furniture or requesting a pick up. All donations are tax-deductible.

cooperative — that’s what drew me in,” Sheffer said. “I liked the whole idea of a cooperative instead of working for someone else. Plus, I’ve always loved this building and this space.” Both said that they were not concerned that people would abuse the program. The fact that more money has been contributed towards the Table 7 program than has been needed so far gives them hope that this trend will continue. They said they created the space because they “saw a need for people to have food and coffee who may not be able to afford it. The Flat Iron is a place where someone can go who’s having a rough time financially, and they can get lunch and still be able to pay a bill.” Patrons have also made other important connections at the coffeehouse. “We have a lot of people who have met and become friends here,” Demos explained. “It’s a place where different-minded people can get to know each other. An important part of this is seeing people connect.” In some cases, people have met others at the Flat Iron and ended up getting a job out of the connection. “We believe that a community should do its best to take care of its citizens,” said Demos.

FROM SECTION FRONT

May, hoping this would give the program a good start.”

A downtown cornerstone for more than 160 years

The Flat Iron Cooperative opened in December 2021. The iconic three-story building has been an integral part of Bellows Falls’ downtown since the mid-1800s. The upper floors have provided housing and office space over the years. In addition to the coffee shop, the ground floor has seen a variety of uses, including as an apothecary and drug store, newspaper office, and a concert venue. The concert series that eventually morphed into the Roots on the River Festival started over two decades ago with a series of shows in the space. The Flat Iron has become more than just a place to get coffee. Sheffer and Demos have opened the space for live weekly music, Rotary meetings, knitting groups, open mics, and a variety of community meetings, and they have featured a constant rotating art show featuring local artists and artist meet and greets. Demos has lived in the area for over 30 years, and worked for several years at Putney’s Green Mountain Spinnery worker-owned co-op. Sheffer moved here two years ago. Both women have been involved with a number of community projects, including volunteering to help with several Bellows Falls Downtown Development painting and beautifying events. “That idea of a worker/owner

shared rich memories, along with a dear friend community. A wake will be held on the beach at Fort Getty, Jamestown, on Saturday, April 15, from 4 to 7 p.m. To honor Leah’s memory, the family asks that you practice compassion, empathy, and kindness and, as her great-grandmother used to say, “Be ever mindful of the needs of others.”

The Flat Iron Co-op (flatironcoop.com (flatironcoop.com/about)) is open Tuesday through Sunday, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Those interested in supporting the Table 7 initiative can drop into the café and donate by cash or card.

Services

• An inurnment service for **Sonya Majdak Searles** will be held at St. Michael’s Cemetery in Brattleboro on Saturday, April 15, at noon, where Sonya will be laid to rest alongside her beloved husband “Gene” Eugene Searles. A celebration of life luncheon will follow at American Legion Post 5 on Linden Street in Brattleboro. Family and friends are kindly invited to attend. Mrs. Searles, 87, died on March 20, 2022.

• The life of **Janette Neubauer** will be celebrated on Saturday, May 6, at 1 p.m., at Trinity Lutheran Church, 161 Western Ave., Brattleboro. A reception will follow, with details to be announced. Mrs. Neubauer died on Nov. 15, 2022, at her home in Brattleboro.



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Vigil

FROM SECTION FRONT

received “a truly remarkable outpouring of support from our community, our organizational partners, and our state government. In order to allow our wider community to appropriately respond to this loss, Groundworks will be collaborating with its many community partners to cover the services it provides.”

Executive Director Josh Davis said the collaboration is needed to help Groundworks through this tragedy and allow the nonprofit’s clients to continue to receive the services they need, while staff members take the time they need to grieve, assess, begin to heal, and return to work.

“It is clear that our entire staff needs a pause in order to come together to grieve, work together toward healing, and figure out our way forward,” Davis said.

A pause for staff healing

Morningside House closed immediately after Rosin-Pritchard’s death at the shelter on April 3. Groundworks closed its overnight shelter on April 7.

The Vermont Office of Economic Opportunity is funding motel rooms for overnight shelter clients, allowing Groundworks to close both facilities until Tuesday, May 2.

“Now that we’ve secured support to continue services throughout the pause, we can begin to plan for our group process in healing,” said Groundworks’ Director of Supportive Services Jess Guardado.

In the interim, the Groundworks Leadership Team said it will focus its efforts during this three week period on three priorities — “long-term continuity of services, caring for and supporting its staff, and providing support to Leah’s family and friends.”

Services will continue at Foodworks and at the permanent supportive housing communities at Great River Terrace and The Chalet. Case management and the Representative Payee program

will also continue, and Brooks Memorial Library will be receiving and distributing client mail.

During the closure time, Groundworks said these services will be operated by their community partners and volunteers. Point people have volunteered to coordinate each area of service, and clients may reach out to the following coordinators with questions or unmet needs:

- Food — Putney Foodshelf: ops.putneyfoodshelf@gmail.com.
- Outreach to/support for shelter guests in motels — HCRS: wwentwor@hcrs.org.
- Health care — Brattleboro Memorial Hospital: rburns@bmhvt.org.
- Overall coordination and coordinator troubleshooting: kmcgraw@bmhvt.org.

Coming together

Davis, who was on a leave of absence to deal with a medical issue in his family, was among approximately 75 people at the April 7 vigil, sharing hugs and tears with colleagues and community members.

“This is so messed up,” he said.

Glenn Fletcher has been a registered nurse for 43 years. She works with the Vermont Chronic Care Initiative and had put in her retirement papers last week.

“I can’t put into words the dedication of this woman,” said Fletcher, who had worked closely with Rosin-Pritchard at Morningside House.

Rosin-Pritchard’s death hit Fletcher hard. She said that “safety has always been a problem” for people who work in social services, but that the system “doesn’t always have a way to catch” people who are in trouble.

According to court documents, Rosin-Pritchard, 37, was slain on April 3 by Zaaina Asra Zakirrah Mahvish-Jammeh, 38, who was charged with first degree murder and is now being held without bail. A psychiatric exam was ordered to determine if she is competent to stand trial.



RANDOLPH T. HOLHUT/THE COMMONS

About 75 people attended an April 7 vigil for Leah Rosin-Pritchard, the shelter coordinator at Morningside House in Brattleboro who was slain on April 3.

The vigil was organized by Sally Fegley, who manages the Morningside Commons condominium complex across the street from Morningside House, and Bonnie Gervan, who is chair of the Morningside Commons Board.

“I thought it was important that we, as neighbors, did something for Leah,” Gervan said. “This has left a lot of us shaken up.”

A second vigil is planned to honor Rosin-Pritchard and everyone involved at Groundworks for Sunday, April 16, at 2 p.m., at the Brattleboro Town Common.

According to Rev. Lise Sparrow, one of the organizers, U.S. Rep. Becca Balint, Kheya Ganguly, the state director of trauma prevention and resilience development, and Vermont Agency of Human Services Secretary Jenney Samuelson will all be present along with town leaders.

The Hallowell Singers will provide musical interludes.

With additional reporting by Kevin O’Connor of VTDigger.org.



RANDOLPH T. HOLHUT/THE COMMONS

Groundworks Collaborative Executive Director Josh Davis was at the April 7 vigil to share condolences over the death of Leah Rosin-Pritchard, the shelter coordinator at Morningside House in Brattleboro who was slain on April 3.

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- Rosalie Hagel Martin, Blue Whale Public Relations
- Social Media Influencers Colleen Blair and her sister Erin Torres, representing *Travel Like a Local*.
- Greg Lesch, executive director of the Brattleboro Area Chamber of Commerce.

The program will be moderated by Joyce Marcel, writer of award-winning cover stories for Vermont Business Magazine who also is legislative writer for *The Commons*.

Email ziagulazimi9@gmail.com for the Zoom link

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COLUMN | Arts Notebook

Black choral music looks to the future to confront the past

Kathy Bullock brings vast knowledge, eagerness to share abundant resources, passion for African American music, and commitment to its understanding



Kathy Bullock

COURTESY PHOTO

KATHY BULLOCK, Ph.D., professor emerita of music from Berea College, will lead a daylong workshop at Guilford Community Church Saturday, April 15 “to teach new choral music by Black composers, to honor their work, and to share the history of appropriation of Black music,” according to a media release.

The workshop is part of the international Black Lives Matter Commissioning Project (blmcommissioning.com) (BLMCP) in affiliation with the Vermont Conference of the United Church of Christ’s Racial Justice Task Force. Catalyzed by the 2020 murder of



ANNIE LANDENBERGER is a freelance writer who contributes regularly to these pages. She also is founder and artistic director of Rock River Players and is one half of the musical duo Bard Owl with partner T. Breeze Verdant.

George Floyd Jr, the international project emerged after a workshop at the 2021 online gathering of the Natural Voice Network (NVN) which, according to its website (naturalvoice.net), is a “network of people who work with voice and song, and who believe that

singing is everyone’s birthright, regardless of musical experience or ability.”

Facing the growing awareness that African American composers and performing artists have rarely received proper remuneration or credit for their work over the centuries, NVN participants Sian Croose and Fran André, both singers, teachers, and conductors in the United Kingdom, reached out to Bullock, an expert in African American music, to consult on and help organize the project.

The yield was the commissioning of eight new choral works by Black composers for the NVN, the fees for which would be paid by each choir based on its size.

Funds were raised from choirs and individuals throughout the United States, the U.K., and Canada, through Europe and even through New Zealand. With a key focus of the project being economic, BLMCP is “acknowledging and attempting to engage in a small but hopefully meaningful way with the economics of racism and inequality in music,” according to the website.

The new compositions by Melanie DeMore, Una May Olomolaiye, Ph.D.; Brenda Rattray, Arnaé Batson, Diane White-Clayton, Ph.D., Michael Henry, Lea Morris, and Jennifer John — four from the U.S. and four from the U.K. — offer a rich range of styles and evocations, all tapping roots of African

American culture in music and beyond. In Bullock’s workshop, the first of its kind outside the U.K., she will introduce the eight songs and teach a selection of them over the course of the day with emphasis on the context of and inspiration behind each.

The day will culminate in a panel discussion with Bullock joined by BLMCP founders and one or two composers via Zoom. The discussion will

■ SEE BULLOCK, B4

COLUMN | Creative Conversations

‘A return to a very beloved place’

‘We aim to play old music in such a way that it doesn’t sound old, and new music that sounds a bit timeless,’ says Rani Arbo of her quartet, daisy mayhem



JULIAN PARKER-BURNS, COURTESY PHOTO

Rani Arbo and daisy mayhem will perform in Putney on Saturday, April 15.

MOST WEEKDAYS, you will find Rani Arbo at Wesleyan University’s Center for the Arts, where she serves as campus and community engagement manager. But on Saturday, April 15, you will find her fronting a concert with daisy mayhem, her acclaimed folk/roots quartet.

Originally from New York City, Arbo, 55, shares her Middletown, Connecticut home with her bandmate and husband, percussionist Scott Kessel. Their son, Quinn, 19, who shared a touring life with his parents, is now off at college.

The band — which *The Boston Globe* calls “playful and profound” — includes Arbo on fiddle and guitar; Andrew Kinsey on bass, banjo, and ukelele; Anand Nayak on electric and acoustic guitars; and Kessel



VICTORIA CHERTOK began covering the arts in Windham County in 2017.

Her work is featured in *The Commons* and *Seven Days*. A harpist by training and mother of two sons, she enjoys attending concerts. (Last concert attended: *Dark Star Orchestra, Infinity Music Hall, Hartford, Connecticut.*)

on percussion. All four musicians sing and they are well known for their stunning four-part harmonies as well as their unique instrumental stylings and repertoire.

When reached by phone at her home studio recently, Arbo says “during the pandemic, we were a warm weather band and rehearsed on Anand’s porch in Massachusetts. We moved from wearing sweaters to T-shirts and then back to sweaters and then took a break during winter.”

She says the band is excited to return to Next Stage.

“We love that venue,” Arbo says. “There are certain venues that have their own personalities — like they absorb the character of all the performers who have been there before and the passion and vision of the folks who created them.”

Playing there, she says, “feels like a duet with the building — with the stage — in a great way.” She calls it “a return to a very beloved place.”

In an email to *The Commons*, Barry Stockwell, production director and one of the five founders of Next Stage Arts Project, notes, “Regulars on the Twilight Music artist roster for the past 20 years, first at Hooker-Dunham Theater & Gallery and now at Next Stage, Rani Arbo & daisy mayhem consistently stands out as a highlight of our programming.”

■ SEE ARBO, B4

Lynn Zimmerman leads ‘negative painting’ class in Bellows Falls

BELLOWS FALLS—The Saxtons River Art Guild (SRAG) announces a one day workshop given by Lynn Zimmerman on Saturday, April 15, at the United Church of Bellows Falls, 8 School Street, from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

The workshop theme is “Negative Painting in Watercolor.” This all-new workshop will feature ways of working to build paintings that preserve the beautiful luminosity of watercolor. Participants will experiment with some

wet-on-wet techniques in ways that build intense color and bright lights, using paints fresh from the tube to ensure rich color when working with lots of water.

“Negative painting is not always an intuitive way to paint, so we need to practice,” organizers wrote in a news release. “We will use methods to paint around the light areas of our paintings and allow them to glow. At least some experience with watercolor will be helpful. A list of

■ SEE ZIMMERMAN, B4



COURTESY PHOTO

One of Lynn Zimmerman’s watercolors.

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Decatur Creek to perform with Bill Wolston in BF

BELLOWS FALLS—Decatur Creek is Beth Eldridge, Doug Farrell, and Jack Henry. Each is a New Hampshire musician, singer-songwriter, and performer, and together, organizers say, they “write and play some of the most tasteful original music in the region, with sharp focus on songcraft and vocals.”

Bill Wolston of Newport, N.H., plays keyboard and writes songs of love, loss, pride of place, and nature, influenced by John Prine, Stephen Sondheim, Lucinda Williams, and Gram Parsons. This will be a 3:00 matinee show on Sunday, April 16 at Stage 33 Live, 33 Bridge Street in Bellows Falls, Vermont. Tickets are \$10 in advance or at the door; advance tickets reserve a seat up front. Limited seating; the event will be recorded and filmed.

The COVID-19 protocol will be the guidelines in effect in the community on show day; currently the guidance is that masks are optional, which may change without notice. Please do not attend if experiencing any respiratory virus symptoms. A pair of high-capacity air purifiers will

be running. Stage 33 Live is a casual and intimate industrial-rustic listening room in a former factory hosting local, regional, and national performances and presentations of original material. With no bar or kitchen, the stage is the mission, say organizers; “beverages and weird snacks available by donation.” More info about the non-profit, all-volunteer project, and this and other upcoming events, online at stage33live.com

Stage 33 Live gratefully acknowledges the help of so many individuals without whom none of this would be happening, and institutional support this season from The Island Corporation, the Vermont Arts Council, the Bellows Falls Opera House, the Rockingham Arts & Museum Project, and WOOL-FM that helped fund improvements and maintenance, and generally smooth out a lot of the rough edges. Stage 33 Live is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, and all donations are deductible to the fullest extent. Volunteers run the thing from stem to stern.

Literary Cocktail Hour hosts journalist and author David Maraniss

BRATTLEBORO—On Friday, April 14, at 5 p.m., the Brattleboro Literary Festival’s Literary Cocktail Hour will present Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist David Maraniss, author of *Path Lit By Lightning: The Life of Jim Thorpe*. Maraniss will be in conversation with Bob Parks, president of the board of the Brattleboro Literary Festival.

Jim Thorpe rose to world fame as a mythic talent who excelled at every sport. He won gold medals in the decathlon and pentathlon at the 1912 Stockholm Olympics, was an All-American football player at the Carlisle Indian School, was the star of the first class of the Pro Football Hall of Fame, and played major league baseball for John McGraw’s New York Giants. Even in a golden age of sports celebrities, Thorpe was one of a kind. But despite his colossal skills, Thorpe’s life was a struggle against the odds.

As a member of the Sac and Fox Nation, he encountered duplicitous authorities who turned away from him when

their reputations were at risk.

At Carlisle, he dealt with the racist assimilationist philosophy “Kill the Indian, Save the Man.” His gold medals were unfairly rescinded because he had played minor league baseball. His later life was troubled by alcohol, broken marriages, and financial distress.

Thorpe roamed from state to state and took bit parts in Hollywood films, but even the film of his own life failed to improve his fortunes. For all his travails, Thorpe did not succumb. The man survived, complications and all, and so did the myth.

David Maraniss is a *New York Times* best-selling author, fellow of the Society of American Historians, and visiting distinguished professor at Vanderbilt University. He has been affiliated with *The Washington Post* for more than 40 years as an editor and writer, and twice won Pulitzer Prizes at the newspaper.

In 1993, he received the Pulitzer Prize for National Reporting for his coverage of

Bill Clinton, and in 2007 he was part of a team that won a Pulitzer for coverage of the Virginia Tech shooting. He was also a Pulitzer finalist three other times, including for one of his books, *They Marched Into Sunlight*.

He has won many other major writing awards, including the George Polk Award, the Robert F. Kennedy Book Prize, the Anthony Lukas Book Prize, and the Frankfurt eBook Award. *A Path Lit By Lightning* is his 13th book. He and his wife Linda, a retired environmentalist, live in Washington, D.C., and Madison, Wisconsin, their home town.

Bob Parks is a Curriculum Developer at MIT in Boston and a freelance writer of long-form stories on inventors, design, and energy innovations for *Bloomberg Businessweek*, *Wired*, and *Make*. He loves to run and finished the Boston Marathon in 2014 in 2 hours, 54 minutes. Bob lives in Brattleboro with his wife and their son and daughter.

Register for this free online event at bit.ly/LitCocktail29.

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Ritual face painting is focus of two BMAC events

BRATTLEBORO—Boston-based artist Daniel Callahan, whose work is on view in the exhibition “En-MassQ” at the Brattleboro Museum & Art Center (BMAC), will give an artist talk and host a participatory MassQing workshop focused on his unique practice of “MassQing,” a ritual marking of the face with paint that aims to reveal the inner essence of his subjects and to find “connection and communion with all things.”

Callahan’s BMAC exhibit is on view through Thursday, June 11. The exhibit and related events are supported by a grant from The Artist’s Resource Trust.

Callahan’s artistic practice is related to longstanding traditions of face painting as a means by which individuals shape their identities by marking, decorating, and adorning the body. Callahan’s

MassQs also draw attention to contemporary ways in which people present themselves and perceive others through bodily appearances.

Through collaboration, “Callahan seeks to connect with the people he MassQs,” say organizers, “and his resulting multimedia works are a platform through which he shares their stories.”

“Simultaneously symbolic, abstract, and figurative, MassQs aim to change the way we ‘look’ in both meanings of the word: how we appear to others and how we gaze upon them in turn,” Callahan writes in an essay accompanying the BMAC exhibition. “The broader socio-political and racial implications of how we look determine our collective reality.”

On Friday, April 21, at 7 p.m.,

Callahan will give an artist talk in which he will discuss his multidisciplinary work and its themes, influences, and evolutions.

Topics will include media, mysticism, Afrofuturism, personal and community expression, and the role of art, culture, and ritual in human society. This event will take place in person at BMAC and via Zoom and Facebook Live. Registration is optional, and walk-ins are welcome.

On Saturday, April 22, at 2 p.m., Callahan will host an art-making workshop, also at BMAC. He will share the techniques and meaning behind his practice of “MassQing,” and participants will create their own MassQs.

This event will take place in person at BMAC. Space is limited, and registration is required. Tickets, which are

\$55, \$45 for BMAC members, can be purchased online at brattleboromuseum.org or by calling 802-257-0124, ext. 101.

Daniel Callahan is a multimedia artist, award-winning filmmaker, and designer. His work has been featured at the Museum of Fine Arts, Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Institute of Contemporary Art, New Orleans Museum of Art, and Queens Museum, as well as in publications such as *Believer Magazine*, *The Bay State Banner*, *Smithsonian Press*, and *Words Beats & Life: The Global Journal of Hip-Hop Culture*.

He holds a master’s in film and video from Emerson College and a Bachelor of Fine Arts and Africana studies from the University of Pennsylvania School of Design.

Lez Zeppelin rocks the Latchis on April 21

BRATTLEBORO—Lez Zeppelin, the all female Led Zeppelin tribute band, will rock the Latchis Theatre on Friday, April 21, at 8 p.m.

Founded in 2004 by guitarist Steph Paynes, the band has garnered critical acclaim as one of the most exciting live acts around. “Lez Zeppelin stays true to the spirit of the original,” organizers say, “delivering the legendary rock band’s blistering arrangements and monstrous sound note-for-note.” *The Guardian* called them “the best tribute band in the world.” Chuck Klosterman of *SPIN* magazine called them “the most powerful all-female band in rock history.”

In 2013, Led Zeppelin guitarist Jimmie Page saw the band and said, “they played the Led Zeppelin music with an extraordinary sensuality and an energy and passion that highlighted their superb musicianship.”

When Joe Perry of Aerosmith heard their studio album, *Lez Zeppelin I*, a re-make of Led Zeppelin’s first album, he said “I have never heard it done better.”

“The thing that sets Lez Zeppelin apart is the seamless and unique way they inject their gender-bending performance into the original material,” say organizers. They have been featured

Artist Dan Folgar leads workshop on creating diary comics at Putney Library

PUTNEY—Putney Public Library, 55 Main Street, hosts Putney School art teacher Dan Folgar for a free class on creating diary comics on Wednesday, April 19, from 6:30 to 8 p.m.

Comics are a versatile medium for storytelling. The Vermont Humanities Council’s “Vermont Reads” book selection for this year, *The Most Costly Journey*, is a non-fiction comics anthology of stories told by Latin American migrant farmworkers in Vermont accompanied by artists’ illustrations.

Vermont Reads brings communities together around stories, ideas, and activities that are important to the life of towns of all sizes. As a recipient of a

Vermont Reads grant, Putney Public Library is circulating copies of the book to encourage as many people in the Putney community as possible to read on the same topic.

The Most Costly Journey presents stories of survival and healing as part of the El Viaje Más Caro project — a health care outreach effort aimed at addressing the overlooked mental health needs of these vulnerable immigrants.

Originally distributed to farm workers as individual Spanish language comic books, this collected edition brings the lives and voices — as well as the challenges and hardships — of these workers to an English-language audience, granting insight into

the experiences and lives of the people vital to producing our food.

Folgar is a Venezuelan-born artist and cartoonist who grew up in Miami, Florida. He is the current associate director of The Putney School Summer Arts program, and a member of the school’s evening arts faculty, leading workshops in comics and animation.

Participants will create a short autobiographical comic with Folgar, using basic materials to create comics that are easy to reproduce and share. This is an all ages program, but children younger than eight need to be accompanied by an adult.

For more information, contact the library at 802-387-4407.

Summer Series at Next Stage offers music, culture, diversity, and creativity

PUTNEY—Next Stage Arts announces the lineup for the third summer of its outdoor, cultural performance series, running from May through October throughout Windham County. The series will include more than 20 performances ranging from a diverse group of musical styles, dance, and puppetry that will take place in fields, farms, and parks throughout the area.

“The Bandwagon Summer Series is an opportunity to cultivate friendships, experience new music, and bask in Vermont’s outdoor beauty,” Keith Marks, executive director of Next Stage Arts, said in a news release. “The series began as a response to Covid, and it has blossomed into something the community looks forward to every summer. Kids running around, Vermont-made food and drinks, and the lineup add up to be an attractive way to meet friends and family. This year’s lineup is easily the best we’ve had yet.”

The Bandwagon Summer Series kicks off on Friday, May 19, at 6 p.m., with the return of Next Stage favorites Underground System, the Brooklyn-based, Afrobeat-influenced indie dance band that “blew everyone away at the Putney Inn last summer,” Marks said.

The Stone Church, which hosted Underground System in February, joins Next Stage as copresenters. The venue is TBA.

The following week, Saturday, May 27, at 6 p.m., Crocodile River Music brings their African and African-influenced blend of Brazilian, Caribbean, and flamenco music to Retreat Farm.

The series continues with Canadian singer-songwriter Kiran Ahluwalia, whose nearly two decades of music making have taken her from Punjabi folk and Indian classical music to refreshingly original borderless songs. She performs on Friday, June 2, at 6 p.m., venue TBA.

The series continues throughout the summer and fall. Series passes and ticket bundles are available for purchase now; tickets to individual shows will go on sale in coming weeks.

The full roster, with information about ticket options, can be found at nextstagearts.org. The series invites children 12 and under into any concert for free, boasts a kids’ play zone, and the organization donates free tickets to every public library in Windham County and to select social service agencies. Vermont-made food and drinks will be available.

on the BBC, CNN, ABC, CBS, MTV and VH-1, on radio shows worldwide, and on thousands of festival and concert stages, including Madison Square Garden and Bonnaroo.

The current Lez Zeppelin lineup includes Steph Paynes (guitar), Marlain Angelides (vocals), Leesa Harrington Squyres (drums), and Joan Chew (bass, keys).

The concert is sponsored by Ramunto’s, with media sponsorship by Q106 and The Peak 101.9 and 100.7. Tickets are \$61 (VIP), \$36 (Orchestra), \$27 (Balcony) and are available at latchis.com.

WEDNESDAY CONT. FROM B2

The written word

PUTNEY Vermont Reads at Putney Library: "Creating Diary Comics" with Artist Dan Folgar: Comics are a versatile medium for storytelling. The VT Humanities Council’s VT Reads book selection for this year, “The Most Costly Journey,” is an anthology of comics telling stories of VT farm workers using their words/illustrations by artists. Join us and create a short autobiographical comic with Putney School art teacher Dan Folgar. We’ll use basic materials to create comics easy to reproduce and share.

- ▶ 6:30-8 p.m. All ages program, but children younger than age 8 need adult accompaniment.
- ▶ Free.
- ▶ Putney Public Library, 55 Main St. Information: 802-387-4407; putneylibrary.org/events.

Well-being

BRATTLEBORO Healthcare Resource Info Hours - Medicaid and other Healthcare Questions: Members of VT Worker’s Center will provide information about the Medicaid re-determinations that just started this month. Drop in to find out about re-determinations, how you might be impacted, and what you can do if you are cut off. There will also be resources answering other questions about healthcare - not only Medicaid - and the opportunity to participate in a healthcare survey.

- ▶ 2-4 p.m.
- ▶ Free.
- ▶ Brooks Memorial Library, 224 Main St. Information: 802-254-5290; brookslibraryvt.org.



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Arbo

The stylistic range of music that they can cover so well is astounding — uplifting and wildly entertaining.”

The Commons spoke to Arbo recently about her band’s name, cathedral choirs, and what makes Putney and Brattleboro audiences so special. Here is an excerpt of the conversation.

VICTORIA CHERTOK: How did you come up with your band’s name?

RANI ARBO: My friend was in an all-women’s punk band in Minneapolis called “Daisy Mayhem,” which was named for a Hanna-Barbera cartoon character from the Scooby-Doo TV show. When they broke up I thought to myself, “That is a great band name, and I wonder if I could use it.”

V.C.: Do you write all of your own songs? Any covers?

R.A.: We have a bunch of songwriters in the band, so we play everyone’s original songs and also covers from familiar and less-well-known artists. We also love the sound and soul of traditional music from the public domain. So we weave from all three of those threads.

One of the things that we’ve enjoyed playing with is blending some of the sounds you have found in traditional music that’s been around for hundreds of years, particularly the fiddle, banjo, and vocal stylings of Appalachian music, as well as a bit of bluegrass, blues, and swing. Those sounds thread into our original music as well.

We aim to play old music in such a way that it doesn’t sound old, and new music that sounds a bit timeless.

V.C.: I hear you have a special guest joining you at your Next Stage show.

R.A.: Yes! Anna Patton is an incredible clarinet player, songwriter, and arranger. She directs the Soubrette Jazz Choir (vtjazz.org/soubrette-choir) in Brattleboro. It’s such a treat to have her on stage with us. She’s guested with us a couple of times and will join us for several songs.

V.C.: You mentioned that the Putney and Brattleboro audiences are special. What makes them so?

R.A.: For one thing, we have lots of old friends in the audience, since we have returned to the area many times. It’s a very

special community, in part because Brattleboro is home to an incredible community of musicians and artists. There are lots of local choirs: the Hollowell Singers hospice choir and local church choirs led by Peter and Mary Alice Amidon and Mary Cay Brass, and local arts organizations that lift up jazz, circus arts, visual arts, and more. It’s a really special place.

Another special Brattleboro-Putney memory hinges on a song I wrote, decades ago. “Crossing the Bar” is an elegy poem by Alfred Lord Tennyson that I set to music. Hollowell and other hospice choirs have been singing it at bedsides and in other hospice settings.

It is a huge honor for me to have a song leave me and be able to travel and do good in the world through other people, who make it their own. Some years ago, we had a chance to partner with Hollowell to sing it together.

There’s something about songs and singing that knits people together, and our Putney-Brattleboro audiences are always full of singers!

V.C.: I heard you say that you think about music as kind of “good medicine.” What does that mean to you?

R.A.: Yes, I think our music is good medicine. It certainly is for me, and for all of us in the band.

One of the things we hear often from audience members on their way out is, “I really had a hard day, and I’m feeling so much better after this show.” It’s one of the amazing things that remind me as a musician that I can make a difference, even if it’s just in how someone’s day feels.

That’s why we’re here. That is the way we approach all of our shows — to have fun with each other, listen to each other, be present with each other — because we are old friends, and there is something about that which translates into an audience experience that feels really welcoming and gentle and inviting.

Healing and lifting spirits... we endeavor to have a band where we can do that for each other, and I hope that is contagious. Come sing with us!

Bullock

focus on the historic underacknowledgement and undercompensation of African American musicians and how proper acknowledgement can help rectify the impacts of racism in the field of music.

An inspiring and powerful performer, as well as teacher, musicologist, and choral leader, Bullock, who has received a host of awards and honors, has worked around the world lecturing, performing, and working with groups to help build understanding, value, and appreciation of Black music.

Bullock, notes Rev. Lise Sparrow, Windham County NAACP’s chair of religious affairs, knows “depth and

V.C.: Who were some of your early music influences growing up in New York City?

R.A.: Oh, what a great question. I sang in a cathedral choir, so musically the experience of being one in a sea of voices in a big community space was really formative. I spent a lot of time at it — close to 25 hours per week from age 7-14. That was an incredible experience for me.

In high school and college, the usual rainbow of singer/songwriters from that time: Bonnie Raitt, June Tabor, Patty Griffin, and Shawn Colvin. Some of those were at the top of their young careers when I was thinking about being a singer.

That is something that happened really slowly for me when I was transitioning from being a choir member to a lead singer. It happened by accident.

My first band, Salamander Crossing, evolved out of a jam session. It got fun, and we got better at it, and people started asking us to play shows. All of a sudden I was singing leads.

V.C.: When did you know that you wanted to be a singer?

R.A.: I was working in Northampton, Mass. at *FamilyFun* magazine. I didn’t plan on music being a career when I was working at the magazine; I left in 1996 thinking, “Oh, I’m not going to want to tour when I’m 40, so I might as well do it now.” I freelanced for a few magazines while we toured coffeehouses, performing arts centers and festivals in

Zimmerman

suggested supplies will be sent upon registration.”

Zimmerman says she is excited by color and the beauty of natural things, and she combines those in her work in watercolor, oil, acrylic, gouache, colored pencil, and ink painting. “Her works show her love of detail as well as a grasp of the bigger sweep of life and light,” say organizers.

She studied at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art and the Rhode Island School of Design and has worked as a graphic designer and illustrator for more than 30 years. She offers instruction in watercolor, oil, and

FROM SECTION FRONT

North America and Canada. Salamander Crossing turned into daisy mayhem in 2000, and my partner Scott Kessel joined the new band. We had a son, Quinn, in 2004, and took him on the road with us. All of a sudden I was past 40 and still touring and having a great time.

I took a steadier job in 2017 when Quinn was 13; we still toured, but were flying less, in part in consideration of environmental concerns and working around everyone’s family commitments. We are really happy to be rooted in New England.

V.C.: What was it like to play cello first and then switch to fiddle?

R.A.: I played classical cello for nine years, through the end of high school. I needed a break from the pressure of the classical world that I was in and took up fiddle while I studied at Amherst College.

Being in the Pioneer Valley meant I was exposed to fiddle music, Cajun, Québécois, and contradance music. I really loved those sounds, the way the fiddle can harmonize with itself and the way it can dance.

I am a harmony person... that is all I want in my life!

RANI ARBO & DAISY MAYHEM (raniarbo.com) will perform at Next Stage Arts Project, 15 Kimball Hill, Putney on Saturday, April 15 at 7:30 p.m. Tickets are \$25 at the door. To purchase advance tickets (\$22), visit bit.ly/710-rani.

FROM SECTION FRONT

gouache painting, as well as drawing, book arts, and collage. Her emphasis is on gently supporting each student along their creative journey.

The workshop fee is \$70 for SRAG members and \$90 for non-members. There will be coffee and tea available. Participants are asked to please bring a lunch.

For more information, email Zimmerman at lynn@luckydogdesign.com. To register for the workshop, email Carolyn Berglund at poohbear@ne.rr.com. Masks and COVID-19 vaccinations are required to attend the SRAG workshops.

FROM SECTION FRONT

She happened in one of our sessions to mention Mary Alice and Peter Amidon. Thus unfolded her decades-long connection to southern Vermont through ongoing work with the Amidons, Mary Cay Brass, Village Harmony, and its co-founder, the late Larry Gordon.

Though retired after nearly 30 years at Berea, the first integrated coeducational college in the South, where she chaired the music department for several years, Bullock is still in perpetual motion.

Having been involved in Mat Callahan’s collecting project *Songs of Slavery and Emancipation*, for which she provided many of the choral arrangements, she’s back teaching with focus on “songs of protest and praise” this semester at Bennington College, where she was a visiting professor last year.

She’ll be working again with Mary Cay Brass and other area musicians, then teaching the eight compositions at various camps this summer before leading yet another group of students to Ghana, which she’s done many times, for Berea College. All the while she remains a key player in the pandemic-generated online Daily Antidote of Song

Of Bullock, Sparrow observes that “perhaps one of her greatest gifts is her capacity to sit at virtually any keyboard or piano and invite the participation of any congregation or group of people.”

Bullock, she says, “has a vibrant, larger-than-life personality but is also somehow able to encourage any class of singer [and] her intuitive sense of the moment is well matched by her depth of knowledge.”

IDENTICAL WORKSHOPS will be held from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturday, April 15 at Guilford Community Church, United Church of Christ in Guilford and on Saturday, May 13 at Malletts Bay Congregational, United Church of Christ, in Colchester.

The workshops are open to anyone interested in supporting Black composers, but especially to singers and choral directors who can share this music in their communities.

The cost of the workshops is \$30 per participant. To register, visit vtucc.org/blmchoirworkshop.

THE COLONIAL

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MUTTS GONE NUTS 4.16

WHOSE LIVE ANYWAY? 4.22

ONE NIGHT of QUEEN 4.25

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ESSAY

'It all brought me home'

For an exchange student in Brattleboro, her first Ramadan away from home turned from melancholy to memorable

UN'TIL THIS YEAR, I'd never spent even a month away from my mother. Now I had flown across the seven seas to an adventure I could never have imagined. It would have been sufficient to experience a new family, a new school, new friends. But I never imagined that I would have an experience of Ramadan here in Brattleboro that would be so memorable. Ramadan is a month of blessings for Muslims and a time during which we try as best we can to help those in need. In that spirit, a friend and I decided that we wanted to reach out and help prepare a special meal on the first night of Ramadan, an iftar meal particularly for the refugees from Afghanistan who have settled in our area. One thing quickly led to another: interactions with interested teenagers from Putney, then meetings at The Works. And then — it happened!

LAIBA EAGER, a sophomore at Brattleboro Union High School, is an exchange student from Pakistan. This piece comes us to us from *Compassionate Brattleboro*.
eaten before dawn and before the fast — without my family. With the help of technology, however, I made some short video clips of the food I was cooking, and sent them to my mother, so we would be connected again. And then I went off to school to share the blessings of the holiday with teachers and friends and to wish them all "Happy Ramadan."
AFTER SCHOOL, I was picked up by the woman who had taken responsibility for the event, held at St. Michael Catholic School. I jumped right in, helping set up the tables, welcoming the guests, and bringing out the food from St. Bridgid's Kitchen for the iftar meal.

Once again, I experienced a moment of melancholy — an iftar meal without my family. And yet there I was, surrounded by friends, hearing the adhan, the call to prayer, by one of our new Afghan neighbors, as I savored the heavenly taste of the first date I put in my mouth. It all brought me home. Before we knew it, the event was over, and it was time to clean up. That was also fun. We put the chairs and tables back, returned the food to the kitchen, and then used trash bags to clear up the area. After everyone left, I stayed behind with a group of new friends and we dried dishes together. I smile now when I think about the effort made by so many, and the genuine expressions of appreciation offered by those partaking. It was Ramadan at its very best. I returned with a full stomach and a big smile to share the experience with my wonderful second family. Who could have imagined?

VIEWPOINT



All children are vulnerable to this madness

An unholy alliance between politicians and the NRA has blocked Congress from taking meaningful action to protect the nation's children from gun violence in their schools

THE U.S. SPENDS \$1.73 trillion a year for national defense, but we cannot protect our children from being shot in school. The recent carnage at the Covenant School in Nashville — the 13th school shooting this year — proves again that all children are vulnerable to this madness. Twenty years ago, the gun industry began to aggressively market assault-style weapons, particularly the AR-15, which became a cash cow. Today, one of every four guns made in the U.S. is an AR-15. Although it's designed to rapidly inflict mass casualties in combat, almost anybody can easily get one. The Nashville shooter, despite being treated for an emotional disorder, had seven legally purchased weapons, including an assault rifle he used to kill six people. Thanks to our lax attitude toward firearms, gun makers have enjoyed record-breaking profits, and shootings have become the leading cause of death among American children and teens.

BILL DUNKEL is a retired educator.
American people because commonsense gun control would hurt the organization's bottom line. Wayne LaPierre, the head of the NRA, has an estimated net worth of \$20 million and flies his family around in private jets. Politicians, mostly conservative Republicans, benefit from NRA campaign contributions and lobbying efforts on their behalf. This unholy alliance has blocked Congress from taking meaningful action to protect the nation's children, despite the fact that polls show the majority of the American people want something to be done. DURING THE 1960s, massive protests, marches, and acts of peaceful civil disobedience, often led by students, helped end the Vietnam War and galvanize support for key civil rights legislation. The American public needs to become similarly aroused today, and there are signs that it's happening. Last January, Students Demand Action engaged in protests at the

National Shooting Sports Federation trade show in Las Vegas. A few weeks ago, 1,000 students and teachers in Denver left school, walked to the statehouse, and demanded action for gun safety after one of their classmates was gunned down. We need more direct action like this — a lot more. SADLY, THINGS have devolved to the point where we also need police or trained security professionals (not civilian vigilantes or overworked teachers) on guard at every school in the nation, pre-K through high school. (Most colleges already have campus police.) Even if we succeed in banning future sales of the most lethal weapons, so many remain in circulation that some inevitably will fall into the hands of deranged, would-be mass shooters. Yes, it will cost a lot of money to provide this level of professional protection for our children. Maybe we need to cancel an aircraft carrier or get by with fewer F-35s at \$135 million apiece. This is the price we need to pay for handing out guns like Halloween candy to anybody who wants one.

GUN ADVOCACY GROUPS, like the National Rifle Association, know where their bread is buttered. They have systematically sold an extreme, warped interpretation of the Second Amendment to the

LETTERS FROM READERS

Redundancy needed in communications services

RE: "Residents discuss long power loss, information vacuum in storm" [News, Apr. 5]. Regarding your story on the loss of utilities in the recent storm, I noted a similar problem on May 27, 2022 and I wrote to the Public Service Department and our legislators about it. "Today, southern Vermont suffered what seems to have been about an 18-hour internet outage for Consolidated Communications customers," I wrote. "There was apparently no public information disbursed about this outage; the recorded message at Consolidated said the same thing all day: that a technical difficulty was being investigated." "The outage seems to have been associated with AT&T cell service interruptions and VPR radio transmission interruptions. We were unable to use the internet or our cell phones to find out what was going on. Luckily we have kept our landline. How are all these things tied together?"

'This is a moment for all of us to show up'

RE: "Brattleboro approves \$20.5M budget for FY24" [News, March 29]. The workers in Windham County who deliver public and human services are much-loved unsung heroes of our towns. On April 3, a tragic death occurred at Morningside House, the shelter run by Groundworks Collaborative. Groundworks is one of the recipients of a few thousand dollars each year from the Town of Brattleboro. Our human services workers — at Groundworks and beyond — show up every day to provide the tough work of providing care in a fraying and violent society. If ever there were a time to support our human services workers, this would be it. As an elected member of Brattleboro Representative Town Meeting, I was proud to vote last month for improvements to Living Memorial Park which included critical upgrades for the skating rink facility. But I'm also proud of another vote, for a much smaller budget line item: A tiny increase to the portion of the 2025 town budget for human services. We voted to increase support for human service agencies by a fraction of a percentage point to 2% of the overall fiscal year 2025 budget. Compared to the multi-million dollar project of improving our park facilities, or spending tens of thousands marketing our town, the relatively small increase for human services garnered more expressions of fear of increased taxes than perhaps anything else on the agenda. But the majority of people at Representative Town Meeting voted to support the increased investments in the people of our town with greatest need — older adults, young people, people who are unhoused, and other residents. I am proud to live in a town that, after much debate, ultimately chose generosity over fear at Representative Town Meeting. This is a moment for all of us to show up — with our best, kindest selves.

It concerns me greatly that in order to take advantage of Consolidated Communications' Fidium fiber internet, customers are required to switch from copper-wire landlines to VOIP (voice over internet) telephone service. This means that when the internet fails (which will happen during a power failure, unless you have expensive batteries), your home phone will also fail. (For this reason, my household has rejected Fidium fiber.) As we saw in March, when internet service fails, cell service and radio can be affected at the same time. It seems to me that if our communications platforms are interdependent, we are less resilient when natural disasters strike. The state of Vermont should require communications companies of all sorts to provide redundancy in their systems so that they can carry on operations in these circumstances. They are essential services and lives depend upon them.

Rebecca Bartlett Brattleboro
Isaac Evans-Frantz Brattleboro

The writer represents Brattleboro's District 1 as a member of Representative Town Meeting.



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RESPONSE

We are life, too, and we need to stay warm

We have a responsibility to cause as little harm as possible, which is why I hope the Affordable Heat Act puts real muscle behind the effort to insulate all Vermont buildings well

JESSIE HAAS is the author of 41 books for children and adults, and a writer for Green Energy Times. This piece is in response to "A dirty truth" (Viewpoint, March 29).

REGENERATIVE FARMERS like to say, "It's not the cow, it's the how," when people tell them animal agriculture is overheating the planet. I'm not clever enough to think up a saying like to defend wood heat, but the same concept applies: If we do it dumb, it's bad. If we do it smart, it isn't.

So in response to Rick Cowan, here are a couple of thoughts about the Affordable Heat Act.

One: I sure was glad my mom had a wood stove during her recent 72-hour outage. Unlike most of her neighbors, she was warm and comfortable.

Two: All wood will eventually release its carbon and methane, whether it is burned or not. If it rots, it will not give off black soot, so that's a clear gain. So, too, is the nourishment and housing a dead tree provides for all kinds of wildlife.

But we are life, too, and we need to stay warm. We have a responsibility to cause as little harm as possible, which is why I hope the Affordable Heat Act puts real muscle behind the effort to insulate all Vermont

buildings well.

As to wood pellets, they are a far cleaner and more efficient way to burn wood. That means fewer trees die, and there are fewer emissions than from cordwood.

AND HERE'S where the "how" comes in: Pellets here in the Northeast are made mostly from the waste wood from lumber mills. They do not come from monoculture "forests" in the South, and they are not shipped thousands of miles to reach us.

Pellet mills are widely scattered, and the companies ship from whatever mill is nearest, just as we'd want them to do. Lisa Merton and Alan Dater's film *Burned: Are Trees the New Coal?* is highly accurate for what it's talking about, but that is not the pellet industry of the

Northeast. Here, we have a rare fit between the natural world and human needs.

Fuel comparisons need to go far beyond measurements of emissions at the smokestack to include the entire life cycle of the fuel. In the Northeast, wood is local and regenerates abundantly, adding to and subtracting from atmospheric carbon depending on the stage of the tree's life, while keeping wealth in our communities.

Our goal should be to avoid burning any kind of fuel, but until we have solar everything, we must make tradeoffs.

We do have an obligation to do our best, and that's not charity. We are nature. We depend on the cycle of life in all its forms, many of which we are far from understanding. Probably the best thing for the planet would be if we humans largely died off, but I ain't fer it.

So I support S.5, warily. We'll need to keep an eye on things. If it turns out there are mistakes in the law, we must fix them down the road.

The most important thing is to get those buildings insulated. Then all our problems will be much smaller.

LETTERS FROM READERS

Only books can stir the imagination to ask the questions you hadn't thought of

As members of the Vermont Antiquarian Booksellers Association, we have dedicated at least a portion of our lives to the care and maintenance of used and rare books. Our shops preserve books and make them available to new readers.

So it's no surprise that we

were horrified to learn of the proposal by the administration of our state's public university to eliminate physical books from the institutions they lead. To paraphrase Cicero, a library without books is like a body without a soul.

Learning should not be conflated with the mere acquisition of information, any more than a college education should end with learning any particular set of skills.

Rather, education — and the books that fill libraries (and,

of course, our bookstores) — should be pathways to opening our minds, to developing our curiosity, and to the extraordinary pleasure of pursuing that curiosity to wherever it leads.

Information alone — whatever its format — simply cannot do this. The mission of any university is to teach its students how to learn and, if possible, to love learning.

We certainly acknowledge that the digitization of information, and the computers and internet which undergird it, provide enormous benefits not just to students and faculty, but to all. In our times, a university library without access to digital information is unthinkable, but by the same token so, too, is a library without books. This is not an either/or proposition.

It boils down to this. Digital information is a great way to get answers to the questions you've already asked, but only books can stir the imagination to ask the questions you hadn't thought of. Anyone who has tried to browse books on the internet understands this difference. The book you were looking for may easily be found on the internet, but in a shop or a library, the book you came to find might be sitting next to the one you didn't know existed but ended up changing your life.

Let's give the last word to Stephen Fry: "Books are no more threatened by Kindle than stairs by elevators."

VERMONT ANTIQUARIAN BOOKSELLERS ASSOCIATION
John Greenberg (The Book Bear, Marlboro) on behalf of officers and members

How much can police sensitivity training accomplish?

Years ago my wife and I came to an unscientific conclusion: that, past the age of 27, one's basic personality rarely changes. And later, more

specifically, we included attitudes: about race, gender, color, nationality, or religion.

We still think that is true: who we are as a person, including our attitudes about different others, is quite fixed before we're 30.

So, every time we read about "sensitivity" or "implicit bias" training (or have undergone such training ourselves), we wonder whether it accomplishes much. Or whether in fact being told how we ought to think and behave may harden prejudices (especially with overmuch indoctrination).

For a number of years we've wondered especially about efforts to retrain police to deal appropriately with people they're policing. And our sense is that that training is of marginal use — beyond enabling management to say they're trying.

(According to a 2020 NPR report on a major independent study of the New York City Police Department. "It's fair to say that we could not detect effects of the training on officers' enforcement behaviors," said Robert Worden, lead author of the study by the John F. Finn Institute for Public Safety.)

What would be of use is thoughtful screening of applicants for police work, including two-stage screening for excess aggressiveness.

First, careful scrutiny of the candidate's background, and then close observation in the police academy (which could include assessment by candidates' peers, proven useful in other settings).

Some of that likely is done already. But I expect it could be done better, and be more effective, than sensitivity training of police once on the force.

Byron Stookey
Brattleboro

'I see a lot of good being done. I don't see a lot of restraint in making choices, in prioritizing.'

RE: "Brattleboro approves \$20.5M budget for FY24" [News, March 29]:

I left Brattleboro's Representative Town Meeting on March 25 perturbed. A lot of good was voted for. Not much restraint was in evidence. I was also unsettled because I think a

lot of District 1 (now District 7) residents would not agree with all the spending that was approved, but I failed to articulate my concerns.

We representatives wrestled for a good while with Article 23, about how large a human services budget to recommend for FY25 (i.e., for July 1, 2024 through June 30, 2025). The budget for this coming year will be some \$280,891. A motion to raise that to 2% of budget (or approximately \$400,000) the following year was made, seconded, debated, and ultimately passed.

We have a great Human Services Committee. They do substantial and superb work. I and many others are in awe of them. I in no way want any criticisms I have of the budget to be directed at them.

I personally do not feel that the Town of Brattleboro should be a substantial funder of any nonprofit, no matter how important a role it plays. There are just too many other needs that the town should give priority to. Nonprofits need to get their funding through some combination of grants, fundraising campaigns, and program income.

From 2003 to 2010, I was the executive director and then the business manager for The Brick House Community Resource Center, a small nonprofit in Turners Falls, Massachusetts. We were lucky to be voted \$5,000 almost every year by the Town of Montague (of which the village of Turners Falls is part).

We greatly appreciated this money, and it definitely helped. Yet we knew we could not, and should not, depend on this source of funding. That \$5,000 made up just 1/50th of our \$250,000 budget. We really needed to hustle to write grants and have a year-end fundraising effort and bring in some money through fees we charged. We did not expect the town to play a substantial role in our overall finances, though we were glad that it was supportive.

In 2022, my wife and I made personal donations to 10 of the human services organizations that the town decided to fund this coming year. My wife and I are also comfortably well off. Although we find the constant rises in property taxes irritating, we can pay for them without real hardship.

In District 1, however, what about the people in the more modest housing? Yes, many of them might see some relief

granted by the state program related to income and home ownership, but their household budgets are still strained. What about the renters in West Brattleboro, who may well see their rents go up? What about investment in business and jobs along the underutilized Marlboro Road business zone? Will there be any?

The decision to raise the human services budget in FY25 to 2% of the previous year's overall budget is but one factor putting upward pressure on future tax rates.

Certainly, the priority decision to fund three new firefighters will have a bigger effect.

Certainly, the voted-in approval of the bond for the next generation of parks and recreation facilities will have a larger effect by its second year. Certainly, the substantial (4% or greater) raises for town staff (which I do not argue with, given the even higher cost of living) will have a substantial effect.

What about the new communications coordinator? Nice, but not essential. What about the likely need a year from now for more bonding for a pool upgrade? Such an upgrade will, I think, serve more low- and moderate-income town residents than the ice rink upgrades.

It also looks like many of the long-term vacancies in our Police Department will be filled, since a number of persons are currently getting trained at the Vermont Police Academy. Good — we need them filled! That will mean, however, that we will not have much of a general fund surplus left over at the end of the fiscal year. Additionally, some members of the Selectboard are already talking about a new town department to work on community safety measures. Is that really needed, or can existing staff take that on?

I guess my bottom-line plea is that people keep the negative effects of a very high tax rate in mind — negative to households with moderate means, negative to the future likelihood that developers and businesses will want to invest in Brattleboro.

I see a lot of good being done. I don't see a lot of restraint in making choices, in prioritizing. Hopefully the Selectboard, between its new members and old members, will lead the way in being careful about keeping spending down.

Michael Bosworth
Brattleboro

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

LOCAL PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS
April 10-16
CHANNEL 1078 CHANNEL 1079

PLEASE NOTE NEW CHANNEL NUMBERS!

<p>Here We Are with guest with guest Rabbi Amita Jarmon. Brattleboro Area Jewish Community Congregation: Mon 8p, Tues 3:15p, Thurs 1:30p, Fri 6:25p, Sat 6:30p</p>	<p>Brattleboro Representative Town Meeting 2023: Mon 3:15p, Tues 10a, Wed 9a, Sun 6p</p>
<p>Collegiate A Capella Concert 2023: Sat 7:30p (LIVE)</p>	<p>Guilford Selectboard Mtg. 4/10/23: Wed 6p, Thurs 8:30a, Fri 11:30a</p>
<p>Rock River Presents - The Importance of Being Earnest: Tues 8p, Wed 9p, Fri 9:30p, Sat 9:30a</p>	<p>Jamaica Selectboard Mtg. 4/10/23: Wed 8:30p, Thurs 6a, Fri 2p</p>
<p>Brooks Memorial Library Events - The Buddha's Politics in the 21st Century 4/5/23: Wed 3:30p, Thurs 9:15p, Fri 12:05p</p>	<p>Townshend Selectboard Mtg. 4/11/23: Thurs 6p, Fri 8a, Sat 12p</p>
<p>Southern Vermont Live Music - Rock Voices 1/13/23: Mon 3:30 & 8:35, Wed 11a, Sun 4p</p>	<p>Windham Elementary School Board Mtg. 4/11/23: Thurs 8:30p, Fri 5:30a, Sat 2:30p</p>
<p>Brooks Memorial Library Events - The Day After Juneteenth Presented by Djelli 2/15/23: Mon 6p, Wed 9a, & 6p, Thurs 12p</p>	<p>Windham Southeast School District Board Mtg. 4/11/23: Sat 8:30p, Sun 8:30a</p>
<p>Red Newt Productions - The Promise of Spring, Smith College Bulb Show 2023: Mon 12p, Tues 6:30a, Thurs 6p</p>	<p>Windham Southeast Supervisory Union Board Mtg. 4/12/23: Fri 6p, Sat 8:30a, Sun 2:30p</p>
<p>Brattleboro Democracy Forum - Our Slow Motion Judicial Coup 3/13/23: Mon 6:45a, Tues 12p, Thurs 4:45p, Fri 1:45p</p>	<p>West River Education District Board Mtg. 4/12/23: Fri 8:30p, Sat 6a, Sun 12p</p>
<p>Energy Week with George Harvey & Tom Finnell: Mon 9a, Tues 5p, Thurs 11a</p>	<p>Newfane Selectboard Mtg. 4/3/23: Mon 9a, Tues 6p</p>
<p>Vermontwide - Weekly Episode: Tue 11:30a & 6:30p, Wed 6a, Thu 1p, Sat 12p, Sun 5p</p>	<p>Brattleboro Planning Commission Mtg. 4/5/23: Mon 11a, Tues 8p, Thurs 11a</p>
<p>WTSA News: Mon-Fri 12p & 6p</p>	<p>River Valleys Unified School District Bd Mtg. 4/3/23: Mon 1:15p, Wed 7a</p>
<p>St. Michael's Episcopal Church - Weekly Service: Wed 2p, Sat 7:30a, Sun 11a</p>	<p>Brattleboro Selectboard Mtg. 4/4/23/23: Thurs 1:15p, Sat 5:25p</p>
<p>Calvary Chapel of the West River Valley - Weekly Service: Tue 9a, Sat 5:30p, Sun 10a</p>	<p>Vernon Selectboard Mtg. 4/4/23: Mon 7:30a, Tues 10:15p</p>
<p>Trinity Lutheran Church - Weekly Service: Wed 10a, Thurs 7a, Sun 3p</p>	<p>Brattleboro Development Review Board Mtg. 4/5/23: Mon 6a, Fri 4:30p</p>
<p>Guilford Community Church - Weekly Service: Wed 6:30a, Fri 8p, Sun 8a</p>	<p>Brattleboro Housing Partnerships Board Mtg. 3/27/23: Sat 11a, Sun 11a</p>
<p>St. Michael's Catholic Church Mass: Sat 4p (LIVE), Tue 6:45a & 2p, Thurs 8p</p>	<p>The David Pakman Show: Mon 8a, Tue 9a, Wed 5p, Fri 10:30a, Sun 5p</p>

Note: Schedule subject to change.

View full schedule and watch online at brattleborotv.org

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GOTAN 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@commonnews.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.

BRENDAN EMMETT QUIGLEY
THE COMMONS CROSSWORD
"You Really Got Me"

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COLUMN | Sports Roundup

Terriers rally to win baseball opener, 2-1

April baseball in Vermont is usually sloppy. Teams don't get a lot of opportunity to play outside, and working out inside is no substitute for taking ground balls off a dirt infield or catching fly balls on a windy day.

The Bellows Falls Terriers tried to play a couple of scrimmages, but according to coach Bob Lockerby, both were cancelled. So their season opener on April 8 at Hadley Field against the Otter Valley Otters marked the first time BF played baseball outside this season.

However, instead of a slop-fest, fans got treated to a magnificent pitchers duel that was won with a walkoff two-out, two-run double by Trenton Fletcher in the bottom of the seventh.

"We had great at-bats [in the seventh]," Lockerby said of the 2-1 victory in the opener. "That's the first live pitching we've seen this spring."

The teams could not get a run across in the first five innings as BF starting pitcher Jamison Nystrom and Otters starter Jordan Beayon were dialed in their first game of the season. Nystrom went six innings, striking out nine and allowing just four hits and one earned run, while Beayon went 6 2/3 innings, allowing two hits and striking out 13.

The Otters got their only run off Nystrom in the sixth inning when Beacon hit a long double to center field. He went to third on a fly ball to right by Isaiah Wood and scored on a squeeze bunt by Ben Adams.

After Beayon struck out the side in order in the sixth, Eli Allbee came into the game in relief of Nystrom in the seventh. Allbee threw a scoreless seventh with a pair of strikeouts to set up the Terriers' comeback in the bottom half of the inning.

Beayon struck out Walker James and Cole Moore and things looked bleak for the Terriers. But Jake Moore beat out an infield hit and Jesse Darrell drew a walk. A passed ball moved both runners into scoring position for Fletcher.

"I was hoping for a fastball," said Fletcher. "When [Beayon] got two strikes on me, I knew he was going to throw a fastball high and inside."

His guess was correct, as Fletcher's fly ball to deep right field dropped in to score Jake Moore and Darrell and emptied the BF bench as everyone rushed out to congratulate, and pile on top off, Fletcher at second base.

"That was a great win against a really good team," said Lockerby. "We didn't quit."

The two teams will meet up again on April 12 in Brandon before BF gets another big test when the Terriers host Brattleboro on April 13.

Colonels win Unified opener

• Before a large and enthusiastic crowd in the BUHS gym, the Brattleboro Colonels Unified basketball team won their first game of the season over the Burr & Burton

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.

Bulldogs, 46-38, on April 3.

It was a good test for the Colonels, for Burr & Burton was last season's South division champions. However, as Colonels coach Tyler Boone said before the season started, he had a deep and skilled team and that came out in the opener.

"We have 17 kids on the roster, and they are all fighting for playing time," Boone said, "That's a good thing, and shows that people want to be a part of this. When you see everyone cheering for you, you want to be part of it."

Brattleboro took a 10-4 lead early in the first quarter, but the Bulldogs came back and cut the Colonels' lead to 14-12 by the end of the first.

Then Brattleboro guard Ben Stauffer took over the game. Between his tenacious defense and his outside shooting, Stauffer was flying all over the court in the second quarter and helped the Colonels take a 28-16 lead at the half.

"Burr & Burton's defense slowed us down, but Ben was awesome in the second quarter," said Boone.

Brattleboro kept up the momentum, taking a 36-28 lead in the third quarter and not letting the Bulldogs get any closer.

The victory was gratifying, but what Boone and assistant coach Erika Bassett said they were most proud of was the number of students who signed the Pledge for Inclusion banner before and after the game.

Boone said that banner is part of a worldwide initiative called Spread the Word (spreadtheword.global), where people pledge to "make your school, your workplace, your community, and your world more inclusive" for the more than 200 million people around the globe with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

"I'm proud of that banner," said Boone. "Students with disabilities can contribute so much, and they have a place in our school."

Wanted: More lifeguards

• Beverly Wright of Vernon has taught hundreds of people over the years to become swim instructors and lifeguards. But she says the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has thinned the ranks locally, enough so that "there is a shortage of qualified aquatics staff."

She told *The Commons* that "local pools, camps, and beaches have been left to posting 'Swim at Your Own Risk, No Lifeguard on Duty' signs, limiting the amount of area available for patrons to swim in, and 'lifeguard sharing' between pools. Camps have gone to not



Bellows Falls baserunner Trenton Fletcher (8) is greeted by teammates after he hit a two-run double to win the Terriers' season opener, 2-1, over Otter Valley on April 8 at Hadley Field.

RANDOLPH T. HOLHUT/THE COMMONS

offering swimming lessons and less free swim time. The lack of swim lessons has only kept us in this crazy cycle of no lifeguards."

And Wright says the current lifeguard shortage means more of the same for this summer.

"We have many local pools: Brattleboro, Vernon, Hinsdale and Putney, to name a few. We have local beaches such as Spofford and Winchester, New Hampshire. Yet none of them is able to say they are fully staffed and manned this year, not to mention that some of these facilities are unable to offer swimming lessons due to the lack of certified instructors."

To be a lifeguard, she said that you need to be 15 years of age, able to swim at least 400 to 500 yards, and be able swim with a 10 pound diving brick at least 25 yards. Lakefront lifeguards need to have a lifeguard certification and an open water certification. These certification classes will be offered this spring and early summer.

The lifeguard course is 35 hours in person with pool time included. An open water course will be offered Sunday, June 18, for interested candidates who are 16 years of age. All of these courses are expected to be completed by the opening of our pools, lakes and camps. If you like to teach and help others and can swim, Wright says being a swim instructor might be for you. You must be 16 years or older, can swim all strokes or willing to learn them, and be prepared to learn to keep others safe.

Wright said that if you are interested in a summer position as a lifeguard at a camp, on a beach, or at a town pool, or perhaps interested in taking this job into a year-round position, such as a work study in college or even working at an indoor pool or park, you can look for courses being offered by the American Red Cross. "We have local courses being offered in the Brattleboro area for full certifications and recertifications," she said.

Email Wright at beverlylifeguardclass@gmail.com, or contact your local pool, beach, or camp. If you're 16 and would like to learn to teach swimming and gain Water Safety Instructor (WSI) certification, email your interest to the above address as well.



Brattleboro's Ben Stauffer, center, and Thomas Bell, right, closely guard a Burr & Burton player during the first half of their Unified basketball game on April 3 at the BUHS Gym.

RANDOLPH T. HOLHUT/THE COMMONS

BOC announces 2023 paddling schedule, watercraft consignment swap and sale

• The 2023 Brattleboro Outing Club paddling schedule features 15 trips on local reservoirs, lakes, ponds & rivers in, and around the Brattleboro area.

According to BOC paddling guru Larry McIntosh, the northern most outing is North Hartland Lake (at the down-stream end of the Quechee Gorge). To the east is Spoonwood Pond in Hancock, New Hampshire (a place motorboats can't access). The southernmost outing is Tully Lake in Royalston, Massachusetts, and in the west is Somerset Reservoir, northwest of Wilmington. "There's lots going on in that big circle," he wrote in an email to *The Commons*.

BOC trips are free and open to the public; just show up at the time and place noted with your boat or board and all the safety gear (and lunch) necessary for a day's outing. Life jackets (PFDs) are required. A list of all the trips planned for this season, and the recommended gear you'll need, can be found at BrattleboroOutingClub.org (click on "Summer Paddling").

Descriptions of all "flat water" trips can be found in the third edition of the AMC Quiet Water books for Vermont/New Hampshire and Southern New England. River trips are

shown on the Connecticut River Paddlers' Trail Maps, second edition. Meeting locations provide a place to car and boat pool.

Although there is no BOC sponsored camping trip this year, camping is available at/near seven of the paddling locations: Spoonwood Pond, Tully Lake, Grafton Pond, Somerset Reservoir, and at/near, all three Connecticut River locations. Paddlers wanting to include camping in their outing are advised to plan early. Reservations are required in most locations, and Connecticut River camping is first come, first served (locations are identified on the Connecticut River Paddlers' Trail Map).

• As for the annual BOC Consignment Sale and Swap of small human and wind-powered watercraft will be held on Saturday, May 13, from noon to 2 p.m. McIntosh said the location is yet to be decided.

Boats will be accepted on Friday, May 12, from noon to 2 p.m. and from 5 to 7 p.m. On May 13, boats will be accepted beginning at 8 a.m., until 11:30am. The swap takes place from 11:30 a.m. to noon, while the sale starts at noon. This is a consignment sale to fund the BOC Summer Paddling Program. Boat owners set the price, and BOC Paddling receives 10% of the eventual selling price. When two or more prospective buyers want the same boat, an "auction" will decide the eventual buyer.

For more information about the paddling schedule, or the watercraft sale/swap, email McIntosh at Lmacyak@gmail.com.

Senior bowling roundup

• With three weeks left in the winter/spring season of the Brattleboro Senior Bowling League, there is a very close race for first place. Fab Four (40-20) is in front, but close behind are Slo Movers (39.5-20-5) and The Markers (39-5-21.5). Split Happens (30-30) is fourth, followed by The Strikers (26-34), The A-1's (24-36), Trash-O-Matic (21-39), and 10 Pins (21-39).

Vikki Butynski had the women's high handicap game (259) and series (696). Alex Theilen had the men's high handicap game (237), while Duane Schillemat had the high handicap game (853) and Split Happens had the high handicap series (2,498).

Chuck Adams led the men's scratch scoring with a 611 series that featured games of 212, 207, and 192. Warren Corriveau Sr. had a 600 series with games of 217 and 201, while Robert Rigby had a 599 series with games of 216 and 214. John Walker had a 550 series with games of 194 and 193, Schillemat had a 532 series with a 198 game and Marty Adams had a 530 series with a 192 game.

Debbie Kolpa had the women's high scratch series (451) that featured games of 160 and 154, while Nancy Dalzell had a 159 game, Butynski had a 157 game, and Carol Gloski rolled a 151.

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