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Jonas Fricke
Arts, B1

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A SWEET TRADITION returns



In this 1990s photo, Don Hazelton works in front of the sugar house, washing up equipment at the end of the season. COURTESY OF DUMMERSTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

A new generation fires up the Hazelton family sugarhouse, dormant for years, in Dummerston Center

By Fran Lynggaard Hansen
The Commons

DUMMERSTON—Sugaring in Vermont is a spring-time gig. The sap won't run until a series of cold nights and warm days, and the sweet, clear liquid from the sugar maples needs to be stored colder than 38 degrees and boiled down to syrup within two to three days. In Vermont, keeping a sugarbush has always been a way to supplement a farmer's income.

That's certainly true for Don Hazelton, who used to raise strawberries on his hillside farm in June and who cultivated an apple orchard that produced in the fall. He's been making sugar for more than 80 years.



Matt Hubbard keeps watch on the evaporator during a boiling session this season at the Hazelton sugarhouse in Dummerston Center. COURTESY PHOTO

■ SEE SUGARING, A2

Ex-principal sues school system for wrongful termination

Perrin seeks jury trial in civil suit after unsuccessful appeal to get his job back

By Virginia Ray
The Commons

BRATTLEBORO—Fired Brattleboro Union High School Principal Steven Perrin has filed a civil lawsuit against the Windham Southeast Supervisory Union (WSESU), the Windham Southeast School District (WSESD), and its board members.

A March 21 filing names the two entities as well as board members at the time of Perrin's firing and his subsequent hearing to appeal that action.

Those defendants are Anne Beckman, Lana Dever, Michelle Luetjen Green, Emily Murphy Kaur, Tim Maciel, Robin Morgan, Shaun Murphy, Deborah Stanford, and Kelly Young.

■ SEE PERRIN FILES SUIT, A3

Brattleboro approves \$20.5M budget for FY24

Town Meeting members ask for more transparency and community input to spend federal Covid funds and make EMS choices

By Virginia Ray
The Commons

BRATTLEBORO—Representative Town Meeting (RTM) voters on March 25 approved a \$20.5 million operating budget for fiscal year 2024 after increasing the bottom line by \$350,000.

Members were also clear in wanting more transparency and participation in how the town's remaining \$2.7 million

federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) money is used as well as how town emergency medical services are contracted.

The approved budget is about an 8.1% increase to this year's operating budget.

Due to use of unassigned fund balance (surplus) money and expense prepayment, the tax rate is expected to increase by 3.9%.

The budget includes a 4% cost of living allowance (COLA) increase

■ SEE BRATTLEBORO ARTM, A5

The just-cause evictions question failed in Brattleboro. Why?

Theories range from the complexity of the charter change language to a hearts-and-minds campaign by property owners and managers. But proponents say that in a tight housing market, the need for such an ordinance is not going away.

By Joyce Marcel
The Commons

BRATTLEBORO—In municipal elections on March 7, ballot questions in support of just-cause eviction policy won in Winooski and Essex. Last year, voters in Burlington passed a measure there.

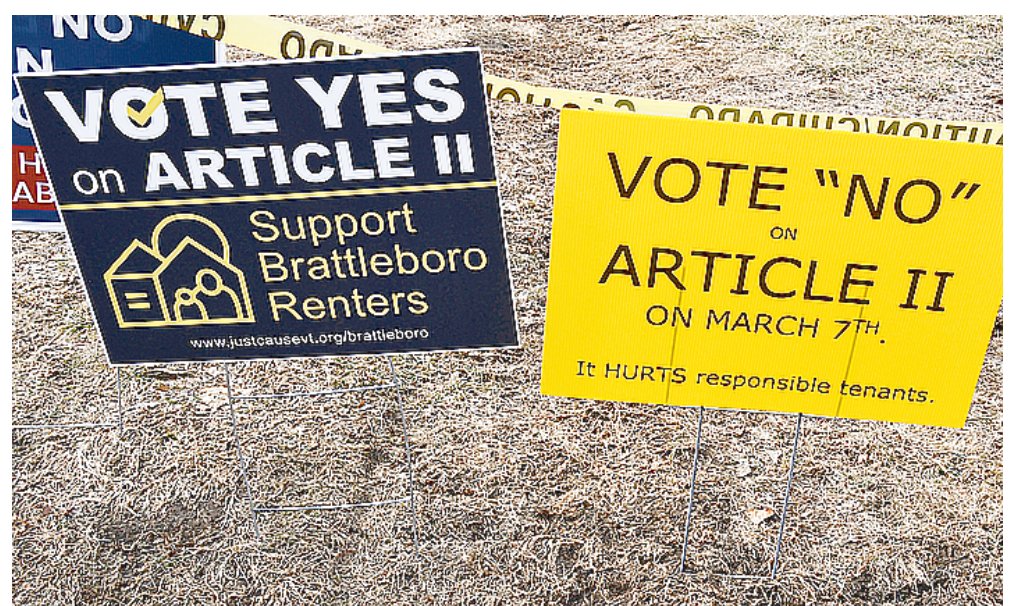
But it lost in Brattleboro. Why? Just cause is a local ordinance to force a landlord to have a reason (a just cause) to evict a tenant

who plays by the rules — i.e., pays their rent on time, doesn't break clauses in the lease (like no pets), doesn't sell drugs out of the apartment, doesn't damage the property, doesn't smoke.

Currently in Brattleboro, landlords can evict tenants without cause; when the lease runs out, they might evict at will for any number of reasons.

They might want to renovate and raise the rent, for example.

■ SEE JUST-CAUSE EVICTIONS, A6



Competing campaign signs on Election Day sum up the debate of just-cause eviction in Brattleboro. RANDOLPH T. HOLMUT-COMMONS FILE PHOTO

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We welcome story ideas and news tips. Please contact the newsroom at news@commonsnews.org or at (802) 246-6397.

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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.org.

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

Sugaring

FROM SECTION FRONT

His education began as a young boy around 8 years of age.

"We didn't have our own trees, but we would get permission from folks and tap their maple trees," he remembers.

He hung 12 buckets of his own and boiled that sap in the kitchen of his mother, Hazel.

"She finally shut me off because I was peeling off the wallpaper," says Hazelton with a wide grin. "I only gained a cup or so of syrup to put on my cereal or pancakes anyway."

When not making his own syrup as a boy, Hazelton would go with his father, Merton, to help gather sap at the Tarbox Farm (most recently farmed by the Ranney family on Route 5).

"I was too small to empty the buckets, but I was allowed to use the reins to stop the horses as my father emptied the sap buckets. My pay for the day was one cake of maple sugar," Hazelton recalls.

Selling the farm

There were big changes at the start of World War II. Very much like what happened during the COVID-19 pandemic beginning in 2020, people from the cities came to Vermont and purchased homes, farms, and land.

Merton Hazelton sold the whole farm — including the barn, around 50 acres of land and the farmhouse in which he and Don were both born — then purchased a smaller home in Dummerston Center.

"I didn't mind that," remarked Hazelton, "because our new house had indoor plumbing."

"Folks came up from out-of-state during the war and property prices went sky high," Hazelton said. "City folks were afraid of getting bombed, so they moved up here. It would have been hard to say no with the amount of money that we could get for our farm. A lot of the small family farms like us, those with five or so cows, sold out."

But the move didn't stop the family from sugaring. With some of the money from the sale of the farm, Hazelton's father purchased 100 acres on Middle Road as a woodlot and sugarbush, along with a tractor that replaced the horses.

Selling the syrup

In 1948, Merton Hazelton built the family sugarhouse that still sits in the town center on East West Road, right across

from the West Dummerston Fire Department's substation.

"We built the sugarhouse in the center of town because we could have electricity in it," remembers Hazelton.

The equipment — including evaporator, buckets, and taps — was purchased, used, from many of those other small farmers who sold out their houses and land, leaving many fewer producers in the area.

They sold maple syrup at the family home and at the sugarhouse.

"That would be hard to do now," Hazelton says, "It costs a fortune to start a sugaring operation nowadays."

"We'd put it right up hot to be sold on site," he said. "We also sold to several grocery stores. Sometimes we'd also sell it in cans."

Hazelton isn't describing the small metal cans of syrup which were used before plastic jugs became popular — he's talking old-fashioned milk cans.

"Back then milk cans were 40 quarts. Then you went to a 30-gallon barrel," he said, also noting the next size up was a 50-gallon barrel, at which point a producer would be selling the syrup wholesale. Hazelton preferred to keep a smaller family operation.

"At that time, the biggest producer in the area was the Coombs Farm in Jacksonville," he said.

"We were a smaller operation, selling anywhere from 200 to 600 gallons depending on the weather that year."

The family didn't do any ad-vertising, but the word spread quickly.

Hazelton remembers the first year late in the season, six out-of-state skiers stopped in the middle of the afternoon and pooled their money to buy a quart of syrup. The next week they'd come back with a whole list of people who wanted them to bring syrup back to Connecticut.

"We kept a cot there to catch a quick nap, but we never boiled all night. When customers asked, they were disappointed that we didn't. So, one night, we did it so we could say we did," says Hazelton, laughing.

A family affair

Boiling sap has always been a family operation for the Hazeltons.

"I give my mother a lot of



RANDOLPH T. HOLHUT/COMMONS FILE PHOTO

Don Hazelton of Dummerston Center has been involved in maple sugaring for more than eight decades. These days, he provides his experience and expertise to a new generation running the family sugarhouse.

credit. We had these syrup strainers that we'd use, and there always had to be four or five extra of them. We put them where the pipe of sap comes in, and they always had to be washed often. We'd carry them up to the house, and she'd wash them out — plus, she was always cooking, sending food down for us to eat."

As the years ticked by, all of Hazelton's children and his nieces and nephews got involved.

"There was always a bunch of the family's kids hanging around," he says. "There were 16 kids within a mile of the sugar house — four Bolsters, my sister Mary's kids, and six Bessettes, my sister Carol's kids. We had a born workforce between us," Hazelton says with a laugh.

Hazelton's son, Ted, now living in Kansas, remembers those days well.

"I loved sugaring time," he says. "It's in my blood. It's not a profitable operation, but it sure was fun."

Ted remembers coming up the hill on the school bus in the 1960s and seeing the maple trees on the town common.

"You'd see that the buckets were overflowing, and you knew it would be a great day gathering," he recalls. "We drove Dad's tractor around collecting the sap while my dad and grandfather were boiling down in the sugarhouse," he says.

The sugarhouse was right by the school bus stop.

"We would get off the bus, pop into the sugarhouse, and all us kids were allowed to have one shotglass of syrup before you would go up to the house to change your clothes and get to work," Ted Hazelton says.

"Technically, we were only supposed to have one shot, but we'd wait until Gramp wasn't looking, and then we'd try to sneak another one," he adds.

In the 1990s, as many family members had grown or moved, Hazelton had many friends who became family to him and welcomed them to help. Joe Thompson of Brattleboro, a lieutenant with Rescue Inc., first met Don Hazelton when they would run Rescue calls together as volunteers. Years later, Thompson found his way to the sugarhouse via his friendship with Hazelton's nephew, Matt Bolster.

"Don is very knowledgeable and taught me everything I know about sugaring," remembers Thompson. "He told me, 'You can't make a mistake I haven't made,' and he was kind and welcoming when I asked to help out."

Hazelton's statement was challenged on Thompson's first day.

"We were walking around, and Don was showing me where and how to collect the sap. Somehow, I got some piece of equipment turned around and couldn't figure out what I'd done. Turns out, Don couldn't either."

"He stood there laughing loudly with that great sense of humor of his and said, 'Well, I take that back, Joe. I don't know what you did. You made a mistake I haven't made before. Congratulations,'" remembers Thompson.

"We still laugh about that day," he says. "Don still explains everything to anyone with kindness, care, calm and his great sense of

humor."

Thompson likes to tell a story about working in the sugarhouse late one night when the crew was hungry, and Hazelton volunteered to drive to town to get pizza for everyone.

"Don lives a sheltered life, I guess. I don't think he'd ever bought a pizza before. When he arrived at the sugarhouse, he was carrying the box on its side like a suitcase. Everything on the pizza had slid off the pie and it was so messed up we couldn't even spread it back on the dough. We laughed hard about that. Still do," remembers Thompson.

When reminded of the story, Hazelton smiles and, with a hearty laugh, shares his dry wit.

"Yeah, nobody let me go for pizza after that," he says.

"It was just like the time that Dwight Miller and I were asked to make the coffee at the Grange Hall," he adds. "Nobody asked me to do that past the first time, either."

Changes cloud the future

Hazelton has seen plenty of changes to the maple industry over the years, and some of them were no laughing matter.

"Climate change is going to take its toll — in fact, it already has," says Hazelton, more serious now.

"First off, with the rainstorms we get now, I wouldn't be able to grow strawberries on that hill any longer. I guess we'll have to wait and see how it stresses the trees over the long haul, but the fact that we had all that warm weather in January is an indicator of what might be coming."

Hazelton also notes that since maple producers can now apply to tap maples on state land, sugar production has become a huge business.

"Those producers are factory specialists," he observes. "To have that big an operation you must have at least a half a million taps, reverse osmosis equipment, and many workers."

And then there is age.

"I've been sugaring, cutting wood, and kept up with everything until I turned 90. Then my body went to hell," he says, soberly.

But then his face lightens. "But I still have syrup on my oatmeal every morning," he says. "I'm still the best customer."

The steam rises again

After Hazelton cut back on his projects, his nephew Matt Bolster took over for a couple of years, and then the sugarhouse stood dormant for a decade or so.

But this season, the steam was rising out of sugarhouse once again.

Matt Hubbard, Merton Hazelton's great-grandson, has resurrected the business. Hubbard, who now lives in Putney, says he had a great season, which closed out on March 26.

"I thought I'd only manage to put up 20 gallons, but we're closing out at 60 gallons this year, which is a great start. Lots of people stopped by to tell me how happy they were to see the place open again, and many stopped by to wish us well."

Hubbard is happy to run the sugarhouse. "I have a lot of great memories of being inside as a kid," he says.

And he is selling his syrup. It can be purchased at his parents' home — the same house where Don Hazelton grew up at 33 Bunker Rd.



STEVE HAZELTON

After being dormant for several years, the Hazelton sugarhouse in Dummerston Center was back in action this season and produced more than 60 gallons of maple syrup. From left are Alex Johnson (brother-in-law of Matt Hubbard), Matt Bolster (firing up the evaporator), and Logan George (who was visiting the sugarhouse that evening).

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Early Education Services earns national award

Program for educating youngsters recognized among the top in the country

By Virginia Ray
The Commons

BRATTLEBORO—Early Education Services (EES) in Brattleboro and Westminster has earned renewed accreditation for its Canal Street and Westminster Head Start programs from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), the world's largest organization working on behalf of young children.

"We're proud to have earned this mark of quality from NAEYC once again and to be recognized for our commitment to reaching the highest professional standards," said EES Executive Director Deb Gass.

Early Education Services serves as the region's Head Start, Early Head Start, and Parent Child Center. Services include Head Start and Early Head Start classrooms, Early Head Start Home Visiting, the Welcome Baby program, playgroups, the Dedicated Dads program, Teddy Bear Teas, a monthly dental clinic for children up to 3 months old, information and referral services to connect families with area resources, support groups, and parent education classes.

NAEYC accreditation is a "rigorous and transformative" quality-improvement system that uses a set of 10 research-based standards to collaborate with early education programs to recognize and drive quality improvement in high-quality early learning environments.

EES is funded to serve 184 Head Start and Early Head Start children ages birth to age 5. The organization is primarily funded through the federal office of Head Start and is also a designated Vermont parent child center and thus receives state money through the Child Development Division for many of the above programs.

EES began here more than 30 years ago as part of the Windham Southeast School District.

In the NAEYC accreditation process, EES went through an extensive self-study and quality-improvement process followed by an on-site visit by NAEYC assessors, who verified and ensured the program met each of the 10 program standards, and hundreds of



FRANCISCO MUGNANI/COURTESY PHOTO

Early Education Services Early Head Start lead teacher Maise Avila uses natural settings to encourage children's sense of wonder and learning.

corresponding individual criteria.

NAEYC-accredited programs are always prepared for unannounced quality assurance visits during their accreditation term, which lasts for five years.

In the 30 years since NAEYC accreditation was established, it has become a widely recognized sign of high-quality early childhood education. More than 6,000 programs in the United States are currently accredited by NAEYC. Fewer than 10 percent of all childcare centers, preschools, and kindergartens nationally achieve this recognition.

"It's an arduous process and a lot of centers opt out because it's so complicated and regulated," said Gass. "They can't invest the effort or time [] or they feel they're not worthy of it."

"It's like the Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval," she said.

Receiving NAEYC accreditation can relate to the Vermont Step Ahead Recognition System (STARS) program, a quality-rating system created to help parents navigate child care choices. Those programs that are STARS-rated can lead to higher reimbursement

rates from the state.

"NAEYC accredited programs have committed to a process that takes time, energy and dedication to complete," said Alissa Mwenelupembe, senior director of Early Learning Program Accreditation. "Early Education Services has demonstrated their commitment to young children and their families."

NAEYC is a professional membership organization that works "to promote high-quality early learning for all young children" from birth through age 8 by connecting early childhood practice, policy, and research. The Association includes nearly 60,000 individual members of the early childhood community and 52 affiliates.

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Perrin files suit

FROM SECTION FRONT

At the end of the March 28 WSESD meeting, the board went into an executive session to discuss pending/potential civil litigation but did not mention anything in open session.

At press time Tuesday night, no board members had actually been served in the suit, according to the Windham Superior Court docket, but several contacted privately knew about it.

In the civil complaint filed in Windham Superior Court, Perrin and his lawyer, Theodore Kramer, request a jury trial and cite the reason for the civil suit as wrongful termination.

In February, the WSESD Board of Directors upheld its original decision to fire former Perrin following a two-week hearing.

The board fired Perrin on Nov. 8 in a unanimous vote. He had not been on the job since before spring break of 2022. The day school resumed, April 25, WSESD Chair Kelly Young communicated via memo that

Superintendent Mark Speno had placed Perrin on a paid leave of absence.

Perrin continued to collect his \$120,000 annual salary until he was fired. Cassie Damkoehler has served as principal since her predecessor's termination.

In October 2022, *The Commons* broke the story of "Jane Doe" who was a sophomore at BUHS in 2010, when she alleges Perrin started to make unwanted and inappropriate sexual and romantic advances toward her and found other ways to make her life difficult, including trying to prevent her from graduating.

It is also believed the former principal did not report her rape by a fellow student to the authorities, as he was mandated to do as an educator.

Friends and classmates corroborated Jane's story, having witnessed Perrin's treatment of her. After the story was published, others stepped forward via social media to express

similar treatment by the former principal.

Perrin exercised his right to appeal his firing, and the WSESD board held the hearing and heard testimony over two weeks from approximately a dozen witnesses, ending Jan. 30.

The hearing, according to statute, was held in executive session. Attorney Sean Toohy of Lynn, Lynn, Blackman & Manitsky, P.C., the district's legal team, moderated the proceedings.

Perrin, who lives in New Hampshire, worked at BUHS since 1995. Prior to becoming principal, he served four years as assistant principal. He taught chemistry and biology at the school prior to becoming an administrator. He also taught high school science for several years in Camden, New York, before moving to the Brattleboro area.

He has retained his administrator's and teacher's licenses from the Vermont Agency of Education. Both expire in 2024.

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Join our residential dining team as a full-time or part-time: Cook, Server, or Dishwasher

Apply at: www.glendalediningservices.com/careers, or call 603-437-0200 x 106.

Cersosimo Lumber Company

Full Time Class A CDL Driver

Monday through Friday.

Minimum of 3 years experience in a similar field preferred.

Log loader experience preferred but not required.

Must be 21 and have a clean MVR.

Competitive benefits package includes:

Health Insurance, Dental Insurance, Life Insurance, Short Term Disability, 401(k)

Please forward resume and cover letter to:

Cersosimo Lumber Company, Inc.

1103 Vernon Street, Brattleboro, VT 05301

employment@cersosimo.com

TOWN OF HINSDALE IS HIRING

Budget/Finance Coordinator

Under the general direction of the Town Administrator and Board of Selectmen, this position performs highly responsible financial and accounting administrative duties in compliance with Town and State policies. Duties include, but not limited to budgeting, general ledger, payroll, accounts receivable, and accounts payable. The ideal candidate must have proven accounting and/or bookkeeping experience using Excel and other accounting software. Associate's degree with three years experience in municipal government, OR any equivalent combination of education, work experience, and municipal experience which demonstrates possession of the required knowledge, skills, and abilities. Salary is commensurate with experience and offers an excellent benefits package. Position is full-time and will work Monday - Thursday, 40 hours per week.

Community Development Coordinator

Performs administrative support work in the area of planning, zoning and assessing. Coordinates planning, zoning and assessing activities with department heads. Assists developers and property owners with application, and interprets administrative decisions and policies. High school diploma or equivalent with secretarial and a minimum of three years bookkeeping experience. Associate's degree in Business, Municipal Government, or English preferred and/or previous municipal experience preferred; OR any equivalent combination of education and experience which demonstrates possession of the required knowledge, skills, and abilities.

Assistant to Town Clerk/Tax Collector Offices

The Assistant Clerk is a front-line customer service position, is knowledgeable of modern office practices, procedures and equipment. The ideal candidate has the ability to understand and follow moderately complex instructions and make minor decisions in accordance with departmental policy. Responsibilities include, but are not limited to servicing the residents and customers of the Town of Hinsdale, NH, processing motor vehicle transactions through the State of NH's motor vehicle computer system, processing tax payments, assisting with election duties, and preparing and recording daily cash receipts for deposit preparation.

Camp Counselors

Are you looking for a summer job and a great experience?! Join us at the Hinsdale Summer Camp! We're looking for energetic counselors that want to be positive role models for children and have fun. Camp Counselors work outside assisting campers with activities, while providing an enjoyable and safe environment. Counselors will receive free training in CPR and First Aid. Training is scheduled for the week of June 26, 2023 and camp will run through August 11, 2023. Hours are Monday-Friday 8a-3:30p. Applicants must be at least 15 years old.

Interested individuals may submit an application with a minimum of 3 professional references to Sarah Tatro, Human Resources Manager, Town of Hinsdale, PO Box 13, 11 Main Street, Hinsdale, NH 03451. Applications may be picked up and dropped off at the Selectmen's Office at the Town Hall. EOE. statro@hinsdalenh.org

Town of Brattleboro Recreation & Parks Department Summer 2023 Job Opportunities

Brattleboro Recreation & Parks Department is accepting applications for the following seasonal positions:

- Assistant Program Supervisors
- Program Staff
- Lifeguards - Minimum age 15
- Water Safety Inductors
- Pool Cashiers & Checkers
- Snack Bar Cashiers
- Seasonal Maintenance - Minimum Age 17

To apply online, please visit:

<https://secure4.saashr.com/ta/6155296.careers?CareersSearch> and search for "Summer" to find the Summer 2023 Rec. & Parks Seasonal Opportunities.

Application deadline is Friday, April 14th.

For more information contact Carol Lolatte, Recreation and Parks Directions at 802-254-5808, or clolatte@brattleboro.org.

The Town of Brattleboro is committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion. We strongly encourage people of color, people with disabilities, LGBTQ applicants, and people from other underrepresented groups to apply recognizing and respecting that diverse perspectives and experiences are valuable to our team and essential to our public service.

West River Valley Thrives
Engaging and inspiring healthy communities

Are you ready for an amazing opportunity to lead an innovative program and make positive changes in your community?

Coalition Director Job Description

Hours and Compensation: This is a flexible 40-hour per week position eligible for generous benefits including paid time-off, health and dental insurance, and 403(b) retirement benefits. Starting rate, \$25 per hour.

Job Summary: The Coalition Director supports the efforts of community members and organizations working together to reduce substance use. The Director will provide leadership, continuity, and coordination for the continued capacity building and oversight of the West River Valley Thrives Coalition and its activities, resources, and staff. This will include coalition and board development, management of grants, as well as planning for the sustainability of the coalition and its work. Coalition operation will be guided by the Strategic Prevention Framework (SPF) process, which includes assessment, capacity building, planning, implementation, and evaluation. The position will also include some direct programming responsibilities.

For full job announcement and how to apply go to:
wrvthrives.org/careers-and-internships

Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis. Position will remain open until filled.

MILESTONES

Births, deaths, and news of people from Windham County

Obituaries



• **Elisabeth "Liz" Babbitt, 92**, formerly of Putney. Died of natural causes on March 18, 2023 at Spring Village Assisted Living in Dover, New Hampshire. Liz was born in Ottmuth, Germany in 1930, the daughter of Ignaz and Helena Bekiesch. As a young girl her family owned a shipping company and a successful local restaurant and tavern. She loved helping her family in the restaurant and enjoyed all the events the restaurant would host. As a teenager she and her family left all that behind to escape the advancing Soviet Army as World War II progressed. They eventually found themselves in Wurzburg, Germany. At the end of the war, her parents and her younger sister Herta returned to their home behind the Iron Curtain to try to reclaim what they could, while Liz and her older sister Eleanor remained in Wurzburg. Much to everyone's disappointment, there was nothing left to salvage, and they found themselves trapped in East Germany for many years before they would be able to reunite with Liz and Eleanor. Liz and Eleanor found work in the commissary of the Army Base in Wurzburg, where Liz met the person that she was destined to spend the rest of her life with, Army Sergeant John Babbitt. In March 1950, they were married in Wurzburg and shortly thereafter moved to the United States. Adjusting to postwar life in the United States as a German war bride was not an easy undertaking. However, Liz was strong, independent, and always ready for a good adventure. She approached life with a positive attitude and was always ready to take on whatever was in her path. She adjusted well to the American way of life, learned the English language, learned to drive, and obtained her GED, since she was unable to finish high school in Germany due to the war. During the early years of their marriage, they moved around the United States until John retired from the military, at which point they settled

in Putney, Vermont to raise their family. Liz and John built a beautiful home together with their own hands, including everything from pouring the foundation to sanding and varnishing the trim. She lovingly raised their three children in this home while still finding time to work as an extremely talented seamstress and eventually owning her own fabric store and business. She was a very creative artist with fabric and a sewing machine creating masterpieces such as German Dirndl dresses for her daughters and elaborate formal wedding gowns for her clients. Having been raised in the world of food and entertainment she was an avid cook and hostess. She enjoyed making homemade doughnuts and pizza for the family, huge elaborate meals for the holidays, and inspired spreads for parties and events. She loved spending time with family and friends in small gatherings and big events. She would bring to all these gatherings her great sense of humor, quick wit, and her ability to be on the receiving end of such exchanges with grace. Her gatherings were always a joyous affair full of food, love, and laughter. She had a big heart that was always open to those in need, especially during the holidays. The holiday tables were big and plentiful and always included neighbors and friends that would otherwise be spending the holiday at home alone. She enjoyed her outdoor home activities with huge vegetable, herb, and flower gardens. She would freeze and can her harvest each fall and enjoy that harvest during the long winter months. She especially enjoyed the summer evenings relaxing outside at the end of the day, watching her children play tag and chase fireflies. Liz is survived by her husband of 73 years, John Babbitt; her children, Linda Gavin of Stratham, New Hampshire, Patricia Babbitt and her husband Allan (Skip) Thurber of Putney, Guy Babbitt and his fiancée Lisa Butler of Fort Collins, Colorado; and her two grandchildren, R. Charles Gavin of Salt Lake City and Mathew Gavin and his husband Tom Bonnar, of Marietta, Georgia. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: A celebration of life will take place April 8, at 1 p.m., at the Fraternal Order of Eagles, 54 Chickering Drive, Brattleboro.

Donations to Putney Community Cares (putneycommunitycares.org) or the Alzheimer's Association (act.alz.org). To send messages of condolence to the family, visit atamaniuk.com.



• **Peter Joseph Iovino, 67**, of Putney. Died peacefully on Feb 13, 2023. Born March 12, 1955 in Pascaougoula, Mississippi, Peter was the middle of three boys and spent his early years with his Air Force family living in Biloxi, Mississippi, Okinawa, California, and Topeka, Kansas. Each new home was a new adventure and a new opportunity for Peter to travel and meet new people, and instilled in him a lifelong love of both. In 1963, his father came home driving a brand-new white and blue four-door Chevy Impala with the stated intention of packing up the entire family and heading West as soon as the school year ended. And so it was, in June 1963, Peter and his family spent the entire summer on the road, visiting the Grand Canyon, Old Tucson, Bryce Canyon, and the canyon lands of Utah, Yellowstone, and the Grand Tetons, Devils Tower and Mount Rushmore, Deadwood, and the Black Hills, and even a short excursion south across the border into Mexico. It was a grand adventure and one which would have a profound effect on Peter and his ability to experience the world outside of his safe suburban predictable life. When Peter's father took a job at Grumman Aerospace in Bethpage, New York to work on the Lunar Module for the Apollo moon landing, Peter once again found himself in the back seat of the Impala, this time heading East from the plains of Kansas to the bustling suburbs of eastern Long Island, where Peter would spend the next 35 years of his life, graduating from Smithtown High School in 1974 and marrying Ann Nazzaro, his wife of 20 years. He settled into work and life, always surrounded by and close to his parents, brothers, and extended family. When Peter's wife died unexpectedly in 1999, Peter made the decision to travel once again, this time to the wilds of Vermont to live with his brother Anthony. Peter took to Vermont living immediately, quickly adapting to his new life and environs, and soon mastering the two essentials of rural Vermont life: stacking firewood and stir-frying tofu. Peter truly thrived in his new life in Putney and soon took a new job at Landmark College, where he spent the last 19 years of his life working in the kitchen, helping to feed thousands of hungry students and entertaining his co-workers with his oversized sense of humor and insight. Outside of work, Peter soon discovered a passion for fishing, and spent countless hours riding the bus with tackle and rods from Putney to Brattleboro where he would spend the day at the Retreat Meadows, always hopeful for the big catch. Peter also continued his love of travel throughout his life, taking cruises with his parents in the Caribbean, camping and canoeing in the Green Mountains with his brother, and making many trips on the Port Jefferson ferry back

to Long Island to see his mother and father. Wherever he traveled, Peter's open-hearted kindness and generosity touched everyone he met; he had always possessed a unusual depth of empathy, compassion, caring and love, and giving to others seemed to be his greatest reward in life. Peter loved people, cats, small dogs, big fish, professional wrestling, and The Weather Channel, and he loved coffee, candy, and clam chowder. Most of all, he loved his family, and always wanted them to feel close and connected. He possessed the biggest heart and even though, in the end, his heart stopped beating, the trail of memories and love he left behind will never leave all who knew him. Peter is survived by his mother, Mary Jo Iovino of Canton, Georgia, brothers Ralph of Tampa, Florida, and Anthony of Putney. Peter was predeceased by his father, Anthony Iovino Sr., and his beloved wife Ann, both of Long Island. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: None provided.

• **John A. Krieger, 93**, formerly of Brattleboro. Died on March 12, 2023 after a brief illness. John was born on Feb. 7, 1930, in Brooklyn, New York to Arthur and Blanche Krieger. He moved from Brooklyn to Wyckoff, New Jersey. John served in the Navy from 1951 to 1953 during the Korean War. In 1963, he married the love of his life, Patricia. John and Patricia moved from New Jersey to Dummerston in 1973. John was an avid Red Sox fan and enjoyed his daily ride to see his friends at Hannaford's on Putney Road. John leaves behind his daughter Kathleen and son-in-law Wayne of Enfield, New Hampshire; his son John of Nashua, New Hampshire; granddaughter Lyndsey, her husband Nino, and John's great-grandchildren Ariana and Kylan, all of Bloomington, Indiana; his grandson Wayne and partner Audra of Philadelphia; granddaughter Mandie and partner Ben of Putney, and several nieces and nephews. His sister Barbara and wife Patricia predeceased John. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: There will be no services. Interment will be in the spring in St. Michael's Cemetery. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to Lake Sunapee Region VNA & Hospice.

• **Louis Edgar Maxfield, 94**, of Hartland. Died on March 17, 2023, in Fort Pierce, Florida. Born to Lesle and Marguerite (Dodge) Maxfield on May 22, 1928, in Tunbridge, the second of their seven children, Louis lived his early life on the family farm there. In 1945, the Maxfield family made the big move to a river bottom-land farm in North Hartland which they would come to name Lemax Farm. Louis completed his high school education in nearby White River Junction, graduating with the Class of 1946 of Hartford High School. He then returned to the family farm to work, joining forces with his parents to build a herd of registered Holstein-Friesian cows. He met the woman who would become his wife, Margaret 'Peggy' Mayhew, in 1947. They married in October, 1949, and were joined by sons Lowell and Cecil in 1952 and 1954. Peggy predeceased Louis in November 2002. After Peggy's death, Louis would go on to marry Bennie Hendrix of Fort Pierce, Florida, who survives him. Louis was a farmer, first and foremost. In a profession which could be viewed as endless drudgery, Louis found contentment and a certain spiritual quality to the husbanding of land and animals. In addition to his farm work, Louis was a 33rd degree Mason, Selectman for the Town of Hartland, Moderator of the Hartland Town Meeting for some years, President of the Vermont and New England Holstein Associations, and a lay minister with the United Methodist Church. Louis also enjoyed judging cattle, especially with



• **Sheila Joan Lawrence, 77**, of Dummerston. Died peacefully, surrounded by her family, on March 22, 2023 at Brattleboro Memorial Hospital following a short, courageous battle with cancer. Sheila was born at home in Westminster on August 24, 1945, the daughter of Ronald and Martha (Chowanec) King. She attended Putney Central School and graduated from Brattleboro Union High School, Class of 1963. On October 15, 1963 in North Walpole, New Hampshire, she married Glenn Hutchins, who predeceased her in 1999. They were married 35 years. She had been employed as a paraprofessional for special needs students at BUHS and previously worked for many years as a secretary/office manager at Learning Skills, Inc., a private learning center located in Dummerston. Sheila also worked for Families

First and in other secretarial positions. She enjoyed flower gardening, feeding her birds, knitting, quilting, and time spent on the coast of Maine and in Heathrow, Florida. Her most favorite thing of all was spending time with her family and friends. Her kind, generous love and taking care of others was the glue that held her family together. On July 17, 2001, in Bellows Falls, she was married to Bernard L. Lawrence, who survives. Other survivors include her five children: Sherry Ames and husband Brian of Putney, Shelly Hain and husband Bob of Heathrow, Stephanie Powell and husband Ray of Groton, Connecticut, Johnny Hutchins and wife April of Brandon, and Gregory Hutchins of Dummerston; sisters Cheryl Aplin, Dolores Sylvester, Norma Ives, and Frances Brochu; brothers, Alton and Randy King; and 14 grandchildren and 12 great-grandchildren. Additionally, she leaves many nieces, nephews, great-nieces, great-nephews, and several cousins. She was predeceased by sibling Darlene Hutchins, Joyce Keeler, Clarice Short, and Raymond, Reginald, Dennis, and Fred King. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: A private graveside service will be held on Friday, March 31, at 11 a.m., for family and extended family at Meeting House Hill Cemetery in Brattleboro, followed by a celebration of life for family and friends at the VFW on 40 Black Mountain Road at 1 p.m. Donations to Rescue Inc., P.O. Box 593, Brattleboro, VT 05302, or to West Dummerston Volunteer Fire & Rescue, P.O. Box 40, West Dummerston, VT 05357. To send condolences, visit atamaniuk.com.

• **Louis Edgar Maxfield, 94**, of Hartland. Died on March 17, 2023, in Fort Pierce, Florida. Born to Lesle and Marguerite (Dodge) Maxfield on May 22, 1928, in Tunbridge, the second of their seven children, Louis lived his early life on the family farm there. In 1945, the Maxfield family made the big move to a river bottom-land farm in North Hartland which they would come to name Lemax Farm. Louis completed his high school education in nearby White River Junction, graduating with the Class of 1946 of Hartford High School. He then returned to the family farm to work, joining forces with his parents to build a herd of registered Holstein-Friesian cows. He met the woman who would become his wife, Margaret 'Peggy' Mayhew, in 1947. They married in October, 1949, and were joined by sons Lowell and Cecil in 1952 and 1954. Peggy predeceased Louis in November 2002. After Peggy's death, Louis would go on to marry Bennie Hendrix of Fort Pierce, Florida, who survives him. Louis was a farmer, first and foremost. In a profession which could be viewed as endless drudgery, Louis found contentment and a certain spiritual quality to the husbanding of land and animals. In addition to his farm work, Louis was a 33rd degree Mason, Selectman for the Town of Hartland, Moderator of the Hartland Town Meeting for some years, President of the Vermont and New England Holstein Associations, and a lay minister with the United Methodist Church. Louis also enjoyed judging cattle, especially with

young members of 4-H, with whom he hoped to pass along his knowledge of good cattle confirmation. In his late-in-life retirement, Louis enjoyed a good game of billiards, horseshoes, and golf. He and Bennie shared seasonal homes in both Vermont and Florida, but his heart was always in his beloved Vermont. Louis was predeceased by his brothers, Dick and Bob, and sister Betty. He is survived by his sisters Lorna, Marjorie, and Bunny, as well as his children, Lowell (wife Carol) and Cecil (husband Stephen Lloyd). MEMORIAL INFORMATION: A graveside memorial service will be held on May 22 at the Brick Church in Hartland Three Corners, Vermont.



• **Sonya Majdak Searles, 87**, formerly of Brattleboro. Died surrounded by loving family and friends on March 20, 2022. An inurnment service will be held in Brattleboro at St. Michael's Cemetery on Saturday, April 15, at 11 a.m., 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.



• **Roger Wayne Sweet, 82**, a former resident of Fairfield, Vermont, and more recently of Readsboro. Died peacefully on March 19, 2023 at Pine Heights Nursing Home in Brattleboro. Roger was born in St. Albans on Jan. 30, 1941, the son of Homer and Elva (Montgomery) Sweet. He was raised and educated in Fairfield and graduating from Bellows Free Academy in St. Albans. While attending high school, he was active in the Future Farmers of America Program, (FFA). At the age of 50, Roger enrolled in the Adult Learning Program in St. Albans, and attended meetings with the Senate in Washington, D.C., with his fellow classmates, something he was very proud of accomplishing. Roger worked the majority of his career as a self-employed logger. An ardent outdoorsman, he enjoyed hunting, fishing, and being in the woods. He enjoyed spending time with his grandchildren and great grandsons. Roger leaves one daughter, Jessica Tatro and her partner Karl Twitchell of Whiteingham; grandchildren Dylan Tatro, Courtney Tatro, Hailey Twitchell, and Zachary Vigneau; great-grandson Bradley and Austin; his extended family Phil, Val, Marie, Sam, and Jeff and many nieces and nephews. Additionally, he is survived by his loyal and beloved poodle, "Goofy." MEMORIAL INFORMATION: In keeping with his final wishes, there are no formal funeral services scheduled. His cremated remains will be scattered on the family farm in Fairfield later in the springtime. An informal gathering of family and close friends will take place at a future date. To send condolences, visit atamaniuk.com.

• **Diana James Waterfield, 78**, of Putney. Died on March 17 2023. She was the daughter of Maynard and Leslie Waterfield, and was a recent resident at Pine Heights Center for Nursing and Rehabilitation in Brattleboro. She is survived by her brother David, sister-in-law Darlene, and two nieces and one nephew. Diana was born in Washington D.C. and grew up in Arlington, Virginia. She graduated from University of North Carolina at Greensboro with a degree in interior design and worked in that field in Arlington. She moved to Massachusetts in 1968 and had several careers and later worked as an executive assistant for a venture capital company. She had a great sense of humor and was an avid animal lover, including her cats and dog Rufus. She will be missed by her family and her many friends. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: A graveside service will be held at a later time in Virginia. Donations can be made in her memory to the Alzheimer's Association (alz.org). To send condolences, visit atamaniuk.com.

PUBLIC NOTICES

ads@commonsnews.org • 888-511-5150

State of Vermont

Superior Court Windsor Unit Probate Division
Case No.: 23-PR-301

In re Estate of Roger M. French

Notice to Creditors

To the Creditors of: Roger M. French late of Brattleboro, 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: March 22, 2023 /s/ Walter G. French
802-254-9000 PO Box 2
wgf@frenchandfrenchlaw.com W. Dummerston, VT 05357

Name of Publication: The Commons Court: Windsor Probate Court
Publication Date: March 29, 2023 12 The Green
Woodstock, VT 05091

Public Hearing Notice

Notice is hereby given that the Brattleboro Development Review Board will hold a public hearing on Wednesday, 4.19.2023 at 7:00 PM in the Selectboard Meeting Room, Municipal Center, 230 Main St., Brattleboro, VT; the meeting will also be held on Zoom. Meeting ID: 881 4045 1917 Passcode: 190450.

2023-15 Town of Brattleboro; IT District; request for Flood Hazard Conditional Use Approval to construct a waste water pump station at 255 Linden St; TMP #70632.000; 2023-21 Tri-Park Cooperative Housing Corp; RN District; request for Flood Hazard Conditional Use Approval to replace sewer system at 85 Glen Dr; TMP #245010.000; 2023-22 Windham County Humane Society; RR District; request for Site Plan & Wetlands Conditional Use Approval to Construct 2045 sq. ft. 1 story addition, add 8 parking spots, stormwater treatment and landscaping at 916 West River Rd; TMP #70186.000 Pursuant to 24 VSA §§ 4464(a)(1)(C) and 4471(a), participation in this local proceeding is a prerequisite to the right to take any subsequent appeal.

NOTE: Meetings are open to the public. For specific accommodations please call the Planning Services Department at 802-251-8154. Application materials are available at <https://tinyurl.com/DRB-Applications> Additional materials may be submitted up to the time of the meeting and will be uploaded to the above address.

STATE OF VERMONT

SUPERIOR COURT PROBATE DIVISION
Windham Unit Docket No.: 23-PR-01059

In re ESTATE of: Seward Jackson Ogden, III

NOTICE TO CREDITORS

To the Creditors of: Seward Jackson Ogden, III (Decedent) late of Putney, 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: March 21, 2023 c/o Amelia W. L. Darrow, Esq.
Maria Ogden, Executor Secret & Darrow, PLC

209 Austine Dr. Brattleboro, VT 05301

Name of Publication: The Commons 802-251-6598
Publication Date: March 29, 2023 adarow@secretanddarrow.com

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Name of Publication: The Commons 802-251-6598
Publication Date: March 29, 2023 adarow@secretanddarrow.com

Address of Probate Court: 30 Putney Road, Brattleboro, VT 05301

MEDIA MENTORING PROJECT

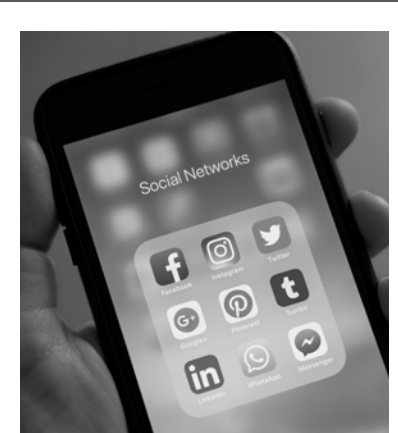
Social Media: The Age of Misinformation, Disinformation, Mal-information.

Why Critical Media Literacy is vital to preserving intelligent civic engagement.

Wednesday, March 29 at 7pm

Email ziagulazimi9@gmail.com for the Zoom link.

Join us for a panel discussion that goes behind the scenes of the mass media world and explores how, as a citizen, good critical media literacy can lead to intelligent civic engagement.



Topics:

- How to think critically and interpret messages from social media, mass media or pop culture.
- How to protect yourself and young people from negative aspects of social media.
- How social media platforms curate information for the reader/viewer.
- How social media is regulated v. mainstream media.

Panelists:

Gyuri Kepes

Susanna Strothman

Ben Boyington

Moderator:
Joyce Marcel

commonsnews.networkforgood.com

WATCH LIVE AT 7PM on The Commons Facebook page!

The reality is that you will grieve forever. You will not 'get over' the loss of a loved one; you will learn to live with it. You will heal and you will rebuild yourself around the loss you have suffered. You will be whole again but you will never be the same. Nor should you be the same nor would you want to.

— ELISABETH KÜBLER-ROSS

■ Brattleboro ARTM

for town employees.

This was the first in-person meeting since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020 forced RTM to go online for three years.

After having started the meeting in the high school gymnasium at 8:30 a.m., as the time approached 5 p.m., Moderator David Gartenstein said with a smile, “My sense looking out at the faces here is nobody’s coming back tomorrow morning.”

The body agreed to extend the meeting until 6 p.m., when RTM adjourned after finishing its business.

ARPA expenditures need community input

David Levenbach (District 3) proposed adding \$350,000 to the operating budget after the Selectboard voted last week to set aside \$1.75 million of the 2021 ARPA Covid relief money for EMS costs, including some to hire firefighters.

Levenbach said an efficiency consultant has said the fire department is understaffed and that six more firefighters would be ideal in a town the size of Brattleboro, whose population is about 12,000. The additional operating money will allow for hiring three firefighters right away without having to tap into ARPA money.

Saying he’s asked the board to seek community input about how to spend ARPA money, “and that hasn’t happened,” Levenbach noted that ARPA money “is a once-in-a-lifetime gift that should be used in long-term investments.”

The website of the U.S. Treasury Dept., which administers the federal funds, lists one goal of the program as “build[ing] a strong, resilient, and equitable recovery by making investments in long-term growth and opportunity.”

Voters ultimately agreed with Levenbach’s addition and also called for a “dedicated community engagement process” about future ARPA money expenditures.

More public say sought in how EMS services are contracted

Initially, Robert Oeser (District 3) offered a non-binding resolution expressing a general community “lack of confidence in the manner in which” the Selectboard has handled matters regarding emergency services. Those decisions resulted in the town abruptly ending a 56-year contract with Rescue, Inc. last spring.

Oeser called for the incoming Selectboard to set up an “accountable” process with a mediator to determine who will perform emergency services, taking into account community input and the possibility of “re-engaging” with Rescue Inc.

He noted that on April 19, 2022, the Selectboard voted to end the relationship with the non-profit, private emergency services company “with little notice to the public and without allowing for public input.”

Further, he said that on March 19, 2022, RTM had passed a budget “with the understanding” that a contract with Rescue Inc. “would be renewed, based on information in a 2021-22 annual report,” specifically noting a line item totaling \$285,600 for ambulance services with a description of Rescue Inc.

District 1 Representative John Kennedy took issue, saying the motion was not factual, that the board had not so voted, and that Rescue Inc. had notified the town it would not continue services after June 30, 2022.

Kennedy asked Town Clerk Hilary Francis to check and confirm his words and to request a review of the Brattleboro Community TV meeting videotape where it had been discussed.

Apparently, then-Town Manager Yoshi Manale had reopened contract talks, leading to the April action Oeser and others claimed had not been reviewed or publicly debated.

Richard Morton (District 1) spoke against the resolution, saying its “real impact [...] is one of condemnation.”

“I don’t think that’s appropriate, and I’m going to vote against it,” he said, adding he believes the newly seated Selectboard will address the issue properly.

Saying the information put forth was “incorrect” and calling a no-confidence vote “extreme,” District 1 Representative Paula Melton said it was “inappropriate” at this stage to recommend a contract with a specific contractor. She said she agreed with a consultant’s opinion that it would be wise to review the situation and set standards for EMS — and then talk about whom to hire.

“I feel sorry that we are here getting into the weeds with so much information we don’t have, trying to encourage the board to

do something it’s already apparent they are going to do,” said Spoon Agave (District 2). “The swamp is so dense and thick that to begin to talk this thing right or wrong, up or down, is going to be an exercise in frustration and futility.”

Bob Tortolani (District 2) said he was “happy we’re talking about it.”

“I’ve been in town about 50 years now and probably this is the most emotional issue that’s come up and continues to be talked about, thought about,” he said. “Rescue and the fire department are both essentially loved by the community, and I hate to see one against the other.”

“We really need to heal,” he continued. “I have faith in the Selectboard. [...] We’d love to have everybody working together and not in a divisive way.”

“It came across as ‘ready, shoot, aim,’” said Andrew Davis (District 3). “A big decision got made, and then we began studying options.”

He called the resolution “an attempt to say, ‘can we get the playing field back to level?’” so all potential providers and options “can be evaluated evenly and fairly and transparently.”

“I don’t think it’s about condemnation,” Davis said. “I think it’s about trying to restore balance.”

Cristina Shayonye (District 2) ultimately offered an amendment to call on the new board to set up a process to determine the future of EMS that is transparent and takes into account the opinions of residents, without requiring a mediator.

The friendly-amended resolution was adopted by the meeting.

Lengthy discussion to support community marketing

An article to appropriate \$45,028 for the community marketing initiative performed by the Brattleboro Area Chamber of Commerce and the Downtown Brattleboro Alliance drew plenty of debate.

District 1 Representative Lissa Weinmann, who has been involved in the effort, was challenged about the initiative’s focus on the BIPOC community. She said she believes the focus has been expanded from that exclusively to include more, despite no “formal” change of direction.

“I think the work is valuable,” she said, adding that most towns of similar size in the state have some marketing outreach and that Brattleboro has received a lot of press about not only the local BIPOC community and its achievements, but also the annual literary festival and more.

Brian Bannon (District 2) said money allocated from the town is used to hire a national marketing company.

“I think it’s a modest amount of money,” he said. “I think it gets attention for small businesses and organizations on a national level that wouldn’t happen otherwise.”

Outgoing Selectboard member Tim Wessel noted the move was initiated a few years ago, when the 1% local-option tax was passed, and “the idea is we take 1% of rooms and meals, collected largely from out-of town visitors, and invest it back to bring more visitors.”

“The idea is to encourage that spending and the money comes back to the town,” he said.

The article passed, as did spending \$36,552 for ongoing work by Southeastern Vermont Economic Development Strategies (SeVEDS) to grow area population and employment.

Circus school: education or recreation?

Lengthy debate ensued about exempting from taxation the New England Center for Circus Arts (NECCA), a tax-exempt, tax-deductible nonprofit, because it is “used primarily for education, performing arts, health, and recreational purposes.”

The meeting approved an exemption for the school from town property taxes through March 31, 2026. Meeting members did not agree to exempt NECCA from the state school tax as well.

NECCA initially brought the exemption request to the Board of Listers, whose members found the organization was more related to health and recreation than education. It came to Representative Town Meeting after NECCA petitioned to include the article on the warrant.

The organization could have appealed further to the Board of Civil Authority and ultimately to court.

NECCA Executive Director Jennifer Struble said the organization chose not to pursue those other options because “we don’t want to litigate with the town.”

Had the state tax been exempted by the meeting, the town would have been responsible

FROM SECTION FRONT

for education taxes, which total \$26,000, and such an action would have set a town precedent.

“We love the town,” she said, adding that as a “vocational school and educational organization,” the board was asking for “fairness” in requesting exemption from both taxes.

Struble explained the school is the “premier circus school in the country” and well known and respected internationally, but she said that it is difficult to keep employees because the organization can’t pay what “big cities” pay. She said the tax savings would go to salaries.

NECCA currently employs nine full-time and 42 part-time staff members and this year offered numerous free performances and \$54,000 in financial aid to community members, including at-risk young people.

“It’s not just cool, it’s really vital to those who changed their lives to move to tiny Brattleboro, and they love it,” she said, thanking the community for its support.

“The idea that NECCA is not an educational institution kind of boggles my mind,” said Anthony Duncan (District 3), a teacher there since 2004.

“Ninety-five percent of what goes on [...] really is about education,” he said. “It’s about helping people grow, develop. There are a lot of young people who come. [...] NECCA helps develop character of people in ways that are beneficial to themselves, and the world, frankly.”

Living Memorial Park improvements approved; pool repair study in the works

Meeting members approved a \$5.8 million comprehensive plan to upgrade Living Memorial Park’s Withington rink, with a 98-19 ballot vote to raise at most \$4.1 million with a bond issue.

Voters also approved \$50,000 for a feasibility study for repairs to the community swimming pool.

The “generational improvements” include repairs to include new upper softball field LED lighting, replacing a 30-year-old condenser, a 25-year-old dehumidifier, and the 49-year-old rusting and uninsulated roof.

Also slated for remediation are two maintenance buildings that no longer serve storage needs and expanding parking at the Kiwanis Shelter to include about 20 more parking spaces.

The improvements voted upon, also approved at the ballot box, include refrigeration system upgrades to the 1970s-era skating rink with a change from synthetic to natural refrigeration. This upgrade, said Parks & Recreation Committee members, was recommended a decade ago.

Representative Shela Linton (District 3) expressed her disappointment that the plan didn’t include upgrading the community swimming pool, saying the pool hosts more BIPOC families and that locker room and restroom improvements are needed.

The pool was considered, and voters agreed to the feasibility study. Some Selectboard members said they, too, wish it had been included now and said the pool will not be forgotten.

Municipal water system upgrade, with state help

Representative Town Meeting unanimously approved another bond issue on Saturday — this one a \$2 million improvement to the municipal water system.

This work is included in of a three-part capital improvement plan and includes an offer from the state of a \$927,500 subsidy over 40 years at 0% interest for this phase.

The Selectboard pointed out that going through the state loan program would reduce the cost to utility payers and that the project could be paid off sooner than expected.

The approved work of this first phase includes improvements to a pump station at Signal Hill, where the existing station was built in 1971 to serve 14 homes. It will also replace the Black Mountain Pump Station generator, in service since 1966, which has proved deficient in backup power with resulting water loss during power outages.

The final part is water main replacement for the 1949-vintage mains at Bridge and Water streets, where several main breaks have occurred and there is inadequate supply for fire protection/hydrants.

Selectboard compensation

What to pay the Selectboard also drove discussion, after it was proposed they be paid \$8,000 each and the chair, \$10,000 — the same as this year, but not always the case.

Tom Franks (District 2) said voters had agreed to increase the amount a while ago in an effort to



RANDOLPH T. HOLHUT/THE COMMONS

Not everyone knits at Town Meeting. Some work in needlepoint projects, such as this Representative Town Meeting member in Brattleboro on March 25.

increase participation by a greater diversity of community members to seek election to board seats.

“I think we failed,” Franks said, moving to reduce the amounts to \$3,500 and \$5,000, respectively. “I think we might want to consider why we’re doing this. I firmly believe this is an honorarium, not a payment, and that, in itself, has a tremendous value.”

Paula Melton (District 1) said there’s no tangible means to evaluate whether the plan worked and perhaps there should be, so that folks with lower incomes can feel they are able to participate.

“Being on the Selectboard is really, really hard, and people should be compensated, regardless of how other towns do it; that doesn’t need to be our standard,” she said.

Robin Morgan (District 2) added, “money is only one barrier to prevent participation” on the board, and all barriers should be examined.

Gary Stroud (District 2), added that money shouldn’t be the driving force to serve.

“This is something that’s in your heart and let not that [money] be the major thing,” he said. “The main reason you’re getting on any of these committees is about people, not profit.”

Franks withdrew his amendment, and the amounts in the proposed motion passed.

Other business

• After nearly two hours of debate, voters agreed to support Franks’ funding is 1.6% of the budget.

Human Services Committee Co-Chair David Miner (District 1) said the panel received 43 applications for the FY24 budget — seven more than were received for



RANDOLPH T. HOLHUT/THE COMMONS

Members from all levels of Girl Scouting in Brattleboro led Town Meeting members in the Pledge of Allegiance.

the allocation next year to up to 2% of the total municipal budget — an estimated \$440,000 — next year. This year’s funding is 1.6% of the budget.

Human Services Committee Co-Chair David Miner (District 1) said the panel received 43 applications for the FY24 budget — seven more than were received for

this year — for about \$107,000 more than was budgeted.

• In addition to the \$50,000 for the pool planning study at Living Memorial Park, the meeting agreed to spend \$1,087,306 in surplus money to pay the \$515,000 required local match for the Melrose Bridge replacement, \$400,000 for the Williams Street repair project, and to transfer \$122,306 to the Living Memorial Park Generational Improvement project fund to reduce borrowing for that project by the same amount.

• Meeting members also agreed to spend up to \$120,000 to defray the town portion of costs to demolish McNeil’s Brewery, 90 Elliot St., after a fire last fall that took the life of owner Ray McNeil and destroyed the structure.

Selectboard members called this “a cautionary article,” adding that insurance/estate money and/or current year money may be available to cover this expense.

• The meeting also commissioned a townwide reappraisal of taxable property to be completed for tax year 2027.

• The meeting adopted special assessments of \$80,000 to pay for the work of the Downtown Brattleboro Alliance and \$131,698 to pay for water and sewer improvements at the Mountain Home and Deepwoods mobile home parks.



RANDOLPH T. HOLHUT/THE COMMONS

District 3 member Shela Linton raised objections to the \$4.1 million improvement plan for Living Memorial Park, saying that much-needed repairs to the park’s swimming pool were not included.

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Just-cause evictions

Or not renovate and still raise the rent. This is capitalism, they argue — owners can do what they like with their property.

This adds an extra layer of uncertainty to renters, especially to those living in apartments considered affordable. Housing advocates have argued that the most vulnerable of the population are at risk of homelessness.

Why? Given the extremely low availability of rental units — a situation not limited to Brattleboro — a tenant who has been evicted from an affordable unit will find it extremely difficult to find another affordable place in the community; proponents of the just-cause movement talk about people being forced to live in their cars.

Different wording, different results

The Essex amendment was one line long: “Shall the Town of Essex amend its charter to give the Select board the power to enact an ordinance to protect residential tenants from eviction without just cause?” It was clean, clear, and somewhat vague about particulars. It passed with 60% of the vote.

The Winooski amendment was quite different. It was long, complex and written in legalese. It began: “Shall the Charter of the City of Winooski, Acts of 2013, No. M-9, as amended, be further amended to give the City Council the power to provide by ordinance protections for residential tenants from evictions without ‘just cause’ by adopting and adding a new subsection 304(b)(13) to read as follows...”

What followed was a list of instructions: providing protections against eviction to be written into

the charter; providing a list of reasons for eviction for just cause; providing a list of exemptions; putting a limit on “unreasonable” rent increases; and defining the meaning of “reasonable” and “adequate notice.”

It passed with 73% of the vote. Basically, these amendments require the town’s governing body to write an ordinance protecting renters. The resulting ordinance will be passed on to the Legislature to go through the process of becoming a state law. If the House and Senate agree on the amendment — and they are free to change the wording — there will be a full vote. If the bill passes both houses, it will go to the governor for his signature or veto.

The Winooski amendment contains identical language to the Burlington amendment that passed in 2021. That one made it through the Legislature, only to be vetoed by Gov. Phil Scott. Without a commanding majority, the resulting override failed by one vote.

This year, the intention is to bring it up again, and this time Democrats have the votes to override Scott’s veto.

The Brattleboro charter amendment language was identical to the Burlington and Winooski amendments, except for new restrictions on landlords that had them up in arms.

For one thing, it capped rent increases at a specific 12%. For another, it required landlords who evict tenants in order to do renovation work to provide them with another apartment or pay one month’s rent for “hardship” and relocation assistance, and then reoffer the apartment to the tenant

when the work is finished.

Brattleboro landlords, led by property manager and Realtor Sally Fegley mounted a campaign to stop the amendment, a campaign that resulted in flyers, road signs, media coverage, and more.

The campaign worked for them. The Brattleboro amendment failed with 65% of voters rejecting the measure.

Crime fears

According to Fegley, the amendment failed because people are afraid of crime.

“It failed in Brattleboro because we did a fairly good job of informing the electorate,” Fegley said. “And I think the electorate is very driven by antisocial behavior and crime right now.”

“In Brattleboro, it’s really an issue. And it’s really a problem,” she continued. “The article would have enabled anti-social behavior to continue.”

People are angry right now, Fegley said.

“In the extreme, it’s drugs,” she said. “And there’s a whole lot of drug dealing going on in town. And landlords are the first line of defense against drug dealing, because, you know, if you get a responsible landlord — and by the way, some of the drug houses in town have landlords who are inept — but responsible landlords would have those drug dealers out of their building.”

“And as I walked around town handing out flyers, countless people spoke to me about drug trafficking in their neighborhoods. Neighborhoods where you wouldn’t even suspect it. Nice neighborhoods.”

But not everyone who is evicted from their apartments is a drug dealer or a prostitute. Much was made during the runup to the election about the Section 8 and disabled tenants who were being evicted, as their leases ended, from an apartment complex on Route 9, simply because the new owners wanted to do renovations and then rent the apartments at a much higher price.

That building was an anomaly, Fegley said.

“Unfortunately, that one building has given all the landlords in Brattleboro a bad name,” she said.

Some landlords with empty rental units were keeping them off the market until they saw how the

amendment fared, Fegley said.

“They’re afraid that an article like that would get passed, and they don’t want to be caught with a tenant they can’t remove,” Fegley said. “So if that article would have passed or if in the future a similar article passes, there will be fewer rental units on the market. It will be counterproductive to what the article is intended to do.”

In any case, Fegley said, the amendment would have violated contract law and would probably have ended up in court.

“It’s the whole idea of the injustice to landlords,” she said. “The tenants would be allowed to leave at the end of the lease, but landlords couldn’t ask them to leave. That is a basic violation of contract law.”

A larger movement

The just-cause movement is being spearheaded by Rights & Democracy (RAD), a nonprofit lobbying group active in Vermont and New Hampshire.

On its website (radmovement.org) it declares, “[W]e’re building a strong movement and the people power necessary to win justice and improve the policies that affect us and our communities. From making sure that every worker earns a livable wage, to securing access to quality healthcare and education for all, we are active in a broad range of issues that people face every day.”

In Vermont, RAD’s housing justice organizer is Tom Proctor. He is the person behind all of these charter amendments.

“The difference between the Brattleboro language and the Winooski language is that Winooski’s language empowers the city council to create just-cause eviction laws in their community,” Proctor told *The Commons*.

“It gives them flexibility,” he added. “But there are guardrails in terms of what that ordinance would look like. For example, just cause is not up to interpretation. It’s very defined. But the language gives them more flexibility, for example, to define what adequate notice is if a landlord is to evict. Or what a ‘reasonable’ rental increase is.”

In Brattleboro, he said, that increase was capped at 12%.

Flexibility is needed because the housing market is in constant change, Proctor said. Also, it is different in different municipalities. City councils or Selectboards need to have the flexibility to tweak the language as it becomes necessary.

In Brattleboro, activists wrote an amendment that is much more restrictive, and “it wasn’t my decision to do that,” Proctor said.

“In the Brattleboro amendment, it meant that the

BDCC partners with SCORE, seeks mentors for local entrepreneurs

BRATTLEBORO — Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation (BDCC) says it is partnering with Score NH-VT to help leverage its strong national business assistance program to assist Windham County entrepreneurs.

Score trains volunteers who work one-on-one with entrepreneurs to assist with business fundamentals. Participants seeking help from mentors also receive access to hundreds of videos and lessons on topics ranging from social media marketing to cash flow analysis.

Currently, the BDCC seeks local community members to join the ranks of Score NH-VT as Windham Region mentors. An informational session will be held on Tuesday, April 25, at 3:30 p.m. via webinar, or Friday, April 28 at 2:30 p.m. in person at BDCC’s offices at 76 Cotton Mill Hill.

BDCC is building a cohort of Windham Score Mentors to work with Windham Region

businesses. BDCC’s technical assistance team will collaborate with Windham Score Mentors and Windham Clients on delivering the needed resources and support for the region’s small businesses to thrive.

Being a mentor can involve as little as 2 to 4 hours per week, depending on your client portfolio. Volunteers are responsible for reviewing mentoring requests in the Score system; setting up client meetings, which range from 30 to 90 minutes, entering meeting notes online, and following up with clients.

Mentors attend 1 to 2 hours of chapter meetings per month. All are encouraged to consider this opportunity; this is not limited to those who are retired or former business owners; Score provides extensive training workshops and materials for mentors. For more information, visit brattleborodevelopment.com, or email bizhelp@brattleborodevelopment.com.

Selectboard [members] weren’t able to define what is reasonable notice or adequate notice or a reasonable rent increase,” Proctor said. “The Brattleboro activists didn’t trust the Selectboard to put in regulations that they thought would actually work. They wanted to have it already in the language. I was personally against it. For my own organizing purposes, I prefer to have standard language.”

The ballot initiative in Brattleboro has a more complicated backstory. It originated with the nonprofit Brattleboro Common Sense, which launched the idea of it on the charter change but ultimately repudiated the ballot question that went before voters.

According to Kurt Daims, the founder of BCS, RAD became involved in the Brattleboro effort at his behest, but eventually they commandeered the organizing effort and effectively shut him out.

“We wanted [provisions for] rent control, eviction control, and creating housing,” said Daims, who faces court action and acrimonious conflict with town officials and some neighbors over his creation of housing — in the form of three recreational vehicles on his Washington Street property that he has made available to people who otherwise would be homeless.

According to Daims, Proctor considered those provisions too radical.

“Well, we wouldn’t have put in a section B,” he said. “There’s no need to prevent [evictions] with the endless lease when they’re already prevented with the rent control provision.”

Daims told *The Commons* in mid-March that BCS was exploring a number of options to continue to advance the just-cause evictions.

‘We just couldn’t compete’

Proctor is convinced that the main reason the amendment

failed in Brattleboro was because the activists were out-organized by the landlords.

“When it came to Brattleboro, we just couldn’t compete against the big money that landlords were willing to throw against it,” he said. “They spent a lot of money to pump out a ton of disinformation. I saw flyers saying that your rent would increase dramatically, and that buildings would fall into disrepair and lie empty.”

“The lies got more outlandish as the campaign went on,” Proctor charged. “So when people were going to the polls, they went with a weird animosity against this policy, mostly because they’d been lied to by their landlords telling them that the sky was falling and houses would spontaneously combust if this passed.”

“We didn’t have nearly the same organization in Essex and Winooski,” he said.

When asked, Fegley said the whole campaign cost under \$350.

“I bought the signs online for a total of \$332, including shipping,” she said. “I put them up myself. And I paid for the flyers.”

Just cause may have failed in Brattleboro this time around, but the issue is not going away, Proctor said.

“A lot of people are not being allowed to re-sign a new lease,” Proctor said. “Landlords are just chucking them out for God knows what reason — it’s a different reason all the time. And then they become homeless.”

“That’s why we need this protection for renters who are playing by the rules,” he continued. “They pay the rent on time, they look after their properties. They should be able to stay in the places that they consider a home if they are doing those things.”

In a world of AirBnBs and gentrification, tenants need protection, said Proctor, noting that RAD is working on a bill that would offer these protections to all renters in the state.

“We need to provide a legal framework of how to stay in your home and continue being a good renter, pay your rent on time, and look after the property,” he said.

“For the moment, we don’t have that legal protection,” Proctor said. “We’re not saying don’t make profit. We’re just saying don’t gouge people to the extent that they become homeless.”

Additional reporting by Jeff Potter.

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COLUMN | Reporter's Notebook



Jonas Fricke, shown working on a mural in downtown Brattleboro.

AMBER ARNOLD/SPECIAL TO THE COMMONS

A community grieves the sudden loss of Jonas Fricke, an artist who made murals and music, who built community, and who imbued Brattleboro with creativity and love — so much unconditional love

WHEN I MET Jonas Fricke more than 20 years ago, I was in deep need of some joy.

I had seen a drunken man attack another man on Elliot Street, late at night after a bar closed, and the violence was haunting me. When I saw the poster advertising the "Pillow Fight in the Harmony Parking Lot!" I knew I had to go.

Soon, feathers were flying in the air as laughing combatants — Fricke among them — chased one another around the parked cars. After the joyous battle was over, some of the pillow warriors turned into cleaners and swept up the feathery mess.

It is one of my favorite memories of Brattleboro.

Since his death at the age of 42 on March 5, of unknown causes after a performance onstage in Tallahassee, Florida, I have been talking with and emailing people who knew and loved Fricke and remember him as much more than a playful ambassador of fun.

Brattleboro



ROLF PARKER-HOUGHTON, a former newspaper reporter and poet, has written about colorful figures in Brattleboro's history for The Commons. He has recently served as principal historian for the Words Trail project.

Jonas Fricke — a.k.a. "Jobo" — was an artist. "For almost four decades I have used creativity as a walking stick," he said on his current website, on which he described himself as a radical musician, painter, and screen printer.

"I believe wholeheartedly in the ability of artwork and creative pursuits to start fires of meaning, illuminate paths of quandary and curiosity, inspire change, make life more colorful and vibrant, as well as inspire others to live more creative lives.

"I work in many mediums and use art as an exploratory process of continual revelation lead by fascination," he wrote. "My images

SEE FRICKE, B4

COLUMN | Arts Notebook

Awareness and empathy

Area writer David Blistein brings his own journey with mental wellness to his work on a PBS documentary series exploring the emotional well-being of young people. He started with interviews in Brattleboro.

DAVID BLISTEIN sits in his "office," a table at the back of Amy's Bakery and Café downtown, enjoying soup while we talk about his work.

A novelist, screenwriter, essayist, and former ad man, Blistein casts a wide net which, he notes on his website, "is the culmination of a lifelong pursuit of wisdom, transcendence, and humor" nurtured by years of meditation and writing. Recently, he's dialed in that writing on issues of health — particularly mental health.

After college, Blistein spent several years selling books for a publishing company before settling in southern Vermont in 1980. After some 35 years in marketing and communications,



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.

primarily at his own ad agency, Blistein left the business world to focus on his projects, first traveling the country in a VW van to examine — perhaps escape, perhaps exorcize — depression, which had repeatedly taken him to the mat. Author or co-author of several books,

including a history of opium, and of documentary films, he has most recently worked with his longtime friend and Walpole, N.H.-based filmmaker Ken Burns, whom he first met when they were undergrads: Blistein at Amherst College and Burns at Hampshire College.

As we look out over the Connecticut River from Amy's back window, Blistein talks about his travels, his work, his relationship to southern Vermont, his peripatetic journey to mental health.

WHILE CLEARLY enthused about all that's on his plate, including a film about Henry David Thoreau, it's his current work with PBS that

SEE DOCUMENTARY, B3



David Blistein

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arts & community CALENDAR

THURSDAY

30

Performing arts

WILLIAMSVILLE Open Auditions for Rock River Players' Evening of Contemporary One Acts: Lichtenwalner. "Punk'd" by Robert Cullinans, directed by Cris Parker-Jennings. "The Caltrop" by Pamela Corkey, directed by Amy Donohue. "Eggs" by Jennifer Jasper, directed by Pamela Corkey. Roles for ages 12 to 65 and over.

► Auditions: March 30: Thurs., 5:30-7:30 p.m.; April 1: Sat., 10 a.m.-12 noon. Performances: June 2-4.

► Through Saturday, April 1.

► **Williamsville Hall, Dover Rd. Information:** More information: rockriverplayers.org or write to producer Annie Landenberger: verbatimvt@gmail.com.

Music

CHESTER Celebrating Women Composers - "Music HerStory": Music HerStory exalts contributions that women have made to the world of classical music. Compositions spanning 1805-1982, including works by Fanny Mendelssohn, Clara Schumann, Caroline Shaw and others will be featured. Pianist Carolyn Enger is dedicated to performing compositions by under-represented female composers. She strives to inspire audiences to appreciate the importance of diverse creators, underscoring the universality of music.

► 7 p.m. Enger performed at Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center and the National Gallery of Oslo and the Felicia Blumenthal Center in Tel Aviv. Her 2013 Nexus recording of music by Ned Rorem, Piano Album 1, was selected as one of The New York Times "Best in Classical Recordings."

► \$10 donation suggested. Proceeds benefit Chester Andover Family Center and First Universalist Parish of Chester.

► First Universalist Parish of Chester, 211 North St., VT 103. Information: More information: cheservtu@gmail.com.

BRATTLEBORO Musical Salon: Beethoven's "Harp" Explored: Hosted by Moby Pearson. Quire and discuss Beethoven's "Harp" Quartet Opus 74 with co-host, musician, teacher, composer Robbie Merfeld. Composed in 1809, Beethoven's "Harp" Quartet is actually written, not for harp, but for string quartet. The "Harp" nickname comes from the pizzicato sections in the allegro of the first movement, where

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NIGHTLY 6:50 PM

QUIET GIRL

DAILY 4 PM
NIGHTLY 7 PM

CHAMPIONS

DAILY 4 PM
NIGHTLY 7 PM

THE COLONIAL JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER Songs We Love 3.31

MARCIA BALL and TINSLEY ELLIS BLUES! 4.1

TAPE FACE Comedy 4.14

MUTTS GONE NUTS 4.16

WHOSE LIVE AN' WYAW Hilarious Improv Comedy 4.22

ONE NIGHT OF QUEEN Gary Mullen & The Works 4.25

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The Colonial Theatre is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization

THURSDAY CONT.

pairs of members of the quartet alternate notes in an arpeggio, reminiscent of the plucking of a harp.

► 7 p.m. These Salons are an opportunity to explore a wide range of topics and pick up new musical perspectives. Topics have included Composers of Color, Music of Protest, The Art of Robert Shaw, Music of Ukraine, Film Scores and Theme Songs, The Mozart Arias, explorations of close harmony singing. Those planning to attend are strongly encouraged to review online materials prepared for the Salon: bmcvt.org/harp-quartet.

► Donations gratefully accepted.

► **Brattleboro Music Center, 72 Blanche Moysie Way. Information:** Please pre-register by calling 802-257-4523 or email info@bmcvt.org so we can reserve a spot for you.

PUTNEY The Association for Cultural Equity's Anna Lomax Woo is interviewed by Miriam Elhajji: Singer-songwriter/musicologist Miriam Elhajji interviews Anna Lomax Wood, President of the Assn. for Cultural Equity (ACE) and daughter of the founder - musicologist Alan Lomax. Talk will focus on ACE and the Global Jukebox - an online database and interactive website - allowing users to listen to and learn about more than 6,000 songs from 1,000 cultures - including many from Lomax's personal collection. Elhajji performs a few songs beforehand.

► 7 p.m.

► Free. Donations are appreciated.

► **Next Stage Arts Project, 15 Kimball Hill. Information:** 802-387-0102; nextstagearts.org.

Instruction

BRATTLEBORO New England Youth Theater: Costume Design: Join Monika Grist-Weiner, NETY's Costume Designer, for a 4-week course in Costume Design. Together we'll cover costume design principles: Color, Silhouette, Texture, and Story. Students will get the opportunity through play to learn the layout of the costume loft. We'll also do some practice work on sewing machines and hand sewing. This class is a chance to expand students awareness of costumes, broaden design vocabulary, and sharpen eyes for design.

► 4-6 p.m. on Thursdays.

► Through Thursday, April 20.

► Sliding scale: \$150, \$200, \$250.

► **New England Youth Theatre, 100 Flat St. Information:** 802-246-6398; neyt.org.

Community building

BRATTLEBORO Windham County Natural Resources Conservation District - Annual Conservation Coffee Chat (In-Person/Zoom): "Learn more about the services we offer to agricultural producers, land owners and beyond. We will also go over what it looks like to join our Local Workgroup and how to participate in Locally Led Conservation. Most importantly, this is an opportunity to tell us how we can better assist you and the conservation concerns you have."

► 10:30 a.m.-12 noon in the Community Room.

► Free.

► **Brooks Memorial Library, 224 Main St. Link (includes Zoom):** https://forms.gle/Q1Noq4pkccz9Uk6RSVP; windhamcountynrcd@gmail.com or 802-689-3024. More info about NRCD: windhamcountynrcd.org.

Bonnyvale Environmental Education Center offers Salamander Crossing Bridge Training (via Zoom): Whether you are new to salamander crossings or want to brush up on your salamander and frog IDs and enjoy some amphibian banter, join us for this webinar. We'll cover where to go and when, what to do when you get there, and how to identify the different amphibians you might encounter. Learn how to become a salamander crossing guard and help spotted salamanders make the trek safely to their vernal pools during the spring migration.

► 7 p.m.

► By donation.

► Zoom Information: Info/Sign-up: pattib@bec.org, 802-257-5785, beec.org. Link: tinyurl.com/47jfvu7.

FRIDAY

31

Performing arts

PUTNEY Gordon Clark and his Vermont Comedy All-Stars return with Stand-Up Comedy: Featured performers include contest-winning and touring comedians most often seen in

FRIDAY CONT.

the Burlington area such as Hillary, Vicki Ferentinos, Al Ghanekar, Marisa Imion, Liam Welsh.

► 7:30 p.m.

► \$12 in advance, \$15 at door.

► **Next Stage Arts Project, 15 Kimball Hill. Information:** 802-387-0102; nextstagearts.org.

Music

KEENE Rachmaninov, Dvorak, Ravel: Piano Trios: Program: Rachmaninov: Trio Elegiaque No.1 in G minor; Dvorak: Piano Trio No.2 in G minor, Op.26; Ravel: Piano Trio in A minor. Louisa Stonehill, violin; Guy Johnston, cellist, returns with his Stradivarius cello; Nicholas Burns, piano.

► 7:30-9:30 p.m.

► \$30. Free if under age 18.

► **Stonewall Farm, 242 Chesterfield Road. Information:** tinyurl.com/4snfjfp.

Kids and families

Free Vermont Family Support Programs - Nurturing Program for Families in Substance Use Treatment & Recovery (Online): Curriculum-based parenting education programs for families experiencing stress. Participants may start up to 2 weeks after class begins.

► 1 p.m. on Fridays. This is one of six programs. All programs are 2 hours a week for 12 to 14 weeks.

► Free.

► Online. Information: pcvat.org/family-support-programs, familysupport@pcvat.org, 1-800-CHILDREN.

BRATTLEBORO Recovery Families hosted by Turning Point: Young children welcome. Join other caregivers for connection and support of your own recovery journey or that of someone you love.

► 10-11 a.m. on Fridays.

► Free.

► **Turning Point, 39 Elm St. Information:** 802-257-5600.

Well-being

BELLOWS FALLS Medicaid & Health Resource Drop-in Hours: All are welcome to stop in to find out whether they will be affected by the upcoming Medicaid cut-backs, what their rights are in this process, and how to be sure that they aren't cut off for bureaucratic reasons. People who are not on Medicaid and have questions about health care access are also welcome, as there will be other health care resources available. Hosted by Vermont Workers' Center.

► 2-4 p.m. in the Meeting Room.

► Free.

► **Rockingham Free Public Library, 65 Westminster St. Information:** More information: windham@workerscenter.org.

SATURDAY

1

The written word

"Writing to Prompts" (Online): "In this workshop, appropriate for beginning and experienced writers, we'll explore how to use scenes to create a story." Led by Barbara Morrison.

► 4-5 p.m.

► \$10 suggested donation.

► Zoom. Information: Register: info@timetowrite.us.

Brattleboro Poetry Discussion Group (Online): This month we discuss Rainer Maria Rilke in translation. No experience necessary; copies of the poems provided. Led by Barbara Morrison.

► 12 noon-2 p.m.

► Free.

► Zoom. Information: Register: info@timetowrite.us.

Kids and families

BRATTLEBORO Family Owl Prowl: Hoot it up naturalist Susie Spikol on a magical twilight walk. We'll look/listen for VT's most common owl species, learning as we go. Perfect for families with elementary-aged children and older. Spikol is a naturalist, writer, youth program educator. She's the author of "The Animal Adventurer's Guide: How to Prowl for an Owl, Make Snail Slime and Catch a Frog Bare-Handed." You will want a copy of this indispensable activity guide for nature-loving kids.

► 7 p.m.

► By donation.

► **Bonnyvale Environmental Education Center, 1221 Bonnyvale Rd. Information:** Learn more at beec.org. Register: beec.org.

Community building

DUMMERSTON The Landmark Trust USA: Sugar Season Event to Celebrate Historic Preservation and Vermont Heritage: The public is invited to The Sugarhouse Open House. The 1915 building was the site of maple sugaring at Scott Farm for many years and was beautifully restored/adaptively reused by LTUSA as a one-bedroom overnight rental, normally accessible only to overnight guests. The Open House will allow the public to learn about the property's history, rehabilitation, explore sugaring, purchase maple products from neighboring Bearfoot Farm, enjoy maple snacks, and more.

► 11 a.m.-3 p.m. This event is part of Maple Open House Weekend, an initiative of the Vermont Maple Sugar Makers Association.

► Free.

► **The Landmark Trust USA, 707 Kipling Road. Information:** Parking: 707 Kipling Road. Accessible Parking only: 759 Kipling Rd.

Film and video

GREENFIELD April Fools Day Mini Marathon - Four Classic Shorts of the Three Stooges: Four classic Three Stooges shorts featuring Larry Fine, Moe Howard, Shemp Howard, and Curly Howard. In "Disorder in the Court," the stooges raise havoc testifying in a murder trial. Shemp is a "Brideless Groom" who stands to inherit \$500,000 if he marries right away. In "Malice in the Palace," follow their adventures searching for a cursed diamond. In "Sing a Song of Six Pants," watch inept tailors inadvertently aiding a robber on the run from the law.

► 11 a.m.

► Free.

► **Greenfield Garden Cinema, 361 Main St. Information:** 413-774-4881.

SUNDAY

2

Music

PUTNEY RUNA - Celtic-American Roots Music Quintet (presented by Next Stage Arts and Twilight Music): Celebrating 14 years together as a band, RUNA continues to push the boundaries of Irish folk music into the Americana

SUNDAY CONT.

and roots music formats. Interweaving the haunting melodies and exuberant tunes of Ireland and Scotland with lush harmonies and intoxicating rhythms of jazz, bluegrass, flamenco, Blues, they offer a thrilling and redefining take on traditional music. One of the most innovative Irish folk groups of this generation.

► 7 p.m. **Vocalist/step-dancer Shannon Lambert-Ryan and fiddler Jake James** from the US; **GRAMMY-award nominated guitarist Fionan de Barra** from Ireland; **percussionist Cheryl Prashker** and **mandolinist/vocalist Tom Fitzgerald** from Canada. RUNA has been honored internationally, winning "Top Group" and "Top Traditional Group" in the Irish Music Awards and three Independent Music Awards: "Best LIVE Album," "Best World/Traditional Song," "Best Bluegrass Song."

► \$22 in advance, \$25 at door.

► **Next Stage Arts Project, 15 Kimball Hill. Information:** Tickets: nextstagearts.org, Information: 802-387-0102.

Community building

W. BRATTLEBORO "I'm New Here" (In-Person/Zoom): We'll learn about the work of the Ethiopian Community Development Council in Brattleboro finding new homes and new lives for folks coming from Afghanistan. Eduardo Melendez and Joe Wiah will be speaking. We'll learn the song Pazy y Libertad, from Amiliah and Greg and guest musicians. Led by Rev. Telos Whitfield.

► 10 a.m.

► **All Souls Unitarian Universalist Church, 29 South St. Information:** Go to our website, ascvt.org, Sunday shortly before 10 a.m. to join via Zoom.

BRATTLEBORO Milk with Dignity Organizing Tour/Lecture on Dignidad: Immigrant dairy workers are traveling across the northeast this spring to connect with supporters and take action. Farmworker organization Migrant Justice calls on Hannaford supermarkets to source store-brand milk from farms where workers' human rights are independently monitored/protected and long-term interests of farm owners are supported. Learn more about rampant abuses workers face on dairy farms and the powerful organizing they're doing to improve conditions/protect rights.

► 4 p.m. During this organizing meeting, you'll hear directly from farmworkers, learn about the Milk with Dignity Program, take collective action, gain tools you need to join this inspiring struggle for human rights.

► Free.

► **The Root Social Justice Center, 28 Williams St., 1st fl. Information:** 802-254-3400; therootsj.org.

Dance

BRATTLEBORO West Coast Swing: West Coast Swing Intermediate Lesson, Nightclub 2-Step Introductory Lesson, Open Dance.

► 3 p.m.: West Coast Swing Intermediate Lesson. 4 p.m.: Nightclub 2-Step Lesson. 5-7 p.m. Open Dance. All this takes place in Thomas Hall. Free parking.

► \$10 Open Dance, \$20 Lessons and Dance.

► **Winston Prouty Campus, 209 Austine Dr. Information:** More info: Text Bonnie at 802-249-8646.

GUILFORD Contra Dance Spring Series - 1st Sundays through June 4 - Sponsored by Brattleboro Contra Dance: Liz Nelson calling with Cojoro: Max Price and Jess Newman. Broad Brook Community Center is a locally owned, recently renovated Grange Hall with a new floor! - 12 minutes from Brattleboro.

► 6-9 p.m. Covid Policy: N-95 Mask and proof of vax/bivalent boosters required. Medical exemptions for boosters only.

► \$15 to \$20.

► **Broad Brook Community Center, 3940 Guilford Center Rd. Information:** Questions: Erich Kruger, ewkruger@gmail.com.

MONDAY

3

The written word

BRATTLEBORO Brattleboro Great Books Group discusses Alexander Pushkin's novel-in-verse "Eugene Onegin": Story of tragic love, the head vs. heart, Voltaire vs. Rousseau. Recently banned in Ukraine (even though it was originally published in the 1820s). The novel runs about 200 pages. Any English translation will do and it's available online as a pdf.

► 7-9:30 p.m. in the History Room on the mezzanine.

► Free.

► **Brooks Memorial Library, 224 Main St. Information:** 802-254-5290; brookslibraryvt.org.

Community building

BRATTLEBORO The Connecticut River Valley Chapter of Trout Unlimited presentation: "The State of the State's Fisheries": Lael Will (VT Fish and Wildlife) fisheries biologist for southeast VT, works mainly on trout fisheries in rivers and streams, bass fisheries in lakes/ponds, and to improve habitat/fish passage for diadromous species as chair of the Science Committee of the 4-state CT River Atlantic Salmon Commission - American eel, American shad, sea lamprey - and she conducts environmental review of development project proposals for potential impacts to VT's fish populations.

► 6 p.m. (pizza and soda at 5:30 p.m.) in Community Meeting Room A.

► Free.

► **Brooks Memorial Library, 224 Main St. Information:** 802-254-5290; brookslibraryvt.org.

Community meals

BRATTLEBORO Vermont Food Bank: Veggie Van Go: Free produce and local food for people to take home.

► 10-11 a.m. in parking lot across main entrance to school (do not arrive before 9:45 a.m.). Stay in your vehicle. If you are walking to get here, see a VT Foodbank associate but make sure to stay 6 ft. back. No income requirements, registration or paperwork to participate. You do not need to be present to get food but can ask someone to pick up on your family's behalf.

► **Brattleboro Union High School, 131 Fairground Rd. Information:** 800-585-2265, veggievango@vtfoodbank.org.

Visual arts and shows

PUTNEY Putney Public Library Exhibit - "Affinities" - Assemblages by Bonnie Menzell: "Objects find me. Their beauty, form, textures and colors draw me to them. I collect them, asking permission and giving thanks. I bring them to my home and studio. I live with them. They engage me both in the moment and over time."

► 10:30 a.m.-6 p.m. Mon.-Fri., 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Sat. Bonnie, a Putney resident, also teaches as part of the New England Council Collective, which offers workshops in the deep listening approach to group dialogue.

► Through Saturday, May 20.

► Free.

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► **Putney Public Library, 55 Main St. Information:** 802-387-4407; putneylibrary.org/events.

Film and video

GREENFIELD First Monday Silent Film Series: "The City Without Jews": The Greenfield Human Rights Commission presents this 1924 anti-Nazi satire film followed by a short discussion about antisemitism. The film will be accompanied with live music by world-renowned musicians Alicia Svigals on violin and David Sosin on keyboard playing original music.

► 6:30 film showing.

► Free.

► **Greenfield Garden Cinema, 361 Main St. Information:** 413-774-4881.

TUESDAY

4

Government

BRATTLEBORO Windham World Affairs Council (WWAC): "The Czech Republic, The European Union and the Rise of Populism": Guest is researcher/author Dr. Martin Nekola, PhD. Merrill Sovner, WWAC member and Assistant Dir. of the European Studies Center at Ralph Bunche Institute moderates. As we navigate our way through the current iteration of populism in the U.S., Europe provides a cautionary tale. Dr. Nekola addresses populism through the lens of the Czech Republic and other countries of Central Europe. The audience will have an opportunity to ask questions and consider global implications.

► 7-8:30 p.m. Dr. Nekola is a member of the Association for Slavic, East European and Eurasian Studies and has published over 300 articles and 20 books.

► Free. Donations (which can also be made at Registration link below) are welcome to support WWAC's work.

► **Brooks Memorial Library, 224 Main St. Susan Healy: windhamworldaffairsCouncil@gmail.com or (781) 422-9485 Registration required: tinyurl.com/5577btxs.**

Kids and families

BRATTLEBORO Sing & Dance with Robin: Enriching musical experience for toddlers and preschoolers (ages 5 and under). Designed to support healthy cognitive, physical, and social development, children will sing, clap, stomp, dance, and play along with the curriculum of traditional and modern folk songs. Parents encouraged to sing and participate with their child.

► 10:30 a.m. on Tuesdays.

► Through Tuesday, April 25.

► Free.

► **Brooks Memorial Library, 224 Main St. Information:** 802-254-5290; brookslibraryvt.org.

Well-being

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

► 5-6:30 p.m. on Tuesdays.

► **Brattleboro Walk-In Clinic, 191 Clark Ave. Information:** 802-251-8484; brattleborowalkinclinic.com.

BRATTLEBORO Aerial Yoga Class Offers Health Benefits: Aerial Yoga is now offered through the New England Center for Circus Arts (NECCA) at Brattleboro area residents of all ages and body types. Beginners of all ages and body types are welcome in this yoga flow class that utilizes loops of fabric attached to the ceiling to support the body. Participants experience suspension on professionally and safely installed equipment while staying close to the floor with low impact sequences that release tension/endorphins.

► 7:30 a.m. Tuesdays. For yoga practitioners, loops of fabric make inversions and yoga poses more accessible. Benefits include: relieving joint pressure and spinal compression that floor workouts can trigger, increased balance, improved breath/body awareness, enhanced core strength for back and joint health. (Classes on Wednesdays start at 5:30 p.m.).

► **New England Center for Circus Arts, 74 Cotton Mill Hill, #30. Information:** 802-254-9780. CircusSchool.org.

BRATTLEBORO Loving Kindness Silent Vigil resumes every Tuesday for its fourth season: Under a banner that reads, "Holding a space of Loving Kindness for all Living Beings," we gather every Tuesday (weather permitting) to extend silent thoughts of loving kindness to family, friends, the good folks passing by (as well as our non-human fellow beings). All are welcome to join us for a few minutes or the entire hour. Bring cushions or chairs, make use of the Benches at the Fountain, or stand if you prefer.

► 4-5 p.m. downtown across from the library.

► **Wells Fountain, south side Windham County District Courthouse, Jct. Putney Rd. & Main St. (Rte 30). Information:** For more information or to be added to the mailing list: Tim Stevenson, bereal@vermontel.net or 802.869.2141.

Arts and crafts

Rural Queer Creative Space hosted by Out in the Open (Zoom): Bring your knitting, your drawing, your collaging, your sewing, your writing, your painting! Bring your crafts and craft along with other rural queer folks! Open drop-in space to share your creative side.

► 6-7 p.m. on Tuesdays.

► Zoom. Information: us02web.zoom.us/j/87116115742...

Ideas and education

PUTNEY Landmark College Academic Speaker Series: Blind Chemist (Dr. Cary Supalo) discusses his Career: Supalo's talk, "Becoming a Blind Chemist: An Autoethnographic Perspective," includes the sociological and technological barriers he encountered on his journey to receiving a doctorate in chemistry. His ability to leverage both resources and networks to assist him in making technologies work more synergistically has resulted in more access for researchers who are blind.

► 5 p.m. Supalo's ability to leverage resources/networks to assist him in making technologies work more synergistically resulted in more access for researchers who are blind. He'll share his multifaceted approach to learning how to perform fundamental problem-solving in a scientific context which opened a door of opportunity to becoming a contributor to the field of chemistry. Supalo's talk is cosponsored through a grant from the National Science Foundation's Scholarships in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics program. Videos of previous speaker presentations are made possible by Brattleboro Community TV: www.landmark.edu/speakerseries.

► Free and open to the public.

► **Landmark College, East Academic Bldg., OBrien Auditorium, 1 River Rd. So. Information:** More info/questions about venue/accessibility contact Lynne Shea: lshea@landmark.edu...

WEDNESDAY

5

Music

GREENFIELD Musica Franklin Community Concert - Connecticut River Flute Choir (CRFC): Join Musica Franklin for a student performance and family-friendly concert. This ensemble of musicians love to play the flute. They represent a wide variety of musical and professional backgrounds, rehearse weekly, and perform at a variety of community and private events. Besides the traditional C-flute, CRFC features the piccolo, recorder, alto flute, bass flute, and even a contrabass flute!

► 5 p.m. Masks required. Sponsored in part by the Greenfield Local Cultural Council.

► Free and open to the public.

► **Temple Israel Greenfield, 27 Pierce St. Information:** 413-773-5884.

The written word

BRATTLEBORO Kekla Magoon: "Revolution in Our Time: The Black Panther Party's Promise to the People": Magoon discusses her nonfiction book/national Book Award finalist "Revolution in Our Time: The Black Panther Party's Promise to the People." The Vermont author also considers the importance of reading as a tool for social change and our individual and collective power to transform our communities.

► 7 p.m. Hosted by Vermont Humanities, Brooks Memorial Library, and the Town Of Brattleboro.

► Free.

► **Brooks Memorial Library, 224 Main St. Information:** 802-254-5290; brookslibraryvt.org.

Kids and families

BRATTLEBORO The Village Closet: Your source for free baby, children, pregnancy clothing/items. Donations of gently used items welcome. We're collecting new and "like new" children's coats and winter gear for our Kids in Coats partnership with United Way of Windham County. If you have items to donate, stop by soon.

► Open Wednesdays 4-6 p.m., Saturdays 10 a.m.-12 noon, or by appointment. On Wednesdays, Everyone Eats will be distributing free dinners on campus from 3:30-4:30 p.m.

► Free.

► **The Village Closet, Croker Hall, Winston Prouty Campus, 60 Austine Dr. Information:** More info: brattleborovillage@gmail.com.

Well-being

BRATTLEBORO Healthcare Resource Info Hours - Medicaid and other Healthcare Questions: Members of VT Worker's Center are on hand to provide information about Medicaid re-determinations which just started. You are invited to drop in to find out about the re-determinations, how you might be impacted, 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. Additional day (same time): April 19.

► Free.

► **Brooks Memorial Library, 224 Main St. Information:** 802-254-5290; brookslibraryvt.org.

Taking Steps Brattleboro: Advance Care Planning Weekly Information Sessions (via Zoom): Advance Care Planning ensures that your loved ones and health professionals know what you want in a medical emergency if you are unable to speak for yourself. It's a process of creating a written health care plan that tells others what you would want if you couldn't tell them yourself. Includes discussing choices about end-of-life care with your medical provider, family, others, choosing/educating your Health Care Agent, making informed decisions to complete an Advance Directive.

► 10-11 a.m. on Wednesdays. Find out if adding a COVID-19 or Dementia provision would be beneficial to include or add to a previously completed Advance Directive. This is a program of Brattleboro Area Hospice.

► Free.

► Zoom. Information: Ruth Nangeroni, Advance Care Planning Program Coord.: 802-251-0775 x 101, ruth.nangeroni@brattleborohospice.org.

Community building

PUTNEY Landmark Trust USA: Sugar Season Events Celebrate Historic Preservation and Vermont Heritage (In-Person/Livestream): LTUSA in partnership with Vermont Humanities hosts Champlain College Prof. Michael Lange for an interactive presentation on "The Many Meanings of Maple in Vermont." Rather than discuss practical aspects of sugaring, Lange's talk focuses on how and why maple has become so important to VT's identity and how and why it helps us shape who we are as Vermonters.

► 7 p.m. Registration required for online access.

► Free.

► **Next Stage Arts Project, 15 Kimball Hill. Online access: landmarktrustusa.org/sugar-season 802-387-0102; nextstagearts.org.**

To submit your event: calendar@commonsnews.org

Deadline: 5 p.m. Friday

Visit commonsnews.org for more listings with more details

Documentary

drives Blistein now.

Since 2018, he's been writer and co-producer of a documentary series on mental health with Erik Ewers and Christopher Loren Ewers of Ewers Brothers Productions, based in Swanzey, New Hampshire.

The first two episodes of *Hiding in Plain Sight* were released last June, and the team has since begun development of the next episodes. They're working, too, to help leverage the impact of the series by helping to develop a curriculum to accompany the series.

Blistein participated in the early conceptualizing and development of the PBS mental health series with Washington, D.C.'s public television station, WETA. After Burns agreed to be executive producer for the series, Blistein began working with Ewers Brothers Productions to manifest the vision.

The first two episodes include intimate interviews with more than 20 young people.

"I had written narrations about a wide range of topics," Blistein says, "but we realized early on that the kids could say it better than I could ever narrate it."

In the end, his writing primarily involved working with Director Erik Ewers to "choreograph" or "orchestrate" excerpts from the interviews focusing on specific topics while creating a coherent narrative about the lives of the young people in the film.

"From my perspective," Blistein says, "they are the ones who really wrote the film."

"I was primarily involved in connecting the team with leaders in the mental health field who helped us find young people and experts to interview," he says.

Former U.S. Rep. Patrick Kennedy, a recovering alcoholic diagnosed years ago with bipolar disorder and one of the leading mental health advocates in the country, was an essential resource. So was Kennedy's wife, Amy, a former teacher who now heads the Kennedy Forum, a nonprofit that advocates for issues of school-focused mental health.

Subjects were chosen for varying reasons reflecting the scope of the series covering a range of issues: mood disorders, self-harm, shame, bullying, self-image, addiction, suicidal thoughts, and the added stigma faced by young people from minority populations and/or with sexual orientation and gender identity issues.

Therapists, psychiatrists, and counselors came from all over the country, but early on, Blistein connected with Ricky Davidson — a member of the Brattleboro Union High School Counseling Department since 2019 — at the Boys and Girls Club of Brattleboro, where he was named director in 2016.

When the film was in nascent stages, Blistein approached Davidson, whom he'd known peripherally.

"Can I come pick your brain?" Davidson recalls Blistein asking.

In 2018, Davidson was the

first to be interviewed for the film. "I heard nothing more for a couple years," Davidson recalls, "but then an email came that said I'd made the final cut."

Davidson, in the end, becomes a familiar face in the series.

He shares the approach he takes with a struggling teen: "You can get through it to the other side and be OK," he says. "There're people out there that can help you get through whatever it is that's making you feel the way you're feeling right now."

"It's not going to be easy, and it's going to be messy at times — and that's OK, because once you're on the other side of it, you're going to realize how strong you are."

Places like the Boys and Girls Club and mentors like Davidson are critical to the mental well-being of youth. "Interestingly, we realized early on that, while our interviewees were willing and able to talk honestly about their mental health challenges, it's difficult for most adults to create a safe, nonjudgmental space for them to do so," Blistein observes.

The series features subjects whose ages range widely and who hail from Montana to Rhode Island, but it was Davidson, who himself had struggled with dependency and identity issues as a youth, who found the first subject, Samantha Fisher, formerly of Brattleboro.

A regular at the Boys and Girls Club for years, Fisher aged out at 18 but still found a warm seat there to hang out with her sister, who was then on staff.

"That place was my rock," she says.

"Ricky came in one day and said that there were some people coming to talk about a film on mental illness and that I needed to be there," she recalls. She became the first young person interviewed.

Living now with family in Amarillo, Texas, where she works at a Montessori school, Fisher notes that she knew at age 10 that something was wrong. At 11, she started "weed and cigarettes." By 13, she was taking pills, too.

She says that she finally realized, "I have limited time on the planet, and I don't want to struggle all the time." An avid writer, she let it be known that something was wrong in a note left under her mother's pillow.

When some of the *Hiding in Plain Sight* interviewees met for the first time at a June White House screening hosted by First Lady Jill Biden, they sort of "fell in love with each other," Blistein recalls. "They're all dealing with mental health issues: they all can feel compassion."

About the experience with the series, Fisher says: "The only thing that continuously came up among all of us was that we just care that somebody sees [signs of their mental illness] and knows they're not alone."

"The more we talk, the closer we can be to getting help," she says.

Such help has allowed Fisher to evolve toward stability — and

FROM SECTION FRONT

fulfillment.

She continues to write — especially poetry — and that has helped, she says.

"I'd be a whole lot worse without it. If I could buy a small house on the rocky New England coast and just write, I could die happy one day," says Fisher.

Her poems reflect her introspective work that has been essential to her staying well, as you can see in this excerpt from "I'll Get There When I Get There":

*§ Through the words I write,
and the songs I listen to,
and the people I spend my days with
I will make the slow unending ascent
back to me.
Away from and out of this pit,
I buried myself in to hide who
I had become
and to escape all the things that
happened along the way.*

IN LAYING OUT the series, producers were encouraged by Kennedy to put the tough material in the first episode, "The Storm," while the second reveals the pathways toward health that the young subjects have found.

The first episode, Blistein explains on his website, focuses on "awareness and empathy — to show how everyone has been touched by mental health disorders — whether in their own lives or the lives of family, friends, and colleagues." It zooms in with candor and acuity on those years when most mental health conditions first appear.

The series' narratives include situation-specific and often tough remarks from subjects, families, providers, advocates.

"No one held back," Blistein says. "It seems more real than anything I've seen."

The aim, he adds, "is to make it clear how many 'regular' kids suffer silently and invisibly from the wounds of adverse childhood experiences and factors such as the impact of 24/7 media, bullying, and ever-more-powerful 'recreational' drugs."

The second episode, "Resilience," was recently nominated for a Writers Guild Award in the Documentary Script — Current Events category. Replete with emotion and empathy, that episode also offers hardcore wisdom about the mental health system — its access difficulties, its limitations, its successes.

Participants talk about disruption and dysfunction within their families, about being shunned, about the confusions around gender identity, and coming out as gay when barely a pre-teen.

A transgender subject talks about counseling methods and the ineffectiveness of many in today's times: "It's like trying to run old software on a new hard drive."

And another subject, a teenage boy, recounts learning that his friend was lost to suicide, calling the experience an "emotional heart attack."

While *Hiding in Plain Sight's* third and fourth episodes are far



Samantha Fisher, then of Brattleboro, was one of the first young people interviewed for David Blistein's PBS documentary *Hiding in Plain Sight*.



Ricky Davidson, then the executive director of the Boys and Girls Club of Brattleboro, is one of the professionals in the TV series speaking about the psychiatric challenges facing young people.

from completion, current plans call for them to focus on mental health issues among older adults, those in the military, people in business, and those experiencing homelessness.

BLISTEIN BRINGS his own experiences with mental health to the project — a journey that he has well-documented in his 2013 memoir *David's Inferno: My Journey through the Dark Wood of Depression* (Hatherleigh Press). Enlightening, practical, useful, entertaining, it's everything from personal testimony to a handbook of essential information — complete with a glossary of mental health terminology. Blistein writes:

"Between 2005 and 2007 I experienced what used to be called a 'nervous breakdown.' As anyone who's tasted a walk on the mental health wild side knows, 'nervous' doesn't do the experience justice. In my case, it was a relentless agitation that careened from low-level anxiety to gut-wrenching, dry-heaving desperation.

"Tens of thousands of people have had experiences like mine. Many are reluctant to talk about them openly for fear it will affect their relationships, their careers, and/or their education[...]."

"I hope," he explains, "the book made some contribution to ongoing efforts to de-stigmatize these experiences — to treat brain disorders with the same compassion (and insurance coverage) as we do physical disorders."

Loaded with epiphany and inquiry, *David's Inferno* parallels Dante's dive into hell on this premise: "The only way out is in. And the only way up is down. Way down."

Toward the end of his memoir, he comes to a point poignantly: "Feeling love for everyone around you is easy compared to receiving love from all around you. But when you're

in the state I was in, you don't have a lot of choice. And that's one of the most humbling and healing spiritual lessons of all."

When an undergrad at Amherst, Blistein recalls, he was always fast, manic, and intrigued by psychology and the workings of the mind. He had self-medicated and meditated until the late-'90s; eventually, therapies and prescribed medication — successful to dramatically varying degrees — brought him relief.

Since 2007, Blistein has worked with youth as a guardian ad litem, a volunteer who advocates for children involved in court cases. He credits that work for his growing understanding of what teens face in these difficult, digitized times.

RECENTLY, Blistein and other team members took part in a workshop in Portland, Oregon, to consult on developing a curriculum with educators and mental health professionals for Providence Health & Services, a large health care system covering several Western states.

"They're building 24 curriculum units based on the chapters of the film, so a teacher, guidance counselor, or other person working with young

people can focus on specific issues from mood disorders to self-harm, addiction, and suicide ideation. It was fascinating," Blistein reports.

PBS (pbs.org/plainsight) also offers a host of resources at pbs.org/plainsight, organized under each topic covered in the interviews.

The first two episodes of *Hiding in Plain Sight* are also available to stream online for members of Vermont Public at PBS Passport (bit.ly/708-plainsight).

Streaming and educational use can broaden the access and reach of a documentary series like this one, which fits with Blistein's goals.

"It's really been our vision for this to have a life well past the broadcast because we want the honesty (and bravery) of the young people talking about these difficult topics to inspire their contemporaries to do the same," he says.

And, he notes, "people keep telling us that this series could save lives."

For more on David Blistein's work, visit davidblistein.com and davidblistein.substack.com (davidblistein@substack.com).

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Jonas Fricke at work painting a mural at Yalla, a restaurant in Brattleboro.

SYLVIA BLANCHET

Honoring Fricke's memory

Efforts are underway to honor the memory of Jonas Fricke.

— Fricke's family and his broader global community have created a web portal (tinyurl.com/everythingjonas) for all to enjoy and contribute images, videos, poems, clown skits, and other expressions of the artist and his legacy, including important work in Bali and other parts of the world.

— The Buoyant Heart Collective accepts donations on a Patreon page (patreon.com/buoyantheart), where people can donate small monthly amounts to keep its community art space open to everyone in Brattleboro.

— Fricke's family has created the Jonas Legacy Fund (tinyurl.com/JonasLegacyFund), which will support several initiatives, including the Buoyant Heart Collective, as well as a Jonas Legacy Festival in July at the Retreat Farm and Stone Church, and an exhibition at Brattleboro Museum & Arts Center.

You can find more about Jonas Fricke and some samples of his art and music online:

- Fricke's website (jonasfrickeart.com).
- Fricke's YouTube channel (youtube.com/user/MrJonasfricke).
- If Not I Then Who Then on Bandcamp (ifnotiwhothent.bandcamp.com).

From *The Commons'* archives:

— "One-man genre: Jonas Fricke melds sound, visual arts, and theatrics into his 'radical courage music,' (commonsnews.org/site/sitenext/story.php?articleid=12184)" by Wendy M. Levy, *The Arts*, May 13, 2015.



SYLVIA BLANCHET

Jonas Fricke, an artist, musician, and builder of community, in a photograph taken by his mother, Sylvia Blanchet.

Fricke

FROM SECTION FRONT

function as illustrations of the experience of consciousness and the adventure of the human condition."

Fricke was also a co-creator of community art spaces that were open to all, most recently the Buoyant Heart on Birge Street. His close friends say he respected all people as a beloved and talented child care worker, a gifted performer and circus clown, a peace maker, and a decent and deeply loving — and much loved — human being.

Several who were interviewed referred to Jonas as a "wizard" and, according to his partner, Jocelyn McElroy, he was cremated with a wizard's staff made "of driftwood from the Connecticut River wrapped in braids and found textures — so many teals and purples and bells and embroidery thread."

It is not possible to include all the tales, poems and memories that people have shared with me. This is my best attempt to share a small part of Jonas Fricke's impact on this community — one that his friends and family say he loved with an abiding and wide-ranging passion, and gentleness.

WHEN FRICKE was born in Langley, Virginia, on the farm of his great-great-great aunt, the first words he heard were from his sister, Lucia Blanchet-Fricke, who greeted him with, "Hello, baby."

"She was convinced her parents had made him as a present for her," Fricke's mother, Sylvia Blanchet, said in a family history she shared with *The Commons*.

"Jonas traveled a great deal at an early age," she said, noting that she and Fricke's father, Thomas Fricke, owned an organic spice and fair-trade coffee business in Indonesia and Guatemala. Fricke would come to Bali and Sumatra in Indonesia to help photograph his parents' work with the farmers.

As an adult, Fricke returned to Bali, where his parents have been living for the last 14 years, on numerous occasions.

The family came to southern Vermont after Thomas Fricke was offered a job at the Experiment in International Living. They came to Dover and later moved to Marlboro.

The story goes that when Fricke was asked as a very young child what he wanted to be when he grew up, he said, "Oh. I want to continue being an artist."

"From an early age the family began to attend events at Bread and Puppet in Glover, Vermont," Blanchet writes, noting that the avant-garde puppet troupe had "a very strong influence on Jonas."

"He admired Peter and Elka Schumann, the founders of Bread and Puppet," she writes. "He embraced the philosophical orientation of the Schumanns that art should be for people, not for profit."

Blanchet credits the River Gallery Art School in Brattleboro as an influence on Fricke and his art. "Jonas attended the school for many years, and he was so happy there." She called the school's co-founder, Ric Campman, "a wonderful mentor to Jonas."

Fricke spent one year at Brattleboro Union High School and, after a year at a Quaker boarding school, returned to Windham County to attend The Putney School.

Fricke attended three colleges, but didn't graduate, according to his sister. "He was accepted to the School of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, but decided not to attend after all because he didn't want to only be surrounded by 'art students' or be told what to do," she says.

Fricke thus began his career in Brattleboro as a young artist.

"He began selling his art, first at Gallery in the Woods, and then chose to begin selling his art on the streets and after his musical performances," his mother said.

He began touring the country, she said, performing music under the name "If Not I, then Who Then?" probably about 15 years ago, she noted.

"Anyone who has seen Jonas's artwork — particularly his performance art — knows that it was amazingly improvisational, uncontained, unabashed, totally ad-libbed, and off-the-wall," said Sarah Bowen, with whom Jonas studied art at Vermont College of Fine Arts.

Bowen said that this wildness in performance was mixed with a deep care for the world, and the people in it. "I believe that responsibility — social, political, and artistic — was very much at the core of his being."

JONAS FRICKE left Brattleboro repeatedly, but always returned. "I doubt Jonas would ever have left Vermont as a teen if I hadn't, and as soon as he could, he came back," Blanchet-Fricke said.

"Jonas has been going on adventures or moving to other towns with Brattleboro energy, like Asheville, North Carolina; Santa Cruz, California; Gainesville, Florida. But he always, always went back to Brattleboro — he thought it was incomprehensible that

■ STORY CONTINUES ON FACING PAGE

BUHS Early Spring Concert showcases modern composers

BRATTLEBORO—The Brattleboro Union High School will present an Early Spring Bands Concert on Thursday, March 30, at 7 p.m. in the BUHS auditorium. No admission will be charged and the public is welcome to attend.

The concert band will present four selections, each by living composers under the age of 50. The first is Cait Nishimura's "Chasing Sunlight." The Asian-Canadian composer wrote she composed this piece drawing inspiration from driving west into the setting sun, "as if trying to keep up with the Earth's rotation and to catch the last few rays of light before dusk."

In a similar fashion, composer Omar Thomas used the inspiration of the Shenandoah Valley in western Virginia for his setting of the American folksong "Shenandoah." He seeks to evoke the feeling of viewing the landscape "not bathed in golden sunlight, but blanketed by low-hanging clouds and experiencing intermittent periods of heavy rainfall."

John Mackey's "Foundry" makes extensive use of percussion instruments, including found

instruments, such as metal mixing bowls, piles of metal objects, and a metallic "clang," to create a raucous, industrial sound.

The band's final work is Brian Balmages's "Elements," a piece that he described as a "petite symphony." The four movements, each using the traditional tempos and meters of a classical symphony, are named for the four elements of air, water, earth, and fire.

Steve Rice is the director of the band.

The jazz workshop will play "Road Song" by Wes Montgomery from his 1968 album by the same title. Also on their program is "Sister Sadie," by Horace Silver from his 1959 album, *Blowin' the Blues Away*. Rob Freeberg serves as director of this ensemble.

The jazz band will perform four selections from the 1950s and '60s, starting with Cannonball Adderley's "Sack of Woe," a funky hard-bop tune from a live album his quintet made in 1960. This big band arrangement is by Mark Taylor.

They will also take on Les Hooper's arrangement of "Boplicity" by Miles Davis and

Gil Evans (who officially credited the composition to Cleo Henry, Davis's grandmother, so he could publish with a different publishing house than the one he was signed with). The 1949 recording is part of a series Davis and Evans made with a nonet, a group of nine musicians. In 1957, it was featured on Davis's album *Birth of the Cool*.

Also on the program is Mike Tomaro's arrangement of Dizzy Gillespie's "Birks' Works." The title refers to Gillespie's middle name of *Birks* and it was the title track for his 1957 big band album. While Gillespie's recording was in a swing style, Tomaro's arrangement is a mambo.

The final selection is Thad Jones's arrangement of Kay Swift's "Can't We Be Friends" that was recorded by the Count Basie Orchestra on their 1959 album *Dance Along with Basie*. Soloists will include Simon Atkinson (tenor sax), Eben Wagner (alto sax), Jasper Woliver (trumpet), and Wyatt Cudworth (vibes). Freeberg will solo on the trumpet on "Boplicity." Rice also directs this ensemble.

For more information about the concert, call 802-451-9072.



COURTESY PHOTO

"The Beginning of Something Great," created by Jonathan Mattoon.

HCRS to host art show at 118 Elliott

BRATTLEBORO—Health Care and Rehabilitation Services (HCRS), Southeastern Vermont's community mental health agency, announced today that they will be hosting a multidisciplinary art show at 118 Elliott in Brattleboro during the month of April.

The artwork comes from talented artists, both classically trained and outsiders alike, who are part of the HCRS community. The show is expected to represent more than 50 artists who are employed or served by the nonprofit agency.

An opening reception will be held on Friday, April 7, from 5:30 to 8:30 pm, featuring live music performed by Shishka Bob and Gary. Light refreshments will be served.

HCRS welcomes the community to join them at the opening reception to celebrate

creative expression through the arts. The community is also welcome to view the artwork during the following open hours at 118 Elliott: Fridays (April 14 and 21) 3 to 7 p.m., and Saturdays (April 8, 15, and 22) and Sundays (April 9, 16, and 23), noon to 4 p.m.

The annual show is coordinated by HCRS Case Manager Jonathan Mattoon, who also offers art wellness for the people he supports.

"We're excited to be hosting our fourth annual art show this year," he said in a news release. "Art can be a very powerful tool for self-discovery and growth, and through meaning, give people an opportunity for greater connection in the community. The opportunity for these artists to display their work is one more step in achieving wellness and sharing with the community."

Musicians from Marlboro presents varied program at BMC April 8

BRATTLEBORO—Musicians from Marlboro touring program, which has been lauded as a "virtual guarantee of musical excellence" by *The Washington Post*, returns to the Brattleboro Music Center Saturday, April 8.

The concert, set for 7 p.m. at the Brattleboro Music Center (BMC), will include

Mendelssohn's Two Pieces for String Quartet, Op. 81; Wiancko's Benkei's "Standing Death"; Kurtág's Duos for Soprano and Double Bass from *The Notebooks of G. C. Lichtenberg*; Kirsten's "yes I said yes I will Yes"; and Beethoven's String Quintet in C major, Op. 29.

Performers include Lucy Fitz

Gibbon, soprano; Alexi Kenney and Lun Li, violin; Hélène Clément and Tanner Menees, viola; Yi Qun Xu, cello; and William Langlie-Miletich, double bass.

Tickets are \$30 general admission, and are available at bmcvt.org or by calling 802-257-4523.

I ever even contemplated settling in Chicago for good," his sister added.

"He just assumed that if you were a Brattleboro kid, you might go walkabout — in fact, you should — but naturally, would eventually make your way home," she continued.

"I am heartbroken that I didn't tell him last week when he called me on my birthday that I had fully decided to move back to Brattleboro — something he had been advocating for years."

MOST PEOPLE who told me stories about Jonas Fricke wanted to share the depth of goodness they felt emanating from their friend, and how important his friendship was to them.

As described by Blanchet, "Jonas felt loved unconditionally by so many people and I think it has to do with his commitment to have positive regard for everyone."

"He made it a practice to envision the kind of world he wanted to see and to create it," his mother noted.

"I used to say, Jonas was my spirit animal," Saturn Millner said. "He was part of me."

"With Jobo I was the happiest I have ever been," said McElroy, "and now it's true I'm in a depth of sadness I didn't know possible."

"We're all yearning now, and we're weeping, we're painting and singing and planning festivals," she said.

Aaron Chesley ran Headroom Stages, a musical venue that occupied the same space as the Tinder Box, a musical venue and community art space run by Jonas and his friends. He remembered Fricke's musical artistry as well as his emotional warmth.

"I am not much of a hugger, but I have been hugging Jonas Fricke for about 20 years," Chesley said.

"That warm, purring hum when you hugged him — it was a resonance that put the fearful part of me at ease," said Dalia Shelvin, "and left the best, most alive and attuned parts ready to work together."

"When we do the sacred labor of holding safe space for the genuine expression of another, we become a part of their freedom and their future," she said. "Jonas was so radically present and loving over the 20 years I was privileged to be his friend that he became deeply a part of me."

"I learned from Jonas that it is a joy to be yourself, continued Shelvin, "That positivity can rule our hearts."

"Jonas was a wonderful person to spend time with," said Sarah Bowen, his college teacher. "Gentle, sweet, kind, sincere, passionate, receptive, and touchingly courageous in the art of being himself."

"My relationship to Jonas was so deeply, profoundly personal," said Jenna Etra. "When I met Jonas, I didn't have a lot of community, and I didn't have people like him holding me in my creative process. He was abundantly welcoming. My life has grown exponentially from being supported by him."

"THE MOST IMPACTFUL memories I have of Jonas aren't about what he gave, but who he was," said Shea Witzberger, a local organizer, artist, and death worker.

"Mostly I am grateful for a midnight blizzard downtown, where we made a peace sign in the snow, and a cop drove through it, sending us into fits of laughter. Or, slapping \$20 bills onto the window of Twice Upon A Time just after they closed to convince them to reopen to sell us a giant cheerleading megaphone, sharing a microphone at many a ragtag show, cooking together in an unimaginably small kitchen, him borrowing a mask off someone else's face so that he could hug me at a concert, and the way his hands moved while he was channeling the great everything, his jokes, and his grief."

"Jonas is in my heart as one of those special people who can be the child we all are," said Ruth Tilghman, the director of Loaves and Fishes soup kitchen in Brattleboro.

Amy Frost, who runs Circle Mountain Farm in Guilford, where Jonas worked and lived most recently, described Jonas as an unusually sensitive and attentive listener. "Jonas treated people like they were the beautiful miracles that they are. Jonas would literally take notes when we'd sit on our stoop talking."

"I became neighbors with Jonas when I lived in Guilford," said Nettie Lu Lane, "and one time, Jonas passed me on the road while I was walking, and he stopped his car and said, 'Nettie, I am so sorry I can't talk right now.'"

"Most people would have just waved as they drove by, but he had to stop his car," she said.

MANY PEOPLE I spoke with talked about Fricke's love of children and the care and respect that he showed them.

According to Tilghman, also the former director of Putney Day Care, young children were drawn to Fricke.

"One summer, when he was a teenager, he magically arrived at my daycare to ask for a job. Didn't need to do much of an interview because he immediately attracted a group of children to him. The children could sense Jonas was special and wanted to be with him. They touched him and hung onto his arms."

Tilghman said she crossed paths with Fricke many years later at Wild Carrot Farm in Brattleboro, where he was the nanny to two little girls.

"He said, 'Hey, Ruth! You were the first to give me employment.' I have a lasting image of him walking off with a baby in a front pack and a little girl skipping alongside of him."

"Jonas was incredible with children," recalled Tess Lindsay, one of Fricke's former partners and one of the collaborators at the Tinder Box. "He created with children and would help them take ideas of art and music and storytelling and make them real."

Laura Goldblatt of Brattleboro said that she and her husband, Caleb Clark, hired Fricke to watch their son, Shaw Clark, from when he was from 2 to 4 years old, so that the couple could have some date nights.

"Pretty quickly those evenings got referred to as 'Jonas-time,'" she said. "Clearly, the most important thing happening wasn't parents escaping for some quality time, but rather Shaw and Jonas having a creative meeting of the minds and hearts."

"The drumming, the cardboard!" Goldblatt said. "We parents could see how being with Jonas built Shaw up. I believe that having



An altar for Jonas Fricke now takes up a wall at the Buoyant Heart. "Actually, the whole building is an altar," says Jenna Etra.

his self and his creativity held in such high regard by an adult made an indelible impact on him, and on me. Through Jonas's eyes I could see my tiny, chubby, lisping, nap-resisting toddler as an artist and musician, in his wholeness.

"Their work really was collaborative, even while Shaw was so young," Goldblatt said.

"He made art and music with children all the time," said Millner.

"And he would jam with them and make bands with them," Etra recalled with a laugh, "with names like, 'The Rockstars' and 'Bloody Eye Century!'"

Goldblatt said that Fricke had a lasting impact on her family.

"I think once we knew him, we felt ourselves to be a part of something larger than ourselves," she said.

ACCORDING TO Jenna Etra, Jonas Fricke almost didn't take up the study of performing as a circus clown.

But once he arrived and started participating in her workshop, Nettie Lu Lane said that his love and empathy helped him to create a skit, developing a character named "The Professor."

"I always experienced Jonas as a huge beating heart with legs and arms and a head attached," she said, "I told the people to bring in a prop, so Jonas brought in a cloth Earth ball."

During the workshop, Fricke discovered a tear in the fabric of the ball.

As Fricke performed the skit, the character of The Professor "came out all vulnerable and openhearted, and talking in his way, about loving the beautiful Earth," Lane said. "And then, the Earth had a rip in it, and it was an emergency, and he turned on this emergency siren, as though to say, 'Look what we are doing! She is hurt!' And he did it with such love and innocence, and the barriers were dissolved; it was so poignant."

"People were stunned," Lane continued. "The audience was just silent. We all felt it. I get tears just thinking about it."

JONAS FRICKE's friends say that he acted as an unofficial archivist of the art and music that other people made and that he included their art in his performances.

"He was the strongest believer in these ideas we shared, such a deep believer in the art and holder of the culture that we were creating," said Millner.

Fricke would store art from local artists in his living space — a former school bus — at Circle Mountain Farm. He would keep art in his mom's basement, in Buoyant Heart, in his car, in suitcases. He would use his friends' art in his performances.

"I came to visit a couple of years ago and he gave me a tour of the Buoyant Heart, and he showed me all of the art that he had saved," Shelvin said. "It was kind of like going to your grandmother's house and seeing the very personal art on the wall. He had put some of my art on the wall, and it moved me to tears."

"JONAS'S WAY of peacemaking was fascinating to witness," said Jenna Etra. "He was not confrontational. It was subtle care, but not so subtle that you would not know."

Fricke "would not take sides, not get caught up in dramas," she said. "He was so committed to being just accepting, of everyone."

Michael Edelstein, Fricke's middle school teacher, observed him defuse a confrontation over food mistakenly consumed from a shared refrigerator that would make many adults flustered and angry.

"Jonas apologized, explained being unaware, and smoothed things out," Edelstein said. "And his staying innocent and positive was how it went from a confrontation to a passing misunderstanding."

"I never heard him say a bad word about anyone. Jobo treated

everyone with respect," Saturn Millner said. "The Future Collective stuff, the DIY stuff — he did that just for the love of it, trying to bring people together."

Kay Curtis, the organizer of the Harmony Art Collective, where Fricke displayed some of his art, said that he offered advice about how to help her heal an impasse among members.

"I did as he suggested, and after Jonas's words came out of his mouth, I was like 'Oh, my God, this is the way to go with this.' And this happened twice, and his contributions were vital to the existence of our gallery."

"I told his mother that he was our spiritual leader," Curtis said.

FRICKE'S FRIENDS remember him as an extremely important presence following a series of deaths that took away some of their young peers in the local arts community.

"He was a gifted griever," said Dalia Shelvin. "I have so many memories of preparing for the memorials of Alex Firth, Molly Dowd, and Jonquil Clouet with Jonas and our community."

According to Etra, Clouet died, Jonas helped create an altar for her, which they set on wheels.

"Late at night, when there was little traffic, we paraded it down from the Buoyant Heart, 40 of us walking down to Elliot Street and right on downtown, and down past the train tracks near the Whetstone Station" she said.

According to Etra, an altar for Jonas now takes up a wall at the Buoyant Heart.

"Actually, the whole building is an altar," she said.

FRICKE WAS PART of a group of people who helped in the creation of community art spaces in Brattleboro, the first of which was the Future Collective, which had a performance space in the Market Block on Elliot Street, above Taylor for Flowers.

However, they were not able to stay there for very long.

"It took so long to find a place that was a good fit for us and affordable, so it was very sad to lose that space," said Tess Lindsay.

According to Saturn Millner, Jonas was determined to keep going, so together he and his group of friends created Tinder Box in 2004, which was started in the same building.

"Tinder Box was a huge deal in all of our lives," said Abby Banks, who remembered sharing the space there with Jonas, Millner, Lindsay, Pat Schneeweis, Dalia Shevin, Luke and Kyle Thomas, and many others.

According to Millner, the space provided young artists who didn't have enough money to rent an expensive studio in Brattleboro, with space to make their art and — perhaps more importantly — to nurture community.

Milner describes the space as a need for artists, not a desire. "People's lives were hanging in the balance," he said. "Brattleboro is not a friendly place for artists that are not making art that is marketable or profitable in some way."

"Jonas helped create the reality that we wanted to live in,"

Millner said.

The Tinder Box also had a performance space for substance-free events. As described in a listing on Sonicbids, a music booking website, the space was an "anti-profit, pro-dance, volunteer run space in Brattleboro, Vermont," with accepted genres including "punk rock, folk, blues, experimental, indie, noise, acoustic, spoken word, etc. [...] just make it original."

According to Millner, keeping the Tinder Box open was a struggle, with people working hard to gather enough rent. "We were always just hustling, always just getting by, so we could bring [performers] who were not getting paid much or just money from the door."

When the building was sold, the group was again unable to renew their lease, and the idea of a sharing space in which to make art had to manifest itself across the street, in the People's Building. After a few years, the process repeated itself, and Jonas and some of his collaborators had to move, yet again.

"Getting kicked out of the Peoples Building was intense," said Etra. "It was really hard that it was ended the way it did."

The community art space was created again, this time in a building on Birge Street that became known as The Buoyant Heart.

"I am so happy the Buoyant Heart space was able to come together," said Lindsay. "Personally, I felt like it was the kind of space we were always looking for in Future Collective days."

According to Millner, Fricke, along with Etra and others, poured themselves into making sure there would still be a community art space that accepts everyone who arrives at its door. Its existence is as vital as ever.

"No one is going to tell anyone that they aren't welcome at Buoyant Heart because they can't afford it," said Milner. He estimated that there were 20 people paying rent — money that Jonas used to help collect — and four times as many who use the space to make their art.

"It's important for young people to have a place like Buoyant Heart," said Banks, "and Jonas was part of the center of it. And he showed younger people how to do this work of creating a community art space."

OVER THE 20 years that passed since I first met Jonas Fricke during that joyful, feathery battle in a parking lot, I saw him perform as The Professor, and I saw his artwork at Harmony Collective.

I even personally benefitted from his unusual and creative kindness. When I broke both my arms in a bicycle accident, he brought two of his musician troubadour friends to our house, and they led a workshop on how to sing harmony. After all, you can't do much with two broken arms, but you can sing.

But I really did not know the extent of Fricke's work here on planet Earth and in our town, or the consistent goodness which he brought to life here, until I spoke to all these people who spent time with him, loved him, and mourn his loss.

"I am having a hard time," said one friend, speaking for so many.

What is clear is that Jonas Fricke loved. He loved people, he loved art, and he loved life.

He loved Brattleboro, too; he wanted it to be a better place, and he made it so.



Jonas Fricke's musical performances were inseparable from his visual art.

SYLVIA BLANCHET

COLUMN | Creative Conversations

A musical love letter to Brattleboro

Kyle Thomas — a.k.a. King Tuff — returns home with a new album and a sold-out show at the Stone Church

Brattleboro
Kyle Thomas says when reflecting on his new album, “I felt a deeper connection with nature and sense of community that had once been so close at hand, so I wanted to make an album to remind myself that life is magical.”

The 40-year-old Thomas was back in his hometown of Brattleboro last weekend, playing a sold-out show at The Stone Church and promoting his new album, *Smalltown Stardust*, released in January, with a multi-city national tour.

Several of his songs on the new album speak about Brattleboro and Vermont, including “Rock River”: “Do you remember the places we used to go / when life was easy and the days were slow? / Through the woods and take off our clothes / Jump in the water and never grow old / And I left my heart on the Rock River.”

Robin Johnson, owner of The Stone Church in an email to the Commons, described Thomas as “Brattleboro’s hometown freak-folk psychedelic wizard.”

“He is one of the Brattleboro kids who made it big in the music world, but always remembers and shows love for his roots,” Johnson said. “Musically, he’s covered a lot of ground from [the] early fuzzed-out indie rock of King Tuff, to metal with his supergroup Witch, to the dreamier psych-pop soundscapes of King Tuff’s most recent releases.”

The Commons talked with Thomas by phone about how growing up in Brattleboro has informed his music career, the theme of *Smalltown Stardust*, and why he thinks music is medicine. Here’s an excerpt from the conversation:

VICTORIA CHERTOK: Tell me about your new album and about how growing up in Brattleboro inspires your music.

KYLE THOMAS: I wrote most of *Smalltown Stardust*



VICTORIA CHERTOK began covering the arts in Windham County in 2017. Her work is featured in *The Commons* and several other publications. A harpist by training and the mother of two sons, she enjoys volunteering, exploring Vermont’s natural landscape, and attending concerts.

during the pandemic — it was a time when we weren’t having experiences out in the world, so we had to look inward.

I think about Brattleboro all the time. I am very thankful I grew up there and got to focus on my art there. I created this album about love and nature and youth. The woods and nature and that imagery started coming up in the lyrics.

I wouldn’t call Brattleboro a normal small town. Lots of people have gone on to do really cool things in the world; they have become musicians and are quite successful. There are weird things about it — like, why does this place seem so connected to the outer world yet at the same time feels like the middle of nowhere?

It has an interesting power to it. People were always talking about it, like there is a crystal under Brattleboro, where two rivers meet, a center of power. So I was hearing all this stuff as I was growing up, and it does seem to me there is something special about it.

I think there is a lot of folk music happening around here, which is in my blood.

V.C.: How has your music evolved over the last 20 years?

K.T.: I was so bored a lot of the time as a teenager — and that was good, because we would just sit in the parking lot and get ideas and make things happen. I had a band in high school with my brother called The Ludicrous. We played at the teen center before we played out of state for a few shows in Massachusetts and New York. That was the start of it all.

My music has gone through a lot of changes. I just focus on songwriting and let the songs

be what they want to be. I can’t control that too much.

V.C.: What was your first instrument?

K.T.: My first instrument was drums. I played the snare drum in the school band but quickly got into playing guitar.

My dad bought a guitar at Maple Leaf Music in the early 1990s, and I started making up songs on it on one string. I made it my own.

Now I’m learning piano. On tour I play mostly guitar but play keys on a few songs. I wrote a lot of the album on the piano.

It’s fun to play those songs live. I don’t usually play covers, but we did play “Margaritaville” on stage the other night in Salt Lake City, Utah, which was incredible. The audience went wild.

V.C.: Who were your early music influences?

K.T.: My first memorable song influences were George Harrison’s “Got My Mind Set On You,” Stevie Wonder’s work, and Starship’s “We Built This City.” Once I bought a tape of Jimi Hendrix — that was the first time I understood what guitar could do. So that was really what opened it up for me.

From there, I just went deep into classic rock and then punk. And I’m very obsessed with The Beatles and Bob Dylan. Albums I love are *John Wesley Harding* and *New Morning*.

I love Dylan’s new records as well. The lyrics and the storytelling, and his delivery, are so unique. He remains unpredictable. He cracks me up. He made a Christmas album a few years ago, and he’s wearing a long blonde wig in the video — there



WYNDHAM GARNETT/COURTESY PHOTO

Kyle Thomas, a.k.a. King Tuff

is no explanation. He just naturally does it; he’s very playful.

V.C.: How did you come up with the name King Tuff?

K.T.: I was 18 or 19 when I came up with the King Tuff name. I was at Mocha Joe’s and wrote it down on a piece of paper with a little lightning bolt and then carried it around in my wallet.

It’s based on my initials and obviously a play on “King Tut.” It’s a funny name, because I’m not tough at all, and I don’t want to be king. But these names — they just stick to you sometimes.

V.C.: Which teachers supported you in your creative journey as you were growing up in Brattleboro?

K.T.: My art teacher at Brattleboro Union High School was Gary Blomgren, who passed away a few years ago. He was great, and I loved him so much. He was so positive, and you felt like you could do anything in his class. He didn’t try to force any rules on you — he was supportive and inspiring.

I was already making weird, dark, intense things, and he loved them.

And Franklin Chrisco, who was my teacher in a combined fifth- and sixth-grade class at Oak Grove School. He was really open and you felt safe and comfortable in his class. He was not a dictator and didn’t make me feel scared.

V.C.: I heard that you have a funny story about how you met your guitar player on this tour. What happened?

K.T.: Yes! I put together a new band every time I put out a new record. I think, “Who is fun to hang out with?” Then by chance, I met Noel Friesen, a guitar player in Los Angeles, and when he told me he’s from Brattleboro, I was shocked.

To me, that is the perfect Brattleboro thing! It keeps popping up. You know — out of all of Los Angeles, of course I find a guitar player from Brattleboro who I’ve never met in my life. There you go.

V.C.: You moved to Los Angeles in 2011. How did that come about?

K.T.: It was extremely hard to leave Brattleboro. I had all my friends here and a great studio, but I couldn’t do what I wanted to do: to make music

my life.

I had to go on tour and make more connections and see what else there was out there. I went through a breakup, and there was a moment where I was, like, “I’ve gotta go!”

I made this really cool group of friends in L.A., and they just called to me. I never would have imagined this is where I would have gone. There is a lot of nature here — a different kind of nature — it’s an open place. I rolled the dice and jumped into the void. I didn’t have a plan, and it started working immediately when I got here.

V.C.: What do you mean when you say “music is medicine”?

K.T.: The world is messed up — it always has been. The messed-up-ness has been heightened in the past few years. It’s a barrage of bad things, one after the other.

For me, music is a way to combat that by putting out positivity into the world. And, you know, at least that is my way to do it. That’s what I focus on. Having music in my daily life is everything to me.

Music is such a special thing and is so powerful.

Next Stage hosts Celtic-American Roots music quintet RUNA

PUTNEY—Next Stage Arts and Twilight Music present Celtic-American roots music quintet Runa on Sunday, April 2, at 7 p.m.

Celebrating 14 years together as a band, Runa says on their website their band “continues to push the boundaries of Irish folk music into the Americana and roots music formats. Interweaving the haunting melodies and exuberant tunes of Ireland and Scotland with the lush harmonies and intoxicating rhythms of jazz, bluegrass, flamenco, and blues, they offer a thrilling and redefining take on traditional music.

Runa has been honored internationally, winning “Top Group” and “Top Traditional Group” in the Irish Music Awards and three Independent Music Awards including “Best Live Album,” “Best World/Traditional Song,” and “Best Bluegrass Song.”

“One of the most innovative Irish folk groups of this generation,” continues their website, “Runa creates the backbone of its signature roots sound from the musical and geographical diversity of its individually established band members.”

Vocalist and step-dancer Shannon Lambert-Ryan and

fiddler Jake James are from the U.S.; Grammy-award nominated guitarist Fionán de Barra is from Ireland; and percussionist Cheryl Prashker and mandolinist and vocalist Tom Fitzgerald are from Canada. “Together they preserve a traditional culture in a modern age, while blazing a trail for the future of folk music,” organizers say.

Tickets are \$22 in advance, \$25 at the door. Advance tickets are available at nextstagearts.org. For more information, call 802-387-0102. Next Stage, 15 Kimball Hill in downtown Putney, will provide a beer, wine, and cocktail cash bar.

Local singer returns for annual a cappella concert

BRATTLEBORO—The 19th Annual Collegiate A Cappella Benefit Concert will take place on Saturday, April 15, at 7:30 p.m., at Brattleboro’s historic Latchis Theatre. Among the six groups slated to perform are the Vassar Devils, featuring Brattleboro native Ben Brady.

Brady, a 2020 graduate of Brattleboro Union High School, is studying astronomy and physics at Vassar. He sings baritone with the Vassar Devils and serves as the group’s assistant music director. As a high school student, Brady

was a frequent performer and a student mentor at New England Youth Theatre, and he sang with the a cappella group Shoulder Narrows.

“I’m super excited to bring my group back to Brattleboro,” said Brady. “Performing at the Latchis was one of the highlights of our season last year.”

“The involvement of ‘hometown singers’ always makes this event extra special,” said BMAC Director Danny Lichtenfeld.

In addition to the Vassar Devils, this year’s lineup includes

The Dartmouth Sings, Shades of Yale, UMass Vocal Suspects, and Williams College Ephlats, all of whom have performed in Brattleboro previously, joined by the Villanova Supernovas making their Brattleboro debut. The Supernovas were Mid-Atlantic Champions in last year’s International Competition of Collegiate A Cappella.

Tickets start at \$10 and are available at brattleboromuseum.org or 802-257-0124, ext. 101. All proceeds benefit the Brattleboro Museum & Art Center (BMAC).

Rock River Players hold open auditions for evening of contemporary one-act plays

WILLIAMSVILLE—Rock River Players hold open auditions for “An Evening of One: Contemporary One Acts” at the Williamsville Hall. The public is welcome to audition either Thursday, March 30, from 5:30 to 7:30 or Saturday, April 1, from 10 to 12. Scripts will be provided.

One-acts to be cast include *Beautiful Noises* by Scott Sickness. Directed by Randy Lichtenwalner, this piece is about a recently deceased man who

encounters his long-lost sister in the afterlife. But instead of offering guidance, she needs his help reaching out to the mother she left behind. However, the animosity between their mother and the man’s lover may prevent any communication between the living and the dead. This short but complex exploration of family dynamics, love and loss, remembering and cherishing calls for one man in his 20s; two women in their 20s; a 50-something woman.

Punked by Robert Cullinane will be directed by Cris Parker-Jennings. The story is that, out of boredom, two young teens want to *punk* someone. So, they decide to make a call to a number they found on a Medicare pamphlet. However, this would not be the first time these two Medicare representatives have had a prank caller. In the end, who gets punked? There are roles for two teens and two adults.

The Caltrop by Pamela Corkey is a short character comedy about three felons and a prison chaplain engaged in an illicit act of carefully crafted escapism. In the process, they are forced to reconcile the fantasy of who they wish to be with the reality of who they really are. Directed by Amy Donohue, its roles are a man and a woman, each over 25; a man over 50; a large man between 20 and 50 and an unspecified role.

Eggs by Jennifer Jasper will be directed by Pamela Corkey. Perfection is the brutal enemy of the good in the fraught gauntlet of modern-day parenthood: that is the plot’s spine. Needed are a man and a woman in their 30s or 40s.

Also on the program will be two experimental pieces, one of which, *I Have to Get This*, is a structured improvisation conceived and directed by Bahman Mahdavi with Susan O’Hara and Stewart McDermet.

An Evening of Contemporary One Acts will be presented Friday through Sunday, June 2, 3, and 4, at Williamsville Hall. For more information, visit rockriverplayers.org or write producer Annie Landenberger at verbatimvt@gmail.com.

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Avocados & Greens Local, Organic, Conventional	Smoked Salmon from Ducktrap, Grindstone Neck, and more!	

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VIEWPOINT

The state is taking money from foster children

How is it fair for some children in foster care to be asked to pay when others are not? And how is it in the children's best interest to use their money to fill the state's coffers?

Brattleboro

AS VERMONTERS, we have a responsibility to take care of the state's youngest residents, especially those children who may be abused and neglected and, as a result, enter the foster care system.

Unfortunately, our state is instead stealing from those vulnerable residents rather than caring for them and securing for each child a bright future.

The reality is that Vermont is taking approximately \$1 million each year from the pockets of children in foster care who are entitled to Social Security disability and/or survivor benefits. These children are being forced, often without their knowledge, to literally pay for their time in foster care.

As background to what can seem like a confusing policy discussion: NPR has reported that 10% of youth in foster care are entitled to Social Security benefits, the payments are usually more than \$700 per month, and this money is considered their property under federal law.

The Social Security Administration recognizes that cases "involving foster care are among the most sensitive SSA encounters" and therefore it "is essential that SSA do all it can to protect the rights of children."

The Social Security Administration has established a specific and clear hierarchy regarding who can be a representative payee, which is a person who receives money on behalf of another. There are eight options on the list. The state isn't the first, second, or third option. In fact, the state is the seventh option — and yet, Vermont cannot (or will not) show that it investigates and gives due process to the people who make up the first six options on that list.

This is counter to Social Security Administration

LINDSEY BRITT describes herself as "a craftsperson, baker, amateur ethicist, and nonprofit administrator."

guidance that each case must be considered individually, that agencies should remember to consider other concerned relatives as possible payees, and that agencies should contact other possible payees and document why they are or why they are not interested in being the representative payee.

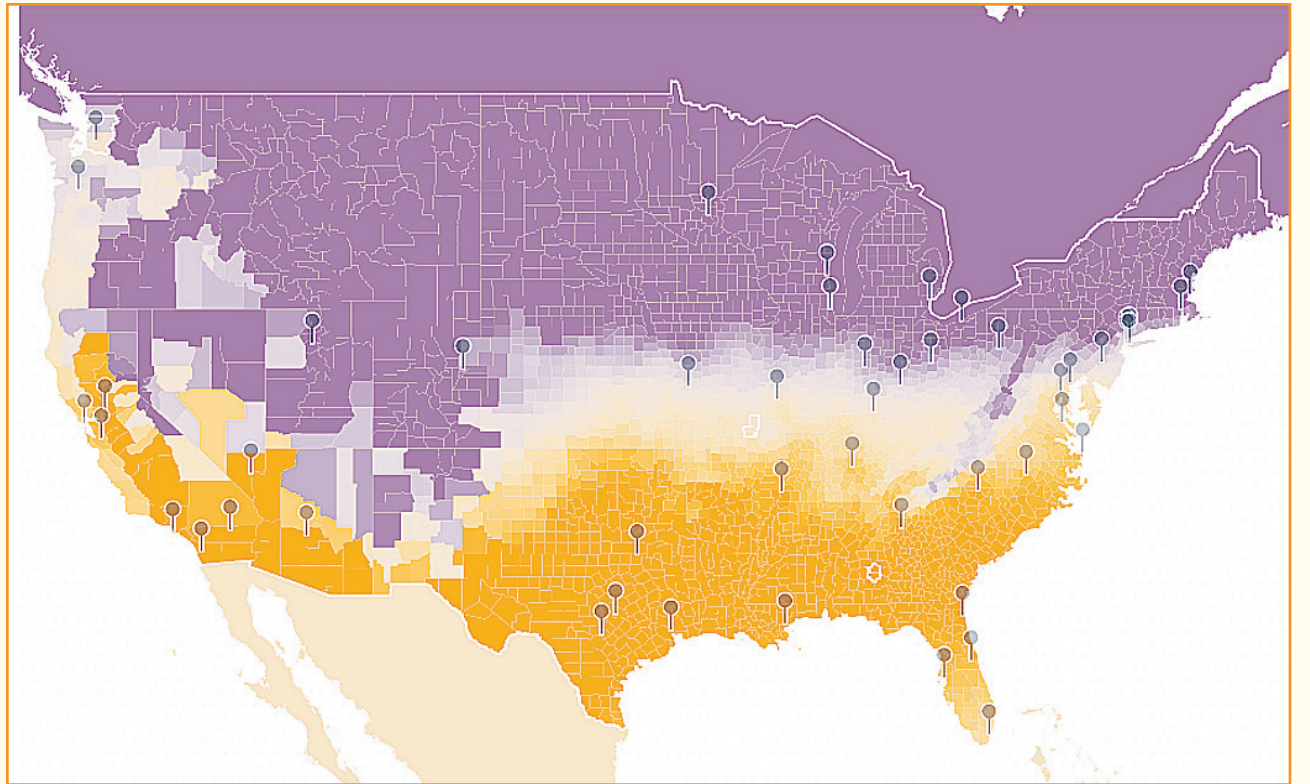
AS VERMONTERS, we should be asking the state to provide proof it is following these guidelines, as well as provide evidence of how the state uses the money it takes from children. These are not frivolous requests; they are part of the Social Security Administration process when representative payees are involved. The state is not immune from this process.

As a representative payee, the state takes on the role of fiduciary — that is, it is entrusted to act in a way that benefits the child, not the state. Considering Vermont is legally required to provide adequate funding for children in foster care without regard to the availability of other funding, like Social Security payments, it is doubtful the state could make an argument that a child's Social Security benefits should be used to cover the cost of housing, food, and other aspects of basic care.

Despite the legal responsibility to adequately fund foster care and the state's fiduciary role as a representative payee, a senior adviser to the commissioner of the Department for Children and Families confirmed to me it is indeed the case that youth receiving Social Security benefits are paying for

■ SEE FOSTER KIDS, C2

VIEWPOINT



Projected mortality rates by the end of this century, according to climate data from the United Nations Development Programme. Orange hues denote higher death tolls.

Woke capitalism meets odd reality

'It is increasingly clear that many of the U.S. states facing some of the greatest climate change hazards appear to be the ones most virulently opposed to environmental, social, and governance (ESG) policies'

Brattleboro

I GREW UP in a tiny New England town known for attracting the odd violent hurricane. One of my earliest experiences of a power outage was during Hurricane Gloria in the 1980s. We basically camped in our own house, tried to wash our clothes with any water we could find and cooked on the neighbor's gas stove (ours was electric).

The memory of that time has been indelible — how quickly we went from living comfortably to roughing it — and made me all the more interested in whether the U.S. is truly ready for what will happen across its 3.8 million square miles as temperatures and sea levels rise.

Much of the data at present is built for big-picture thinking: How to shape carbon emissions policies and carbon capture technologies; how to right-size investing, regulation, and resources across the country to safeguard our national security and critical infrastructure; how to use

computer modeling to predict how rising sea levels, or extreme temperatures, or weather patterns will affect our states, towns, and cities.

But what about ordinary people? How do we think about where to buy a home, build a life and family, or invest our individual resources in the face of these projected changes? Many of these shifts will happen in this century. How to prepare ourselves and our children?

What is the best way to look at it so we can protect ourselves and the people we love? Most of all, how do we help each

other as we confront a transition that is looking to be unavoidable?

No matter where you stand on the climate change debate or what you believe is the extent of the human contribution to it, the global data now show we are already experiencing many of its effects.

We can be ready for it — or not. Personally, I want to be ready. And I want everyone reading this to be ready, too.

UNLESS THE DATA are dead wrong, it is increasingly clear that many of the U.S.

■ SEE CLIMATE CHANGE, C2

LEAH MCGRATH GOODMAN brings two decades of experience covering politics and money to Power Corridor (powercorridor.substack.com), a new twice-a-week Substack newsletter, where this piece was originally published. The newsletter is a product of The Daily Upside, a digital media company covering the world of business, finance, economics, and investing, where McGrath Goodman is lead editor and senior writer. In 2010–2011, she was a Scripps fellow at the University of Colorado at Boulder's Center for Environmental Journalism.

VIEWPOINT



JEFF POTTER, COMMONS FILE PHOTO

A dirty truth

By discouraging the use of fuel oil and propane, the Affordable Heat Act might drive more Vermonters toward heating with wood — a consequence that could well accomplish the exact opposite of the proposed legislation's intended effect

Bellows Falls

AS A LIFELONG environmentalist who applauds the intent of the Affordable Heat Act (S.5), it pains me to point out a very big problem with the bill that is now cruising toward legislative approval: wood heat is far dirtier than coal, oil, and gas. And if you make fuel oil and propane more expensive, we Vermonters will burn more firewood.

RICK COWAN, a retired school administrator, is a new member of the Rockingham Selectboard.

Since 38% of Vermont homes are heated in part or full with wood, S.5 may well accomplish the exact opposite of its intended effect.

Research from various countries confirms the inconvenient

truth that wood combustion releases large amounts of carbon dioxide, methane, and particulate pollution, all of which accelerate global warming. A study in Finland confirmed that burning wood to heat homes is a source of climate-impacting emissions of carbon dioxide and the least environmentally friendly solution.

French research looked at different ways to meet the growing

■ SEE WOOD HEAT, C2



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Wood heat

FROM SECTION FRONT

demand for wood. There was no solution, as all outcomes would have reduced the ability of forests to absorb carbon dioxide. Other studies in Denmark and Australia have shown that burning wood produces methane and carbonaceous particles that, in turn, accelerate climate change.

If YOU IGNORE the climate-altering gases and particulate pollution issuing from our chimneys, wood energy offers many benefits.

Much of Vermont — 74% — is forested and, unlike our heating oil and propane purchases, the money we spend on firewood stays in our state and provides jobs.

Newer EPA-certified stoves produce less pollution but, given a replacement cycle of about 20 years, their installation will take a long time to reduce wood's total carbon dioxide emissions. And most importantly for low-income rural Vermonters, wood heating costs far less to install and operate than oil, gas, or electrically powered systems.

Vermont's Agency of Natural Resources Department of Forests touts wood heat as "sustainable," and the current state plan for renewable energy calls for 35% of our thermal energy needs to come from wood by 2030. Automated wood heat technology via pellets is the tool that will enable us to reach that goal.

And we will generate lots of electricity, expanding our fleet of wood-fired commercial electric generating stations beyond the two already in operation, McNeil and Ryegate.

INCREASING Vermont's energy independence is appealing, but the environmental downsides are hard to dispute.

According to Sami Yassa, a senior scientist with Natural Resources Defense Council's Climate & Clean Energy Program, "At the smokestack, wood emits more carbon dioxide than coal for every unit of electricity produced." In fact, the Partnership for Policy Integrity, a U.S.-based group that advocates for data-driven environmental policies, finds that power plants that burn

biomass emit 150% more carbon dioxide than those burning coal.

And as to renewability, a tree that is cut down can't capture carbon. Reforestation creates vulnerable monocultures of fast-growing trees. Writing in *Yale Environment 360* (e360.yale.edu), an online magazine of the Yale School of the Environment, Fred Pearce explains that "long-maturing natural forests will eventually store typically 40 times more carbon than a plantation harvested once a decade."

And if insects don't kill them before they mature, the rows and rows of seedlings that pellet manufacturers plant over their clearcuts will never grow fast enough to keep up with the voracious appetite for natural resources that is the hallmark of our species.

A documentary by Westminister West filmmakers Lisa Merton and Alan Dater, *Burned: Are Trees the New Coal?*, powerfully illustrates the damage done by the biomass energy industry and how it is greenwashed.

In 2018 The American Conservation Film Festival Committee awarded the film its Audience Choice Award, noting that it "elicited a powerful and passionate response from our audience this year with many saying they had no idea about this issue and its devastating impacts."

SADLY, NONE OF these facts will impede S.5's passage or Vermont's expanding subsidies of wood burning appliances and power plants.

Just as Texans, Saudis, and Russians love their oil and gas and the Chinese and Indians won't let go of coal, we Vermonters are happily married to our firewood. I say this as a wood burner myself who will lay in another couple of cords next winter if, as projected, the ironically named Affordable Heat Act will increase the already shocking cost (currently around \$4.50 per gallon) of fuel oil.

But unlike Act S.5's proponents, I don't pretend that my heat source is good for the planet.

LETTER

Lori Miller will be missed at Parks Place

A bundle of boundless energy, Lori Miller shared her considerable talents as a volunteer gardener at Parks Place Community Resource Center in Bellows Falls for 17 years.

A certified master gardener since 2006, she soon became a volunteer at Parks Place, developing a garden where visitors and staff could find a calming patch of land that offers respite, a space for reflection and, of course, beauty.

She spent many of those years as project leader, coordinating the efforts of community and master gardeners in this labor of love. As project leader, she fostered gardens that would thrive with minimum maintenance over the years, knowing volunteer labor only stretched so far.

Thanks to Lori's constant and devoted attention, the gardens have prevailed. Over the years, an oasis has emerged where struggling families can seek the calmness that nature can bring.

Lori loved working at Parks Place. Over the past few years, while she struggled with a debilitating illness, she kept coming to Parks Place while she slowly stopped her activities with numerous other



Extension Master Gardeners Frankie Knibb, Lori Miller, and Nancy McAuliffe at the Parks Place Community Resource Center in Bellows Falls in 2017.

organizations. She and her husband, Dick Miller, were named Citizens of the Year in 2021 in Westminster for their many decades of work for Meals on Wheels and the Westminster Institute.

Week after week during gardening season, Lori showed up at Parks Place with her bucket of tools and a list of priorities for the day, graciously accepting the frequent appreciative comments of visitors and staff. She also fostered a strong sense of

camaraderie among the gardeners, hosting many potlucks.

She will be sorely missed.

Parks Place (parksplacevermont.com) was founded in 1995 to connect people throughout the Greater Falls region and beyond with the social, health, and educational information and resources they need to strengthen their lives.

The goal of the Extension Master Gardeners (uvm.edu/extension/mastergardener/)

program) is to support safe and sustainable home gardening practices through education and community activities that incorporate Integrated Pest Management practices.

Frankie Knibb
Westminster

Lori Miller died Feb. 24; her obituary appeared in the March 16 issue. The Parks Place gardeners contributed to this letter.

Climate change

FROM SECTION FRONT

states facing some of the greatest climate change hazards appear to be the ones most virulently opposed to environmental, social, and governance (ESG) policies.

The data also show something else that we don't like to talk about: Americans are already dying due to climate change and have been since around 2005.

U.S. cities from coast to coast are experiencing fatalities in the double digits yearly, especially south of the Mason-Dixon line, according to an in-depth project surveying more than 24,000 regions of the world, led by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and New York-based Rhodium Group, a provider of independent research, data, and analytics tackling mission-critical global topics.

In Texas, the fatality rate due to climate change — for instance, from heatstroke or other underlying causes — is an estimated 14 people a year per 100,000 of the population in both Dallas and Austin. Those numbers will rise to 38 and 39, respectively, by 2040, and leap to 130 and 131 people a year, respectively, by 2080, according to the data.

The situation in Phoenix is even more dire, with an annual fatality rate of 17 people per 100,000 of the population, climbing to 46 by 2040 and 148 people a year by 2080. In Atlanta, the fatality rate is estimated to be around 10 people a year per 100,000, with that number at 29 by 2040 and shooting to 100 people by 2080.

"The mortality impact is some of the most striking of the data," says Hannah Hess, associate director at Rhodium, who worked on the project. "When you look at the year 2040, it can seem really far out and distant in the future, but the people most affected by the heat are 65 and older — those are people in their 40s today who will be impacted."

By the same token, those in their 20s and 30s will be confronting even higher temperatures, and those who are currently in their teens or younger will be forced to contend with some of the most extreme climate challenges of anyone alive.

IN RECENT DAYS, President Biden cast his first veto since taking office, rejecting a bill that would have scuttled a Labor Department rule he put

in place allowing money managers to account for climate change when making investment decisions for their clients' retirement savings.

The Biden rule supplanted a Trump-era rule that sought to impede the consideration of ESG principles in investing, "even in cases where it is in the financial interest of plans to take such considerations into account."

In issuing the veto, Biden blasted "MAGA House Republicans" and others for risking Americans' retirement plan savings by making it illegal to weigh ESG principles. "Your plan manager should be able to protect your hard-earned savings, whether Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene likes it or not," he said, noting strong opposition from the Republican congresswoman from Georgia.

Two Democrats also backed the bill. Sen. Joe Manchin of West Virginia, who charged that Biden's veto was "absolutely infuriating" and denounced the administration's "radical" and "progressive agenda," and Jon Tester of Montana, who voted alongside the Senate's Republicans to overturn the Biden rule.

Both Georgia and West Virginia are forecast to sustain pronounced effects from climate change relative to northern states, like Montana.

The ESG fight, not surprisingly, is focused on money — primarily, how resources will be marshaled or redirected in anticipation of future shifts that are expected to devastate real estate, housing, and jobs markets. "Without concerted and urgent action, climate change will exacerbate inequalities and widen gaps in human development," the UNDP projected at the end of last year.

A smattering of top money managers and private equity firms have begun to prepare for the transition, touting pro-ESG investing principles that aim to capture a profit. But they have also warned that adopting these strategies poses heightened financial and reputational risks with the growing anti-ESG backlash.

The world's biggest private-equity firm, Blackstone, disclosed in a recent filing that pushback from states across the country over so-called "boycotts" of investments in the fossil fuel industry could affect the company's fundraising and revenue and will be perceived negatively by some

stakeholders. Others signaling similar headwinds include KKR & Co., State Street, Carlyle Group, T. Rowe Price, TPG Inc., Ares Private Equity Group, Raymond James, and BlackRock.

WHILE PARTISANSHIP seems to be ruling the debate, it's worth looking closely at what is forecast for some of the states that are most assiduously pursuing anti-ESG legislation, many of which are expected to experience some of the most serious fallout of climate change. Among them are Texas, Arizona, Oklahoma, Idaho, Louisiana, Arkansas, Tennessee, Kentucky, West Virginia, South Carolina, and Florida.

Over the past few years, these states have sought to introduce or pass legislation barring companies from discriminating against investing in fossil fuel developers or energy companies contributing to climate change. Those succeeding in passing legislation against so-called "woke capitalism" include Texas, Arizona, Oklahoma, Idaho, Louisiana, Tennessee, Kentucky, West Virginia, South Carolina and Florida.

Other states that have tried or are still trying to pass anti-ESG legislation include North Dakota, South Dakota, Colorado, Wyoming, Montana, Arkansas, Nebraska, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, and New Hampshire, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures, a Denver nonpartisan research organization.

Meanwhile, Arizona, Texas, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee and Florida have more anti-ESG legislation pending, in addition to what they've already enacted, even though all of them are now dealing with fatalities from climate change.

Hess says research shows that some states' attitudes may change on climate change as "those places start to feel the impact," but, until then, states suffering the ongoing fatalities of climate change while fighting to ban ESG-friendly policies, sustainability practices, and "social credit scores" to protect investments in fossil fuels is "an odd reality."

WORTH NOTING are the states that have pursued anti-ESG legislation but will not feel the impact of climate change as strongly as some of the states mentioned above.

They are Pennsylvania, New Hampshire, Indiana, Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska, Utah, Wyoming, Montana, Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Alaska.

The one state that will be hard hit by climate change but is working to bolster pro-ESG initiatives — and block any attempts to stop it from doing so — is California.

According to the UNDP-Rhodium data, the state's cities are already sustaining some of the highest annual fatality rates in the country due to climate change. At present, the death toll is estimated to be around a dozen people per 100,000 of the population in San Francisco and Sacramento, but is seen rising to 30 and 33, respectively, by 2040, and 104 and 113 people a year, respectively, by 2080.

Other cities impacted by climate change include Los Angeles, Houston, San Antonio, Las Vegas, Nashville, Memphis, New Orleans, Miami, Virginia Beach, Raleigh, Charlotte and Washington, D.C., according to the data.

INTERESTINGLY, the data show a handful of states will see some benefits from climate change, at least in theory.

Rising temperatures likely will contribute to fewer mortality rates in cooler cities such as Seattle, Portland, Denver, Kansas City, Minneapolis, Milwaukee, Chicago, Indianapolis, Louisville, Cincinnati, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, New York, and Boston. These benefits stem from the fact that, as temperatures rise, annual fatality rates resulting from cold weather will ease, Hess says.

But even with fewer fatalities in some regions by the end of the century, the effects of climate change will eventually overtake much of the U.S., whether through rising temperatures, changes in precipitation, droughts, serious weather patterns, or what is expected to be an influx of displaced populations — also known as "climate refugees" — who will need to migrate to safer locations to survive. That means anyone living in safe zones will find their regions more and more crowded.

"Income will matter a lot in how people will be able to adapt and respond to the impact of climate," Hess says.

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

bc tv LOCAL PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

March 27-April 2

CHANNEL 1078 CHANNEL 1079

PLEASE NOTE NEW CHANNEL NUMBERS!

Here We Are with guest Hannah Hoffman, Mon 8p, Tues 12:05p, Thurs 9a, Fri 5:25p, Sat 6:30p, Sun 9:30a	Battleboro Representative Town Meeting 2023 , Thurs 8:30a
Media Mentoring Project - How Social Media is Changing Our World , Wed 6:30p (LIVE)	Battleboro Housing Partnerships Board Mtg. 3/27/23 , Wed 2:30p, Thurs 8:30p, Fri 5:30a
The World Fusion Show - Ep 148 - Okaidja Afroso , Mon 7:30a, Tues 8p, Wed 12:05p, Thurs 9:15p, Fri 1:15p, Sat 12:30p & 5p	Battleboro Selectboard Re-Org Mtg. 3/27/23 , Mon 6:15p (LIVE), Fri 2p, Sat 8p, Sun 8:30a
Brooks Memorial Library Events - GennaRose Nethercott 1/27/23 , Tues 10a, Wed 3:30p, Thurs 1:30p, Fri 6:30a, Sat 7:15p	Guilford Selectboard Mtg. 3/27/23 , Wed 8:30p, Fri 11:30a, Sat 2:30p
Thorn in My Side - HOLLYWOOD - August 18, 2022 , Mon 12:05p, Tues 3:15p, Wed 8:30p, Thurs 9:30a, Fri 3:45p, Sat 8:30p, Sun 12:30p	Jamaica Selectboard Mtg. 3/27/23 , Wed 6p, Fri 8a, Sat 12p
Brooks Memorial Library Events - Hiking VT's 500 Highest with Spencer Crispe 2/8/23 , Wed 10:45a, Thurs 5:45a, Fri 12:05p, Sunday 7:30p	Townshend Selectboard Mtg. 3/28/23 , Fri 8:30p, Sat 6a, Sun 12p
1st Wednesdays Presents - Pandemic Architecture: Two Centuries of Disease and Design 12/7/22 , Mon 1:30p, Tues 8:30p, Fri 1:45p, Sat 9a, Sun 8:45p	Windham Southeast School District Bd Mtg. 3/28/23 , Fri 6p, Sat 8:30a, Sun 2:30p
Battleboro Literary Festival - A Trillion Trees with Fred Pearce and Lisa Merton , Mon 8:30p, Wed 9a, Thurs 11a, Sun 4p	River Valleys Unified School District Bd Mtg. 3/23/23 , Mon 8p, Tues 7:30a, Wed 1p
Windham County Genealogy Interest Group - Finding Your Ancestors in Immigration Records , Thurs 2:45p, Fri 10a, Sat 2p, Sun 5:30p	Vernon Town Meeting 2023 - 3/6/23 , Thurs 5:45a
Vermontitude - Weekly Episode , Tue 11:30a & 6:30p, Wed 6a, Thu 1p, Sat 12p, Sun 5p	Newfane Town Meeting 2023 - 3/7/23 , Sun 6p
WTSA News , Mon-Fri 12p & 6p	Jamaica Town Meeting 2023 - 3/7/23 , Tues 10a, Sat 5p
St. Michael's Episcopal Church - Weekly Service , Wed 2p, Sat 7:30a, Sun 11a	Townshend Town Meeting 2023 - 3/7/23 , Wed 9:15a
Calvary Chapel of the West River Valley - Weekly Service , Tue 9a, Sat 5:30p, Sun 10a	Guilford Town Meeting 2023 - 3/7/23 , Tues 6p
Trinity Lutheran Church - Weekly Service , Wed 10a, Thurs 7a, Sun 5p	Putney Town Meeting 2023 - 3/7/23 , Mon 10a
Guilford Community Church - Weekly Service , Wed 6:30a, Fri 8p, Sun 8a	Energy Week with George Harvey & Tom Finnell , Mon 9a, Tue 5p, Sat 7p, Sun 11a
St. Michael's Catholic Church Mass , Sat 4p (LIVE), Tue 6:45a & 2p, Thurs 8p	The David Pakman Show , Mon 8a, Tue 9a, Wed 5p, Fri 10:30a, Sun 5p

Note: Schedule subject to change.

View full schedule and watch online at brattleboroTV.org

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Brattleboro Community Television - 257-0888

Foster kids

FROM SECTION FRONT

their foster care placements.

This raises two questions: How is it fair for some children in foster care to be asked to pay when others are not?

And how is it in the children's best interest to use their money to fill the state's coffers instead of for their own direct needs, such as buying a bike or suitcase, funding music lessons, or purchasing any number of other items or services children in foster care frequently go without?

I KNOW THIS TOPIC may seem wonky and mired in bureaucracy, but it has real-world consequences for children and young adults.

At the least, there is the issue of children exiting foster care without ever knowing they are eligible for benefits, so they don't apply to receive those benefits after the state is no longer their guardian.

Then there are the young people who may lose out on educational opportunities, who

may not be able to buy a car that gets them reliably to and from a job, or who may find themselves evicted from their first apartment because they have no savings to help them through rough times.

Other states and cities have begun to reform, including Maryland, New York City, and Philadelphia. Now is the time to reach out to the Department for Children and Families and your legislator to let them know you're aware that Vermont is

pocketing the money of children in foster care and that you want it to stop.

You can find your state representatives at legislature.vermont.gov/people, and you can find local and state-wide DCF contacts, including Deputy Commissioner Aryka Radke, at bit.ly/708-dcf.

We owe it to Vermont's children to do better.

AROUND THE TOWNS

Brattleboro begins new dirt road monitoring system

BRATTLEBORO — As we enter the spring season, be aware that dirt and gravel roads in Brattleboro may become muddy due to the thawing of winter snow and ice. The Department of Public Works will be monitoring these roads and providing status updates through roadside signage, which will be placed at the end of gravel roads throughout town.

The roadside signage will display a QR Code, which you can scan using the camera app on your smartphone to access a direct link to the online map. The roadside signage and online map will be color-coded. The colors will indicate the following:

- Green: Passable by all vehicles. Expect seasonal conditions.
- Yellow: Four-wheel drive or high-clearance vehicles recommended. Some rutting and muddy conditions.
- Orange: Four-wheel drive or high-clearance vehicles advised. Local traffic only. Expect heavy rutting and deep mud.
- Red: Closed to through traffic. Emergency vehicles and residents with proper vehicles only. Some areas are not passable.

Road conditions will also be reported via an online map that you can view by visiting bit.ly/708-roads. If you have any questions or concerns, contact the Department of Public Works at 802-254-4255 or email Peter Lynch at plynch@brattleboro.org.

VTrans: Expect traffic delays on Route 142

BRATTLEBORO — The Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) says motorists on Vermont Route 142 (Vernon Street) should be aware that construction activities associated with the new Brattleboro-Hinsdale bridge are ongoing along VT 142 approximately 1,000 feet south of the current intersection with New Hampshire Route 119.

Construction vehicles will continue entering and exiting the construction site and minor flagging and delays may be encountered in this area.

Traffic control plans for June 2023 include a scheduled closure of VT 142 for 90 days. The location of the closure will be north

of the intersection of Royal Road and continue to 28 Vernon St., with access to both being maintained for the duration.

VTrans also reports the Vermont bridge abutment continues to progress with backfill and embankment operations scheduled through the end of March. Construction on the mechanically stabilized earth (MSE) wall on the north side of the abutment will then begin.

Pile driving operations are complete at Pier 3, but VTrans said work will continue at Piers 2 and 1 — the piers closest to the Vermont side of the Connecticut River. Intermittent pounding of diesel pile hammers is anticipated through the summer of 2023 with Saturday work anticipated. The contractor is allowed to work Saturdays from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. unrestricted.

Brattleboro Great Books Group to meet

BRATTLEBORO — Brattleboro Great Books Group will meet to discuss Alexander Pushkin's novel-in-verse *Eugene Onegin* on Monday, April 3, from 7 to 9 p.m., in the mezzanine History Room of Brooks Memorial Library on Main Street.

The novel is approximately 200 pages (a three- to four-hour read). Any English translation will do; since it is out of copyright, it is now available online as a PDF file. It is a story of tragic love and the struggle between the head and the heart. Recently banned and burned in Ukraine, it was originally published in the 1820s.

Rec. Dept. hosts free Easter Egg Hunt

BRATTLEBORO — The Brattleboro Recreation & Parks Department presents its annual free Easter Egg Hunt on Saturday, April 8, on the lower softball field at Living Memorial Park. In case of mud/rain, the alternate location will be inside the Nelson Withington Skating Facility.

Each egg hunt will start promptly at the times listed below. There will be six stuffed-animal prizes in each age group. Each child needs to have a basket or container to collect the eggs: 9:30 a.m., ages 4 and under; and 9:45 a.m., ages 5 and older. For more information, call the Rec.

Dept. at 802-254-5808.

Food waste reduction challenge begins in April

BRATTLEBORO — The Windham Solid Waste Management District is celebrating Earth Month by joining with the Vermont Department of Conservation to promote a three-week food waste reduction challenge.

Food waste is often preventable, and wasting less food saves money and is a climate solution. Starting April 3, they'll provide tri-weekly emails and weekly virtual meet-ups with tips on how to assess what food you're wasting and how to prevent waste in the first place. To sign up or learn more, email Alyssa Eiklor at alyssa.eiklor@vermont.gov.

Putney Farmers' Market seeks vendors

PUTNEY — The Putney Farmers' Market is seeking

vendors of all types for the 2023 summer season, Sundays, May 14 through Oct. 22, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

The market is across from the Putney Food Co-op and next to the Putney Community Gardens. Visit their website for the 2023 vendor application at putneyfarmersmarket.org or contact the market manager at putneyfarmersmarket@gmail.com.

Applications sought for Crosby-Gannett Fund

BRATTLEBORO — Funding is now available for Vermont organizations in the Brattleboro area through the Crosby-Gannett Fund grant program. The purpose of the fund is to support endeavors that contribute to the betterment and vitality of the Brattleboro area.

According to the Vermont Community Foundation (VCF), which administers the Crosby-Gannett Fund, the giving strategy for the fund has evolved and, beginning in 2023, will award a

grant to one applicant annually.

The grant term will be active for three years, and the grantee will receive \$7,500 per year, totaling \$22,500 over the three-year period. VCF says the goal of the new model "is to provide reliable capacity-building support to creative ideas that will enable meaningful improvement in the Brattleboro area."

The fund will prioritize small community-based organizations or specific projects within larger organizations. Applications must be submitted by 5 p.m. on Tuesday, April 25. Visit vermontcf.org/crosby-gannett to learn more and apply.

Crowell Scholarships available for Newfane, Brookline students

NEWFANE — The Moore Free Library is offering a total of \$12,000 in scholarships, generously funded by the family of the late Robert L. Crowell. These awards are open to all residents of Newfane, South Newfane,

and Brookline who are graduating high school seniors at any high school or who are GED recipients.

The scholarship committee will consider academics, personal growth, and community service. Applications, which are available at the library, should include a brief autobiography, including plans for continued study and the name of the school to which you have been accepted; a high school transcript; and at least two letters of reference.

Completed applications must be received by May 12. For more information, contact the library at moorefreelibrary@gmail.com.



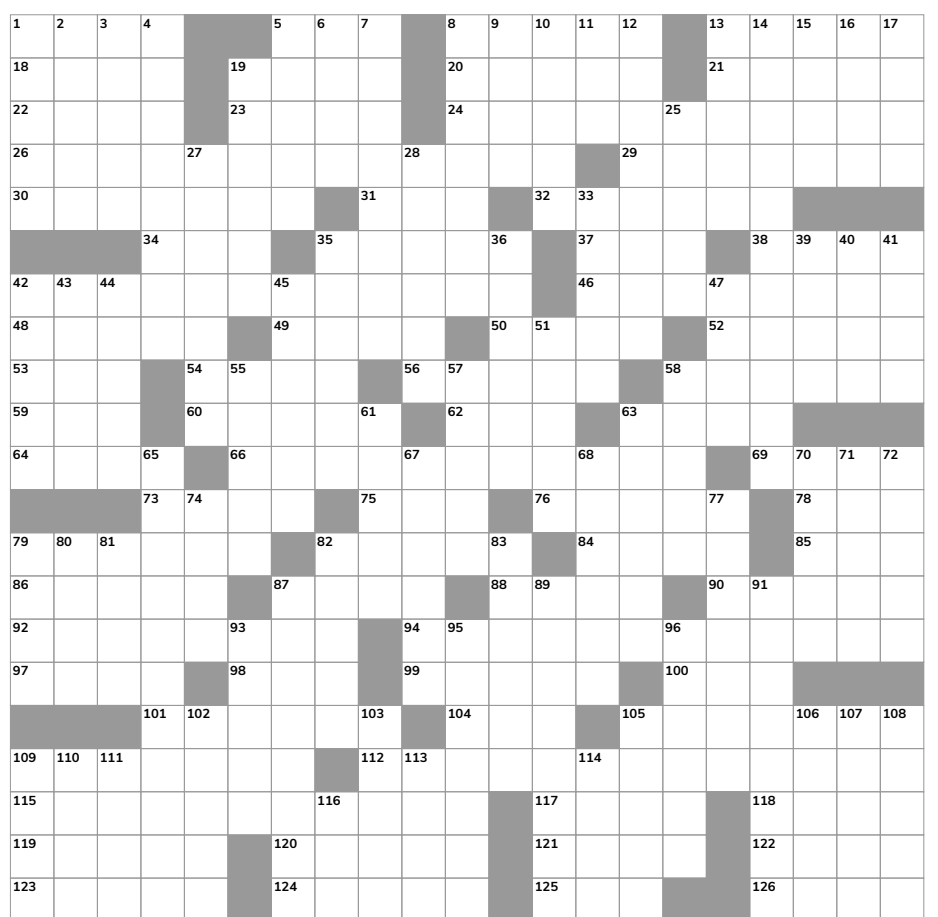
JOON PAHK

THE COMMONS CROSSWORD

"Soccer Talk"

Across

- Nonfiction movies, for short
- Nail polish brand
- Clear, as writing?
- Paperless greeting
- Mayberry tyke
- Love, in Latin
- Country
- The ___ Lama
- Helen of Troy's mother
- City near Sparks
- Situation in which an opponent has just kicked the ball between your legs?
- Stamina, aggression, and coordination to close down the opposition?
- 17-Down's country
- Use as an energy source
- Jewel cases' contents
- Like the MLS Cup, but not the World Cup
- Cord cutter?
- Like soccer goals
- British "Inc."
- Red Sox manager Alex
- England winger
- Grealish, where he is most dangerous?
- Tyrannical
- Is sore
- "omg 2 funny"
- ___ out (just barely managed)
- Website problem
- Tegan and Sara, e.g.
- Dull impact sound
- Enjoy home cooking
- Not learned
- Aliens, briefly
- Round reached by the USA in every FIFA Women's World Cup
- "The Matrix" hero
- "Agnes Grey" author Brontë
- Consider
- France's Kylian Mbappé?
- Filing aid
- Letters on a letter
- Fast-ending feast
- Upmarket Honda
- Blacktop gunk
- Casey Kasem voice role
- "John Brown's Body" poet
- Skier's lift
- Softball stat
- Shinto gateway
- Hindu-majority Indonesian province
- Greek mountain
- Shouts
- Utter fiasco
- Block that might lead to a penalty?
- One of 32 at the 2022 FIFA World Cup
- Green Day drummer ___ Cool
- White House architect James
- Genre for Dessa
- In disagreement
- Tease, with "on"
- Remove with heat, as alcohol from cooking wine
- Segments of DNA that don't code for proteins
- Two players attempting simultaneous overhead kicks?
- Show yellow cards to goalies?
- Long bath
- "If I may..."
- Lauder of cosmetics
- "Live at the Acropolis" singer



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- Civil rights activist Baker
- Fertile soil
- Rose pricker
- "Rocketman" role for Taron
- Business card no.
- Hit with light

Down

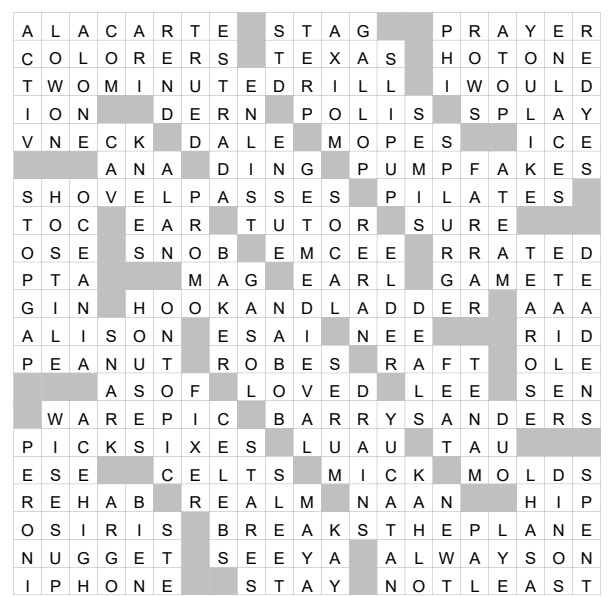
- Actor Lundgren
- Musical drama
- Fall beverage
- Marine reptile
- Signs
- 1972 hit video game
- Cook-off show franchise originating in Japan
- Che Guevara's given name
- Casper of tennis
- Preentious
- Chelsea striker Kerr
- Higher than usual
- Henry Ford's son
- Snide set piece?
- Rickman of "Die Hard"
- Pro ___
- 1960s president
- Ng Dinh ___
- Up and about
- Puts a belt around
- Misogynists, e.g.
- Hash brownie, say
- ___ Ring (2022 hit video game)
- "New phone, ___?"
- New Hampshire prep school
- ___ vez ("again" in Spanish)
- ___ grrrl (music genre)
- 4,840 square yards
- Sick of it all
- Below 90 degrees
- Selected
- "Fair Deal" president
- Princeton rival
- Great Plains people
- Sizeable
- Car battery terminal
- Vedic sky god

- Hard stuff in a screwdriver?
- Xander Bogaerts, for one
- Opponent who can appear out of nowhere to guard you?
- Get done
- Is a cast member of
- Sunny rooms
- Fencing blade
- Spectrum maker
- End-of-week exclamation
- No longer in everyday use
- "Leave in" notation
- What was left in Pandora's jar
- 2-Down solo
- Bundled, as hay
- "That's a shame"
- Frozen food brand

- Scenographer's product
- E-mail option to be used with caution
- Do penance
- Intrudes
- Threesome
- Board game piece
- Surgical tube
- Hoops
- Mexico goalie Guillermo
- Causes of dog bites?
- Aesthetic for some queer people
- Words of agreement
- Snack
- Drothy's dog
- Florence's river
- Infiltrating spy
- Friend

Last issue's solution

"Tools of the NFL"




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Hi, my name is **Bandit**! I am a vocal boy when I get very excited. I would not be suitable in an apartment setting. Giving my breed I would require a lot of exercise and would make a wonderful hiking buddy. I am very friendly and affectionate and loves to be around people. I may be able to live with another dog with a slow intro. Cats would be way too exciting for me.



Hi, my name is **Dixie** and I weigh about 30 pounds! I came from the South to find a new home. I need someone who is patient with me because I am quite nervous. Once I get to you know I will be all over you with kisses. While I play well with other dogs I would do best in a home without other animals. If you have kids they should be on the older side. Please visit me soon.



Hey new friends, I'm **Frank**! I'm a friendly and outgoing guy who loves people. I'm very affectionate, playful and love to be wherever my human friends are. I do not seem to enjoy sharing my space with other cats so my new home should be feline free. I have lived with dogs before and seem to do well so I might be okay with a canine buddy as long as we have a chance to meet properly. I'm a big boy with a lot of love to give.



Hi, my name is **Twyla**! I came in from another Vermont shelter to find a new home. I am a little nervous of men, but with time I will warm up. I do have a lot of energy and love to play ball. I'm great at fetch! I may be able to live with another dog with a slow intro. I think cats are way too fun and shouldn't live with any. I would do ok with a home with older respectful kids.

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COLUMN | *Sports Roundup*



The 2022 Brattleboro Union High School Unified basketball team poses for a group picture before its season opener. This year's BUHS Unified team plays its first game of the season on April 3 against Burr & Burton.

RANDOLPH T. HOLHUT COMMONS FILE PHOTO

Unified basketball returns to BUHS on April 3

The spring high school sports season begins on April 3 at Brattleboro Union High School with the return of Unified basketball. The Colonels will host Burr & Burton for a 2:15 p.m. contest at the BUHS gym.

That starting time is significant, said returning coach Tyler Boone, for it allows the students and faculty to fill the gym to watch the game and gives the players a chance to do their thing in front of a big crowd.

Unified basketball, which is run through Special Olympics Vermont, is an all-gender-inclusive program that pairs athletes who may have disabilities with partners that do not have disabilities. At any given time, there are three athletes on the floor with two partners. According to Vermont rules, the partners are not allowed to shoot the ball, leaving all the scoring opportunities for the athletes.

Unified sports have been well-supported by BUHS, so much so that the school was honored last fall by Special Olympics Vermont as a "National Unified Champion School."

BUHS is one of only four schools in Vermont, and one of about 80 schools nationwide, to receive this honor for Special Olympics for its efforts to "provide inclusive sports and activities for students with and without disabilities" and "for meeting national standards of excellence in the areas of inclusion, advocacy, and respect."

Boone, who has coached the Unified basketball team for six seasons, said nearly all of last year's team has returned to play this season, along with several newcomers. He believes that all extra experience gained last season should improve the team's quality of play on both ends of the court. Erika Bassett is the team's assistant coach.

As of this week, the Colonels' roster for the April 3 opener looks like this: Gabe Raymond, Alana Bell, Thomas Bell, Jeffery White, Austin Pinette, Mario Day, Ashley Cleveland, Devon Rabideau, Timothy Galdamez, Silvia Galdamez, Marcella Galdamez, Joanie Tuttle, Evan Velez, Travis Chase, Jaymeson Crochetiere, Matthew Kingsbury, Shaeleigh Willard, Maren Sawyer, and Bobby Petrie.

Boone said the rest of the season's schedule is in flux as other schools around the state



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.

are still getting their programs together. So far, the Unified team has games scheduled on April 10 against Middlebury and May 1 against Hartford, but Boone expects there will be more games set for the rest of April.

Whitney, Normandeau earn All-State honors

• Brattleboro's Ava Whitney was recently named to the Division 1 girls' All-State Nordic ski team. Teammate Katherine Normandeau earned honorable mention.

Both skiers helped lead the Colonels to a sixth-place finish in the state meet this season, with Whitney finishing in the top 10 in both the classic and freestyle individual races. Both Whitney and Normandeau were also part of the Colonels' relay teams at the state meet.

Sign-ups begin for Rec. Dept. summer camps

• The Brattleboro Recreation & Parks Department will be offering a variety of sports camps this summer. In-person registration for the camps starts this week, and takes place Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. until noon, and 1 to 4:30 p.m. at the Gibson-Aiken Center, 207 Main St. Anyone interested may also register online at register1.vermontsystems.com/wbws/vtbrattleboro.wsc/splash.html.

• The baseball camp will be held at Living Memorial Park on the lower softball/baseball field. Session one of baseball camp is for ages six- to nine-years-old and will run from July 10-14. Session two of baseball camp is for ages 10- to 12-years-old and will run from July 17-21. Both sessions will run from 9 a.m. until noon. The fee is \$130 for Brattleboro residents and \$145 for non-residents.

• Coaches Jay Cudworth and Erin Cooke will be offering a youth softball camp from

July 24-28 for participants in Grades 3-8. Softball camp will run from 9 a.m. until noon on the Living Memorial Park lower field. The fee is \$130 for Brattleboro residents and \$145 for non-residents.

• The "Hoop It Up" basketball camp, with Jay Cudworth and Todd Bell, will be held June 26-30. The fee is \$130 for Brattleboro residents and \$145 for non-residents, and includes a t-shirt for each participant. The camp is for students entering grades 1-4 and runs from 9 a.m. until noon. For students entering grades 5-8, the camp will run from 1 to 4 p.m.

• Ed Powers will run a tennis camp for those 11 to 18 years old this summer at the Brattleboro Union High School tennis courts. Week one of girls' tennis camp for ages 11-18 years old will be June 26-30, from 3:30 to 5 p.m. Boys' tennis camp for ages 11-18 will be July 1-14, from 3:30 p.m. to 5 p.m. Week two of girls tennis camp will be Aug. 7-11, from 3:30 to 5 p.m. The fee is \$150 for Brattleboro residents and \$165 for non-residents.

• Gurudharm Khalsa will lead a pickleball camp for those in grades 4-8 at Living Memorial Park. The camp will be offered two different weeks July 17-21 and July 24-28 from 4 to 5:30 p.m. The fee for the program is \$50 per week for Brattleboro residents and \$65 per week for non-residents. The camp will cover the basic fundamentals of pickleball play, learning the basic rules of the game for doubles play, and some elements of strategy.

• Instructors Michael Davern and Kristine Reilly will be running a mountain biking camp for those in grades 4-8 on Aug. 21-25 (Monday, Wednesday, and Friday) from 5 to 7 p.m. Participants will meet at Living Memorial Park-Lower Parking Lot. The fee for this program is \$60 for Brattleboro residents and \$75 for non-residents. Participants must have their own bikes.

• Reily Mumpton will be offering a fencing camp for those ages 7-13 years old at the Gibson Aiken Center. Camp will be offered Aug. 7-11, Aug. 14-18, and Aug. 21-25. Participants will experience an introduction to Western Martial Arts and the forms of combat pursued and developed within Medieval Europe. Students will learn the basics of combat, self-defense, and a history



RANDOLPH T. HOLHUT COMMONS FILE PHOTO

Tyler Boone, at center wearing a face mask, has coached the Colonels' Unified basketball team for six seasons.

of swordplay within medieval society. All three weeks of camp will run from 1 to 4 p.m. and the fees are \$145 for Brattleboro residents and \$160 for non-residents.

• The Rec. Dept. advises that many programs fill quickly, and program cancellations could occur if their minimum enrollment numbers have not been met. There is a surcharge of 3.5% on the total transaction amount on credit or debit card purchase. Full payment is due at the time of registration for each week a child is being registered for, unless approved by the Recreation & Parks Director.

If a participant needs to withdraw from a program/camp for any reason, written notice will be required no less than 9 days prior to the first day of each program/camp week start. An email to recreation@brattleboro.org will be considered written confirmation of cancellation. Cancellation for any reason will result in a \$25 service fee.

In the event that the full payment is not made nine days prior to the start of any program/camp, the campers "spot" may be filled by another camper. For more information, call the Gibson-Aiken Center office at 802-254-5808.

Sports betting coming to Vermont?

• Vermont may soon become the latest state to legalize online

sports betting. On March 24, the Vermont House passed a bill nearly unanimously. The bill now goes to the Vermont Senate for consideration.

According to VTDigger.org, Vermont would take at least 20% of the adjusted gross revenue that sports betting operators make in the state each year, with some of that revenue used to mitigate the sharp rise in problem gambling that officials expect would follow legalized bookmaking.

The state also would charge each company an annual operating fee that varies based on how many other companies are in the market here. If Vermont contracts with one operator, it would charge \$550,000. But if there are six — the maximum allowed under the bill — each one would pay \$125,000.

Gov. Phil Scott's proposed 2024 fiscal year budget estimated that the state would bring in \$2.6 million through online sports betting. But the Legislature's Joint Fiscal Office estimated last week that after the House's tweaks to the bill — the state could expect to bring in just \$2 million.

Vermont is a little late to the party — 33 states have legalized sports gambling, including Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Rhode Island — and the \$2 million annual revenue estimate might be a bit optimistic. But there is definitely a demand for betting on sports, and the state might as well get a piece of the estimated

\$60 billion annually that's legally wagered in the United States.

Senior bowling roundup

• In Week 10 of the winter/spring season of the Brattleboro Senior Bowling League at Brattleboro Bowl on March 23, The Markers (34.5-15.5) remained first place, while Slo Movers (30.5-19.5) is in second place, followed by Fab Four (30-20), The A-1's, The Strikers, and Split Happens (all 22-28), Trash-O-Matic (21-29) and 10 Pins (19-31).

Nancy Dalzell had the women's high handicap game (236), while Diane Cooke had the high handicap series (616). Robert Rigby had the men's high handicap game (268), while Warren Corriveau Sr. had the high handicap series (733). Split Happens had the high team handicap game (863) and series (2,485).

In scratch scoring, Corriveau led the men with a 700 series that featured games of 255, 232, and 213. Rigby had a 595 series that featured games of 267 and 200. Chuck Adams had a 555 series with a 215 game, while Marty Adams had a 544 series with a 194 game, and Skip Shine had a 516 series with a 190 game. Duane Schillemat had a 500 series.

Dalzell had the women's high scratch game (185), while Carol Gloski had scratch series (483). She also had a 171 game.

The Commons special section for
SUMMER CAMPS
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