

Celebrating our 20th anniversary in 2024!

# The Commons

FREE

— thanks to hundreds of readers who chip in because they believe that a community thrives when everyone has access to news. If you appreciate this community resource and can afford to chip in, please join us now! [donate.commonnews.org](http://donate.commonnews.org)

Brattleboro, Vermont • Wednesday, February 7, 2024 • Vol. XIX, No. 6 • Issue No. 751

[commonnews.org](http://commonnews.org)

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



## Thinking REGIONALLY

With many complex issues facing small towns in Vermont, there is a renewed call to pool local resources and expertise

COURTESY PHOTO COMMONS FILE; INSET, MIKE FAHER VTDIGGER AND THE COMMONS FILE PHOTO

Members of Rescue Inc. Technical Rescue's swift water team check on the residents of a home in Londonderry amid rising flood waters in July. Windham Regional Commission Executive Director Chris Company, one of a number of planners, elected officials, and municipal managers who are envisioning towns cooperating and collaborating on projects that address a range of needs, says that among other measures, Vermont should "quit doing flood mitigation on a town-by-town basis."

By Ellen Pratt  
The Commons

**B**RATTLEBORO—Chris Company sounded a municipal alarm. "Every day I see our towns holding on by a thread or breaking, and I fear those doing the work of towns are on the verge of breaking as well," the executive director of the Windham Regional Commission (WRC) wrote in a recent opinion piece published by VTDigger ([vtdigger.org](http://vtdigger.org)). Company noted that towns have limited capacity to meet the increasing demands of basic town management, including dealing with storm damage, managing major infrastructure planning and investment, hiring and retaining personnel,

and combatting the intentional obstruction of public proceedings. In addition, towns are tasked with meeting statewide policy goals like housing, transportation, climate adaptation, and flood protection that are "beyond their political or operational capacity," Company wrote. Company is calling for an "honest conversation" about which statewide policies are within a town's ability to act upon and which are the responsibility of the state. "It seems like everybody's doing everything they can do," Company said in an interview with *The Commons*. "And there are a lot of needs that are going to go unmet, in part because of the way that we've structured

how we govern ourselves." WRC is one of 11 regional planning organizations in Vermont that provide technical assistance to municipalities in areas like land use, transportation, housing, and economic development. Company has been with the regional planning commission for 14 years. "When I first got here, towns were focused on developing town budgets — which largely addressed roads — and maintaining a very small town staff," he said. "But the world has become a lot more complex," Company continued. "If you look back at most of our towns' history, probably the last time most of them dealt with a major infrastructure project was at the turn of the last century with rural electrification,

[addressing] whether or not to have streetlights." Now, Company said, towns struggle to develop and manage water and wastewater projects "the scale and the complexity of which they've never had to manage before" — essential municipal services needed to support building the housing that the state so desperately needs. "The Hunger Games approach" Many town projects can be realized only with funding from state or federal grants. Identifying, applying for, and managing these grants falls on Selectboards and, for those towns that have it, staff. "I refer to this as *The Hunger Games* approach to municipal

## Can foreign-born health care workers ease staffing woes?

State senator introduces bill that would help streamline the process for permitting noncitizen medical personnel to practice here

By Joyce Marcel  
The Commons

**B**RATTLEBORO—It seems like a no-brainer. On the one hand, Vermont — and especially Windham County — has a dire shortage of medical practitioners. General practitioners are especially needed. Also, nurses, phlebotomists, X-ray technicians, dentists, hygienists, and a whole host of other medical professionals. On the other hand, Vermont — and especially Windham County — is a welcoming place for immigrants. And some of them are medical professionals. It seems like a problem with an obvious solution. But nothing

is uncomplicated when it comes to medicine. Let's start with doctors. The process of converting a medical degree earned outside the United States into one that would allow someone to work here is long, tedious, expensive, and sometimes — at least when it comes to finding a residency — close to impossible. Recognizing this, state Sen. Wendy Harrison, D-Windham County, has just introduced a bill, S.263, which would start to make the process less onerous. "The intent of the bill is to identify opportunities to utilize graduates of international medical schools living here our the

■ SEE IMMIGRANT HEALTH JOBS, A5

## An apology

Brattleboro

**I**N THE Jan. 31 issue of the print edition of *The Commons*, an advertisement used a word that is widely regarded as antisemitic. Since the eruption of violence on Oct. 7, we have published a full range of local viewpoints about the horrific scenario unfolding in Israel and Gaza. Advertising from organizations, businesses, and individuals will reflect this same tension. Readers expect a full spectrum of views expressed in our pages in news and advertising. Discomfort will be inevitable. Antisemitic language is another thing altogether — it is inappropriate, offensive, and wrong, and it has absolutely no place in a newspaper. Like any responsible publication, *The Commons* reserves the right to reject advertising, and we should have done so with this ad. We are chagrined that this ad escaped notice before it was published. We are adapting our production processes to ensure adequate review of all content that goes to press. We apologize to readers for the harm this ad caused. We are truly sorry. —The board of directors of Vermont Independent Media, Inc., publisher of *The Commons*

## COLUMN | Reporter's Notebook

# Bellows Falls project envisions a riverfront oasis

Historical Riverfront Park and Trail System is an ongoing effort to transform a long-neglected part of the village from a bygone industrial era

**W**HAT WAS THE bustling industrial center of Bellows Falls a hundred years ago has slowly been converted over the past two decades into an exceptional public park. An area polluted, abandoned, and neglected for most of the past century has been the focus of volunteer citizens working to convert the 8-acre former



**ROBERT F. SMITH**, a freelance writer, reporter, and editor, writes about the Bellows Falls region for *The Commons*.

industrial site into an inviting, environmentally safe outdoor space for the community. But somewhat hidden away and accessed from the village only through the alley-like, narrow Mill Street, even some local folks don't even know that it exists. The site of the now-14-year-old Bellows Falls Historic Riverfront Park and Trail System was initially developed in the mid-1800s by the lumber and papermaking industry. Located on the Connecticut River's edge below the terraces that the village is built on, the site has been known locally as

the "Under the Hill" area for over two centuries. For well over half a century, Bellows Falls was the major end point of a three-month-long log drive originating in the great rivershed forests of northern Vermont and New Hampshire. The annual log drive brought millions of board feet of timber down the Connecticut River each spring from 1865 to 1915 ["From river's depths, a vestige of Bellows Falls history emerges," News, Aug. 9, 2023]. While some of those logs would continue south to mills in Massachusetts and Connecticut, a large percentage were processed in Bellows Falls and across the river in North Walpole, New Hampshire. Timber was milled into framing lumber, furniture and cabinet-making hardwoods, and interior trim. In addition, many of the logs — in particular, poplar



ROBERT F. SMITH/THE COMMONS

Two large pulp milling stones, salvaged from the Connecticut River, are now part of the park's displays. ■ SEE RIVERFRONT PARK, A4

PRSKY STD  
U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
BRATTLEBORO, VT 05301  
PERMIT NO. 24

VERMONT INDEPENDENT MEDIA  
P.O. Box 1212, Brattleboro, VT 05302  
CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

Become a member and receive *The Commons* in the mail. Your membership supports our journalism and lets us make this newspaper available for all, in print and online. Join today at <http://donate.commonnews.org>.

PAID ADVERTISING • To place your ad, call 888-511-5150 or email [ads@commonnews.org](mailto:ads@commonnews.org)

**WINTER FARMERS' MARKET**  
Saturdays 10-2  
Open every week thru March  
60 Austine Dr.  
Lots of convenient parking!

**DRYER VENT CLEANING**  
Installation & Repair  
603-762-3433  
[durlingcleaning.com](http://durlingcleaning.com)

**WINTER CLEARANCE ON NOW!**  
THE SHOE TREE  
Main St. Brattleboro  
802-254-8515

**VT STATE INSPECTIONS**  
No appt. needed during business hrs.  
GOVIN SERVICES  
802-257-1800  
500 Guilford Street  
Brattleboro

**Green River Bridge Inn**  
Friday Dinner  
Sunday Brunch  
[www.GRBInn.com](http://www.GRBInn.com)  
802-490-2632

**20% Off All Jewelry at VT Artisan Designs**  
Through Feb. 14  
106 Main St. Brattleboro  
802-257-7044

**COOK WANTED**  
at the Brattleboro VFW  
40 Black Mt. Rd.  
Apply at the VFW.

Brattleboro Winter Carnival Presents  
**WINDHAM PHILHARMONIC**  
Winter Music from Around the World  
Feb. 19 at 7 p.m.  
Latches Theatre  
[windhamphilharmonic.org](http://windhamphilharmonic.org)

The Commons

A publication of Vermont Independent Media

139 Main St. (Hooker-Dunham Bldg.) #601A - Newsroom #604 - Business and Advertising P.O. Box 1212, Brattleboro, VT 05302 888-511-5150 • fax 802-246-1319 commonsnews.org Office hours by appointment

Jeff Potter Editor-in-Chief Kate O'Connor Executive Director

EDITORIAL

Randolph T. Holhut, News Editor Elizabeth Julia Stoumen, Calendar and Proofreading Heather Taylor, Copy Editor

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Virginia Ray, Joyce Marcel, Olga Peters, Fran Lynggaard Hansen, Robert Smith, Megan Applegate, Annie Landenberger, Dot Grover-Read, Victoria Chertok, Deborah Lee Luskin, Elayne Cliff, Kevin O'Connor, Alyssa Grosso, Thelma O'Brien

EDITORIAL VOLUNTEERS

Lee Stookey, Karen Cribari, Connie Evans, Kim Noble, Janet Wallstein, Elizabeth Trousdell, Wendy S. Collins, Proofreaders Taryn Heon, Editorial Assistant/Voices David Shaw, Photographer

OPERATIONS

CREATIVE MARKETING SERVICES Amanda Harwood, Marketing and Office Manager Lori Pinsonault, Nancy Gauthier, Advertising Sales

INTERNS AND APPRENTICES

Elias Vary, Social Media DISTRIBUTION STAFF Grace Hedderman, Dan Lydon, Bill Wilmot

OPERATIONS VOLUNTEERS

Spoon Agave, Karen Axelrod, Karena Huber, Phoebe Wagner, Jon King, Philip Colbeth, Distributors Alison Bundy, Membership

STAFF OFFSPRING

Owen Harwood, Olivia Harwood

CONSULTANTS

Agatha, Caslon, Ely, Ghivashel, Mookie, Rocky, Valentino

Deadline for the February 14 issue Friday, February 9

VIM Vermont Independent Media logo and mission statement: "Recognizing that a vigorous exchange of ideas and information allows democracy to function and is the lifeblood of a community, Vermont Independent Media..."

ABOUT THIS NEWSPAPER The Commons is a nonprofit community newspaper published since 2006 by Vermont Independent Media, Inc., a nonprofit corporation under section 501(c)(3) of the federal tax code. The newspaper is free, but it is supported by readers like you through tax-deductible donations, through advertising support, and through support of charitable foundations. The paper is published weekly, with the exceptions of the weeks of July 4 and Dec. 25. SUBMITTING NEWS AND TIPS We welcome story ideas and news tips. Please contact the newsroom at news@commonsnews.org or at (802) 246-6397. VOICES The Commons presents a broad range of essays, memoirs, and other subjective material in Voices, our editorial and commentary section. We want the paper to provide an unpredictable variety of food for thought from all points on the political spectrum. We especially invite responses to material that appears in the paper. We do not publish unsigned or anonymous letters, and we only very rarely withhold names for other pieces. When space is an issue, our priority is to run contributions that have not yet appeared in other publications. Please check with the editor before writing essays or other original submissions of substance. Email: voices@commonsnews.org. Editorials represent the collective voice of The Commons and are written by the editors or by members of the Vermont Independent Media Board of Directors. The views expressed in our Voices section are those of individual contributors. Bylined commentaries by members of the Vermont Independent Media board of directors represent their individual opinions; as an organization, we are committed to providing a forum for the entire community. As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, Vermont Independent Media is legally prohibited from endorsing political candidates. ADVERTISING Your advertising directly supports a better newspaper. The open display advertising rate is \$16.50 per column inch, and The Commons offers discounts. To place your ad, contact lori@commonsnews.org or nancy@commonsnews.org. Advertising files can be saved as PDF (press-ready setting), as TIFF (600 pixels per inch), or printed as black-and-white hard copy. We can design your ad, and you should not hesitate to ask us to do so. We love helping our clients. DISTRIBUTION The Commons distributes 8,100 copies per issue to 250 drops in almost every Windham County town, as well as in neighboring towns in Windsor County (VT), Cheshire County (N.H.) and Franklin County (Mass.). Please get in touch (circulation@commonsnews.org) if you would like us to consider adding your business. Without our volunteers, this newspaper would exist only in our imaginations. Special thanks to: Simi and Mark Berman, Diana Bingham, Jim Maxwell, Rob Bertsche, Barbara Evans, Cameron Cobane, Shannon Ward, and Hooker-Dunham Theater & Gallery; Clay Turnbull and NEC; Brendan Emmett Quigley and Joon Pakh In memoriam: Alan O. Dann, Judy Gorman, Mia Gannon

# Three races emerge for WSESD board

## Half of the open seats are contested in this year's election

By Virginia Ray  
The Commons

Half of the open seats on the Windham Southeast School District (WSESD) School Board are being contested in the election on Tuesday, March 5.

- Matt Schibley, who was appointed in October 2023, is being challenged for the remainder of a three-year term as Brattleboro representative by Lance Cutler.
- Two full three-year terms as Brattleboro representative are being sought by incumbent Tim Maciel, Colleen Savage, and Richard Leavy.
- In Guilford, current board Chair Kelly Young is being challenged for a three-year term as Guilford representative by Deborah McNeil and Brian Remer.
- In Vernon, a three-year seat is being sought by incumbent Cheryl Brown.

- Incumbent Anne Beekman is the sole candidate for re-election to a three-year term as Putney representative.

There are no open seats for a Dummerston representative. There is no candidate on the ballot for an open two-year term as Vernon representative.

### Matt Schibley

Matt Schibley (Brattleboro, three-year term) was selected from a field of seven candidates for appointment to the seat left open when former board member Lana Dever resigned in June. The executive director at The NEARI School in Easthampton, Massachusetts, Schibley started that position in August 2023. The NEARI School — officially,



COURTESY PHOTOS, YOUNG PHOTO-BCTV

Above, left to right: Matt Schibley, Lance Cutler, Tim Maciel, Colleen Savage, Richard Leavy. Below, left to right: Kelly Young, Deborah McNeil, Brian Remer, Cheryl Brown, Anne Beekman.

the New England Adolescent Research Institute — is a 12-month day school for learning-disabled, emotionally distressed, neurologically challenged students ages 7-22.

Schibley holds a master's degree in counseling psychology from Antioch University. He is a licensed clinical mental health counselor in Vermont.

He previously served as director of residential life and interim dean of students at The Greenwood School in Putney. Most recently, for six years, he supervised an outpatient mental health clinic and school-based program with Health Care & Rehabilitation Services (HCRS) in southeastern Vermont. Schibley and his wife have two sons in

school in the district.

"There is a tremendous amount of work that the board is currently engaged in and so much more work yet to do," Schibley said on Feb. 5. "We, as a school district, are at a crucial point where so much is at stake, not only for our students but I believe the larger community as well.

"If allowed to serve this community another year, my top priorities would be continuing developing the board's relationship with Superintendent Mark Speno; ensuring fiscal responsibility to mitigate impacts on taxpayers; and further addressing ongoing concerns regarding transparency, accountability, and the safety of our students.

"There is so much important work to be done, and I look forward to the opportunity to do it. I am proud of this district and the teachers in our schools. I believe we can continue to collaborate together to ensure a high quality education for our students, and I am grateful for the opportunity to be considered again."

### Lance Cutler

Lance Cutler (Brattleboro, three-year term) is a lifelong resident whose family members attended schools here and worked here. He is program supervisor at Kindle Farm School, a special education school for boys from about 15 school districts in the tri-state area.

His daughter graduated from Brattleboro Union High School last year, and his son is currently a junior there.

Asked why he's running, Cutler said, "Part is not really understand what's going on — whether about the former principal [Steve Perrin, fired by the board in 2022 from his position at Brattleboro Union High School] or the facilities — there are a lot of factors I don't understand, and I want to know more about what's going on."

"And I feel I have a pretty good perspective, as someone who's worked in the schools for two decades. I'm from here and have kids in the district, and I just felt

it was my turn to try," he says.

"I know there's a lot going on today and I wonder, given the problems that the town is facing, if there's more we can do. And I feel the school system is where I can have an opinion I can talk about, having had kids in the system."

### Tim Maciel

Tim Maciel (Brattleboro, three-year term) is a higher education consultant for his company, Educational Solutions of New England, focusing on campuses that want to increase their inter-national populations.

He served as associate provost for Excelsior College from 2007 to 2011 and as associate vice president of academic affairs at Post University from 2002 to 2006.

Maciel was dean of the Division of Language Teaching Education at World Learning's School for International Training Graduate Institute from 1999 to 2001 and as training director with the Peace Corps from 1991 to 2001.

He holds master's and doctoral degrees in education from Harvard Graduate School of Education.

"How are our students doing emotionally, socially, and academically?" That is one of many questions that, if re-elected, I would continue to seek answers to," says Maciel. "School boards attract individuals from diverse backgrounds and with different areas of expertise; mine is education. "I have been a teacher, teacher trainer, researcher, and educational administrator for my entire professional life, but perhaps the best training I have had for the seat has been my experience for the last four years serving multiple roles on the board."

Maciel currently serves on the Policy and Amendments Committee, the Social Justice Committee, and the Brattleboro Union High School Leadership Council. He is also advisor to the Student Advisory Committee and to one of the two student representatives on the board, "roles I enjoy immensely," he says.

"To do the job well takes an enormous time commitment, and so it does help that I am retired," Maciel says, adding any contribution he's made has been "in collaboration with others on the board and throughout the school community."

If re-elected, he says he will "continue to work with others to do all we can to attract, support, and retain quality teachers and administrators; practice fiscal responsibility; maintain safe and healthy school environments; and assess and promote student learning.

"I am committed to supporting innovative programs that allow our students to develop the skills, knowledge, attitudes, and self-confidence to achieve their highest aspirations."

### Colleen Savage

Colleen Savage (Brattleboro, three-year term) holds a bachelor's degree in English from the University of South Florida and a master's in nonprofit leadership from La Salle University in Philadelphia.

Savage and her family moved to Brattleboro in 2020. She is a volunteer for Brattleboro Area Hospice, and she and her family foster dogs through Through the Love of Dog/Vermont.

"We are among those people who moved from the pandemic," she said. "It was a good move. We're very happy to be here."

Savage has a son at Green Street School, where she serves on the PTO.

She says she is running "mostly as a concerned parent and community member."

"I just feel I could contribute and would be happy to do so. I come from a long line of

■ STORY CONTINUES ON FACING PAGE

**HOUGHTON SANITARY SERVICE INC.**  
SEPTIC TANK SERVICE CLEANING  
Commercial & Residential Septic Pumping  
Portable Toilet Rentals also available  
Family Owned for 50 years  
Call 802-254-9221  
Guilford Ctr. Rd. Guilford, VT

**BUYING SELLING**  
COINS/PAPER \$ VINTAGE SPORTS POKEMON CARDS COMIC BOOKS  
SAT, FEB. 10 9AM-3PM  
HOLIDAY INN, BRATTLEBORO  
802-379-2353  
pepsijoseph@yahoo.com

# February is American Heart Month

## Give Your Heart the LOVE it Deserves!

- EAT MORE fruits and veggies—CUT DOWN on salt & carbs.
- MOVE your body—even 5 minutes a day can help!
- DISCUSS your family's history of heart disease with loved ones.

**And schedule that overdue healthcare appointment TODAY!**

Introducing our Newest Team Member!

**Tammy Simpkins, NP**

**Center for Cardiovascular Health**  
a Department of Brattleboro Memorial Hospital  
802-275-3699

educators and education has always been super important to me and I'd like to be more involved with it," she says.

Savage is former marketing manager for a non-profit in Philadelphia, Manayunk Development Corporation, where she organized a massive street fair and art festival.

"I really got to see what a great sense of community they had there," she says. "And I think being on a school board is more a community position. It's not just the board members, but the staff, and parents, and students, and I feel I'd benefit from that."

"And I've been on a lot of different boards — my food co-op in Philadelphia, my son's preschool — and with my experience and education, I'm well-versed on how boards work; how to work in the system; how to work collaboratively, putting your own agenda to the side. I've come to learn a lot of folks don't know how to do that."

**Richard Leavy**

Richard Leavy (Brattleboro, three-year term) studied at St. Lawrence University and holds degrees in philosophy and environmental studies.

Leavy is owner of Southern Vermont Home, LLC. In 2015, he moved to Vermont and shifted his career path to construction.

A commercial organic farmer in Connecticut for 15 years, he was also an organic farmer in California for a decade and in North Carolina, Hawaii, and in the Hudson Valley, in New York state.

Leavy has two children who attend Brattleboro Area Middle School and Academy School, respectively.

"I'm just interested in being involved on the school board with two kids enrolled in the district," Leavy says. "I think it is time well spent."

He also feels his expertise in the construction field will help with the district's various capital and infrastructure projects.

"There are a lot of capital improvements we're trying to do at all the individual schools, and I feel I can be an asset in that regard," he says, noting he's looked at the 2025 capital plan. "I can certainly help with that, as well as future years' intended projects. I really want to focus on the capital plan and those projects. I'm getting feedback from the schools directly that there's a need there."

Leavy is also keenly interested in drawing on his farming background to help improve the school lunch program.

"I've had a lifelong passion for healthy eating, and I know the board is going to reevaluate that program and find out what changes to make, so I think it's an appropriate time to throw my hat in the ring in that regard," he says.

**Kelly Young**

Current WSESD school board Chair Kelly Young (Guilford, three-year term) works as a judicial assistant for the state of Vermont in Windham Superior/Probate/Criminal/Family courts. She earned a paralegal certificate from Post University and a bachelor's degree in political science from Norwich University.

She grew up in the Brattleboro area, and she and her husband have lived in Guilford for more than 20 years, raising four children in the district, all BUHS graduates.

Young joined the Guilford School Board in 2018. As its clerk, she was a member of the transitional board. She says she was "encouraged" to run for the merged board and has been serving on the WSESD since.

"From an early age, I have seen the impact education can have on someone's life — how not having a good education can influence their life path in so many ways, even years out," says Young, noting that her mother was a math tutor at Adult Basic Education (now Vermont Adult Learning) for almost 35 years, starting when Young was in second grade.

From her mother's work, Young learned that some of her students were "young people whose needs were not able to be addressed by the school system and who were looking to get their GEDs. Others were adults in the community who had, years earlier, not been able to finish high school for one reason or another. Many of these individuals took the steps beyond getting their GED to earn their high school diploma."

"I observed how people's options for jobs and opportunities were influenced by the challenges they faced, both in school and in their lives," she says. "I witnessed the way seemingly minor progress could alter a person's self-confidence. Some of these people had such challenges that anyone believing in them and giving them a chance to shine was rare."

"I am my mother's daughter, and I know that. This is confirmed for me because of my

commitment to ensuring that as many young people as possible receive a good education that prepares them for a meaningful life, one which is going to be different for each individual."

**Deborah McNeil**

Deborah McNeil (Guilford; three-year term) has retired from Health Care Rehabilitation Services, where she worked for 13 years. She has worked in a Montessori school and then at Putney Central School as a library assistant and as a substitute teacher's aide. She has worked with students who had emotional/behavioral issues.

Her grown children have children of their own, and she takes care of these grandchildren.

"My focus has always been for the kids, who, through no fault of their own, need support, and I've never been afraid of speaking up for those who can't," says McNeil, a self-proclaimed conservative. "That's really important."

She says that her grandchildren "are going through the school system, and I'm concerned about what's going on fiscally and emotionally, and what they're teaching. I don't think young children should be taught about what are your pronouns."

"I think young children are being asked to carry too much. I think more people are nodding and saying, 'That's what I should say,' but I'm not that person. I don't think that should be forced onto children."

"I really care about children, and that's my primary reason [for running], and I really want them to go forward and have things simpler. My husband said, 'They're going to crucify you,' and I said, 'Well, if that's what they're going to do, then that's what they'll do.'"

"We're all different, but I'm not afraid to say what I feel."

**Brian Remer**

An educator and facilitator, Brian Remer (Guilford, three-year term) works for the state of Vermont as training and engagement specialist at the Center for Achievement in Public Service.

He and his wife, Nanci Leitch, who is development and communications director for Youth Services, have a daughter who is a BUHS and University of Vermont graduate now doing post-graduate work at the University of California/Berkeley.

Remer is former creative learning director for The Firefly Group.

With a B.A. in psychology from Coe College in Iowa and an M.A. in intercultural management and administration from the School for International Training here, Remer has worked with businesses and organizations around the world and throughout the U.S. He is a regular presenter at national training conferences and has published widely.

A member of the International Society for Performance Improvement, Remer has served on the board of directors and as chair and president of the North American Simulation and Gaming Association as well as on the boards of the Center for Health and Learning and the Guilford Community Church.

"I'm really interested in learning, and learning from experience," Remer says, adding that he has taught elementary and middle school students and trained adults in nonprofits and businesses, and for the state. "I design and deliver interactive courses in leadership, supervision, ethics, sexual harassment, inclusion, and other topics. I'm really interested in how experience teaches us and how we turn our experiences into learning."

"I think that draws me to the school board because I'm interested in the way people learn and the opportunities we provide for our students. It's really important that students have learning opportunities that engage them. I know that, and I want to keep that trend going."

Remer says his work facilitating meetings and helping people "share ideas in ways so that everyone can listen and appreciate and learn from one another" is a "perspective and approach I hope to bring to the board itself and, by example, share with the administration and model how we remain productive in dialogue and conversation."

"It seems to be something we're not so good at or not paying attention to. Something — I'm not sure what."

Remer sees the board as an opportunity to gather "with deep concerns," wanting to "share them and be heard."

"My goal is to create an environment where people can do their best learning and share their best skills. I would like to bring that perspective to the students, faculty, and administrators in the schools of our four towns and to the WSESD school board meetings," says Remer, a "collaborator who believes everyone has something they can contribute to solve problems and improve our systems and community."

He also tries to "stay current on the challenges and struggles young people face."

"Well-educated young people energize our communities with passion, optimism, and creativity," he says. "It is extremely important that our schools balance the ability to generate a positive learning culture where all can thrive with the community's ability to provide the resources needed. Schools are where we teach children what a community is. And schools help children gain the knowledge and develop the skills so they can find their place within our community."

**Cheryl Brown**

Cheryl Brown (Vernon; three-year term) is owner/trainer/instructor at Cold Brook Stables. After graduating from Hinsdale High School in 1997, she attended the Thompson School for Applied Science at the University of New Hampshire in the equine studies program.

She worked as a wrangler in South Dakota before attending Laramie County Community College and graduating with an associate's degree in horse training and management with a minor in agricultural business in 2002.

She has competed on equestrian teams at the college level and lived and worked in Wyoming, Colorado, and New Hampshire.

She's taught riding to many local children who attend Vernon Elementary School and she's run both dairy and horse 4-H clubs for 20 years here.

She and her husband Peter have three children and have lived in Vernon since 2004. Two attend Pioneer Valley Regional School in Northfield, Massachusetts, where Brown is director of food services, and one who goes to Vernon Elementary.

Brown was appointed in January to complete an unfinished term and is seeking election to her first full term.

"From my work at Pioneer Valley, I've learned a lot, especially becoming administration, and having children in the schools where they are — two by school choice — and one at a local school, and having been involved in [individualized education programs], I have a kind of rounded look at things that I think would benefit the schools and the towns," Brown says.

In the past month she's served, she's been part of the budget process and "watching and listening because I'm so new, but I feel like I'm learning a lot."

**Anne Beekman**

Beekman (Putney; three-year term) was appointed to fill a vacancy on the Putney Town School Board in 2013 and then to fill a vacancy on the Brattleboro Union High School (BUHS) District #6 Board in 2016. At the same time, she was also appointed to the Windham Regional Career Center Regional Advisory Board (WRCC RAB) and represented the BUHS board on the Windham Southeast Supervisory Union (WSESU) board.

She continued to serve in all those positions until the districts were merged into the WSESD. She was elected to serve on the transitional board and has served as an elected representative from Putney on the merged board since its inception.

She currently chairs the WSESU board and serves on the finance and policy subcommittees, and chairs the personnel committee. She remains a member of the regional advisory board.

"I reached out to some of my colleagues to help me describe my role on the board," Beekman tells *The Commons*. "They said to say I bring experience, expertise, knowledge, and wise counsel. I think that sort of sums it up for me. I bring a steady influence born of experience."

"I also have a passion for growth and improvement born of that same experience. I see how far we've come, and I see the enormous potential of our district. We have amazing folks doing amazing work in our schools. I want to continue to use my experience to support that work."

"I was recruited to the Putney Town School Board because there was work to do, and no one else was willing to do it. I was recruited to the BUHS District 6 Board for the same reason."

"I'm running again because there is still so much work to be done," Beckman says. "In the difficult world we have found ourselves in, the most important thing we can give our children is an education."

"Every child needs knowledge, critical thinking skills, and a safe place to begin to understand the world around them. I want to continue to work to make all of our wonderful schools a place where every child is prepared with a foundation to make their dreams come true. I want that for every child, no matter who they are or where they come from [...] or what their dreams may be."

**AROUND THE TOWNS**

**Auditors' Reports ready in Brattleboro**

BRATTLEBORO — The Brattleboro Town and 2023 Town Auditors' Reports for fiscal year ending June 30, 2023, are available upon request and may be picked up at the Town Clerk's Office, 230 Main St.

The Auditors' Reports will also be available as part of the Town Annual Report which will be available at the Town Clerk's Office no later than March 1, 2024.

As the town no longer mails the Auditors' Reports to all voters of the town, persons interested in obtaining a copy should contact the Town Clerk at 802-251-8157. Copies are available on the town website or for pick up, may be transmitted electronically, or sent by first class mail.

**Lunar New Year celebrated on Feb. 10**

BRATTLEBORO — Asian Cultural Center of Vermont (ACCVT) celebrates the Lunar New Year Festival of China, Korea, and Vietnam Saturday, Feb. 10, from 1 to 3 p.m. at the Brattleboro Museum & Art Center to usher in the year of the Green Wood Dragon.

With this rare combination of the Dragon's power and Wood's creativity, 2024 brings a year of innovation, vision, and growth. The Wood Dragon year promises to be dynamic and unpredictable. They will start the celebration with a potluck: and ask participants to bring a dish to share. A traditional Chinese Dance follows with Nan Jiang Hyde, group Taiji and Qigong, Korean Tug-of-War, and New Year crafts featuring make-your-own dragon puppets.

The celebration ends with a dragon parade from the Museum up Main Street "to bring everyone luck for the coming year," say organizers. "Don't miss the chance to dance with the 30-foot dragon. This extraordinary dragon was created by an accomplished Vietnamese craftsman."

According to Chinese folklore, this enormous marionette, requiring at least 10 people to hold, is forever chasing the "heavenly pearl" in its pursuit of wisdom. More information can be found at [accvt.org](http://accvt.org).

**'The Street Project' screens at Brooks Library**

BRATTLEBORO — On Monday, Feb. 12, at 7 p.m. at Brooks Memorial Library, join the Brattleboro Coalition for Active Transportation (BCAT) for a screening of *The Street Project* and a conversation with Brattleboro Planning and Public Works staff, Selectboard member(s), and a state representative.

*The Street Project* is the story about humanity's relationship to the streets and the global citizen-led fight to make communities safer. Digging deep into the root causes of traffic violence, the filmmakers engage a diverse array of experts including street historian Peter Norton, city planner Jeff Speck, and urban design expert Mikael Colville-Andersen.

These expert interviews are interwoven with the stories of real people working to make their communities safe. Watch the trailer at [youtube.com/watch?v=dbzYTz-27qQ](https://youtube.com/watch?v=dbzYTz-27qQ).

**Senior lunch in Dummerston**

DUMMERSTON — Evening Star Grange and Senior Solutions will present their lunch on Wednesday, Feb. 14. The meal will be served in-house at noon with takeouts available to pick up between 11:30 a.m. and 1 p.m.

The menu will consist of baked tilapia, rice pilaf, and broccoli/cauliflower au gratin, with red velvet cake for dessert. The vegetarian option, or alternative for those who don't like fish, will be a cheese tortellini casserole.

Reservations CAN be made by calling 802-254-1138. Leave name, phone number, the number of meals, which entree to be ordered, and whether the order is for eating in or taking out. The suggested donation for the lunch is \$3 for those 60 and over, and \$4 for those under 60.

**Haydock talks about hiking trail construction, layout**

WEST DUMMERSTON — The Dummerston Conservation Commission presents a talk with Roger Haydock on Thursday, Feb. 15, at 7 p.m., at the Dummerston Community Center, 150 West St.

Haydock will present a talk and slide show on hiking trail layout and construction. For more than 30 years, he has constructed in excess of 20 trails in the local area for the Windham Hill Pinnacle Association, Putney

Mountain Association, the Nature Conservancy, and the Deer Run Nature Preserve. He will share his methods, approaches, goals, and lessons.

All are welcome. A suggested donation of \$5 per person will be split equally between the Dummerston Community Center and the Dummerston Conservation Commission.

**Rec. Dept. offers additional open gym and game room hours for winter break**

BRATTLEBORO — The Recreation & Parks Department will offer additional open gym and game room hours for grades K-12 at the Gibson-Aiken Center on Feb. 19-23, from 1:30 to 5 p.m.

The Recreation & Parks Department will also offer additional public skating hours at the Nelson Withington Skating Facility Feb. 19-23 from 12:30 to 2:30 p.m.

Open gym and game room is a free program for children of all ages. It is a supervised program with a variety of activities to choose from. Along with basketball, there is foosball, air hockey, pool, arts and crafts, Legos and more.

For all programs, events, facility information, and more, visit [Brattleboro.gov](http://Brattleboro.gov) and hover over the Departments tab on the blue horizontal bar. A new dropdown menu will appear; click Recreation and Parks.

**Windham Philharmonic concert set for Feb. 19 at Latchis**

BRATTLEBORO — Windham Philharmonic performs a concert of winter music at the Latchis Theatre Monday, Feb. 19, at 7 p.m., under the direction of

**Transcribing, Editing and Proofreading Services**

Accurate, Confidential, Fast Turn-Around, Fair Pricing

Elizabeth: [elizabethjulia88@aol.com](mailto:elizabethjulia88@aol.com); 802-257-7475

**Brattleboro Books Since 1988**

Temporary home to the area's best USED BOOKS.

**25,000 USED BOOKS**

Buying books by appt. **802-257-7777**

OPEN THURSDAY, FRIDAY & SATURDAY 11AM - 5PM SUNDAY 11AM - 4PM

36 Elliot St, Brattleboro [brattbooks@gmail.com](mailto:brattbooks@gmail.com)

**THIS SPACE FOR RENT**

You, and some 20,000 other readers, are looking at Windham County's best advertising value. To promote your business in the next issue of *The Commons*, call us at (802) 246-6397 or e-mail [ads@commonsnews.org](mailto:ads@commonsnews.org).

Hugh Keelan. It is the first time the orchestra will take part in the Brattleboro Winter Carnival.

The program includes Tchaikovsky's "February" from *The Seasons*, "Winter Dreams" from his Symphony No. 1, Mozart's "Sleigh Ride" from Three German Dances K. 605, Debussy/Caplet's "The Snow Is Dancing," and "Skater's Waltz" by Waldteufel.

Michelle Liechti, concertmaster, will perform the violin solo in Vivaldi's "Winter" from the well-known *Four Seasons*. Admission to this family-friendly event is by donation. The concert will last approximately one hour.

**AMERICAN LEGION**  
POST #5  
32 Linden St. Brattleboro  
802-257-1872

---

**FEBRUARY 12-16 LUNCH SPECIALS**  
**\$9.50**  
Mon. - Pot Roast  
Tue. - Ground Beef Tacos  
Wed. - Valentine's Special Prime Rib & Shrimp Scampi \$20 call to set up take out!  
Thu. - Turkey Croquettes  
Fri. - Beef Stroganoff  
*\*\*\*Burgers, salads, apps and take out available\*\*\**

---

**OPEN TO THE PUBLIC**  
[www.brattleboropost5.org](http://www.brattleboropost5.org)

**NOW PLAYING at the MOVIES**

**LATCHIS THEATRE**  
[latchis.com](http://latchis.com) | 802.246.1500

**FEBRUARY 9-15**

**ALL OF US STRANGERS** R  
FRIDAY 4:15 / 6:40 / 8:50  
SATURDAY 2:15 / 6:40 / 8:50  
SUNDAY 2:15 & 6:40  
MON.-THUR. 4:15 & 6:40

**ARGYLLE** PG-13  
FRIDAY 4:15 / 6:45 / 9:15  
SATURDAY 2 / 6:45 / 9:15  
SUNDAY 2 & 6:45  
MON.-THUR. 4:15 & 6:45

**AMERICAN FICTION** R  
FRIDAY 4:15 / 6:50 / 9  
SATURDAY 1:45 / 6:50 / 9  
SUNDAY 1:45 & 6:50  
MON.-THUR. 4:15 & 6:50

**ZONE OF INTEREST** PG-13  
FRI. & SAT. 7 & 9:05  
SUN.-THUR. 7

**THE BOY AND THE HERON** PG-13  
DAILY 4:15

**OFF THE BEATEN PATH SERIES**  
MARCEL THE SHELL WITH SHOES ON 1:30PM ON SAT. & SUN.  
MOVIES FOR KIDS THE IRON GIANT 11AM ON SAT. / 4PM ON SUN.

rock river players presents

Looking for love

**Valentine's**

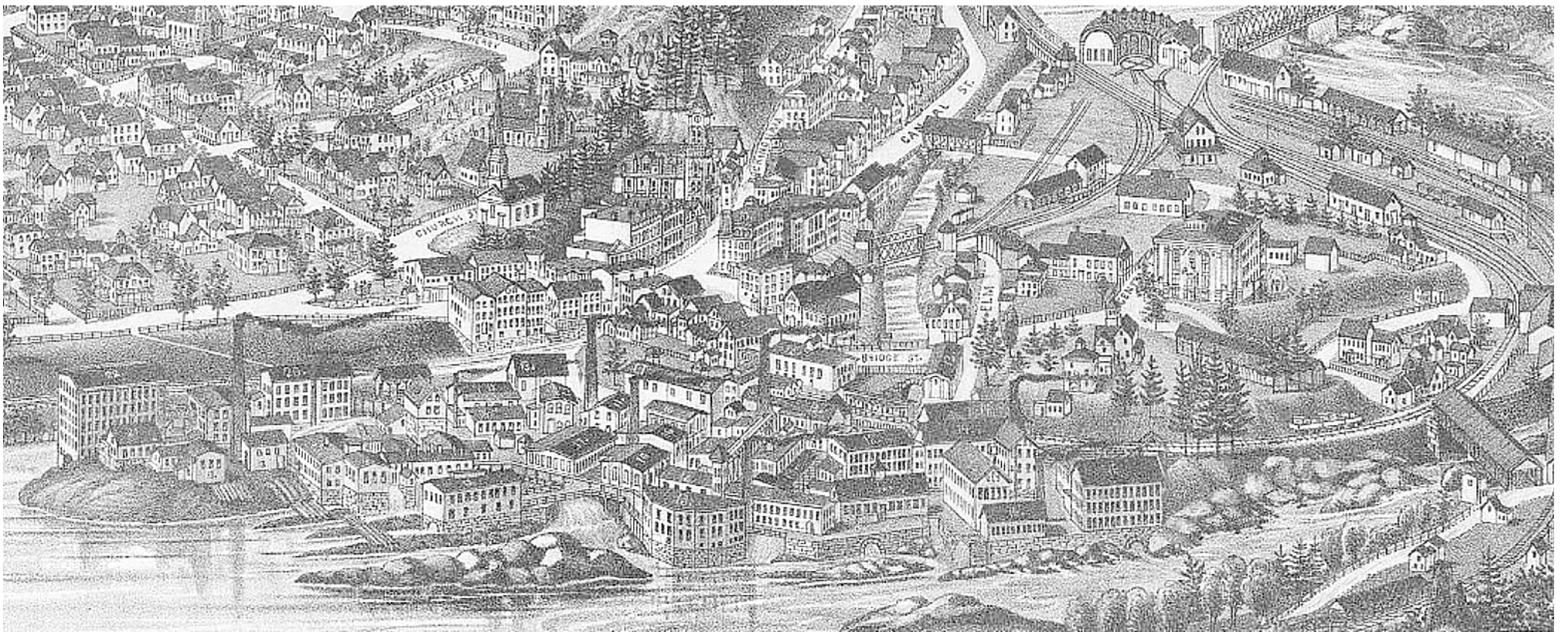
**CABARET**

songs, satire, sketches, &

Fri & Sat, FEB 9-10, 7 pm Sun, FEB 11, 3pm

Williamsville Hall, 35 Dover Rd., Williamsville

- Dan Dewalt on piano
- Cabaret seating, ADA compliant
- info: [verbatimvt@gmail.com](mailto:verbatimvt@gmail.com)
- \$12 pp includes sweet & savory snacks
- Reservations: [rockriverplayers.org](http://rockriverplayers.org)



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

This portion of an 1886 Burleigh lithograph of Bellows Falls shows the industrial area that is now Riverfront Park.

## Riverfront Park

— became pulp for papermaking, and much of that was done in the mills that once stood in what is now Riverfront Park.

Some paper mills sat along Bridge Street on the southern end of the Island, including the 16-building Moore and Thompson Paper Mill Complex, built around 1880.

While most of those mills are gone, a few of those buildings are still in use, though most remaining are empty and in disrepair.

But the largest industrial complex in the village was built in the Under the Hill area along the aptly named Mill Street by the predecessor of the International Paper Company.

In 1869, William Russell, who would become a founder and the first president of International Paper, leased all the old factories and their water rights, and began construction of this Under the Hill site.

The advent of railroads in 1849 had made the Bellows Falls canal obsolete, so Russell removed the locks and rebuilt the original 1790–1801 canal, which by 1869 was in disrepair. He converted it to power the mills.

International Paper, today the largest pulp and paper company in the world, was co-founded by Russell and incorporated in 1898 when 17 Northeast pulp and paper mills, including the local Fall Mountain Paper Co., merged.

International Paper was actually founded in the Fall Mountain Paper offices in Bellows Falls. The building housing those offices is one of the few remaining buildings at the site, known today as the TLR Building.

In stark contrast to the park's present configuration, the Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of the site in 1896 shows that what is now an 8-acre green space was once completely covered by dozens of factories, lumber mills, lumber sheds, carpenter shops, acid rooms, paper machine rooms, shipping buildings, buildings for coal storage, pulp storage, paper storage, sulfite mills, blowpits, and digesters, as well as the Frank Adams Grist Mill, most of it owned by the Fall Mountain Paper and Robertson Paper companies.

The buildings were often connected directly or by overhead pedestrian bridges.

In 1896, the mills were all operated by water power from the converted canal, which Russell split into covered west and east flumes.

Each flume ran under the factories and emptied into the Connecticut River via two separate tail races, one of which is still visible. The buildings were heated by coal boilers and some wood stoves, so the threat of fires at the complex was a serious ongoing concern.

New papermaking technology, which used a mixture of wood pulp and rags to make usable paper, was installed in the factories. Parts of those original, huge papermaking machines are among the educational exhibits in the Park.

From 1870 to the 1920s, Bellows Falls was one of New England's major industrial centers, with a population of over 6,000, more than double the current population of 2,800.

By 1902, some 5,000 workers from the area were employed at the mills, which ran continuously in shifts.

Town life centered on the mills. Whistles blown at shift changes and other times of day could be heard around the town. Villagers used the whistles to schedule their days, time their meals, get to school, and set their clocks.

Frances Stockwell Lovell and Everett C. Lovell's *History of Rockingham* recorded the results when time keeper "Hosea Parker made the mistake of his life; he blew the noon whistle at eleven o'clock and the town was not the same for days!"

By the early 1900s, things began to change.

The great northern forests of New England were largely depleted, and the last great log drive down the Connecticut River took place in 1915.

Smaller log drives of pulp wood, disparagingly referred to as "4-foot stuff," would continue for another 30 years, but the glory years were gone.

In addition, labor unions — at first, the International Brotherhood of Paper Makers and, in 1906, the creation of the International Brotherhood of Pulp Sulphite and Paper Mill Workers — became and remains an important part of the history of the paper industry.

That was very true in Bellows Falls. The local union helped

fund a new firehouse in Bellows Falls, which included a union meeting hall on its top floor. Large union parades were held in the village around the turn of the century, and many local union leaders went on to national positions.

Fighting for improved working conditions and better pay, there were several strikes against International Paper for 20 years, starting with a 1907 strike in Bellows Falls.

There were paper mill strikes throughout the East in 1910. In 1919, some 5,000 workers went on strike in Bellows Falls for two weeks.

But 1921 was the beginning of the end when local workers went on strike for several months. International Paper in Bellows Falls laid off 400 workers, and union pickets and marches occurred daily. Union meetings had to be held in the Bellows Falls Opera House because so many attended.

Local union leaders were jailed for "intimidation," and two companies of the Vermont National Guard patrolled the streets to keep order during the marches. Pulp trucks trying to get to the mills were overturned by strikers.

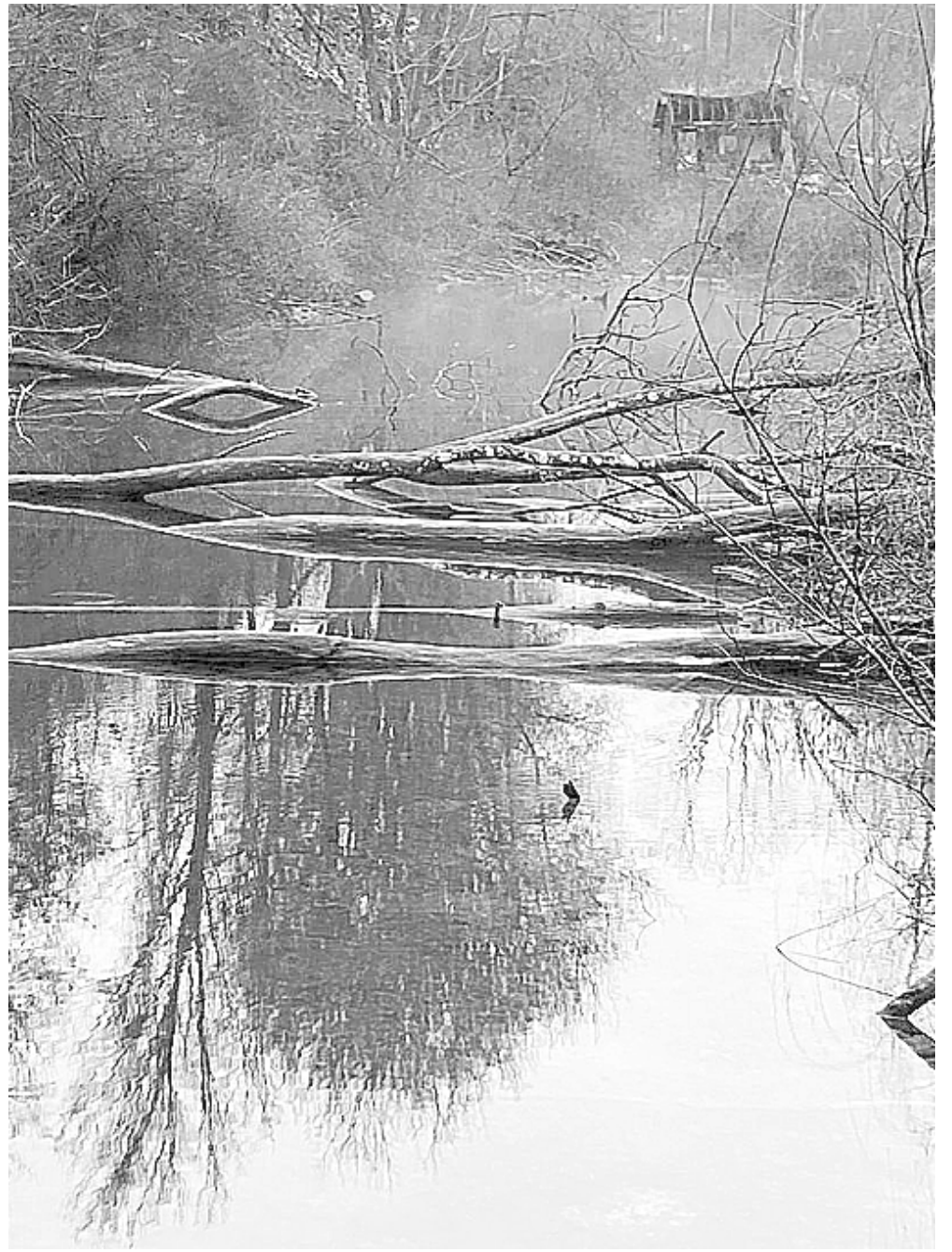
When strike breakers — often foreign immigrants — were brought in by train to salvage some of the pulpwood, they had to be protected by the National Guard carrying rifles with fixed bayonets. Shots were fired across the river into the campsite of the strike breakers. Nearly all the Bellows Falls stores and businesses refused to serve them. The situation divided the town for months, and mob rule became a political issue.

"It was," as Lovell's *History of Rockingham* understates, "a tense time."

Finally, in 1922, things came to an end, but not in the way the strikers had hoped. International Paper began shutting down machines and dismissing workers in what newspapers of the era described as a shift in its corporate strategy.

"Recent developments strongly indicate that the International Paper Co., intends to make itself a great hydroelectric company, with paper a secondary matter. If favorable legislation continues, it is very likely the company will

FROM SECTION FRONT



ROBERT F. SMITH/THE COMMONS

Cold Spring Pond, a water body warmed by underground thermal heat, is a popular year-round spot for local and migrating waterfowl.

follow out its veiled promises to get out of the paper business in the United States and go to Canada for that purpose," the *Brattleboro Reformer* reported on May 5 of that year.

That came to pass in March of 1926, with the announcement that almost all of the paper manufacturing operation in Bellows Falls would cease within two months, with plans for demolishing the majority of the mill complex over 3 acres, rebuilding and upgrading the canals to provide electricity for remaining industry.

Most of the Under the Hill buildings came to be owned by a new entity, the International Hydro-Electric Company. Though some paper mills, in

particular the Robertson Paper Company, would continue in town for decades longer, the mostly abandoned Under the Hill site would soon begin to be dismantled and demolished.

Thousands of people lost their jobs. "It was the end of a period of prosperity" for Bellows Falls, Lovell wrote.

WHILE THE GREAT RIVER log drives and the paper mill industrial years have been romanticized to a degree, the truth is that in many ways they created environmental problems that we are still dealing with today.

The great lumber companies often logged without a sustainable plan, deforesting much of their holdings in northern New England. The colorful river drives were an ecological disaster for Connecticut River fish and wildlife.

The huge paper mill complex used vast amounts of water, as well as dangerous chemicals that ended up in the soil and the river. It has taken decades for the Connecticut River to begin to recover. And while the vast complex of factories and mills along the river in Bellows Falls are mostly gone now, the soil there remained contaminated and unused for the remainder of the 20th century.

Now, with the development of the Historic Park and Riverfront Trail System by the Bellows Falls Historical Society, all of that is changing.

IT COULD BE SAID that in some ways, the Bellows Falls Historical Society owes its very existence to the park. In 1965, one of the last remaining buildings of the Under the Hill industrial area, Adams Grist Mill, was on the docket to be torn down.

The mill, built in 1831, was in continuous operation until 1961. Painted on the second floor of the building, and still visible today, is a message proclaiming the mill's offerings: "Hay — Grain — Feed — Flour."

The mill was in dire need of restoration and repair, but it was a diamond in the rough, with grinding machines, old motors, electrical fuse boxes, elevator shafts, storage bins, and transfer pipes all still in place and most of them still in working order.

Not wanting to see this community treasure lost, a group of citizens, spearheaded by locals Bob Adams and Bob Ashcroft, banded together and formed the Bellows Falls Historical Society in 1965.

The Society at first leased the mill from the New England Power Company.

When TransCanada bought the hydroelectric power system on the Connecticut River in 2005, it viewed the polluted site as a financial liability. The new owners donated the land, including the grist mill and the adjacent Wyman Flint Building, to the Historical Society on the condition that the power company be released from any liability to clean up the contaminated region.

In addition, the town of Rockingham eventually ended up also owning the nearby abandoned TLR Corporation building, which put all of the few remaining structures within the industrial complex in local hands.

Other parts of the eventually full 8-acre site that were owned by the town were also donated to the Historical Society, or bought from private owners via donations.

Rescuing and restoring, or if necessary removing some of these remaining buildings, has been a central project of the group ever since.

Acquiring and preserving Adams Grist Mill in the 1960s would evolve into the much larger concept of creating a historical community park, an education and heritage center, and a riverside trail system — a project that is likely to continue on for several more decades into the future.

A former long-term treasurer ■ STORY CONTINUES ON FACING PAGE



ROBERT F. SMITH/THE COMMONS

A meditative stone labyrinth has been created on a man-made knoll at the south end of the park, offering sweeping views of the Connecticut River valley.

of the BFHS was the project manager through the grant writing and overseeing of the Riverfront Park project at the beginning. From 2005 to 2009, the group worked closely with the National Park Service, the Windham Regional Commission, Mount Ascutney Regional Commission Brownfields Reuse Program, the state Department of Environmental Conservation, and other organizations and agencies to test the site for contaminants.

The soil tested positive for contamination by arsenic, polynuclear aromatic hydrocarbons, and dioxin, all remnants of its use for paper production.

The studies provided the basis for applying for Brownfields Cleanup Grants, which were used for successful pollution remediation work on the site in 2010 and 2012. All the park's trails have been cleaned up, and contaminated public areas have been capped.

The few areas that still contain contaminants are isolated from public access. The environmentally safe zones in the park are open to public access, and the park's hiking trails connect to others along the Saxtons River.

Though Bellows Falls has 3 miles of frontage on the Connecticut River, the village had never had safe public access to the river itself, and no boat access. To remedy that, stairs now offer access to the river, where people can now find a landing for kayaks and canoes.

Industrial artifacts recovered from the mills are displayed throughout the park, and more are being added. Train wheels have been converted to benches, and scenic viewing areas have been created.

On a man-made knoll at the south end of the park offering sweeping views down the Connecticut River valley, a meditative stone labyrinth has been created, along with a stone bench, called the Poet's Seat. The knoll was initially created when it was used as the dumping spot for dirt and blasted stones during the construction of the nearby hydroelectric station in the 1920s.

A gated, gravel road provides full access to the labyrinth for everyone, including those with disabilities.

Gary Fox, a founder of the Sustainable Valley Group, which has also been involved with the creation of the park and now owns the Wyman Flint Building, said that the next stage of plans for the park involves assessing and deciding what to do with the remaining buildings.

His group is also looking into creating a second, safer access trail or road into the park.

The park was developed with the stated purpose of creating a historical, interpretive park with a Connecticut River heritage center, museum, education space, and emphasis on the arts and recreation.

The significance of the site — dating back to the area's 10,000-plus pre-European-contact Indigenous times — will also be part of the park's future development and use.

Fox said that, in 2023, the Sustainable Valley Group had both the TLR and the Wyman Flint buildings assessed for contamination, as well as the Adams Grist Mill. Now that the park's trails have been cleaned up, what happens to the remaining buildings has to be decided.

"The next step," said Fox, "is to work with environmental organizations to clean up all the building areas and decide which buildings can be saved."

He noted that structural issues will have to be considered in deciding what buildings are still viable. A few remaining, but already collapsed, buildings on the site will need to be removed.

Annette Spaulding, a recognized world-class scuba diver, is the volunteer park manager and a member of the BFHS board of directors.

In extensive exploration underwater along the shore of the park, Spaulding has discovered, among other things, remnants of a steamboat dock, underwater springs, and numerous artifacts from the mills, including two pulp milling stones that, with the help of a local construction company, she was able to salvage.

The large mill stones are now part of the park's displays.

Spaulding said that plans are underway to get permitting to build a 20-by-30 foot roofed pavilion in the park, with picnic tables for both recreation and educational purposes. Compass School and Bellows Falls Middle School frequently bring students down to the nearby park for classes.

In meeting its goals for creating opportunities for the arts, the park was the setting for an

## Immigrant health jobs

FROM SECTION FRONT

state to improve Vermonters' access to primary health care as well as the lives of those graduates and their families," Harrison said when introducing the bill to the Senate Health and Welfare Committee on Jan. 31.

"It proposes two actions: one, the beginning of a long-term solution and the other, to make short-term progress," she said.

First, S.263 proposes that the Legislature form a one-year working group to study how to simplify the process of accrediting qualified foreign medical professionals to practice in the United States. The group would work under the auspices of the Department of Public Health's Board of Medical Practice.

In addition, it suggests that \$50,000 be appropriated in FY2025 to "reimburse international medical school graduates for all or a portion of the costs of books, study materials and software needed to become licenses to practice medicine in Vermont."

### Meeting the needs of a diverse community

Harrison credits NAACP of Windham County's Health Justice Subcommittee for alerting her to the problems that international doctors face in trying to practice here.

The organization, which promotes and supports the BIPOC community, became involved in this issue when its subcommittee began investigating whether the health needs of people of color in U.S. were being met.

Then its focus widened to looking at a variety of health outcomes in general.

Diana Wahle is a founding member of the subcommittee. In the past year, she has led its work group as it focuses on diverse workforce development in health care.

"We started learning about stubborn regulations that make the path to U.S. credentialing unrealistic and unattainable," Wahle said. "Most of the work group members are internationally trained professionals who have experience with these challenges. As a team, we work closely with Sen. Harrison and fully support S.263."

Meanwhile, several issues have emerged in the general landscape of health care in Vermont: Demographics have changed, the population is shrinking, and general practitioners who want a rural practice are rare, Wahle said.

"So it's really sad to see barriers put up to keep physicians out who do not reflect the same culture or have the same racial background," Wahle said.

She called the shortage of practitioners "just the tip of the iceberg" and cited "a crying need for nurses, [licensed nursing assistants], and people at all levels of the profession."

"The hope is the working group will target physicians to start, because that's something that's very workable, but then evolve into dealing with every level of health care, and the possibilities for streamlining people who are internationally trained to enter more easily into the Vermont workforce," Wahle said.

As a potential model, Tennessee has just passed Senate Bill 1451, which goes into effect in June and smoothes the pathway for international medical professionals by issuing temporary licenses to international medical school graduates who have demonstrated competency, completed a three-year postgraduate training program in their country, or

outdoor concert this past year, and plans are in the works for other arts offerings this summer, including a Renaissance fair-type event.

AMONG THE MORE interesting features of the park is a small, partially human-made pond at the south end of the industrial site. Called Cold Springs Pond in the earliest maps of Bellows Falls, this natural pond was expanded during the industrial era for use in fighting fires. A small shed at the north end of the pond was intended to house water pumping equipment.

What makes this pond unique is that it never freezes over, even in the coldest of winter weather, making it a year-round open water refuge for waterfowl, including a flock of more than 200 Mallard ducks in January.

The never-freezing pond is evidence of the geothermal springs that feed it, and studies have explored the feasibility of using this thermal water source to help heat some of the town's public buildings. That idea has been abandoned for the time being.

Don't confuse the idea of geothermal springs with hot

"otherwise practiced as a medical professional performing the duties of a physician for at least three of the last five years outside the United States."

An applicant must also submit evidence of education, training, and employment offers in Tennessee.

The law also creates a pathway for a permanent license after two years under a temporary license.

### A doctor who can't practice

Dr. Candice Taylor-Diallo is from Trinidad and Tobago. She got her medical degree from the University of the West Indies in Jamaica and practiced at home in Trinidad and Tobago before marrying and coming to live in Brattleboro.

"I knew that I wouldn't be able to practice immediately," said Taylor-Diallo, United Way of Windham County's community health equity grant coordinator, who came here in 2021 at the height of Covid. "So there were a lot of barriers during that particular time," she said.

But she learned that "it's going to be a long, expensive process in order for me to practice," Taylor-Diallo said.

First, she had to get her green card (the Permanent Resident Card, which allows foreigners to live and work in the United States) and become established in Brattleboro. Then she took the job with United Way.

"The process to get licensing or credentialing for medical practitioners, you have to begin at the very beginning," Taylor-Diallo said. "You have to do the [U.S. Medical Licensing Exams]. These exams are quite expensive, maybe around \$2,000 or so apiece."

To pass the exam, "you have to study for a lengthy period of time," she continued. "Essentially, you're repeating medical school, if you want to think of it like that. Because step one would be the foundational classes that I would have studied for the first two years in medicine."

Step two would involve the more clinical aspects of medicine.

"That would have been the last three years of my medical school, compared with the last two years of the medical school program in the United States," Taylor-Diallo said.

That makes a five-year program — often one year longer than a path in this country for an aspiring doctor — for someone who already has a medical degree.

"We spent three years in the hospital doing hands-on work, and two years in the classroom. Whereas the program in the United States is two years or so in the classrooms and the other two years in the hospitals, if I understand that correctly. And at each step, there's an exam. When you come here, you have to repeat those exams."

Then there is a residency requirement. According to Harrison, "It's expensive and has very limited capacity."

Taylor-Diallo agrees. "That's a whole other set of hurdles for somebody to go through as well, because there would be a certain amount of residency spots," Taylor said. "And they hold immigrants, physicians, to so much higher standards than the American ones."

There are significant differences in how medicine is practiced in different countries, Taylor-Diallo said.

"Everything here is more technologically advanced," she said. "So those systems, and with

springs. As the name Cold Springs Pond indicates, this water is far from warm, but the springs keep it warm enough to never freeze.

The pond's waters have been tested for contamination, but Spaulding said that in recent years a healthy population of fish, frogs, toads, and crayfish has been closely observed there, leading her to infer that, like the nearby river, the pond is growing cleaner and healthier with time.

The Bellows Falls Historical Riverfront Park and Trail System is in its infancy, a product of the efforts of dozens of mostly unsung local citizens and volunteers.

But with the Bellows Falls Historical Society and the Sustainable Valley Group spearheading the efforts and creating a clear vision for the park's future, it is likely many generations to come will enjoy this unique and beautiful spot.

Anyone who would like to volunteer at the park or with the Bellows Falls Historical Society should contact President Cathy Bergmann at [bfhistoricalsociety@gmail.com](mailto:bfhistoricalsociety@gmail.com).



COURTESY PHOTO

Candace Taylor-Diallo, a graduate of the University of the West Indies, was a medical physician in her home country of Trinidad and Tobago for four years. She now is the Community Health Equity Grant Coordinator for United Way of Windham County.

insurance, those are the areas where it's a bit more challenging for us. But not necessarily the actual dealing with patients."

As a person of color, Taylor-Diallo would add an important aspect of diversity to the medical system here. In general, many studies show that BIPOC people have shorter life expectancies.

In addition, studies show that "stark racial disparities in maternal and infant health in the U.S. have persisted for decades despite continued advancements in medical care," according to KFF.

And while the BIPOC community experiences mental health issues at the same rate as white communities, BIPOC people are less likely to seek medical help.

"There really is nobody that they feel comfortable, with whom they could seek care," said Taylor-Diallo, who calls the bill "an important step."

"There's a lot that people don't know and don't particularly understand," she continued. "But I think we're in at least the beginning stages of putting things in place to encourage more diversity and more people to come."

"If we are trying to bring more people to Vermont to practice — not just in medicine, but in general, to increase the workforce and the diversity as well — this is a good opportunity," Taylor-Diallo added.

### Hospitals need doctors

Aware of the Tennessee bill, Christopher Dougherty, the CEO and president of Brattleboro Memorial Hospital, is a strong supporter of Harrison and S.263.

"I believe that our responsibility is to find ways to safely create the most clinicians we possibly can," Dougherty said. "How do we do it so that we can maximize the supply of physicians in Vermont, yet also maintain the high quality that Vermont is known for?"

His answer: "We've got to find innovative ways. The question becomes a balance of supply and

quality. How can you guarantee the quality? Senator Harrison's bill is to do a study, creating a working group, which is, I think, a great first step."

Some people believe the quality of medical care will be diminished if Vermont allows immigrant practitioners to practice here, Dougherty said. But he disagrees.

"There's criteria," he said, noting the safeguards and processes defined in the new Tennessee law. "It's not just, 'Oh, I'm a doctor from somewhere.'"

And, he said, "there might even be some evaluation of the work that you're doing."

Licensing immigrant practitioners aids in the economic development of the community as well as in its overall health, Dougherty said.

"A physician, when she starts working as a physician, she's generating more income," Dougherty said. "She's paying more taxes into the community. She's buying more in the community. She's able to help generate more economic growth in the community. And I can tell you, this community needs more economic growth. I

would assume everywhere else in Vermont does, too."

When evaluating S.263, the question for the Legislature should not be whether we should do it, but how we should do it, Dougherty said.

"Maybe it's just primary care, or maybe it's some certain specialty care as well," he said. "Maybe there's limitations that need to be put in place. I think the medical world needs to weigh in on some of that."

But he thinks that it should "be a question of, How do we make this work to increase the supply of clinicians in the state of Vermont? Because we're never going to catch up."

"I think if we keep at the same pace, we're just going to get further and further behind in terms of our physician-to-population ratio," Dougherty said — and because of the aging population, "the needs are increasing more rapidly than the supply is increasing."

"Somehow we have to figure out ways to increase the supply," Dougherty said. "I think this is a great opportunity to do so."

NUTS & BOLTS

**JEWETT**

PLUMBING & HEATING

SERVING THE BRATTLEBORO AREA WITH RELIABLE PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

RESIDENTIAL • COMMERCIAL

- BATHROOM & KITCHEN REMODELING

- COMPLETE HEATING SYSTEMS

- WATER PUMPS & SYSTEMS

802-254-4963

1090 WESTERN AVENUE  
WEST BRATTLEBORO

---

*Steve's*

SEPTIC SERVICE

Septic Tank Pumping

e3 Portable Toilet Rentals

802-257-1619

Vernon, VT • [stevessepticpumping.com](http://stevessepticpumping.com)

Noel Hoffmann Dog Training & Behavior Consulting

The Good, the Bad and the Ugly.

There is a positive solution for every behavioral problem: Aggression, Resource Guarding, Reactivity, Separation Anxiety...and more!

Private training in a quiet and safe environment, so that you can learn. Fully certified to work behavioral cases.

Westminster, Vermont - 5 minutes from Exit 5, I-91.

www.noelhoffmann.com • 802-375-5560

noelh@noelhoffmann.com

CPDT-KA,  
KPA-CTP,  
IAABC-CDBC  
Fear Free  
Certified

Love thy neighbor

thy immigrant neighbor

thy black neighbor

thy atheist neighbor

thy religious neighbor

thy depressed neighbor

thy asian neighbor

thy lgbtqia neighbor

thy disabled neighbor

thy indigenous neighbor

thy conservative neighbor

thy elderly neighbor

thy homeless neighbor

thy latino neighbor

thy addicted neighbor

thy progressive neighbor

thy incarcerated neighbor

thy \_\_\_\_\_ neighbor

groundworks  
COLLABORATIVE

groundworksvt.org

adapted from  
©TheHappyGivers.com

## MILESTONES

*Births, deaths, and news of people from Windham County*

### College news

• **Sarah Butterfield** of Vernon has been named to the University of Delaware Dean's List for the fall 2023 semester.

• **Audrey LaMorder** of Guilford was named to the Dean's List for the fall 2023 semester at St. Michael's College in Colchester.

• **Liliana Buettner**, an inclusive elementary education major from Dummerston, was named to the Dean's List for the fall 2023 semester at Hartwick College in Oneonta, New York.

### Obituaries



• **Louis Thomas "Lou" Corbett, 77**, of "The Free Republic of Corbett" in Seattle, Washington, and formerly of Westminster. Died peacefully in his home on Jan. 22, 2024, surrounded by his friends and chosen family who were also his tireless, loving caregivers during his bout with cancer. Lou was born and raised in Newark, New Jersey, the son of Marguerite and Louis Corbett. Lou adored his younger brother William "Billy," later known as "Willie." Willie remembers fondly the "street cred" he had from having Lou as his older brother, and Lou supporting, protecting, leading, and teaching him on the path to a peaceful and thoughtful way of life. Lou attended Catholic schools in Newark and graduated from Essex Catholic High School in 1964. He attended the University of Scranton in Pennsylvania, graduating in 1969 with a degree in sociology. In Scranton, Lou found extended family, lifelong friends and community. He was instrumental in starting a food co-op there and traveled to Alexandria, Louisiana, with classmates to rescue a Black Catholic school there, serving as teachers, coaches, janitors, etc. Also in Scranton, Lou met friends who came with him to Vermont in 1970 to join the "back to the land movement" and a whole new community that he deeply loved and who loved him in return. Lou, Willie, and friends loved telling stories of the often harsh, always hilarious, and wonderful times they had trying to burn green wood to heat the uninsulated "Slum Goddess" shack, cook a frozen-solid turkey in a wood stove on Thanksgiving morning, help the neighbor butcher a pig in the dead of winter, grow and smoke pot, avoid the cops and the draft, learn crafts and professions, and living the hippie life. Lou's great passion was traveling, and not as a tourist. He traveled to Europe, Iceland, North Africa, India, Tibet, Nepal, China, Bhutan, Thailand, Vietnam, Pakistan, Myanmar, Indonesia, the Philippines, Jordan, Syria, East Africa, Cuba, Panama, Ethiopia, Papua New Guinea and more. He loved participating in festivals and living local life, especially in India and Nepal. He had two audiences with the Dalai Lama as well as several holy men around South Asia. He became a photographer and was known for his intimate, empathic photos of the places he visited and people he met, sharing them with many. Lou's move to Washington

in 1983 led him to a new community of deep friendships and chosen family. He became a radiology technician, working in the emergency room of Harborview Hospital in Seattle. His co-workers and friends remember him for his patience, caring, and expert taking of X-rays at difficult angles. They were impressed at his ability to work at his very physically demanding job until age 74. He was elected Union Shop Steward at Harborview and was very proud of that. In 2016, Lou was inspired to travel to North Dakota and stand with the Water Protectors of the Sioux Nation to challenge the building of an oil pipeline that threatened the water and the way of life there. He had great passion for the struggle and lived there for six weeks, recognized as a wise elder of the protest community. Lou was a great storyteller, raconteur, humorist, wise man and counselor. A friend wrote on Facebook, "His place in Washington, and formerly of Westminster. Died peacefully in his home on Jan. 22, 2024, surrounded by his friends and chosen family who were also his tireless, loving caregivers during his bout with cancer. Lou was born and raised in Newark, New Jersey, the son of Marguerite and Louis Corbett. Lou adored his younger brother William 'Billy,' later known as 'Willie.' Willie remembers fondly the 'street cred' he had from having Lou as his older brother, and Lou supporting, protecting, leading, and teaching him on the path to a peaceful and thoughtful way of life. Lou attended Catholic schools in Newark and graduated from Essex Catholic High School in 1964. He attended the University of Scranton in Pennsylvania, graduating in 1969 with a degree in sociology. In Scranton, Lou found extended family, lifelong friends and community. He was instrumental in starting a food co-op there and traveled to Alexandria, Louisiana, with classmates to rescue a Black Catholic school there, serving as teachers, coaches, janitors, etc. Also in Scranton, Lou met friends who came with him to Vermont in 1970 to join the 'back to the land movement' and a whole new community that he deeply loved and who loved him in return. Lou, Willie, and friends loved telling stories of the often harsh, always hilarious, and wonderful times they had trying to burn green wood to heat the uninsulated 'Slum Goddess' shack, cook a frozen-solid turkey in a wood stove on Thanksgiving morning, help the neighbor butcher a pig in the dead of winter, grow and smoke pot, avoid the cops and the draft, learn crafts and professions, and living the hippie life. Lou's great passion was traveling, and not as a tourist. He traveled to Europe, Iceland, North Africa, India, Tibet, Nepal, China, Bhutan, Thailand, Vietnam, Pakistan, Myanmar, Indonesia, the Philippines, Jordan, Syria, East Africa, Cuba, Panama, Ethiopia, Papua New Guinea and more. He loved participating in festivals and living local life, especially in India and Nepal. He had two audiences with the Dalai Lama as well as several holy men around South Asia. He became a photographer and was known for his intimate, empathic photos of the places he visited and people he met, sharing them with many. Lou's move to Washington



• **Marjorie Evelyn Brown Denyou, 73**, of Andover. Died on Jan. 17, 2024. Marjorie was born on Sept. 29, 1951, at Grace Cottage Hospital in Townshend, to Phyllis and Kenneth Brown of Newfane. She attended Newfane Elementary and Leland & Gray Seminary, where she starred in the circus and lettered in cheerleading, graduating in 1969. She then traveled the U.S., spending time in Louisiana, Arizona, and San Diego. She also managed a campground on the coast of Maine and was co-owner in a landscape and gardening business. For more than 40 years, Marjorie brightened everyone's holiday season with the most beautiful handmade Christmas wreaths and centerpieces, along with the adorable knitted and crocheted forest animals she made that brought a smile to so many. Animals, both domestic and wild, had a special place in her heart and life. Feeding her birds was a priority each day and she always looked forward to seeing her bears, especially her favorite, "Little Bear," who brought her cubs to see Marjorie each spring. Along with her animals, one of her most favorite things to do was to watch the stars with her granddaughter, Montana, making sure they never missed a meteor shower, no matter what time of night it peaked. Marjorie was preceded by her parents and by her sister, Louise, and brother, Roger. She is survived by her brother, Allen Brown (Helen), of Charlestown, New Hampshire; her partner, Richard Quinn, of Andover; her daughters, Jennifer Denyou, of

South Londonderry, and Heidi Roy and husband, Francois, also of South Londonderry; her beloved granddaughter, Montana; along with many nieces and nephews. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: All are invited to remember and celebrate Marge with her two daughters and granddaughter on Sunday, Feb. 18, from noon to 3 p.m., at the NewBrook Fire Station in Newfane. Donations to the Vermont Network Against Domestic Violence, P.O. Box 405, Montpelier, VT 05601. To offer condolences, visit [atamaniuk.com](http://atamaniuk.com).



• **Lois Marie Dowling, 91**, formerly of Saxtons River. Died peacefully, surrounded by her loving family, on Feb. 1, 2024, at Maplewood Assisted Living facility in Westmoreland, New Hampshire. Lois was born on Jan. 30, 1933, in Whitman, Massachusetts, to Harold S. Lawrence and Gladys L. (Bourne) Lawrence. She grew up and attended schools in Walpole, New Hampshire, graduating from Walpole High School in 1950. On Dec. 3, 1955, she married Paul Delaney Dowling at St. Peter's Catholic Church in North Walpole. She worked as a telephone operator for New England Telephone for several years prior to starting her family. She spent many years working at home, raising her family of six children at their longtime residence in Saxtons River. While living there, Lois was very active in St. Edmunds Catholic Church. She was well known for her perennial gardens, her knitting, her cooking, and her overall homemaking skills. Her sweaters continue to be handed down from generation to generation. She was especially proud of her children, grandchildren, and her great-grandchildren. Lois was predeceased by her parents, her husband, her brother Richard, her sister Lucille, and her sisters-in-law Liz Lawrence and Shirley Richardson. She is survived by her brothers, Paul Lawrence and his wife, Maryann, and Ralph Lawrence and his wife, Helen; her children Dennis Dowling of Springfield, Vermont, Marie Liska and Mark of Falmouth, Massachusetts, Anne Higgins (Paul Tollios) of Bourne, Massachusetts, Dan Dowling (Robin) of Hernando, Florida, Jeannie Hodson (Chris), of Bellows Falls, and Maureen Williams (Dan) of Woodbury, Connecticut; and 14 grandchildren and six great-grandchildren. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: A funeral Mass was held Feb. 5, at St. Peter's Catholic Church in North Walpole, followed by burial at St. Peter's Cemetery in Drewsville, New Hampshire.



• **Burton "Burt" Eldridge, 86**, of Brattleboro. Died peacefully at home, surrounded by his family, on Jan. 23, 2024, after a period of declining health. Burt was born on May 25, 1937, in Boston to Arthur and Harriet (MacQueen) Eldridge and raised in Shelburne Falls, Massachusetts, where he was a 1955 graduate of Arms Academy. He attended Virginia Tech before graduating from North Adams State College in 1960. Later, he earned a M.Ed. He enjoyed teaching and taught many grades before becoming a principal at the Putney School and then Assistant Superintendent of Schools in Brattleboro. He stayed in education until 1996 and also ran a small electronics business in the 1980s. Even after retirement, he taught math and science courses at Community College of Vermont for many years. He took great pride in helping his students and always enjoyed helping his children and grandchildren with math and science homework. He was an avid ham radio operator since the age of 16 and belonged to the West River Radio Club. An excellent piano player, he formerly played the organ at the First Congregational Church in West Brattleboro. The thing that was most important to him was his family. He remembered everyone's birthday, anniversary, and other special events and always enjoyed a family gathering. Burt is survived by his wife of 60 years, Rosemary (Childs) Eldridge; his children Brenda Mockler and husband Jim of Northfield, Massachusetts, and David Eldridge and fiancée Betsy Robb of Dummerston; grandchildren Melissa Castonguay and husband Brad, Zachary Thamm and wife Marisa, Jessica Thamm, Brittany Eldridge, and Alyson Eldridge; and great-grandchildren Blissy, Braden, Cameron, Xavier, Evelyn, Charlie, and Jack. Burt's twin brother, Bruce Eldridge of Coppel, Texas, also survives, as well as a sister-in-law, Martha Brulotte of Greenfield,

Massachusetts, and several nieces and nephews. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: Funeral services will be private and at the convenience of the family. Burial will be in the spring at Morningside Cemetery in Brattleboro. Donations to Rescue, Inc., P.O. Box 593, Brattleboro, VT 05302, or the charity of your choice. To offer condolences, visit [atamaniuk.com](http://atamaniuk.com).



• **Patti Marie Howe French, 70**, of Brattleboro. Died at home, surrounded by family, on Jan. 30, 2024, following a period of declining health. Patti was born to Eleanor and Kenneth Howe on April 23, 1953 in Brattleboro. In 1972, she married the love of her life, Lester French, and started married life as a Navy wife. Patti settled into life in Groton, Connecticut, until 1977, when they departed the Navy and returned to Vermont, a few miles away in Whitingham. While in Whitingham, Patti was an active member of the community, and was closely involved in her sons' activities. She became a school bus driver, giving the school staff unique access and removing any chance of getting away with misdeeds. Over the years in Whitingham, she also managed a retail ski apparel shop and packaged maple candy — leading to tasty rejects landing at home. After seeing sons through high school, Patti and Lester returned to Brattleboro. She worked at New Chapter for several years, and remained the center of the family. Patti took great joy in seeing and caring for family members, and loved to travel with the family on a variety of vacations. She was also very close with her mother, doing many activities, including many of those vacations and shopping trips. Christmas was always resplendent with far too many gifts! She had a penchant for baking impressive birthday cakes and enjoyed quilting. Patti was always generous in gifts, companionship, and love. Patti is survived by her husband; a brother, Terry Howe; a sister, Lori McDermid; sons Christopher and Matthew; and grandchildren and step-grandchildren. She was predeceased by her son, Nathaniel. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: There are no formal funeral services scheduled. Donations to Grace Cottage Hospital, P.O. Box 216, Townshend, VT 05353 ([gracecottage.org](http://gracecottage.org)). To offer condolences, visit [atamaniuk.com](http://atamaniuk.com).

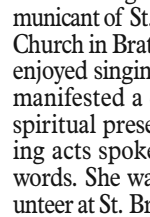


• **Susanne Helene Brattebo, 82**, of Bellows Falls. Died on Jan. 23, 2024. She was born on Sept. 11, 1941, daughter of Robert and Margaret Brattebo who welcomed their second baby girl into this world. Susanne grew up in Bellows Falls with her big sister Patricia (David) Lawlor. She attended St. Charles School and was a graduate of Bellows Falls High School, Class of 1966. She married her high school sweetheart, the late Gary Illingworth on Sept. 12, 1970. They were married 43 years and had three children, Geoffrey (Jean), Chad (Tina) and Lindsey (predeceased). Sue Sue, as her grandchildren — Ethan, Brady (the favorite), Madisyn, Kayleigh, and Myleigh — called her to annoy her, enjoyed nothing more than seeing her children and then grandchildren, playing sports, performing in concerts, and attending proms/dances. She was their wrapping paper target at Christmas and biggest cheerleader throughout the rest of the year. She reveled in the gossip of the day at the Dari Joy or through talking with her best friend, Donna Hartly. Having her family go with her on vacations to Maine and Florida created memories talked about for a long time afterward. Sue loved days where her entire family would share a meal with Pepsi, swim in the backyard pool, and tell stories with great laughter. She had fascinations with jewelry, pocketbooks, Jodi Piccolt books, Bingo, and long fingernails. She was fiercely protective of all those she loved but didn't hold back on her own opinions. She adored the many pets she had over the years. If there is one thing you could count on, it was Sue always blinged out in purple at many Terrier events. Sue was active in the community she loved, serving on the Bellows Falls Booster Club, Terrier Hall of Fame Committee (an inductee in 1997), Project Graduation, and various other local community groups. Over the years, she worked for Peerless Insurance, Simmons Precision, Manning's Phonebook Company, and McGirr's Nursing Home. On April 4, 2008, she lost two things — her daughter, Lindsey, in a car accident and her faith. With this

abrupt loss, Sue's family saw her rise but never to the full person she had been before. Years of declining health took a toll on Sue's body, mind, and soul. Her family's consolation is that they are sure the reunion in Heaven was glorious. Sue lives on in her children, grandchildren, sister, nieces, nephews, cousins, and friends, all of whom she loved very much. With a final hug and saying, "I love you, honey," may she finally rest in peace. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: A graveside service took place on Feb. 2 at St. Peter's Cemetery in Drewsville, New Hampshire. Donations to the Rockingham Vet Clinic, in care of Sumi, P.O. Box 98, Chester, VT, 05143.



• **Mary Margaret "Meg" Maloney, 84**, of Brattleboro. Died peacefully on Jan. 26, 2024, following a lengthy battle with Alzheimer's disease. The oldest of 11 children, Meg was born in Troy, New York on March 25, 1939, the daughter of Philip and Mary (Seagroatt) Riccardi. She was raised in Berlin, New York, where her family owned a large greenhouse operation that grew roses. After graduating from the Academy of Holy Names in Albany, New York, she entered the convent where she served for 13 years. Meg went on to attend Fordham University, where she received a M.Ed., and met her future husband, Ed Maloney. She taught in elementary education for 33 years, mostly at the Cottage School in Pleasantville, New York. She would host an end-of-year picnic for her beloved young students. She and her husband lived in a beautiful home in Mount Kisco, New York, and both were active in community theater throughout Westchester County. Upon retiring, she and her husband moved to Brattleboro and lived in their wonderful home on East Orchard Street, where they generously entertained family and friends. Meg was a faithful communicant of St. Michael's Catholic Church in Brattleboro, where she enjoyed singing in the choir. She manifested a deep and lifelong spiritual presence, and her loving acts spoke louder than any words. She was a dedicated volunteer at St. Bridget's Kitchen, and served as guardian ad litem in the Brattleboro Family Court. Meg was widely known for her spirit of genuine friendship, remarkable generosity, loving nature, and all-embracing smile. She was a doting aunt to her many nieces and nephews, and her door was always open to all. She loved her pets, and did not hesitate to spoil them. As to how she treated herself, as one of her nieces put it, "Any excuse to update her wardrobe was always appreciated." Her laugh was irresistibly contagious, and she will be joyfully remembered by all who had the privilege of knowing her. Survivors include nine siblings and many nieces and nephews. She was predeceased by her husband, one brother, and her parents. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: A funeral Mass was celebrated on Feb. 6 at St. Michael's Catholic Church. Burial will be later in the spring. Donations to Brigid's Kitchen, 47 Walnut St., Brattleboro, VT 05301, or to the Windham County Humane Society, P.O. Box 397, Brattleboro, VT 05302. To offer condolences, visit [atamaniuk.com](http://atamaniuk.com).



• **James Everett Stark, 55**, of Brattleboro. Died unexpectedly on Jan. 14, 2024, at his home. He was born on Jan. 15, 1968, in Brattleboro, child of Donald Alfred and Elizabeth "Betty" Akley Stark. A longtime resident of Brattleboro, he attended Academy School and Brattleboro Union High School. In the early 1990s, he moved to North Carolina to be closer to his siblings. While in the South, he worked for Food Lion Warehouse. After years of being away from home, he moved with his family back to Brattleboro, where he worked at G.S. Precision and C&S, and, after suffering a spinal cord injury, he enjoyed driving for Connecticut River Transit. Prior to succumbing to his spinal cord injury, Jim really enjoyed time with his family, outdoor activities, fishing, being wicket cool, building bonfires, hosting get-togethers for family and friends, and cooking and grilling for everyone. He was a devoted Christian whose favorite Biblical verse was John 4:19: "We love because he first loved us." He was predeceased by his son Brandon James Stark in 1991, his father in 2012, and his mother in 2014. He is survived by Ann Stark (ex-wife) of Plymouth, Massachusetts; daughters Jessica Farquhar and her husband Joe of Brattleboro, Brittney Stark of Braintree, Massachusetts, and Cassandra Stark of Brattleboro; friend/caretaker Andrew Cotel of Brattleboro; grandchildren Elizabeth, Cameron, Malikai, Lillian, and Bryson; siblings Randy, Dawnette, and Christina; nieces and nephews Donny, Danielle, Nicole, Tony, and Michael John. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: A graveside service and celebration of life will be held in the spring. Donations to Windham County Humane Society, P.O. Box 397, Brattleboro, VT 05302. To send condolences, visit [csnh.com](http://csnh.com).



• **Rebecca McKenny, 84**, of Westminster. Died on Dec. 2, 2023, at Thompson House in Brattleboro. A loving mother, grandmother and great-grandmother, Rebecca was born in Newfane on Dec. 15, 1938, to Noma (Perry) and Fred Sanderson. She graduated from Leland & Gray Seminary where she was a member of the band. On May 1, 1959, at the Federated Church of Putney, she married Robert Arthur McKenny of Putney, who predeceased her on July 9, 2003. They made their forever home on River Road in Westminster and together they raised two children, Terry (McKenny) Bonnette and Frederick McKenny. A woman of faith, she officially joined the First Congregational Church of Westminster in May 1972, though she served the church starting in 1959, working as a Sunday school teacher and later as the Sunday School Superintendent, which she retired from after 36 years. She was a member and president of the First Congregational Church Women's Fellowship for many years. Rebecca enjoyed playing clarinet as a part of the community band of Westminster. Rebecca was also a proud den leader and pack leader with the Green Mountain Council of Boy Scouts of America for many years. Rebecca is survived by

her children, Terry (McKenny) Bonnette (Grant Alexander) of Putney and Londonderry, and Frederick McKenny (Alisha McAllister) of Putney; grandchildren Sean Bonnette of Putney, Erin Bonnette of Bloomingdale, Georgia, and James Bonnette of Chicago; and great-grandchildren Anthony and Arthur Bonnette; both the light of her life in recent years. She is also survived by brothers Curtis Sanderson (Ellen) of Wilder and Ron Sanderson (Michele) of Townshend, along with many nieces and nephews. She was predeceased by her parents and siblings Elizabeth Putnam of California, Dottie Hilton of Newfane, and Bob Sanderson of Jamaica. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: Memorial services will be held in the spring at First Congregational Church of Westminster. Donations to First Congregational Church of Westminster, P.O. Box 122, Westminster, VT 05158.

• **Emmagene "Jeannie" McPherson, 67**, died on Monday, Dec. 18, 2023, after a nearly two-year battle with lung cancer, at the Jack Byrne Center in Lebanon, New Hampshire. She was born on Nov. 23, 1956, daughter of Edgar Taylor and Beatrice Glynn. Jeannie worked for the Brattleboro Housing Authority for 26 years. She enjoyed life — going to the beach, camping, long car rides, wearing flip-flops, and watching butterflies. Most of all, she enjoyed being around people she loved. She was loved by many. She leaves behind her son Timothy Call, daughter-in-law Kelly Call; granddaughter Charlie, and grandson Michael, all of Brattleboro; her ex-husband Frank McPherson, of Vernon; her sister Joann Morris of Enosburg Falls; and many nieces, nephews, and adopted family members. Besides her parents, Jeannie was predeceased by her grandson Ryan Call and her sister Anna Barrows. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: There will be a celebration of her life on Feb. 17 at the VFW, 40 Black Mountain Rd., Brattleboro.



• **James Everett Stark, 55**, of Brattleboro. Died unexpectedly on Jan. 14, 2024, at his home. He was born on Jan. 15, 1968, in Brattleboro, child of Donald Alfred and Elizabeth "Betty" Akley Stark. A longtime resident of Brattleboro, he attended Academy School and Brattleboro Union High School. In the early 1990s, he moved to North Carolina to be closer to his siblings. While in the South, he worked for Food Lion Warehouse. After years of being away from home, he moved with his family back to Brattleboro, where he worked at G.S. Precision and C&S, and, after suffering a spinal cord injury, he enjoyed driving for Connecticut River Transit. Prior to succumbing to his spinal cord injury, Jim really enjoyed time with his family, outdoor activities, fishing, being wicket cool, building bonfires, hosting get-togethers for family and friends, and cooking and grilling for everyone. He was a devoted Christian whose favorite Biblical verse was John 4:19: "We love because he first loved us." He was predeceased by his son Brandon James Stark in 1991, his father in 2012, and his mother in 2014. He is survived by Ann Stark (ex-wife) of Plymouth, Massachusetts; daughters Jessica Farquhar and her husband Joe of Brattleboro, Brittney Stark of Braintree, Massachusetts, and Cassandra Stark of Brattleboro; friend/caretaker Andrew Cotel of Brattleboro; grandchildren Elizabeth, Cameron, Malikai, Lillian, and Bryson; siblings Randy, Dawnette, and Christina; nieces and nephews Donny, Danielle, Nicole, Tony, and Michael John. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: A graveside service and celebration of life will be held in the spring. Donations to Windham County Humane Society, P.O. Box 397, Brattleboro, VT 05302. To send condolences, visit [csnh.com](http://csnh.com).

• **Julian "Mickey" Jackson, 86**, of West Chesterfield, New Hampshire. Died at his home on Jan. 14, 2024. Julian was born in Vermont on Feb. 28, 1937. He is survived by his partner, Steven West. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: A committal service will be held in West Chesterfield in the spring.

—REGINA BRETT

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

### PETS AVAILABLE FOR ADOPTION



916 West River Rd,  
Brattleboro, VT  
802-254-2232  
[wchs4pets.org](http://wchs4pets.org)



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



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

Ad graciously sponsored by:

**GUILFORD SOUND**  
guilfordsound.com  
802-254-4511  
[info@guilfordsound.com](mailto:info@guilfordsound.com)



## Regional government

project funding,” said Company. “Those towns that have the capacity to develop the applications and administer the grants are the ones that can proceed. The others struggle.”

The state’s recent flooding has highlighted the extent to which some issues need to be handled on a regional level.

“Instead of hoping that towns get together to do flood resilience projects within a river corridor, let’s just have the state do it,” Company said, noting that towns should also be “at the table” for these planning projects.

“We’re in a new geologic era, and we’re experiencing storms with a frequency and intensity that most humans have never seen,” he said.

Company believes that Vermont must “quit doing flood mitigation on a town-by-town basis.”

“If you’re a downstream town, you’re every bit as dependent on what happens upstream as you are on what happens in your own town,” he said.

“Flood mitigation is a huge thing for a volunteer planning commission to take on when they’re just trying to develop basic land use plans,” Company said. “And now suddenly they’re expected to understand the hydrologic behavior and coefficients of runoff related to land use cover.”

And then, he said, “there’s the political will and capacity to even have those conversations — much less adopt bylaws to regulate them.”

### Selectboards stretched thin

Selectboard members from across Vermont are voicing their support for Company’s ideas.

“Chris simply hit the nail on the head with every issue facing us,” said Rick Cowan, a Selectboard member from Rockingham.

“I think this idea of towns working together instead of being in these little silos, is an idea whose time has come,” he added.

One step in that direction: Rockingham shares a zoning administrator with Weathersfield, a town 20 minutes north in Windsor County.

“With all the expertise required by local government now, hiring people with those skills is super expensive,” Cowan said. “And yet there’s not quite enough work in one small town. So sharing employees is an elegant solution.”

*Towns were set up to deal with snow and mud 150 years ago. We were all isolated, and everybody had to band together in a town to make things work. They didn’t need regional solutions to those issues.*

—ZON EASTES, GUILFORD SELECTBOARD

Aileen Chute, chair of the Putney Selectboard, said that much of the work of the board falls outside of members’ expertise.

“So many things come across the table that it’s probably good that we’re generalists,” Chute said. “But things like the town plan, or putting car chargers in Putney, or updating the zoning laws, or putting in a sidewalk, or any of that stuff is beyond our ken.”

With a small yearly stipend of about \$1,500, Chute joked that she makes 15 cents per hour.

“The work is always in the back of my mind, all the time,” she said.

### Complexities are huge

“I joined the Selectboard hoping that we could take on some of the bigger issues facing the town, like the need for housing,” said Ann Golob, a Selectboard member from Newfane. “But the complexities we’re dealing with are huge.”

Noting that Selectboards are doing much more than deliberation at official meetings, Golob said she can “easily put in 10 to 20 hours a week” on board matters.

“When the state says we need to do x, y, or z, or we need to be looking at issues of flood plains, or thinking about zoning, I wholeheartedly agree. But who the heck do you think is going to do it?” she said.

“I definitely know that we need help. It’s really hard. And it’s only getting more complex and with fewer people available to do it,” Golob said.

Both Golob and Company pointed to the Franklin Regional Council of Governments in Franklin County, Massachusetts, as a model for how to regionalize some town functions.

The mission of the voluntary membership organization, developed in 1997 as the state eliminated the county government structure, is to “leverage resources that promote collaboration and efficiency” among its 26 member municipalities.

Noting the streamlined process of the organization, Company

said that member towns can participate in bulk purchasing of fuel oil, road salt, insurance, or animal control, for example. Membership assessments pay for the administration of projects on behalf of 26 member towns.

### Shared learning would help Selectboards

Zon Eastes, a Selectboard member in Guilford, agrees that working regionally on some issues makes sense.

“Towns were set up to deal with snow and mud 150 years ago,” he said. “We were all isolated, and everybody had to band together in a town to make things work. They didn’t need regional solutions to those issues.”

Eastes sees the need for shared learning among Selectboard members across town lines.

“We’re all wasting so much time learning how to handle certain kinds of issues,” he said. He advocates for legislation that would enable this sharing of information without triggering the state’s open meeting law.

A self-proclaimed “public administration geek,” Company said that laying the responsibility for land use, housing, economic development planning, and infrastructure planning at the “feet of these tiny geographies that are our towns” is inefficient.

In many states, county governments aggregate tax dollars for public investment in critical infrastructure that serves inter-municipal purposes.

“We just don’t have that structure in Vermont,” he said. “I’m not saying that’s good or bad; it is what it is.”

Sponsors of Senate Bill 159, introduced in January, agree that it’s time to take a look at how to strengthen local governance. The bill proposes “to create a study committee to examine how best to strengthen county-level government to enhance and optimize public safety, tax collection, and resource allocation.”

State Sen. Rebecca White, D-Windsor, is a sponsor of the bill and sits on the Senate Committee on Government Operations, which is taking

testimony on the bill. She echoes the theme that Vermont’s structure of local government results in inefficiencies.

Noting that many towns struggled to deal with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) on post-flood recovery efforts, White said that towns are often asked to do the work that a regional body, like a county, might do in another state.

### How to meet 21st century challenges

Much of the testimony on S.159 has been favorable.

“We do see the value in the state evaluating whether we have the right governance structures in place to meet 21st-century challenges,” said Ted Brady, executive director of the Vermont League of Cities and Towns in written testimony on S.159. But he cautioned that the bill “too narrowly calls for evaluation of county government.”

“Local government serves an important purpose — of placing some of the most consequential public policy decisions and everyday impacts of government spending and decision making as close to the voter as possible,” Brady said.

The study should, instead, recommend ways to encourage and stimulate regional collaboration, he said.

Tim Arsenault, Vernon town clerk and co-chair of the Vermont Municipal Clerks and Treasurers’ Association’s Legislative Committee, said that S.159 is “a needed step toward providing additional government efficiency.”

Noting that Vernon’s population has “nearly tripled since 1970,” Arsenault said that any study should address the “basic questions” of the minimum amount of law enforcement that should be provided to towns, how towns share services for hard-to-fill functions like listers, and how any change will affect the sense of community that so many small towns struggle to preserve.

“In light of the changes to a post-COVID-19 Vermont, it’s high time this kind of study is done,” Arsenault said.

## Rally for sex abuse survivors planned for Tuesday, Feb. 13

BRATTLEBORO—Following the Windham Southeast School District (WSESD) decision on Jan. 23 to abruptly close its investigation into reported sexual abuse by staff members dating back decades without disclosing any information, a rally in support of survivors has been planned for Tuesday, Feb. 13.

The We Stand with Survivors rally will be held on Atwood Street (in back of Brattleboro Union High School and in front of and next to Community Bible Chapel) from 5 to 7 p.m., while the WSESD board meeting takes place nearby.

Organizers Mindy Haskins Rogers, whose 2021 essay in

*The Commons* exposed the first abuse allegations, and survivors’ advocate Diana Whitney have organized the rally to show support for survivors of sexual misconduct and abuse in WSESD schools.

“On the evening of the next school board meeting, we will gather in solidarity, hear about resources for healing, speak our own truths, if we feel compelled, and show survivors in our community that they are not alone,” they write in their invitation to survivors to attend.

Organizers urge able-bodied attendees to park and walk to the event to reserve closer parking spots for those who most need them.

## BRATTLEBORO

### Absentee ballots available for March 5 elections

BRATTLEBORO—Absentee ballots for the presidential primary, the town’s Annual Representative Town Meeting, and the Windham Southeast School District school board vote — all to be held on Election Day, Tuesday, March 5 — are now available from the Town Clerk’s office.

Absentee ballots for this election must be requested.

Anyone wishing to vote absentee may apply for an absentee ballot until 5 p.m. on Monday, March 4, although town officials recommend doing so as soon as possible to account for mail delivery time.

All voted absentee ballots must be received before the polls close on March 5 to be counted.

Brattleboro voting will be conducted at American Legion Post 5 at 32 Linden St. Polling hours are 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

In-person early voting has not yet begun. This voting option will be announced once it is available.

For more information or to request an absentee ballot, call the Town Clerk’s office at 802-251-8157 or visit [mvp.vermont.gov](http://mvp.vermont.gov).

Absentee ballots can be mailed to the voter or picked up from

the Town Clerk’s office only by the voter.

Ballots can be delivered outside of a voter’s location by two justices of the peace. Mailing of requested ballots will begin in mid-February.

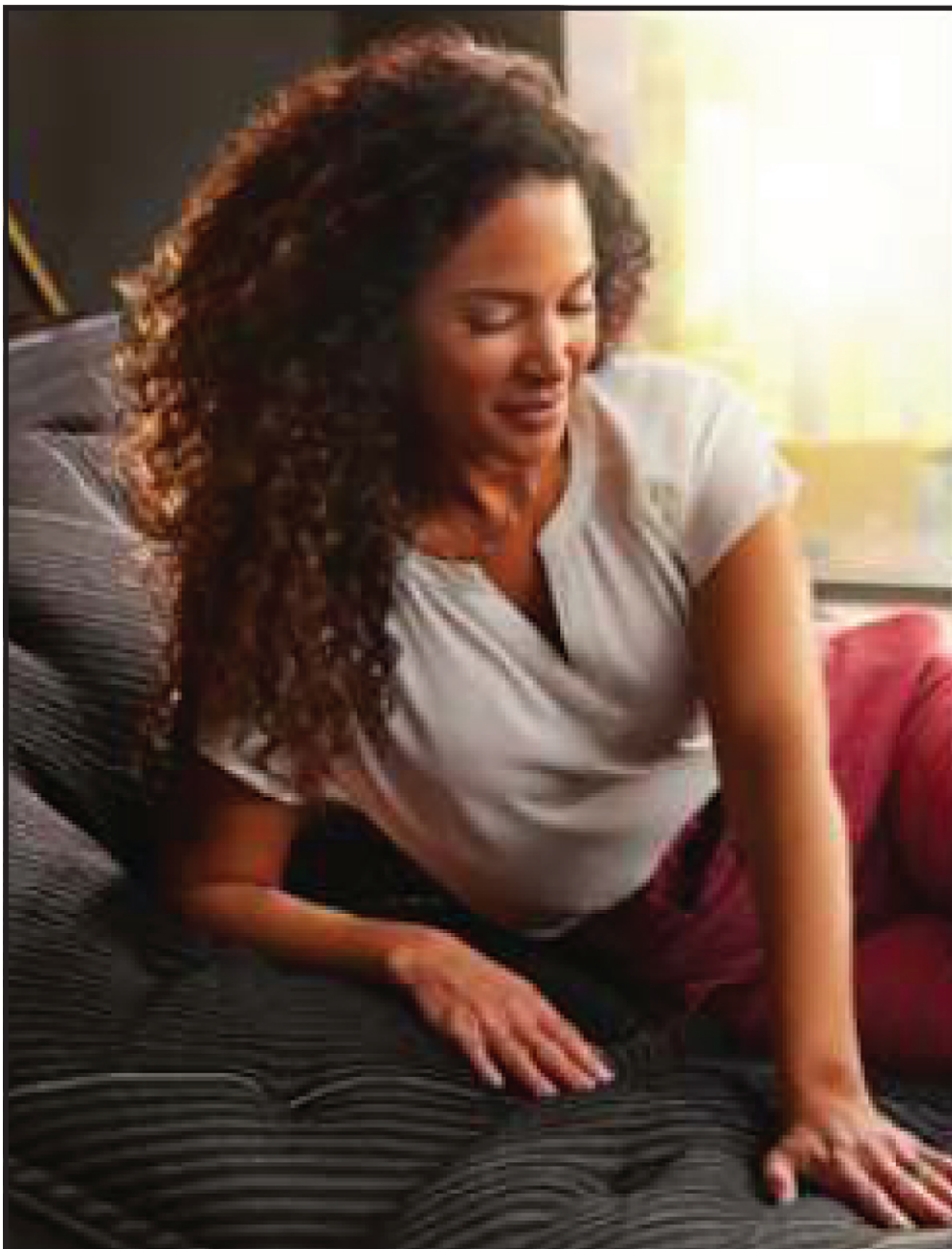
For the presidential primary, a voter is required by state statute to choose one party’s ballot on making the absentee ballot request. The voter will receive only that party’s ballot.

Sample ballots and meeting warnings can be found at [Brattleboro.gov](http://Brattleboro.gov), under “Elections.” Visit the new Voting FAQs page at [brattleboro.gov/voting-faqs](http://brattleboro.gov/voting-faqs).

Vermont offers same-day voter registration. However, to save time on Election Day, voters should register in advance at [olvr.vermont.gov](http://olvr.vermont.gov). Paper applications are available at the Town Clerk’s office.

Voters can also update voter information or request a ballot at [mvp.vermont.gov](http://mvp.vermont.gov).

The Town Clerk’s office hours are 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday. The office will be closed Tuesday, March 5, Election Day, and will reopen on Wednesday, March 6 at noon.



Beautyrest

BLACK<sup>®</sup>  
COLLECTION

★ PRESIDENTS DAY SALE ★

Up to \$1100 off  
select mattress &  
adjustable base sets\*

\*Purchase a Beautyrest Black or Beautyrest Black Hybrid mattress between January 31, 2024 and February 26, 2024 and receive up to \$700 in mattress savings. Plus save up to \$400 on a qualified Beautyrest adjustable foundation. Savings offers on both the mattresses and adjustable foundations will vary by model and size. The maximum \$1100 savings applies to king size eligible mattress and a king size Beautyrest adjustable foundation. See stores for details. These offers may not be applied to previous purchases, cannot be combined with other offers and are available only on qualified purchases made at participating retailers in the 50 United States and District of Columbia while supplies last. Product availability, pricing and offer dates may vary by retail location. Void where prohibited by law. © 2024 Simmons Bedding Company, LLC. All rights reserved.

Frazier & Son  
FURNITURE

Monday-Friday 10-6 • Saturday 10-5  
Sunday Closed

LABOY  
Flexsteel England  
America's Seating Specialist

Serta

VISA MasterCard  
DISCOVER



(800) 494-3876

(603) 352-0337

[frazierandsonfurniture.com](http://frazierandsonfurniture.com)

233 Old Homestead Hwy  
(Rte. 32, just south of airport)

Swansey, NH

# Something Sweet for Valentine's Day!

**Ahhh...YES!**

♥ Celebrate your love with Reiki: ♥  
♥ Gentle healing support. ♥

♥ Gift Certificates & Appointments ♥  
**802-275-7434**  
Rebecca Rueter, M.A.  
Reiki Master since 1988  
reikihealingartsvt.com



436 Western Ave., Brattleboro, Vermont  
(802) 257-9254 • Open 8am-6pm Daily  
www.vermontcountrydeli.com

Fresh Pastries • Salads & Sandwiches  
Vermont Products • Gifts • Gourmet to Go

*Heart Shaped Sweets for your sweetie!*

**We LOVE our Residents & Staff!**  
**Happy Valentine's Day from**



*Do you love working with elders?*

**We would love to work with you!**

We are a Level III Residential Care facility with a home-like atmosphere and great benefits (we are not a nursing home).

**Join our care team and begin your rewarding career in eldercare today!**

We provide a sign-on bonus and paid training in a supportive, caring environment.

To learn more and to apply for a position, please visit our website at [www.gardenpathelderliving.org](http://www.gardenpathelderliving.org).

Send your loved one 5 organic gourmet vanilla beans from the birthplace of the vanilla orchid, Papantla.



A magical, ethereal gift with lovely flavor and aroma for that special person in your life who appreciates the finest ingredients.

**\$25** I will ship anywhere in the U.S. or deliver them locally.

Contact New Forest, LLC. to order:  
Call/Text: 802-275-6885  
Email: [newforestorganics@gmail.com](mailto:newforestorganics@gmail.com)

Show your **LOVE**

for The Commons

by making a donation today to receive mail delivery of the paper!



Scan the QR code, or visit [commonsnews.org](http://commonsnews.org) and click on the donate button.

**My Best Pal Treat Sale**

**ALL TREATS 15% OFF!**



Shop in store or online  
Cotton Mill Hill, Brattleboro  
[buddysapetsstore.com](http://buddysapetsstore.com)

"Where Happy Pets Shop!"

The Commons wants to know  
**What do you think makes the best gift for Valentine's Day?**

Flowers, chocolates, or a dinner out.

Visit [commonsnews.org](http://commonsnews.org) and look for the ad to answer the question for a chance to **WIN A BOX OF TAVERNIER CHOCOLATES!**



Scan the QR code to visit [commonsnews.org](http://commonsnews.org)



**20% Off All Jewelry through February 14!**



**Vermont Artisan DESIGNS**

106 Main St.  
Brattleboro  
802-257-7044

**Keeping your loved ones safe.**



Trust Us With All of your Lock and Security needs.



Richard S. Frost  
802-254-8533  
802-451-6989

Residential - Commercial  
Bonded & Insured

[www.dickslockvt.com](http://www.dickslockvt.com)  
356 S. Main St. Brattleboro, VT 05301



**Vermont's Largest Farm Stand**

Roses are red, violets are blue,  
for him or for her, we've got lots for you!



**Deli • Craft Beer • Bakery  
Flowers • Wine**

♥ **802-722-3395** ♥

[allenbrothersfarms.com](http://allenbrothersfarms.com)

6023 US Route 5, Westminister, VT, Exit 5 off I-91

**Looking for a veterinarian for your goats, cows, or sheep?**



Goats, cows and sheep need regular veterinary visits, whether they are in a herd of 20 or just 2!

GREEN MOUNTAIN



BOVINE CLINIC

**CALL TODAY to schedule your next appointment!**  
**(603) 256-8400**

Find us on Facebook!





COURTESY OF MOSAIC FILMS

Middlebury farmer Doug Butler is the subject of the documentary *Underdog*, a film that comes to Brattleboro on Feb. 28 as part of a nationwide tour.

## A brush with Oscar fame

Green Writers Press, a small publisher based in Brattleboro, finds itself in a scene in 'American Fiction.' Or, at least that was the plan.

By Annie Landenberger  
*The Commons*

BRATTLEBORO—If you're one who likes to be in the know when the Academy Awards roll around, you might be catching *American Fiction*, a complex satire nominated for several Oscars to be awarded March 10.

If you see the film, you can catch a hometown splash: Green Writers Press (GWP) as part of an "authentic set with real publishers from New England," says Dede Cummings, who founded the press nearly 10 years ago.

She recalls that in 2020, she received an email from Jake Swartz, a Boston-based freelance set decoration coordinator working for the design/production company involved in a film project he called simply "untitled fiction." He wasn't at liberty to name the film.

The filmmakers contacted "about a half dozen" publishers for the scene, Cummings says.

Swartz, Cummings explains, "wrote that they wanted to use actual New England publishers to be part of a book festival scene in the film they were set dressing. Rather than use fake books [and publishing houses], they really wanted to honor the publishers that might be [at such an event]."

The production was seeking "15–20 copies each of different books we can use as set decoration for our book fair scene, as well as any merch/banners/decorations we could dress a booth with," Swartz wrote.

"Of course I said, 'OK!'" Cummings recalls.

They "were very interested in [GWP's] mission and our trying to bring more diversity into publishing," she says. "Jake didn't tell me much about it other than that it was a Black cast, Black themes."

Cummings thought then it would be a literary film about Black fiction writers.

"I didn't know it was like a takedown of the publishing industry!" she says, chortling.

She signed with MRC/T-Street Studios, a contract "for various books provided by Green Writers Press [...] to be used as featured set dressing, and/or props in the Picture." The company bought and paid to ship 120 books from GWP's warehouse.

"At the end of the shoot," Cummings adds, "the books were going to be donated to various sites around Boston."

Cummings said that

■ SEE PRESS, B3

# Forces beyond control

A new film, 'Underdog,' follows a farmer from Middlebury in pursuit of a dream — while highlighting the vulnerability of Vermont dairy farms and the stress on the families who run them

By Victoria Chertok  
*The Commons*

BRATTLEBORO—A new documentary film, *Underdog*, comes to the Latchis Theatre in Brattleboro on Wednesday, Feb. 28 to shine a light on one Vermont dairy farmer and his struggle to survive during these challenging times.

As described by the filmmakers, in the film, "a quixotic Vermont dairy farmer risks losing the only home he's ever known to chase his dreams of dog mushing in Alaska. In the era of the pandemic, the resonance of Doug [Butler]'s journey extends to all who have faced down loneliness, isolation, and the struggle to make sense of forces beyond control."

In many ways, the story of Butler, a family farmer in Middlebury, echoes the reality of the dairy industry in Vermont as a whole, and in

Windham County, whose 45 dairy farms counted in 1997 dwindled to 23 by 2017. As of last year, 18 dairy farms remain in business here.

"It's an unfortunate reality that small family dairy farms in Vermont have been becoming less of a viable business for so long, really to no fault of the farmers," filmmaker Tommy Hyde, 31, told *The Commons*.

"There is such a loss of culture, knowledge, and economic activity when family dairies leave our Vermont towns and the industry consolidates on mega-farms in the Midwest and California," he said.

### Film with a cause

During a recent phone call with Hyde, he said that he got his "Vermont fix" early and that he has always been interested in dairy farms in the state since he was a child visiting Ferrisburgh.

■ SEE 'UNDERDOG,' B2

## COLUMN | Deeper Dive

# Sonic sculptor

'Beat scientist' and drummer Makaya McCraven performs at Vermont Jazz Center on Feb. 18

THE VERMONT JAZZ CENTER is excited to present International Anthem recording artist, drummer/producer Makaya McCraven, in a Sunday afternoon concert with bassist Junius Paul, trumpeter Marquis Hill, and perhaps other guests on Feb. 18, at 4 p.m.

McCraven is a sonic sculptor. His huge presence from behind the drum kit drives his band's sound and takes listeners on a journey of unexpected pathways. He uses his ability as a drummer to conjure polyrhythms that are unique, highly accessible, and deeply grooving.

These less-familiar rhythms are the engine that propels his music and adds excitement to his live shows and recordings. They are the cornerstone of his compositions, which also use layering and atypical textural combinations to produce an otherworldly listening experience.



**EUGENE UMAN** is director of the Vermont Jazz Center. The Commons' Deeper Dive column gives artists, arts organizations, and other nonprofits elbow room to write in first person and/or be unabashedly opinionated, passionate, and analytical about their own creative work and events.

McCraven's music can be meditative and trance-inducing, with mantra-like repetitive phrases that morph over time. In live performances, his episodic

■ SEE MCCRAVEN, B4



Makaya McCraven

Publication of this week's Calendar is underwritten by BERKLEY & VELLER GREENWOOD COUNTRY REALTORS • [www.berkleyveller.com](http://www.berkleyveller.com)



Buyer demand is still soaring!

Get in touch today for tips on getting your home ready for the market.

Let Us Help You Reach Your Real Estate Dreams!



Brattleboro: 802-254-6400 • Dover: 802-464-8900 • [www.berkleyveller.com](http://www.berkleyveller.com)

## 'Underdog'

"I grew up in the suburbs of New York and would spend the summer in Vermont with my grandma, who lived down the road from a dairy farm," he said, adding that he "was always fascinated by the place."

"Addison County Field Days might as well have been on a different planet," he continued, saying that "over the years Vermont came to feel like home to me."

Hyde graduated in 2015 from Middlebury College, where he studied architecture. He also worked at Basin Harbor, a resort and hotel on Lake Champlain, for many years, and he attended and later worked at Camp Keewaydin on Lake Dunmore in Salisbury.

At Middlebury, "I had an amazing teacher named Pete Lourie, freshman year, who taught this class 'Adventure Writing and Digital Storytelling,'" Hyde said. "It was great, because it popped the college bubble and encouraged kids to get out in the community."

The professor told him about a dairy farmer who had a few sled dogs.

Hyde and his "project buddy," Tito Heiderer, who would become the composer of *Underdog*, went to visit Doug Butler at his farm, Cobble Hill Dairy, on the outskirts of town.

"Doug, without hesitating, gave us a tour of the entire farm, and he also got us working and covered in cow manure in about two hours," said Hyde with a laugh.

Butler "thought he scared us off, and then next day we showed up in 'farmer jumpsuits.' I found out later that they were called 'coveralls,'" Hyde continued.

"The class ended, but Doug and I stayed friends," he said. "And I had just had a camera

there from day one."

Over the course of the next nine years, a unique relationship developed and a filming style emerged which Hyde calls "fly-on-the-wall, or cinema vérité."

"At times I'd blur into the background, in others I would drop the camera to pitch in on the farm," Hyde said. "Along the way, Doug would confide in me things he hadn't shared to anyone but his dogs."

As described in the film's publicity, Butler was "keenly aware of the fate of the other family farms that used to dot the landscape."

"Doug has managed for years to play one creditor off against the next to survive another season," the description continues. "But with the accumulated debt now insurmountable and Doug's thoughts plunging into depression and suicide, his dogs offer solace."

What happened during Hyde's filming came as a surprise to all parties involved.

"Doug and I went to Alaska!" Hyde said, describing the trip — Butler's longtime dream — as "quite the experience, quite the roller coaster."

Hyde had kept filming Butler "sporadically over the course of many years. "Rather slowly, I learned how to capture what I was seeing, and I learned about his dream of going to race in Alaska," he said.

Along the way, the filmmaker learned that Berman "hadn't left the farm for more than five days in his entire life!"

"It just struck me for someone who gets so excited about small things," Hyde said. "For someone who spreads so much joy in their everyday life, what would it look like if his biggest dream came true? That was the seed for

FROM SECTION FRONT

the whole project."

Hyde reached out to a local nonprofit, the Town Hall Theater in Middlebury, which believed in his project and helped him and the local community raise over \$10,000 to send Butler to Alaska.

"I started following Doug to dog races, and because Doug's schedule was so crazy on the farm I decided to just visit every Tuesday. I would just go down with a camera. Most of what you see in the film just happened on Tuesdays. I got better at filming and started to blend into the wallpaper," Hyde recalled.

The duo drove from Middlebury to Fairbanks in a truck that already had 350,000 miles on it, with 22 dogs and "a total hodgepodge" of borrowed and rented filmmaking gear that Hyde accumulated as he "pieced together gas money for the project."

"We only broke down three times, and it took us 10 days," Hyde said, reporting that they "hit some serious blizzards in the Dakotas but otherwise the weather cooperated."

"When you take a long drive you can get deep with people in different ways," he said. "I kept the camera trained on Doug, and we just chatted for much of the trip."

Hyde credited Aaron Wolf as "a key collaborator" who served as a fellow writer and producer on the project, "as well as a mentor for a young filmmaker like myself."

"With his expertise and the backing of his production company Mosaic Films, we were able to transform hundreds of raw hours of footage into the feature film audiences are resonating with today," Hyde said.

## Canal Street Art Gallery announces open call for entries for Spring Salon

BELLOWS FALLS—The Canal Street Art Gallery's Spring Salon is open to all artists of all levels to submit original artwork for exhibition. This is the third edition of the Spring Salon; the show will open Saturday, March 17, and run through Saturday, June 1.

Image submissions for the Spring Salon are due Monday, Feb. 26, and artwork delivery is on Wednesday, March 6. Artists may submit one to three artworks. Submission is free. The exhibition fee is a sliding scale: \$12 for one artwork, \$24 for two artworks, \$36 for three artworks. To submit, visit [canalstreetartgallery.com/call-for-entry-spring-salon.html](http://canalstreetartgallery.com/call-for-entry-spring-salon.html).

The art show is inclusive of all art, and the opportunity to exhibit is open to the public. The Spring Salon celebrates the abundance and diversity of art created by artists everyday. Artists of all career levels, experience, and training exhibit their artwork.

The Salon, which was popular in the 19th century, offers the public a unique chance to view art from many more talented local and regional artists than a typical modern group show. At their start, one of the goals of the original Royal Academy Salons was to provide venues where artists, including emerging artists, could show their work and garner patronage.

The historic way of installation is to hang pieces closely together on the wall, with sizes and artists interspersed throughout the exhibit. Before the contemporary gallery and art fair, it was also common in Europe and America to hang both museum and private collections in the floor-to-ceiling manner.

Canal Street Art Gallery is located at 23 Canal St. in Bellows Falls, and is open Tuesday to Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. For more information, go to [canalstreetartgallery.com](http://canalstreetartgallery.com) online, call Mike Noyes by phone at 802-289-0104, or email [artinfo@canalstreetartgallery.com](mailto:artinfo@canalstreetartgallery.com).

## There for the asking

The sort of emotional turmoil captured in *Underdog* is not surprising to members of Farm First, an organization whose peer-to-peer program can give a farmer support from someone who has been there and who understands.

The filmmakers point out a stark statistic: Suicides among farmers are 1.5 times higher than the national average.

"Farming is constantly in a state of change, something we farmers are more than used to. Nowadays, these changes seem to be coming in a swifter more complicated manner. Simply put, it can be downright overwhelming," said Alicia Jenks, owner of Green Dragon Farm in Weathersfield, Vermont, who is part of the peer network.

For more than a decade, Farm First has been helping Vermont farmers — from dairy farmers to fruit and veggie growers to farms that are diversifying and everything in between.

"For me, being a farmer peer is being available as a friend, a listening ear, a resource person, there for the asking if the need arises," Jenks said.

"I have lived and worked on a farm for four years," she said. "These issues, as they have been recurring over years, if not decades, has taken an emotional toll on our farm families; this stress and burden has caused some families to give up farming as a life choice," said Leanne Porter, manager at Farm First.

"What was a family tradition has become a family liability," Porter added.

"The more we help farmers lower their stress and pay attention to their own well-being, the safer our farms will be," she said. "It is an isolating profession with long hours and so much unpredictability."

When asked what needs to happen to help Vermont Dairy farmers, Hyde was quick to reply. "Connecting farmers with other farmers is key," he said. "Because sometimes it takes a farmer to understand the difficulties of another farmer — the peer to peer network [of Farm First] is doing incredible work, trying to expand it in the Northeast."

He also points out the "big farm bill coming up in Washington," legislation that customarily reauthorizes spending on federal farm subsidies and programs to support agriculture in the United States. The current farm bill was passed in 2018 and extended last year. Funding expires in September.

"I think the hope is nationally that there can be progress and funding on resources like this," Hyde said.

In the meantime, the film is putting farmers and their financial and emotional well-being in the spotlight.

"We hope farmers will continue to realize that reaching out for help is good for their farms, their families, and their communities," Porter said.

She suggests that farmers visit [farmfirst.org](http://farmfirst.org) to connect to all of Farm First's resources, which, in addition to the peer support network, offers free short-term solution-based counseling for farmers and their families.

Farmers can also call 802-318-5538 to reach the Farm First resource coordinator or leave a message. They can call 877-493-6216 to speak with someone immediately around the clock.

"During the pandemic, the challenges Doug faces in the film — isolation, loneliness and the forces beyond his control — are all relevant to us after that experience. There is this universal truth that Doug is tapping into!" Hyde said.

"That we are hoping to get in front of as many people as possible. It is striking a chord which is so exciting [as we] try to harness that momentum," he continued.

Scene, the tour of the 23 free screenings across the country. Vermont Public is helping to organize the five-town tour of this free film screening in

## Rock River Players present 'Looking for Love: A Valentine's Cabaret'

WILLIAMSVILLE—The Rock River Players (RRP) present "Looking for Love, a Valentine's Cabaret," Friday and Saturday, Feb. 9 and 10, at 7 p.m. and Sunday, Feb. 11, at 3 p.m. at the Williamsville Hall, 35 Dover Rd.

In a news release, producer Annie Landenberger says "the cabaret, with deep roots in France and Germany in the early 20th century, has long been a trend-setting form of entertainment, featuring a variety of performance styles for an audience that's typically enjoying from small café tables, which we'll have. Moreover, cabarets are typically adult-focused with a heavy dose of subversion."

Landenberger adds: "Cabaret has been the hotbed of creative energy for decades. In its earliest form, it gave us out-of-the-box perspective and material. With a collection of scenes, songs, satire, and surprises — and in keeping with the essence of the cabaret — the RRP evening promises

laughs, love, and epiphanies."

This year's Players' cabaret features Rock River Players Tino Benson, Gigi Birri, Peter Broussard, Rick Contino and Laura Elisabeth, Walter Cramer, Cathie Creed, Alan Darling, Ramsey Demeter, Shafiyah Finger, Sue Kelly, Randy Lichtenwalner, Stewart McDermet, John Moran, John Ogorzalek, and T. Breeze Verdant in a range of comedy from original standup to Monty Python skits, and music from composers Tom Lehrer to Lerner and Loewe. Dan DeWalt will be the accompanist.

Admission is \$12 per person and includes sweet and savory treats. Cabaret goers are asked to bring their own beverages. For reservations, visit [rockriverplayers.org](http://rockriverplayers.org) and for more information write [verbatimvt@gmail.com](mailto:verbatimvt@gmail.com).

■ Annie Landenberger, referenced in this report, is a regular freelance contributor to *The Commons*.

the state, where it will also play in Greensboro, Montpelier, Middlebury, and Burlington.

In Brattleboro, Hyde and Jenks will speak after the film in a discussion moderated by Vermont Public's southern Vermont reporter, Howard Weiss-Tisman.

"One of our missions is to amplify other storytellers in our community," says Amy Zielski, senior event producer at Vermont Public, who called *Underdog* "beautifully crafted."

## 'Drink more milk'

One longtime Windham County resident with experience with the state's farming challenges is former Gov. Peter Shumlin (D-Vt.), who observed in an email to *The Commons* that, "as you know, dairy farmers in Windham County are few and far between."

"We have far fewer farmers farming more and more acreage," continued Shumlin, a longtime Putney resident who now lives in Westminster West. "In other words, the same land that was farmed by several dozen farmers when I was a kid is now farmed by the Goodells, with large equipment — an industrial farm model, where the cattle never graze."

Shumlin pointed out that "it's not that the farmland is not being used. It is. Arguably, it's more valuable than ever. But you need hundreds and hundreds of milk-cows to survive."

The Goodell family owns and operates Westminster Farms on Route 5, the biggest dairy farm in Windham County. It does have hundreds and hundreds of cows — 1,400 Holstein cattle.

Shawn Goodell, 48, told *The Commons* by phone that his father, Clayton, bought the farm in 1978. Today, its 20 employees farm 1,500 to 1,600 acres of land in Windham County.

Other family members working on the farm include Clayton, Shawn's father; Jason, Shawn's brother; and Jill, Shawn's aunt.

The Holstein herd is "all for dairy, except for 50 Angus Holstein cross," he said, noting that the small beef cattle operation "helps us pay some of the bills."

"We have genomic testing here that tells us which cows are good, and we use those scores to grade them before they are even born," Goodell said. "So with that in mind, we will breed that mother to a beef sire Angus. It's another avenue for income."

Goodell explained that diversification on a dairy farm is very important today.

"We have a methane digester now," he said. "It's a big power plant that can power 400 houses. It converts the gases in the manure to electricity, and we're selling power to the power company. We also sell a lot of compost to local gardeners for fertilizer."

## GAME DAY DEALS

CHIPS! AVOCADOS! WINGS! SALSA! CHEESE!

*Fresh*  
from the  
Meat Dept!

And many more items throughout the store!

### BRATTLEBORO FOOD CO-OP

Mon-Sat 8-8, Sun 9-8 • 2 Main Street, Brattleboro  
EVERYONE IS WELCOME! BFC.coop • 802-257-0236

## 1922 1923 1924 1925 1926 1927 1928 1929 1930 1931 1932 1933 1934 1935 1936 1937 1938 1939 1940 1941 1942 1943 1944 1945 1946 1947 1948 1949 1950 1951 1952 1953 1954 1955 1956 1957 1958 1959 1960 1961 1962 1963 1964 1965 1966 1967 1968 1969 1970 1971 1972 1973 1974 1975 1976 1977 1978 1979 1980 1981 1982 1983 1984 1985 1986 1987 1988 1989 1990 1991 1992 1993 1994 1995 1996 1997 1998 1999 2000 2001 2002 2003 2004 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009 2010 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017 2018 2019 2020 2021 2022 2022 2022 2022 2022 2022 2022 2022 2022 2022 2022 2022 2022 2022 2022 2022 2022 2022 2022 2022 2022 2022 2022 2022 2022 2022 2022

# HARRIS HILL SKI JUMP

Presented by PEPSI Brattleboro, VT

## 102 years & counting!

### Feb. 17-18, 2024

### Brattleboro, Vermont

**Saturday**  
- Pepsi Challenge  
- U.S. Cup

**10:00 am**  
Gates open

**11:15 am**  
Opening ceremonies

**12:00 pm**  
Competition begins

**Sunday**  
Fred Harris Memorial Tournament

**10:00 am**  
Gates open

**11:45 am**  
Opening ceremonies

**12:30 pm**  
Competition begins

**Tickets**  
Adults, \$25  
Youth, 6-12, \$15  
Under 6 Free

Exit 2 off I-91  
Follow signs to Cedar Street

To purchase tickets:  
[HarrisHillSkiJump.com/tickets](http://HarrisHillSkiJump.com/tickets)

[HarrisHillSkiJump.com](http://HarrisHillSkiJump.com)



**Press**

"Jake and his team were so fun to work with," noting that their art director/designer even asked to create a GWP banner with a logo that would work better in the film.

"I liked it a lot," she said. Cummings was thrilled to hear in the first follow-up talk with Swartz that among the film's stars are two of her favorites, Jeffrey Wright and Tracee Ellis Ross.

It was important to her that a piece of Green Writers Press end up in each of their hands; thus, Swartz said he would contact the producers to make sure that could happen.

From among GWP titles by prominent Black authors, Cummings chose *Chicago Heat and Other Stories*, by Clarence Major, for Wright.

For Ross — who uses the surname of her mother, Diana Ross, as her stage name — Cummings chose *Dancing With Langston*, by Sharyn Skeeter.

*American Fiction* is a film adaptation of Percival L. Everett's *Erasure: A Novel* (Hyperion, 2002). It described on [imdb.com](http://imdb.com) thusly: "A novelist who's fed up with the establishment profiting from 'Black' entertainment uses a pen name to write a book that propels him into the heart of hypocrisy and the madness he claims to disdain."

Centered on the production of a fabricated memoir of faux suffering, the film is clever in manifesting a funhouse mirror into which privileged whites often seem to look to find comfort with their own views of BiPoC friends and adversaries.

After all that, the book fair scene isn't in the film. Was it ever shot? Is it languishing on a cutting room floor somewhere?

Swartz doesn't know. "Once our work's done," he says, "we don't know what happens next."

"Some of our books were used as props, though," Cummings adds. "I did spot Clarence Major's book on a bookshelf in

the girlfriend's house!"

**A decade of growth**

"When we first started, my focus was on Vermont writers," Cummings recalls. "Initially, it was more of a side project."

Robin MacArthur, who signed on to help Cummings as a freelance editor, brought along *Contemporary Vermont Fiction*, which Cummings describes as the press' "step toward creating a Vermont ethos."

Cummings says she was aided enthusiastically by Howard Frank Mosher, a prolific and acclaimed author of 13 books of fiction and nonfiction set in the Northeast Kingdom, who was "a guiding light for my press."

In the early days of the press, Mosher, who died in 2017, took Cummings around to all the southern Vermont bookstores. "In one day, we visited them all," she says.

"He drove in his beat up old Dart and he told stories the whole way," Cummings says. "A character!"

"And then we'd go to the bookshop, and he'd say 'Dede's a new publisher: We need to support her, because we don't want books to just come from Amazon or the big four or five publishers in New York,'" says Cummings, calling Mosher "such a champion of the press."

"He kind of launched it," she says.

Green Writers Press is certainly not a side project now. It became national when she signed Dr. M Jackson — "a geographer, glaciologist, and science communicator exploring the intersections of societal transformation, glaciology, and climate change," according to the author's website ([drmjackson.com](http://drmjackson.com)) — as a science writer with her title *The Secret Lives of Glaciers* in 2019.

A poet, nonfiction writer, book designer, and public radio commentator as well as a publisher, Cummings grew up on the East Side of Providence, Rhode Island, where her father was a stockbroker in a long family lineage of men who went to Brown University and then Harvard Business School.

Graduating from The Wheeler School, Cummings was happy to break loose from Providence, she says, to study at Middlebury College, where she became smitten with Vermont.

An English major there, Cummings wended her way into the publishing world, learning

FROM SECTION FRONT

letterpress printing; honing her poet's craft, and garnering accolades such as the New England Book Award; earning coveted spots at the Bennington Writers' Workshops and Bread Loaf Writers' Conference.

As an intern, apprentice, and ultimately as a freelance designer, Cummings has been associated with a number of highly regarded publishing houses, among them David R. Godine, Little, Brown and Company, Shambhala Publications, and Chelsea Green Publishing, where she designed the first edition of Eliot Coleman's *The New Organic Grower*.

As a designer, she's worked with a number of authors, rising and canonized, among them Nobel laureate Vicente Aleixandre, novelist Thomas Pynchon, and poet Mary Oliver, who, Cummings recalls, "liked that I was a poet. That I understood her lineation and her indents."

In contrast with the hefty publisher portrayed as handling the protagonist's new book in *American Fiction*, Cummings is in the world of small presses, which, she notes, are winning ample awards these days.

She talks of the benefits of the small press, noting, for example how "books come into what they call the 'slush pile' — you never know what's in there. The bigger publishers aren't quite as nimble because of overhead, cost, projections — how many books are we going to sell [...]?"

"A small press, though, has a lot of flexibility, and we can take chances," she says.

And the Green Writers Press team can even find a gem in a slush pile.

Howard Frank Mosher was right, Cummings adds, when he said that the small press is "critically important in the struggle to keep good ideas and important literature alive and well."

That, quote, she says, "has been my mantra." She's published it on the GWP website.

"There're a lot of writers in Vermont and a lot of readers in Vermont so we can fill a niche. We've grown; we're more international now, so that's been kind of a surprise," she says.

Emerging from the pandemic, Cummings recalls, "I thought I would go under." GWP is alive and well. Sales — 54% of which are to brick-and-mortar [not online] outlets — were up 25% last year, she says, beaming.

**Juno Orchestra presents 'Challenge' on Feb. 11 at BMC**

BRATTLEBORO—The Brattleboro Music Center's Juno Orchestra, the region's "home team" chamber orchestra, presents "Challenge" on Sunday, Feb. 11.

The concert is scheduled for 2:30 p.m. at the BMC.

Under the direction of Zon Eastes, the Juno Orchestra will perform George Frideric Handel's Concerto Grosso in B flat major, Op. 6, No. 7; Paul Hindemith's Five Pieces, Op. 44, No. 4; Erik Nielsen's Movement III from *Glimpses of Azure*; Jean Perrault's *Exodus*; and George Templeton Strong's *Chorale on a Theme of Leo Hassler*.

Also featured will be the premiere of Robert Merfeld's *Bridget Anne Hart: An Irish Legacy*. The piece was inspired by memories of departing the Irish homeland and settling in a new land, namely Vermont. The piece is set for narrator, winds, and strings, and "presents several tunes any audience member will recognize," Eastes explained in a news release.

*Exodus* is a one-movement work, expanding in size from a string quartet written in 2021. The piece is dedicated to anyone forced from their homeland. "Unusual and appealing," this piece seemed a perfect emotional fit with Merfeld's, Eastes said.

While the theme of Challenge initially focused on asking composers to create new pieces for the concert, an alternate take on the idea of challenge began to emerge. "In these unsettling times, in our own country and abroad, the challenge of displacement, departure, and resettlement strikes a deep chord."

A third piece on the program that complements the theme is Strong's *Chorale*. This eight-minute chorale is a study on a tune by Leo Hassler from 1601 that audiences will recognize as *O Sacred Head Now Wounded*, used by Johann Sebastian Bach in his two *Passions* as well as in several cantatas.

"While the pieces on the remainder of the program may not speak to 'challenge' as directly as the first three, separately and together, they offer explorations of question, complexity, and hope."

Tickets are \$20 for advance general admission, \$25 at the door, \$10 for youth admission and free for those 12 and under, available at [bmcvt.org](http://bmcvt.org) or by calling 802-257-4523. A limited number of reduced-price tickets are also available; call the BMC or email [info@bmcvt.org](mailto:info@bmcvt.org) for more information.

**Next Stage presents Genticorum, with special guests Seamus Egan and Lyssa Schneckenburger, on Feb. 10**

PUTNEY—Next Stage Arts Project and Twilight Music present traditional folk and Celtic music trio Genticorum, with special guests Seamus Egan and Lyssa Schneckenburger, at Next Stage 15 Kimball Hill, Saturday, Feb. 10, at 7:30 p.m.

Genticorum features intricate fiddle, flute, and accordion lines, vocal harmonies, guitar textures, and foot percussion.

The trio's founding members Pascal Gemme and Yann Falquet are both recognized as major contributors to the traditional music scene in Quebec and, since 2015, they have been joined by multi-instrumentalist and composer Nicholas Williams.

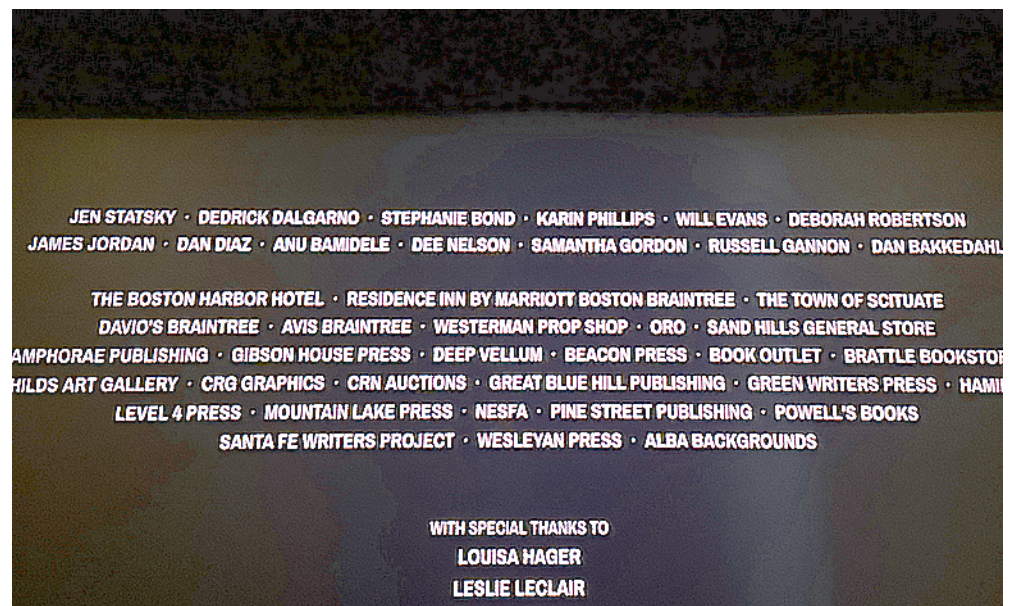
They are known for their "unbridled energy, musicianship, and magnetic stage presence," state organizers in a news release. "The infectious joie de vivre that these three musicians bring to the stage, playing and creating together, is palpable."

Over the past 22 years,

Genticorum has showcased the poetry and nuance of French Canada's old songs and step-dance tunes." Pascal, Yann, and Nicholas have won multiple Canadian Folk Music Awards and received Juno and ADISQ nominations.

Genticorum has carved a place for itself on the international music scene, performing on stages worldwide, from Celtic Connections in Scotland, the Tønder Folk Festival in Denmark; the National Folk Festival in Australia; the Independent Music Festival in Alexandria, Egypt; and the Rain Forest Festival in Malaysia to countless venues across North America.

Tickets are \$20 in advance, \$25 at the door, and \$10 for access to the concert livestream. Advance tickets are available at [nextstagearts.org](http://nextstagearts.org). Next Stage will provide a beer, wine, and cocktail cash bar. For information, call 802-387-0102.



Stay until the end to see Green Writers Press in the credits for *American Fiction*.

The press is engaged in collaborations with individuals as well as with several nonprofits, including colleges and universities. While GWP maintains its focus on social justice, women's issues, environmental issues, and diversity, the press has established an "umbrella imprint" — Green Place Books, which Cummings describes as "a hybrid, author-funded press that allows us to publish books on [...] education, spirituality, caring for elders, childhood education, and memoir."

According to the press's website, in this publishing model, "the author or organization pays for editorial work (editing, copyediting, and proofreading), design of the cover and interior, pagination of the book, and printing." Green Writers Press, the site says, is "selective in this process,

and the books are submissions we would acquire if we had a large budget and a full-time staff." The press brings to the partnership a "very grassroots and effective" publicity and marketing materials that includes press releases, book launch support and book festival participation. Cummings expresses optimism for her healthy, dedicated, highly-regarded 10-year-old press. "The future is bright," she says.

**Art Classes + Workshops**

**Gift Certificates** Adult + Children + Teen Studio, Printmaking, Painting, Art Camp and more!

RIVER GALLERY SCHOOL OF ART

[rivergallerieschool.org](http://rivergallerieschool.org) Register online or call 802-257-1577

**Stage 33 Live hosts The Becker Sisters on Feb. 18**

BELLOWS FALLS—The Becker Sisters are soprano Alyssa Becker and pianist/composer Kirsten Becker. Their debut album, *Love and Thought* (2022), fuses neoclassical, contemporary art song, folk, opera, and jazz, featuring Alyssa's soprano and Kirsten's piano accompaniment.

They will perform at Stage 33 Live, 33 Bridge St., on Sunday, Feb. 18, in a 3 p.m. matinee.

Stage 33 Live is a casual and intimate industrial-rustic listening room in a former factory hosting local, regional, and national performances and presentations of original material.

Tickets are \$5 in advance or \$10 at the door; all proceeds go to the artists. Limited seating; the event will be recorded and filmed. More information about this and other upcoming events, as well as advance tickets, can be found at [stage33live.com](http://stage33live.com).

*The Oyster Bar*

OYSTERS - CLAMS - SHRIMP - FISH  
COCKTAILS - WINE - BEER

OPEN WEDNESDAY - SUNDAY • 3PM - 10PM

34 ELLIOT ST. BRATTLEBORO, VT 05301  
802-257-3333

**Primary Care with Compassion & Convenience**

**New Patients Welcome**  
On-site Lab, X-ray, CT scanner, & Pharmacy

**Grace Cottage**  
FAMILY HEALTH & HOSPITAL

185 Grafton Rd, Townshend, VT  
[gracecottage.org](http://gracecottage.org) • 802-365-4331

**LATCHIS PUB**

UNDERGROUND LOUNGE

**Dine In Live Music**

Online Ordering for Take Out / Delivery.  
Free delivery in downtown area!

[latchispub.com](http://latchispub.com)

**EVERYONE'S BOOKS**  
for social justice & the earth

Working for a better world since 1984

**We are OPEN!**  
9:30-5:30 Mon.-Sat.; 11-5 Sun.

25 ELLIOT STREET  
BRATTLEBORO, VT  
802.254.8160

ORDER BOOKS ONLINE OR BY EMAIL  
[WWW.EVERYONESBKS.COM](http://WWW.EVERYONESBKS.COM)  
INFO@EVERYONESBKS.COM

Free Estimates  
Free Deliveries

**WW Building Supply**  
*True Value*

Open M-F 7am-5pm  
Saturday 8am-4pm

For all your building projects, since 1969.  
*Quality products, real solutions, and the best customer service!*

802-365-4333 HARDWARE, LUMBER, SHOWROOM 551 Rt. 30 • Newfane, VT  
802-464-0394 DESIGN CENTER 444 Rt. 100 • Wilmington, VT  
802-464-3022 HARDWARE, LUMBERYARD 434 Rt. 100 • Wilmington, VT

**wwwbuilding.com**

Benjamin Moore Trakita MARVIN Schrock Doorn

# Write Action seeks submissions for Poems Around Town 2024

BRATTLEBORO—Poems Around Town, an event held in celebration of National Poetry Month, returns for a fourth year. It is co-sponsored and organized by Write Action, Time to Write, the Brattleboro Literary Festival, and Brooks Memorial Library.

Vermont poets and those within a 50-mile radius in the southeast tri-state region are invited to submit poems to Write Action for Poems Around Town. Chosen poems will appear in downtown Brattleboro shop windows during April, National Poetry Month.

Submitted poems should be recent — written within the past year. In general, organizers say, they prefer that poems have not been previously published; however, they will accept submissions that have appeared in *The Commons*' "Poets Respond" or the Write Action newsletter. Poems must fit on a single page and use a minimum of 14-point type in a font that is easy to read, such as Times New Roman. Also for ease of reading by the public, 1.5 or double-spaced formatting is requested. The poet's name and hometown should appear at

the bottom of the poem. Students should please include the name of their school beneath their name. Poems will be chosen based on quality as judged by the organizers' submission readers and the number of venues available for display.

Interested writers may submit poems via email to [info@writeaction.org](mailto:info@writeaction.org) by Friday, March 1. Poem titles and contact information should be included in the

body of the email, with "PAT" in the subject line. No more than two poems may be submitted per writer, one poem per page, attached to the email. The titles of the poems must also be included in the names of the attached files.

Write Action is planning a reading with Poems Around Town participating poets toward the end of April.

## Guilford Center Stage hosts open auditions for 'Love Lost Diaries'

GUILFORD—Open Auditions for the upcoming Guilford Center Stage play, *Love Lost Diaries*, will take place in two sessions: Saturday, Feb. 10, from 1 to 4 p.m. and Monday, Feb. 12, from 5 to 8 p.m. upstairs at the Broad Brook Community Center in Guilford. The facility is fully accessible, with an elevator to the theater space upstairs.

*Love Lost Diaries* is the work of Hardwick playwright Marc Considine. It will be directed by Julie Holland, of Guilford, with performances in early May.

Considine teaches at Hazen Union High School in Hardwick and coaches the school's Drama Club, a very ambitious program. He wrote this play for his students, and they performed it at a regional drama festival in 2012.

*Love Lost Diaries* is Guilford Center Stage's 12th production. Director Holland has appeared as an actor in nine of the previous shows and stage-managed

another. She describes this play, whose main characters are three high school students, as "a bitter-sweet story of a lifelong marriage that could have been so much more loving than it was, if only the couple had communicated their feelings to each other."

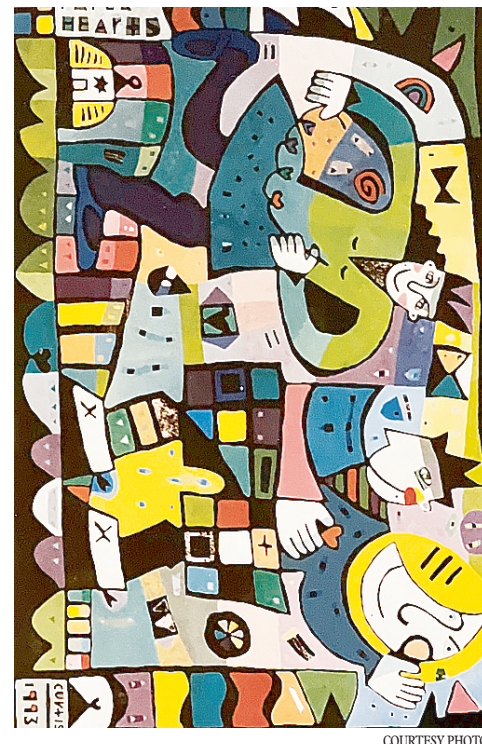
Holland said this production calls for "actors who can pass for young and then transform into old. Also a possibility is casting a mother/daughter or granddaughter duo and a father/son or grandson duo, so bring the whole family." Three male roles are available, age range from 20 to 60+; three teenage female roles, age range from 14 to 25; and two additional female roles, age range 25 to 60+.

Those who may be interested in working on the production in capacities other than acting may also attend auditions or be in touch.

Scripts will be provided for the audition, but those trying out should feel free and welcome to prepare a one-minute monologue to show off their acting skills. Those who can't make either of the audition times, or would like more info should contact Holland at [JHollandPTA@live.com](mailto:JHollandPTA@live.com).

Once chosen, the cast will meet in early March, with rehearsals beginning the third week of the month through the show dates: Friday and Saturday, May 3 and 4, at 7:30 p.m., and Sunday, May 5, at 2 p.m. The 2024 season will conclude with another work by a Vermont playwright in late October.

Broad Brook Community Center, the former Grange hall, is at 3940 Guilford Center Rd., four miles west of the Guilford Country Store. Find out more at [facebook.com/GuilfordCenterStage](https://www.facebook.com/GuilfordCenterStage).



"All Hearts" by Kay Curtis. COURTESY PHOTO

## 'All Hearts' group show opens at Harmony Collective

BRATTLEBORO—What is love? The Harmony Collective Artists Gallery's February Group Show "All Hearts" explores the many facets and meaning of love through the works of 13 artists.

Some, such as Kay Curtis, often use hearts as a theme. She explained in a news release that, in her work, a heart "does not always signify a love between individuals. It is just as likely to represent a love of the planet, or all people or of the work we choose. Exploring what a person loves is the first step in understanding (one) another. I love exploring life through whimsical characters and paint, the brighter the better."

Others, like Kate Greenough, do not often involve heart symbols in their art, so they have explored the shape and concept for this show. She explains that she spent the month of January incorporating hearts into her daily art practice, "playing with their overt sweetness, and their ubiquity as a shorthand for 'love' and 'caring.' The shape has a compelling sensuality and is simply fun to draw," she says, "whether as a sincere or an ironic shorthand for one of our deepest emotions."

Julia Sorensen also explored hearts for the first time for this show. "I have tried to imbue honesty into my work, 'Love Shines Through.' Valentine's Day is generally about celebrating romantic love, but love can be about strength, tenderness, pain, grief,

and loss, as well as euphoria." Her heart series attempts to represent romantic love, she says, "while also reflecting the depth of what love can mean."

Ruby Rice approached the concept of love differently. "The question I try to remember to ask myself in any situation I may be struggling with is, 'What Would Love Do?' Employing the quote from Maureen Kennedy's *The Path of Remembering* is a practice for Rice that she says guides her focus. It's a reminder to continuously come from a place of love.

Rice describes the healing process she was in while creating her fiber piece, as including grieving, weeping, laughing, and "remembering a precious marriage lost to the opiate epidemic."

A conversation hearts photo booth installation by Rose Watson will also be part of the exhibit. While conversation hearts — the heart-shaped candies that are a Valentine's Day staple — are typically a half an inch in size, Watson's conversation hearts are oversized at nearly a foot and a half wide. She says her favorite creations take the form of bigger-than-life-art installations. "This one is bound to elicit happiness," she says, and includes a "Marry Me" conversation heart.

The All Heart show opens Thursday, Feb. 8, from 6 to 8:30 p.m. and will be up for the month of February. Learn more at [harmonyartsbrattleboro.com](https://www.harmonyartsbrattleboro.com).



## ■ McCraven

FROM SECTION FRONT

compositions often begin with virtuosic rhythmical grooves, onto which horns and guitars introduce long tones and repetitive phrases that lock in polyrhythmically.

His studio recordings are quite different. As a producer he utilizes his tandem skills as a multi-instrumentalist and recording engineer to fine-tune his musical offerings. He embraces and creatively incorporates the languages of electronica, hip hop, spoken word, folk music, and jazz, irrespective of the composition's stylistic character.

These recordings are meticulous collages of samples, mostly of himself and his band playing their own instruments. He selects snippets of the group's most powerful grooves and combines sections into seamless tapestries.

Sometimes McCraven fuses his samples with those of classic recordings. Two of his most recent albums are reinventions of classics.

In *Deciphering the Message*, he was given access to the vault of Blue Note records by the label's president, Don Was. McCraven carefully chose performances by Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers with Lee Morgan and Wayne Shorter, as well as Eddie Gale, Dexter Gordon, Horace Silver, and other less-familiar Blue Note artists.

MCCRAVEN WAS BORN in Paris and grew up primarily in the Pioneer Valley near Amherst, Massachusetts. His parents are drummer Stephen McCraven and multi-instrumentalist and vocalist Agnes Zsigmondi.

In a documentary about his life, *Universal Beings*, McCraven discussed his upbringing, saying, "I come from a multinational, multi-ethnic household. [...] My mother is from Hungary, and my father is American. My father is Black, and my mother is of Jewish descent."

For McCraven, "It's very much an immigrant story," he said. "Leaving one's home to go look for something different, somewhere else, using music as a tool to allow them to travel."

"From the time I was a baby I had access to music," McCraven continued. "Growing up in a home of two professional musicians, there was music on all the time and there were opportunities to play."

When McCraven was 2 years old, "my dad would practice with me on his lap and hold my hands while he played the drums," he said. "It was an amazing thing to grow up [surrounded by] people like Yusef Lateef and Archie Shepp."

"My mother has also been a huge influence of mine. She was an artist in a band called Kolinda — her records were about bringing music from different regions of eastern Europe together, sharing songs and cultures and melodies.

"So I've always been into eastern European folk music. I believe I've been connected to history that can be [...] expanded into my own vision. And that's why I always refer to my parents. Those things that they did [are] why I do what I do."

McCraven attended the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, where he studied with drum legend Bob Gullotti. He moved to Chicago in his early 20s and found an invigorating music community that encouraged both originality and tradition. He soon became a member of guitarist Bobby Broom's trio, with which he performed at the Vermont Jazz Center in 2016.

McCraven will be appearing at the Jazz Center with two of his most consistent collaborators, Marquis Hill and Junius Paul. Trumpeter Hill emerged into the jazz limelight in 2014 after earning the top prize at the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz International Trumpet Guild's Jazz Improvisation Competition and the 2013 Carmine Caruso International Jazz Trumpet Solo Competition.

Hill's music is influenced by his Chicago upbringing. In an interview with *Neon Jazz*, Hill acknowledges his kinship and respect for Louis Armstrong

who, he says, "walked these [Chicago] streets and claimed them to be one of the places where jazz was created."

Hill has released 13 records and numerous EPs as a leader. He has recorded as a sideman with Joel Ross, Greg Spero, Makaya McCraven, Diego Urcola, Junius Paul, Marcus Miller, Boney James, Kurt Elling, Jeff Hamilton, Ernest Hawkins, Caroline Davis, Emmet Cohen, Chicago Jazz Orchestra, and many others.

The bassist for the ensemble is Junius Paul, a vital member of the Chicago creative music scene since the mid-2000s. Paul is a member of the trail-blazing avant-garde group the Art Ensemble of Chicago, with which he has appeared on two albums.

He is also an integral participant in the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM) and has performed or recorded with Famoudou Don Moye Sun Percussion Summit, Roscoe Mitchell, Kahil El'Zabar, The Fred Anderson Trio, The Curtis Fuller Quintet, Oliver Lake, Willie Pickens, Dee Dee Bridgewater, Marquis Hill, and Donald Byrd, among others.

*This concert is taking place on a Sunday afternoon in order to accommodate McCraven's busy touring schedule. Come enjoy the music and find out why McCraven was the winner in the "Rising Star" categories of best producer and best drummer of the year in DownBeat's 2020 Critics Poll.*

*In-person tickets for Makaya McCraven at the Vermont Jazz Center are offered on a sliding fee scale from \$25 to \$45 per person (contact the VJC about educational group discounts); available online at [vtjazz.org](https://vtjazz.org), by email at [elsavjc@gmail.com](mailto:elsavjc@gmail.com), or by calling the Vermont Jazz Center ticket line at 802-254-9088, ext. 1. Mobility access for the in-person event is available by emailing [elsavjc@gmail.com](mailto:elsavjc@gmail.com).*

Online streaming of this concert at [vtjazz.org](https://vtjazz.org) and at [facebook.com/VermontJazzCenter/live](https://facebook.com/VermontJazzCenter/live) will be offered free, but donations are welcomed.

# LETTERS FROM READERS

## WSED disregards the rights and needs of entire community

RE: "WSED: 'No further comment likely' after lengthy sexual abuse investigation" [News, Jan. 31]:

I am heartbroken and appalled by the actions, and lack thereof, of the Windham Southeast School District Board and its superintendent, in their disregard for the rights and needs not only of the victims of sexual grooming and abuse by school staff, but of our entire community.

It is difficult to imagine that the board and superintendent, who are meant to be the chief advocates and protectors regarding all aspects of students' lives, could be so naive about the appropriate response required in situations of abuse and harm.

One would think that especially now, in the midst of the #MeToo Movement, some obvious lessons have been learned about accountability, and the repair of betrayal and wrongdoing.

But alas, this is what the board has succeeded in doing:

1. Teaching students to equate authority with danger and fear, and letting them know that there will be no accountable adult within the school to turn to with sensitive issues or complaints.

2. Letting parents know that their children's safety is not a priority of the school system and its governing board.

3. Failing to incorporate the dictates of our legal system, the expertise of our police department personnel, and the standards of our criminal justice system in responding to felonies perpetrated by school employees on underage, vulnerable youth.

4. Failure to be accountable to every tax-paying citizen of this county, whose hard-earned monies fund the school system through taxation, and who assume these funds will be used to provide not only academic education but care in the realms of social, cultural, and moral responsibility.

5. Casting doubt in the minds our community-at-large upon the board's own ability to manage its affairs in a transparent, accountable manner, regarding both the law and the social structure.

6. Ignoring the obvious needs of victims to receive validation of their experience and their courage in coming forward.

7. Teaching young people that sexual misbehavior is an acceptable norm.

8. Letting students know that the topmost authorities governing their school experience do not care what happens to them, and that betrayal of students by school authorities is to be expected.

9. Failing to engage in the actions necessary to repair harm.

It is with a heavy heart, and deep worry for our youth, that I implore Brattleboro Police Chief Norma Hardy and our police department to conduct their own investigation into these matters, and bring known perpetrators, such as Zeke Hecker — who admitted his guilt outright ([commonsnews.org/issue/626/From-Zeke-Hecker](https://commonsnews.org/issue/626/From-Zeke-Hecker)) in *The Commons* — into the criminal justice system, where they, as any sexual predator of youth, will be subject to the letter of the law.

Muriel Wolf Brattleboro

## A lung is a lung

RE: "A matter of equity" [Viewpoint, Jan. 24]:

I had to respond to Robin Rieske's piece.

First, cigarette companies targeted *everyone* regardless of race or any other factor. (Remember the rugged white Marlboro Man?) Most companies want everyone to buy their product.

Second, a lung is a lung, and cigarettes affect every smoker exactly the same way!

I would rather see people smoking cigarettes than using illicit drugs.

If you bring beer, even "light" beer, to an already intoxicated person to "keep them and others safe," you are an enabler. Same for "needle exchanges": That's enabling.

I'm amazed Rieske wants certain cigarettes and tobacco products banned but supports continued illicit drug use by handing out paraphernalia and substances that perpetuate the problem.

Sandy Golden Hinsdale, N.H.

## Extreme language from Israeli officials signals genocidal intent

RE: "Crossing a fine line" [Letters, Jan. 31]:

Jean Anne Kiewel has accused Jewish Voice for Peace of promoting a "false equivalency," for equating slogans from Black Lives Matter and Palestinians. Palestinians often chant, "From the River to the Sea, Palestine Will Be Free." She claims that this is hateful. Thankfully, she also acknowledges that Israel's attacks on Hamas are horrific.

Kiewel contends, though, that these Israeli attacks, killing over 25,000 mostly women and children, are not genocidal in intent.

Well, the recent ruling by the International Court of Justice, that Israel must stop its "acts of genocide," starkly contradicts Kiewel. The court identifies extreme language from Israeli officials that undeniably signals exactly such genocidal intent.

Defense Minister Yoav Gallant has said Israel "is fighting human animals," and Deputy Knesset Speaker Nissim Vaturi wrote that Israel has one goal, "erasing the Gaza Strip from the face of the earth." ICJ sees this language as evidence of genocidal intent.

I believe that sincere liberal Zionists, who are not overtly racist toward Palestinians, have not come to terms with the inherent white supremacy of Zionism, whether "liberal" or emanating from the extreme right.

Zionism was always by definition a European settler-colonial project. Yitzhak Laor's book, *The Myths of Liberal Zionism*, explains the fundamental problems with such Zionism. Laor is a prominent Israel poet.

Led by David Ben-Gurion, Zionism was predicated on displacing indigenous Palestinians from their ancestral homes, to be replaced by mostly "white" Ashkenazi Jews from Europe.

Israelis take pride in being an outpost of Western civilization in what they see as a backward Arab world. Prime Minister Ehud Barak even termed Israel a "Villa in the Jungle."

South Africa, which brought the Israeli genocide charges

to ICJ, can provide us with a valuable context. Just imagine the slogan, "From Atlantic to Pacific, South Africa Will Be Free." It was that concept which terrified the white Afrikaners who ruled under their racist system of Apartheid.

When one-person, one-vote ended Afrikaner minority rule and lifted Nelson Mandela to the presidency, the whole world celebrated. Most white South Africans learned to live in a democracy under Black majority rule in a multiracial state.

JVP's support for Palestinian liberation and true democracy "from the river to the sea" should inspire us all. Like the white allies who collaborated in Mandela's struggle for freedom (and there were many), JVP is living up to the best tradition and values of Judaism.

Here in the U.S., I have often marched with the Black Lives Matter movement, chanting "No Truth, No Justice, No Peace." That slogan is taken from the Jewish Torah. It stands in the long, sacred Jewish tradition of speaking truth to power.

Thomas Kim Hill Putney

## Can there be life after the death of democracy in the U.S.A.?

Democracy is dead in America when a smart, articulate, unifying Congressman — Rep. Dean Phillips — spends more than two months campaigning in New Hampshire for the Democratic Presidential Primary, and gets nearly zero news coverage.

Democracy is dead in America when a sitting president is a no-show in New Hampshire because he fears being challenged by someone more fit for office than himself.

Democracy is dead in America when the Democratic National Party and state Democratic parties keep Phillips off the ballot and call Biden the winner.

Democracy is dead when Biden says it is "clear that Donald Trump will be the Republican nominee." Probable, yes, but who is Biden to declare winners before Americans vote?

Democracy is dead when a majority of Republicans

support an incoherent, racist, sexually abusive man who refused the peaceful transfer of power in the last election and will make pardoning himself one of his first acts if he indeed wins the coming election.

Democracy is dead when autocratic Trump speaks to his followers through limited communication channels, inciting them with false threats that people and institutions are out to get them and that he is the only one who can save them.

Democracy is dead in America when special interest money controls politicians' positions, what we hear, and who we can vote for to lead our nation.

Democracy is dead when our citizens are too tired, too discouraged, too zoned-out, too disenfranchised, too preoccupied — with the Kardashians or porn or Netflix — to engage in civil discourse or stand up for what they believe is important and just.

Democracy is dead in America. We can only hope that there is life after death.

Jacki Brown Jamaica

## Work of Brooks Memorial Library and its staff goes beyond books

RE: "Library finds growing challenges in accommodating urgent human needs" [News, Jan. 31]:

Thank you, Joyce Marcel, for the well-written love letter to Library Director Starr Latronica and her excellent staff at Brooks Memorial Library.

What a compassionate insight into the underpinnings of the library and the hard work these librarians perform, so far above and beyond anything to do with books.

And thank you for citing possible solutions to the challenges they face.

This talented, kind crew deserves help, not threats and endangerment.

Margot Zalkind Mayor Newfane

## No wonder we are a sick, frightened nation

RE: "A simple demonstration of care" [Viewpoint, Jan. 17]:

Vida King perpetuates the myth that masking prevents the spread of virus and other unseen pathogens.

Viruses, smaller than bacteria, are by definition microbes and not visible to the naked eye or under an ordinary microscope. Viruses are only visible under an electron microscope.

I'm wondering how writer Vida King expects a mere mask to prevent the spread of viruses.

Ms. King also seems to think that individuals have the power to keep their neighbor's body healthy. In reality, your immune system only works to protect you. But your immune system, which mostly resides in your gut, requires care. Drugs (legal or illegal), alcohol, and standard American diet/lifestyle destroy one's immune response.

No wonder we are a sick, frightened nation. Who do you know who is *not* taking a medication (including vaccines)?

Regarding the article's subtitle: "Covid is back with a vengeance. Masking is an intelligent, adaptive, compassionate practice." Says who?

Are *The Commons* editors planning on presenting opposing viewpoints? If two or more viewpoints had been published side by side, the readership would understand that *The Commons* is promoting thoughtful consideration, not just paraphrasing government rhetoric.

As for me, a person with health issues related to our toxic environment, I continue to show my face in public. You can read my point of view in *The Commons*, Nov. 17, 2021, "A respiratory therapist speaks out about masks."

Betsy Thomason West Townshend

## Election candidate statements and letters, C2

# COLUMN

## The time for change is now

More than ever, we need four institutional changes as our government hovers on the brink of disaster

Brattleboro

AS GREEK PHILOSOPHER Heraclitus claimed around 500 BCE, "No man ever steps in the same river twice, for it's not the same river and he's not the same man. There is nothing permanent except change."

The noted philosopher meant that change is the only reality. Given our political processes in election years, institutional change is needed more than ever as we hover on the brink of disaster.

Four major changes need to occur, and none will be easy, but maybe we can begin by ending the Electoral College, an antiquated system that means we are not a true democracy because our president and vice-president aren't elected by a majority of the popular vote, which is why five times candidates who won the popular vote didn't get elected.

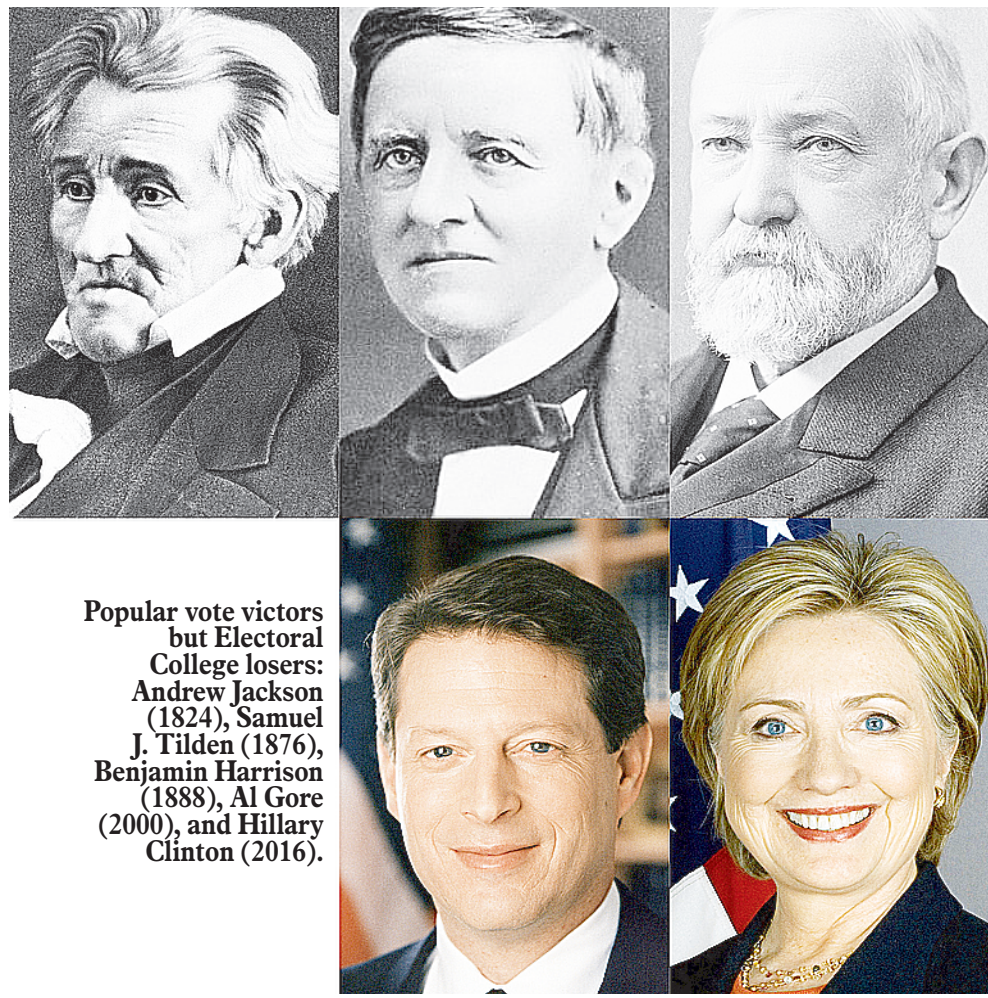


ELAYNE CLIFT ([elayne-clift.com](http://elayne-clift.com)) has written this column about women, politics, and social issues from the earliest days of this newspaper.

The Electoral College has its roots in racism and misogyny, as the Brennan Center points out. When it was established, it gave an electoral advantage to slave states in the South because they upheld the Constitution's declaration that "any person who wasn't free would be counted as three-fifths of a free individual for the purposes of determining congressional representation."

Racism still prevails through voter suppression. As for women, they didn't get to vote until 1920 — if they were white!

SEE TIME FOR CHANGE, C2



Popular vote victors but Electoral College losers: Andrew Jackson (1824), Samuel J. Tilden (1876), Benjamin Harrison (1888), Al Gore (2000), and Hillary Clinton (2016).

WIKIMEDIA COMMONS



## Great opportunity for starting or expanding your investment portfolio.

- Good rental income and affordable property.
- Nice location.
- Good parking for tenants and private porches for unit 1 and for unit 2.
- Minimal yard maintenance.
- Fully rented.

EXCLUSIVE: \$145,000



Ask for Sue  
802-257-7979 x 2  
255 Western Ave, Brattleboro, VT  
[www.bellvillerealty.com](http://www.bellvillerealty.com)



www.milkweedfarmvt.com

**Join our vegetable CSA!**

21 weeks of fresh & locally grown produce

# Aqua-Aid Systems

WATER CONDITIONING & FILTRATION

**Solving hard water, iron, blue staining, radon and arsenic problems in the Windham County area since 1984.**

- Water Conditioning
- Free On-Site Water Analysis & Estimate
- Iron and Manganese Removal
- Radon & Arsenic Removal
- Systems Maintenance
- Home Supplies Delivery

**Worried About Your Water?**

**We Service All Makes And Models Locally Owned & Operated Since 1984**



ON SITE, NO CHARGE, TESTING AND ESTIMATES

**800-252-8484**

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

## bc tv LOCAL PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Jan. 5-Feb. 11

CHANNEL 1078 CHANNEL 1079

PLEASE NOTE NEW CHANNEL NUMBERS!

<b>Here We Are - Brian D. Cohen, Artist:</b> Mon 8p, Tues 3:15p, Wed 9p, Thurs 1:15p, Fri 10a, Sat 12:15p, Sun 5:15p	<b>Brattleboro Selectboard Mtg. 2/6/24:</b> Tues 6:15p (LIVE), Thurs 1p, Sat 8:30p, Sun 4a
<b>The World Fusion Show - Ep# 171 - :</b> Mon 9p, Tues 9a, Wed 3:30p, Thurs 10:30a, Fri 5:30p, Sat 8p, Sun 9:30a & 6p	<b>Windham Elementary School District Board Mtg. 1/26/24:</b> Mon 7:15p, Tues 10a, Wed 2:30p
<b>Putney Selectboard Special Mtg. 2/6/24:</b> Tues 6p (LIVE)	<b>Townshend Selectboard Special Mtg. 1/30/24:</b> Monday 8:15p, Tues 6:30a, Wed 12p
<b>Deliberate Drift - 5. A Rookery of Chinstraps:</b> Mon 12:45p, Tues 6:30a & 4:30p, Wed 11a, Thurs 9:15p, Fri 7:45a, Sat 8:30p, Sun 12:30p	<b>Windham Southeast School District Board Special Mtg. 1/30/24:</b> Mon 6:10p, Tues 10:55a, Wed 3:25p
<b>BCTV Open Stage - Peter Eisenkramer - "Handyman":</b> Mon 8:35p, Tues 12:40p, Wed 6:25a & 5:55p, Thurs 6:55a, Sat 12:55p, Sun 8:50p	<b>Newfane Selectboard Mtg. 2/5/24:</b> Wed 6p, Thurs 8:30a, Fri 12p
<b>BCTV Open Stage - Peter Eisenkramer - "All My Geets are Gone":</b> Mon 12:40p, Tues 11:50a, Wed 6:20a, Thurs 5:50p, Fri 7:40a, Sun 5:55p	<b>Brattleboro Planning Commission Mtg. 2/5/24:</b> Wed 8:30p, Thurs 6a, Fri 2:30p
<b>Couch Potatoe Productions - 78th Guilford Fair - Morning Events:</b> Mon 10a, Tues 12:45p, Wed 4p, Thurs 9a, Fri 10:45a, Sat 8:45p, Sun 12:45p	<b>River Valleys Unified School District Board Mtg. 2/5/24:</b> Fri 6p, Sat 9:30a, Sun 12p
<b>Brattleboro Reformer Presents Windham County's Got Talent 1/25/24:</b> Mon 1p, Tues 8p, Thurs 3:30p, Fri 3p, Sat 9a, Sun 6:30p	<b>Vernon Selectboard Mtg. 2/6/24:</b> Thurs 6p, Fri 8a, Sat 12p
<b>Couch Potatoe Productions - Orchard Aid - Slow Pony:</b> Tues 3:50p, Wed 12:45p & 5:15p, Thurs 6:15a, Fri 7a & 9:30p, Sat 11:15a	<b>Putney Selectboard Special Mtg. 2/6/24:</b> Thurs 8:30p, Fri 5:30a, Sat 2:30p
<b>Energy Week with George Harvey &amp; Tom Fennell:</b> Mon 9a, Tues 4:45p, Thurs 11a, Sat 7p	<b>Putney Selectboard Mtg. 2/7/24:</b> Sat 6p, Sun 8:30a
<b>Vermontitude - Weekly Episode:</b> Tue 11:30a & 6:30p, Wed 6a, Thu 1p, Sat 12p, Sun 5p	<b>Dummerston Selectboard Mtg. 2/7/24:</b> Fri 8:30p, Sat 6a, Sun 2:30p
<b>News Block: WTSA News:</b> Mon-Fri 12p & 6p <b>Reformer News Break:</b> Mon-Fri 12:05p & 6:05p <b>BUHS-TV News:</b> Mon-Fri 12:20p & 6:40p	<b>Guilford Selectboard Mtg. 1/22/24:</b> Thurs 11a, Sun 8:15p
<b>St. Michael's Episcopal Church - Weekly Service:</b> Wed 2p, Sat 7:30a, Sun 11a	<b>Jamaica Selectboard Mtg. 1/22/24:</b> Fri 5p, Sat 8:30a, Sun 6p
<b>Trinity Lutheran Church - Weekly Service:</b> Wed 10a, Thurs 7a, Sun 3p	<b>Brattleboro Charter Revision Commission Mtg. 1/18/24:</b> Wed 12:15p, Sun 6:55p
<b>Guilford Community Church - Weekly Service:</b> Wed 6:30a, Fri 8p, Sun 8a	<b>Town Matters - Weekly Episode:</b> Mon 6p, Wed 4:45p, Thurs 11a, Fri 11:30a, Sat 5p
<b>St. Michael's Catholic Church Mass:</b> Sat 4p (LIVE), Tue 6:45a & 2p, Thurs 8a	<b>The David Pakman Show:</b> 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**

BCTV's Program Highlights are sponsored by The Commons. BCTV's municipal meeting coverage helps Commons reporters stay in touch. Read about it in the Town & Village section at [www.commonnews.org](http://www.commonnews.org).

**Brattleboro Community Television - 257-0888**

# LETTERS FROM READERS

## Election Day is Tuesday, March 5

### Candidate statement: Heller for Selectboard, Brattleboro

My name is Oscar Heller, and I'm running for Selectboard. I believe I have the temperament and skills to do a great job on your behalf. I value thoughtfulness, hard work, and public engagement. I'm not afraid to admit when I don't understand something, or to ask hard questions on behalf of the public. And I'm not afraid to stand alone or take a hard vote if I disagree.

I found Brattleboro through Camp Waubanong and moved here permanently 10 years ago. Since then I've started two small businesses, bought a building and become a landlord on Elliot Street, and gotten involved in local politics.

I first joined the Energy Committee, and I am currently a town meeting representative and a member of the Finance Committee. I'm 35 years old, and I want to be a part of building our future.

As a Finance Committee member for four years and former chair, I plan to bring my experience to bear on next year's budget process after some speed bumps this year. That's a priority for me.

Another is to help Brattleboro evolve. It seems like a whole generation of businesses is transitioning as people retire and other people step up. The Selectboard needs to carefully shepherd that process. Things are fragile right now, but also full of potential.

The EMS transition will be a major project. We've jumped in. Now we have to put aside our differences and make it work. We've been having a community safety conversation in fits and starts for four-plus years. We owe it to everyone to finish that conversation.

We need to invest in climate adaptation and resilience.

And I know that none of this is free: everything we do comes out of the bank accounts of those who pay property taxes. (I'm one myself.) We have to be smart, and we have to be practical.

There are other problems that no one person can solve, problems we all know too well: mental health, homelessness, drugs. These ripple out and hurt everyone. There are no easy answers. All we can do is continue to pick our way slowly

and methodically down the path.

Please reach out to me personally (802-380-6847; [oheller25@gmail.com](mailto:oheller25@gmail.com)) if you'd like to get to know me better. A 20-minute chat over coffee beats a press release any day. ([oheller25@gmail.com](mailto:oheller25@gmail.com))

Oscar Heller  
Brattleboro

### Candidate statement: Chute for Selectboard, Putney

My name is Aileen Chute, and I am running for re-election to the three-year Selectboard seat here in Putney.

I like to joke that I am the longest-serving member of the Putney Selectboard, and that is true because Putney has a young board. I have served on the Selectboard for one entire three-year term and have been honored with the seat of chair for the last two.

A graduate of Bryn Mawr College, much of my professional career has been in information technology. My husband and I also built and operated a successful diversified family farm that featured pick-your-own blueberries, broilers, vegetables, and maple syrup in the small rural town of Washington, N.H. I know how to run a business, I know how to run a farm, and I am not afraid of dirty, tedious work.

In addition to serving on the Selectboard, I have been a lister, a planning commissioner, and chair of the Energy Committee for the town of Putney. I currently work in the assessor's office for the town of Brattleboro.

Working for local town government is rewarding in many ways, but more importantly, it has given me the insight and experience to be a more effective leader in town initiatives.

During my time on the Selectboard, we've expanded our board from three to five members, which has allowed Selectboard members to meet and collaborate on many subjects.

As a result, we have updated and clarified many of our outdated policies and procedures to make our local government more transparent and efficient, we have expanded access to Selectboard meetings by investing in the technology for hybrid in-person and online access for the public, and we have seen public engagement in both town

committees and citizen-run initiatives, such as the Our Future Putney Housing Solutions Task Force, grow and bring real change and much-needed vitality to Putney.

We also face real challenges in Putney. We struggle with empty storefronts, a housing shortage, high taxes, and a changing climate.

During my time as a Selectboard member, I have come to understand that all these issues are complex, they are intertwined, and they have no easy answers. If I told you there was one good answer, I would be lying.

What I do know is that Putney needs a strong, thoughtful, knowledgeable Selectboard with the experience to navigate these issues.

This is what I have brought to the table, and this is what I will continue to bring. Please vote for me on March 5.

Aileen Chute  
Putney

### Heller: Representing a younger generation

I recently had the pleasure to spend a little time with Oscar Heller, who is running for a three-year seat on the Brattleboro Selectboard. Oscar has been actively engaged in local government for a number of years, serving on the town Finance Committee.

He is a local entrepreneur who runs a web design business and has gained an understanding of what it takes for a small business to survive in this area. Oscar is smart, and he makes it clear that he cares very much about making sure that the potential of Brattleboro and its citizens is promoted.

The town needs representation from a younger generation, and Oscar fits the bill as a 35 year old. The younger generation will be losing a voice on the Selectboard because Ian Goodnow is not seeking re-election. Oscar is the best replacement as a voice for his generation on the board.

The election is March 5. Please vote in person or by mail in ballot.

Richard Davis  
Brattleboro

### Davis: A 45-year record of getting things done

When it comes to candidacies for Brattleboro Selectboard, Richard Davis is the real deal.

I have known Richard for over 40 years. We worked together at Brattleboro Memorial Hospital. We started the Windham County Heat Fund in 2005, raising almost \$1 million and providing heat for over 2,000 families.

Richard has served on many nonprofit boards. He also helped start Guilford Cares. When Richard says he will do something, he not only keeps his word but he accomplishes the task effectively and expertly.

He's the kind of person you want on your team when you are trying to make things happen. He is a team player with a 45-year record of getting things done for the people of Brattleboro, whether it is for the homeless population, those without access to health care, or anyone needing local services.

Richard has become the go-to person for many people in Brattleboro and surrounding towns. He has earned a chance to serve on the Selectboard, but he needs your vote to put him there.

Please vote on March 5. Your vote counts.

Daryl Pillsbury  
Brattleboro

### Chute: Leaders do what is principled

Town of Putney Selectboard chairperson Aileen Chute is running for reelection to a second three-year term. I am voting for her because:

- Her forthright public statements affirming affordable housing and its residents have proven that she is a leader in Putney: Leaders do what is principled.

- She has demonstrated her natural ability to chair public meetings: dealing fairly with pacing and debate while mentoring her less-experienced Selectboard colleagues in close collaboration with Putney's town manager and ensuring that everyone who wants to speak has been heard.

While no one agrees with all that selectpersons do, I agree that Aileen Chute does them well and has earned reelection.

Howard Fairman  
Putney

## Time for change

The 538 members of the Electoral College are chosen by state officials, a change from voter choice that resulted from the 2023 Electoral Count Reform Act, designed to deal with prior problems regarding who became a member of the College.

To win an election, a presidential candidate must have a majority of all the electoral votes cast to win. Nearly all U.S. states have a winner-take-all system in which all the electoral votes go to the candidate who won the popular vote in respective states.

To eliminate the College requires a Constitutional amendment — difficult, but not impossible. The John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act, passed in the House (but not the Senate) in 2022, would have addressed many problems that arise as a result of the Electoral College. It's a bill that desperately needs to be a priority in the next Congress.

ANOTHER PRESSING ISSUE calling for change is lifetime appointments to the Supreme Court and the federal courts, an "outdated relic," as the Brennan Center calls the practice.

This structure gives enormous, long-term power to judges to decide laws that can affect generations. The consequences of that longevity can be dire, especially as the courts become more politically polarized.

Abortion is a case in point. SCOTUS overruled the Constitutional right to abortion that was established 50 years ago because far-right Trump appointees on the Supreme Court, who all promised in their confirmation hearings to follow precedent, proceeded to overturn *Roe v. Wade*.

That's why the call for 18-year terms and regular appointments on the Supreme Court is growing.

Term limits would enable every president to shape the direction of the court and its decisions during a four-year term. There would be no Constitutional crises because of unexpected vacancies late in that term, and scheduled appointments for Congressional oversight would be less contentious.

Enforcing ethical rules would also be upheld and belief in the court's integrity would be restored. Secret money would no longer be able to influence

justices.

As the Brennan Center notes, "On average, justices today sit on the bench for more than a decade longer than their predecessors did. [...] Unbounded tenure allows a single justice to shape the direction of the law [...] without regard to the evolving views and composition of the electorate. It puts justices in an elite and unaccountable bubble. [...] It is time to reform the Supreme Court."

WHEN IT COMES to reform and rebellion, campaign finance reform is up there with the Electoral College and SCOTUS appointments. Many organizations support "a comprehensive and meaningful system of public financing that would help create a level playing field for every qualified candidate," as described by one of them, the ACLU.

To make our playing field more equitable, we can look to the U.K. for guidance.

First, they have a "regulated period" prior to each election campaign. The length of time depends on the election and covers the period that someone is formally a candidate.

And those candidates must

FROM SECTION FRONT

spend only a limited amount of money on campaigning. There is no political advertising on TV, radio, or social media, other than a short, free pre-election TV broadcast. There are no debates!

Political donations to national parties over a certain amount, approximately \$8,000 (U.S.), must be declared as well as donations to local parties worth more than approximately \$2,000.

Donations to members' associations — groups whose members are primarily or entirely members of a single political party — also need to be declared above \$8,000. That's when it comes to financial donations.

In contrast, citing superPACs and dark money, the Brennan Center says that "a handful of wealthy donors dominate electoral giving and spending in the U.S. We need limits on campaign finance, transparency, and effective enforcement of these rules — along with public financing."

A FOURTH ISSUE that calls for action is voting systems that keep people from the polls.

Purged voter rolls, gerrymandering, and deceptive election practices, primarily meant to block voters of color, low-income communities, students, and seniors, must be addressed so that everyone can participate in the democratic process of voting.

This is a time for constitutional change despite challenges. We must keep the pressure for reform up if we are not to become a banana republic.

## GOT AN OPINION?

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

Got something on your mind? Send contributions to our Letters from Readers section (500 words or fewer strongly recommended) to [voices@commonsnews.org](mailto:voices@commonsnews.org); the deadline is Friday to be considered for next week's paper. When space is an issue, we give priority to

words that have not yet appeared elsewhere.



arts & community CALENDAR

THURSDAY

8

Well-being

W. BRATTLEBORO Bone Builders Class at All Souls Unitarian Universalist Church: Bone Builders is modeled after the Growing Stronger Program created at Tufts University Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy. It's a fun and interactive strength-based exercise program that benefits women and men. It's been proven to help build strength, maintain bone density, improve balance, coordination, mobility, reduce risk of falling, and help maintain independence in performing activities of daily life. Anyone age 55 and over is welcome.
► 12:30-1:30 p.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays. Weights provided. Participants who wish to participate in the exercises using weights must have a release from their doctor.
► Free.
► All Souls Unitarian Universalist Church, 29 South St. Contact Bev Miller (bevermont@gmail.com) to register and get a medical consent form in advance of the first class. 802-254-9377; ascvt.org.

Ideas and education

BELLOWS FALLS Rockingham Free Public Library hosts Southern Astronomy Group member Claudio Véliz for Upcoming Total Solar Eclipse Presentation: The total solar eclipse on 4/8/2024 is an opportunity to experience a rare - even once in a lifetime - natural event. Véliz will cover in this graphic-rich presentation, how to prepare for the eclipse, where to be, and what to do if it is cloudy. Safe solar filtered glasses will be handed out to in-person attendees, complete with instructions as to how to use them when this stunning event arrives.
► 7 p.m. In case of cancellation due to weather, program will be rescheduled for Thursday, 2/15. Wheelchair accessible.
► Free.
► Rockingham Free Public Library, 65 Westminster St. Information: More information, email reference@rockinghamlibrary.org, call 802-463-4270, go to rockinghamlibrary.org, or just stop by.

FRIDAY

9

Celebrations and festivals

WILLIAMSVILLE Valentine's Cabaret: Rock River Players offers an evening rich in sketches, solos, comedy and song. Valentine fare will be offered.
► Performances: 7 p.m. Friday and Saturday, 3 p.m. Sunday.
► Through Sunday, February 11.
► \$12 for cabaret-table seating.
► Williamsville Hall, Dover Rd. Information: For advance purchase go to rockriverplayers.org.

SATURDAY

10

Music

PUTNEY Genticorum, with special guest Seamus Egan and Lissa Schneckenburger: Genticorum is among the most distinctive voices of Québecois traditional music. The trio's connection is magnetic - the filigree of their arrangements, seamlessly melding fiddle, flute, accordion, guitar, foot percussion, voices, there's always an organic spark. At its root, this is social music, and audiences can't help but feel the pleasure.
► 7:30 p.m. Founded in 2000, when fiddler Pascal Gemme and guitarist Yann Falquet met in Montreal's trad scene, Genticorum quickly earned international recognition for bringing out all the poetry and nuance of French Canada's old songs and step-dance tunes. Co-presented with Twilight Music, concert is sponsored in part by Howard Printing.
► \$10 - \$25.
► Next Stage Arts Project, 15 Kimball Hill. Information: 802-387-0102; nextstagearts.org.

SATURDAY CONT.

Kids and families

BRATTLEBORO Kids Cooking Class: Pasta & Brownies: Calling all pasta and chocolate lovers! In this class we will be making homemade pasta and brownies. Ages 0-14 with parent or caregiver.
► Choose 10:30-11:45 a.m. or 1:30-2:45 p.m. Space is limited so registration is recommended.
► Free.
► Brattleboro Food Co-op Community Room, 7 Canal St. Information: Register: BFC.coop/events.

GUILFORD Celebrate the start of the Lunar New Year - the Year of the Dragon: February 10-15 is the celebration of the start of the Lunar New Year, the Year of the Dragon. The dragon represents bravery, strength and luck. The celebration of the Lunar New Year began as a method to celebrate the end of winter and the arrival of spring. This is a time for family get-togethers, much like Thanksgiving in Western countries.
► Join us on February 10 between 10 a.m. and noon and make a dragon finger puppet.
► Free.
► Guilford Free Library, 4024 Guilford Center Rd. Information: 802-257-4603; guilfordfreelibraryvt.org.

Community building

VERNON Coffee with Coffey - Sara Coffey, State Representative Windham-1/ Vernor & Guilford: "Join me and Windham County Senator Nader Hashim in Vernor for my monthly Coffee with Coffey hour. Share updates, plans, your priorities and get answers to any questions you have about any issues we are debating in Montpelier. This is a great way to connect with neighbors and discuss issues you care about."
► 10 - 11 a.m.
► Free.
► Vernor Free Library, 567 Governor Hunt Rd. Information: 802-257-0150.

Celebrations and festivals

BRATTLEBORO Asian Cultural Center of Vermont celebrates Lunar New Year of China, Korea, Vietnam: Start celebrating with potluck: Bring a dish to share. Then join us for traditional Chinese Dance w/ Nan Jiang Hyde, group Taiji and Qigong, Korean Tug-of-War, New Year crafts featuring make-your-own dragon puppets. We close with Dragon parade from the Museum up Main Street for luck. Don't miss dancing with 30-foot dragon created by Vietnamese craftsman. According to Chinese folklore, this huge marionette forever chases the 'heavenly pearl' in its pursuit of wisdom.
► 1-3 p.m. You don't have to be Asian or know anything about Asia to participate! Join us at the Brattleboro Museum and Art Center to usher in year of the Green Wood Dragon. With a rare combination of Dragon's power and Wood's creativity, 2024 brings a year of innovation, vision and growth. The Wood Dragon year promises to be dynamic and unpredictable.
► Free.
► Brattleboro Museum & Art Center, 28 Vernon St. Information: accvt.org. Phone inquiries day of event: 802-257-7898 ext. 3.

WEST TOWNSHEND "Valentine's Dance" with Boy Ray & Friends: Jasin Morin, Susie Gates Turco, Kim Ray: "This Project is part of The West River Community Project, a nonprofit community center dedicated to promoting local agricultural, economic and social activities. Through participation and contribution, we seek to improve lives and strengthen our community as a whole. This is a fun evening for families, friends, and absolutely everybody!"
► 6-9 p.m. Enjoy hot cocoa and lots of delicious sweets.
► Free admission.
► West Townshend Country Store and Cafe, Rte. 30. Information: 802-874-4800; info@westtownshend.org.

SUNDAY

11

Community building

W. BRATTLEBORO "The Heart of Courage" led by Rev. Telos Whitfield (in Person/Zoom): There are

SUNDAY CONT.

conflicts all around our planet, wars and struggles and within our own lives and selves. We'll explore how to build courage within ourselves to engage in conversation and actions that promote peace and healing.
► 10 a.m. "The Heart of Service": Note: Variety of pre-service activities offered starting at 8:45 a.m.: Choir rehearsal. 9 a.m.: Children's Religious Exploration class, Adult Coffee & Conversation, and Quiet Meditation.
► Free (donations welcome).
► All Souls Unitarian Universalist Church, 29 South St. Information: Visit ascvt.org Sunday shortly before 10 a.m. to join "The Heart of Courage" via Zoom.

TUESDAY

13

Instruction

BELLOWS FALLS "Tech Time" - hosted by Rockingham Free Library: Join us for one of our upcoming tech sessions this February to learn more about different applications and digital library resources. Today's program is "Love your Library's resources - Libby and Biblio+" Drop-in sessions are first come, first served. Providing your own personal devices is highly encouraged, however library

TUESDAY CONT.

laptops will be available for class use.
► 2 p.m. "A different tech class will be held in the Youth Programming Room each Tuesday in February. Note: February is National Library Lovers' Month! Love your library more by learning how to access eBooks, films, and television for free through our online library resources."
► Free.
► Rockingham Free Public Library, 65 Westminster St. Information: 802-463-4270; rockinghamlibrary.org.

Well-being

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

afford their high deductibles or co-insurance.
► 5 - 6:30 p.m. on Tuesdays.
► Brattleboro Walk-In Clinic, 191 Clark Ave. Information: 802-251-8484; brattleborowalkinclinic.com.

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

BRENDAN EMMETT QUIGLEY THE COMMONS CROSSWORD

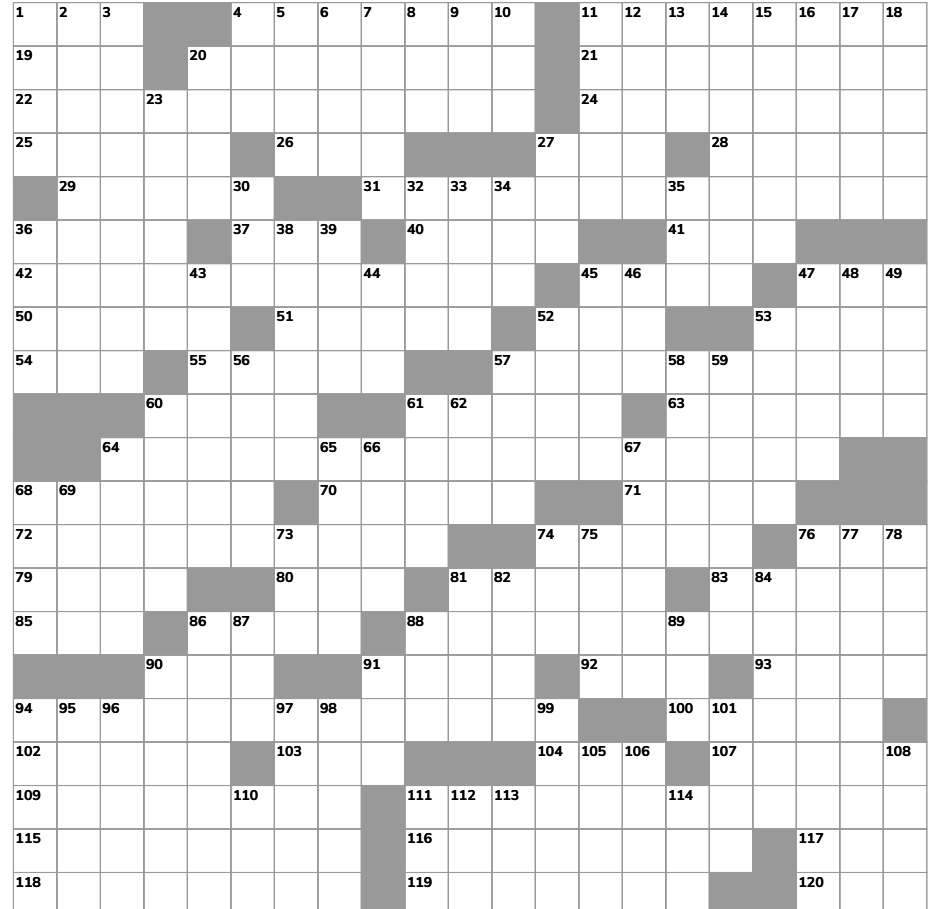
"Eh? Oh!"

Across

- 1. Russian Cold War grp.
4. Watery
11. Provide via cable
19. Bank investment, for short
20. "Yeah, maybe"
21. Like some vegetarians
22. Where Courtney Love's band prepares meals?
24. Smoker's mouthpiece
25. \_\_\_-Grain (breakfast bars)
26. As well
27. "... to \_\_\_ it mildly"
28. Task
29. Belarus port
31. Markings on some breakfast bread?
36. Top spot
37. MSNBC, WSJ, etc.
40. X, y, or z
41. Patch up
42. Guy who does Casper's voice?
45. Sit in the sun
47. Corn holder
50. Western writer Bret
51. Slightly off
52. Animation frame
53. Generate some interest?
54. Munched on
55. Graybeard
57. Throw a jalapeño down an alley?
60. Patella's location
61. Polynesian language
63. Situate
64. Flying nannies?
68. Fall guy
70. "I love you," in Spanish
71. Insta, Uber, etc.
72. Other players on the team who can't come through in the clutch?
74. Uneasy feeling
76. Border-crossing necessities
79. Klutzes
80. Soaked to the bone
81. Sheet of print
83. Cosmetics' Lauder
85. Contraction in poems
86. Caribou or whitetail
88. Nirvana attainer of a certain area?
90. Easy running pace
91. Auditor's dream
92. Sex ed. topic
93. WYSIWYG, in two words
94. One amassing displays of affection?
100. Feudal workers
102. \_\_\_-couriers (scouts)
103. Long, long time
104. Anxious med. condition
107. Lover's quarrels
109. It's bordered by eight states
111. Stow things in an airship?
115. Begins, as an adventure
116. Irrationality
117. Norwegian eau de parfum
118. Mattel educational toys with farm animal noises
119. "Take a shot!"
120. Baby carrier?

Down

- 1. Greg who had the 1983 hit "Jeopardy"
2. Members in a typing pool?
3. "Charm City"
4. Have questions
5. Give up



©2023

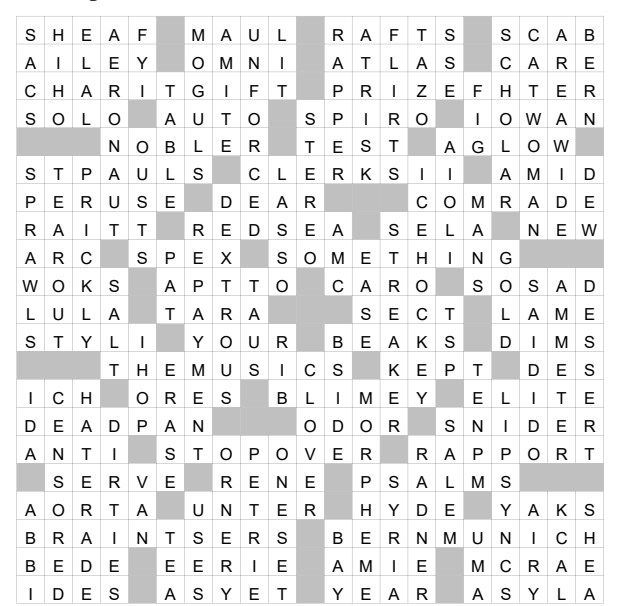
- 6. Till
7. Magic Kingdom's neighbor
8. "How impressive!"
9. Take advantage of
10. Rep.'s counterpart
11. Freshen, as a drink
12. "Don't Cry for Me Argentina" musical
13. Cut (off)
14. Office holder
15. Kind of nut
16. One who is rarely himself
17. Firm
18. Heavy books
20. Mother of Horus
23. "\_\_\_ & Celestine"
27. Liq. measures
30. maps.google.it meas.
32. Acorn bearers
33. Wood choppers
34. Title for Brian May
35. Sound of impatience
36. Turkish title
38. Dark suit
39. Postable joke
43. Adolescent
44. Flying space
45. Provide with a headpiece
46. Totally
47. Like Dracula and Batman
48. Part of a bakery
49. "Sesame Street" character with a unibrow
52. Pear leftover
53. Kissing game turns
56. "They should do what they do!"
57. \_\_\_-chic
58. Exhausts, in slang
59. Blew one's top
60. Wackos
61. Curators' degs.
62. Card often swiped
64. Minor missteps
65. Riverbank romper
66. Some are corny
67. Spicy stew
68. Highlander

- 69. Like the sport krabi-krabong
73. Stunned reverence
74. Barley wine, e.g.
75. Writing points
76. "Categorically untrue!"
77. Abstaining
78. Play structures?
81. Military stronghold
82. Aware of
84. Shannon of "First Take"
86. Cooks, as books
87. Bigheadedness
88. Bengals coach Taylor
89. Orthodontist's deg.
90. "Supernatural" star Ackles
91. Cygnet's mother
94. "42nd Street" song
95. Sheeplike

- 96. Spoonful, say
97. Man's name that means "the king"
98. Meat cuts
99. Where to get a fast buck?
101. "First Take" channel
105. Old Russian autocrat
106. South Asian
108. Make out, in Manchester
110. Where 136 of the world's 500 largest companies are HQed
111. Steakhead
112. Bed-In for Peace participant
113. Toy cry
114. Dispensary stuff

Last issue's solution

"Falling Leaves"



PUBLICATION OF THE COMMONS CROSSWORD IS UNDERWRITTEN BY

Advertisement for Brattleboro Tire. Includes logo, text: "Locally owned for over 46 years!", "TIRES & ALL UNDER CAR SERVICE", "802-254-5411", "558 Putney Rd.", "IT WILL GET COLD AND SNOW THIS WINTER... BE READY!", "Oil Change \$74.95 FULL SYNTHETIC UP TO 5 QTS. INCLUDES 30 POINT COURTESY CHECK Fluids • Belts • Hoses • Steering • Brakes Lights & Much More Upon Request", "Schedule your preventative maintenance for February and get 10% OFF", "VT State Inspections • Courtesy cars or rides available at no cost".

**COLUMN** | Sports Roundup

# A win for the BUHS girls, a loss for the BUHS boys against Mount Anthony

Everything seemed lined up in favor of the Brattleboro Bears boys' basketball team going into their Feb. 2 game against the Mount Anthony Patriots at the BUHS gym.

The Bears were coming off the high of a buzzer-beating victory over Burr & Burton on Jan. 26, and they had a week off to prepare for their Route 9 rivals.

And, for the first three quarters, Bears fans saw a close, intense, and competitive game. Then MAU seniors Carter Thompson and Shemar Sookdar sparked a 15-3 run in the first six minutes of the fourth quarter and the Patriots left town with a 63-54 victory.

Thompson and Sookdar combined for 45 of the Patriots' 63 points, with Thompson scoring a game-high 27. Both also played great defense to force turnovers that quickly were transformed into points for MAU.

Brattleboro held their own in the first half. After scratching out a 9-7 lead after one quarter, senior forward John Haskins scored 10 of his team-high 18 points in the second quarter as he dominated inside and turned several offensive rebounds into baskets. The first half ended in a 26-26 tie.

"John Haskins is undoubtedly our team MVP," said Brattleboro coach Winston Sailsman Jr. "Game in and game out, he's always a force on the boards. He's always giving us opportunities to stay in games. I can't say enough about him."

The third quarter was just about as even, but the tide started turning in the Patriots' favor when a 15-footer by Thompson gave MAU a 40-39 lead with 3:23 left. From that point, the Patriots gradually shifted the momentum and took a 48-43 lead into the fourth quarter.

Brattleboro struggled to score in the final quarter. Aside from a pair of three-pointers by junior guard Keagan Systo, the Bears could not stop the Patriots' surge. They contained Haskins in the second half, holding him to just four points on free throws. Systo finished with 10 points, while junior guard John Satterfield added nine points.

"I tried to tell them to slow it down," Sailsman said of the Bears' play in the fourth quarter. "They started to rush to get back in the game, and that's when the turnovers began to hurt us."

The Bears fell to 5-10 with the loss. They hold the No. 11 spot in the Division I standings with four games to play in the regular season.

## Girls' basketball

• Brattleboro is starting to build some momentum for the playoffs. On Feb. 1 in Bennington, the Bears beat Mount Anthony, 45-33, to sweep the season series with the Patriots.

MAU tried to concentrate their defensive efforts on shutting down sophomore guards Reese Croutworst and Abby Henry. The strategy was somewhat successful. Croutworst got all of her team-high 14 points in the first half, and was held scoreless in the second half, while Henry was held to five points and was in foul trouble for much of the game.

But Brattleboro had plenty of other scoring options. Senior guard Kate Pattison picked up the slack and scored 12 points on four three-pointers. The Bears enter the final three



**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](mailto:news@commonsnews.org).

weeks of the season with a 7-6 record and the No. 9 ranking in Division I.

• After a 51-46 loss to Springfield on Jan. 29 and a 43-23 loss to Hartford on Feb. 1, Bellows Falls got back into the win column with a 57-55 victory over White River Valley on Feb. 3 in Royalton. BF ended the week with a 10-4 record with the No. 5 ranking in Division III.

• Leland & Gray is starting to get it together as the regular season winds down. They have won their last four games, including a 40-30 victory over Green Mountain on Jan. 29 and a 39-17 road win over Woodstock on Feb. 2. The Rebels ended the week with an 8-8 record and the No. 7 ranking in Division IV.

• Twin Valley is still searching for its first win of the season. The 0-13 Wildcats dropped a pair of road games last week — a 43-28 loss to Mill River on Jan. 29 and a 41-24 loss to Green Mountain on Jan. 31.

## Boys' basketball

• Twin Valley lost to visiting White River Valley, 47-44, on Jan. 30, but bounced back with a 65-34 victory at Arlington on Feb. 2 to improve to 10-6 on the season. They hold the No. 4 spot in the Division IV rankings.

• Bellows Falls is sliding down the Division III rankings. After a 62-50 home loss to Mount Anthony on Jan. 30 and a 69-34 loss at Otter Valley on Feb. 2, the Terriers are now 6-10 and hold the No. 13 spot in the division.

• Leland & Gray's struggles continue as their losing streak increased to 11 games with three losses last week — a 71-43 road loss at West Rutland on Jan. 30, and home losses to Woodstock (49-44 on Feb. 1) and Rivendell (67-58 on Feb. 2). The Rebels ended the week at 2-14 and are ranked No. 14 in Division IV.

## Ice hockey

• The Brattleboro girls gave up five goals in the first two periods in a 6-1 loss to Rutland at Withington Rink on Jan. 31. Lily Carignan had the goal for the Bears in the third period. Brattleboro then lost to Missisquoi, 10-0, in Swanton on Feb. 3 to fall to 1-13 for the season.

• The Brattleboro boys lost at Milton, 3-0, on Jan. 31. Noah Keeler, Luke Bushey, and Jacob Deuso were the goal scorers for Milton as Bears goaltender James Fagley made 18 saves. On Feb. 3, the Bears beat visiting Rutland, 6-2, to improve their record to 6-6-3.

## Nordic skiing

• The Brattleboro boys finished third behind Mount Anthony and Woodstock in the Woodstock Classic on Jan. 30. Nico Conathan-Leach led the Bears with a seventh-place finish in 17 minutes, 30 seconds.

With the lack of snow, it's been hard to stage races, but weather permitting, the Brattleboro girls' and boys' teams will be skiing in the



RANDOLPH T. HOLHUT/THE COMMONS  
**Brattleboro forward John Haskins (24) tries to block a shot by Mount Anthony's Shemar Sookdar during the first half of their boys' basketball game on Feb. 2 at the BUHS gym.**

Southern Vermont League Championships, with the Classic event on Feb. 7 at either Wild Wings in Peru or Prospect Mountain in Woodford, the Skate event on Feb. 14 at either the Brattleboro Outing Club or Prospect, and the Relay event on Feb. 20 at Mountain Top Resort in Chittenden.

The state Classic Championships are scheduled for Feb. 27 at Rikert Outdoor Center in Ripton, while the Skate Championships are scheduled for March 1 at Craftsbury Outdoor Center.

## Vermont State Parks are hiring for the 2024 season

• With warmer weather just around the corner, Vermont State Parks are gearing up for their annual spring hiring.

"If you love working outside and making a difference, meeting people from all over the world, and being part of a team, you might just be the next great addition to the Vermont State Park staff," according to the state's recruiting pitch.

There are openings for a commuting assistant manager at Fort Dummer State Park in Brattleboro and Townshend State Park. And all state parks — including Jamaica State Park and Molly Stark State Park in Wilmington — have attendant openings. To learn more about these jobs, and others around the state, visit [vtstateparks.com/employment.html](http://vtstateparks.com/employment.html).

## Volunteers needed for Harris Hill Ski Jump Weekend

• Next weekend, Feb. 17 and 18, is the Harris Hill Ski Jump, and volunteers are needed to pitch in for a shift or full day to help make this year's event a success.

For more details, contact Volunteer Coordinator Kathryn Einig at [ktown969@gmail.com](mailto:ktown969@gmail.com), or visit [harrishillskijump.com](http://harrishillskijump.com).



RANDOLPH T. HOLHUT COMMONS FILE PHOTO  
**Brattleboro center Lily Carignan (5), seen here skating against Middlebury last month, scored her team's only goal in a 6-1 loss to Rutland on Jan. 31 at Withington Rink.**

## Rec. Dept. offers youth indoor soccer

• The Brattleboro Recreation & Parks Department will offer youth indoor soccer beginning the week of Feb. 26 and continuing through March 27.

Pick-up games will take place from 5 to 6 p.m. in the Gibson-Aiken Center's Third Floor Gym. Grades K-1 will play on Mondays, Grades 2-3 on Tuesdays, and Grades 4-6 on Wednesdays. Scores will not be kept. Shin guards and sneakers are required. The focus will be on having fun. Don't forget to bring water. The fee is \$20 for Brattleboro residents and \$35 for non-residents. Space is limited. Individuals can register online at [register1.vermontsystems.com/wbwc/vtbrattleboro](http://register1.vermontsystems.com/wbwc/vtbrattleboro), [wsc/splash.html](http://wsc/splash.html), or in person

Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to noon and 1 to 4:30 p.m., at the Gibson-Aiken Center on Main Street. For more information, call 802-254-5808 or visit their Facebook or Instagram pages.

## Senior bowling roundup

• Week 5 of the winter/spring season of the Brattleboro Senior Bowling League at Brattleboro Bowl on Feb. 2 saw High Rollers (21-4) have another 5-0 week to remain in first place while Good Times (17-8) had a 4-1 week to hold on to second place. Stepping Stones II and Four Seasons (both 11-14) remain tied for third, followed by Stayin' Alive (10-14), Hairiers (10-15), Four Pins (10-15), and Slow Movers (9-16).

Roberta Parsons had the women's high handicap game (233) and series (613), while Fred Ashworth had the men's high handicap game (260) and series (704). Good Times had the high team handicap game (896) and series (2,617).

Ashworth had the men's high scratch series (608) with games of 234 and 200. Peter Deyo had a 605 series with games of 234 and 193. Robert Rigby had a 596 series with games of 211 and 207, while Milt Sherman had a 540 series with a 193 game and Gary Montgomery had a 519 series with a 195 game. Charlie Marchant had a 511 series, Rick Westcott had a 505 series, and Jerry Dunham had a 190 game.

Diane Cooke had the women's high scratch series (440), with games of 153 and 152. Nancy Dalzell had a 150 game.

**Members 1<sup>st</sup> CREDIT UNION** [members1cu.com](http://members1cu.com)  
Small Credit Union. Big Heart.  
10 Browne Crt. P.O. Box 8245 N. Brattleboro, VT 05304  
Tel: (802) 257-5131 Fax: (802) 257-5837  
EQUAL HOUSING OPPORTUNITY NCUA