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Brattleboro, Vermont • Wednesday, January 25, 2023 • Vol. XVIII, No. 4 • Issue No. 699

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



RANDOLPH T. HOLHUT/THE COMMONS

The closing of Hotel Pharmacy marks the end of family-run drugstores in Brattleboro — thanks, its owner says, to insurance and pharmaceutical industry pricing practices that made it impossible not to lose money

I had **NOTHING LEFT**

Pharmacist Mary Giamartino reaches for medication to fill a customer's prescription at Hotel Pharmacy on Jan. 14.

By Joyce Marcel
The Commons

BRATTLEBORO—The closing of the 83-year-old Hotel Pharmacy on Elliot Street on Jan. 17 marked the end of so many eras like a Shakespearian tragedy without the poetry. Much sadness. Many tears. Emptying shelves. Emptying space. A sense of

emptying lives. The end of family-run pharmacies in Brattleboro. The end of owner Mary Giamartino's long-held desire to help people. The end of 20 important, well-paying jobs. The end of a small community of people who depended on the staff of the pharmacy to fill its prescriptions, to listen to its health needs, and to personally provide needed help and advice.

And the end of Brattleboro's image as a small Vermont town managing to escape the grip of national chains. All during the closing weeks, ever since it was announced that Giamartino, 67, had sold her business to Walgreens, people were coming in a steady stream to say how grateful they were to have had the downtown pharmacy there — and how sad they were that it would be closing.

■ SEE PHARMACY, A4

What is the government we need, and how do we pay for it?

Brattleboro representative savors new role as chair of Ways and Means, the committee that asks the big questions about state government and how to fund it

By Joyce Marcel
The Commons

BRATTLEBORO—This year, State Rep. Emilie Kornheiser has hit the ground running. The Windham-7 district representative, a Democrat and one of three House members from Brattleboro, opened the legislative session when she was chosen to nominate the current speaker of the House, Jill Krowinski

(D-Burlington). It was a high honor, she said. "We in the building tend to talk about people working tirelessly, rather than skillfully or compassionately," said Kornheiser. "So when I was offered the honor, it was really important to me to talk about some different qualities that I think are important in leadership." So in her nomination speech,

■ SEE KORNHEISER, A2

Legislature extends towns' flexibility for Town Meetings

If signed by governor, bill would continue with pandemic-inspired measures like ballots and online information sessions

By Kevin O'Connor
VtDigger.org

The Vermont Legislature has approved a two-year extension of COVID-19-era options for how and when the state's 247 cities and towns decide upon local leaders, spending, and special articles. Bill H.42 mirrors legislation passed in 2021 and 2022 that allowed municipalities to make short-term, pandemic-safe changes to Town Meeting

— traditionally held on or around the first Tuesday in March — and gather governing boards solely online. "With the rising cases of Covid variants, there's a real question in a lot of our communities about whether we can get participation in decisions about local government without some flexibility," said Rep. Michael McCarthy, a St. Albans Democrat and chair of the House Government Operations

■ SEE TOWN MEETING BILL, A8

A 'magical hub' emerges in Rockingham

In a sprawling former inn, a new nonprofit offers artistic education and community, with dance and performance at its heart

By Robert F. Smith
The Commons

ROCKINGHAM—In 2020, Nurnia Bowart and Jared Williams, friends and colleagues who are both in the midst of life transitions, decided to become business partners and buy

a 48-acre former inn. As they transform the property into an arts education nonprofit, The Field Center, they are creating what Bowart describes as "a center for contemporary art practices, with dance and performance at its heart." No strangers to alternative education, Bowart and Williams met while attending The Putney School in the late 1980s and early 1990s, and despite leading quite different lives, they remained friends and stayed in touch. Bowart went to college at Bryn Mawr, then became a dancer, an artist, and teacher. She did therapeutic work, living in the San Francisco area for many years. She married and started a family. Williams grew up in the Boston area. After graduating from the Rhode Island School of Design, where he studied visual arts,

■ SEE FIELD CENTER, A8



ROBERT F. SMITH/THE COMMONS

Participants in a Contact Improv group workshop at the Field Center in Rockingham.

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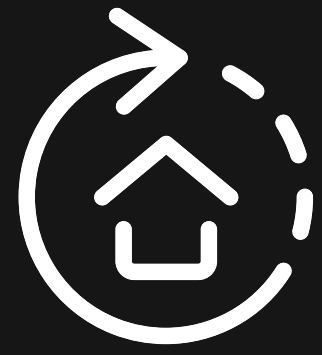
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The shelves at Hotel Pharmacy on Elliot Street as seen on Jan. 14, just three days before owner Mary Giamartino (inset) closed its doors for good.

Pharmacy

FROM SECTION FRONT

“All of the patients and people in the community have come in and been very grateful,” Giamartino said. “Many of them were crying.”

Giamartino, who had a haunted, hollowed-out look, was trying to hold back her own tears when she said that.

As she describes it, she lost her business to predatory pricing in the pharmaceutical industry. Middlemen, in league with chain pharmacies and drug insurers, appear to have engineered drug prices and insurance reimbursements to their sole benefits, leaving independent pharmacies unable to afford to stay in business.

“There was just nothing left in the well,” Giamartino said. “I put everything I could into it to keep it going. But I had nothing left.”

Even with the sale of a thriving business to a major chain like Walgreen’s, Giamartino is not sure how much, if any, money she will recoup. She fully intends to pay all her bills; what is left, she said, might be only as much as \$100,000. That is because she used up almost every bit of her own money to keep the pharmacy running.

“I got a couple of grants,” Giamartino said. “I used my personal finances to keep things going. My retirement fund. But

there’s nothing left. I just couldn’t do it anymore.”

Jodi Harrison has worked for Hotel Pharmacy for 29 years. She said the last weeks were incredibly difficult for the staff.

“There’s been many tears,” Harrison said. “We’ve tried to make it as easy as possible for the transition, but we just found out about the sale on the Tuesday before Christmas. So we’ve really had to come together as a tech team.”

“It’s hardest on the patients,” she observed.

“I would always dig a little bit deeper than I think the box store is going to for these people,” Harrison continued. “I know that there’s not a lot happiness at Walgreens. And I’m not saying we’re perfect here, but we really did try to go above and beyond and do what we could for the patient. I think that’s important to say.”

A legislative look

Last year, the Legislature passed a bill, signed into law as Act 131, to investigate and possibly regulate the pharmaceutical industry in Vermont — including those middlemen — although any regulation would come far too late for Giamartino.

The state’s Department of Financial Regulation recently published a 68-page analysis of the law, written by Kevin Gaffney, the state agency’s commissioner.

His brief was “to study certain issues related to pharmacy benefit managers (PBMs), which act as an intermediary between health plans and pharmacies, and to deliver a report with findings and recommendations to the House Committee on Health Care and the Senate Committees on Health and Welfare and on Finance.”

Gaffney opened his analysis with this admission: “Prescription drugs represent a significantly expensive and exceptionally complicated sector of the American health care system.”

“Complicated” is the right word.

“To obtain prescription drugs, pharmacies contract with wholesalers either directly, as in the case of large chain pharmacies, or through third-party buying groups for smaller independent pharmacies,” Gaffney wrote. “The contracts control prices, payment terms, logistics, and financial incentives for meeting certain distribution thresholds.”

“Pharmacies have some discretion in setting retail prices (also known as the ‘cash price’) for patients without insurance. However, the amount that a pharmacy is reimbursed for dispensing prescription drugs to insured patients is entirely determined by the pharmacy’s contract with pharmacy benefit managers.”

Smaller pharmacies “have little choice but to accept the reimbursement rates set by pharmacy benefit managers,” Gaffney said.

He concluded that the state has an interest in regulating pharmaceutical industry practices in Vermont and called for “requiring Pharmacy Benefit Managers (PBMs) to receive a license from the Commissioner to operate in Vermont.”

But it is too little, too late for Giamartino. Sitting at her work table with stacks and stacks of pharmaceutical paperwork in front of her, she illustrated the problem.

“OK,” she said, pulling one paper from the stack. “This is one prescription. My cost is \$189.12. And this is what the insurance paid me: \$15.21. The patient’s co-pay was \$10. So I was out \$163.91.”

Giamartino did not want to pass the \$163.91 on to the patient. “That’s what Walgreens does,” she said. “It’s not the right thing to do. And I had to get her the drugs. She was dying.”

To get drugs at all, Giamartino was forced to sign contracts that, among other things, require a certain number of prescriptions to be filled every month. If, as a small independent retailer, she could not make the quota, she would be penalized, with money drawn directly from her bank account.

There were other fines as well. “For example, say somebody has a prescription that they have to pick up every 90 days,” Giamartino said. “If they don’t get it on the 90th day, I get fined. They just take the money out of my checking account.”

These fines have added up to thousands and thousands of lost dollars for the independent pharmacist.

“The pharmacy benefit managers run the insurance claims through and take a cut,” Giamartino said. “It’s been going on for a long time, but it’s gotten a lot worse.”

“Look at all these drugs!” she said, flipping through her stack of paperwork. “Loss, loss, loss, loss, loss, loss, because they don’t even cover the cost of the drug. It’s so incomprehensible. That’s what people

PUBLIC NOTICES

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STATE OF VERMONT

SUPERIOR COURT **PROBATE DIVISION**
 Windham Unit Docket No.: 22-PR-06574
 In re ESTATE of: Elizabeth Chromec

NOTICE TO CREDITORS

To the creditors of Elizabeth Chromec, late of Saxtons River, Vermont

I have been appointed to administer this estate. All creditors having claims against the decedent or the estate must present their claims in writing within four (4) months of the first publication of this notice. The claim must be presented to me at the address listed below with a copy sent to the Court. The claim may be barred forever if it is not presented within the four (4) month period.

Dated: January 12, 2023 c/o Dakin & Benelli, P.C.
 Margaret C. Lacoste, Executor PO Box 499
Chester, VT 05143

Name of Publication: The Commons 802-875-4000
 Publication Date: January 25, 2023

Name of Probate Court: Vermont Superior Court, Windham Unit, Probate Division
 Address of Probate Court: 30 Putney Road, Brattleboro, VT 05301

Important Annual Notice Regarding Herbicide Use in the Maintenance of Electric Utility Rights-of-Way

The Vermont Public Utility Commission has set forth rules under PUC Rule 3.600 pertaining to the use of herbicides in the maintenance of electric utility rights-of-way (ROW). Each spring, herbicide applications may begin on or after April 1st. These rules afford you important rights and duties. Vermont electric utilities maintain electric line rights-of-way with several methods, including the selective use of herbicides on trees and brush. They also encourage low-growing shrubs and trees which will crowd tall-growing species and, thus, minimize the use of herbicides. Methods of herbicide applications may include stump, stem injection, basal, soil, and foliar. **Only electric utility rights-of-way that have tall-growing tree species with the potential of threatening the electric utility system are treated.**

If you reside on or own property in Vermont within 1000’ of an electric utility right-of-way:

- Sign up to receive written notification** from your local electric utility of plans to apply herbicide on any ROW within 1000’ of your property or the property where you reside. Check nearby poles for tags identifying the utility and/or pole number, complete the form below and submit it to your local electric utility by mail before February 15th, 2023 to be added to the notification list. If determined to be qualified, you will receive notification from the utility at least 30 days prior to scheduled herbicide application.
- You are responsible to make your local electric utility aware** of the location of any potentially affected water supply, and of any other environmentally sensitive area where herbicide application ought to be avoided.
- Watch and listen for public service announcements** in newspapers and radio ads noting upcoming herbicide applications.
- Check with your local electric utility** regarding the vegetation management cycle near your particular line.
- You have the right** to request, in writing, that the utility refrain from applying herbicides in the process of clearing the right-of-way, and the utility may offer alternatives such as herbicide stump treatment or herbicide stem injections.
- You have the right** to refuse, in writing, the use of herbicides whatsoever at no cost to you if the type of lines in the right-of-way are **distribution lines**, bringing electric service directly to individual customers.
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For more details, or to ask additional questions, please contact your local electric utility, or one of the following:

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Based on the information above, if you believe you qualify to be notified in advance of pending herbicide applications in the rights-of-way, mail the request below to your local electric company before February 15th, 2023.

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RANDOLPH T. HOLHUT/THE COMMONS

A photo of the late Frank Giamartino, who ran Hotel Pharmacy with his wife, Mary, until his death in 2006.

don't understand. They'll pay you, but then they take all the money away."

Jeff Hochberg, the president of the Vermont Retail Druggists Association, told VTDigger, "Pharmacies are not in control of their financials — we don't control the cost of the medications, nor do we control the reimbursement. Every state in the country is feeling this, rural ones in particular. I think that pharmacy is a great bellwether for true reform of the health care system."

Brattleboro now has no independent pharmacies, and the chains are consolidating.

In June of 2017, Walgreens bought half the stores in the Rite Aid chain, which at the time operated pharmacies on Canal Street and Putney Road in Brattleboro.

In response to antitrust concerns, the two chains scuttled plans for a merger. The Putney Road pharmacy was sold, but not the Canal Street Rite Aid, located across the street from Walgreens' Canal Street store.

The only other independent pharmacy in town, Brattleboro Pharmacy on Canal Street, closed last year. The nearest independent pharmacies now are in Townshend and Bellows Falls.

Grace Cottage Hospital owns and runs the Messenger Valley Pharmacy in Townshend, across the street from the hospital's clinic.

"We have the same problems as Hotel Pharmacy," said Andrea Seaton, the hospital's senior director of development, marketing, and community relations. "We keep our pharmacy open as

a community service, because this is the only pharmacy in any direction for 20 miles, even though we're losing money every year."

A historic loss

Once there really was a hotel connected to the Hotel Pharmacy.

It opened in the Brooks House in 1940, where a restaurant, Tine, now sits. The pharmacy kept its name through further moves, first to the old Elliot Street fire station in 1978 (now the home of Everyone's Books) and to its final

home, across the street in the old Methodist Church in 1992.

The place kept its church-like atmosphere, with a big rose-colored stained glass window facing the street and impossibly high ceilings inside. The floor was lined with shelves of useful and hard-to-find hospital-style supplies as well as the usual cosmetic items found in drug stores today.

Mary and Frank Giamartino met in pharmaceutical school and decided together to live and work in Brattleboro. Frank first worked

for the original owners of the pharmacy, and, for a time, Mary Giamartino ran the pharmacy at Brattleboro Memorial Hospital.

Then the two began working together; they bought Hotel Pharmacy in 1982. When they moved to the church building, in March of 1992, they first lived in an apartment in the building's basement.

The Giamartinos became intimately involved in community activities, especially in high school sports while their sons played. In 2001, one of their sons died at the age of 17. Five years later, in 2006, Frank died in a car crash at the age of 53.

While Giamartino was grieving, an employee, a pharmaceutical technician embezzled upward of \$1 million worth of hydrocodone from the business — tens of thousands of pills, according to press reports of his sentencing.

The employee served a one-year-and-one-day sentence in federal prison and remained on probation until he paid the pharmacy \$8,500 in restitution — less than 1% of the financial impact to the small business.

"It was horrible," she said. "And I was advised to declare bankruptcy then. But I didn't because I felt that the people who I bought the goods from should get paid."

Giamartino continued running the business, donating to local charities and organizations and remaining a mainstay of downtown.

Over the years, the pharmacy has offered 24-hour-seven-day-a-week emergency service, local delivery, curbside service, and pharmacists so skilled they had the almost-lost ability to compound medication.

Meanwhile, the pharmaceutical business was becoming less and less viable.

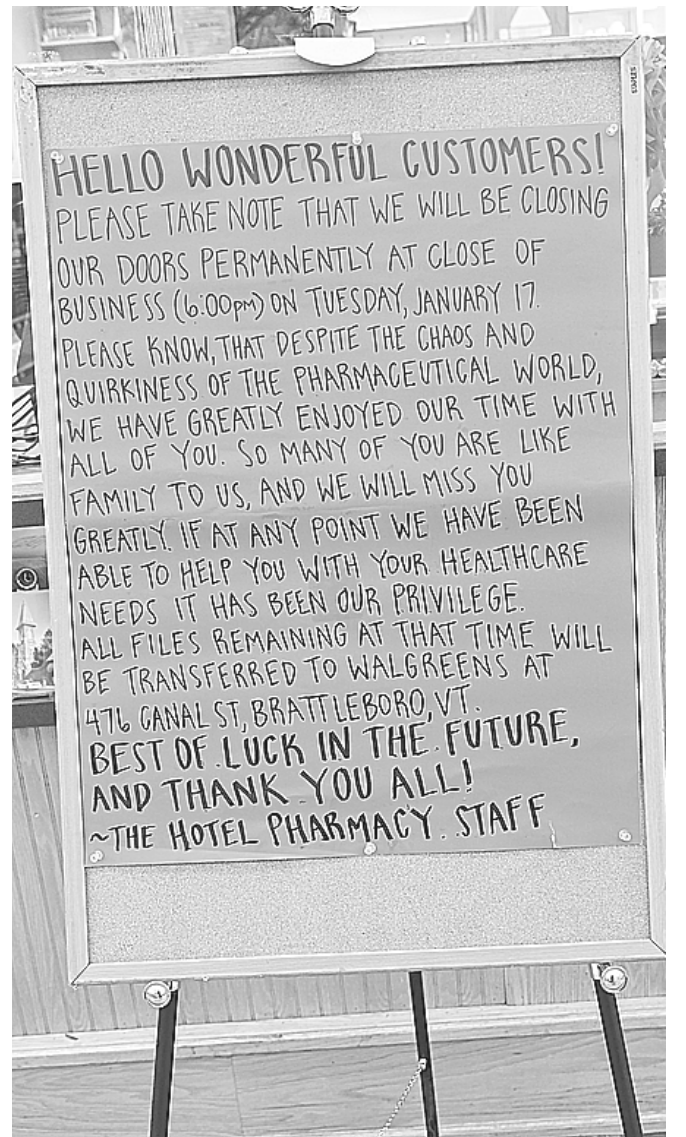
At first, Giamartino tried to cut costs by dropping advertising, then donations to community causes, then staff raises and bonuses.

This past year she looked for someone to buy the business. She found no takers.

"I tried to sell it to an independent," Giamartino said. "I wrote to all 50 states, to independent trade newspapers. Nothing. I went to the National Community Pharmacists Association convention and put it up there. Nobody."

"The people who buy and sell pharmacies? They're only selling," she said.

"My friend in Bennington just



RANDOLPH T. HOLHUT/THE COMMONS

A sign reports the coming closure of Brattleboro's Hotel Pharmacy after 83 years.

sold his three stores a couple of weeks ago for the same reason — he was losing money," Giamartino said. "He sold to a couple that owns eight other pharmacies. So technically, they're a chain. But they're not Walgreens. They kept the store names."

"I reached out, but they didn't approach me," she said.

Still, Giamartino persevered.

"I love what I do," she said.

"I love the family of co-workers here. They are fantastic. I know we were giving people the best health care. And I wanted to sell it to somebody who would keep it independent, so that people who wanted to use our pharmacy could still do it."

"We enjoy our patients. We like taking care of them and seeing them get better," Giamartino continued. "We've seen grandparents, parents, children, even great grandchildren through the

years. And even with people who are dying, we want to make sure that they die the way they want to, in peace."

Eventually, Giamartino reached a deal with Walgreens, transferred up to 2,000 of her patients' prescriptions there, and quietly closed down the store. The last day of business was Jan. 17.

The building is on the market, and Giamartino is already fielding job offers. She plans to take a few months to clear her head and then decide what she will do next.

In the meantime, an 83-year history is done and many, many people are sad about it.

To quote Shakespeare (*Romeo and Juliet*, Act 5, Scene 3): "O true apothecary! Thy drugs are quick. Thus with a kiss I die."

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



Mary Giamartino heads down the stairs from her office at Hotel Pharmacy.



RANDOLPH T. HOLHUT/THE COMMONS

Brattleboro's Hotel Pharmacy has operated out of the town's former Methodist church on Elliot Street since 1993.

arts & community CALENDAR

THURSDAY FRIDAY CONT. SATURDAY CONT. SUNDAY CONT. MONDAY TUESDAY CONT.

26

Instruction LONDONDERRY Bernie Mittens Workshop: Heidi Root leads this workshop and will provide the material to sew a pair of Bernie Mittens! She'll also have pre-made pairs on hand.

Well-being BRATTLEBORO 2023 Life's Intentions Workshop (for ages 14 to 18): "Through creating intentions that align with one's life values we create a path that actively helps us show up in the world in a way that one can be proud of."

Community building BRATTLEBORO The Beloved Community: Bible Study and Free Supper: With Rev. Ralph W. Howe, Pastor.

Community meals PUTNEY Putney Monthly Free Produce Distribution: Monthly food drop of free produce and some non-perishables. All are welcome.

Visual arts and shows BRATTLEBORO Marco Yunga Tacuri's Display/Artist Talk: "Los Longos del Barrio - A Portrait Project About Ecuadorian Immigration"

FRIDAY 27

Performing arts BRATTLEBORO "REGENERATIONS: Reckoning with Radioactivity": This 2nd iteration of an interdisciplinary performance project of poetry, dance, projection, live music focuses on spent radioactive fuel, radioactive water, and soil left behind by Vermont Yankee.

The written word BRATTLEBORO GennaRose Nethercott presents: "Thistlefoot" - An Immersive Experience: Local author GennaRose Nethercott presents her highly acclaimed epic novel, "Thistlefoot," with an immersive reading and evocative puppet show.

her highly acclaimed epic novel, "Thistlefoot," with an immersive reading and evocative puppet show. Rife with rivalry, romance, regret and redemption, this ripping yarn features scenes set in Brattleboro.

SATURDAY 28

Performing arts NEWFANE Evening of Story and Song plus a Spaghetti Supper: Enjoy a concert of story and song by mezzo-soprano Miriam Allbee and pianist Mike Kelly.

Farmers' markets BRATTLEBORO Brattleboro Winter Farmers' Market: Weekly diverse indoor farmers' market. Local farm produce, meats, syrup, fresh baked goods, fruits, cider, preserves, handmade jewelry, pottery, soaps, more.

The written word "Writing Dramatic Scenes Part 2" (Online): Led by Barbara Morrison: "In this workshop, appropriate for beginning and experienced writers, we'll explore how to use scenes to create a story."

SUNDAY 29

Well-being BRATTLEBORO Food Choices with Robin Matathias - Sea Vegetables: We read and hear how we should eat more fish for health reasons, but with our growing population and modern technology, we are fishing some species close to extinction.

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

vegetables and incorporating them into your diet. 2-4:30 p.m. Register by 1/27. Brattleboro Food Co-op Community Room, 7 Canal St. Information: Register; Education@BFC.coop.

BRATTLEBORO The Beloved Community VT: Gentle Exercise and Sacred Dance Class, Lunch, Workshop on Active Non-Violence: Led by Rev. Ralph W. Howe, Pastor. 11 a.m.-12 noon on Saturdays: Gentle Exercise and Sacred Dance Class, 12 noon: Lunch; 12:45-2:30 p.m. Workshop on Active Non-Violence.

Multimedia BRATTLEBORO Workshop: "What is Hidden? What is Revealed?": Local radio personality Wendy M. Levy presents a participatory workshop on how to use existing printed media to create new works of art.

Ideas and education BRATTLEBORO First Time Home Buying Workshop: Learn the basics of home-buying from realtor John Hatton. Find out about resources you might qualify for from Kayla Bernier-Wright of Windham and Windsor Housing Trust.

ing Through Poetry" (In-Person/Zoom): "Poetry services are a beloved twice yearly tradition here. Today, we will honor the monthly UU theme of Finding Our Center by sharing poems which focus on and distill our sense of who we are."

Community building Indigo Radio (Brattleboro Community Radio (107.7FM): Deepening understanding/making connections! Indigo Radio is a group of area educators seeking to learn through engaging with others in our community and throughout the world.

Dance PUTNEY Contradance: Ruth Holler-in will be calling and Amy and Laurie will be playing. This will be our new time and day for at least the next 3 dances. We hope that families with children will take this opportunity to dance with us.

Ideas and education PUTNEY Gordon Hayward gives a talk based on his 2008 book "Art and the Gardener": Juxtaposing an image on the large screen of a fine painting next to a garden image, Hayward explores composition elements: straight lines vs. curved lines in paintings as well as paths/planted beds; the itinerary of the eye; positive/negative space (as in the positive space of planted beds and the negative space of adjacent lawn); color, light/shadow, role of background, placing easels to paint as akin to placing garden chairs to sit.

30

Community building BRATTLEBORO Instant Pot Fun! Hands-on Workshop with Edible Brattleboro: Learn how quick and easy it is to prepare soup, greens, and a dessert in an Instant Pot. Together we will prepare a 3-course vegan meal and sit down at the communal table to enjoy it!

TUESDAY 31

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.

Ideas and education Patti Smith: "Raising Pumpkin" (Zoom): Born to a single mother in a stone culvert, this beaver's life was strange from the start. It got stranger still. Much stranger. Learn about Pumpkin's childhood in the Beaver Lodge and many adventures that ensued on his path to adulthood.

Zoom. Information: Learn more/register: tinyurl.com/jauzpc5f.

WEDNESDAY 1

Music GREENFIELD Black History Month Celebration with Musica Franklin (staff and students performance): Family-friendly concert features music by Black composers - Robert Glasper, Florence Price, Cynthia Erivo, Gloria Matlock in addition to traditional spirituals.

Well-being Taking Steps Brattleboro: Advance Care Planning Weekly Information Sessions (via Zoom): Advance Care Planning ensures that your loved ones and health professionals know what you want in a medical emergency if you are unable to speak for yourself.

To submit your event: calendar@commonsnews.org. Deadline: 5 p.m. Friday. Visit commonsnews.org for more listings with more details.

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

bc tv LOCAL PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS Jan. 16-22 CHANNEL 1078 CHANNEL 1079

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Table with 2 columns: Program Name and Time. Includes entries like 'Here We Are with guest Eduardo Melendez', 'The World Fusion Show', 'Special Live Event - Windham County's Got Talent', etc.

Note: Schedule subject to change. View full schedule and watch online at brattleboroTV.org. BCTV's Program Highlights are sponsored by The Commons.

SUNDAY 29 The written word W. BRATTLEBORO All Souls Church Unitarian Universalist: "Center

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Field Center FROM SECTION FRONT

he worked as an illustrator for many years. In 2000, he moved to Brattleboro and got married. He then moved back to Boston for 20 years. He was practicing the Brazilian martial art of capoeira, which combines elements of dance and acrobatics, and, with Bowart's encouragement, he began to find a love of improvisational dance.

"The way I do things is to give it my all," Williams said. "I really wanted to get good at dance. I wanted more access to things. I started to bring in really good dance teachers and producing dance events. I fell in love with teaching improv dancing."

Williams is the cofounder of the Lion's Jaw Performance and Dance Festival, a contemporary dance festival in Boston that has been in a state of suspended animation since the pandemic.

Being new to the world of dance, Williams said he naively invited "some high-level dancers to come," and, to his surprise, they accepted. This created "a bit of a hum" around the festival, he said. That's when he decided that creating a workshop/performance space might be the next logical step.

Williams and Bowart had talked about becoming partners in the project. Williams wanted to be in the East, and Bowart had just sold a home and, with her children nearly grown, she was ready for a fresh start.

That's when they discovered the Williams Road property that was purchased in 2010 for \$1.9 million by a consortium of biotech colleagues from India, with the intention of creating a spiritual retreat. That plan faltered, and after an incarnation as another inn, by 2019, the buildings were seeing very limited use as Airbnb rentals.

In 2020, the property was back on the market for \$750,000, what the real estate ad described as "well below the replacement and assessed values."

While attending Putney School, both Williams and Bowart had become familiar with the area, and they liked the artistic and creative vibe they found in Bellows Falls' lively music and arts scene.

After the sale of the property in February of 2021, they moved to the property in the spring,

and each lives in one of the three apartments. Field Center chef/artist/dancer Lillian Kane moved into the third.

With the help of many volunteers, some coming for up to three weeks, they began to transform the property into a functioning school, where Bowart is director of systems development and Williams is director of dance and performance programming.

Rounding out the team is Anya Smolnikova, residential life coordinator, who also manages the center's Working Resident Program, a long-term work exchange for artists.

A campus for 28

According to the town's most recent grand list, the property, valued at \$745,800, is 47.8 acres. It includes the expansive, ruggedly beautiful post-and-beam main structure, a three-apartment building, and a pond that's a short walk away.

Williams said linens were still on the beds and dishes in the sink when they moved in. Tools, furnishings, and other equipment also came with the buildings.

The Field Center has almost 12,000 square feet at its disposal.

The large main building offers bedrooms with bathrooms for 28 attendees and staff, large practice areas, fireplaces, a sauna, a library, a recording studio, comfortable areas for socializing and watching movies, a woodworking shop, a laundry, a filmmaking studio, smaller classrooms, a large restaurant-level kitchen, and a big dining area. Organic gardens on the property provide food for the kitchen.

Williams said they are in the planning stages of building a performance center next to the main teaching center. One goal: more live performances.

"We have some goals," Williams acknowledged, "and then there's what actually happens in life."

For now, The Field Center is offering three-to-four-day workshops and events based around weekends a couple of times a month, or longer, more immersive workshops up to 10 days once a month.

Local people are welcome to attend, and dancers and artists from New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore regularly drive or



ROBERT F. SMITH/THE COMMONS

Field Center founders Jared Williams and Nuria Bowart in the recording studio of the center in Rockingham.

take Amtrak up to Bellows Falls to attend the programs.

"We usually have at least two teachers for every 15 to 20 students we have attending," Williams said.

A 'transformative experience'

Sol Cort, who has attended Center workshops four times, grew up in Harlem and now lives in Philadelphia.

"After graduating college, I came to Vermont for the first time to attend an improv workshop," Cort said. "It was really transformative. I felt I needed to be here."

Cort had studied dance in college, ballet and modern dance in particular. She is also a bass player and music producer, and she noted that the integrated program at The Field Center, combining dance, art, music, recording and film, is "ideal" for her work.

Workshop attendee Marielle Abell, who has worked in the medical field for 30 years, grew up in Brattleboro, but moved out of the area. She recently moved back.

She described The Field Center as "a magical hub."

"It really brings in people from the region and from other states," Abell said. "There are all sorts of programs, from costume design to dance."

She describes the atmosphere at the Center as "like a welcoming, instant family."

Abell started coming to the monthly improv dance jams and since then has attended several workshops.

She describes the current contact improv workshop as "Aikido meets a very friendly mosh pit."

"This dance form has trust building as part of it," Abell said. "We need that."

Contact improv was first developed some 50 years ago. It involves using dance fundamentals to explore weight, touch, and movement awareness with a partner. Dancers support, assist, protect, and may even lift and move their partners. Women lifting male dance partners was a unique hallmark of contact improv.

Nancy Stark Smith of Northampton, Massachusetts, who died in 2020, was one of the founders of contact improv, and a strong influence on The Field Center's teachings and



ROBERT F. SMITH/THE COMMONS

The Field Center in Rockingham.

philosophy.

Bowart observes that in contact improv, dance partners who are also life partners might dance differently from dance partners who do not have that connection.

Creativity without competition

Bowart said their goal for The Field Center is pretty straightforward.

"We want to provide education and the opportunity to be with other artists, but not in an academic space," she said. "We wanted to build a space where teachers could teach without being an academic. This includes collaboration, inspiration, networking, and skill cultivation."

In addition to dance, filmmaking, and art, the center's offerings include stage design and costume making.

The Field Center also hosts a monthly contact improv dance jam every second Wednesday of the month following a class.

"I watched artist friends struggle in a society that doesn't value artists," Williams said. "And dance is the worst. You spend most of your time asking for grants and competing with other dancers for them."

Bowart noted that at The Field Center, "we're doing it in a way that takes away the competitive part of it."

Black Mountain College inspiration

The Field Center mixes theater, dance, art, music, filmmaking, and painting, with students taking on responsibility for cleaning, cooking, gardening, and maintenance at the school.

It carries on the educational tradition of Black Mountain College, created in 1933 as a new type of college based on the progressive educational principles of John Dewey.

Formed at a time when the U.S. was still reeling from the Great Depression, Adolf Hitler was on the rise in Germany, and artists and intellectuals were being persecuted across Europe, Black Mountain became a legend in its short, 24-year existence.

The college, which closed due to financial issues in 1957, attracted a highly influential array of artists, musicians, writers, poets, creators, filmmakers, and inventors. Many of them came to the United States to escape the rising fascism and anti-intellectual populism in Europe.

Among its more famous alumni and teachers are artists Josef

and Anni Albers, Bauhaus instructors who escaped Nazi Germany to teach art at the school, Robert Rauschenberg, Susan Weil, Willem and Elaine De Kooning, Cy Twombly and Jacob Lawrence; dancer Merce Cunningham; composer John Cage; film director Arthur Penn; writer Francine du Plessix Gray; poet Charles Olson; and inventor and futurist R. Buckminster Fuller.

The Internal Revenue Service has recently recognized The Field Center as a nonprofit, tax-deductible, tax-exempt educational charity, and the organization has begun seeking grant funding. Bowart and Williams said they hope the center becomes a cauldron of creativity, similar to what Black Mountain College became.

"It's not that we're building something that will last forever," Williams said. "It's more about how much of an impact can we make."

A full list of upcoming workshops, programs, recurring events, and contact information can be found at thefieldcenter.com.

Town Meeting bill

FROM SECTION FRONT

and Military Affairs Committee.

Some 80% of municipalities in 2021 and almost 75% in 2022 used the temporary laws to replace shoulder-to-shoulder decision-making with mailable ballots, while most of the rest tapped the legislation to reschedule proceedings until residents could open windows or gather outdoors in warmer weather.

In 2021, only five communities held an in-person March Town Meeting, with each having little on the agenda or gaveling in for the sole purpose of adjourning to a later date. In 2022, that figure rose to about 40 — or 15% of the state's cities and towns.

The latest bill, now awaiting the governor's signature, will continue the options of switching from floor voting to ballots, rescheduling Town Meetings, and holding public information sessions online until July 1, 2024.

The move isn't expected to affect Vermont's 28 cities and towns with 5,000 or more people, as they annually vote on local matters using ballots. But most

of the 219 communities with smaller populations traditionally hold some sort of Town Meeting, which must be warned at least 30 days in advance — or by Feb. 5 this year for those seeking to take municipal action on the traditional first Tuesday in March.

The extension has received support from the Vermont Secretary of State's Office and from the Vermont League of Cities and Towns, a municipal support organization, both of which hope the Legislature will consider granting communities more permanent flexibility.

"Many of the temporary and emergency provisions required during the pandemic have caused us to rethink how and why we do things," replied Sen. Ruth Hardy, an East Middlebury Democrat and chair of the Senate Government Operations Committee.

"We want to create a new normal where we ultimately both return to what works and reinvent what does not," she said.



ROBERT F. SMITH/THE COMMONS

Dance workshop participant Sol Cort takes a break.

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COLUMN | Creative Conversations



MC Noyes, Judy Hawkins and Carol Keiser celebrate their current show, "Life," at Canal Street Art Gallery.

Art comes to life

Artists Judy Hawkins, Carol Keiser, and MC Noyes, whose work is exhibited in 'Life,' discuss their creative process and inspirations

HAVING COVERED the opening of Canal Street Art Gallery in 2017 when the gallery went by a different name (Ad Hoc Art Gallery), I found myself once again on the lovely canal at the enchanting gallery that boasts the likes of 27 local artists and crafters.

On this day, I was viewing "Life," a show and collection of artworks by three of those artists — Judy Hawkins, Carol Keiser, and MC Noyes — who explore that theme in their creative work.

The Commons sat down on a snowy morning to talk with Hawkins, Keiser, and Noyes as they reflected on their show. We talked about everything



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

from materials to how art can "transport people to somewhere peaceful and calm," and why the arts matter. Here's an excerpt from the conversations:

VICTORIA CHERTOK: By way of introduction, why don't each of you say a few words about your paintings in the show, your materials and your painting process.

MC NOYES: I live in Bellows Falls and am the owner of Canal Street Art Gallery. My painting in the show is called "Waterway 1."

A lot of things inspire me to paint. I have the paintings in my head when I see certain things which I study, like water, trees, patterns, colors, shapes, and the light.

This painting was a departure from direct observation. I've been studying the canal

which our gallery is located on for years now. Having formed the composition in my head and also incorporating the visualization of using running water with bubbles to take away unwanted thoughts, it's like a meditation, in a way. It works for me as a visualization technique; I like painting water.

CAROL KEISER: I live and work mostly in Putney. My choice of medium is acrylic paint, because it is water-based and its quick-drying nature makes it ideal for travel.

I was very fortunate to be invited to join a safari to Zambia this past year. It was an incredible experience, being

■ SEE 'LIFE', B3

Auditions planned for Ten Minute Play Festival at Actors Theatre Playhouse

BRATTLEBORO—The Actors Theatre Playhouse (ATP) in West Chesterfield, N.H., will hold open auditions for its 2023 Ten Minute Play Festival at the Brooks Memorial Library Community Room on Saturday, Feb. 4, from 10 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., and Monday Feb. 13, from 6:30 to 9 p.m.

According to ATP, this year's festival winners were selected from national submissions of more than 250 10-minute plays, which will be presented for nine performances on Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays, June 8 through 24. "The plays that have made the final cut have gone through a vigorous screening by all our directors, and we look forward to bringing these plays into our production," ATP organizers said in a news release.

Copies of the plays as PDF files for perusal by email are available from producer Jim Bombicino at jbombicino@comcast.net.

If you are interested in auditioning, email or call/text 802-274-0503 to schedule an appointment for a given time on either date. If you are unable to attend either audition session, you may contact Bombicino to make other arrangements.

Since its inception 12 years ago, ATP said it is "proud to have created many acting and directing opportunities for seasoned actors and newcomers alike. Actor participation and enthusiasm are key to the success of the program and we take care to cast actors of various experiences, ages, and types."

At the audition, performers will be asked to read from the 10-minute plays that interest them. Directors may ask them to read for other plays as well. People may audition for as many plays as they like, and they may be cast in more than one play.

Rehearsals for the 10-minute plays will most likely begin with a read through in March and rehearsals in May, with the most intensely scheduled rehearsal time being the three weeks prior to the opening.

The directors this year are Wendy Almeida, Jim Bombicino, Lionel Chute, Bob Kramsky, Brenda Seitz, Lin Snider, and Ben Stockman. They will schedule rehearsals for their respective plays. Performers should plan to be available on call to rehearse during the final three weeks before opening.

The plays in consideration for production, and their plot and character synopses are:

— *Ode to Clouds*, written by Carol Mark. "A fifty-something 'hippie' helps a distraught young newcomer re-frame her recent breakup by pointing out images in the clouds [...] from the ledge of a New York apartment building." Roles: Joni, 50s+; Stacey, 20s.

— *And Twice on Sunday*, written by Brad Sytsma. "A comedic spin on one of the most basic elements of spycraft [...] the exchange." Roles: two agents, young man; man or woman; two "trench coats," man or woman.

— *It's About Forgiveness*, written by Albi Gorn. "A reconciliation beyond the pearly gates [...] can Myrna forgive Herman for the ultimate sacrifice?" Roles: Man and woman, 50s+.

— *Out From Under With Mary*, written by Chris Shaw Swanson. While waiting for a drug test at an inner city methadone clinic, a suburban housewife realizes there is more to homeless Mary than meets the eye [...] and ear." Roles: Diane, 30s; Mary, 50s+.

— *Torrid Taxes*, written by Laurie Spector. "As the tax filing deadline rapidly approaches, a beautiful woman with a dark secret changes the world of a dedicated CPA in ways he never calculated." Roles: Chance, man, 30s–40s; Desiree, woman, 20s–30s.

— *Speed Date*, written by Carol Mark. "Can you find love in two minutes? Crazy. How about eight? Maybe not so crazy." Roles: Pam, 30s–50s; Tony, 30s–50s; and Sam the bartender.

— *Homeland Security*, written by Mathew Widman. "A black comedy about who we watch,

■ SEE AUDITIONS, B4

Northern Roots Festival is back — live and in-person for first time since 2020

Concert, pub sing, and full slate of workshops planned for Jan. 28, 29

BRATTLEBORO—After two years of disruption due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this year's 16th annual Northern Roots Traditional Music Festival returns on Saturday and Sunday, Jan. 28 and 29, with various in-person workshops, an evening concert, and three Sunday music sessions.

Part of the traditional music calendar in New England, the Festival showcases the variety of northern musical traditions including Irish, Scottish, English, French Canadian, Shetland, New England, and, this year, French Bal Folk.

Workshops at the Brattleboro Music Center are scheduled from noon to 5:30 p.m. on Saturday, Jan. 28. Offerings include

celebrations of Bob McQuillen's tunes and Tony Barrand's singing, fiddle tunings and stylings, Irish flute technique, English and early New England tunes, Mandolin and guitar techniques, Irish and French-Canadian tunes, and explorations of French Bal Folk.

The Saturday evening concert, at 7:30 p.m., will include performances by Nathan Gourley and Laura Feddersen (Irish fiddle duo), Julia Friend (traditional song), Alex Cummings and Max Newman (English accordion and guitar), and Mary Fraser and Sally Newton (French Canadian fiddle).

Also performing will be Traddleboro 2023. Traddleboro

■ SEE NORTHERN ROOTS, B4



For the first time since 2019, the Northern Roots Festival in Brattleboro will be a live event.

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AROUND THE TOWNS

Town polls RTM members on childcare options

BRATTLEBORO — The Brattleboro Town Manager's Office is emailing out a poll to Representative Town Meeting members regarding their interest in town-provided childcare for the March 25 meeting at Brattleboro Union High School. This email will come from executive assistant Jessica Sticklor (email address: jsticklor@brattleboro.org).

Respondents are asked to return the poll as soon as possible, especially if they are interested in childcare being provided.



Workers' Center offers information about Medicaid cutoffs

BRATTLEBORO — In December 2022, Congress voted to eliminate the extra federal funding and requirement that states keep people on Medicaid. States will be able to start Medicaid re-determinations on April 1. According to the Urban Institute's projections, as many as 29,000 Vermont Medicaid recipients could be affected.

The Vermont Workers' Center is hosting two drop-in informational sessions in the Community Room at Brooks Memorial Library on Main Street. The sessions will be on Wednesdays, Jan. 25 and Feb. 8, between 2 p.m. and 4 p.m.

Members of the public are welcome to stop in to find out

whether they will be affected, what their rights are in this process, and how to be sure that they aren't cut off for bureaucratic reasons. People who are not on Medicaid and have questions about health care access are also welcome, as there will be other health care resources available. For more information, email windham@workerscenter.org.

Conflict resolution facilitation training offered online

SOUTH NEWFANE — Restorative Community Practice of Vermont is offering an eight-week course on learning to facilitate conflict resolution restorative circle conferences. The course meets once each week, on Thursdays from 3:30 to 5:30, Jan. 26 through March 16. The classes will be held on Zoom. RCPVermont uses nonviolent

communication as a basis for preparing folks for a circle conference and teach the protocols and skills need to facilitate the ensuing conference. Instructors are Laurie Rabut and Dan DeWalt. There is a charge for the course, but no one will be turned away for lack of funds. To register, contact clairesummers@rcpvermont.org. For more information, contact Dewalt at 802-348-7701 or visit rcpvermont.org.

Vermont FoodBank seeks volunteers

BRATTLEBORO — Want to engage with your neighbors and support food security in your community? Come volunteer at one of the Vermont Foodbank's fresh produce distributions.

Right now, the FoodBank said it is in urgent need of support at their Whitingham and Brattleboro events. To learn

more about volunteer opportunities with the Foodbank, visit vtfoodbank.org/give-time/volunteer or email them at volunteer@vtfoodbank.org.

Newfane Church hosts an evening of story, song, and spaghetti

NEWFANE — Newfane Congregational Church presents an evening of story and song, and a spaghetti supper on Saturday, Jan. 28, at 4:30 p.m.

Participants are invited to enjoy a concert of story and song by mezzo-soprano Miriam Allbee and pianist Mike Kelly, then stay for spaghetti supper following the concert. A free will offering will be available during the concert. Dinner tickets available at the door at \$10 per person.

Hospice offers volunteer training

BRATTLEBORO — Brattleboro Area Hospice announces its latest training program for Bereavement Program Volunteers. Applications are now being accepted for the upcoming spring training for the bereavement program. It will be held for eight weeks on Wednesdays, March 15 to May 3, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Space is limited. Those interested may apply at brattleborohospice.org, or email info@brattleborohospice.org to have an application emailed or mailed to them. Contact Bereavement Program Coordinator Lars Hunter with any questions at lars.hunter@brattleborohospice.org or 802-257-0775, ext. 104.

Latchis Arts announces return of Movies for Kids series

BRATTLEBORO—Latchis Arts announces the return of its Movie for Kids series after its suspension in March 2020 due to COVID. Family-friendly films will be presented on Saturdays and Sundays at 11 a.m. beginning the weekend of Jan. 28–29 and continuing through March at the Latchis Theatre. Admission is by donation.

The Movies for Kids series has been one of the most popular programs since Latchis Arts launched it in 2018. The intent is to present films for families to enjoy together, without cost as a barrier to access. More than 3,000 people attended series offerings in its first three years, including many young people for whom it was their first experience in a theater.

The series opens with screenings of *The Lego Movie* on Saturday and Sunday, Jan. 28 and 29, at 11 a.m. *The Lego Movie* "is an action-packed animated family-friendly adventure following original and existing Lego characters," say event organizers.

"Featuring an all-star voice cast and some of the brand's most popular figures (including Batman, Superman, Gandalf, Wonder Woman), the inventive

movie should appeal to all ages, from young Duplo players to teens who consider themselves Master Builders." Common Sense Media rates the movie as being appropriate for ages six and up and gives it high marks for positive messages. It is rated PG.

On Saturday and Sunday, Feb. 4 and 5, the series features *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, the first of the movies in the popular franchise based on J.K. Rowling's best-selling books. Harry, Hermione, and Ron Weasley make their way at Hogwarts school for wizards. The film is rated PG. Common Sense Media says the film is appropriate for ages seven and up, giving it high scores for positive role models and positive messages about courage, teamwork, and loyalty and saying some scenes might be a bit scary for little ones.

On Saturday and Sunday, Feb. 11 and 12, the series features *The Wizard of Oz*. Judy Garland stars as Dorothy. She and her pals Tin Man, Scarecrow, and the Cowardly Lion go on a quest to the Emerald City to see if they can get Dorothy and her dog Toto safely home to Kansas. Released in 1939, *The Wizard of Oz* is ranked No. 10 on the American

Film Institute's 100 Greatest American Movies of All Time. Common Sense Media says it's appropriate for ages six and up.

The series continues on Saturday and Sunday Feb. 18 and 19, with *Space Jam: A New Legacy*, the 2021 film that features NBA star LeBron James, who teams with Bugs Bunny to win a basketball game so he can bring his kidnapped son home. The film is rated PG. Common Sense Media says it's appropriate for ages seven and up, noting that there is a fair amount of "toon" violence, balanced by positive messages and positive role models.

Additional Kids Movies series screenings will be announced soon. Watch latchis.com for details.

Families should also know that the Latchis Theatre will be bringing back its \$1 Kids Movies during Winter Carnival, featuring daytime screenings starting at 11 a.m. during school vacation week, Feb. 20–24. The films this year are *DC League of Super-Pets*, *Tom & Jerry*, and *The Hobbit*. Check latchis.com for exact screening times.



Justin Murphy-Mancini

COURTESY PHOTO

Epsilon Spires presents free organ concert in its Lunchtime Pipe Organ Series

BRATTLEBORO—At noon on Wednesday, Feb. 1, Dr. Justin Murphy-Mancini will perform a recital that ranges in time from the 17th-century composer Dieterich Buxtehude to contemporary pieces by the Franco-Lebanese organist Naji Hakim and the 95-year-old American composer Emma Lou Diemer. The program also includes a sonata by Felix Mendelssohn and J.S. Bach's Passacaglia in C.

"Every piece on the program is a set of variations of one kind or another, allowing for the instrument's great variety to be communicated by composers throughout history," Murphy-Mancini said in a news release. "The concert will show off the many different colors and sound combinations possible only on the organ."

Murphy-Mancini is a graduate of Oberlin College and Conservatory of Music, where he earned degrees in historical performance, organ, composition,

and philosophy before going on to receive a doctorate in composition at the University of California, San Diego. He is coming to Brattleboro from the North Shore of Massachusetts, where he serves as the director of Church music at a Unitarian Universalist congregation that is home to the last surviving organ by Newburyport organ builder Joseph Alley, built in 1834.

As a composer, Murphy-Mancini's work explores medieval poetic forms, with "an emphasis on timbre as the meaning-generating dimension of the music." His performance repertoire consists primarily of music from the Middle Ages, Renaissance, and Baroque periods, but he also maintains a strong interest in contemporary composers.

In addition to his other musical activities, Murphy-Mancini frequently records works by women, people of color, and unknown Renaissance composers on the organ, which he then

makes available to listeners online through various platforms.

Now in its third year, the Lunchtime Pipe Organ Series has brought dozens of performers from throughout the northeast to play programs of their favorite pieces on the 1906 Estey pipe organ installed in the sanctuary of Epsilon Spires. Previously used only during church services, this instrument is now regularly featured in a variety of musical events that have attracted thousands of listeners of all ages, backgrounds, and interests.

The free Lunchtime Pipe Organ Series is supported in part by a grant from the Windham Foundation. Note that Epsilon Spires heats its historic space with an environmentally friendly system that keeps the Sanctuary at a cooler temperature than the rest of the building during the winter months, so audience members are encouraged to dress warmly. For more information on this program, visit epsilonspires.org.

Brooks Memorial Library celebrates GennaRose Nethercott's debut novel

BRATTLEBORO—A special after-hours celebration of local author GennaRose Nethercott and her debut novel, *Thistlefoot*, will take place on Friday, Jan. 27, at 7 p.m., at Brooks Memorial Library, 224 Main Street.

Steeped in the folklore of Eastern Europe, this tale journeys through generations of heartbreak, horrors, and heroism, from Russia to Brattleboro, on the chicken feet of Baba Yaga's house. A ripping yarn filled with rivalry, romance, regret, and

redemption, *Thistlefoot* has received accolades from readers and reviewers alike.

Nethercott is a writer and folklorist. Her first book, *The Lumberjack's Dove*, was selected by Louise Glück as a winner of the National Poetry Series. Whether authoring novels, poems, ballads, or even fold-up paper cootie catchers, Nethercott's projects are all rooted in myth—and what our stories reveal about who we are.

She tours nationally and

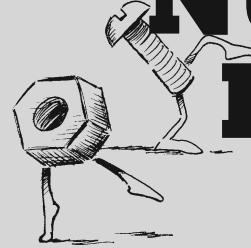
internationally, performing strange tales (sometimes with puppets in tow) and composing poems-to-order for strangers on an antique typewriter with her team, the Traveling Poetry Emporium. The presentation will feature puppets, crankies, and immersive reading. "It promises to be an unforgettable evening, and not for the faint-hearted," organizers say.

Books from Everyone's Books will be available for sale and signing. This event is sponsored by the Friends of Brooks Memorial Library.

The program is free and open to the public and is accessible to people in wheelchairs. For more information, visit brookslibraryvt.org or call 802-254-5290.

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Calendar appears on page A7 this week

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Life, death, and cake: Preparing for a good death

BELLOWS FALLS—Death denial in the United States is commonplace, according to a news release from Kasey March, a trained International End of Life Doula (INELDA) and Susan MacNeil, author of *18 Minutes: A Daughter's Primer on Life & Death*.

March and MacNeil will offer a chance to talk about preparing for a good death through the lens of their unique experiences in two events planned for February: Wednesday, Feb. 1, from 3 to 5 p.m., at the Rockingham Free Public Library (802-463-4270), 65 Westminster Street, Bellows Falls, and Wednesday, Feb. 15, from 2 to 4 p.m., at the Springfield Town Library (802-885-3108), 43 Main Street.

"Fears about dying in pain from a lingering illness and a lack of certainty about what happens to our physical presence or how loved ones left behind will cope when we die make it easier to simply avoid the conversation," they say.

The two-hour session will provide a framework for participants to join in the conversation about all aspects of death. Unlike a Death Cafe, which is intended solely as a discussion group, March and MacNeil's program provides a deeper dive into specifics around end-of-life challenges and issues.

The event is not intended to be a support group, although the conversation will be conducted in a compassionate environment.

March will provide resources as requested by attendees and MacNeil will hold a book-signing. Village Square Booksellers will be on site to manage book purchase. Coffee, tea, and cake will be available.

Adults 18 and older are welcome, and there is no charge to attend. Building accessibility is available. For more information, find March and MacNeil on Facebook or through their respective websites: DoulaCareforDying.com and authentic-voice-narration.com.

Life

there in Africa with the amazing wildlife and large animal population. I was in awe and felt so privileged to be able to witness these great creatures up close in their natural habitats, to watch the large herds of buffalo, elephants, zebras, giraffes, lions, wild dogs, moving slowly around each other and co-existing and in harmony.

I was especially interested in watching the mother elephants protecting their young. You can really almost feel the empathy and care they have for each other. I came away with a great respect for the animal kingdom, and I know that we humans have a lot to learn from just sitting and observing the natural world.

JUDY HAWKINS: I live in Westminster West and have been a painter all my life. I paint with oils. When I was 6 years old, I was encouraged by my uncle, an accomplished artist, to make art in his studio using paper and paints while the families visited. It was an incredible and a pivotal moment. From that point on, that's all I wanted to do.

My parents also encouraged my creative interests, setting up a studio for me in the basement. When I was 16, I had a one-person art show at our house,

which my mother set up as an art gallery.

My paintings are inspired by country drives looking at favorite marshes, fields and ever changing Vermont skies. These recollections are freely interpreted in the studio with color and texture.

I begin a painting at the top and work my way down, working quickly to establish mood through color and composition. I allow the paint, drips, and accidental color combinations to guide my vision, to create the mood and feeling of weather, skies, and water.

V.C.: What do you hope people will take away from this show?

M.N.: I hope "Water Way 1" transports them somewhere peaceful and calm. It is really about the motion of the water. I feel with the size of my painting — 6 feet x 4 feet — I hope that people feel the motion of water, [feel as if they are] standing in front of it.

C.K.: I hope they can just enjoy the simple beauty of these great creatures. This series is very different from my usual more-colorful style. I am so in awe of what I saw and experienced in Zambia that I felt I had to be true to the colors and the landscape, and I hope viewers

FROM SECTION FRONT

can also imagine being there.

J.K.: I chose both older work and some of my latest paintings. I chose these paintings, created 25 years apart, because they have a common thread visually and in concept. This body of work is the most abstract of my paintings; they are atmospheric yet grounded, simplified yet complex expressions of the landscape.

This group of landscape paintings is not about particular places but [it conveys] my emotional connection to the beauty around us. By using bold colors and simplified forms my hope is that viewers will be able to immerse themselves in the beauty that surrounds us.

V.C.: Why do the arts matter?

M.N.: The arts are essential to quality of life and to culture which is such a big part of society. It makes it worth being an artist in society to have beautiful things — not just infrastructure, things that inspire.

I love this quote from my late friend, artist Charles Norris-Brown: "Art lasts, and life is short."

C.K.: I believe that the arts can return us to our soul and restore our faith, our faith in humanity, and our respect for our planet. Above all, I believe that art can transform us and return us to love and compassion for all of life, great and small.

My trip to Africa made me aware of how fragile life is and how important it is for all of us to protect this planet. I hope my paintings bear witness to this beautiful place we call home.

J.K.: I can see the way my early art experiences have opened a more complete view of the world. Having been a special education teacher working with small groups of children, I have experienced the way art and creativity can open connections to learning and experiencing the world.

My grandchildren, ages 8, 10, 4, and 8 months old, love creating, and I learn so much seeing the world through their creations. They are sensitive to nuances and details, and it creates and opportunity to open their minds to something that is not strictly words. Their view of the world expands.

Visit Canal Street Art Gallery at 23 Canal Street in Bellows Falls. "Life: Judy Hawkins, Carol Keiser, MC Noyes," a collection of artworks from three artists with life as a commonality in each of their practices, is on display until Feb. 11. For more information, visit canalstreetartgallery.com, or call 802-289-0104.

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Marco Yunga Tacuri to speak at VCP

BRATTLEBORO—The Vermont Center for Photography (VCP) will host photographer Marco Yunga Tacuri for an Artist Talk on Thursday, Jan. 26, at 6 p.m.

"Los Longos del Barrio," Yunga Tacuri's portrait project about Ecuadorian immigration, is on display in the Picker Print Gallery at VCP until the end of the month.

"This project attempts to tell a story through images about the life of many Ecuadorian

immigrants living in New York," he wrote in his artist statement. "The majority of the people portrayed in the first part of this project are friends and relatives of mine who, like me, left our hometowns and families in Ecuador a few decades ago to seek better opportunities in the U.S."

"In our youth in Ecuador, we were often pejoratively called 'los longos del barrio' — roughly translated as 'the crud of the neighborhood' — by people who believed they were superior

because of their class and race. I would like to reclaim this phrase as a way of asserting our existence and identity through this project of portraits.

"As an immigrant myself, who was once undocumented, I believe that through this project, I will be able to open up a dialogue about the complexities of being an immigrant in this country, especially while undocumented. With this project, I believe I can create a bridge between those who, decades ago, left our home country and never got the opportunity to see each other again."

Yunga Tacuri describes himself as "an Indigenous Ecuadorian immigrant, musician, anthropologist, soccer player, teacher, father of two beautiful kids, and

partner of a wonderful and talented woman." He moved to Brattleboro with his family in June 2014.

"I love being a part of this community," he wrote, "walking, making connections with other people, helping and sharing when I can, as well as, of course, the magic of photography and the stories I can tell through the images I capture."

More of Marco Yunga Tacuri's work can be viewed at marcoyungatacuri.com.

VCP is located at 10 Green Street and lists its business hours as Wednesday through Sunday, 11 a.m.–5 p.m. Call 802-251-6051 or email info@vcphoto.org for more information.

Storytelling returns to Main Street Arts

SAXTONS RIVER—A community favorite event that began in 2013, *A Night of True Stories*, is back at Main Street Arts on Friday, Jan. 27, at 7:30 p.m.

Creators of *A Night of True Stories* were motivated to offer encouragement and support to locals who aspire to tell their stories and to get them on stage. "Like *The Moth* format," event organizers wrote in a news release, "the stories are true experiences, no more than 10 minutes long, and told without notes. For audiences, past stories have evoked empathy, laughter, reflection, and connection."

For the upcoming event, organizers said storytellers will share "their experiences with 1950s air raid drills, woolly bears, a fear of heights, following the heart, and walking through open doors, mistaken identity, and a calling

from God."

"Revealing one's story on stage is an act of courage. *A Night of True Stories* is an unveiling of life experiences that not just impacts the storyteller but even more so those that come to listen" said Annesa Hartman, event coordinator.

Tickets are \$16 in advance, \$18 at the door. For more information, visit mainstreetarts.org or email info@mainstreetarts.org.

We have become not a melting pot but a beautiful mosaic. Different people, different beliefs, different yearnings, different hopes, different dreams.

—JIMMY CARTER

Storytelling is as old as speech. It existed before humans first began to carve shapes in stones and press their hands upon the rocky walls of caves.

—KATE FORSYTH

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Northern Roots

FROM SECTION FRONT

gathers a group of different local musicians each year to perform for the evening concert. Traddleboro 2023 features Keith Murphy, Andy Davis, Fred Brunig, and Amanda Witman.

If you are unable to attend in person, this concert will be livestreamed.

The festival continues on Sunday, Jan. 29, with its three-session afternoon format, with a Pub Sing, French Canadian Session, and Irish Session, all hosted downtown at the River

Garden Marketplace from 1 to 5:30 p.m.

Tickets are \$35 adult day, \$25 adult evening, and \$50 adult combo. Youth tickets are \$10 day, \$10 evening, and \$15 combo. Sunday sessions are by donation. Concert seats are limited, and advance purchase is strongly advised.

To reserve your tickets now and learn more about the livestreamed concert, go online at bmcvt.org, call the BMC at 802-257-4523, or email info@bmcvt.org.

Auditions

FROM SECTION FRONT

and who watches us. Big government and big business conspire to save America in the digital age." Roles: man and woman 20s-30s; man and woman 30s-50s.

— *Independence Day*, written by Rhea MacCallum. "A mom and her adult daughter share laughter and tears as they navigate the difficult road to terminal illness." Roles: Alice, frail, 60s+;

and Elizabeth, 30s-40s.

— *Fighting Mr. Right*, written by Barbara Lindsay. "Does Marla really have the best strategy for finding Mr. Right? Roles: Marla and Joel, 20s-30s.

— *Leaving Nic*, written by Connie Schindewolf. "Sue struggles to break up with her former love [...] Nic(-otine). A comedy." Roles: Sue and Nic, 30s-50s.

Artists appearing at this year's festival

• Alex Cumming is a traditional singer, accordionist, pianist, and dance caller hailing from Somerset, England, now living in Brattleboro. He performs songs and tunes from around the United Kingdom and America, sharing his knowledge of the tradition.

Cumming describes himself on his website as having made his mark on the folk scene with his "rhythmic, dance-able accordion style, strong voice, and his fun and engaging stage presence." He performs with bands Bellwether and The Teacups around the U.S. and UK and serves as music director for Revels North in the Upper Connecticut Valley.

• Julia Friend is a singer of pub songs, sea shanties, and ballads. The Country Dance and Song Society (CDSS) says she "loves the power and vulnerability of the human voice. An occasional performer at folk festivals, she is happiest swapping songs and blending harmonies in dark corners in the wee hours of the night."

She co-authored the CDSS's *Starter Kit for Folk*

SongOrganizers, helped launch Youth Traditional Song Weekend, and generally cheers for singing in all genres. She lives in Brattleboro, where, she says, she hums incessantly.

• Trained in classical violin for the first decade and a half of her life, Mary Lauren Fraser studied violin as an instrument intensively. Since moving from the classical music world into traditional music, she has traveled to many places with rich fiddle traditions, immersing in the tunes and styles of Ireland, Scotland, Appalachia, Quebec, and New England.

With the Suzuki Violin Teacher certificate, and many years of experience teaching at Maine Fiddle Camp, Pinewoods Camps, and festivals, she teaches all ages and abilities. Mostly performing solo, she has collaborated with other musicians and artists in New England in a wide range of creative and performance projects.

Some recent projects include researching and learning old traditional ballads of New England from the Helen Hartness Flanders

collection and starting a new music, song, and dance camp in southern Vermont called The Riverjam Romp. Mary plays for dances, weddings, house concerts, funerals, parties, re-enactment events and more.

• Max Newman performs with dance musicians and dancers across North America. Organizers say his accompaniment "is sought after for its musicality, its danceability, and grounding in traditional styles." With a keen interest in New England music and dance, he has played in many dance halls with luminaries of the style, most prominently in his group the Stringrays with Rodney Miller and Stuart Kenney."

As a community member, he has been involved with a number of next-generational and multi-generational events and is currently co-directing CDSS's American Week at Pinewoods. His playing has been featured in *Flatpicking Guitar* magazine. Max is described as having a warm, generous teaching style.

• Nathan Gourley and Laura Feddersen are an Irish fiddle duo

hailing from Boston. Their playing is steeped in lifelong study of the Irish musical tradition, and is at same time colored by their American roots. The pair have developed what organizers call "a unique style of twin fiddling, sometimes playing in taut unison, sometimes exploring chordal harmonies and rhythmic and melodic variations."

This year they released *Brightly or Darkly*, a follow-up to their 2014 recording with Brian Miller, *Life is All Checked*. They each perform and teach regularly both at home in Boston and at festivals throughout the U.S. and Ireland.

• Sally Newton grew up singing and dancing with her family in the town of Jamaica. In high school, she began to play guitar with the family band, the Turkey Mountain Window Smashers, for square and contra dances. She learned to call from her father and, over the years, developed her guitar style, backing up fiddlers from New England and Southern Old Time and Quebecois traditional musicians.

Hayward to discuss art, gardening

PUTNEY—Gordon Hayward will give an illustrated talk at Next Stage Arts on Sunday, Jan. 29, at 4 p.m. on the design elements shared by the painter and garden designer. This talk comes out of Hayward's 2008 book *Art and the Gardener* (Gibbs Smith).

According to a news release, juxtaposing an image on the large screen of a classic fine painting next to a garden image, Hayward "will explore a variety of elements of composition: straight lines versus curved lines in paintings as well as paths and planted beds; the itinerary of the eye; positive and negative space (as in the positive space of planted beds and the negative space of adjacent lawn); color, light and shadow, the role of background, placing easels to paint as being akin to placing garden chairs to sit."

Hayward says his goal is to "help you see your garden and paintings in a new way, no matter how big or small your garden might be. And if you're not a gardener, this is also a talk about how to look at a garden (and a

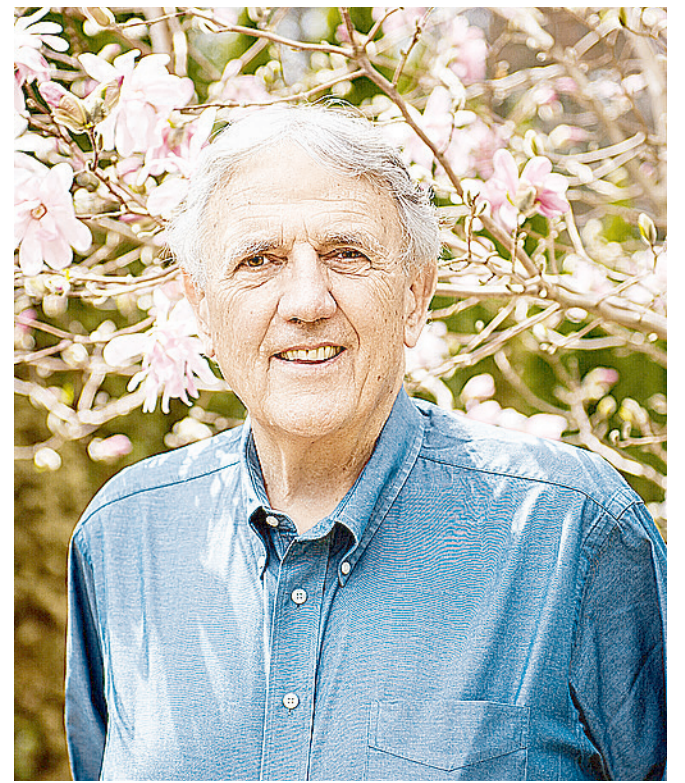
painting) more consciously, with more understanding. In the end, it is about conscious seeing, about paying attention with your eyes."

Hayward has given this lecture in several art museums and for garden clubs across the country over the years and, in late February, he will give this revision for the Village Garden Club of La Jolla, California.

As garden curator Marco Polo Stufano, founding director of horticulture of the extraordinary Wave Hill Gardens north of Manhattan, wrote, "The study of art is the most important study a garden designer can pursue."

Admission is by donation (\$10 suggested), and all proceeds will directly benefit Next Stage Arts and Sandglass Theater. Tickets may be purchased at the link provided or at the box office on the day of the event.

Next Stage is located at 15 Kimball Hill in downtown Putney. For more information, call 802-387-0102 or visit nextstagearts.org.



Gordon Hayward

JOSEPH VALENTINE

Canal Street Art Gallery presents 'Heroes & Villains' art show

BELLOWS FALLS—Now through March 4, Canal Street Art Gallery presents "Heroes & Villains," an exhibit with artwork by Clare Adams, Thomasin Alyxander, Debi A. Barton, Jean Cannon, Mindy Fisher, Corinne Greenhalgh, Gregory Damien Grinnell, Yvette Hender, Su Lin Mangan, Charles Norris-Brown, Gretchen Seifert, and Linda Udd.

"The story of the hero and

villain is told in many ways," gallery organizers said in a news release. "Through art, music, performance, writing, and everyday life, the hero and villain come alive. The quest of the hero often includes the villain, and the villain's story may even be told as well as or even instead."

"Many of the hardest decisions a hero must make are revealed by villains. The internal struggle

of the hero becomes clear only after encountering, then revealing the true nature of, and finally conquering, the part of the villain which resides in the hero themselves."

How do these artists tell these stories?

"As a bead weaver I try to stitch sculptures that tell stories about society, weaving together elements from folklore, history, literature and mythology," Alyxander said.

"I have collected vintage textiles, buttons, and ephemera which tell stories of people, especially women, who came before me. What stands out most to me during these strange times is not, however, the Villains who wish to control, but the strength and perseverance of the Heroes who will not be controlled," said Barton.

"Are they heroes or are they villains?" Grinnell asks. "What parameters are ascribed to each? They are indeed heroes in their own reality but what of our reality as observers?"

"Escape depicts the

underground railroad routes that escaping slaves traveled, from the southern territories to the northern territories," said Mangan. The heroes are not only the escaping slaves but the people, the large network, who risked their lives to help them on their way to freedom."

"One of the most heroic acts one can undergo is taking on one's daimon/demon. To battle the inner chaos and untangle the knots, to have the courage to look at the shadow that personifies everything one refuses to acknowledge about oneself; within this dark seeming abyss lie the possible jewels of the authentic self, the discarded self tangled in darkness," said Udd.

Canal Street Art Gallery is located at 23 Canal Street, and is open Tuesday to Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. For more information about the "Heroes & Villains" show or the gallery, go to canalstreetartgallery.com, call 802-289-0104, or send emails to artinfo@canalstreetartgallery.com.

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VIEWPOINT



A young person seeks asylum at the U.S./Mexico border.

GLENN FAWCETT/ U.S. CUSTOMS AND BORDER PROTECTION, VIA WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Biden administration puts asylum seekers in harm's way

We work with 20 people seeking safety here in Brattleboro — people facing torture, government persecution, gang violence, or rape in their countries of origin. Under new rules, three quarters of them would not have been permitted to do so.

JOE BIDEN came to office in 2021 vowing to undo the disastrous and cruel immigration policies of the Trump administration. Instead, he has embraced and expanded them. “We’re going to restore our moral standing in the world and our historic role as a safe haven for refugees and asylum seekers,” the president said on the campaign trail in 2020. But on Jan. 5, the Biden administration announced that it will double down on its support for Stephen Miller’s baby, Title 42 — an obscure element of the public health code used by the Trump Administration to prevent people from accessing their right to asylum at the southern border. Long lambasted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and by immigration experts as unnecessary and illegal, Title 42 has subjected a reported 13,000 migrants to murder, torture, kidnapping, or rape in the last two years alone. After years of public pressure, the measure is something the Biden administration has made moves to overturn. But when those moves were temporarily blocked by contested court orders, the

Brattleboro

KATE PAARLBERG-KVAM (she/her/they/them) is executive director of the Community Asylum Seekers Project (caspvt.org).

administration chose instead to use it to continue putting tens of thousands of people in harm’s way.

THE ADMINISTRATION’S announcement detailed its plans to expel 30,000 additional asylum seekers from Venezuela, Haiti, Nicaragua, and Cuba to Mexico per month in addition to rejecting all asylum claims from people who traveled through Mexico and other countries without attempting to seek asylum there prior to arriving in the United States. (This ban was found to be illegal by U.S. courts when the Trump administration tried it, which apparently isn’t enough of a reason to take it off the table.)

The Biden administration is forcing people to seek asylum in a country from which thousands of people every year flee to seek

asylum elsewhere, which cannot grant them protection from gang violence, gender violence, kidnapping, or torture.

“These policies violate domestic and international law and actively put asylum seekers in harm’s way,” said the Center for Victims of Torture in a statement.

IN AN EFFORT to put a humanitarian mask over these violations, the Biden administration announced a concurrent plan for a mini-parole program modeled on a program offered in October to a select number of Venezuelans.

The plan immediately met with resounding condemnation from the immigrant support community, with Human Rights First reminding us that the parole plan for Venezuelans is “a humanitarian disgrace.”

The new plan offers a chance at parole for 30,000 asylum seekers a month from four select countries: Cuba, Venezuela, Nicaragua, and Haiti. Under the plan, asylum seekers can apply for parole by way of a cell phone app — if they already have available a

■ SEE ASYLUM SEEKERS, C2

MEMORIAM

‘He touched a lot of lives. He changed mine.’

Gary Smith ‘was smarter, funnier, and more talented at almost everything than pretty much everybody, but he never held that over anybody’s head’

FOR ME, “friend” is an elevated concept seldom bestowed. I don’t make friends easily. And then, being a socially inept dumbass, I’m not always a particularly attentive friend when I get one. But somehow Gary Smith was one of my best friends. He was that for a lot of people. My friend Gary died. There’s a mountain of good things to say about Gary, and many of them are being said by famous people and not-famous people alike. I’m one of the not-famous ones. He touched a lot of lives, changed a lot of lives. He changed mine. I was lucky to know him. A lot of the same things irritated us. A lot of the same things inspired us. He was smarter, funnier, and more talented at almost everything than pretty much everybody, but he never held

Bellows Falls

MARK PIEPKORN is the founder of Stage 33 Live and a longtime volunteer with Black Sheep Radio (WOOL). He posted this piece on Facebook on Jan. 19. His friend Gary Smith, a founder of WOOL, died Jan. 16; an obituary will appear in next week’s Commons.

that over anybody’s head.

I didn’t know him until after his days in the thick of the music biz — I didn’t even realize initially that he’d had his fingers in so much of that stuff that defined my life. He didn’t hide it, but he didn’t crow about it. He wasn’t much older than me.

I MET GARY when I moved to the small Vermont village of Bellows Falls and got involved with the community radio station that he’d helped found, one of his many passions.

This was after the Windham Ballroom concerts ended, and a few years before he started planning Popolo

restaurant.

He once had an idea for a regional events magazine. We launched and ran it together, he and I. It only managed to last for four issues, but it was pretty great and should have been successful.

He was one of the earliest supporters of the music performance documentation project I’ve been hacking away at the last handful of years. The spirit of it resonated with him even though it’s mostly defined itself as an acoustic folkie thing rather than the crunchier stuff that really moved him. He donated some bits and bobs left



MARK PIEPKORN

Gary Smith, right, visits with Mark Edson at the headquarters of WOOL-FM, the community radio station that he helped found.

■ SEE SMITH, C2



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LETTERS FROM READERS

ELL teachers supported Afghan family's children educationally, culturally, and personally

Over the past year, I had the privilege of serving on an Afghanistan refugee cosponsorship team composed mostly of members of three local United Church of Christ congregations. Our team supported a family of refugees, which consisted of two parents and, until a recent joyful addition, three children.

There were countless ways that our community inspired us with the welcome they extended to the family. I want to speak specifically about the area I helped facilitate — education. Our family's children were warmly welcomed by school representatives from the outset, and they and their parents were treated with compassion and dignity.

The English Language Learners (ELL) teachers were the first and most constant connections between the family and the schools. From the initial encounter, an intake interview, I was struck by the high degree of preparation and care these teachers showed. Deb Coombs, Jen Course, and Rachel Scarano were remarkably ready for the large influx of ELL students created by our community's resettlement of refugees.

Despite the stress this must have caused them, they were calm, gentle, and reassuring as they discussed the previous educational background of the children, the process for enrolling them at Academy School and Brattleboro Area Middle School, and what their experience would be like there.

Once the students started going to school, the sense of a warm embrace was extended by the entire school population, from the classroom teachers who welcomed and fully included each child in instruction as well as their classroom communities, to the students who reached out and befriended them and created room signs in Dari or Pashto languages, to the administrators who extended offers of support and created spaces for the children to privately observe their noontime prayers, to the coordinators of after-school programs who eagerly included the children in their activities.

But the anchor of support — educationally, culturally, and personally — for the children continued to be their ELL teachers.

Jen, Deb, and Rachel as well as Olivia Clark and Heidi Pancake established strong, healthy, positive relationships with the children, helping them to understand academic content in a new language and creating

a space in which they felt comfortable and known. The children loved their schools and looked forward to attending every day.

The family we welcomed to Brattleboro last February has recently relocated to another part of the country where the father has found a good job in his professional field.

As our work with them concludes, our team felt it was important to shine a positive light on the outstanding experience this family of refugees had in our schools.

Stephen Rice
Brattleboro

The writer has served as educational liaison for a refugee resettlement cosponsorship team from First Congregational Church of West Brattleboro, Centre Church, and Dummerston Congregational Church.

Brattleboro Selectboard: Reconsider making Representative Town Meeting in-person only

On Jan. 3, the Selectboard voted to hold Annual Representative Town Meeting as a strictly in-person event for the first time since 2019. The vote took place during the first board meeting of the year, and those of us with family obligations during the holiday could not attend.

The Selectboard should reconsider this decision for two reasons.

First of all, in the minutes of the meeting (bit.ly/699-bratts), I see that Selectboard members asked for the opinion of RTM members. However, no one actually seems to have checked the minutes of last year's meeting (bit.ly/699-artm2022).

At the end of that long night last March, as recorded on page 12 of those minutes, RTM passed the following motion: "RTM recommends that the 2023 RTM be held in a hybrid format, and offer ways to attend in-person or virtually, while also having a Zoom option made available to the public, with a Zoom co-host assigned to assist with the virtual aspect of the meeting, with details to be developed by the Selectboard."

This passed 80 in favor, 8 opposed.

If the Selectboard's decision was meant to be based on the needs of RTM members, they ought to take this motion into consideration.

The second reason is one of selection bias. There were multiple RTM members at the Jan. 3 meeting who spoke in favor of in-person meetings. I must point out that the minority of RTM members who are

VIEWPOINT

We need zoning for the Vermont that we are

Our look should be protected — but so should the possibility of at least being able to rent, if not buy, a place to live

Chester

ALL THAT state Rep. Seth Bongartz (D-Manchester) and his colleagues are doing is facing the fact that lovely Vermont just isn't what it thinks it is anymore.

The bill they're proposing to enable housing development by banning single-family zoning and allowing duplexes and even three-and-four-unit homes in some municipalities just makes sense.

A couple of decades ago I began to understand what Vermont had become.

Driving from our Weathersfield house to a friend's place a few miles down the Center Road, I found myself thinking how great country living was as I passed generally modest homes set far apart from each other, with lots of trees and brambles and brooks in between.

It couldn't get any better.

Then something else occurred to me. For the first time since we'd moved to Vermont some years before, I began to think about where the people who lived in those houses worked: some in Springfield, Windsor, and Claremont a half-dozen miles away; a few farther away, in Brattleboro or Ludlow, or, increasingly, in Lebanon and Hanover.

That's when I realized a simple fact: I didn't really live in the country. Vermont wasn't rural. It was just another set of suburbs with big lawns.

A few people actually lived off the land,

NICHOLAS BOKE is a freelance writer and international education consultant.

like the Woods on Center Road and the McDermotts down the hill. But most of us drove to work in the morning, some of us nearby, others quite a distance away. Almost none of us lived a truly rural existence.

Sure, some of us raised laying hens and even a pig or milk cow, and grew and preserved lots of vegetables, but our lives — where we worked and bought our food and clothes and such — were not much different from the lives my wife and I had lived in the Maryland suburb we'd moved from, or the Connecticut one the Harrises up the hill had left. Even multigenerational Vermonters like the Stoodleys down the hill and Joe Dodge just up Jarvis Road left home every morning for their work.

MY WIFE AND I left Vermont for a while in 2005, but moved back, to Chester, a few years ago. None of my new neighbors runs a dairy farm or relies on the sugar maples on their property for a living here, either.

Every morning, everybody gets in a car (or pickup) and goes to work.

I get it that we love the look of Vermont. All those white-clapboarded

houses and open fields, all those trees and brooks. They're lovely.

And they should be protected. But so should the possibility of at least being able to rent, if not buy, a place to live. And the simple fact of the matter is that, according to the Vermont Housing Finance Agency, if we're to house those who'll need to live in Vermont in 2030, 40,000 new housing units must be built.

That's a lot of houses and apartments.

If we don't allow more residences on smaller parcels, we'll never make it. If we don't make it, there'll be no place for all those people to live, the ones who would drive to the restaurants and antique shops, fire departments and nursing homes, hardware stores and supermarkets that'll be necessary to take care of Vermonters' needs — our needs.

LOTS OF PEOPLE and organizations are generally on board with Bongartz's efforts, as many are with the concomitant need to reform Act 250.

Given how long it takes to go from having an idea about what and where to build, to slapping on that last coat of paint, we'd better get started on all this pretty soon.

Sure, Vermont may not end up looking quite so country. But at least the people who'll be needed to make it work will have places to live.

available to come to the very first Selectboard meeting of the year are, by default, the ones who do not have a problem with in-person meetings.

Those of us who have at-home obligations and Covid concerns are less likely to be able to come and speak in person, much as we might want to. I know at least one candidate for this year who is no longer going to submit an application because she cannot and will not attend a strictly in-person meeting.

I may not be able to, either. I have managed to attend hour-long, masked Finance Committee meetings with six people in them, but a day-long indoor meeting with 250 is more Covid risk than I want to bring home to my child — in particular, during the rise of a treatment-resistant variant.

At least one person last year had trouble with Zoom because he called in from a beach in Florida and then seemed surprised to have connection issues. I hope folks who had technical troubles last year will take them as a learning opportunity, take advantage of provided tech support, plan to be at a computer for future Zooms, or come in-person in the event of a hybrid meeting.

For all its flaws, Zoom is still the best option to attend RTM for me and my family.

Eli Coughlin-Galbraith
Brattleboro

The writer is a Representative Town Meeting member serving District 2.

Emergency housing in RVs: a good, simple plan

Brattleboro Common Sense has a broad and practical agenda to address the housing crisis, including emergency housing in RVs. Rights and Democracy (RAD) and BCS are working out a joint proposal not for eviction alone, but also for rent control. We hope it will be a model for the state campaign.

Since BCS started negotiating with the Selectboard on the Fair Evictions and Rents Law (FERL) in 2020, we have consulted with many allies and are ready and eager to proceed with a petition drive. RAD is not endorsing the BCS emergency housing plan.

BCS believes Vermont must enact fair evictions and rent controls together for housing retention, but these acts would offer no protection for the people moving into the local economy or people who are most vulnerable in our society — the many people or who are already homeless.

BCS is developing policy for emergency housing in RVs so that people can rent out space for RVs on land in town. Property owners can donate space or get extra income.

Brattleboro officially needs 500 rental units as soon as possible. Officials around Vermont

have plans for big housing construction projects and for new ways to pay for them, but big construction projects take years. They will be of no help to homeless people this winter and no help to other people moving here to live.

Besides that, there is a shortage of construction workers because of the labor shortage, and no place for them to live, because there is a housing shortage.

So, big construction projects are a shortsighted plan.

Emergency housing in RVs is a good, simple plan. RVs can be complete separate rental units, or they can be used like a detached bedroom. Creating one can be as quick as buying a car.

People in non-profit organizations around town and people in town government have been very helpful, and we invite everyone to join us and develop these new policies. BCS's first RV has arrived. It's as cool as a baby elephant and deserves a name.

BRATTLEBORO COMMONS
SENSE
Brattleboro

Kurt Daims

No legitimate argument in favor of trapping

I came within inches of stepping in a steel-jaw leghold trap while hiking along an established trail on state land. While I would have suffered a lot of pain and significant injury had it crushed my foot, the fact that I was hiking with my dogs and grandchildren elevated my concern to another level and led me to give this issue a critical review.

As demonstrated by my experience, these traps are entirely indiscriminate, maiming and often killing animals, wild and domestic, that not only are unintended targets, but which often are protected species. Dogs, cats, deer, black bear, eagles, turkeys, and owls are among the many animals that are captured in these devices by trappers seeking fur, control of "nuisance" animals, or simply for "sport."

If a similarly lax approach were applied to hunting, people would have license to shoot anything that moves.

Of course, no creature should be subjected to the suffering caused by this cruel and inhumane practice. Trapped animals are left to suffer for hours or days in the elements, while experiencing blood loss, frostbite, exhaustion, predation, severed tendons, torn ligaments, dislocated joints, and broken bones and teeth (from desperately chewing at the trap to escape). Many die trying in vain to escape the steel jaws of the trap. With no other hope of escape, trapped animals may resort to amputating their own limbs.

It has been argued that trapping, including the use of leg-hold traps, should be protected because it is a longstanding

tradition, is "necessary" to limit property damage (such as flooding caused by beavers), and provides an important economic benefit.

None of these arguments has merit: The economic value of fur trading continues to decline with limited to no markets; there are more effective, lasting, and humane ways to control nuisance wildlife; and, while there is value to tradition, it also is necessary to recognize when a tradition (for example, discharging raw sewage into rivers, burning plastic trash in

backyards) must be abandoned.

Legislation has been proposed that would severely restrict trapping and ban the most barbaric trapping practices. Hardly a radical idea, as such restrictions already have been enacted in 10 states and more than 100 countries. Please consider contacting your state representatives and senators and urge them to ensure that Vermont joins this growing group of responsible and humane jurisdictions.

Jim Sullivan
North Bennington

Asylum seekers

FROM SECTION FRONT

passport, a U.S. sponsor who commits to two years of financial support, and international airfare.

Access to all three of these prerequisites is limited to people of relative means, effectively shutting out the poor from the chance to save their own lives.

"People fleeing for their safety are often unable to obtain passports or wait in their countries of origin while their applications are processed, particularly those who are fleeing government persecution," said Human Rights Watch.

Moreover, given that 60% of current asylum seekers come from Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador — none of which are on the list of eligible countries — Biden's new policy is essentially an asylum ban levied on the people most often seeking safety.

For a man who lauded himself publicly for ending Trump's so-called Muslim Ban, the move is particularly repugnant.

EVEN THOSE FEW asylum seekers admitted by way of the new program will be shunted into the broken and backlogged asylum system. Thousands

of Afghans admitted into the country on similar grounds over a year ago, including many of our neighbors and colleagues, are still in legal limbo. Adding more people to those rolls does nothing to advance immigration justice in this country.

At the Community Asylum Seekers Project, we work with 20 asylum seekers building new lives in Brattleboro. Each one of them faced torture, government persecution, gang violence, or rape in their countries of origin.

Under the new rules, three quarters of them would not have been permitted to seek safety in the United States.

All of them left family members and loved ones behind who are facing similar harms at this very moment, blocked now from accessing their legal right to seek safety in this country.

The administration's parole program is a policy of smoke and mirrors, wearing an ill-fitting costume of humanitarianism while dispossessing and endangering tens of thousands of people for political gain.

Here in Vermont, we're trying to open our doors. When will our government get out of the way?

Smith

FROM SECTION FRONT

over from Fort Apache Studio — gear that might very well have been used in sessions with The Pixies, Billy Bragg, Radiohead, Big Dipper, Juliana Hatfield, Throwing Muses, Belly, Tanya Donnelly, Dinosaur Jr., Sebadoh, The Connells, The Specials, Blake Babies, Weezer, Yo La Tengo, Warren Zevon, Uncle Tupelo, or countless other bands and performers.

To be the steward of a tiny slice of that legacy, to keep it fulfilling the purpose Gary intended, is heady stuff.

AS HE STARTED getting sick and then sicker, Gary and I had frank and mostly irreverent

conversations about mortality. We were both pragmatic about death.

He lasted a lot longer than he always thought he would; except for his mom, his family all died young. He didn't want to die, though. There were a hundred things he still wanted to do. There were always a hundred things he wanted to do.

It's been three days since I got the text: "Gary died tonight." I was in Minnesota visiting my mom, something I know Gary would have approved of.

I'll miss Gary. It's not really real yet.

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Brattleboro Retreat to ramp up inpatient care and transport capacity

Hospital adds more beds, signs contract with Rescue Inc. to provide patient transport

By Kristen Fountain
ViDigger.org

BRATTLEBORO—As much as any provider within the state's strained mental health system, the staff at the Brattleboro Retreat are attuned to the fact that every day Vermonters in crisis wait for care in emergency departments across the state. That's why they are pushing to get back to pre-COVID-19 levels of inpatient beds as quickly as possible, and why they just launched a new ambulance

transport service pilot program through a contract with Rescue Inc. "The Retreat will be over that 100-bed mark here in 60 days," said Brattleboro Retreat Vice President Erik Rosenbauer. "That is what the planning is, and that is why all these other initiatives are underway." Getting back to 100 beds would be an increase of 16 beds over what the state's largest provider of inpatient mental health services has had available in recent days, Rosenbauer said.

But having the space open is just part of the solution. Brattleboro Retreat CEO Linda Rossi said in a Jan. 17 statement announcing the new contract with Rescue Inc. that patients sometimes wait in hospitals for hours or days solely because of the lack of available transport. In December, on any given day, between 25 and 30 patients were in emergency departments around Vermont, waiting to be transferred elsewhere for mental health care, according to the Vermont Association of Hospitals and Health Systems, which surveys its members on this topic twice a week. The majority wait longer than 24 hours. The new Brattleboro Retreat

contract will allocate one Rescue Inc. vehicle and crew entirely to the transport needs of incoming patients five days a week, between noon and 8 p.m., which is when historical trends suggest the service is most needed, said Drew Hazelton, Rescue Inc.'s chief of operations. The crew is set to receive training from Retreat staff on best practices for interacting with patients in a mental health crisis. The ambulance itself will also be physically adapted to create a more calming environment. "Ambulances can be very busy," Hazelton said. "They are like emergency departments. There is a lot of stimulus in ambulances, and that can be

challenging to some patients." Rescue Inc. has long provided transportation between local hospitals and the Retreat, but this program expands that service to other hospitals statewide, Hazelton said. Hazelton also hopes to make the training available to EMS providers statewide through the Vermont EMS Academy, which Rescue Inc. launched in August in Newfane. Existing EMS training programs do not focus enough on interacting with mental health patients, he said. Like the rest of the health care system, the Retreat experienced significant staff turnover during the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as several outbreaks of the virus,

both of which led to the decrease in bed capacity. According to a recently released Legislative report by the Vermont Department of Mental Health, the Retreat's capacity fluctuated by more than 20 beds between October 2021 and late February 2022. Staffing shortages continue to force facilities to close beds at times, the report says. With the new transportation program and the return to pre-pandemic bed levels, the Retreat is trying to make a difference in the long emergency room waits. "From the bottom of my heart, I really think that this is something that can have an immediate impact," Rosenbauer said.

DVFiber connects first customers in Readsboro

Halifax, Marlboro, Stamford, and Whitingham are next on the list

READSBORO—Deerfield Valley Communications Union District (DVCUD), operating as DVFiber, the communications union district serving 24 towns in southeastern Vermont, says it has connected its first customers with high-speed fiber optic Internet. According to a news release, customers in Readsboro were connected to DVFiber.net late in December. This pilot group is testing the DVFiber network for reliability of speed and access to the Internet for a three-month trial period.

DVFiber says it will survey the pilot group for feedback regarding all aspects of customer service, including initial connection, call response time, repair, customer support, and billing. The survey findings will help ensure that connecting larger numbers of customers will go as quickly and smoothly as possible in 2023. "The connection of the pilot program customers last week marks a huge milestone for Readsboro. In recent years, whenever someone new moves into town the first thing they ask is, 'What's the best option for Internet service?' and really there were no good broadband options available. "So, for me," says Omar Smith, Readsboro's representative to the DVFiber Governing Board, "it's very exciting to see a 'world class' option available for our community. It creates a level playing field

for our residents to have the same connected services as many larger, more densely populated areas." Now that DVFiber is officially an internet service provider (ISP) for Windham and Bennington counties, its next focus will be to press forward speedily with its construction to expand and connect more customers in 2023. The current expected engineering plan is that DVFiber will connect customers in areas of Halifax, Marlboro, Readsboro, Stamford, and Whitingham. DVFiber's construction build-out design does not track town borders, so portions of some member towns may be available to be connected sooner than another section of the same town. This construction work is expected to take the better part of the next two years. "These initial homes mark the first step in achieving our goal to make fiber service accessible and affordable to all in our district," said DVFiber Chair Steven John. "This is our mission and sole purpose as your publicly owned and operated Internet service provider." DVFiber was established in 2020 to provide universal, affordable, reliable high-speed Internet service that will support economic development and expand educational opportunities within the district. For more information, visit DVFiber.net.

Scholarships available for older students

BELLOWS FALLS—The General Federation of Women's Clubs of Vermont (GFWC-VT) announces the availability of scholarships for Vermont women, beyond the traditional high school to college age track, seeking to further their education, training, or to upgrade their skills in preparation for entering or advancing in the workplace. Applicants must submit a specific plan for their education or training. Applications are due to Betty Haggerty, 16 Taylor St., Bellows Falls, VT 05101 by March 15; her contact information is also included on the application. The scholarships range from \$500 to \$1,500. GFWC-VT has been awarding this financial aid, which is funded through contributions from the state federated clubs and from individuals, for

29 years. The scholarship is named for late Barbara Jean Barker, of Poultney, who served as GFWC-VT President from 1992-1994, and who was instrumental in establishing the program. Women receiving the awards over the years have come from a range of Vermont towns. Applications for the scholarship can be obtained from Betty Haggerty (hubett@hotmail.com) and GFWC-VT president Beverley Pallmerine (bpallmerine@gmail.com). They are also available through federated women's clubs in several towns, and through Community College of Vermont and Vermont Technical College sites around the state. The scholarships will be awarded at the state federation's annual meeting in the spring.

Free Tax-Aide service begins on Feb. 2

BRATTLEBORO—Beginning Feb. 2 and continuing through April 13, AARP Foundation is providing tax assistance and preparation through its Tax-Aide program — and it's completely free. AARP Foundation Tax-Aide volunteers are trained and IRS-certified every year to ensure they understand the latest changes to the U.S. Tax Code. Tax-Aide has two sites available in Brattleboro this year. The Brattleboro Senior Center, 207 Main Street, will be open from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Thursdays. Call 802-257-7570 to schedule an appointment. VFW Post 1034, 40 Black Mountain Road, will be open from 9 a.m. to 4 pm on Mondays. Call 802-490-4619 to schedule an appointment. Your taxes will be prepared and filed in person at either site, or for those concerned about

COVID-19, materials may be dropped off on those days. Tax-Aide provides tax preparation assistance services nationwide. For more information about AARP Foundation Tax-Aide, including what type of service is available where, and which documents you need to file your taxes, visit aarpfoundation.org/taxaide or call 888-AARPNOW (888-227-7669).

They can't collect legal taxes from illegal money.
—AL CAPONE

JOON PAHK
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Across

1. Penicillin discoverer
8. `War and Peace` heroine
15. "You'd think so, wouldn't you?" follow-up
20. 2022 Presidential Medal of Freedom recipient Megan
21. Less tactful
22. 2018 title role for Bullock
23. Chapel that also sells fried chicken?
25. Singer Osmond
26. Wall St. letters
27. Pilgrimage to Mecca
28. Teacher's grad deg.
29. Grammar topic
30. Fish tank fish
32. Polynesian nation
34. Name that's Hebrew for "adversary"
36. Online alternative, briefly
37. Take wing
40. Corn
42. Operate
43. "Gangnam Style" guy
46. Delivery method
49. Board game cafe that also sells pizza?
52. Venues
54. Sphere
55. Place for a new do
56. Fabric store that also sells trail mix?
62. Fonzie catchphrase that's also an office chair brand
64. Middle distance distance, informally
65. Reporter's coup
66. Hosiery color
67. Dubious blockchain asset
69. Shot blocker?
73. Made inquiries
75. Fast tempo
77. Bloke
78. Fairy tale's second word, often
80. Give a once-over
82. Homer's hangout
83. Home of soccer's OL Reign
85. Ice cream parlor that also sells fishing gear?
89. Around
90. Important time
92. Audition
93. Car wash that also sells Jamaican food?
98. Very, very cold
102. Australia's busiest airport
103. `Silent Spring` pesticide
104. Eschew
106. Afternoon meal
107. Taking estrogen, informally
108. Have your say
110. Civilization of ancient Mexico
112. Belly button
114. `Squid Game` language
117. Actress Carter
119. Campus marching gp.
122. `Cryptonomicon` author Stephenson
123. Bond formers
124. Pot dispensary that's also a laundromat?
127. Tag declaration
128. Used a crowbar on "Who's with me?", in a word
130. The ones here
131. Confessional opening
132. Insects with prominent eyespots

Down

1. Wildly distraught
2. Bar workers?
3. Letter
4. Stratego piece that can defuse bombs
5. Gerund ending
6. Ancient mariner?
7. Actress Rowlands
8. 1990s hoops arcade game
9. Mont Blanc, e.g.
10. Great disturbance
11. Ancestral Puebloans
12. Eyelid woe
13. Listens to
14. Itinerary abbr.
15. Music club that also does auto repair?
16. Where Sue Bird played college ball
17. Circus setting
18. Grandma
19. Banded gemstone
24. Provides music
29. Floor
31. Union that merged with SAG
33. More, in Madrid
35. Coffee variety
38. Home security?
39. Over there, poetically
41. Prefix with tourism
43. Kicking someone when they're down
44. Unpunished
45. Desire
47. Winery barrels
48. Catches
50. Form of Irish
51. Columnist Savage
53. Trinidadian music genre
56. NFL coaching great Chuck
57. With misgivings
58. Submitted, as an offer
59. Also-ran
60. Where Suni Lee won gold
61. Alacrity
63. Carson Daly's old MTV show
68. Coin flip
70. Butcher shop that also sells fake jewelry?
71. Suitable
72. Cornmeal dish
74. Check for prints
76. Twitch stream reaction
79. Ardent hobbyist
81. Separate
84. Obama health measure, for short
86. Duma denial
87. "There!"
88. Habanero, e.g.
89. Includes in an e-mail
91. Basketball star Wilson
94. Yemeni port
95. Turns into a different Pokémon
96. Curling tools
97. Surname of three unrelated members of BTS
99. "That was great!"
100. Anywhere to be found
101. "I mean, that goes without saying"
105. Make fun of
108. Penultimate round
109. Genueflect
111. Gear tooth
113. Attracted to masc people, in brief
114. Categorical imperative philosopher
115. Texter's "However..."
116. Mechanical repetition
118. Icicle site
120. Cuisine with pad see ew
121. Military garb, briefly
124. Barrister's deg.
125. Line of fashion?
126. Game played with matchsticks

Last issue's solution

"What Are the Odds?"

V	E	S	T	S		B	L	A	M	E		Y	A	W	N	S		C	T	E					
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COLUMN | *Sports Roundup*



RANDOLPH T. HOLHUT/THE COMMONS

BUHS defeats Harwood for third straight win

Brattleboro forward Evan Wright narrowly avoids being slammed into the glass by a Harwood defender during boys' hockey action on Jan. 21 at Withington Rink. Wright had a goal and two assists in a 6-3 victory.

Brattleboro boys' hockey coach Eric Libardoni admits his team got beat up by the top teams in Division II in the first part of the season. "We had a ridiculously hard schedule to start the season," he said.

But a four-game homestand at Withington Rink against opponents that are at the same level as the Colonels enabled them to get things right heading into the final weeks of the season.

The Colonels picked up their third straight win with a 6-3 victory over Harwood on Jan. 21. Brattleboro sophomore right winger Evan Wright, who scored four goals in an 8-4 win over Burlington on Jan. 14, had a goal and two assists against Harwood. Sophomore Alex Dick added two goals and Riley Dionne, Henry Schwartz, and Carter Mialkowski also scored. Gabe Alexander had a pair of assists and Andy Cay and Rowan Lonergan were credited with one assist each.

"We're starting to get more scoring from different people, which is always good to see," said Libardoni. "We're doing a lot of things right, but we're not doing everything right."

The one thing Libardoni singled out that needs improvement is the defense. "We have to start limiting teams to a goal or two," he said. "You can't beat the better teams if you're giving up three or four goals in a game."

Brattleboro got out to a quick 2-0 lead in the first period as Wright showed off his speed and some nifty stick work in getting an unassisted goal just 53 seconds into the game. Those same moves led to another goal about a minute later as Wright and Alexander set up Dionne for his tally.

Harwood had two power play chances later in the first period. They came up empty on the first one, but Eli Harrington scored the first of his three goals in the game during the second power play with 4:32 left in the period. Brattleboro wasted no time getting that goal back as Cay and Mialkowski set up Schwartz for his goal just 25 seconds later.

Harrington scored again just 2:03 into the second period to cut the Colonels' lead to 3-2, but Dick scored a power-goal assisted by Wright to make 4-2 with 9:36 to play.

Dick scored an unassisted goal to start the third period, but Harrington finished his hat trick with a power play goal with 11:12 left in the game to cut the lead to 5-3. Mialkowski, a

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

freshman forward, then capped off the Colonels' scoring with a power play goal assisted by Alexander and Lonergan with 2:04 to play.

Derek Harvey got the start in goal for Brattleboro and wasn't seriously tested. "The goals we gave up were team goals, and not Derek's fault," Libardoni said.

Brattleboro, now 4-6-1, finishes the homestand on Jan. 25 against Lyndon. With six games left in the regular season, the Colonels have a good chance to move up in the Division II standings if they can keep improving.

Girls' basketball

- Leland & Gray picked up their ninth straight win on Jan. 17 with a 55-11 victory over visiting Rivendell. Senior forward Hannah Greenwood scored 18 points to lead the Rebels. Junior guard Maggie Parker scored 12 points and sophomore guard Abigail Emerson added nine points.

- The 10-1 Rebels remain in the No. 2 spot in Division IV, a game behind undefeated West Rutland. At press time, the two teams were scheduled to face each other on Jan. 24 in West Rutland.

- Brattleboro dropped its third game in a row with a 51-22 loss to the South Burlington Wolves on Jan. 21 at the BUHS gym. The Wolves got hot in the second half and outscored the Colonels 37-13. Aleah Staley was the catalyst, scoring 19 of her game-high 27 points in the second half, including four three-pointers. The Colonels are now 4-8.

- Bellows Falls came close, but couldn't quite finish off Long Trail School, as the visiting Mountain Lions pulled out a 48-46 win at Holland Gymnasium on Jan. 21. BF is 3-8 on the season.

- Winless Twin Valley didn't play last week, due to weather issues that forced the postponement of their scheduled home game with Proctor.

Boys' basketball

- Brattleboro traveled south to Northampton, Massachusetts to take

on the Blue Devils on Jan. 16, and came away with a 52-45 loss.

The Colonels trailed 28-19 at half-time, but outscored the Blue Devils 15-6 in the third quarter to tie the game at 34-34. Northampton then stopped the Brattleboro rally in the final quarter to secure the win. The Colonels are now 6-4.

- Colby Dearborn scored 21 points and Jamison Nystrom added 19 points as Bellows Falls defeated the visiting Poultney Blue Devils, 67-58, on Jan. 16. BF had a narrow three-point lead at the half, but held off Poultney in the second half. Peyton Book led Poultney with 26 points, while Marcus Lewis added 16 points.

The Terriers then improved their record to 7-3 with a 70-40 win over visiting Leland & Gray on Jan. 19. BF had a 34-21 lead at the half, and started the third quarter with an 11-4 run to dash any hopes of a Rebel comeback.

- Dearborn led BF with a game-high 17 points, including an 8-for-9 performance at the free throw line. Cole Moore scored nine points and Jake Moore and Walker James each added eight points. Trevor Stillwagon and Matt Winkler led the Rebels with 15 and 12 points, respectively, while Cody Hescok chipped in nine points.

- With a 44-38 win over White River Valley on Jan. 21, the Rebels ended their week at 4-4.

- Weather woes kept Twin Valley, now 1-7, from playing any games last week.

Girls' hockey

- Brattleboro started its week with a 5-1 loss to South Burlington. Sabrina Brunet scored twice in the first period as the Wolves took a 3-0 lead and cruised from there. Ava Hershberg, Izzy Redzic and Rosa DiGulian also scored for South Burlington. Willow Romo got the Colonels' lone goal and goaltender Angela Jobin made 36 saves.

The Colonels then snapped their six-game losing streak with a 3-0 road win over Harwood on Jan. 21. The Colonels are now 2-9.

Nordic skiing

- A lack of snow forced the cancellation on Jan. 18 of Brattleboro's lone regular season meet. Their home course at the Brattleboro Outing Club's trails at the Brattleboro Country Club has seen more rain and days above freezing than snow.

For the BOC, that has meant very few days where there has been enough

snow for skiing, although that changed with the most recent storms that unfortunately came too late for the Colonels to host their meet.

The next chance to see the Colonel skiers on their home course is Wednesday, Feb. 15, when the Southern Vermont League's relay championships are scheduled. Weather permitting, of course.

Harris Hill Ski Jump prepares for its 101st year

- The annual Harris Hill Ski Jump competition, featuring up to 40 of the world's up and coming jumpers who soar more than 300 feet at speeds of nearly 60 mph, is set to take place on Feb. 17-19 in Brattleboro. Organizers have their fingers crossed that the weather in mid-February will be favorable for snowmaking so they can get the hill ready for competition.

For the first time at Harris Hill, the weekend will kick off on Friday, Feb. 17 with two rounds of a fun target jump challenge under the lights. Saturday's and Sunday's events will be the official judged competition sanctioned by the U.S. Ski and Snowboard Association. This year will mark the 101st year of the event.

Harris Hill's inaugural nighttime event will be held under new lights installed last year. There are no advance ticket sales for Friday night; admission is first come, first served and parking is only available at the ski jump. Pricing is \$10 per adult (kids age 10 and under are free) or fill the car for \$30. Light food concessions will be available.

Saturday the 18th features the Pepsi Challenge and Sunday's competition is the Fred Harris Memorial Tournament. Each day, gates open at 10 a.m., and competition starts at noon. The event features professional announcers, music, a bonfire, a beer garden, local food concessions, and a great family atmosphere. Tickets start at \$15.

Full details on the Harris Hill Ski Jump weekend — including details on tickets — can be found online at harrishillskijump.com, and you can follow the latest news on Harris Hill on Facebook and Instagram.

Martinez to play pro football in Germany

- BUHS and Castleton University alumnus Anthony Martinez will try his hand at playing professional football this summer in the German Football League.

Martinez, a receiver, will be playing for the Dusseldorf Panther, which was founded in 1978 and is the oldest American football club in Europe. It is also the most successful, with six league championships.

After starting for the varsity for three seasons and finding his niche as a pass catcher for the Colonels, Martinez went to Castleton and was a four-year starter with the Spartans from 2017 to 2021. He finished his collegiate career as Castleton's fourth all-time leading receiver with a total of 1,830 yards, and is ranked fifth all-time in career receptions with 125 and fourth all-time with 12 career touchdown catches.

Since graduation, the 23-year-old Martinez has been a receivers coach last fall at Castleton, and hopes to return to Castleton to continue coaching in some capacity this fall after the Dusseldorf Panther season — which runs from June through September — is finished.

Senior bowling roundup

- Week 3 of the winter/spring season of the Brattleboro Senior Bowling League at Brattleboro Bowl on Jan. 19 saw The Markers (Team 5) move into sole possession of first place with a 5-0 week to improve to 13-2. The A-1's (Team 1) had a 1-4 week to fall into a second place tie with Slo Movers (Team 7) at 9-6, followed by Split Happens (Team 8) at 8-7, Trash-O-Matic (Team 3) at 7-8, 10 Pins (Team 4) and The Strikers (Team 2) at 5-10, and Fab Four (Team 6) at 4-11.

Nancy Dalzell had the women's high handicap game (240), while Carol Gloski had the high handicap series (678). Robert Rigby had the men's high handicap game (271) and Larry McIntosh had the high handicap series (678). Slo Movers had the high team handicap game (883) and series (2,591).

In scratch scoring, Rigby led the men with a 689 series with games of 268, 289, and 191, while Chuck Adams had a 591 series with games of 204, 194, and 193. Warren Corriveau Sr. had games of 211 and 191, and Pete Cross also rolled a 191 game.

Gloski again had the women's high scratch series (533), with games of 187, 178, and 172. Dalzell had the high scratch game with a 191, and Shirley Aiken rolled a 172.



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