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## Brattleboro EMS study sparks more questions

### Consultant will present findings to the Selectboard at Feb. 7 meeting

By Kevin O'Connor  
*VtDigger.org*

BRATTLEBORO—Town-funded consultants and the region's main emergency medical provider concur on a key finding in a \$39,000 review of local ambulance options: All provide quality care. If only they could agree on everything else.

A new feasibility study by Wyoming's AP Triton consulting firm concludes that Rescue Inc. — Windham County's largest and longest-serving ambulance service — is the most economical

choice for maintaining current local coverage.

In comparison, a proposed Brattleboro Fire Department takeover of EMS duties would increase costs, but would also bolster the town's understaffed system of crisis response, the report found.

"I think they're all going to provide good service," Rich Buchanan, an AP Triton senior project manager, told VTDigger. "The only caveat to be considered is that the department, strictly for the provision of fire service, does not have enough staffing to meet

■ SEE EMS STUDY, A2

## Former side judge will face charges

### Duff accused of collecting pay for hours she allegedly never worked

By Tom Kearney  
*VtDigger.org*

BRATTLEBORO—An assistant judge in Windham County has been criminally cited for allegedly falsifying her work schedule and collecting \$8,518 to which she wasn't entitled, according to a Vermont State Police press release.

Patricia Duff, 60, was cited on Jan. 26 on charges of false pretense and grand larceny, according to state police. She is scheduled to be arraigned on Feb. 28 at Windham Superior Court in Brattleboro.

Duff, who had been a side judge since 2006, resigned last summer after authorities said they were investigating her. Reached Friday by email by VTDigger, Duff declined to comment on the pending charges.

An affidavit of probable cause, which describes the police investigation, will not be made public until Duff is arraigned, police said.

The state police Bureau of Criminal Investigations began its probe last July based on information from the Windham County Treasurer's Office and the Vermont Judiciary. Authorities allege that between January and June 2022, Duff was paid \$8,518 for 352 hours she claimed but did not work.

Assistant judges are leaders of Vermont's county government system. Each county has two independently elected side judges who are responsible for administering the county budget and other county government

activities. However, Vermont's county governments have few real powers.

The assistant judges also sit as finders of fact in civil and family court alongside the presiding superior court judge, and so are often called "side judges."

Other side judges have been disciplined by the Vermont Judicial Conduct Board in recent years.

Paul Kane, a Windham County side judge, was reprimanded in 2017 for violating professional codes of judicial conduct, and was prohibited from holding any judicial office in the future.

Kane was elected as an assistant judge in 2014. He was accused of mishandling the assets of his uncle's wife in 2010 and failed to take responsibility for his conduct, according to the conduct board.

Judges Constance Ramsey and Charles Delaney, former Chittenden County assistant judges, were disciplined in 2021 for approving \$2,000 bonus payments for themselves without proper transparency.

With additional reporting by Maggie Reynolds of VTDigger.org.



VERMONT STATE POLICE  
**Patricia Wells Duff, 60, of Brattleboro is seen in a processing photo taken Jan. 26 by Vermont State Police.**



OLGA PETERS COMMONS FILE PHOTO  
**With Thanksgiving plans upended by a pandemic with no end in sight, people lined up on Flat Street for the Everyone Eats Thanksgiving food distribution in Brattleboro in 2020.**

## Vermont Everyone Eats program helped diners, restaurateurs, and farmers survive difficult times during the pandemic with more than 3.5 million meals

By Virginia Ray  
*The Commons*

BRATTLEBORO—Vermont Everyone Eats (VEE) will end March 31 after a hugely successful two-and-a-half-year run.

The federally funded, short-term pandemic recovery initiative was created to help restaurants, farmers, and those who needed a meal navigate the acute economic challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We don't get to eat out very often, and the foods you have prepared for us have been absolutely delicious," one Brattleboro meal recipient told program organizers, likening the program's offerings to "a catered meal."

"You should know how your contribution has not only fed us, but also made our hearts grow with gratitude," the writer continued. "The quality, time, and care that has been put into these meals is nothing short of

outstanding. Finding a way to be resourceful and still feeding us as if we were eating in the restaurant means so much."

The Brattleboro Everyone Eats hub of the statewide program has been sponsored by the Downtown Brattleboro Alliance and run by Restaurant Liaison Amanda Witman and Distribution Manager Max Magen, with the help of numerous volunteers and community organizations.

At the peak of the program

in December 2020, the local hub was providing 5,000 meals per week made by 29 local restaurants dealing with lockdowns and uncertainty that accompanied the coronavirus and its spread, especially before vaccines and effective treatments became available.

Today, Brattleboro Everyone Eats distributes 2,200 meals a week to eaters in need in the greater Brattleboro area and provides income to 15 local

■ SEE EVERYONE EATS, A2



RANDOLPH T. HOLTHUT THE COMMONS  
**For the first time in his legislative career, State Rep. Mike Mrowicki, D-Putney, is the sole representative of his House district.**

## Mike Mrowicki, a longtime state representative, looks at legislative priorities, from broadband to housing to guns

By Joyce Marcel  
*The Commons*

PUTNEY—As Michael "Mike" Mrowicki, D-Putney, begins his ninth term as a state legislator, he suddenly finds himself flying solo.

Last year's redistricting separated Westminster from Putney and Dummerston in the Windham-4 district. His last term co-representative, Michele

Bos-Lun, now finds herself representing turf that's farther north — Westminster and Rockingham.

That left Putney and Dummerston to Mrowicki. But he doesn't feel alone.

"The immediate benefit of a one-member district is I can focus more time on a smaller number of constituents," Mrowicki said.

"That said, being in Windham County, our legislative delegation works together as a team quite well," he noted. "More so,

I daresay, than any other county delegation in the state."

Lawmakers meet twice a month — or more frequently, if needed.

"These meetings allow us to share with each other what we're doing, who has questions they could use some direction with, and we also work together on issues," Mrowicki said. "So none of us are really working solo."

From the beginning of his political career — which was three

governors ago, if you're counting — Mrowicki has been focused on service.

"I've been doing service for most of my adult life," he said. "When I first started, I was working for Putney Family Services. And, I think, I bring more of a service-oriented perspective than some of the people for whom politics is like playing human chess."

"I understand the importance of policy," Mrowicki said. "I

■ SEE SERVICE, A3

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Recognizing that a vigorous exchange of ideas and information allows democracy to function and is the lifeblood of a community, Vermont Independent Media: • creates a forum for community participation, • promotes local independent journalism, • fosters civic engagement by building media skills through publication of The Commons and commonsnews.org, and through the Media Mentoring Project.

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

VOICES

The Commons presents a broad range of essays, memoirs, and other subjective material in Voices, our editorial and commentary section. We want the paper to provide an unpredictable variety of food for thought from all points on the political spectrum.

We especially invite responses to material that appears in the paper.

We do not publish unsigned or anonymous letters, and we only very rarely withhold names for other pieces. When space is an issue, our priority is to run contributions that have not yet appeared in other publications.

Please check with the editor before writing essays or other original submissions of substance. Email: voices@commonnews.org.

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

Everyone Eats

FROM SECTION FRONT

restaurants.

Born of crisis

The program began Aug. 1, 2020. Hubs in the state have distributed approximately 3.5 million meals throughout the state's 14 counties, generating more than \$34 million in revenue for participating restaurants.

An average of 35% of meal ingredients — far exceeding the program's 10% local ingredient minimum — have been bought from Vermont farmers and food producers, providing more than \$3.5 million in revenue.

The program has benefited more than 700 restaurants, farms, food producers, hubs, and distribution partners throughout the state's 14 counties since its inception and will continue to distribute an average of 25,000 meals per week to food insecure individuals across Vermont until it ends.

Why is the program ending? "Vermont Everyone Eats was specifically intended as a temporary emergency support program," Witman says.

The program was made possible after the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES), the \$2.2 trillion economic stimulus bill passed by the 116th U.S. Congress, was signed into law on March 27, 2020 in response to the economic fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In late June 2020, Vermont legislators allocated CARES Act money and voted to create the VEE program.

"We owe deep appreciation to our legislators for making this program possible with their vote," Witman says. "It soon became clear that FEMA [the Federal Emergency Management Agency] could and would provide federal disaster funding to reimburse the costs of the program, which it continued to fund 100% through June 2022."

However, beginning in July 2022, FEMA's funding shifted to a 90/10 model with a requirement that the program cover 10% of the cost. The Vermont Legislature allocated \$1.3 million to make up that difference.

VEE ran with collaborative support from the Agency of Commerce and Community Development; the Agency of Human Services; the Agency of Agriculture, Food, and Markets; Vermont Emergency Management; and more than \$42 million in federal FEMA funding supplemented by the \$1.3 million allocation from the Legislature.

The program provided a three-pronged boost during the pandemic: free restaurant-prepared meals to Vermonters in need of food assistance, a stabilizing source of income for Vermont restaurants hurt by Covid closures, and economic support to Vermont farmers and food producers.

"With careful management and a measured ramp-down, that \$1.3 million allocation will stretch until exactly March 31, 2023," Witman says. "The program will not qualify for funding after the cost share allocation is used up."

"This emergency program played a key role in providing meals to households while providing stable income for Vermont restaurants, farmers, and food producers during the uncertain times of the COVID-19 pandemic," says Department of Housing and Community Development Commissioner Josh Hanford.

"As this federally funded emergency COVID-19 response tool winds down, the hard work of developing sustainable solutions to end food insecurity in Vermont will continue," he adds.

Gaps remain in food insecurity fight

VEE has raised awareness of gaps in the existing systems addressing food insecurity in the state as well as the ongoing business challenges faced by Vermont restaurants and farmers in our seasonally driven state economy.

Using this program as a model, partners will continue to work together to identify sustainable long-term solutions to address ongoing food security and economic needs.

"Vermont Everyone Eats did a remarkable job rallying communities of restaurants, eaters, and farmers during the pandemic. It was not designed to end hunger in the state of Vermont," says Vermont Foodbank CEO John Sayles, a member of the Vermont Everyone Eats statewide task force.

"Hunger, a solvable problem, still exists. While VEE is coming to a close, collaborative action will continue across Vermont to ensure the dignity of enough nourishing food for all."

Asked what options or plans — if any — exist for the diners, restaurants, and farmers in need who have been helped while the program has been running, Witman answers, "this is the question we are all grappling with right now."

"A number of federally funded, pandemic-era programs are ending at the same time, and the increased need will be significant," she says. "Hunger is always an emergency, and restaurants and farmers always face ongoing business challenges in our seasonally-driven state economy here in Vermont."

Witman says a number of strong programs and organizations already in place statewide "work very hard" to improve food security for Vermonters.

"Locally, we have organizations like Foodworks, Loaves & Fishes, and many others that do their part in providing food for those who need it. Is it enough to meet the need? No," she says.

EMS study

FROM SECTION FRONT

any national standard. There is a benefit to adding firefighters who can serve dual roles."

As for the price tag? AP Triton researchers and Rescue cite significantly different totals, leaving taxpayers with their own questions as the town prepares to discuss the issue Feb. 7.

'A great deal of detail that still has to occur'

The Brattleboro Selectboard surprised residents last spring when it voted with little public notice or debate to drop the town's nearly 60-year contract with Rescue, a private non-profit, and hire Golden Cross Ambulance to help the fire department pick up EMS duties.

Local leaders at the time claimed the plan would not only cost less than Rescue's \$285,600 annual fee but also reap an estimated \$500,000 to \$700,000 in yearly insurance revenue after expenses.

"After a careful internal analysis of the feasibility of the Fire Department taking on EMS, I felt that not only can BFD provide a high level of service after a year of transition, but it also makes financial sense," said then-Town Manager Octavian "Yoshi" Manale, who abruptly resigned eight weeks later under an agreement that included a \$72,515 severance package.

Manale told the press that his experience working for the city government of Trenton, New Jersey, "gave me a perspective that I believe my predecessors did not have." But his revenue forecast hasn't panned out, as documented by financial figures six months into a test run, as well as by AP Triton.

According to the feasibility study, if Brattleboro adds enough fire department employees and equipment to cover all EMS calls, it would collect an estimated \$935,626 in annual insurance payments but would still need to pay more than \$300,000 a year beyond that to cover \$1.2 million in expenses — a figure higher than the most recent Rescue contract.

The only way the town could save money through an EMS takeover, the report said, is if it cut its current level of service.

But Rescue questions whether AP Triton's cost projections for any town model capture all required spending, which it believes could leave taxpayers with a bill even higher than projected.

AP Triton's firefighter salary numbers, for example, are based on a current contract set to expire June 30. The Selectboard is proposing a 2023-24 budget with a 4% cost-of-living adjustment and, after that, will enter collective bargaining with workers to determine how much

more wages and benefits will rise July 1.

Rescue, which regularly replaces its 11 ambulances and equipment, also wonders why AP Triton's town takeover estimates don't spell out such expenses as training, certification, inspections, equipment (ranging from stretchers to disposable supplies), and an annual state provider tax payment of about \$30,000.

"I know our numbers are accurate because we just cost this out to put another ambulance on the road," Drew Hazelton, Rescue's chief of operations, said at a recent public meeting. "It's very expensive equipment and has a very short life."

In response, AP Triton said it stood by its financial figures — yet added that the numbers were estimates aimed at helping the town pick an option and then piece together a more specific budget.

"We have a reasonable idea — enough to start making a discussion on the cost of running a system," Buchanan told VTDigger. "There's going to be a great deal of detail that still has to occur."

'An analysis based on what was available'

The Selectboard approved the EMS change prior to requesting, let alone receiving, the feasibility study.

When board members approved the transition plan last April, they voiced concerns about Rescue's costs as well as what they called an "incendiary" tone of a March 25 letter from the provider seeking an update.

"It's our job to negotiate contracts that are best for the town," Selectboard Chair Ian Goodnow said at the time.

Added fellow member Elizabeth McLoughlin: "We're the town and we can hire contractor A or contractor B. Contractor A sent us a nasty letter, so we go with contractor B."

But since dropping Rescue in July, Brattleboro has spent enough on unanticipated expenses to eat up the promised savings. Local leaders who focused on finances in the spring pivoted over the summer to professing the need to consider greater municipal control.

"It was never all about the money," board member Tim Wessel said once the switch drained the expected surplus last September — four months after he deemed the supposed cost-cutting move "a good path, but I am perfectly willing to eat those words if it turns out this is not."

The Selectboard has moved on to focus on the feasibility

study's assertion that average response times by the fire department are five minutes faster than those by Rescue. But the latter agency questions the accuracy of AP Triton's figures, which it didn't provide.

Rescue, presenting its own numbers at a recent public meeting, calculated its average response time is only 71 seconds behind the fire department.

In reply, AP Triton said it stood by its findings — yet cautioned they weren't foolproof because Rescue didn't participate in the study.

"I would have been able to do more accurate analysis had they been forthcoming and given us their data," Buchanan told VTDigger. "They simply did not. Therefore, we had to make an analysis based on what was available to us."

AP Triton questioned why Rescue was withholding information. Rescue, for its part, said it had lost trust with local leaders after the town severed their six-decade working relationship yet tried to blame the agency — starting with an April 11 municipal memo the town later acknowledged was "flawed" because of "inartful drafting."

(The "flawed" admission came when local leaders, calling for Rescue to be "transparent," denied a series of VTDigger public records requests for any and all paperwork behind their EMS decision.)

Rescue added it wasn't questioning the AP Triton study in an effort to return Brattleboro to its fold. The agency has filled the town void by signing contracts with the Vermont Department of Health and the community's two largest medical facilities, Brattleboro Memorial Hospital and the Brattleboro Retreat. It's also busy running its new Vermont EMS Academy, where students include Brattleboro firefighters.

AP Triton is scheduled to answer questions at a Brattleboro Selectboard meeting on Tuesday, Feb. 7. The session is expected to draw interest from both taxpayers and the town's citizen Finance Committee, which is generating its own list of inquiries.

The consulting firm said the high level of local debate and division is unusual.

"Most communities lean toward wanting to have public service," Buchanan told VTDigger. "In contrast, Rescue Inc. has been providing good care and they've been around a very long time, so I think there's more of an affinity for the organization."

"That means you have more options," he said. "But you're just getting started here. The community has a lot of things to figure out over the next year."

"We are also concerned by the challenges that restaurants and farmers continue to face," Witman adds. "We must continue to work together to develop sustainable solutions to these ongoing challenges."

"The restaurants and other downtown businesses in downtown Brattleboro are part of what makes our town so vibrant and attractive," she continues. "It is a huge success of this program that so many of our participating restaurants were able to weather the pandemic and remain in business."

"The Everyone Eats program helped make that happen," Witman says.

Helping small businesses survive

Two restaurateurs who have participated in the program for

two years are exceedingly grateful for the VEE opportunity, albeit for different reasons. It got one through a rough patch. For the other, it gave him another venue in which to do the right thing.

"It has, honestly, been a lifesaver," says Jaci Reynolds, who owns a catering business and food truck called Jaci's BBQ Joint.

Reynolds says last year was her first year with the truck and she had no plan for the fall or winter other than to take on catering gigs.

She heard of the program, contacted organizers, and "thank goodness, they needed more partners," she says.

Otherwise, she says, she would have had taken on another sort of job, which would have proved difficult to find, given that she planned to leave when barbecue season started again.

"Everyone Eats kept me going," Reynolds says, recognizing that the program will end just as she'll be moving on from the food truck to a bricks-and-mortar location at the new Vermont Marketplace (formerly The Outlet Center) on Canal Street, off Exit 1 of Interstate 91, where she's renting a kitchen and "pivoting the business a little bit."

For Eddie Cogliano of Fast Eddie's Restaurant and Bakery on Putney Road in Brattleboro, helping out is a way of life, and Vermont Everyone Eats offered him another opportunity to do so.

"I do the meals because it's the right thing to do, not for financial gain," Cogliano says. "I put out meat meals, which are expensive to make. I was a caterer for 30 years in Massachusetts and have huge buying power. I mostly buy meat from Boston, but I do buy local veggies, so I'm able to give a good value."

Cogliano is also involved with Groundworks, a Brattleboro collaborative working to find solutions to end hunger and homelessness in the region. He personally delivers meals there every Thursday and plans to do more.

"They look forward to seeing me," he says, adding that his 19 years in the Coast Guard showed him how government programs work — or sometimes don't work — in many locations.

"There is homelessness everywhere, but it seems in Brattleboro homelessness is highlighted, and it seems to be a big problem, and it's very sad," he says. "Sometimes between the political layers things don't always work out so well, but if everyone does the right thing, it does work."

"Amanda has been great and when I saw what it [VEE] was, and knew I could make an immediate impact, it meant a lot to me," Cogliano says.

For more information about the program and how to receive a meal, visit the Vermont Everyone Eats website at vteveryoneeats.org.

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Service

work hard at that.” But, he stresses that just as important to him is the person who calls and says, “I didn’t get my fuel assistance check. Can you help?”

“And for that person, I don’t think there’s any more important issue than trying to get them heat,” said Mrowicki, who identifies with the concept of “the wounded healer.”

“I believe that when I’m trying to help others, I’m also helping myself,” he said.

Mrowicki’s primary work is with the Government Operations and Military Affairs Committee, but he has many priorities.

“The Speaker has appointed me as one of three House members to the Joint Legislative Management Committee,” he said. “I have also been appointed, for my fourth term, to the House Sexual Harassment Prevention Committee.”

The management committee, in the light of the Jan. 6, 2021 attempt to override a national election, is tasked with overseeing issues such as looking at a possible reorganization of the statehouse’s Capitol Police Force.

“Given new and diverse security issues, from cyberattacks to having to prepare for unique situations from white nationalist groups that the U.S. Capitol, plus the Michigan and Oregon legislatures, have encountered, it’s a different world — and that needs to be recognized and prepared for,” Mrowicki said.

Top priority: helping constituents

What Mrowicki likes most about his job, however, is helping his constituents.

Last week, for example, the Windham County delegation got together to help a number of organic dairy farmers.

“Their milk prices are currently \$32 per hundred pounds of milk, and their production price is \$42,” Mrowicki said. “That’s mostly for feed and fuel costs.”

“This is not sustainable and we’re hoping we can get some relief as soon as possible in the Budget Adjustment Bill,” he continued. “We’re also hoping federal policy can address this, and we’re in contact with our D.C. delegation to raise these concerns.”

To take another example, one day Mrowicki got a call from somebody who said that their parent had not received their heating assistance check.

He called the office of the then-deputy commissioner of the Department for Children and Families, Economic Services Division, Office of Fuel Assistance (currently, a position waiting to be filled).

That commissioner told Mrowicki that the agency’s records showed the family had “gotten it in the past, but we don’t have an application for this year,” the lawmaker recalled.

A return call to his constituent revealed that one of the parents had died the previous year. “And apparently, that was the parent [who] always filled out the application. The other parent didn’t know about it,” Mrowicki said.

“So I called back to the commissioner,” he continued. “I explained the situation. I said, ‘I know the deadline has passed, but can we do something?’ He said, ‘We sure can.’”

“And the next day we were able to get them back on track,” Mrowicki recalled. “So they got the heating assistance.”

Another constituent was new to the country and needed to get their child into the Dr. Dynasaur low-cost or free health insurance program for children, teens, and pregnant Vermonters who qualify.

Again, Mrowicki called a commissioner. And again, the state official directly answered the call.

“The commissioner was able to get that straightened out,” he said.

‘The face of Vermont is changing’

This anecdote illustrates the growing nature of diversity in Vermont — especially in Windham County, Mrowicki said.

“Windham County has the fastest growing population of people of color in Vermont,” he said. “And now, by adding Afghan refugees, we’re developing some diversity here.”

“We want to make sure everybody feels welcome,” Mrowicki said. “The face of Vermont is changing, it’s going to keep changing, and we have to make sure that we go out of our way to make everybody feel welcome.”

“So I’m part of the Social Equity Caucus here,” he continued. “We’re trying to listen to people of color who live here and make the changes they need.”

Last year, the House passed a bill to start the process of creating a Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

“This was something requested

from communities of people of color here in Vermont,” Mrowicki said. “We can start the process of hearing their reality, of getting their stories out there.”

“A lot of us don’t realize the experience of being someone of color in Vermont is not always easy,” he admitted.

“So we want to make sure this commission actually takes form and starts doing its work,” Mrowicki continued. “Sometimes we pass a bill and then we have to make sure that next year it is actually being done.”

Another bill Mrowicki is interested in is called a “Crown Bill” — proposed legislation along the lines of what has recently passed in Massachusetts. Such policy protects African Americans and other people of African descent from facing issues in schools and in other situations about the way they wear their hair.

Other issues, other solutions

One of the biggest issues facing the House comes from the U.S. Supreme Court’s dismantling of *Roe v. Wade*. Last year, Vermonters passed by a significant margin a constitutional amendment to protect reproductive rights in the state.

But now a whole host of other issues have come up. Some states are passing bills, for example, that would criminalize the act of traveling to Vermont for, say, an abortion.

“We’re going to be keeping up on reproductive rights,” Mrowicki said.

“Other states are trying to restrict what happens, so we’re going to be testing for shield laws that have to do with allowing others to come to Vermont and not be prosecuted, or protecting the doctors who help people from not being prosecuted. Details are going to be worked out, but that’s the headline.”

Housing — or Vermont’s lack of it — is another big issue the House is working on. Mrowicki is especially interested in this issue since Putney might soon have 22 new units of housing, some of it at affordable rates, on land in front of the Putney Food Co-op and next to the community garden.

The plan is for town houses, with some units listed as affordable. The top annual income level will be \$70,000, said Mrowicki, who has put a lot of time and energy into getting the housing approved.

“I’ve been been working hard to get that through, locally, and with the Housing and Conservation Board, which is a big supporter, and in the House,” he said.

The issue is controversial in Putney.

“I think there was a minority who didn’t like it,” Mrowicki said. “But last year we had a Selectboard election where that was the main issue. And the people supported the housing by a 2-1 margin.”

Mrowicki has also been involved the Deerfield Valley Communications Union District (DVFiber), which has been working to provide last-mile

fast internet access to 24 towns in Windham and Bennington counties, starting with towns that previously had no internet service at all.

After years in the planning stages, and with \$60 million in federal funds at its disposal, last month the service went live in Readsboro.

“Broadband is essential for the 21st century, both living at home and trying to do business at home,” Mrowicki said. “So I’ve been part of the Putney contingent on the board, and we just lit up our first houses. It’s probably going to take over \$100 million to light up the whole county.”

At this point, Mrowicki warned that he was “going to get on my Democratic Socialist soapbox.”

“The free market has failed us,” he said. “The for-profit companies are only going to go so far. As soon as they hit that line where their return on investment doesn’t create enough profit, they’re going to stop, and they’re not going to go any further.”

And “that’s where government has to step in,” Mrowicki said.

“We know that every Vermonter deserves broadband, whether they live on the last 100 yards in the last mile in town,” he said. “That’s what DVFiber is committed to doing.”

Taking steps on gun reform ‘before we have a big incident here’

An issue Mrowicki is passionate about is gun control — although he prefers “gun safety reform.”

“Gun control” is a term that came up from the gun lobby,” he said. “And I don’t think that’s an accurate description.”

“We know that most gun owners are safety- and civically-conscious people,” Mrowicki said. “What we’re trying to do is make sure that people who should not have that right don’t have guns. Whether it’s domestic violence, or they’re having a mental health episode, I don’t think there should be firearms allowed to be in that situation.”

Given that America has painted a huge target on itself and invited children as young as 6 to use firearms against others, it is essential that action be taken, he said.

The House has a staff that writes the bills, but Mrowicki is a sponsor of gun safety reforms.

FROM SECTION FRONT

“It’s apparent, when you look around the country, that we still have more to do to prevent gun violence,” he said. “Vermont is one of the safest states in the country. But still, we do have a problem here when it comes to domestic violence, when it comes to suicide.”

“I think we need to start to take steps before we have a big incident here,” said Mrowicki, adding that “I’m going to keep pushing.”

“I know that’s not always a popular thing, but there are enough of us here that are going to keep pushing, and I think we’re going to get some more good legislation on gun safety reform.”

Age limits for automatic weapons are part of the bill.

“One of the things that we’re seeing around the country is how often it is young people can get hold of weapons of war,” Mrowicki said. “They have no business with them.”

“I think we’re going to raise the age to 21,” he said. “I am one of the people that goes out in front of the crowd and says, ‘OK, this is what we’re gonna do. If you don’t like it, we’ll have to talk about that.’”

Climate change is another of Mrowicki’s interests.

“Climate touches on so many things, including housing,” he said. “And it affects agriculture and forestry, which are a huge part of the landscape. It’s not just for economic reasons. They’re an essential part of decarbonizing and reducing our carbon footprint.”

Mrowicki has been on the committee that reworked the open meeting laws for the time of Covid.

On Jan. 25, Gov. Phil Scott signed “An act relating to temporary alternative procedures for annual municipal meetings and electronic meetings of public bodies, passed by the General Assembly. He noted that he has concerns with the bill related to transparency,” according to *Vermont Business Magazine*.

The Legislature is also considering an extension of universal mail-in voting for all elections.

“I think that later on in the session, we’ll have more conversations about whether to extend that bill,” Mrowicki said. “Beyond that, with Town Meeting coming up, we’ve heard from a lot of town clerks that they want to know for sure if they will

Climate touches on so many things, including housing. And it affects agriculture and forestry, which are a huge part of the landscape. It’s not just for economic reasons.

—MIKE MROWICKI

be in-person or on Zoom. A lot of towns want to be back in person.”

“Sometimes I feel like it might not be the right time yet,” he acknowledged. “But there’s a sense — from a lot of people — that they want to be back back in person, back in the community. And later on in the session, we’ll probably revisit the issue to see if we want to make that a commitment for a longer term.”

For example, Dummerston will not hold an in-person Town Meeting this year; voters will instead have Australian balloting at the Town Clerk’s Office on Town Meeting Day and before, and the

town will hold an informational meeting by Zoom on March 1. Putney, however, has decided on an in-person meeting on Town Meeting Day.

All these interests mean Mrowicki is a busy man at the Vermont State House. He is lucky that the towns he represents, Dummerston and Putney, have so many things in common.

“Putney and Dummerston already having many connections, being neighbors and culturally and politically pretty similar,” he said. “It’s a pleasure to serve both communities.”

PUBLIC NOTICES

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PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that the Brattleboro Development Review Board will hold a public hearing on Wednesday, 2.15.2023 at 7:00 PM in the Selectboard Meeting Room, Municipal Center, 230 Main St., Brattleboro, VT; the meeting will also be held on Zoom. Meeting ID: 881 4045 1917 Passcode: 190450. 2022-174 Town of Brattleboro; WF District; request for Riparian Area & Wetlands Conditional Use, Site Plan & Local Act 250 approval to construct a bike pump track at Memorial Park Dr; TMP #110215.000; 2023-6 Elnu Abenaki, Inc; RN District; request for Site Plan & Conditional Use approval to change use to religious facility and nature park to establish an Abenaki cultural center at 25 Shore Dr; TMP#220006.000; 2023-7 JMD Hospitality, LLC; SC District; request for Subdivision and Local Act 250 approval to create a new lot containing the barn residences at 1382 Putney Rd; TMP#80003.000 Pursuant to 24 VSA §§ 4464(a) (1)(C) and 4471(a), participation in this local proceeding is a prerequisite to the right to take any subsequent appeal.

NOTE: Meetings are open to the public. For specific accommodations please call the Planning Services Department at 802-251-8154.

Application materials are available at <https://tinyurl.com/DRB-Applications> Additional materials may be submitted up to the time of the meeting and will be uploaded to the above address.

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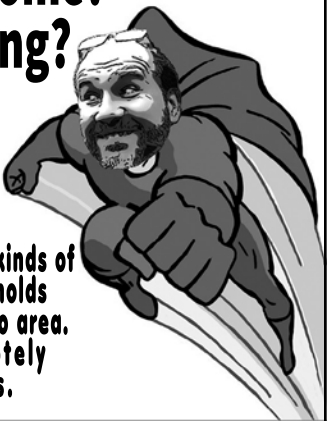
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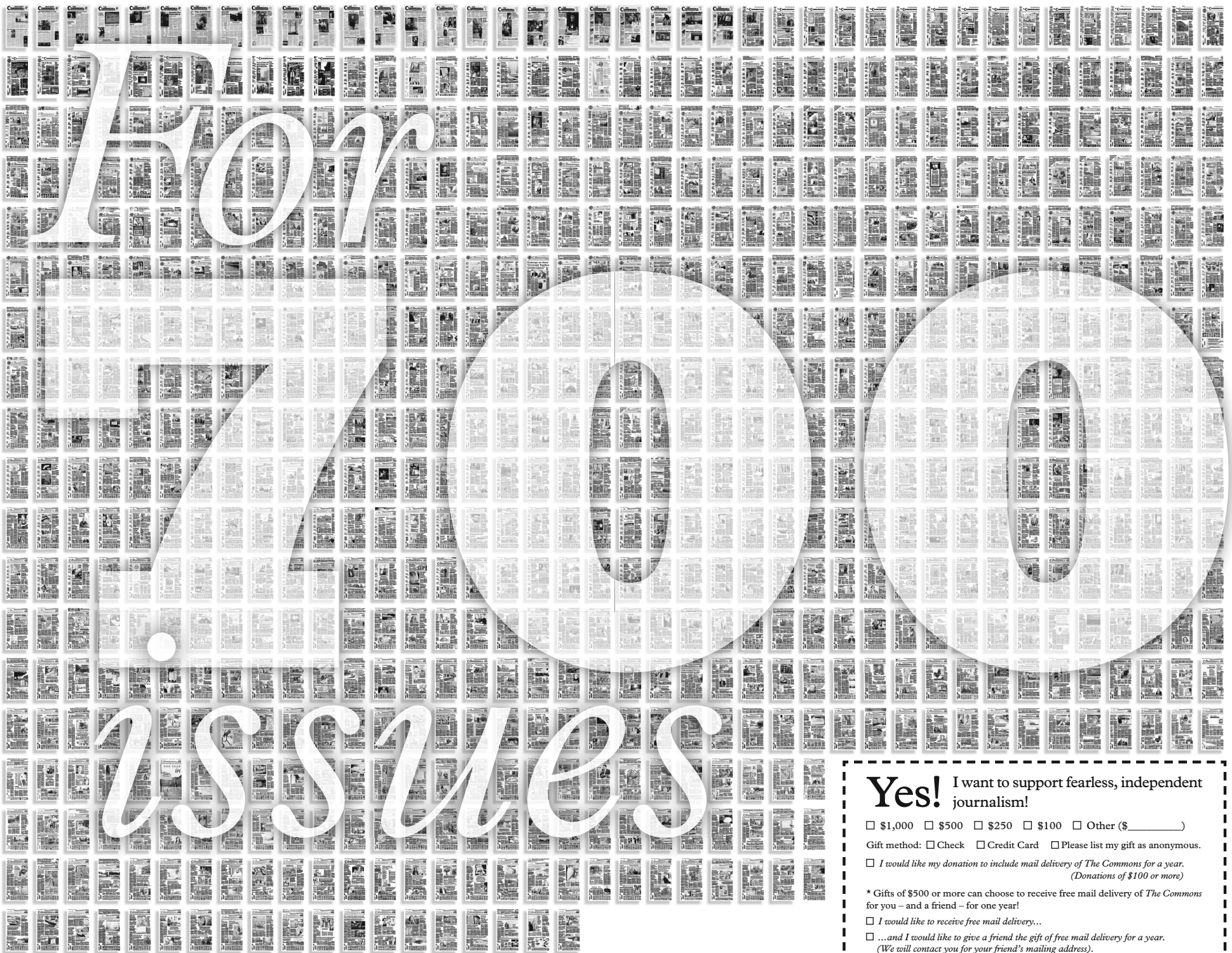
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## MILESTONES

Births, deaths, and news of people from Windham County

## College news

The following local students were named to the University of Vermont Dean's List for the fall 2022 semester: **Allura Cameron** of Londonderry, **Madeline Prouty** of Londonderry, **Elijah Ghia** of Saxtons River, **Ella Bursky** of Westminster, **Owen James** of Brattleboro, **Julia Luna** of Brattleboro, **Jasmine Wegiel** of Brattleboro, **Westerly Gooley** of Brattleboro, **Dylan Ray** of Brookline, **Alexander Urbaska** of Newfane, **Emmett Dewes** of East Dummerston, **Maxwell Naylor** of East Dummerston, **Corissa Freeman** of West Dover, **Justin Fusco** of West Wardsboro, **Bailey Boyce** of Whitingham, **Christos Contakos** of Whitingham, **Molly Wrathall** of Whitingham, **Jordyn Jager** of Landgrove, **Rose Summerlin** of Brattleboro, **Charles Galanes** of Brattleboro, **Edith Cay** of Brattleboro, **Nina Singleton-Spencer** of Newfane, **Chandre Pero** of Putney, and **Max Tiffen** of West Wardsboro.

The following local students have been named to the Dean's List for the 2022 fall semester at the University of New England in Biddeford, Maine: **Jonathan Terry** of Bellows Falls; **Nicholas Campbell**, **Hannah Geno**, **Mollie Patenaude**, **Riley Patenaude**, and **Rachael Rooney** of Brattleboro; and **Shelby Stoodley** of Westminster.

**Keigan Illingworth**, a dance major from Westminster, was named to the Dean's List for the fall 2022 semester at Hofstra University in Hempstead, New York.

**Gabrielle Beal** of Wilmington was named to the Dean's List for the fall 2022 semester at the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, Massachusetts.

**Avery VanHendrick** of Brookline and **Emily Hoos** of West Wardsboro were both named to the Dean's List at the University of New Hampshire for the fall 2022 semester. VanHendrick earned High Honors, while Hoos earned Honors status.

**Michelle Marchica** of Westminster and **Hayden Reed** of Jacksonville have been named to the Dean's List for the fall 2022 semester at Siena College in Loudonville, New York.

## Obituaries

**Gerald Bowser, 82**, of Rockingham. Died Jan. 7, 2023, at his home. He was born on April 6, 1940 in Warren, Maine, the son of Gordon and Wilma Mellow Bowser. He attended elementary school in Warren, Maine and was a graduate of North Haven (Conn.) High School. Gerald was a lifelong truck driver working for many area trucking companies. Gerald is survived by his son Alan Bowser, his daughter Elizabeth Young, grandchildren Benjamin Lee Roth and Andrea Bowser, and a brother, David Bowser. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: There will be no services. In lieu of flowers, the family requests donations to help cover expenses at [Paypal.me/becky91663](https://www.paypal.me/becky91663).



**Donna Ann Daley, 74**, of Brattleboro. Died unexpectedly in her home on Jan. 21, 2023. She was born in Hartford,

Connecticut, the daughter of John and Margaret (Healy) Daley. She was raised and educated in Manchester, Connecticut. Donna was employed by Olan Mills Studios after graduation, in a position that afforded her the opportunity to travel throughout New England doing portrait photography. She met her husband, Steven Pritchard, while living in Greenfield, Massachusetts and they married in 1969. Although the marriage ended in divorce, they had three beautiful children together. She lived in San Francisco for seven years before returning to Vermont. She worked at Diller's Deli and Catering Services. Prior to retirement, she most recently worked at World Learning/School for International Training in the Environmental Services Department and was appreciated for decades of hard work, friendliness and smiles. She made many lifelong friends. Donna loved dancing and dining out. She enjoyed summer vacations to the Connecticut coast to visit family. She traveled to see her children and grandchildren in Colorado and New York. Donna is survived by her three children: Jennifer Pritchard of New York City, Lynette Pritchard of Putney, and Joshua Pritchard of Laramie, Wyoming; one sister, Gail Graham of Clinton, Connecticut; and four grandchildren, Kyler Pritchard, Connor Pritchard, Kaitlyn Pritchard and Dallin Wachelhausen. She also leaves behind many beloved nieces, nephews and cousins. She was predeceased by one sister, Joan Marquis. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: A celebration of life service will be conducted at a future date and time to be announced. Donations to Rescue, Inc., P.O. Box 593, Brattleboro, VT 05302. To share a memory or send the family messages of condolence, visit [atamaniuk.com](https://www.atamaniuk.com).



**Edward Leroy "Ed" DeCell, 91**, died on Jan. 19, 2023, with his family by his side. He was born Dec. 17,

1931 at home in Landgrove to Hattie Maude Wilder and Ervin Joseph DeCell. His brothers were Lawrence, Lowell, Carson, Wayne, and Eugene; and his sisters were Elva, Francis, Leone, Clara, Pauline, Carolyn, Sylvia, and Vera. Ed loved his family deeply and was the youngest of 14 children. Edward leaves behind two daughters, Tracy DeCell of Brattleboro and Tammy Mayben of Pawtucket, Rhode Island; grandchildren Hunter Raymond and his fiancée, Swan Perea-Pirinha, of Brattleboro, and Adam and Heidi; and great grandchildren Travis, Emma, Brandon, and Serenity. He was predeceased by his son-in-law, Kevin Mayben, and all of his siblings. Edward worked at Mount Snow for 22 years as a heavy equipment mechanic. He went on to become the

manager of the former Norway/Gray Ghost Inn. He also worked in housekeeping for the Brattleboro Retreat. Upon his retirement, he took to taking care of his grandson, Hunter Raymond, and they shared a deep bond. Throughout his life, he lived in various places in Vermont and also resided in Summerville, South Carolina and Amarillo, Texas. He had a love for pro wrestling, never missed a Red Sox game, and loved NASCAR and the New England Patriots; all of which included yelling at the TV from time to time. His greatest pastimes were driving back roads and telling stories. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: Edward wished for no funeral. There will, however, be graveside services held in the spring at Maple Grove Cemetery in Weston, followed by a celebration of his life at the Rod and Gun Club in Weston. Donations to the Windham County Humane Society, P.O. Box 397, Brattleboro, VT 05302. To share a memory or send condolences to Edward's family, visit [atamaniuk.com](https://www.atamaniuk.com).

**Patricia Kiniry "Pat" LaRoche** died on Jan. 12, 2023. Patricia was born in Springfield, Vermont to Bernard and Gladys Ward on Nov. 9, 1932. She graduated from Springfield High School in 1951 and attended the University of Vermont for a short time. She met George Kiniry in 1953 and they were married in 1955. After raising their seven children, she went to work at Jones & Lamson for many years as a key punch operator. She also worked at Bryant Grinder when Jones & Lamson closed. Pat enjoyed painting and word search puzzles. Each one of her children were blessed with a painting she painted several years ago. She will always be remembered for her gingerbread cookies. The recipe was handed down to her by her mother and will always be known as "Grammy cookies." Pat was predeceased by her first husband in 1997. She was blessed to have met George LaRoche in 2001, who survives her. They have been married since 2004. She is survived by her seven children: Teresa Lupien (Cliff) of Winchendon, Massachusetts, Patrick Kiniry (Janet) of North Walpole, New Hampshire, Christine Cook (Ken) of Westminister, George Kiniry, Jr. (Sloan) of Derry, New Hampshire, Mary Jo Clark (Kevin) of Bellows Falls, Kevin Kiniry (April) of Vancouver, Washington, and Kelly Patch (Gary) of Alstead, New Hampshire. She is also survived by 19 grandchildren, 17 great-grandchildren, and 1 great-great-grandchild. Pat also leaves siblings Sylvia Dubanevich, Richard Ward, and James Ward of Winooski, Vermont. She is also survived by George's children: Michael LaRoche, Edward LaRoche, and Thomas LaRoche. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: In lieu of flowers, the family asks that donations be made in her name to the American Red Cross.

**Corrinne (Corky) Menard, 86**, of Westminister. Died unexpectedly at her home on Jan. 21, 2023. Corrinne was born September 6, 1936, in Brattleboro to Elmer and Alice Martelle. She received her education in Brattleboro and graduated from Brattleboro Union High School in 1954. She then went on to

work for the Holstein Association in Brattleboro. Corrinne later worked, for 30 years, at White Metal Rolling and Stamping in North Walpole, New Hampshire and retired at age 80 from Silver Forest of Vermont. For her whole life, Corrinne was an incredibly hard worker, and she instilled her work ethic in her children. On June 7, 1990, Corrinne married her life partner, Lawrence Menard. Corrinne had many joys in life. She loved to be outside gardening and watching birds at her many bird feeders. She loved to sit at her kitchen table to complete crossword puzzles and play solitaire. Through her life, Corrinne had many cats that she loved dearly. She was a member of the American Legion, the Moose, as well as the Polish-American Club. Her greatest joy in life came from spending time with her grandchildren. Corrinne loved to play board games and dress up games with her grandchildren. She especially loved to attend their concerts, plays, and sporting events. Corrinne was predeceased by her parents, her husband, her brother Clifford Martelle, and her sister Violet Martelle. She is survived by her sister Eleanor Liimatainen; her son Brian Johnson, of Walpole, New Hampshire, and his wife, Paula Johnson; her daughter, Alesia Rainville, of Highgate, and her husband, George Rainville; her son, Laurens Johnson of Hagatar, Guam; and six grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: A funeral service was held on Jan. 27 at Fenton and Hennessey Funeral Home in Bellows Falls, followed by burial in Westminster Cemetery.

**Amber Gail Monty, 42**, of Burlington, formerly of Bellows Falls. Died unexpectedly at her home on Jan. 8, 2023. Amber was born in Bellows Falls on April 12, 1980, the daughter of Raymond and Jean Monty and the first of their seven children. Amber embraced her role as the "leader of the pack," and was a fierce protector who always stood up for those she loved. Amber lived in and attended school in Bellows Falls before relocating to Burlington. Amber loved country music, rides on back dirt roads, spending time with her children, sunflowers, Fireball whiskey, buying new stationary supplies, and being surrounded by friends. Amber had so many friends and found her calling being a mentor to younger women in need. Amber was involved actively with Mercy Connections in Burlington and helped organize community events such as coat drives and harvest dinners. Amber's personality was one you will never be able to forget. She was loud and outspoken (some would even say a bit feisty). Amber loved with all she had and that love will live on with those who survived her. Amber is survived by her children, Lucy Burns of Keene, New Hampshire and Joel Chickering Jr. of Walpole, New Hampshire; her parents Raymond Monty of Alstead, New Hampshire and Jean Vancor of Cambridgeport; siblings Heidi Monty of Bellows Falls, Jessica Monty (Jay) of Langdon, New Hampshire, Raymond Monty (Krista) III,

Jed Monty, and Alicia Monty all of Bellows Falls, and Cody Monty of Charlestown, New Hampshire; and several uncles, aunts, nieces, and nephews. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: Donations in Amber's memory may be sent to Mercy Connections, 255 South Champlain St. #8, Burlington, VT 05401.



**Gary Smith, 64**, of Walpole, New Hampshire. Died at home from cancer on Jan. 16, 2023.

Born on March 28, 1958 in Newport, Rhode Island, Gary was set on his life's path during a matinee showing of *The Sound of Music* at the Starcase Cinema in Middletown, Rhode Island. He was seven years old. "I learned that music could beat Nazis. That's when I knew," Gary said several weeks before his death. Music, art, beauty, and community as bulwarks against the darker forces of the world and the human condition — this was the indelible thread that ran through Gary's life. Born to the late Michael and Marie Pinto Smith in Newport, Gary honed his musical chops in high school rock bands and sharpened his fine mind as a student of philosophy at Colby College, where he built his first recording studio, a pair of four-track machines set up in a glorified broom closet. Following his *Wanderjahre* in France, Gary moved to Boston, determined to work for the celebrated architect Moshe Safdie, whose ideals of timelessness, connection to nature, and creating meaningful spaces for community resonated deeply. Gary arrived at Safdie's Faneuil Hall office each morning for weeks until the office manager finally hired him to run errands. Walking the streets, absorbing the rhythms of the city, he wrote songs in his head. Before long, he formed the band Lifeboat, which toured the country and received accolades in the national press. While Gary was an accomplished guitarist and songwriter, he found his calling outside the spotlight at Fort Apache, a scrappy recording studio that he built into a clubhouse for young musicians and a global force in alternative rock. Gary's ears were impeccable. His work ethic, matchless. His deal-making was the stuff of major-label dreams. As a producer and manager, Gary shepherded the careers of some of the most influential artists of the 1980s and 1990s, among them The Pixies, Throwing Muses, Tanya Donelly, Juliana Hatfield, and Natalie Merchant. But his impact transcended the realm of records and contracts. Gary brought people together, cultivating a sense of family that sustained him and the many outsiders, misfits, and dreamers fortunate enough to travel in his orbit. In 2001, Gary moved into an antique farmhouse at the end of a country road in New Hampshire. Inspired by a profound affinity with the Shakers — their dedication to hard work and craftsmanship, their embrace of song as a spiritual gift — he filled his home with simple, sturdy furniture and musical instruments. He built a swimming pond, planted a garden, and lovingly

tended his sheep and donkey. The farm was heaven. For Gary, a near-constant stream of friends and musicians, who often stayed for days, made the place yet more heavenly. Whether entertaining a field full of revelers or laying a perfect table for an intimate meal, Gary was the consummate host. His parties were nothing short of legendary. Leaving the fast-paced city life slowed neither the flow of Gary's ideas nor his boundless energy for making things happen. He relocated Fort Apache from Massachusetts to Bellows Falls, opening the recording studio and a live performance venue in the former Hotel Windham. Over the next two decades, Gary's local imprint grew. He was a founder of WOOL-FM in Bellows Falls, a community radio station, launched a regional events magazine, and with investment support from friends near and far he opened Popolo, an Italian-inspired, farm-to-table restaurant. When Gary received a cancer diagnosis in September of 2022, his chief concern was how to get done everything he wanted to accomplish. The list, as ever, was long. He worked, quite literally, to his dying day. Gary leaves behind a hole that cannot be filled. But his vision and integrity, prodigious intelligence and marvelous sense of humor, his steadfast care for people and community will continue to inspire the legion of comrades mourning his loss. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: According to his wishes, Gary's body was cremated and there will be no funeral service. Plans are being made for a gathering to celebrate his life. Donations can be made to WOOL-FM at [blacksheepradio.org](https://www.blacksheepradio.org).

**Jeffery D. Tallman, 55**, of Bellows Falls. Died suddenly on Jan. 17, 2023 at his home. Jeff was a graduate of Bellows Falls Union High School and a member of the Polish-American Club, the American Legion, the Moose, and the Elks, all in Bellows Falls. Jeff was known for helping other people, volunteering at the clubs, singing karaoke, playing horseshoes, doing word puzzles, playing guitar, and playing with the family cats. Jeff leaves his father, David Tallman, and mother, Jennifer Wright Tallman; siblings Katrina Tallman (Neal Whitcomb), Kara Tallman and her children, Desmond and Saoirse Chiu, Chris Tallman (Haley) and their children, Avery and Eden. He is also survived by aunts and uncles, many cousins, and friends. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: Donations to Moose Heart or the Moose Haven Fund.

**Lorraine Maybelle Walker, 87**, of Dummerston. Died Dec. 22, 2022 at her home, surrounded by her children, after a lengthy illness. She was born on June 27, 1935 in Plymouth, Vermont, the daughter of Kedric Hall and Helen (Bramwell) Hall. She was happily married for 67 years to Le Roy Harold Walker, who died in March 2020. They were married in Ludlow on July 3, 1953. She attended high school in Charlestown, New Hampshire while staying with her aunt. She held various jobs over the years in addition to being a full-time mother to her five children. She worked for several years as a chambermaid at the Holly Motel and the Stone Fence Inn. She was also employed at Lawton Dry Cleaners for many years and her last job was as a quality control inspector for VerMed. She enjoyed making quilts and baby blankets for members of her family as well as reading fiction and watching her soaps. She liked solving Sudoku puzzles and baking bread, apple pies and many other delicious foods. She especially enjoyed hosting family game nights complete with homemade popcorn, macaroni and cheese, and drinks all around. She loved spending time with her five grandchildren and six great-grandchildren who knew her as "Nanna." She lovingly cared for many animals in her lifetime including cats, dogs, numerous ferrets and her pig, Sukki. She is predeceased by one brother, James Hall, and two sisters, Gloria Saari and Joy Blood. She is survived by three sons and two daughters and several siblings, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: Services will be held privately at the convenience of the family. A celebration of her life will be held at a later date. Donations to the Windham County Humane Society, P.O. Box 397, Brattleboro, VT 05302.



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Hi Everyone...the names **Bella!** I'm the coolest gal you will ever meet. I love everyone who says "Hi" to me. I haven't met anyone I didn't like... as long as your a person. I'm a gentle giant but would need to be the only dog in the home because I don't like to share my people with other dogs. I may be ok with a feline friend after a slow introduction though. Because I don't know my own strength I would do best with children 15+ years.



Hi, my name is **Zoey!** I am a gentle older gal looking for my retirement home where I can soak up sunbeams and love. I would need someone who can take me out a lot because I can't hold my bladder as long. I enjoy lounging on my dog bed and taking walks in nice weather. I'm generally mellow although I occasionally get some zoomies in the yard! I am well behaved on a leash plus I seem to be mostly housebroken! I have been used to being the only pet and would rather not have to get used to other animals at my age. I would be happy in a home with kids as long as they can be respectful of a sweet senior like me.



Hi there, I'm **Sidney!** I started out my life living on the streets with other cats in Florida! I came up to Vermont to find a new home. It will probably take me some time to get settled in a new home, but once I know you I am very affectionate and will seek out attention. I seem to like other cats so I would likely do well with a feline buddy. Dogs would be new to me so introductions should be gradual and they should be cat-savvy. I have been around older children and done well.



Hey there, I'm **Murdock!** I'm a sweet and friendly guy who came all the way from Florida! I came to Vermont with my brothers Face and Baracus. My foster says I'm a laid back boy who likes to be held and get kisses and I love to play with other cats! I spent time in my foster home with other cats and children so I could probably have some friend in my new home with a proper introduction. Dogs would be new so introductions would have to be gradual and well monitored.



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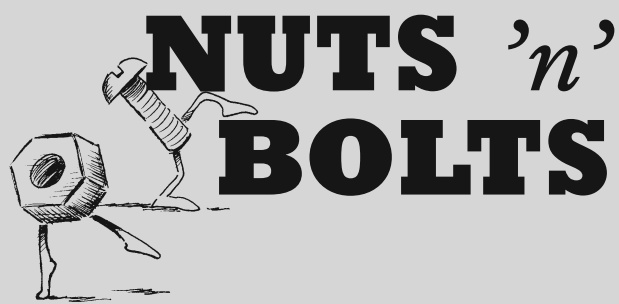
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Milestones are published as community news at no cost to families, thanks to financial support of our members and advertisers. Send them to [news@commonsnews.org](mailto:news@commonsnews.org). Though we ask that content for this column be sent by Friday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

**AROUND THE TOWNS**

**SEVCA offers free tax prep services**

WESTMINSTER — Southeastern Vermont Community Action (SEVCA) is again offering the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program, which provides free income tax preparation and filing help to anyone who makes \$60,000 or less and fall within the VITA scope requirements.

SEVCA is offering a Covid-safe, low-contact service this year via secure drop-box locations in Windsor and Windham counties. Envelopes for client's tax documents and VITA Tax forms for clients will be at all SEVCA drop-box locations. There are no appointments needed. All taxpayers need to do is fill the appropriate information at the drop box location and be sure to have a valid picture ID and their Social Security card. All returns are prepared by first in, first out method.

Locked drop-boxes are located at the Windsor Resource Center, 1 Railroad Avenue, Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.; at SEVCA's main office on 91 Buck Drive in Westminister, Monday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.; and SEVCA's Brattleboro office at 15 Grove Street, Mondays and Wednesdays from 1:30 to 4 p.m. and Fridays from 9 to 11 a.m. Documents may also be mailed to SEVCA, Attn: VITA Program, 91 Buck Drive, Westminister, VT 05158. More information is available at [SEVCA.org](http://SEVCA.org).

**Nicki Steel photography show at Bartleby's Books**

WILMINGTON — Bartleby's Books, 17 West Main Street, is hosting its annual show of Nicki Steel's photography throughout the month of February. Steel will have cards and enlargements available from her popular Hearts in Nature series in honor of Valentine's Day.

The show will also celebrate Vermont's working landscapes with canvas prints and cards featuring beloved local landmark, the Wheeler Farm, as well as Steel's newest boxed set of cards, Farms & Barns. The show will also have its traditional selection of photographs which highlight scenery and wildlife from the Deerfield Valley, available as boxed sets, mini-mats, cards, matted and canvas prints, all available for purchase.

Bartleby's will host a reception with Steel on Saturday, Feb. 11, from 3 to 5:30 p.m., to include time for open conversation with the artist and a slideshow viewing of her latest work. Light refreshments will be served. Call or email Bartleby's Books for details at 802-464-5425 or [bartbookvt@gmail.com](mailto:bartbookvt@gmail.com).

**Senior meal served in Dummerston**

DUMMERSTON — The next Senior Solutions/Evening Star Grange Senior Lunch will be held on Wednesday, Feb. 8 with take-outs available from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., and the eat-in luncheon served at noon. The menu will consist of chicken pie, mashed potatoes and gravy, vegetarian mac and cheese, and succotash, with black forest cake for dessert. Reservations are strongly suggested and can be made by calling the Grange at 802-254-1138 by Feb. 7 at 5 p.m. Leave a name, telephone number, the number and type of meal requested, and whether eating in or taking out. A donation of \$3 for those 60 and older and \$4 for those under 60 is suggested. All are welcome.

**Energy Committee presents online biofuel talk**

BELLOWS FALLS — The Rockingham Energy Committee will present a biofuel discussion over the Rockingham Free Public Library's Zoom on Thursday, Feb. 9, at 6 p.m. Learn all about the emerging renewable liquid heating fuels from Sean Cota, president and CEO of the National Energy & Fuels Institute (NEFI) in Washington, D.C. This presentation will review why these fuels reduce CO2 and why immediate cumulative uses of renewable fuels affect total cumulative emissions.

Cota has more than 35 years of experience in the heating fuels industry and has testified before Congress multiple times as a subject matter expert on energy trading market functions, and in the areas of swaps, futures, options, and other nonregulated, structured financial products. To receive an invitation to join this live presentation over Zoom, contact [programming@rockinghamlibrary.org](mailto:programming@rockinghamlibrary.org) or call the RFPL at 802-463-4270.

**Putney Community Suppers return, starting on Feb. 10**

PUTNEY — A growing community desire to have opportunities to gather in community, now that the worst of the Covid pandemic is over, has led to the return of Putney's monthly Community Suppers starting on Friday, February 10, from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m., at Next Stage Arts, 15 Kimball Hill.

The first supper will be prepared by Eleni of the Putney Diner, who is sharing her heritage by serving a Greek dinner. All are welcome. Organizers ask those who can to make a donation to defray the costs of the food. They also welcome help moving forward with various tasks, from organizing to clean up afterwards, or to set up for subsequent events.

For more information about the suppers, contact Simon Renault at [simoninvermont@gmail.com](mailto:simoninvermont@gmail.com) or Mike Mrowicki at [mmrowicki@gmail.com](mailto:mmrowicki@gmail.com).

**West River Thrives seeks input from area families**

TOWNSHEND — West River Valley Thrives is seeking your input from parents and caring adults with children in grades 6-12 who live in Townshend, Brookline, Newfane, Marlboro, Wardsboro, Windham, or Jamaica (you do not have to attend Leland & Gray). A brief survey can be found at ([surveymonky.com/r/HMF2DH5bit.ly/700-survey](https://surveymonky.com/r/HMF2DH5bit.ly/700-survey)). The survey is 100 percent anonymous and Thrives uses a CDC-approved data management plan.

Parental input and perceptions collected through this survey will help to guide their work and target their resources more effectively. For more information, contact West River Valley Thrives Director Meg Gonzalez at 802-365-4700 or visit [wrvthrives.org](http://wrvthrives.org).

**Crowell Gallery helps Moore Free Library celebrate its 125th anniversary**

NEWFANE — As part of Moore Free Library's 125th Anniversary celebration, the library's board of directors invites the community to a reception in the Crowell Art Gallery on Saturday, Feb. 11, from 1 to 3 p.m., as select works from the Crowell collection will be on display.

The gallery, located within the Moore Free Library, will be exhibiting the Robert L. Crowell Art Collection throughout the month of February. The gallery, once a 200-year-old barn owned by the library, was transformed into an eclectic art gallery by Crowell and his wife, Muriel in 2000.

Crowell was a strong supporter of the arts, and shortly before his death in 2001, he traveled southern Vermont in search of works he felt reflected the vast diversity of the artistic culture of the area. Contemporary pieces by Mallory Lake, Jules Olitski, Emily Mason, and Wolf Kahn hang alongside works by Eric Aho, Roger Sandes, James Urbaska, Marcy Hermansander, and others. Johnny Swing's "Penny Chair" and Jim Florschutz's wood and stone "Shrine to the Sun Shaman" sculptures are included in the collection and on view during library hours until Feb. 28.

Located at 23 West Street, the library is open on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from 1 to 5 p.m., Thursdays from 1 to 6 p.m., and Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

**WOOL-FM completes upgrades**

BELLOWS FALLS — With help from their supporters and members, WOOL-FM 91.5 has recently upgraded its studio-to-transmitter link, a significant achievement that has vastly improved the quality and stability

*Windham County Humane Society warns of dangers to chained dogs*

BRATTLEBORO — The Windham County Humane Society (WCHS) is trying to get the word out about the dangers of tying or chaining dogs outside.

WCHS Executive Director Maya Richmond said in a news release that she and other Humane Society employees "have seen some terrible things" befall area canines.

"Some owners tie their dogs outside because the dog may be destructive in the home or this was how their families cared for dogs when they were growing up," said Richmond. "In many instances people don't realize their dogs' lives are at risk. Our staff provides education and resources to help these pet owners so the dog can begin to live inside."

When a dog is tied to a stationary object for prolonged periods, they suffer physically and mentally.

Chained dogs often have inadequate housing to escape the cold or wind in the winter. Dogs can get frostbite, die of exposure, and suffer from dehydration when water bowls freeze or from malnutrition because they need more food to stay warm and the cold causes them to deplete their fat reserves. During hot summer days, they may have no shade or a way to cool down, and not enough water puts them at risk of overheating.

of Black Sheep Radio's broadcast.

The nonprofit radio station also updated its streaming address. If you're outside of the broadcast area or simply prefer to listen to online, just go to the WOOL-FM website, [blacksheepradio.org](http://blacksheepradio.org), and click either the Streamer button or the Listen link. You can also connect to the new stream directly, or to re-streaming services TuneIn ([tunein.com](http://tunein.com)) or Radio.Garden.

On the WOOL-FM website, listeners can also browse the broadcast schedule, renew their membership, or make a donation. Members are also welcome to sign up to become a WOOL DJ and create their own radio show.

According to The Humane Society of United States, chaining can lead to psychological problems in dogs because they are social animals. A dog who is tethered too much can become anxious or territorial.

"Being alone, constrained from doing what dogs are meant to do — sniff new smells, run, play with a variety of toys — damages them," says Richmond.

All dogs need food, water, and shelter, but providing only these things isn't enough, says

Richmond. A happy healthy dog needs love and comfort from living with their human family, their pack.

Richmond advises that people concerned about the welfare of a chained dog should try to determine whether the dog is able to freely move, has adequate food, water, and shelter — all of which are required by state law — and report neglect to their town's animal control officer. For more information, visit [windhamcountyhumane.org](http://windhamcountyhumane.org).

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**Filmmakers preview documentary about nuclear weapons and institutional racism**

PUTNEY — The Landmark College Academic Speaker Series opens its spring 2023 schedule with a presentation entitled "Resisting Nuclear Armament in the 21st Century" by filmmakers Taylor Dunne and Eric Stewart on Tuesday, Feb. 7, at 5 p.m., in the Brooks M. O'Brien Auditorium, located in the Lewis Academic Building.

Dunne and Stewart will preview their in-production documentary *Off Country*, and facilitate a conversation about how experimental cinema and documentary can augment, resist, and subvert the institutional memory of the nuclear weapons industry.

*Off Country* interrogates the institutional racism of the nuclear weapons industry, using oral history to articulate how the creation of "National Sacrifice Zones" has disproportionately affected Native and Anglo-ranching people as well as communities of color throughout the southwestern United States.

Dunne is a filmmaker, curator, and university lecturer based in Colorado's San Luis Valley and the Catskill Mountains of New York State. Her works have been exhibited widely at

international venues. She has curated film screenings for The Black Cube Artist Program, Experiments in Cinema Film Festival (Albuquerque), and The Boulder Public Library.

Stewart is an interdisciplinary multimedia artist and assistant professor of visual communication at Landmark College. He was awarded the 2015 Mono No Aware Award for Excellence in Filmmaking at the Haverhill Experimental Film Festival, and his films have shown from San Francisco to Zagreb. He holds a bachelor's from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and a master's from the University of Colorado, Boulder.

This event is free and open to the public. For additional information or questions about venue accessibility, contact Lynne Shea at [lshea@landmark.edu](mailto:lshea@landmark.edu).

Driving directions, a campus map, and more information about the Landmark College Academic Speaker Series is available at [landmark.edu](http://landmark.edu). Videos of previous speaker presentations are made possible by Brattleboro Community Television and can be found at [landmark.edu/speakerseries](http://landmark.edu/speakerseries).

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# arts & community CALENDAR

THURSDAY	THURSDAY CONT.	SATURDAY CONT.	SUNDAY CONT.	TUESDAY	
<b>2</b>	<p>► This is part of BMAC's exhibit "We Feel Our Way Through When We Don't Know." ► Through Sunday, February 12. ► Brattleboro Museum &amp; Art Center, 28 Vernon St. Information: <a href="http://tinyurl.com/2p82cxcz">tinyurl.com/2p82cxcz</a>.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>FRIDAY</b></p> <td style="text-align: center; vertical-align: middle;"><b>3</b></td> <td> <p>► The Honesty Room," Dar Williams has become one of the most beloved singer/songwriters in America. Massucco, a civic-minded attorney/part-time concert promoter/full-time music lover, passed away last September. A group of VT friends who worked with Massucco on Rockingham's Roots on the River music festival, which ended a 20-year run just prior to Covid, quickly coalesced around the idea of a concert series. ► 7:30 p.m. (doors open 6:30 p.m.). Presented by Next Stage Arts and RED Concerts. ► \$18.50 to \$45. ► Bellows Falls Opera House, Town Hall, 7 Square. Information: Tickets: <a href="http://BellowsFallsOperaHouse.com">BellowsFallsOperaHouse.com</a>, 802-387-0102.</p> <p>► 8 p.m. (Doors open 7:30 p.m.) Check Covid guidelines. ► \$17 in advance, \$22 at door. ► The Stone Church in Brattleboro, 210 Main St. Information: 802-579-9960; <a href="http://stonechurchvt.com">stonechurchvt.com</a>.</p> <p><b>Farmers' markets</b> <b>BRATTLEBORO</b> Brattleboro Winter Farmers' Market: Weekly diverse indoor farmers' market. Local farm produce, meats, syrups, fresh baked goods, fruits, cider, preserves, handmade jewelry, pottery, soaps, more. SNAP shoppers turn \$10 into \$40 each week! ► 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. Saturdays through 3/25 in the gymnasium. ► Through Saturday, March 25. ► Brattleboro Winter Farmers Market, 60 Austine Dr. Information: <a href="http://farmersmarket.org">farmersmarket.org</a>, 802-275-2835.</p> <p><b>The written word</b> <b>"Writing to Prompts"</b> (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." ► 4 - 5 p.m. ► \$10 suggested donation. ► Zoom. Information: Register: <a href="mailto:info@timetowrite.us">info@timetowrite.us</a></p> <p><b>Brattleboro Poetry Discussion Group (Online):</b> "This month we'll discuss A. E. Housman. No experience necessary. Copies of the poems provided." Led by Barbara Morrison. ► 12 noon - 2 p.m. ► Free. ► Zoom. Information: Register: <a href="mailto:info@timetowrite.us">info@timetowrite.us</a></p> <p><b>Kids and families</b> <b>BRATTLEBORO</b> The Village Closet: Your source for free baby, children, pregnancy clothing/items. Donations of gently used items accepted. We're collecting new and "like new" children's coats and winter gear for our Kids in Coats partnership with United Way of Windham County. If you have items to donate, please stop by soon. ► Open Saturdays 10 a.m. - 12 noon, Wednesdays 4-6 p.m., or by appointment. On Wednesdays, Everyone Eats distributes free dinners on campus from 3:30-4:30 p.m. ► Free. ► The Village Closet, Croker Hall, Winton Prouty Campus, 60 Austine Dr. Information: More info: <a href="mailto:brattleborovillage@gmail.com">brattleborovillage@gmail.com</a>.</p> <p><b>PUTNEY</b> Sandglass Theater Presents, Winter Sunshine Series, Puppet shows for families: Join us as we celebrate the magic and warmth of puppetry for young audiences with a different live performance on Saturdays. Today's show "Oma," an intergenerational tale that revolves around Grandma or "Oma." Oma's knitting contains whole stories! Recommended for Pre-K to 4th grades (ages 4-10). Series includes performances by Modern Times Theater, Little Uprisings, and The Gottabees. ► 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. on Saturdays. (2/11, 3:30 p.m.): "Following today's 2nd performance, we offer a Junk Music and Sound Experimentation Workshop led by junk musician and art educator Justin Lander. Have you ever written a song on the bicycle pump? Now's your chance!" ► Through Saturday, February 25. ► \$9 EB, Medicaid cardholders: \$7.50. Buy 1 ticket for each week totaling \$30. Discount appears after tickets ordered for all 4 performances. ► Sandglass Theater, 17 Kimball Hill. Information: Tickets: <a href="http://tinyurl.com/mr36jzvu">tinyurl.com/mr36jzvu</a>. Junk Music and Sound Experimentation Workshop (2/11): \$10: <a href="http://tinyurl.com/mr36jzvu">tinyurl.com/mr36jzvu</a>.</p> <p><b>Well-being</b> <b>BRATTLEBORO</b> "Food Choices: Food and Climate Change" with Robin Matathias: Discover which foods and agricultural practices contribute most to climate change and what you can do about it. Learn how to cut your carbon footprint in half just by making changes in what you eat. This class will teach you about true sustainability, about supporting 9 billion people while mitigating climate change. Discover that everything you do really does make a difference. ► 1-3:30. Register by 2/3. ► Free. ► Brattleboro Food Co-op Community Room, 7 Canal St. Information: Register: <a href="mailto:Education@BFC.coop">Education@BFC.coop</a>.</p> <p><b>Film and video</b> <b>BRATTLEBORO</b> Latchis Arts' Spotlight Series opens with "The Pig" (curated in collaboration with Keene State College's Film Society): The Spotlight series features films which shine a spotlight on different voices. "Pig" is a 2021 feature film starring Nicholas Cage as a truffle hunter who lives alone in the Oregon wilderness but who must return to his past in Portland in search of his beloved pig, who was kidnapped. It has a 97% score on Rotten Tomatoes and is Rated R. ► 1:30 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday. KSC Film Society student members will be on hand for some of the screenings to share their thoughts. Series continues 2/11-12 with "First Cow," followed on 2/18-19 by "Dawson City Frozen Time" and 2/24-25 by "The Last Black Man in San Francisco." ► Through Sunday, February 5. ► \$10 suggested donation (no one turned away). Proceeds from Spotlight Series films benefit the non-profit Latchis Arts. ► Latchis Theatre, 50 Main St. Information: 802-254-1109; <a href="http://latchisarts.org">latchisarts.org</a>.</p> <td style="text-align: center; vertical-align: middle;"><b>MONDAY</b></td> <td style="text-align: center; vertical-align: middle;"><b>7</b></td> </td>	<b>3</b>	<p>► The Honesty Room," Dar Williams has become one of the most beloved singer/songwriters in America. Massucco, a civic-minded attorney/part-time concert promoter/full-time music lover, passed away last September. 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Have you ever written a song on the bicycle pump? Now's your chance!" ► Through Saturday, February 25. ► \$9 EB, Medicaid cardholders: \$7.50. Buy 1 ticket for each week totaling \$30. Discount appears after tickets ordered for all 4 performances. ► Sandglass Theater, 17 Kimball Hill. Information: Tickets: <a href="http://tinyurl.com/mr36jzvu">tinyurl.com/mr36jzvu</a>. Junk Music and Sound Experimentation Workshop (2/11): \$10: <a href="http://tinyurl.com/mr36jzvu">tinyurl.com/mr36jzvu</a>.</p> <p><b>Well-being</b> <b>BRATTLEBORO</b> "Food Choices: Food and Climate Change" with Robin Matathias: Discover which foods and agricultural practices contribute most to climate change and what you can do about it. Learn how to cut your carbon footprint in half just by making changes in what you eat. This class will teach you about true sustainability, about supporting 9 billion people while mitigating climate change. Discover that everything you do really does make a difference. ► 1-3:30. Register by 2/3. ► Free. ► Brattleboro Food Co-op Community Room, 7 Canal St. Information: Register: <a href="mailto:Education@BFC.coop">Education@BFC.coop</a>.</p> <p><b>Film and video</b> <b>BRATTLEBORO</b> Latchis Arts' Spotlight Series opens with "The Pig" (curated in collaboration with Keene State College's Film Society): The Spotlight series features films which shine a spotlight on different voices. "Pig" is a 2021 feature film starring Nicholas Cage as a truffle hunter who lives alone in the Oregon wilderness but who must return to his past in Portland in search of his beloved pig, who was kidnapped. It has a 97% score on Rotten Tomatoes and is Rated R. ► 1:30 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday. KSC Film Society student members will be on hand for some of the screenings to share their thoughts. Series continues 2/11-12 with "First Cow," followed on 2/18-19 by "Dawson City Frozen Time" and 2/24-25 by "The Last Black Man in San Francisco." ► Through Sunday, February 5. ► \$10 suggested donation (no one turned away). Proceeds from Spotlight Series films benefit the non-profit Latchis Arts. ► Latchis Theatre, 50 Main St. Information: 802-254-1109; <a href="http://latchisarts.org">latchisarts.org</a>.</p> <td style="text-align: center; vertical-align: middle;"><b>MONDAY</b></td> <td style="text-align: center; vertical-align: middle;"><b>7</b></td>	<b>MONDAY</b>	<b>7</b>
	<p><b>Music</b> <b>BRATTLEBORO</b> Local Musician Brendan Taffee releases a new album of Gourd Banjo Music - "Heap of Horseshoes": Event includes fabulous guests: Eamon O'Leary (The Murphy Beds, The Alt) on acoustic guitar, Stefan Amidon (The Sweetback Sisters, The Devil Makes Three) on drums, Yann Falquet (Genticorum, Seamus Egan Project) on electric, Michael Roberts (The Rear Defrosters, Wooden Dinosaur) on electric, Colin McCaffrey (too many bands to mention) on electric, and Mia Bertelli on vocals. ► 12 noon - 2 p.m. Brendan will be playing at the Brattleboro Co-op. Stop by and grab lunch or a coffee and get a taste of what is on the album. There may be surprise guests. Album will be released on 2/3. You can also check it out then at <a href="http://brendantaaffe.bandcamp.com">brendantaaffe.bandcamp.com</a>. ► Free. ► Brattleboro Food Co-op, 2 Main St. Information: 802-257-0236; <a href="http://brattleborofoodcoop.coop">brattleborofoodcoop.coop</a>.</p> <p><b>Well-being</b> <b>LONDONDERRY</b> AARP discusses Identity Theft: AARP Vermont and Elliott Greenblatt, state volunteer coordinator for the AARP Fraud Watch Network, talks about identity theft and techniques used by identity thieves to steal information. He'll explain how and why it occurs, provides instruction on protective steps, and what to do if it happens. ► 2 p.m. ► Free. ► Neighborhood Connections, The Meeting Place, Rte. 100, 5700 Marketplace (across from the post office). Information: Call 802-824-4343 if you would like to attend.</p> <p><b>Visual arts and shows</b> <b>Artists/Curator Conversation: Alison Moritsugu</b> (Densho community activist), Erin Shigak (artist), Curator Sarah Freeman (Zoom/Facebook Live): Discussion: "Moons and Intermittent Stones" exhibit: Paintings collected by Moritsugu's grandfather in Santa Fe Internment Camp during WW II. Japanese American Erin Shigaki creates art focused on BIPOC experiences from others incarcerated there from her community. She seeks to understand intergenerational trauma, explore emergence of beauty/intimacy despite unspeakably harsh circumstances. She believes wielding art and activism to tell these stories can educate, redress, heal. ► 7 p.m. Hosted by Brattleboro Museum &amp; Art Center. Presented in partnership with Densho - a nonprofit committed to documenting oral histories of Japanese Americans incarcerated during World War II. ► Free. ► Zoom. Information: Sign up: 802-257-0124 x 101 or <a href="http://tinyurl.com/352t6thc">tinyurl.com/352t6thc</a>.</p> <p><b>BRATTLEBORO</b> "Dooryard Gardens, Pt. 2: Party in the Kitchen" by Vessna Scheff: Scheff is a multidisciplinary artist who creates paintings, portraits, performances, sounds, installations that use watercolors, movement, vocals, and projections as mediums of inquiry. Grounded in watercolors, her work reclaims a medium often described as "difficult" or "sketch" for its uncontrollable qualities, and rather conceptualizes the freedom of watercolors as an expression of Black liberation.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>SATURDAY</b></p> <td style="text-align: center; vertical-align: middle;"><b>4</b></td> <td style="text-align: center; vertical-align: middle;"><b>5</b></td> <td style="text-align: center; vertical-align: middle;"><b>6</b></td> <td style="text-align: center; vertical-align: middle;"><b>8</b></td>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>8</b>
	<p><b>Music</b> <b>BELLOWS FALLS</b> Dar Williams Returns to Bellows Falls Opera House - Kicks off Ray Massucco Concert Series: Since the success of her first album,</p> <p><b>Recreation</b> <b>BELLOWS FALLS</b> Chess Club at Rockingham Library: Drop-ins and all levels of playing are welcome. Led by Mike Sola. ► 3 - 5:30 p.m. on Mondays. ► Free. ► Rockingham Free Public Library, 65 Westminster St. Information: 802-463-4270; <a href="http://rockinghamlibrary.org">rockinghamlibrary.org</a>.</p> <p><b>Kids and families</b> <b>Free Vermont Family Support Programs - Nurturing Skills for Families (Online):</b> Curriculum-based parenting education programs for families experiencing stress. Participants may start up to 2 weeks after class begins. ► 11 a.m. on Mondays. This is one of six programs. All programs are 2 hours a week for 12 to 14 weeks. ► Free. ► Online. Information: <a href="http://pcavt.org/family-support-programs">pcavt.org/family-support-programs</a>, <a href="mailto:family-support@pcavt.org">family-support@pcavt.org</a>, 1-800-CHILDREN.</p> <p><b>Community building</b> <b>BRATTLEBORO</b> Weatherization Where You Live Workshop (In-Person/Virtual): Heating expenses getting out of hand? Keep your home's heat where you need it/don't let it sneak outside. Weatherization saves you money by increasing insulation/air sealing. As Vermonters, we know best practices to staying warm like layering a sweater underneath a jacket. This same idea works when looking at weatherization opportunities. Whether you rent, are a home owner or landlord, there are affordable programs available. ► 6-8 p.m. in upstairs meeting room next to children's room. Learn about programs and options available to you from our Financial and Energy Coach, Kevin O'Brien, who can help you through the process. Community partners like Efficiency Vermont, Heat Squad, VSECU have programs which work to weatherize as many people as possible. Southeastern Vermont Community Action (SEVCA) has their own weatherization team which can go beyond insulation and air sealing to look into heating systems. Cost savings for an individual have a huge positive environmental impact at the State level because of the reduction of heating-fuels needed to keep weatherized spaces more comfortable for VTers. ► Free. ► Brooks Memorial Library, 224 Main St. More info: <a href="mailto:kobrien@sevca.org">kobrien@sevca.org</a> 802-254-5290; <a href="http://brookslibraryvt.org">brookslibraryvt.org</a>.</p> <p><b>Community meals</b> <b>BRATTLEBORO</b> Vermont Food Bank: Veggie Van Go: Free produce and local food for people to take home. ► 10-11 a.m. in parking lot across main entrance to school (do not arrive before 9:45 a.m.) Stay in your vehicle. If you are walking to get here, see a VT Foodbank associate but make sure to stay 6 ft. back. No income requirements, registration or paperwork to participate. ► You do not need to be present to get food; you may ask someone to pick up for your family's behalf. ► Brattleboro Union High School, 131 Fairground Rd. Information: 800-585-2265; <a href="http://veggievango@vtfoodbank.org">veggievango@vtfoodbank.org</a>.</p> <p><b>Government</b> <b>LONDONDERRY</b> AARP Free Tax Aide: Neighborhood Connections welcomes AARP Tax-Aide volunteers once again and their free tax service. If you had your taxes prepared at Neighborhood Connections last year by AARP, you'll be contacted to make an appointment. These volunteers are trained and IRS-certified every year to make sure they know and understand the latest changes to the tax code. Focus is on taxpayers over age 50 who have low to moderate income. ► Through Tuesday, April 11. ► Free. ► Neighborhood Connections, The Meeting Place, Rte. 100, 5700 Marketplace (across from the post office). Information: 802-824-4343; <a href="http://neighborhoodconnectionsvt.org">neighborhoodconnectionsvt.org</a>.</p> <p><b>Kids and families</b> <b>BRATTLEBORO</b> Sing &amp; Dance with Robin: Enriching musical experience for toddlers and preschoolers (ages 5 and under). Designed to support healthy cognitive, physical, and social development, children will sing, clap, stomp, dance, and play along with the curriculum of traditional and modern folk songs. Parents encouraged to sing and participate with their child. ► 10:30 a.m. on Tuesdays in the Community Room. ► Through Tuesday, April 25. ► Free. ► Brooks Memorial Library, 224 Main St. Information: 802-254-5290; <a href="http://brookslibraryvt.org">brookslibraryvt.org</a>.</p> <p><b>Well-being</b> <b>BRATTLEBORO</b> Brattleboro Walk-In Clinic: Primary medical treatment for patients ages 18 to 64 in our community who do not have health insurance or who cannot afford their high deductibles or co-insurance. ► 5 - 6:30 p.m. on Tuesdays. ► Brattleboro Walk-In Clinic, 191 Clark Ave. Information: 802-251-8484; <a href="http://brattleborowalkinclinic.com">brattleborowalkinclinic.com</a>.</p> <p><b>Dance</b> <b>BRATTLEBORO</b> Argentine Tango Class and Practical: Guest instructors and DJs, many from Argentinian Beginners and all levels are welcome. No partner needed. ► 7-8 p.m. on Tuesdays. N95 masks required. ► \$12 class, \$5 practica, \$15 for both. First class is free. ► One Eighteen Elliot, 118 Elliot St. Information: 118elliot.com.</p> <p><b>Visual arts and shows</b> <b>BELLOWS FALLS</b> "Heroes &amp; Villains" Exhibit: The story of the hero and villain is told through art, music, performance, writing, everyday life - hero and villain come alive. The quest of the hero often includes the villain, and the villain's story may be told as well as or even instead. Artwork by Clare Adams, Thomasin Alyxander, Debi A Barton, Jean Cannon, Len Emery, Mindy Fisher, Corinne Greenhalgh, Gregory Damien Grinnell, Su Lin Mangan, Charles Norris-Brown, Gretchen Seifert, Linda Udd. ► 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. Tues. - Sat. 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 himself. ► Through Saturday, March 4. ► Free. ► Canal Street Art Gallery, 23 Canal St. Information: 802-289-0104; <a href="http://canalstreetartgallery.com">canalstreetartgallery.com</a>.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>WEDNESDAY</b></p> <td style="text-align: center; vertical-align: middle;"><b>8</b></td>	<b>8</b>			
	<p><b>Community building</b> <b>BRATTLEBORO</b> Parenting 4 Justice - Monthly Book Group: Dive deep into the topics of Social Justice, Parenting for Social Justice, Parenting for Racial Justice, Parenting for Economic Justice, Parenting for Disability Justice, Parenting for Gender Justice, and Parenting for Collective Liberation. Facilitated by Abby Mnookin. Snacks provided. We also hope to offer childcare. ► 6-8 p.m. 2nd Wednesday monthly (3/8, 4/12, 5/10). Sign-up/ questions, email Abby at <a href="mailto:asmnookin@gmail.com">asmnookin@gmail.com</a>. Some copies of "Parenting 4 Social Justice" by Abby Mnookin are available for loan from the library, can be purchased at Everyone's Books or online. Hosted by Brooks Memorial Library and Parenting for Social Justice. ► Free. ► Brooks Memorial Library, 224 Main St. Information: 802-254-5290; <a href="http://brookslibraryvt.org">brookslibraryvt.org</a>.</p> <p><b>Ideas and education</b> <b>BRATTLEBORO</b> Hiking VT's 500 Highest: Spencer Crispe is a 9th generation lifelong Vermonter from W. Brattleboro. In an increasingly virtual world, he is an advocate of the many benefits coming from connecting with nature - optimizing free time mountain climbing and hiking. Join him as he shares stories/photos from his many adventures in the VT mountains and wilderness, many involving navigating to the top of peaks with no trails and few known climbers. ► 7-8 p.m. In 2020, Spencer finished climbing all 770 mountains in the Northeast above 3,000 ft. in elevation, 8 years after starting on this goal. Recently, he became the first known person from VT to climb VT's 500 highest mountains. ► Free. ► Brooks Memorial Library, 224 Main St. Information: 802-254-5290; <a href="http://brookslibraryvt.org">brookslibraryvt.org</a>.</p>				

# BRATTLEBORO AREA YOUTH COUNCIL

## SEEKING NEW MEMBERS (AGES 11-21)

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THE YOUTH COUNCIL ADVOCATES FOR THEIR PEERS AND COLLABORATES WITH COMMUNITY DECISION-MAKERS TO ADDRESS THE NEEDS OF YOUTH.

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FOR MORE DETAILS AND TO APPLY GO TO [YOUTHOUNCIL802.ORG](http://YOUTHOUNCIL802.ORG)

APPLY BY FEB 10!




**Recreation**  
**BELLOWS FALLS** Chess Club at Rockingham Library: Drop-ins and all levels of playing are welcome. Led by Mike Sola.  
► 3 - 5:30 p.m. on Mondays.  
► Free.  
► Rockingham Free Public Library, 65 Westminster St. Information: 802-463-4270; [rockinghamlibrary.org](http://rockinghamlibrary.org).

**Kids and families**  
**Free Vermont Family Support Programs - Nurturing Skills for Families (Online):** Curriculum-based parenting education programs for families experiencing stress. Participants may start up to 2 weeks after class begins.  
► 11 a.m. on Mondays. This is one of six programs. All programs are 2 hours a week for 12 to 14 weeks.  
► Free.  
► Online. Information: [pcavt.org/family-support-programs](http://pcavt.org/family-support-programs), [family-support@pcavt.org](mailto:family-support@pcavt.org), 1-800-CHILDREN.

**Community building**  
**BRATTLEBORO** Weatherization Where You Live Workshop (In-Person/Virtual): Heating expenses getting out of hand? Keep your home's heat where you need it/don't let it sneak outside. Weatherization saves you money by increasing insulation/air sealing. As Vermonters, we know best practices to staying warm like layering a sweater underneath a jacket. This same idea works when looking at weatherization opportunities. Whether you rent, are a home owner or landlord, there are affordable programs available.  
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► Brooks Memorial Library, 224 Main St. More info: [kobrien@sevca.org](mailto:kobrien@sevca.org) 802-254-5290; [brookslibraryvt.org](http://brookslibraryvt.org).

**Community meals**  
**BRATTLEBORO** Vermont Food Bank: Veggie Van Go: Free produce and local food for people to take home.  
► 10-11 a.m. in parking lot across main entrance to school (do not arrive before 9:45 a.m.) Stay in your vehicle. If you are walking to get here, see a VT Foodbank associate but make sure to stay 6 ft. back. No income requirements, registration or paperwork to participate.  
► You do not need to be present to get food; you may ask someone to pick up for your family's behalf.  
► Brattleboro Union High School, 131 Fairground Rd. Information: 800-585-2265; [veggievango@vtfoodbank.org](http://veggievango@vtfoodbank.org).

To submit your event:  
[calendar@commonsnews.org](mailto:calendar@commonsnews.org)  
Deadline: 5 p.m. Friday  
•  
Visit [commonsnews.org](http://commonsnews.org) for more listings with more details

# Honoring the stage

*Stage 33 Live provides a no-frills intimate listening experience for up-and-coming artists — all on stage in a repurposed paper mill that echoes with the history of Bellows Falls*

By Robert F. Smith  
The Commons

**B**ELLOWS FALLS—Housed in a former paper mill — which today looks very much like it did when the mill closed in 1963 — Stage 33 Live seems an unlikely spot for small, intimate live music concerts.

In actual practice, the space has worked out just fine.

Stage 33 Live is a no-frills live concert and listening room, featuring mainly folk, jazz, Americana, and roots music, with some interesting exceptions, performed by regional singer-songwriter musicians.

There's a stage, built by local music hero Ezra Veitch, and 40 folding chairs for the audience. No bar, no food service or refreshments, and no cover songs.

"We feature really good talent," said Stage 33 Live founder Mark Piepkorn, who also serves as executive director and president. "It's just that most of these performers are not known at a high enough level long enough to be able to fill larger venues."

Out of necessity, the concert

series almost exclusively features original music by the artist, with an occasional traditional song in the public domain.

"The practical reason," Piepkorn said with a laugh, "is that we have no budget to pay for covers. The romantic reason is to celebrate originality."

Piepkorn describes Stage 33 as a live music organization that is "small and underfunded."

Some grants and donations help pay for the live music venue, but the work is all done by volunteers.

"None of us are paid," Piepkorn said. "Any money we get goes to the performers."

He admits that "it's a terrible business model. We're not trying to be [Brattleboro's] Stone Church or Next Stage [in Putney]. We're just trying to be as good as they are."

### A 'hand up' for regional talent

Stage 33 Live's main purpose is promoting regional talent. "We're trying to be a stepping stone for up-and-coming artists," Piepkorn said. "We're trying to help people

in the ascendancy of their arc as artists."

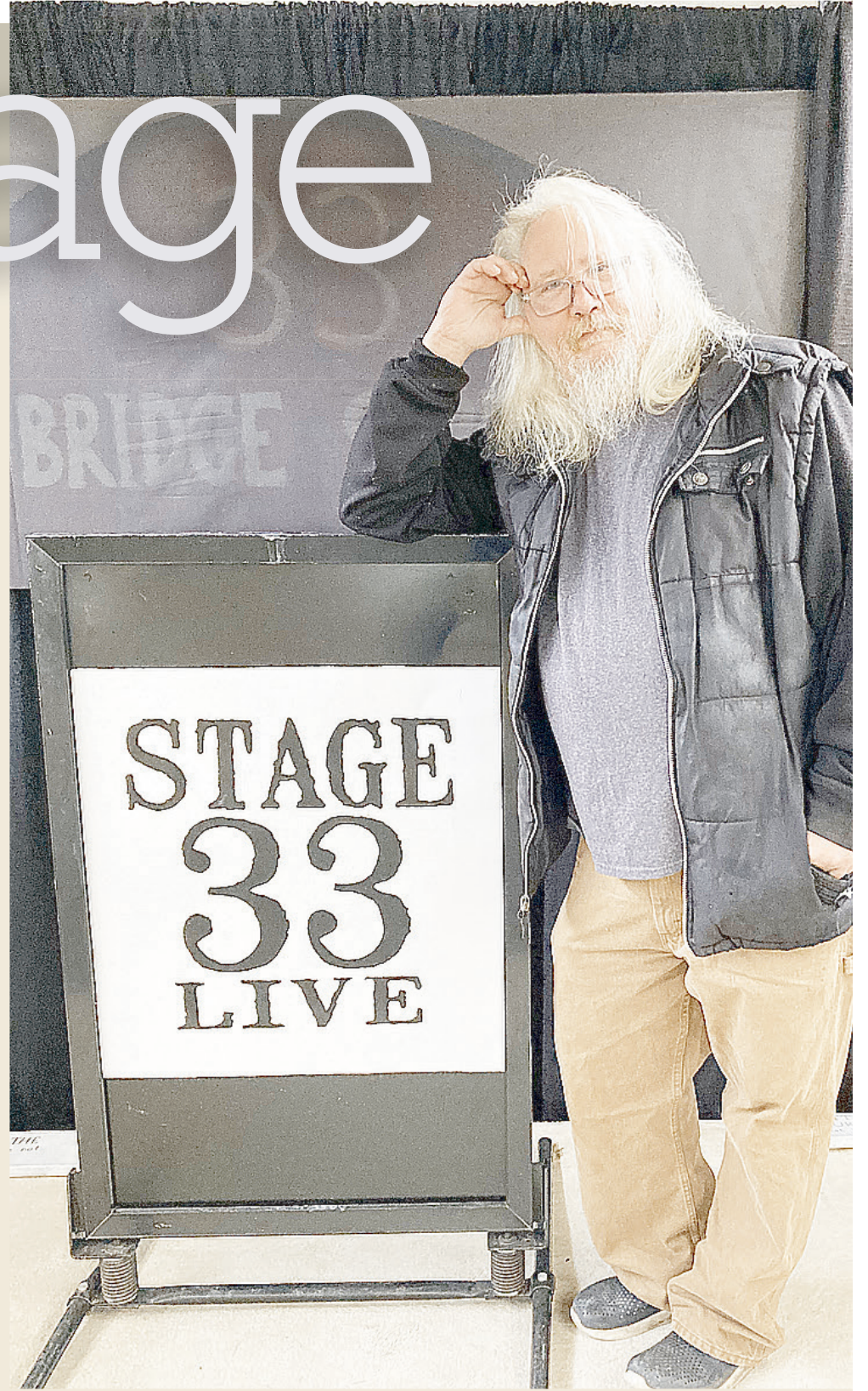
Piepkorn provides that help in concrete ways. First, Stage 33 Live provides a chance to hear live music performed by the artist. Covid proved that people still love live performances, and attendance has been growing. In addition, all the live concerts are recorded in audio and with multiple video cameras.

After the show, Piepkorn does a professional quality mix of the sound, adds the video, and passes all the media on to the performer. The audio can be turned into a CD, and the videos can be shown on public media or to a potential new performance venue.

"We're not charging \$100 an hour," he said. "But we offer professional live audio and video."

Making those recordings offers some challenges. They capture one live performance — no retakes. And with no money for the annual licensing fees to performance-rights entities such as ASCAP (American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers) and BMI (Broadcast

■ SEE STAGE 33 LIVE, B4



ROBERT F. SMITH THE COMMONS

Mark Piepkorn stands in front of the Stage 33 Live marquee in Bellows Falls.

## COLUMN | Creative Conversations



Hayley Jane

COURTESY PHOTO

## 'It feels like coming home'

Hayley Jane returns to music with a tour that brings her to the Stone Church on Feb. 4

**I**N 2020, Hayley Jane gave up music and moved back home to be near her family in California, where she ran a small shop in Carmel.

"I completely detached from music, and it was very painful," she recalls in a recent phone call.

But Hayley Jane is back with a bunch of East Coast tour dates as she brings a stellar lineup of musicians to the Stone Church on Saturday.

"Coming back to it feels so good, and it feels like coming home," she says. "I'm so excited about all these shows and hope to just get everyone to zone in and be in the moment together."

The lineup includes Josh Dobbs (Hayley Jane & The Primates and Dobbs' Dead) on keys, Jack Vigonion (Swimmer) on bass, and Cotter Ellis (Swimmer) on drums.

As we talk by phone, Dobbs,



**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.

of Burlington, recalls a unique experience in St. John, Virgin Islands, when they last played together.

"I was on tour with Marcus Rezak (Shred Is Dead) and it just so happened that Hayley Jane was also in St. John," he says. "We had a three-night run at a big venue and then two acoustic style shows."

"At the last minute, Marcus wasn't able to make two of the gigs, so we asked Hayley Jane to fill in. Hayley came in and did this beautiful, magical, and unexpected kind of music."

"There was this freedom of trust that was established from the first note," he continues.

"We looked at each other and said, 'What just happened? That was amazing!'"

When asked why Hayley Jane stands out as a performer, Dobbs adds, "In my opinion, she surrenders to the music. It can be very emotionally, physically, and spiritually taxing. She is 100% honest, and when you see Hayley Jane, you get Hayley Jane."

In an email, Robin Johnson, owner of the Stone Church, likens Jane's "powerful voice and commanding performances" to "strong front women of classic rock like Grace Slick and Janis

■ SEE HAYLEY JANE, B3

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Bonnie Duncan from The Gottabees' "Squirrel Stole My Underpants."

LIZ LINDER



Justin Lander in Modern Times Theater's "The Baffo Box Show."

COURTESY PHOTO



Tanya Nixon-Silberg from Little Uprisings' "My Night in the Planetarium."

SARA NOLEN

## Sandglass Theater offers Winter Sunshine series, workshop, and Winter Puppet Camp

PUTNEY—Sandglass Theater presents its annual Winter Sunshine Series in February and celebrates the magic and warmth of puppetry for young audiences with four puppet companies from Massachusetts and Vermont.

Dedicated to serving children, families, and teachers through the art of puppetry, Sandglass will host a different live performance every Saturday at 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. throughout the month.

Sandglass Theater's featured artists of 2023 include the following shows:

— Feb. 4 — *Oma*, a family show by Shoshana Bass and Jana Zeller. It is an intergenerational tale that revolves around Grandma, or "Oma," and her family's antics at her birthday celebration. Oma says "knitting is not just pompom hats and sweaters." Oma's knitting contains whole stories! Directed by Ines Zeller Bass and featuring a special musical score composed by Molly Gawler and the Gawler Family Band, the show runs 45 minutes and is recommended for ages 4 and up.

— Feb. 11 — *The Baffo Box Show: A Compact Cardboard Comedy* by Modern Times Theater of East Hardwick. Performed in a one-of-a-kind suit-stage, this show packs classic

hand puppetry, Dadaist ventriloquism, and stand-up comedy into a cardboard box and delivers it, with impeccable timing, live on stage. From the moment the lid opens, audiences "are captivated as the Baffos juggle and dance their way through the day's chores," say organizers, "despite the undeniable evidence that their world is changing." Puppeteered by Justin Lander and directed by Rose Friedman, the show runs 45 minutes and is recommended for all ages.

— Feb. 18 — *My Night in the Planetarium* by Little Uprisings of Jamaica Plain, Mass. Best-selling children's book author Innosanto Nagara's true story of art and social protest comes to life as a dynamic pop-up puppet show. Created and performed by fellow artist/activist Tanya Nixon-Silberg, the show transports audiences to Jakarta in the 1970s, where 7-year-old Inno learns firsthand how a play has the power to spark a resistance movement. Featuring designs by Sarah Nolen, the story is brought to life with a rich soundscape, visual transformations, and kid-centered lessons about social justice. The show runs 45 minutes and is recommended for ages 5 and up.

— Feb. 25 — *Squirrel Stole My Underpants* by The Gottabees of Boston. A lonely, awkward girl is sent out to the backyard to hang up the laundry and keep herself busy. The moment Sylvie's back is turned, a mischievous squirrel appears, steals her favorite piece of clothing and runs off. As the story unfolds, an entire world emerges from her laundry basket and Sylvie learns that she is

a strong girl with magic within herself. Created and performed by Bonnie Duncan with live music by Brendan Burns and Tony Leva. The show runs about 45 minutes, including a meet the artist Q&A. Recommended for ages 3 and up.

For those looking to join the action, they can register for a special Junk Music and Sound Experimentation Workshop, led by renowned junk musician and arts educator Justin Lander. The workshop takes place after the second performance on Feb. 11.

During Windham County's school winter break, Monday through Friday, Feb. 20–24, 8- to 14-year-olds may attend Sandglass's own Winter Puppet Camp from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. each day.

Jana Zeller and Shoshana Bass teach basic marionette and rod puppet building and techniques. Participants develop scenes that together culminate in a final puppet circus performance for friends and family at 3 p.m. on Friday.

The camp will take place in Sandglass Theater's own space, located at 17 Kimball Hill. Campgoers must bring their own lunch, morning snack, and water bottle.

*Tickets for all Winter Sunshine shows are \$9 general admission, or \$7.50 for Medicaid/EBT cardholders. The great enthusiast can purchase a pass for all four shows for \$30. Workshop pricing includes The Junk Music and Sound Experimentation Workshop at \$10. The Winter Puppet Camp is \$30 for the full week. For more information and to purchase tickets, visit sandglasstheater.org.*

## Next Stage welcomes Balla Kouyaté, Mike Block for night of world music

PUTNEY—Next Stage Arts presents a concert with Malian balafon player and singer Balla Kouyaté and American cellist, singer, and composer Mike Block, on Sunday, Feb. 5 at 4 p.m. Composer, kora player, percussionist, and vocalist John Hughes opens.

Kouyaté and Block have been collaborating for over a decade, according to a news release, bonding over their shared interest in music from across the world and their commitment to innovating on their instruments.

Kouyaté, who comes from the *Djeli* tradition of Mali, was awarded a National Heritage Fellowship from the NEA. Block is a Grammy Award-winning musician with the Silk Road Ensemble, originally trained in Western Classical music.

"Two world-class masters from different continents unite to bring together different musical traditions with Mike and Balla," Keith Marks, executive director of Next Stage Arts, said in a news release. "Balla was named a World Heritage Fellow by the National Endowment for the Arts and is the heritage keeper of his region's heritage instrument, the balafon. Mike Block [...] is known in numerous musical circles as a master at the cello. Next Stage is over the moon about presenting these two virtuosic musicians."

To say that Kouyaté was born into a musical family is an understatement. His family lineage goes back over 800 years to Balla Faséké, the first of an unbroken line of *Djelis* in the Kouyaté clan. *Djelis* are the oral historians, musicians, and performers

who keep alive and celebrate the history of the Mandé people of Mali, Guinea, and other West African countries.

Kouyaté explains that the word *Djeli* derives from his Mandinka language, "It means blood and speaks to the central role we play in our society." One must be born into it. The Kouyaté family is regarded as the original praise-singers of the Malinké people, one of the ethnic groups found across much of West Africa.

In 2001, the Sosso-Bala — a thousand-year-old balafon — was declared an item of intangible cultural heritage by UNESCO. This powerful symbol of Mande culture, in the care of the Kouyaté family, is brought out once a year for ceremonial playing.

Kouyaté also regularly plays with world-renowned West African musicians who are touring in the States.

He often accompanies kora master Mamadou Diabaté and, in 2004, joined NEA National Heritage Fellow Sidiki Cond Kouyaté for a month-long residency at Carnegie Hall.

Yo-Yo Ma has described Block as the "ideal musician of the 21st Century." Touring and playing extensively throughout the world with SRE, Block has also contributed arrangements and compositions and earned a Grammy Award in 2017 for SRE's album, *Sing Me Home*.

Using the innovative Block Strap, which allows a cellist to stand and move while playing, he was the first cellist to perform while standing at Carnegie Hall. *The New York Times* characterized the performance as,

"Breathless. [...] Half dance, half dare."

As an educator, Block is described by organizers as passionate about creativity and collaboration, and is the founding director of Silkroad's Global Musician Workshop and the Mike Block String Camp.

John Hughes is a composer, kora player, percussionist and vocalist whose style crosses myriad cultural boundaries and fuses disparate influences. Playing ancient traditional instruments not often heard in the United States, many of which he builds himself, Hughes "takes his audience on an intimate musical tour of universal expressions of joy and hope that soothe and uplift the spirit," say organizers.

Also a sculptor, dancer, instrument builder, and educator, Hughes holds a bachelor's from the Tyler School of Art of Temple University and the West Surrey College of Art and Design in Farnham, England, and a master's degree from the University of Wisconsin in Madison. He has studied the music, song, and dance of West Africa for over 28 years, training with numerous master drummers and dancers from Guinea and Mali, including Mamady Keita and Famoudou Konaté.

*Next Stage is located at 15 Kimball Hill in downtown Putney. Tickets are \$20 in advance, \$24 at the door. Advance tickets are available at nextstagearts.org. Next Stage will provide a beer, wine, and cocktail cash bar. For information, call 802-387-0102.*

## Artist, curator to speak on museum exhibit 'Moons and Internment Stones'

BRATTLEBORO—The Brattleboro Museum & Art Center (BMAC) will present a free online conversation between artist Alison Moritsugu, artist Erin Shigaki, and curator Sarah Freeman on Thursday, Feb. 2, at 7 p.m.

Moritsugu, Shigaki, and Freeman will discuss the exhibit "Moons and Internment Stones," on view at BMAC through February 12. The event is presented in partnership with Densho, a nonprofit organization committed to documenting the oral histories of Japanese Americans incarcerated in World War II.

In "Moons and Internment Stones," Moritsugu pairs watercolor paintings of rocks gathered by her grandfather while he was imprisoned at the Santa Fe Internment Camp during World War II with oil paintings of the moon.

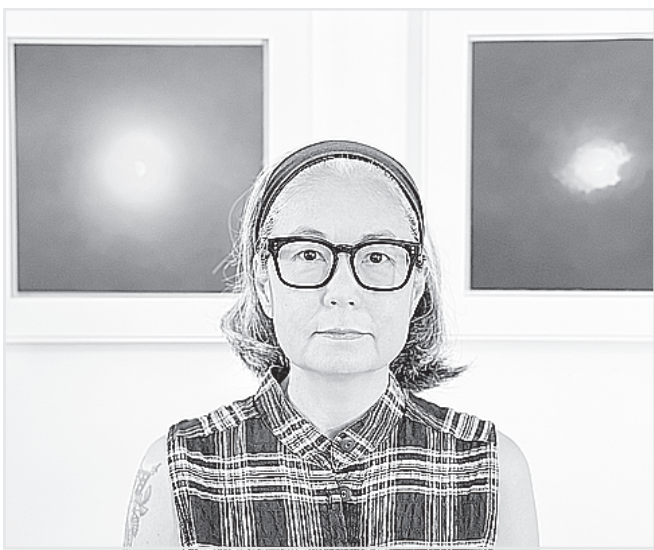
The latter, the artist explained, are based on "sketches and color notes taken at random times in my life when the moon has evoked a poignant beauty, inspired curiosity, or provided solace."

"As painters, we know the importance of the sensory and visual world," Moritsugu writes in a statement accompanying the exhibition. "Each subject we choose to paint, each color and material we select to work with, each visual decision we make gives insight into who we are. In a similar way, each stone my grandfather selected and then carefully packed and carried back home to Hawaii is a reflection of who he was."

Moritsugu was born and raised in Hawaii and now lives in Beacon, New York. Her work has been exhibited in solo shows at the Honolulu Museum of Art at First Hawaiian Center, the Lux Art Institute, Littlejohn Contemporary, and the John Michael Kohler Arts Center.

She has received a New York Foundation for the Arts Fellowship in painting and has participated in residencies at the Cité Internationale des Arts, Yaddo, MacDowell, and the Sharpe - Walentas Studio Program. She holds a bachelor's degree from Washington University and a master's from the School of Visual Arts.

Shigaki is a *yonsei* (fourth-generation) Japanese American who creates art that is community-based and focused on BIPOC experiences, such as those of



Alison Moritsugu

COURTESY PHOTO

members of her community incarcerated during World War II. The artist describes on her website she seeks to understand intergenerational trauma and to explore the emergence of beauty and intimacy despite unspeakably harsh circumstances. She believes that wielding art and activism to tell these stories can educate, redress, and incrementally heal.

Shigaki has received grants and commissions from numerous institutions, including Densho, the Wing Luke Museum, the Seattle Office of Arts & Culture, and the Kip Tokuda Memorial Washington Civil Liberties Grant. She holds a bachelor's degree from Yale University.

The event will take place via Zoom and Facebook Live. Register at [brattleboromuseum.org](http://brattleboromuseum.org) or 802-257-0124, ext. 101.

## Online talk addresses youth media literacy

BELLOWS FALLS—The Rockingham Free Public Library presents Media Educator Ben Boyington, a contributor to *The Media and Me: A Guide to Critical Media Literacy for Young People* on Saturday, Feb. 11, at 1 p.m.

During the recent presidential election, *media literacy* became a phrase that signified the threat media manipulation posed to democratic processes, states a news release. Meanwhile, statistical research has shown that 8- to 18-year-olds pack more than 11 hours with some form of media into each day by "media multitasking."

"We live much of our lives immersed in media, and rather than simply complaining about it, we need to understand it," Boyington said. "We need critical media literacy. How are we being used? Who is behind the screens? Who benefits from our attention? What messages are being burned

into our brains? Critical media literacy is essential to exploring these questions and approaching the world—from news and politics to entertainment and social media."

By covering topics like storytelling, building arguments and recognizing fallacies, surveillance and digital gatekeeping, advertising and consumerism, and global social problems through a critical media literacy lens, Boyington will explain how to grow from passive consumers of media to engaged critics and creators.

*The Media and Me* is a joint production of Project Censored and Triangle Square Books for Young Readers.

Boyington is an advocate for integrating critical media literacy into K-12 schools, a veteran high school teacher, and the father of two teenagers who are immersed in the worlds of video games, Discord, and Twitch, as well as

anime and other visual storytelling. A member of the Media Freedom Foundation board, he designs and conducts teacher trainings with his partners at the nonprofit organization Mass Media Literacy.

In his daily life, he works with high school students on self-driven learning and builds student-centered programming at a rural high school. An avid media consumer with a particular interest in film and television, he says he also enjoys audiobooks, music, and podcasts but eschews video games "because they have too many buttons now."

This program is free and open to the public. Copies of the book will be available for purchase through the Village Square Booksellers. For more information, contact the Library at 802-463-4270, [youthservices@rockinghamlibrary.org](mailto:youthservices@rockinghamlibrary.org), or go online to [rockinghamlibrary.org](http://rockinghamlibrary.org).

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## Hayley Jane

Johnson, who called the concert “a great preview of our celebration of Women’s History Month in March,” noted that the venue has booked “almost entirely women-fronted bands” through March.

With the underwriting of the Vermont Women’s Fund, the Stone Church has created a program for women, the Women Belong in the Booth Workshops, to learn about the production side of live music. “In the music industry, women have historically been grossly under-represented,” Johnson says.

The Stone Church will collect donations throughout the month to benefit two other presenting partners Planned Parenthood of Northern New England and the Women’s Freedom Center. The venue will match every dollar donated, up to \$1,000.

*The Commons* reached Hayley Jane on the road in New Jersey, where she was writing new music and hanging with the band Dogs in a Pile, whom she will be joining for their Winter Rescue Tour.

Here is an excerpt from the conversation:

**VICTORIA CHERTOK:** Last time we met you were performing at Northlands Music Festival in 96 degree weather! This Saturday, at the Stone Church, what are you most excited about with this particular lineup?

**HAYLEY JANE:** I’ve known these guys for a long time. Josh Dobbs was in Hayley Jane and Primates for the last six months before we went on hiatus. I always enjoy playing with Dobbs. I’ve known Jack and Cotter for a while.

I had no plans to play with these guys, and then we all ended up on St. John in the Virgin Islands together. So the four of us got together with no real plans and we started to see which songs we knew, and we messed around.

It felt so good and was so playful and stress-free, and the audience loved it. It was almost jazzy. It was percussion, bass, keyboard, and saxophone, and

it was improv — and we went on little journeys together.

Dobbs plays in such a theatrical way, and he was making me giggle. He was playing things that were like a brain tickle; I was just laughing, and we just played songs we all knew together. It was such an adventure.

I just blurted out, “Do you guys want to gig this summer?” They’re like, “Yeah!”

**V.C.:** What can the audience expect at this show?

**H.J.:** There will be some songs that are mine, and we will have fun with covers. And it will just be very playful. They are such good musicians — watching me and supporting me and knowing where to go next.

When I feel supported, it makes me fearless in my performance, and I take more risks. Different musicians bring different things out of me in my performance. So Dobbs has this way of pulling out my playfulness.

**V.C.:** You chuckle when people ask you which genre music you play. You pull from many different ones: ’60s and ’70s rock, pop, jazz, funk, blues, musical theater, etc. Do you have a favorite one, and who were your early music influences?

**H.J.:** Doris Day was a big influence. In my early years I was obsessed with the movie *Calamity Jane*. Others are Ella Fitzgerald, Billie Holiday, and Rosemary Clooney. I have this vibrato which is very old. I tried to correct it once, and it wasn’t natural, trying to take away this thing that is embedded in who I am.

The ’90s rockers? Alanis Morissette for the teen angst. I was into Jewel for the emotional and sad stuff. I did musical theater for years and then got into Led Zeppelin and the Beatles.

People compared me to Janis Joplin. When I checked her out, I could see the similarities — it’s just vulnerability, being open and spilling your guts on the floor. She was an accidental influence, I guess.

Stevie Nicks was a big one for me. Her movement was so free. I really took from that her

FROM SECTION FRONT

bravery in allowing the music to move through her. I developed my own clarity around what it felt like for the music to move through me. You give up your autonomy to the music, and magic happens.

I naturally ended up in the jam scene; you don’t have to pick a genre, you can improvise, and there are no rules. I believe that jam music is the young man’s jazz.

**V.C.:** How old were you when you knew this is what you wanted to do?

**H.J.:** I knew right away that I was going to be some kind of performer when I was 9 years old. I was in musical theater at age 12 doing Gilbert and Sullivan. I got into dance late at 14. I learned very quickly and was in the senior company by age 16.

I devoured dance classes like ballet, African, jazz, tap, modern. I started to let go of the strict rules of dance but kept the technique and the flow.

At 17, I got a job at Disney and spent one year as Snow White for eight hours a day. She’s heavily embedded in who I am. When I was 19, I moved from Los Angeles to Boston because I found L.A. so overwhelming.

I also played Lulu the German prostitute in Cabaret for three months, so they are both in there — Snow White and Lulu. I have existed between those two women ever since.

**V.C.:** You say “music is medicine.” How so?

**H.J.:** You realize that music is medicine and it is OK to be dark, because people need the sad songs and the dark songs to know they are not alone.

My intention around music just changed completely, and it became about healing — helping people and entertaining them while they are here in this realm.

That’s my job now: being as authentic as I can and making them feel something deeper.

**V.C.:** Finally, why do the arts matter?

**H.J.:** The arts are so important because they make you feel less alone because of the people

## Guilford Center Stage announces its 2023 season

**GUILFORD**—Guilford Center Stage returns, after a three-year absence, with spring and fall productions of plays in its home at Broad Brook Community Center. Covid concerns cancelled the 2020 season, after which the former grange hall was closed for major renovation, now completed. The theater group will remain on Covid awareness as this season progresses.

In a departure from its usual mission of presenting little-known plays, Guilford Center Stage will move in the opposite direction for its return production, with performances of Thornton Wilder’s *Our Town* the first weekend in May. The group decided this popular, ground-breaking play about typical life in a small New England town would be in keeping with this occasion.

The play will be directed by Ian Hefele, a veteran of several Guilford productions. Auditions will be announced shortly. *Our Town* is presented by arrangement with Concord Theatricals on behalf of Samuel French, Inc. Stage and Stream, a summer

theater camp program, free for Guilford kids, was originated by Guilford Center Stage. It is now part of the nearby Guilford Free Library lineup of camp programs, and will again use the stage at the community center.

Rounding out the 2023 season, Guilford Center Stage will present a new, seasonally appropriate program of short plays by Guilford playwright, Michael Nethercott, in late October.

The group has previously premiered several one-act and full-length plays by Nethercott. A new play, which was canceled by Covid three years ago, is still on hold for a future season, but this autumn production will continue a tradition of spooky fare in the old grange hall.

Broad Brook Community Center is at 3940 Guilford Center Rd. The building is now fully ADA-accessible, with an elevator to the theater space. More information can be found at [facebook.com/guilfordcenterstage](https://www.facebook.com/guilfordcenterstage), and at [broadbrookcommunitycenter.org](https://www.broadbrookcommunitycenter.org), or call 802-257-7024.

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## Dar Williams returns to BF Opera House to kick off Ray Massucco Concert Series

**BELLOWS FALLS**—On Saturday, Feb. 4, Dar Williams returns to the Bellows Falls Opera House for her fourth appearance at the historic venue, kicking off the new Ray Massucco Concert Series. “Since the runaway success of her first album, *The Honesty Room*,” organizers say, “Dar Williams has become one of the most beloved singer/songwriters in America.”

Massucco, a civic-minded attorney, part-time concert promoter, and full-time music lover, passed away unexpectedly in September. A group of friends who had worked with Massucco on Rockingham’s Roots on the River music festival, which ended a 20-year run just prior to Covid, quickly coalesced around the idea of a concert series.

“Dan Richardson on sound, Ezra Veitch as production manager, Maridee Serebrov and Patric Leblanc doing front of house and stage management,” says Charlie Hunter of Rockingham Entertainment Development, presenter of the series in partnership with Next Stage Arts of Putney, “these were the folks who oversaw much of Roots on the River, and they were eager to keep Ray’s spirit and vision

alive.” The group decided to base the series — one per season — around some of Massucco’s favorite acoustic and Americana performers, with Dar Williams at the top of the list.

Williams laughs at this news, however, averring, “I’m thrilled to play the first concert honoring Ray, but I don’t think it’s any reflection of Ray’s preferences. He loved so many artists and genres with no hierarchy; I’m guessing he told all of them that they were his favorites.”

The second show in the series will be Appalachian newgrass barnstormers The Steel Wheels on Friday, April 7. Guitarist Chris Smither appears Saturday, Sept. 23, with Matt Lorenz, better known as The Suitcase Junket, opening. The fourth concert in the series has yet to be announced.

With \$6 movie tickets and the iconic \$5 “Triple Up” (a medium popcorn, soda, and a candy), the 550-seat Bellows Falls Opera House has become known as the best value first-run movie theater in the region, say event coordinators. “The sightlines and acoustics in the room are fantastic,” boasts Hunter. Now the venue is

broadening its offerings. “Movies are, and will continue to be, the bread and butter of the Opera House,” says Hunter, “but we are ramping up to present 24 live performance dates each year.

“The Massucco acoustic series, Wild Goose Players’ annual theatrical presentation, Cider Presents bringing in comics and tribute bands ... there’s a lot going on here.”

Dar Williams is known for her songs such as “When I Was A Boy,” “The Babysitter’s Here,” “The Christians and the Pagans” and “After All.” Her

books, *Amalie, What I Learned in a Thousand Towns*, and *How to Write a Song That Matters* have been described as thought-provoking and inspirational. Newcomer Crys Matthews opens the show.

The Bellows Falls Opera House is located at 7 Village Square, Bellows Falls. Doors open at 6:30; showtime is 7:30. Tickets and information at [bellowsfallsoperahouse.com](https://www.bellowsfallsoperahouse.com) or call 802-387-0102. Presented by Next Stage Arts and RED Concerts.

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## ■ Stage 33 Live

Music Inc.) for legal authority for the performers to play other people's music, Piepkorn said the recording is turned off anytime someone starts playing a cover.

"Our audio and visual work continually get better," Piepkorn said. "I'm always trying to do better. You really have to move fast considering that we're recording their one live show."

Focusing specifically on local and regional artists, said Piepkorn, "this is a place to play, and we give them the resources to market themselves. We want people to capitalize on what we can produce for them."

### A stepping stone

Stage 33 Live has featured some 200 performers since the first concert in the series on April 1, 2018, even accounting for an extended break when Covid hit in 2020. The list of performers is a virtual Who's Who of artists from Vermont and beyond.

Concerts are scheduled for about every three weeks through the spring and fall, with summers off.

"Somehow we've become attractive," Piepkorn said. "We're on the radar of some great touring artists. It shouldn't be as good and as even as it is, but somehow we've set a very high bar for talent."

Many of those artists have moved on to bigger venues, as well as national and even international tours.

Thus Love, a Brattleboro-based trio of young musicians who describe their music as "queer, post-punk," performed at Stage 33. Since then, they have released a very-well-received CD, *Memorial*, recorded during the Covid lockdown. They have been on a national tour, and they will soon head out on a European tour with several shows already sold out.

The End of America (TEOA) has performed at Stage 33 Live several times. A harmonically rich, multi-instrumentalist trio, the group has played together for more than a decade and has released several CDs. Founding member Brendon Thomas has been a well-known performer in southern Vermont since his successful high school band, Blind Luck Music, 20 years ago.

TEOA has moved on to much larger venues and received numerous awards. In 2022, the group toured nationally and was slated to perform 19 shows in Europe this past fall, until the

plans were disrupted by Covid.

High-energy, eclectic, acoustic band Spike Dogtooth has played Stage 33 several times. "The venue is so intimate," wrote Christina Mancini, lead singer and founder of the group. "You know almost everyone in the audience. You invited them, and they are friends of your music."

Spike Dogtooth, with special guest Sam Duffy, will return to perform at Stage 33 Live later this year. The group just released a new CD, *Dogtooth and Duffy*, from the recording Piepkorn made at their last performance here on Sept. 9, 2022.

Phil Henry is a singer-songwriter and music educator based in Rutland. He's the winner of SolarFest's Songwriter Contest and was voted a "Most Wanted" showcase performer to return to the Falcon Ridge Folk Festival in Goshen, Connecticut. He played Stage 33 Live on Jan. 22.

"I play listening rooms in [Unitarian Universalist] churches, coffeehouses, house concerts, clubs, and festivals throughout the Northeast. As a singer-songwriter, listening rooms are essential to what I do," Henry said. "I've played far too many noisy bars and restaurants where music is ambience, and not the focus."

"To have a roomful of people at Stage 33 Live actively listening and connecting with the lyrics and emotions of the songs means everything," he said. "Add to that topnotch sound, professional video recording that can be used for future promotional use, and Mark's commitment to getting the word out about these shows, [and] this is a great experience, top to bottom."

That experience is aided by the one basic rule that Piepkorn insists on: Honor the stage. He takes the designation as a "listening room" very seriously.

"Although our listening events are informal and friendly, they're rarely a good environment for squalling babies, ADHD kiddos, or disruptive adults. It's all about honoring the stage," Piepkorn writes on the Stage 33 Live website. "Cell phones off, pop a lozenge if you've got a cough. Don't talk over the performance. Applaud like crazy though [...] cheer a great solo, laugh loud at a good joke, or groan loud at a bad one."

"Heck, heckle if it seems appropriate," his web copy continues. "But honor the stage."

FROM SECTION FRONT

### Mentors and sponsors

Piepkorn is very clear that Stage 33 Live would not be functioning if not for the help of many others in the greater Bellows Falls community. Stewart and Dot Read, owners of the building, are at the top of his list.

"We keep our overhead extremely low," Piepkorn said. "We're not charged rent, and our electricity is free. Other tenants in the building help us out. Without that support, there is no way this could happen."

Piepkorn wrote a tribute to his mentor, the late Gary Smith, in the Jan. 25 issue of *The Commons*. Smith, who died on Jan. 16 after a long illness, had been a key figure in Piepkorn's musical life.

Smith was a founder of Fort Apache Records in the Boston area. After his move to the Bellows Falls region, Smith started a concert series in the Hotel Windham Ballroom, helped found community radio station WOOL-FM, sponsored numerous events, concerts and programs, and founded Popolo, a popular downtown restaurant.

Piepkorn said he also had help from artist and music entrepreneur Charlie Hunter and from local attorney, event producer, and community booster Ray Massucco. Stage 33 Live is located just outside Hunter's painting studio in the 33 Bridge building, and its walls are decorated with the art of Hunter and other artists who work from the old paper mill.

In the last four months, with the deaths of Massucco and Smith, as well as author and theater enthusiast Bill Lockwood, the local arts community is reeling and trying to recover.

As Mancini wrote on her new CD's liner notes about the night it was recorded at Stage 33, "The evening was further blessed by having our dear friend and music aficionado Ray Massucco present in the audience."

"No one on this entire planet loved live acoustic music more than Ray, and he passed away a few weeks after attending the show," she wrote.

### Industrial not-so-chic

The building at 33 Bridge St. still looks like a former paper mill. Some of the artists have remodeled and spruced up their spaces in the building, but it is far from a gentrified industrial space.

In recent years, the building has been an incubator for the arts and small entrepreneurs. Its tenants now include several painters, two glassblowers, photographers, a community radio station, an artisanal soap making company, and a craft brewer, along with the live music space, which has also served as an art gallery and auction site for special events.

The 18-building complex's historical designation is the Moore and Thompson Paper Mill. It is the largest remaining former mill complex in Bellows Falls, a repurposed reminder of the village's industrial past.

The lower part of the complex was built in the 1880s. The Hudson Bag Company built the upper building, 33 Bridge Street, where the music venue is located,

## The Rough & Tumble, with High Tea and Decatur Creek, to perform at Stage 33 Live

BELLOWS FALLS—Three groups take the stage at 3 p.m. on Sunday, Feb. 12, at Stage 33 Live, at 33 Bridge Street in Bellows Falls.

"A decade of relentless touring has earned 'thriftstore-Americana' duo The Rough & Tumble — Mallory Graham and Scott Tyler — the right to trot out the haggard road-worn trope," say event organizers in a news release, "but they defy that stereotype and pretty much every other with their upbeat, commanding stage presence and razor-sharp banter, earworm melodies, and heartstring lyrics. "These songwriters and storytellers have audiences in stitches one minute and falling apart at the seams the next."

Graham and Tyler had been writing and performing together for years in other projects

by the time they created The Rough & Tumble in 2011.

Since then, they've been crowned The Listening Room Network's Artist of the Year; have been an Official Showcase Artist for the Southeast Regional Folk Alliance; and were awarded Americana Song of the Year for "The Hardest Part" by the Independent Music Awards. They've released half a dozen albums and EPs.

They may have their signature nose flutes on the merch table if they aren't sold out.

Rising indie-folk duo High Tea from Boston will celebrate their new CD, delivering a blend of old blues and new pop — "songs ripe with Americana heartbreak and heat, punctuated with tales of growing up, going wild, and always coming back to the ones you love," says

the artists' website.

This stop on their tour is bookended by appearances at Signature Sounds' The Parlor Room in Northampton, Mass., and Rockwood Music Hall in New York City.

Decatur Creek will open. Beth Eldridge, Doug Farrell, and Jack Henry are each accomplished New Hampshire musicians, singer-songwriters, and performers who together "write and play some of the most tasteful original music in the region, with sharp focus on songcraft and vocals," say organizers.

Tickets are \$15 in advance through [stage33live.com](http://stage33live.com) or \$20 at the door. Seating is limited and the event will be recorded and filmed.

in the 1920s. It remained the area's largest paper maker until closing in 1963.

Part of what makes the former paper mill a unique and valuable business incubator is a deal the company made in 1914 with the owners of the famed Bellows Falls Canal.

Construction began in 1791 for the canal, the first of its kind in the U.S. It was built to bypass the 52-foot-high Great Falls on the Connecticut River at that spot, and open the upper part of the river to navigation and boat trade.

But by the 1850s, railroads had made river transport by barge obsolete. At that time, the canal was converted to supplying hydro-power to six mills built over the lower end of the canal.

With the advent of electric power in the early 1900s, a large dam was built on the Connecticut River above the north end of the canal, and the canal was converted yet again to power a hydroelectric generating facility. From 1926 to 1928, the dam and canal were rebuilt to power the hydroelectric plant. The dam, the rebuilt canal, and the generating station at the south end of the canal are all still in operation.

To encourage that shift from hydro power to hydroelectric power, in 1914 the Bellows Falls Electric Company, which owned the power plant, began to lease the canal water rights from the companies along the canal that owned the rights. This included the Moore and Thompson Paper Mill.

One vestige of those manufacturing agreements remains.

Per the terms of a 999-year agreement, "Our building gets a quota of electricity from the power company," building co-owner Dorothy Read said.

She does note that there is an annual fee, and that as owners, she and Stewart pay normal rates for the excess power consumed. ("While it is reduced in price, it is not free," she said. "Everyone thinks that.")

The large, open main entry area into the building serves as the performance space. It has

a concrete floor, and the mill's original metal plumbing, duct work, and wiring conduits are still clearly visible and functioning. A clerestory runs down the center of the building, rising above the ceiling height, providing light and ventilation to the middle of the former factory floor.

Clerestories are ancient architectural features dating back to Egypt and Rome, and were a common feature in medieval cathedrals. It's a welcome detail in a building that was once a temple to industry, and has been re-purposed as a temple for creativity.

Piepkorn said he first was involved with the building when co-owner Stewart Read suggested he start a live music show on WOOL-FM.

With recording and video equipment available, Piepkorn began thinking of opening a live music venue in 2017. The space had been used for numerous concerts over the previous 20 years, so it wasn't an issue wondering whether it could serve that purpose.

Even with the interruption of Covid, Piepkorn said that he still has "more people waiting to play here than we have dates for in a year."

"It's ridiculous!" he observed.

More information regarding upcoming shows can be found at [stage33live.com](http://stage33live.com), which offers links to social media and an email newsletter.

## Piano recital starts concert series at Guilford Community Church

GUILFORD—A recital by pianist Rachel Johnson will be performed on Sunday, Feb. 5, at Guilford Community Church, the first in a series of concert featuring area musicians.

Starting at 2:30 p.m., it will showcase a repertoire from the Baroque, Classic, Romantic, and Impressionistic eras by composers such as J.S. Bach, Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Schumann, Brahms, Debussy, and more.

Other musicians on the recital will be her husband, Dwayne Johnson, who will play a trumpet solo by Fitzgerald; and Connie Green, who will play a flute solo by Bach. Rachel Johnson will accompany both instrumentalists.

Musicians Peter Amidon, Andy Davis, and others will provide brief introductions to the concert pieces.

Rachel Johnson studied classical piano in the Indianapolis, Indiana, area since age 5 and says hardly a day goes by when she doesn't play for enjoyment or practice for an event. She taught piano until recently and was a music teacher in elementary, middle, and high schools. She served as an accompanist for numerous choirs, instrumentalists, university students' juries and recitals, and various competitions in the

Midwest. Many Sunday mornings, Johnson can be found performing in churches, most recently in Guilford, where she and her husband moved in 2018. Subsequent Sunday afternoon concerts in the Guilford Community Church series includes March 26 (Andy Davis), May 21 (Shirley Crockett's 25th Memorial Concert), early June (Event for Children) and early October (Peter and Mary Alice Amidon).

Tickets will only be available at the door with a suggested donation of \$10-\$25. Complimentary refreshments will be served following the concert.

All proceeds from the concert series benefit the church, which is handicapped accessible and actively supports numerous local programs and organizations serving the wider community. Vaccinations and masks are welcome but not required.

Directions to 38 Church Drive: I-91 to Vermont Exit 1 (Brattleboro), south on Route 5 to just past the Guilford Country Store, left on Bee Barn Road, left again on Church Drive. For information, contact the church office at 802-257-0994 or [guilfordchurch@gmail.com](mailto:guilfordchurch@gmail.com).

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VIEWPOINT

# Our slow-motion judicial coup

A longtime BUHS history teacher looks at the historic, corporate, political, and social forces have been working since the post-World War II era to drive a slow-motion hijacking of our judicial system by the extreme right

Brattleboro

## 1 'A supremely political court'

THOMAS JEFFERSON called the United States Supreme Court the “despotic branch.” Historically the least democratic of the three branches, this tribunal — unelected to life terms with no codified ethical standards — has overwhelmingly served elite political and corporate interests over citizen rights.

What riled Jefferson most was Chief Justice John Marshall’s coup of 1803, which established judicial review, thus anointing the court with the ability to nullify acts of the legislative and executive branches as unconstitutional.

Marshall’s aggrandizement was powered by a fiction, as there was nothing in the Constitution that accorded the high court such sweeping powers. Alexander Hamilton and the Federalists did not object; the founders designed a quick consensus that the country would be best served by the elites of the Senate and the Supreme Court. There would be no need for popular elections for these white men of property and standing.

Thus a conservative court would protect slavery, abet the destruction of Native peoples’ societies, enshrine corporate prerogatives over citizens’ rights, institutionalize the Jim Crow systems, and acquiesce to imperial aggressions.

**TIM KIPP**, a political activist since the 1960s, is a retired history and political science teacher of 39 years.

Since the 1980s, the Supreme Court has accelerated environmental degradation, reignited discrimination in voting rights, destroyed workers’ rights to unionize, strengthened corporate economic and political powers, and assaulted reproductive rights. Acclaimed political scientist Michael Parenti years ago called it a “supremely political” court.

The high court has inexorably marched to the extreme right. Now in 2023, with a 6-3 supermajority, this court is arguably the most reactionary in U.S. history.

While the court’s been a consistent bulwark protecting elite interests first and foremost, there have been notable exceptions. The court, under Chief Justice Earl Warren from 1954 to 1969, represented the high-water mark of judicial liberalism, defending civil rights, women’s rights, and defendants’ rights, as well as bolstering antitrust and corporate regulations.

The conservative transformation over the past decades is qualitatively different from past shifts in the balancing of the court — it is more than conservative presidents nominating conservative candidates.

Since the Nixon era of the 1970s, judges have been more ideological and political. It’s no longer party power brokers sitting around a kitchen table choosing candidates; rather, the vetting process has become a long-game strategy of grooming and promoting the right people.

How did this systemic change occur? What historical, corporate,



PHOTOILLUSTRATION BASED ON IMAGE FROM 3D ANIMATION PRODUCTION COMPANY PIXARBY

political, and social forces coalesced to drive the court to the extreme right?

Class-serving ideologues choreographed this slow-motion judicial coup d’état, but this story begins with the evolution of the political economy of the post-World War II era.

## 2 The great backlash

ALTHOUGH THE TRANSFORMATION began in earnest in the Nixon years in the 1970s, the groundwork was laid in the political turmoil of the previous decade. Citizens forced the country to reckon with its putative democratic promises; African Americans, women, and young idealists shook the conscience of the nation.

The good trouble fomented by activists in the civil rights, women’s liberation, peace, and other such movements galvanized a generation and scared the hell out of the establishment.

Throughout our history, when citizens organize and win significant democratic victories, a powerful backlash emerges to redeem

ruling class interests, as took place with Black Reconstruction in the 1870s; the rise of organized labor in the 19th and 20th centuries; the Populist, farm-labor alliances; the Progressive and socialist movements; the New Deal and the post-World War II uprisings, among others.

In the aftermath of these victories, corporate and political elites vowed to restore their power in the name of stability and the so-called national interest.

Thus emerged the campaign by Republicans to regain a long-lost ascendancy — and capturing the Supreme Court became instrumental to that strategy.

## 3 A cynical strategy

BORN OF THE Barry Goldwater presidential campaign of 1964 and perfected by Richard Nixon in 1968, the master plan became known as the “Southern strategy.”

The goal was the expansion of the Republican Party base by appealing to historically conservative southern Democrats. Fair enough. However, the appeal would be based on fear, economic insecurity, and racist predilections of the white working class Southerner.

The strategy was to not appeal to optimism and vision to build a party — quite the opposite. The Southern strategy would expand the party’s reach via a vicious, sustained program to divide and further dehumanize by wielding the cudgels of white supremacy. Build a party, weaken potential working-class solidarity, and undermine the impressive gains made by the civil rights movement: a reactionary trifecta.

Nixon was the master of the strategy. His became the model for the campaigns spewed forth for decades to come. Reagan’s “welfare queens,” the Bush war on drugs, Willie Horton, immigrant invasions — the list goes on. The Southern strategy would be supercharged over the internet and social media ecosystems during the cult years of Trump.

The South became a Republican stronghold, and by the 1980s the long struggle had just begun.

## 4 Roe v. Wade

THE EXTRAORDINARY ERA of citizens’ democratic victories was punctuated in 1973 with the Supreme Court’s ruling in *Roe v. Wade*. For the first time, women had a federal right to reproductive liberty with limited access to an abortion.

*Roe* became the new lightning rod of right-wing animus over a country careening wildly to the left. The Supreme Court’s *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling of 1954 ending de jure segregation in public schools initially ignited the ire of the extreme right. *Roe* provided what Brown could not: a straightforward Manichean good-versus-evil world of morality played out with the innocence of a fetus.

Opposition to *Brown*, particularly outside the South, meant being opposed to equal educational opportunities for grade-school children. Denying an education to kids was an implicit repudiation of this country’s founding principles of equal opportunity, fairness, and democracy.

The putative moral issues of *Roe* had nothing to do with the abstract notions in the Declaration of Independence and the preamble to the Constitution. This was a personal issue, not a state one and, most importantly, it was a religious concern. Logic could

■ SEE SUPREME COURT, C2

VIEWPOINT

# Charter change would make housing worse for everyone

Banning no-cause lease terminations ‘is surely not in any way equitable and absolutely does not balance the rights of housing providers with the rights of tenants’

Brattleboro

**M**Y WIFE, SHARON, AND I OWN two apartment houses with five rental units next door to us. We keep a close eye on the property, and I do most of the maintenance on the five apartments.

We urge voters to vote no to the proposed change to the Town Charter regarding “no-cause” termination of a lease. It is not good for Brattleboro, not good for tenants, and not good for housing providers.

In all those years, we have needed to use the “no-cause” lease termination law only twice — in both cases because of a problem tenant.

**ERIC ANNIS** and his wife, Sharon, purchased two buildings with five rental units 12 years ago “as a way to help with college costs for our children and for retirement income,” they write. The first public hearing on the proposed change to the Brattleboro Town Charter will take place on Friday, Feb. 3 at 6:15 p.m. in the Selectboard Meeting Room at the Municipal Center (230 Main St.). A second public hearing will be held during the Selectboard’s regular meeting on Tuesday, Feb. 7 at 6:15 p.m. in the board’s meeting room.

In both cases, these tenants were disturbing the others with loud noise and harassment. They were damaging the apartment, abusing girlfriends, and violating their lease by smoking in the apartment.

One tenant even stole a

neighborhood cat and kept it captive in the apartment. One was coming home at all hours of the day and night habitually intoxicated and asking to be let into the apartment because he could not find his key.

Housing providers I have talked to uniformly say that

the only time they use the “no-cause termination” law is to remove a problem tenant from the property.

No landlord takes this lightly. Each time my wife and I have had to use this provision it has cost us roughly \$5,000 in unpaid rent and the cost to repair the substantial damage caused by the tenant.

We used that provision because any just-cause termination action filed in court would take months to resolve, resulting in a mounting loss of monthly rent, more damage to the unit, no way to protect other tenants from being harassed, and zero chance of ever

■ SEE CHARTER VOTE, C2



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## Supreme Court

FROM SECTION FRONT

not interrupt one's religious beliefs; that ground was solid and immovable.

Now religion would serve a more explicit political purpose. When an evangelical, Jerry Falwell, discovered television in the 1970s, a multimillion-dollar industry was born. The nexus of religion, politics, and capitalism would not be denied.

Prior to the *Roe* decision, Falwell, as a Baptist preacher, spent decades fighting *Brown v. Board of Education* by sponsoring private, white Christian schools. Now antiabortion forces would unite with white supremacists in the pulpits to tithe to the business of fundamentalism. By 1980, radical conservatives would draw no lines between religion, economics, and politics. Their drum major would be Ronald Reagan.

A new political cauldron would be cast, and into it would be abortion, homosexuality, free love, drugs, gay and interracial marriage, making a toxic brew that would nourish Republican "culture wars."

This was just another variant of the recipe for the Southern strategy of division, fear, and hate.

It was injury enough to conservatives that *Roe* was ruled by a decisive vote of 7-2 in 1973. They found it downright insulting that years later, in 1992, three Republican appointees — Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, Justice David Souter, and Justice Anthony Kennedy — voted to uphold *Roe* in *Casey v. Planned Parenthood*.

5

## The Powell roadmap

SELDOM DOES HISTORY offer a clear blueprint, but in 1971 a corporate tobacco lawyer and soon-to-be Supreme Court jurist, Lewis Powell, accommodated.

In an extensive memorandum sponsored by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, "Attack on American Free Enterprise System," Powell issued a call to arms and a strategic plan for corporate America to reassert itself in the political economy. With liberalism on the rise, it was time long overdue for a counteroffensive.

Powell declaimed, "Strength lies in organization, in careful long-range planning and implementation [...] over an indefinite period of years [...]." The memorandum is quite breathless in tone; one can imagine Powell seeing himself as a latter-day Thomas Paine, exhorting corporations, conservatives, and the Republican Party to storm the liberal barricades erected by Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal of the 1930s and Lyndon S. Johnson's Great Society of the 1960s.

Powell fingered corporations and conservative elites most of all for renegeing on the responsibility for defending and projecting the values and virtues of free enterprise and capitalism to the American people. After all, in the 1950s, the Advertising Council, in alliance with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, unrolled an aggressive campaign called "People's Capitalism," designed to sell the American way of life during the throes of the Cold War. Powell called for more.

Powell called for building a corporate-funded army of benignly named political and economic foundations to reorder the political economy. Behind these activist groups, think tanks, and lobbying, educational, public relations, and funding organizations would emerge a comprehensive program to research and promote legislation, to educate the next generation of political and judicial leaders, and to lobby and reform the representative system through gerrymandering and voter suppression.

Critical to this scheme would be the reshaping of the judicial landscape. Heavy earth-moving equipment would be necessary.

In Powell's words, "with an activist minded Supreme Court, the judiciary may be the most important instrument for social, economic and political change."

Pointing out the success of organizations like the American Civil Liberties Union in arguing cases before the court, the future justice pointed out: "This is a vast area of opportunity for the Chamber, if it is willing to undertake the role of spokesman for American business and if, in turn, business is willing to provide the funds."

Much of the big money corporate world saluted and joined the ranks.

## Charter vote

FROM SECTION FRONT

recouping any judgment for unpaid rent and damages.

To small housing providers like us, \$5,000 is not a minor amount of money. We are continually faced with rising property taxes, mortgage rates, and increased costs for insurance, heat/electric/water, and sewer and maintenance. This only makes it costlier and riskier for a person to contemplate becoming, or remaining, a housing provider.

Any profit margin is very slim, especially while there is still a mortgage, and one problem tenant can result in a loss that year. Using the no-cause termination provision is a losing proposition at best, but it is currently the best avenue to minimize loss.

WE ALSO CANNOT IGNORE that our judiciary is in crisis mode. Due to the pandemic, systemic lack of funding and resources, short-staffing, and judges retiring, we have no timely access to the justice system.

Judges are being asked to cover other counties and split their time between courts. The time allotted to civil hearings must often be taken to address other higher-priority dockets.

If a contested eviction case comes before the court and requires any measurable hearing time, it will take literally months to get a court date and then an undetermined amount of time for a judge to issue a

written decision.

It is also virtually certain that in every single just-cause eviction case filed, the housing provider will never recover a judgment.

Has anyone considered the increased burden on the court system of passing this charter change and the net result to housing providers, who would then be required to retain attorneys, absorb the loss of whatever number of months it takes to have the case wind its way through the system, all the while knowing they will never be made whole when the process is complete?

This is surely not in any way equitable and absolutely does not balance the rights of housing providers with the rights of tenants.

OUR WORST-CASE EXAMPLE is a tenant in an apartment who is a drug dealer who is putting the other tenants at risk and making them miserable.

We could serve a no-cause termination notice and, with luck, within two to three months remove the drug-dealing tenant.

If that option were not available, that drug dealer could continue dealing while we were forced to go through the clogged court system to evict them. Even if they were arrested, they could make bail and then come right back to the apartment.

In 1971, 175 people were registered as business lobbyists; eight years later, 2,500 were. Today, thousands more haunt the hall of Congress.

Some of the fortunes of the elite flowed into the trough to rescue capitalism from the demonic clutches of government regulation.

New activist organizations appeared such as the Heritage Foundation, the Manhattan Institute, the CATO Institute, the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), and the Federalist Society.

These groups are not like the mainstream Rockefeller, Ford, and Carnegie foundations, the Business Roundtable, or the American Enterprise Institute. As political writer Jane Mayer observed, "the conservative rich" — mostly under the radar of the public "created a new generation of hyper-political foundations [...] to invest in ideology like venture capitalists, leveraging their fortunes for maximum strategic impact."

The Powell plan helped spawn ideologues willing to sacrifice democratic norms on the altars of laissez-faire deregulation. Remember Reagan's "government is the problem" mantra or Republican political brain-trustee Grover Norquist's "shrink the size of government to be able to drown it in the bathtub" or Steve Bannon's goal under Trump was the "destruction of the administrative state."

No, these were not your traditional Republican political and economic elites.

6

## All Koched up

In 1974, billionaire libertarian activist Charles Koch genuflected to Powell's exhortations that "business and the enterprise system are in trouble, and the hour is late." In a speech, Koch urged corporate leaders to "undertake radical new efforts to overcome the prevalent anti capitalist mentality."

Koch Industries, founded by patriarch, Fred Koch in 1940, became a multinational empire of oil, gas, paper, and chemical companies that now employs 122,000 in 60 countries. Fred's politics were extreme; he co-founded the infamous reactionary John Birch Society in 1958.

When Charles and his brother David took over the family business, they inherited their father's penchant for fringe politics, starting as libertarians. Over time the brothers would supercharge the company's politics into a stealth juggernaut of the extreme right. Their rising political ambitions kept them safely behind the scenes.

Now it was the Reagan 1980s, and they were going to help him "make America great again". (In his true fashion, Donald Trump would steal the Reagan campaign's slogan in 2016.)

The Koch brothers and their machine would establish or subsidize more than 200 activist organizations to make America safe for capitalism. Over the years, Koch organizations have opposed national health care, weakened environmental protection laws, helped eviscerate government regulations of businesses, destroyed campaign finance laws, supported gerrymandering and voter suppression, sponsored legislation on the state and federal levels (via ALEC), helped Republican capture 30 state legislatures, and funded the remaking of the judicial system.

Operating in the shadows, most Americans have never heard of the Kochs. In the 2020 election cycle, Koch-related groups spent \$1.1 billion to customize their political system.

"Just as Koch-funded operations weaponize and intensify racism to secure political power, they also exploit and escalate misogyny, homophobia, and transphobia by any means to boost Republican power," wrote Nancy MacLean, a scholar and historian, and Lisa Graves, an investigative research watchdog group leader whose work focuses on the consequences of Koch political activities.

This is the Southern strategy writ large.

7

## No more 'squishes'

In 1961, RETIRED President Dwight Eisenhower was asked what decision he regretted the most in his eight years. Without hesitation, he called his decision to nominate Earl Warren to the Supreme Court "the biggest damn fool thing I ever did."

The conservative governor of California seemed a safe choice. Not so. As mentioned, for nearly two decades, Warren presided over the most liberal court in history.

That betrayal surfaced again years later when conservative presidents nominated putative conservative justices. Sandra Day O'Connor and Anthony Kennedy, Reagan nominees, and George W. Bush's David Souter were by no means liberal, but they committed the sin of judicial moderation. In 1992 they all voted to uphold the principles in *Roe* with the *Casey v. Planned Parenthood* decision.

The lesson was learned; extreme-right ideologues would no longer countenance betrayals. There would be no more "squishes" — conservatives with moderate tendencies — elevated to the high court. In the legislative realm, such leaders were tagged as "RINOs": Republicans in name only.

Meanwhile, Republicans' memories of the Democrats' contentious rejection of Robert Bork in 1987 to the bench compounded the pain of judicial betrayal. The ideological vice was tightening.

To ensure that there would be no more "squishes," a more systematic, comprehensive approach to judicial nominees had to be advanced. This new strategy would need the cover of secrecy.

The Federalist Society and the cloak of darkness would come to the rescue.

That does not even account for the burden on the landlord to prove the tenant is a drug dealer — which is virtually impossible unless law enforcement has already made an arrest and is prosecuting a criminal case against the person.

ELIMINATING THE NO-CAUSE termination law would actually result in consequences the proponents of this charter change have not considered. Certainly, for mom-and-pop housing providers like my wife and me, we would have to change how we do business — and we do operate a business, not a public service.

To mitigate the risk of a bad tenant and the prospect of a very substantial loss of money if we have to judicially terminate every single problem tenant, we are going to do our best to ensure that never happens.

We will not take a risk, as we have in the past, in working with a low-income tenant to pay a security deposit over time.

We will require perfect references before we will risk taking on a new tenant.

We will no longer be willing to work with a tenant who falls behind for a month or two due to extenuating circumstances.

We will have to raise rents to ensure that we will be able to bear the cost of judicial

evictions. That means we will have to spread the risk over all the tenants, as even one problem tenant who destroys an apartment and who takes us a year to evict could financially destroy our small business and result in our having to sell the buildings.

MY WIFE AND I are not wealthy housing tycoons. Most of the housing providers we know in Brattleboro are also mom-and-pop operations with property close to their homes.

Many laws and provisions are already in place to protect tenants and their rights, including warranty of habitability, remedies for illegal evictions, fair housing laws, and a system that is already rigged so that the housing providers disproportionately bear the cost of any lease termination, whether no-cause or just-cause.

We are not, and should not be, to blame for the larger socioeconomic issues that cause housing insecurity, nor should we financially bear the brunt of the difficult solutions to the same. Housing providers should not be required legally to bear the financial burden of essentially subsidizing housing for tenants.

This charter change is not the way to address this problem.

8

## The dark money shroud

ONE BARRIER to the extreme right's master plan to capture the court would be the Federal Election Campaign Act of 1971. This law, weak though it was, set limits on campaign contributions and expenditures and imposed some disclosure requirements on funding sources.

These feeble regulations had to be scuttled. Leverage was applied.

According to Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse, thanks to favorable court rulings and "unrelenting pressure on the Internal Revenue Service and the Federal Elections Commission," millions in so-called "dark money" flowed into the long-term scheme to pack the court.

As defined by the watchdog group OpenSecrets, dark money is "spending meant to influence political outcomes where the source of the money is not disclosed."

Through creative interpretation of IRS codes such as 501(c), which governs the tax exemptions and reporting requirements of nonprofit organizations, elite donors could find ways to legally avoid spending limits and disclosure requirements.

If a benefactor was designated as a "charitable" or a "social welfare" organization, the money was "nonpolitical" and therefore needed no regulation. New rules and pressures on the IRS during the Trump presidency further greased these machinations.

So how does one open the spigot for unlimited campaign contributions?

Starting in 1976, a newly evolving Supreme Court would oblige. In the *Buckley v. Valeo* case, with Lewis Powell on the bench, the court ruled that "money is speech" and merited First Amendment protections allowing the wealthy to finance their candidates with impunity. This watershed decision also struck down source disclosures.

In three subsequent cases — most notably, *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* in 2010 — the court injected steroids into *Buckley* by greatly expanding corporate munificence.

Chief Justice John Roberts did not see the potential for any quid pro quo corruption problems arising with unlimited corporate cash. In his vigorous dissent, Justice John Paul Stevens wrote "the framers had enshrined the right of free speech to individuals, not corporations." This ruling is "a rejection of the common sense of the American people [...] who have fought against the distinctive corrupting potential of corporate electioneering."

As predicted by everyone except the court majority, a tsunami of dark money flooded the political landscape.

In 2006 only 2% of campaign funds came from undisclosed sources; by 2020, 40% was dark. In that year, nine out of 10 of the largest spenders were for conservative candidates.

In 2012, Super PACs and independent donors spent \$1 billion on campaigns, which was more than all independent expenditures combined from 1980 to 2010. Like a shroud concealing the dead, dark money can cover the dying of a democracy.

Now, with a superabundance of covert cash available, an activist network was needed.

9

## The Federalist grooming stable

FLUSH WITH MILLIONS from the likes of the Olin, Koch, and Scaife families, in 1982 the Federalist Society embarked on a patient, stealth strategy to remake the judicial system.

According to scholar Steven M. Teles, "In no other area was the process of strategic investment [by right-wing organizations] as prolonged, ambitious, complicated, and successful as in the law." The Federalist Society fostered a novel universe of judges, scholars, politicians, lawyers, and law schools to create an ideologically conscious court system on the state, federal, and supreme levels.

The formula was funding a sustainable system to recruit, train, groom, and install the right people. The Federalist Society would do the heavy work, guided by longtime judicial activist Leonard Leo, its vice president. Operating via his Judicial Crisis Network, Leo presided over a byzantine money-laundering spider web of two dozen shape-shifting front groups that dodged taxes and disclosure regulations.

This chimera operates in the unaccountable world below the radar of public or congressional scrutiny, though in one notable exception, Sen. Whitehouse has reported that from 2016 to 2018, Leo's congregation spent \$580 million to curate their judicial sock puppets.

Political writer Thom Hartmann said the Federalist Society's intent is "to indoctrinate a new generation's legal system with Powell's mantra: Corporate personhood is real, money is speech, democracy is mob rule, and organized money should always have privilege over organized people."

Accordingly, over time the Federalist Society web has grown to more than 70,000 practicing attorneys in 90 cities and more than 200 law school chapters. Scholar Amanda Hollis-Brusky observed that the organization "has evolved into the de facto gatekeeper for right of center lawyers aspiring to government jobs and federal judgeships under Republican presidents."

Historically, judicial confirmation hearings are yawners. An elite consensus of Republicans and Democrats readily coalesces around the mainstream American Bar Association's recommendation. Contention did arise in 1967 when Thurgood Marshall was nominated; he was the first African American candidate. Marshall

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<b>Here We Are with guest Negin:</b> Mon 8p, Tues 9p, Wed 6:30p, Thurs 6:30a, Fri 12:15p, Sat 6:30p, Sun 7p	<b>Battleboro Selectboard Special Mtg. 1/31/23:</b> Tues 6:15 (LIVE), Thurs 1p, Fri 6:30a, Sat 8:30a & 3:30p, Sun 12p & 8p
<b>The World Fusion Show - Ep 144 - John Sheldon:</b> Mon 8:30p, Tues 8:30p, Wed 1:30p, Thurs 6a, Fri 3:15p, Sat 8:15p, Sun 9:30a	<b>Windham Central Supervisory Union Bd. and Exec. Comm. Mtg. 2/1/23:</b> Fri 8:45p, Sat 6a & 8p, Sun 8:30a & 4:30p
<b>Windham County's Got Talent 1/26/23:</b> Wed 9:15p, Thurs 9a, Fri 12:45p, Sat 9a, Sun 7:30p	<b>Battleboro Selectboard - Public Hearing on Amendments to the Battleboro Town Charter 2/3/23:</b> Fri 6:15 (LIVE)
<b>Lil Balzac 2:</b> Mon 6a, Tues 6a, Thurs 11p, Fri 10:30p, Sat 9p	<b>River Valleys Unified School District Bd Mtg. 1/23/23:</b> Mon 7:15a, Tues 11:50a, Wed 6:30p, Fri 11:30a
<b>At BMAC - Conversation: Renate Aller and Makeda Djata Best:</b> Mon 12:15p, Tues 9:30p, Wed 9:15p, Fri 6:45a, Sat 7p, Sun 1:45a	<b>Guilford Selectboard Mtg. 1/23/23:</b> Mon 6:30p, Wed 1p
<b>Thorn in My Side - MEDIEVAL TIMES! - April 21st, 2022:</b> Wed 3p, Thurs 5p, Fri 9:30p, Sun 6a	<b>Jamaica Selectboard Mtg. 1/23/23:</b> Mon 10a, Tues 6a, Wed 2:30p, Thurs 9:30p
<b>At BMAC - Lunar New Year Cooking Demo:</b> Tues 12:10p, Wed 9a, Fri 6p, Sun 12p	<b>Townshend Selectboard Mtg. 1/24/23:</b> Mon 8:30p, Thurs 12p, Fri 12p, Sun 7a
<b>Around Town with Maria - A Ray McNeill's Celebration at the Stone Church 12/17/22:</b> Tues 3:15p, Thurs 1:30p, Sat 9:45p	<b>Windham Southeast School District Bd Mtg. 1/24/23:</b> Tues 7a, Thurs 7p
<b>Red Newt Productions - Memorial Service for Jay Herbert Karpin 1/13/22:</b> Tues 1:15a, Fri 4p, Sun 12a	<b>Putney Selectboard Mtg. 1/25/23:</b> Mon 12:30p & 9:30p, Tues 12:30p, Wed 9a
<b>Vermontitude - Weekly Episode:</b> Tue 11:30a & 6:30p, Wed 6a, Thu 1p, Sat 12p, Sun 5p	<b>Dummerston Selectboard Mtg. 1/25/23:</b> Mon 3:30p, Wed 9:30p, Thurs 6a
<b>WTSA News:</b> Mon-Fri 12p & 6p	<b>Montpelier Connection - Rep. Sara Coffey 1/16/23:</b> Mon 8a, Tues 11:15a, Thurs 9p, Fri 3:15p, Sat 12:30p, Sun 7:45a
<b>St. Michael's Episcopal Church - Weekly Service:</b> Wed 2p, Sat 7:30a, Sun 11a	<b>Newfane Selectboard Mtg. 1/17/23:</b> Fri 4p
<b>Calvary Chapel of the West River Valley - Weekly Service:</b> Tue 9a, Sat 5:30p, Sun 10a	<b>Vernon Selectboard Mtg. 1/17/23:</b> Tues 10p, Wed 8:30p
<b>Trinity Lutheran Church - Weekly Service:</b> Wed 10a, Thurs 7a, Sun 5p	<b>Rescue Inc. Consortium Mtg. 1/17/23:</b> Tues 10a, Wed 7:15p, Thurs 5p
<b>Guilford Community Church - Weekly Service:</b> Wed 6:30a, Fri 8p, Sun 8a	<b>Energy Week with George Harvey &amp; Tom Finnell:</b> Mon 9a, Tue 5p, Wed 12p, Thu 10:30a, Sun 11a
<b>St. Michael's Catholic Church Mass:</b> Sat 4p (LIVE), Tue 6:45a & 2p, Thurs 8p	<b>The David Pakman Show:</b> Mon 8a, Tue 9a, Wed 5p, Fri 10:30a

**Note: Schedule subject to change.**

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prevailed. The last time the Senate issued a rejection was in 1930 during the Hoover administration.

Starting in the 1970s and accelerating in the years to come, these hearings became contested terrain. As ideologies crystalized, control of the Supreme Court became a more coveted political prize.

The issue of a candidate's position on abortion created a "litmus test." The veil of the nonpartisan jurist was lifting. When Trump announced that the Federalist Society would oversee his judicial agenda, the veil was removed altogether. It now appeared a nominee's integrity, legal talents, character, or judicial temperament would no longer be salient characteristics of a good judge.

After a candidate matriculated through the Federalist Society grooming program, a public relations campaign would sell the nominee to the Senate, the mainstream media, and the public.

With Leo at the helm, a barrage of high-tech hucksterism would ensue, using network TV, cable, social media, ads, op-eds, and talking heads — propaganda at its most potent.

Sen. Whitehouse clarified the Federalist Society's motives, noting that for the organization, spending \$580 million to capture the judicial branch "was more cost effective than continuously throwing billions into two-year election cycles, particularly when the people you elect still won't do all the things you want."

This was money well invested; Justices Thomas, Alito, Scalia, Gorsuch, Kavanaugh, and Coney Barrett and Chief Justice Roberts — and, by 2020, 43 of Trump's 51 federal judges — were Federalist Society grads.

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### The Faux News network

THROUGHOUT U.S. HISTORY, the economic and political elites have relied upon a less-than-objective mass media to represent their interests. The difference from one era to the next was mostly in degrees of magnitude and mendacity.

Starting in 1996, the Fox News Network formulated a new level of low: playing on emotions to manufacture dissent based on hate, fear, racism and xenophobia. It's all eerily reminiscent of Goebbels of the 1930s.

Founded by international media mogul Rupert Murdoch and directed by Nixon attack-ad specialist Roger Ailes, Fox became an empire of unprecedented scope. Its cable television and radio and online social media tentacles claims to reach 200 million people in a month.

This influence was driven by neoliberal deregulation of the airways and the latest technology. During the Reagan and Clinton years, the public trust of the airways was deconstructed.

In 1949 the Federal Communication Commission (FCC) established the Fairness Doctrine to, among other things, protect a citizen's right to unbiased news by requiring responsible opposing views. Under Reagan in 1987, the FCC abolished this longstanding doctrine.

Under Clinton in 1996, Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act let loose a feral virus called "social media" by stipulating that web platforms could not be held liable for content posted on their sites. This nihilism of unaccountability would turbocharge the Fox technique. Propaganda became news weaponized for an ultraconservative Republican Party.

New computer technologies enabled the microtargeting of messages to specific audiences via the power of algorithms. Fox was selling ideology.

According to the former Fox contributor and news anchor for 14 years, Tobin Smith, "We now have [...] a completely separate country-within-a-country that is digitally interconnected by God, guns, megachurches, and political, cultural, and religious evangelists and Fox News televangelists spreading the good word of white nationalism."

Religion and politics gathered at Fox, which then ordained the Republican Party as its church. Religious politics is a potent force. For many in the radical religious world logic, rational thought or facts are not required — only God's word need suffice.

In true cultlike fashion, every Republican administration from Nixon on has effectively played on the insecurities of faith to advance their reactionary agendas, including choices for the Supreme Court.

All that remained for this grand machination to succeed was high-profile national leadership.

11

### The Machiavellian Dr. No

MITCH MCCONNELL has been the Republican Senate leader since 2007. He vowed to make Barack Obama a one-term president and has said he is "100% focused on stopping the Biden agenda."

A shameless and adroit politician, McConnell leads the Republican judicial wars in Congress. When Trump took office in 2016, there were 107 judicial vacancies, thanks to McConnell's strategy of preventing Obama from making appointments.

In a milestone that was Machiavellian even for McConnell, he famously denied Obama's Supreme Court nominee, Merrick Garland, a constitutional right to a Senate confirmation hearing.

Not since 1832, when President Andrew Jackson refused to comply with the high court's ruling favoring the Cherokee Tribe, has another branch of government been so brazen.

"[Chief Justice] John Marshall has made his decision, now let

### LETTER

#### We don't deserve a guarantee of comfort every time we experience art or music

On Jan. 26, Brattleboro was treated to an evening of Windham County's Got Talent. Young contestants got a chance to perform for the judges and the public.

One young student, after an investment of time and hard work, was excited to perform Billie Holiday's "Strange Fruit." However, less than hour before the performance, a parent voiced an objection to the song and asked that it not be performed.

To their credit, the organizers encouraged the youth to go forward with the performance in spite of this objection. But the parent's poison arrow had hit its mark and gutted the performer's spirit; the song was not sung.

Perhaps the parent was dis-comforted by the hard reality that lies in the lyrics' story. Perhaps they felt shame at what was so commonplace in America fourscore or so years ago. Perhaps they couldn't shake the sick feeling that in the United States today, we still need to write songs about the needless death of Black Americans at the hands of their white co-countrypmen.

Apparently, this parent's discomfort was more important than the aspirations and hard work of a young talented

student.

Apparently, the discomfort of hearing about oppression carries more weight than actually being oppressed.

Apparently, this parent's sense of appropriateness trumped the interests of every other audience member who could have experienced the song had it been performed.

Who are we to think that our comfort level is so important that it requires that an entire community turn its back on racism and oppression that still run rampant in our society?

We don't deserve a guarantee of comfort every time we experience art or music. "Strange Fruit" should make us uncomfortable. If we find it difficult to listen to, we should examine just why that is, not close our ears or, worse, censor the voice singing the song. We need to feel discomfort every day until we decide to face our nation's prejudices and injustices head on.

The parent's action was an insult to the performer, to the event, and to our entire community. This is not Florida. We cannot simply shake our heads, and say, "Oh, well."

We must respond to every attempt to prevent us from considering the problems that are festering in our nation. We should respect artistic freedom. We should welcome opportunities to be seared to the bone, all the better to see what lies within each one of us.

Dan DeWalt South Newfane

him enforce it," Jackson was said to have declared with impunity.

Prior to inauguration, McConnell met with his amanuensis, Donald Trump, to instruct the president-elect on judicial policies. Filling judgeships would be the preeminent priority.

"We are going to move judges like they are on a conveyor belt," McConnell said.

That plan was to appoint young strict constructionists (read: right-wing ideologues). "We're making generational change in our country that will be repeated over and over again through the years," said McConnell, believing that, ultimately, the courts are more powerful than the Congress or the president.

By 2019, Trump had appointed more judges than Clinton, Bush, and Obama combined.

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### The captured court

THE REPUBLICAN corporate long game to control the Supreme Court has been a spectacular triumph.

For nearly two decades, the Roberts court has unabashedly protected elite economic and political prerogatives. Not since the Lochner era of the early 20th century has the Supreme Court amassed such a pro-capitalist, anti-regulatory, free-market record of rulings.

An analysis by Sen. Whitehouse's staff revealed that this court has racked up an astonishing 80-0 business friendly record. Of these cases, 78 were decided by 5-4 vote margins. Clearly, ideology prevails here.

Historically, the courts are dissatisfied with close decisions, especially in cases that have national socio-economic implications. In the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling, Chief Justice Warren labored diligently to build a 9-0 consensus. Hell, even the infamous *Plessy v. Ferguson* case of 1896 — the one that legalized

segregation for half a century — was decided 7-2.

This new breed of radical conservatives has no compunctions about consensus. Nor do they seem to have any reverence for *stare decisis*, the honoring of legal precedence.

Driven more by radical ideologies than judicial norms, these jurists show little concern for the societal impacts of their decisions. The 2022 *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health* decision outlawing women's reproductive rights comes to mind.

As social philosopher Eric Hoffer noted years ago about authoritarian thinking, such jurists are their own "true believers."

As effective as Republicans were, they had critical help along the way as Democrats acquiesced and miscalculated. Clinton's neoliberal "triangulation" strategy of moving Democrats to the center-right, eschewing the old New Deal and Great Society coalitions and running to Wall Street for financial sustenance, all emboldened and abetted Republicans.

Perhaps the most galling was the Clinton/Obama policy of preemptive compromise with a clearly intractable force. From their anemic policies on health care, worker's rights, military spending, environmental protection, regulation, judicial nominees, and the like, Democratic vacillation yielded predictable outcomes.

The radical Republican agenda continues to imperil democracy as the 2023 Supreme Court docket includes hearings on the environment, religious discrimination, union rights, college affirmative action, and a state legislature's power to overturn federal elections.

So all the essential mechanisms remain in place for Republicans. With even more extremists in Congress, — see the "Freedom Caucus" — and with a 6-3 solid majority on the Supreme Court, challenges to democracy abound. Putting party before country and ideology before democracy is their new norm.

The first two years of the Biden presidency offer glimmers of light and some grounds for cautious optimism.

In American politics nothing lasts forever — it just feels that way.

BRENDAN EMMETT QUIGLEY

### THE COMMONS CROSSWORD

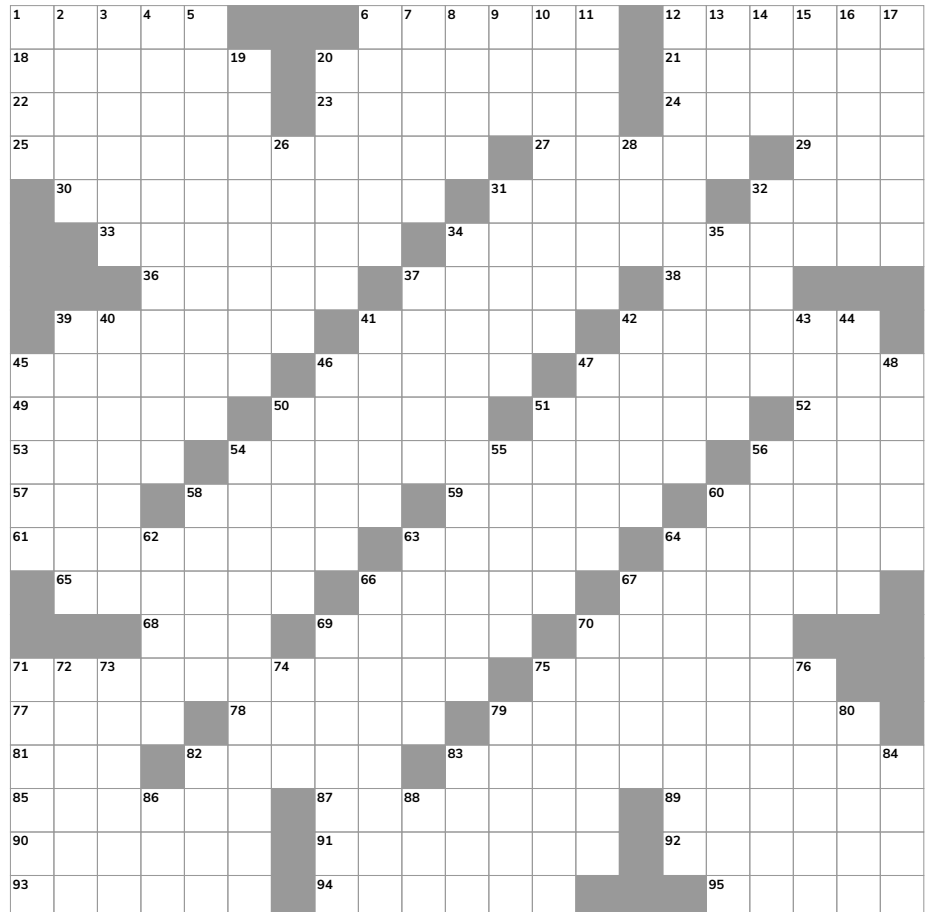
"Themeless Challenger"

#### Across

- 1. Molly's "Pretty in Pink" role
- 6. Ford failures
- 12. "None for me, thanks"
- 18. Heckle, owl-style
- 20. Cravat jewelry
- 21. Logical gap
- 22. Wardrobe
- 23. "That's how it's done, monsieur"
- 24. Antiseptic pioneer Joseph
- 25. Second jab
- 27. "Where does a thought go when it's forgotten?" speaker
- 29. London covering
- 30. TV host Gifford
- 31. Routine parts
- 32. Improve, as an edge
- 33. Livery cab vehicle
- 34. They're stuffed in November
- 36. Corporate symbols
- 37. Tabula rasa philosopher
- 38. Like sushi
- 39. Speeding along
- 41. Classroom items
- 42. See 64-Across
- 45. Something cooked to a crisp in Canterbury
- 46. Division of a poem
- 47. Animal spirit protector, in the Potterverse
- 49. Prudes
- 50. Golfer Nick
- 51. Nation home for many rugby players
- 52. Lousy egg?
- 53. Body of water, to an 8-Down
- 54. Appliance identifier
- 56. Film that lost Best Picture to "Coda"
- 57. Bart Simpson's grandpa
- 58. Grinning ear to ear
- 59. Military higher-ups
- 60. Pentax rival
- 61. Performance that clicks with the audience?
- 63. Stretch of land
- 64. Included on 42-Across
- 65. Feared fly
- 66. Bathub sealant
- 67. Groups of quail
- 68. Put away the plates
- 69. Daughter of Oceanus and Tethys
- 70. Relocation help
- 71. Drink made with citrus juice and tonic water
- 75. Son of Mary Stuart
- 77. Sandy home
- 78. Smokes with a pen
- 79. Rock and Roll Hall of Fame session drummer who played on six consecutive Records of the Year

#### Down

- 1. Starbucks' boss
- 2. Bad
- 3. Nail perfectly
- 4. "Totally ridiculous"
- 5. Creatures in a compost
- 6. "\_\_\_ way, you lose"
- 7. Bell Biv \_\_\_ ("Poison" group)
- 8. Dundee resident
- 9. Samuel's teacher
- 10. "Peanuts" precursor
- 11. Really shine
- 12. One working on a book for children
- 13. Her work is picking up
- 14. Syringe amts.
- 15. Best, mentally
- 16. Common soccer draw
- 17. Some shirt sizes
- 19. Preparing for a drive
- 20. S, X, and Y, e.g.
- 26. Fact-finding mission
- 28. Job hiring inits.
- 31. "Thriller" man, briefly
- 32. Charming salutation
- 34. Athlete who practices at the Warrior Ice Arena
- 35. Iraqi port
- 37. Ivan on the court
- 39. Adobe layout program
- 40. Arm muscles
- 41. Chicago ex-mayor Richard
- 42. Roster fodder
- 43. Recurring payment
- 44. Pear relatives
- 45. Comic falling sound
- 46. Inner circle

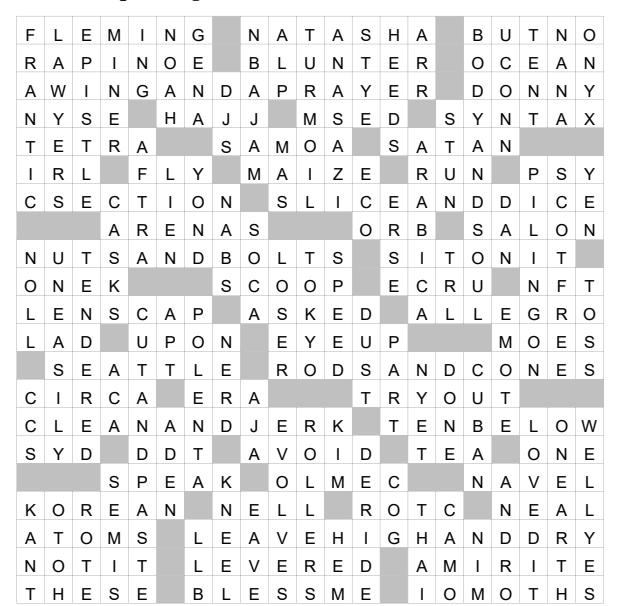


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- 92. Glass ingredient
- 93. Rich cakes
- 94. Completely convinced of
- 95. Ukrainian "unh-unhs"
- 47. Blue Ribbon maker
- 48. Suffix for farm or bed
- 50. Jedi's skill
- 51. Hard hit
- 54. Valets, etc.
- 55. Russian range
- 56. Like having a claim on an award
- 58. Photo finish
- 60. Is resurrected
- 62. Major Arcana card
- 63. Roots for poi
- 64. Darlings
- 66. Acquire
- 67. Grooms' gear
- 69. Sadden
- 70. Karl of "On the Waterfront"
- 71. Three-pointer
- 72. "Let's do this!"
- 73. Make fit
- 74. Race unit
- 75. Two-time NL Reliever of the Year Kenley \_\_\_
- 76. How fabulists get caught
- 79. Silent prop comic
- 80. November buzzword
- 82. Attorney work
- 83. Worked the soil
- 84. MBTA terminals
- 86. "Some assembly required" purchase
- 88. Home to over half of the Fortune 500 cos.

#### Last issue's solution

"We're Expanding"



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**COLUMN** | *Sports Roundup*

# St. Mike's builds up a basketball program, one step at a time

The Austine School for the Deaf closed its doors in 2014, and the tiny gymnasium where standouts such as Darryl Wetzell, Mike Carter, Madonna Coburn, and Jill Donohue once played is now home to the Brattleboro Winter Farmers' Market. The school itself is now owned by the Winston Prouty Center and is home to several other tenants.

The basketball court looks pretty much as it did when the Austine Arrows boys' and girls' basketball teams were playing, albeit a little shopworn after nearly a decade without regular maintenance. The boards listing the all-time Austine career record holders are still on the wall. But now, another group of basketball players are trying to write their own history in this old gymnasium.

The St. Michael's School boys' basketball team plays its home games in the old Austine gym. The high school closed its doors in 1968, but its K-8 classes remained on Walnut Street. Growing demand for Catholic education saw St. Michael's revive the high school in 2015. It remains the only Catholic school in southern Vermont.

Over the past few years, as St. Michael's enrollment in grades 9-12 grew, so have its athletic offerings. The basketball team started up in 2018, took a couple of years off due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and now is back in its second post-pandemic season playing independent schools from Vermont, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts. The team is totally run by volunteers, including coach Nate Chechile.

"This is the first year of really getting back to a



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

full-fledged program," Chechile told me on the afternoon of Jan. 26, when I stopped by to see the Saints in action against Buxton School, a private school in Williamstown, Massachusetts.

Buxton had only six players available for the game, and the Saints took full advantage by jumping out to a 25-0 lead in the opening minutes of the game before Chechile started giving the reserves the bulk of the playing time.

St. Mike's led 33-14 at the half, and cruised to a 62-41 victory. Michael Pierce led the Saints with 19 points, while Anthony Bills added 15 points and Hudson Buckley chipped in nine points. All eight players dressed for the game scored for the Saints.

"We're here to give kids an opportunity to compete," said Chechile. The boys of St. Michael's are definitely getting that chance, and if you want an opportunity to see what they're up to, their next home game is Feb. 7 at 3:30 p.m. against The Academy at Charlemont (Mass.).

## Bowling

• Brattleboro's first home match of the season got snowed out, so fans had to wait until Jan. 28 to get a look at the Colonels at their home lanes at Brattleboro Bowl. They didn't



Hudson Buckley of St. Michael's, right, throws up a shot against a Buxton School defender during first-half boys' basketball action on Jan. 26 in Brattleboro.

disappoint, as they won a four-team match against Fair Haven, Hartford, and Windsor.

The Colonels' varsity bowlers got off to a fast start in the standard scoring games. No. 1 Thomas Bell had games of 194 and 213, while No. 2 Kelton Mager rolled a 136 and a 172. No. 3 Tucker Sargent had a 173 and a 154, while No. 4 Dorien Phillips had the individual high score of 222 in his first game and a 142 in his second. No. 5 Jacob Girard rolled a 135 and a 117 as the Colonels racked up a team total of 1,658 to clinch the top seed for the Baker round.

The extra bowlers also had a good day, with Charlie Forthofer rolling a 171 and 169, while Mateo Lopez-Course had a 188 and 140. Forthofer joined Bell, Mager, Sargent, and Phillips to bowl in the Baker

round. Brattleboro defeated No. 4 Hartford, 2-0, to set up the final against third-seeded Windsor, who dropped the first game to second-seeded Fair Haven and then won the next two games to advance.

The Colonels won the first match against Windsor, 159-114, but the two teams tied in the second match, 158-158. That forced the teams to do a "bowl-off," which Windsor won, 59-47. Brattleboro then went on to the deciding match, 200-187.

"That was pretty stressful," said Colonels coach Will Bassett about the bowl-off. Brattleboro has three more regular season matches until the playoffs.

## Girls' basketball

• The undefeated West Rutland Golden Horde is the No. 1 team in Division IV and arguably one of the best basketball teams in the state, regardless of size. Leland & Gray and Bellows Falls found that out firsthand last week.

On Jan. 24, the Rebels faced West Rutland, and the hosts breezed to a 59-24 win. The Horde opened with a 17-2 run and led 30-9 by halftime. The Rebels had no chance after that.

Peyton Guay led the Horde with 19 points, with Arianna and Bella Coombs adding 10 and nine points, respectively. Maggie Parker led the Rebels with 10 points.

Three nights later in Westminster, the Horde rolled to a 92-35 win over Bellows Falls. Guay broke her own school record for the second time this season with 45 points and Arianna and Bella Coombs had 18 and 13 points, respectively.

Veronica Moore led the 4-9 Terriers with nine points, while Laura Kamel and Erin Ross chipped in eight points each.

• Leland & Gray bounced back from losses to West Rutland and White River Valley with a 62-23 road win over Mill River on Jan. 27. Samantha Morse led the 11-3 Rebels with 19 points, while Hannah Greenwood added 14 points.

• Sydney Perry had 14 points and 15 rebounds and Audrey Rupp had 14 points, five rebounds, and five steals as Windsor downed the Brattleboro Colonels, 53-21, at the BUHS gym on Jan. 27.

Windsor put the game away with a 17-3 run in the third quarter and led 40-15 heading into the final quarter. Montana Frehsee led the 4-9 Colonels with five points, while Reese Croutworst added four points.

• Long Trail rolled over winless Twin Valley, 48-9, on Jan. 24. The 0-7 Wildcats then lost to Mid-Vermont Christian, 44-4, on Jan. 26.

## Boys' basketball

• Brattleboro lost two close ones last week. On Jan. 26, Burr & Burton pulled out a 61-57 overtime win over the visiting Colonels. Burr & Burton forward Will Ameden scored in the final seconds to tie the game to force overtime. Despite a 24-point effort by Brattleboro guard Cam Frost, the Bulldogs had seized the momentum and hung on for the win in the extra period.

On Jan. 28 at the BUHS gym, Brody Tyburski scored seven of his 10 points in the fourth quarter as Hartford rallied from a six-point deficit to take the lead with a minute to go and hang on for a 43-42 victory over Brattleboro. The Colonels had a 34-28 lead heading into the final quarter, but the Hurricanes outscored Brattleboro 15-8 to pull out the win. Brattleboro is now 7-6.

• Rivendell beat BF, 75-61, on Jan. 28. The Terriers are now 7-4.

• Bad weather in January has meant a lot of postponed games for Twin Valley. The 1-7 Wildcats now have to play 12 games in the final 24 days of the regular season.

## Green Mountain drops its mascot

• On Jan. 19, the Green Mountain Unified School District Board voted to discontinue the use of the name "Chieftains" as the school mascot.

The school had been slowly phasing out the Indian head logo over the past few years. It's no longer on the uniforms of its sports teams and when Green Mountain recently refurbished the floor of Nason Gymnasium, the school left off that logo. It's still painted on the wall of the gym, but probably not for long.

There will be hard feelings among the Green Mountain alumni. Brattleboro has

certainly been there with the fight over the old Colonel logo. However, given the change of attitudes toward the use of Native American imagery for sports team branding, dropping the Chieftain name was an overdue, but welcome, move.

Last week, Tom Haley of the *Rutland Herald* came up with a good suggestion for Green Mountain: use the old Chester High School mascot — GM's predecessor — for their sports teams: "Sentinels."

Sounds like a good idea, and sounds better than the alternative of having no mascot at all.

## Rec. Dept. offers third session of ice skating 'FUN'damentals

• The Brattleboro Recreation & Parks Department says that the Nelson Withington Skating Facility at Living Memorial Park will offer the third session of ice skating "FUN'damentals" for those who completed session 1 and session 2.

Note that any new participants who did not complete session 1 and session 2 must have prior skating ability. Participants in this session should be able to sit on the ice and get up properly, march across the ice, do a two-foot forward glide and two-foot forward glide with a dip position held, and do forward swizzles, backward wiggles, beginning snowplow stops, and scooter pushes.

Stacey Chickering, Suzanne McCaughy, and Megan Pratt will be the instructors for session 3, which will run on Tuesday nights (Feb. 14, 21, and 28) from 4:30 to 5:30 p.m. at the Withington Skating Facility. The fee is \$54 for Brattleboro Residents and \$69 for non-residents. This session requires a minimum of 15 skaters to run and has a maximum of 50 participants. This hour-long class includes lessons and practice time. Skate rentals are available for \$3, and are not included in the lesson fee.

You can register at [bit.ly/700skate](http://bit.ly/700skate) or at the Gibson-Aiken Center, 207 Main St., Monday-Friday 9 a.m. to noon and 1 to 5 p.m. For more information on programs, events, facility information, and more, call the Rec. Dept. at 802-254-5808.



Brattleboro bowler Charlie Forthofer helped the Colonels win a four-team match on Jan. 28 at Brattleboro Bowl.

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