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Brattleboro, Vermont • Wednesday, January 17, 2024 • Vol. XIX, No. 3 • Issue No. 748

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Putney paper mill shuts down, eliminating jobs for 127 workers

Soundview Vermont cites energy costs as the impetus for closing its paper manufacturing this week with no warning; converting operations will shut down by April



In the still of a hot August night in 2018, the Soundview Paper plant in downtown Putney hums with activity.

By Jeff Potter and Fran Lynggaard Hansen
The Commons

PUTNEY—A paper mill has operated next to Sacketts Brook in downtown Putney for more than 150 years — a tradition that has come to an abrupt end on Jan. 16 with the sudden closure of Putney Paper Mill by its current owner, New Jersey-based Soundview Vermont Holdings LLC.

According to the Vermont Department of Labor, 127 employees are affected.

Workers expecting to report for duty on Tuesday were notified of the closure when they were directed to stay home. Some employees later reported to the mill to discuss severance pay and other details.

According to a news release from Soundview, the decision “to shut down its papermaking operations, effective immediately, and to wind down its converting operations by the end of the first quarter of 2024” was based on high energy costs.

As of 2017, 50 people worked in the Mill Street facility manufacturing paper, and another 80 people worked a mile away, in Soundview’s Kathan Meadow Road converting facility to “turn parent rolls into finished goods,” according to testimony to the House Committee on Natural Resources, Fish, and Wildlife by then-General Manager Brian Gauthier.

“The high cost of energy in the region has made it unaffordable to keep our doors open,” said Rob Baron, the company’s president and chief executive officer in the news release. “Our top priority moving forward will be supporting our incredible employees and their families throughout this difficult transition.”

According to an industry directory, the company manufactured paper and paper products for packaging and for household use.

The products included “primarily the toilet-tries and cleaning supplies carrying the Marcal brand,” according to a 2017 recruitment video

■ SEE PUTNEY PLANT SHUTTERED, A2

A second year in Washington

Becca Balint returns to a House chamber riven by dysfunction — and a historic lack of lawmaking — but says she is still focused and determined to help Vermonters

By Joyce Marcel
The Commons

BRATTLEBORO—Through no fault of her own, Rep. Becca Balint’s second year in Congress is starting to look a lot like her first year in office: mad, chaotic, wasteful, cynical and insane.

In the beginning, the Vermont Democrat idealistically went down to Washington ready to work on legislation to help solve her constituents’ most pressing problems: housing, mental health, a broken health care system, equal rights, LGBTQIA rights, and

then some.

But with a slim Republican majority in the House of Representatives more interested in trying to shut down the government than in across-the-aisle compromises that fix problems, Balint put her much of her energy into the only thing she could accomplish: constituent service.

Balint and her staff of 16 have spent the year delivering help for Vermonters who have sought assistance from her office.

“We’ve been able to resolve over 1,200 constituent cases, and we’ve brought back to Vermont over \$200,000 through programs we support,” Balint said.

“One of the things that I want Vermonters to understand about the work that we do in D.C., even when it’s so dysfunctional, is that both the D.C. staff and the Vermont staff essentially work as problem solvers, as

troubleshooters, and sometimes as the folks who can hand-hold between agencies,” she explained.

This translates into help for people having problems with Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security, or other government systems.

This year, Balint’s office also helped a lot of people affected by flooding.

“Certainly we took a lot of calls about recovery from the flood,” Balint said. “That took up, as it should [have], a lot of our energy in the summer, helping Vermonters get connected with the agencies that can help them.”

Passports were another big concern for Vermonters. “There was a huge passport backlog,” Balint said.

She noted that one member of her team, Aileen Lachs, previously worked with now-retired Sen. Patrick Leahy and brought

a great deal of experience working with issues related to immigration, migration, refugee status and issues related to passports. Balint said Lachs, her director of constituent services, has “really been a gem in our office.”

The staffs of the two senators from Vermont, independent Bernie Sanders and Democrat Peter Welch, work closely with Balint’s team.

“We’re all at-large in the state, but they have much bigger staff in the Senate than in the House,” Balint said. “But oftentimes, if we have an issue that could use the attention of the staff from the three offices, one of the senators’ offices will take the lead because they know they’d have more work capacity.”

Balint is proud that she kept her promise to visit all the counties in Vermont during her first

■ SEE BALINT, A3



After a year of chaos and dysfunction in the U.S. House, Rep. Becca Balint of Brattleboro remains determined to do whatever it takes to help Vermonters in the second year of her first term in Congress.

RANDOLPH T. HOLHUT COMMONS FILE PHOTO

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A publication of Vermont Independent Media

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 • promotes local independent journalism,
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The Commons is a nonprofit community newspaper published since 2006 by Vermont Independent Media, Inc., a nonprofit corporation under section 501(c)(3) of the federal tax code.

The newspaper is free, but it is supported by readers like you through tax-deductible donations, through advertising support, and through support of charitable foundations.

The paper is published weekly, with the exceptions of the weeks of July 4 and Dec. 25.

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

VOICES

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

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

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

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

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Special thanks to:
 Simi and Mark Berman, Diana Bingham, Jim Maxwell, Rob Bertsche, Barbara Evans, Cameron Cobane, Shannon Ward, and Hooker-Dunham Theater & Gallery; Clay Turnbull and NEC; Brendan Emmett Quigley and Joon Pakhik

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

Putney plant shuttered

FROM SECTION FRONT

posted on Soundview's behalf by Keene, New Hampshire-based TPI Staffing Group.

In the news release, Baron said that "over the past decade, the company invested tens of millions of dollars to strengthen the mill, but the rising energy costs were too insurmountable to sustain operations. The decision to close the mill comes after careful consideration and a recognition that there was not a viable path forward."

The recruitment video described Soundview as "a key member of the local economy for generations," and said that "many employees are following in their parents', or even their grandparents', footsteps."

Soundview purchased the Putney Paper Mill in 2012. According to the town's 2023 Grand List, the mill is assessed at \$1.12 million. Other parcels add \$128,000 to the town's property tax base.

Rapid response from state DOL

State Rep. Mike Mrowicki, D-Putney, called the closure "terrible news" for the employees and their families.

In an email to *The Commons* on Tuesday morning, he also expressed concern "that the company is not compliant with the federal [Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification] Act and the Vermont Notice of Potential Layoffs Act."

Jay Ramsey, the Vermont Department of Labor's workforce development director, confirmed that it received notification

from Soundview on the morning of Tuesday, Jan. 16.

He said that while Soundview might technically be in violation of the WARN Act — which requires a major employer to provide a 60-day warning of a mass layoff or closure under most circumstances — a company can offset that violation by providing severance pay and benefits.

This scenario is common enough that it is discussed in detail on a page of frequently asked questions on the Federal Department of Labor's website (bit.ly/748_warn-act).

The DOL will be "reaching out directly to the impacted workers to make sure they're aware of resources that are available to help them land softly," said Ramsey, who noted that Soundview has started to work with the state to provide a "rapid response."

"The workforce development team comes in to provide information to the impacted workers about how to file for unemployment, where they can access other state services like health insurance, and to learn how the Workforce Development Division can help them find a new job or access supports for training, if that's what they decide they want to do."

Personnel from the Brattleboro and Springfield offices, and DOL managers from Montpelier have begun to work on site to counsel employees through the transition.

Ramsey expected that by Jan. 17, the Department of Labor would be coordinating with the New Hampshire Employment Services Division's office in



VERMONT GIS

Paper goods have been manufactured for generations in the heart of downtown Putney, seen so clearly in this state geographic aerial shot.

Cheshire, New Hampshire.

"We can coordinate across the state lines to have people go to whatever office makes the most sense," he said. "Each state receives this kind of federal financial support to help people who have been dislocated through no fault of their own."

Federal funds are available to help employees with "retraining or even upskilling, if people want to do that," Ramsey said.

The DOL also maintains a job board that, as of Tuesday, reflected 8,833 positions available in the state, he added.

"Not to take the shock away from the impacted employees or the community there, but I think the prospects are good for those impacted to find a new job relatively quickly," Ramsey said,

citing a "very tight labor market" for Vermont employers are challenged to fill available positions.

He anticipates that other employers might reach out to the Department of Labor and seek connections to Soundview workers.

"Not that that's a consolation to anyone," Ramsey said.

Multiple generations, multiple businesses

The history of New England is filled with the mills along its many waterways that powered the U.S. Industrial Revolution, but by the mid-1900s, a majority of the paper mills still operating moved their businesses overseas or to the South, where labor and energy costs were far cheaper.

Out of the thousands of paper mills once located in New England, only 128 remain in the entire United States, according to IBIS World, a worldwide industry analysis company.

Throughout its history, the paper mill in Putney has served as the center of operations for a number of businesses and some manufacturing breakthroughs.

A mill built in 1818 was destroyed when Sacketts Brook flooded 10 years later. The current mill building — the Eagle Mill — was built in 1869.

In 1938, a Polish immigrant, Wojciech Kamierczak, would purchase the paper mill, held in trust by the town, after a bankruptcy and fire left the business empty at the beginning of the 1930s.

The Kamierczak family included Wojciech's wife, Sambraska, and his two daughters, Shirley and Gertrude.

According to the Putney Historical Society's book *Putney: World's Best Known Small Town*, Kamierczak, who used the name "John Smith," "had spent the 20 years since his arrival at Ellis Island from Poland working and learning in the mills of New England, staked all that he had into the burned-out mill."

He borrowed against his life insurance policy and asked his son-in-law Frank Potash to move to Putney to assist him.

For 46 years, the family ran the Putney Paper Mill. While the business "progressed through many phases of growth and expansion," according to the 2011 obituary for Shirley Kamierczak Stockwell, who married Earl Stockwell, also of Putney, in 1945.

Putney Paper would remain in the family until 1984, at which point Shirley and her husband, Earl Stockwell, sold it to Ashuelot Paper of New Hampshire.

The plant underwent serious issues through the years, especially during the late 1960s to the mid-1970s, including the pollution of the Sacketts Brook, chemical spills, an unsavory order in the 1980s which permeated the center of town, along with a significant oil spill.

Newspaper archives through the years describe the back-and-forth of regulatory battles and bitter skirmishes with neighbors in the thickly settled village over such environmental concerns as the sludge that was a byproduct of the paper manufacturing process. Photos of firefighters battling blazes in the plant appeared regularly.

By 2012, when Soundview purchased the plant, it was a subsidiary of Claremont, New Hampshire-based APC Paper Group.

In his 2017 testimony, Gauthier touted the company's environmental stewardship, noting that Soundview's output was created from more than 40,000 tons of waste paper each year and changes to machinery that substantially reduced water consumption and carbon emissions.

"The result is reduced landfill waste, improved water and air quality, and the preservation of the environment for future generations," Gauthier told lawmakers.

His bold testimony offers not even a slight hint of the shuttering of the plant that would take place this week in 2024, less than seven years later.

"Amid the very sad closing of multiple paper mills across the Northeast in recent years and a challenging marketplace — and after years of uncertainty surrounding our historic and vital business in Putney — we have not only stabilized but grown our business," Gauthier said.

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Balint

year in office.

“That’s really, really important to me,” she said. “I made a commitment last January that we were going to visit all 14 counties within the first year. And we did that.”

The time with Vermonters is so valuable to Balint “because you’ve got to get out of the D.C. bubble,” she said. “You have to hear directly from people how their lives are going and how the communities are feeling. And I miss them when I’m not there.”

That part of her job is going very well.

“I’m really pleased, not just with the work that we have done meeting the needs of Vermonters, but I’m really proud that so many Vermonters tell me when I’m back in the state, ‘Hey, I called your office. People were respectful. They were kind. They worked on my problem. They got right back to me,’” Balint said. “That’s the kind of constituent services that I think is really important for a congressional office to do.”

Staying busy

In the House, Balint has been busy. She co-sponsored more than 230 bills and introduced 12 of her own.

Naturally, given the political prerogatives of the House of Representatives right now, none of this legislation went anywhere.

“It’s horrible,” Balint said. “It truly has been a year, in this Republican-led House, just careening from one emergency to another. And, as someone who is very focused on getting work done for my people back home, that’s been really frustrating.”

During Balint’s first weeks in office in 2023, she had to sit through 15 votes while the Republicans tried to elect a Speaker of the House. They eventually settled on Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., who lasted only until October. After being voted out as Speaker, he resigned and left the House entirely.

The Republicans next installed as Speaker Rep. Mike Johnson, R-La., who just made a deal with the Democrats on spending numbers for the 2024 budget. If passed, the deal will prevent a partial shutdown of the government at the end of the week. In messaging House Republicans, Johnson’s office said the spending will be set at \$1.59 trillion for fiscal year 2024 — the level set in last year’s bipartisan debt ceiling deal.

Now Johnson is under threat of removal from far-right members of his own party for helping to negotiate such a deal.

“I want to put it in context for folks,” Balint said. “This has been one of the least productive Congresses in recent history. We were only able to get 20 bills signed into law. And the next least productive House got between 70 and 73 laws. So we’re not even close. The level of chaos and dysfunction here is amazing.”

“I’ve heard it from my colleagues who’ve been here longer. They are saying they’ve never seen anything like this. Between two speaker fights, the default crisis, and the government shutdown crisis, it really has just been one emergency to another, which has left very little time to actually do the work that we were all sent here to do.”

Profiting from chaos?

Does Balint think that the voters who sent these representatives to Congress really want them to waste taxpayer money by trying to shut down the government?

“There is certainly a core group of MAGA Republicans who want to shut things down,” Balint said. “They don’t actually want to do anything. And for them, causing chaos is actually a win.”

How would that work? “They’ve said as much in the last two months as we head into an election year,” Balint said. “If the economy’s bad, if things at the border are bad, if inflation is bad, if there is a perception that Congress is not getting its work done, they see that as a win for them. They will ride that dysfunction to electoral victory. That’s really how cynical so many of them are.”

That kind of approach to government may be hard for Vermonters to understand, Balint said.

“Why would you go through all of the work of running for office, serving here in D.C., and not be focused on actually trying to make life better for people?” Balint said. “And the fact is that we sit, day in and day out, on the floor of the House of Representatives, voting on issues related to ‘cultural wars’ or their ‘anti-woke’ agenda, which we hear about all the time.”

The weekly committee hearings are often centered around conspiracy theories, or what Balint called “hateful testimony.”

“These people have not been

willing to govern,” she said.

The solution, from Balint’s perspective, is for Democrats to win control of the chamber in the upcoming election.

“If Democrats can flip the House in 2024, we can actually get work done, work that Americans — and, most specifically, Vermonters — need,” Balint said. “We need investments in health care. We need investments in shoring up Vermont for the next climate emergency. We have a workforce crisis. We have a housing crisis. We have so many things that require our attention.”

Balint vowed to “do everything that I can to make sure that we’re able to flip the House, because until then, we’re going to be stuck in this morass for the perceivable future. And that’s not good for the country.”

For many of the most radical Republicans, democracy itself is the problem, Balint said.

“They don’t believe in democracy,” she said. “Many of them do believe in the strength of the autocrat. So we have incredibly high stakes.”

The kind of behavior being practiced by MAGA Republicans is turning people off government, Balint said.

“I heard this from my teenage son the other day,” she said. “He said, ‘Mom, you know, every election feels like this is the most serious election of your lifetime.’ And even though it’s true, I’m worried that people are becoming so inured to that sentiment that, unfortunately, they check out. They don’t want to feel so bad and be so worried all the time.”

This makes it essential to shore up people’s belief in government, Balint said.

“Actually, government can be a force for good,” Balint said. “Look at what [former Speaker of the House] Nancy Pelosi was able to get done with a very slim majority. The biggest infrastructure investments since Eisenhower. Making sure we were bringing down prescription drug prices on some drugs.”

Democrats, she said, “want to continue to build on that.”

“Look at the Inflation Reduction Act that was rolled out,” Balint continued. “And all kinds of green energy and resiliency projects across the country to make sure that we can meet this moment of climate change. We know it’s possible, even with a slim majority, to get work done.”

Balint cited a rather angry floor speech given by conservative Republican Rep. Chip Roy of Texas on Nov. 15 of last year. “I want my Republican colleagues to give me one thing that I can go campaign on and say we did. One! Come and explain to me one meaningful, significant thing the Republican majority has done,” Roy implored.

“So you’ve got somebody within the caucus, who is by no means a moderate, saying the quiet part out loud: ‘We squandered our leadership. We squandered our majority,’” Balint said.

“And now they just have a one-vote majority to pass a bill,” she continued. “I didn’t think it could get more dysfunctional, but it’s going to be very difficult for Speaker Johnson to pass the wish list of his extremists, because he doesn’t have the votes.”

Ukraine, and the border

Balint believes Congress should find a way to support the Ukrainians in their fight for freedom against Russia.

“We’ve been waiting months now for a deal for Ukraine,” she said. “It is very frustrating to me that we have invested so much time and resources and we’re still holding back.”

Russian President Vladimir Putin — “the autocrat,” Balint said — is not looking just at Ukraine and won’t stop there.

“He’s going to take a victory there and then see what else he can pull into his orbit,” she said, frustrated that the Republicans are trying to fund Ukraine on the condition that it be linked to funding security for the U.S.’s southern border.

“But it’s disingenuous, because the Biden administration has already offered billions of dollars to help shore up the dysfunction at the border, and Republicans have flatly refused to negotiate with the president for that funding,” she said.

Immigration reform needs to be comprehensive in and of itself, not tied to a war on another continent, Balint said.

“The freedom fighters in the Ukraine have been working so hard for years to beat back Russia,” Balint said, and Johnson is “holding them hostage” for “demonizing asylum seekers.”

“That’s what’s going on here,” Balint said. “Because the president has said he understands that we need more border security, that we need more people working at the border. And they have turned that down. Because, again, it goes back to what I was saying

FROM SECTION FRONT

before, if if there is dysfunction at the border, that’s a win for them.”

At this point in U.S. history, with a shrinking workforce and a low birth rate, more people, including immigrants, are needed more than ever.

In Windham County, the Brattleboro Development Credit Corp. has been integrating Afghanistan refugees into the workforce with great success.

“This whole anti-immigration thing is insane,” Balint said. “If Vermont is having trouble finding workers, then other states must be having the same problem.”

That has proved true, she said, pointing to the “huge workforce shortage” across New England.

“In every single hearing in which immigration comes up, in any single floor debate on this issue, I pivot back to the fact that we need workers for every industry,” Balint said. “Across Vermont, from the coffee shop down the corner to assisted living homes to home health aides, all of it, we need workers.”

She called the Republicans’ handling of workforce issues “another very cynical ploy.”

“They know that if we don’t have the labor that we need, then the economy is not going to be clicking along,” Balint said. “People who want to come and work should have a legal pathway to do that. Migrants certainly are an asset to our agricultural community in Vermont, and across the nation. But we need talented migrants and immigrants at every level in every industry. We need to provide legal pathways to citizenship.”

War in the Middle East

The attack on Israel by the terrorist group Hamas and the retaliation against the people of Gaza by the Israeli government is an especially difficult issue for Balint, who identifies as Jewish and has had family members who were affected by the Holocaust.

Not all Jews support the current Israeli government, and Balint has nuanced views.

“I believe that Israel has the right to defend itself as a sovereign nation and as an ally,” she said. “I want to make sure that they have Iron Dome [an Israeli mobile all-weather air defense system] capability.”

Balint, like many other Jews, also wants a two-state solution: one for Israel and one for Palestine.

“I’m going to have to review any package that comes before me concerning aid to Gaza and also support for Israel,” she said. “I’m going to have to look at that really carefully, because if it’s just about Israel without any support for rebuilding Gaza, then I’m not going to be supportive.”

She said we need to make sure that “our American dollars are not being used to kill thousands of innocent men, women and children in Gaza.”

Balint said that based on “listening to Vermonters over the break,” she will look “really, really carefully” at proposals for further United States military aid to Israel, to “make sure that that money is spent responsibly.”

“We need to know they’re not going to be given a blank check,” she said.

Balint feels Israeli President Benjamin Netanyahu has done a dangerous disservice to Israel with his actions toward the Palestinians.

“Much like President Trump, I think a lot of the decisions that Netanyahu makes right now [are] about saving his ass,” Balint said.

The antisemitism unleashed by Israel’s bombing of the Palestinians has personally affected Balint.

“It’s been horrible,” she said. “Antisemitic hate crimes are up dramatically. And I’ve personally been called a ‘fascist pig genocidal murderer.’”

But it’s clear to Balint that “most Vermonters care deeply about making sure that there is a safe and secure Israel, but also making sure there is a two-state solution.”

“And unfortunately, right now, we’re not even able to have a substantive conversation about building an Israeli post-war government, or determining who’s going to govern Gaza afterwards, or negotiating long-term peace and security for both Palestinians and Israelis,” she continued.

“Right now we’re stuck in horrible antisemitism. It’s making it very difficult to have substantive conversations,” she said.

Balint talked about a recent rally in Montpelier.

“I think it would be interesting for your readers to hear this,” she said. “I was at the rally, and a number of people stayed to speak with me afterwards. A woman came up to me and said, ‘Can I have a word with you privately?’ So we moved away from the press and the folks on my team.

“She said, ‘I want you to hear it from me directly.’ She said, ‘About this suffering in Gaza, I

Rockingham looks at boosting voter turnout

Town Meeting attendance has dipped since the pandemic, and a citizens group is exploring ideas to reverse the trend

By Robert F. Smith
The Commons

ROCKINGHAM — Concerned that poor Town Meeting attendance is not good for a direct democracy, an informal group of citizens is trying to figure out how to get more people to attend.

Only 3% of the town’s 3,819 registered voters attended the Annual Town Meeting in 2023. According to the 2020 U.S. Census, Rockingham and its villages have a population of 4,832.

At the 2023 meeting, town officials agreed to study what might be the causes of such low voter turnout and to see if changes to the meeting would help more people attend.

To that end, the Selectboard is conducting a survey to explore when to hold the meeting, whether providing transportation and child care would let more voters attend, and whether enabling voters to participate in the meeting via Zoom or similar online access would be an improvement.

The survey, which runs until Wednesday, Jan. 31, is available in print at the Town Hall, Village Square Booksellers, Lisai’s Market, the Bellows Falls Senior Center, Saxtons River Village Market, and at the Rockingham Free Public Library. It can also be accessed through a link on the town’s website at rockinghamvt.org or directly at surveymonkey.com/r/5GKCGVJ.

The citizen work group, organized by Steve Crofter,

includes Meg Lucas, Stuart Brown, Barbara Ternes, Wayne Blanchard, and Carolyn Anhalt.

They will host a program at the Rockingham Free Public Library on Saturday, Feb. 24, from 10:30 a.m. to noon, “Introduction to Town Meeting: How to Participate,” aimed at people who are new to Town Meeting or unsure why they might want to participate.

“We’ll provide information about Town Meeting, how it works, and how individuals can most effectively participate,” said Crofter. “We’ll also be prepared to help with voter registration for unregistered residents.”

Lucas noted that “we’re so fortunate to have this form of direct democracy here in New England. It would be a shame to lose it.”

Voters who attend Town Meeting in person can discuss, modify, and vote on articles in a very personal form of democracy, she said.

At the same time, having just a handful of voters decide on budget items involving millions of taxpayer dollars is far from an ideal situation, she acknowledged.

The Covid pandemic has also had an effect on Town Meeting. For two years, the meeting was held online, and attendance has remained frustratingly low since then.

Crofter said that the group is looking into a number of attendance-boosting measures, including better publicity for the meeting, transportation, child care and hospitality at the

meeting, and changing the time and date.

Noting that controversy often sparks attendance, Crofter said the group is looking into the idea of making one of the budget items a separate article that would be discussed and voted on separately from the rest of the budget.

“We’re trying to think of something that will get more people to come in,” Crofter said. “The more community spirit the town has, the more people will attend. We’re looking at what we can do at Town Meeting to make people proud to be in this town.”

How to register to vote

To register to vote, you must fill out an application, which must be approved by the town clerk. Voters may register to vote up to and including the day of the election.

Registering online could introduce delays to the process, and town officials recommend that you register to vote no later than a few days before the election or Town Meeting.

If you are registering to vote in Vermont for the first time, you must include a photocopy of an acceptable form of ID such as a valid photo ID, driver’s license, passport, a current utility bill, or current bank statement with your address.

Anyone interested in discussing Town Meeting attendance can contact Crofter at 802-275-4646 or steve.crofter@gmail.com.

want to make sure that we are doing everything that we can to minimize death there.”

“She said, ‘I want you to know, as a Jew in Vermont, I have never had to censor myself so much.’ She said, ‘I sit through meetings when I cannot speak from the heart about my experiences. I also didn’t want my co-workers, who are here at this rally, to hear what I’m going to say to you.’”

“And then she said, ‘I do want a safe and secure Israel. And I feel like a lot of the voices that are getting listened to right now are people who want to dismantle Israel. They don’t want a two-state solution.’ And she said, ‘I don’t feel comfortable talking about that.’”

The woman made Balint feel sad, she said.

“We are a small state and we need to be able to have hard

conversations,” Balint said. “I do worry about the amount of antisemitism in the state right now. And I know that some of the most important work that I can do going forward is to continue to hold space for complexity and nuance. These are not easy issues.”

“But, bottom line, if you are holding all Jewish people responsible for the actions of the Israeli government, that is antisemitism,” Balint said. “If you’re attacking people coming out of a synagogue because of the actions of the Israeli government, because these people are Jewish, how are they responsible?”

‘Concrete things’

This upcoming year will be a tough one on so many fronts, but Balint said she has her priorities in line.

“One of my top issues is the

work that we need to do on the mental health crisis,” she said.

“And the issue regarding the housing crisis. They go hand in hand. We’re going to be rolling out a big housing bill in the next month or so, and I want to continue to work with my colleagues across the aisle to try to find some wins on the mental health crisis.”

She said she will continue fighting to address the shortage of health-care providers for mental health care.

The rural mail delivery system is another priority, she said.

“I know a lot of seniors care deeply about reliable postal service throughout the state. It really matters for folks who are relying on the mail for prescription drugs,” she said.

“So my staff and I are really trying to work on concrete things,” Balint said.

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MILESTONES

Births, deaths, and news of people from Windham County

College news

• **Maria Carfora** of Brattleboro was named to the Dean's List for the fall 2023 semester at Quinnipiac University in Hamden, Connecticut.

• **Keigan Illingworth**, a dance major from Westminster, was named to the Dean's List for the fall 2023 semester at Hofstra University in Hempstead, New York.

• **Kim Amidon** of Vernon, **Nicholas Douglass** of Saxtons River, **Venus Fu** of Brattleboro, and **Corina Mitchell** of Westminster were all named to the Dean's List for the fall 2023 semester at Roger Williams University in Bristol, Rhode Island.

• The following local students were honored for academic excellence in the fall 2023 semester at Clarkson University in Potsdam, New York: **Jesse Peter Dykes** of West Wardsboro, a sophomore majoring in computer science, was named a Presidential Scholar, while **Owen Wesley Ameden** of Jamaica, a senior majoring in civil engineering, was named to the Dean's List.

• The following local students were honored for academic excellence in the fall 2023 semester at Southern New Hampshire University: **Ozzee Haskell** of Bellows Falls, **Kobe Bazin** of Bellows Falls, **Nolen Donovan** of Rockingham, **Forrest Brooke-deBock** of Brattleboro, **Chelsea Fletcher** of Brattleboro, **Walter Randall** of Brattleboro, **Grady Lockery** of Putney, and **Miranda Blake** of Vernon were all named to the President's List, while **Melina Nelson** of Brattleboro and **Tabish Nabeel** of Brattleboro were both named to the Dean's List.

• **Elisabeth Keeler** of Wilmington, who is studying in the dental hygiene academic program, was named to the fall 2023 President's List at Hudson Valley Community College in Troy, New York.

Transitions

• **Ethan Grimes**, vice-president of mortgage lending at 802 Credit Union, recently joined Youth Services' board of directors. He grew up in Newfane, graduated fourth in his class from Leland & Gray Union High School, and attended Florida



State University, where he majored in economics, with a minor in both business administration and communications. Since 2009,

Grimes has worked in mortgages at River Valley Credit Union, now 802 Credit Union. Starting as a mortgage processor, he eventually became a mortgage originator and eventually vice-president of the credit union's mortgage department in 2016. The West River Valley resident looks forward to helping Youth Services prepare for new challenges ahead, strengthen its operations, and serve on its annual golf tournament committee.

• **Winthrop Pennock** of Townshend has joined the Grace Cottage Family Health & Hospital Board of Trustees. Pennock has been a partner with Artisanal Cellars, a wine importation and distribution company in White River Junction, since 2011. His early professional experience is in the hospitality business. He started working in kitchens after graduating from Ithaca College, working first in Colorado, then after five years returning East and enrolling at New England Culinary Institute where he received a degree in restaurant management. He has worked at the Three Mountain Inn in Jamaica, at the Copper Beach Inn in Essex, Connecticut, and was manager of Windham Wines in Brattleboro.

Obituaries



• **Robert "Bob" DuCharme, 88**, of Brookline. Died Jan. 7, 2024 at Vernon Green nursing home, where he had been a resident for several years. Bob was born in Bridgeport, Connecticut on Oct. 19, 1935, and grew up in nearby Milford. As president of his senior class at Milford High, he and his best friend and class vice president, Jim Farrell, performed song and dance routines that they reprised at class reunions over 50 years later. With plans to become an actor, Bob graduated from the American Academy of Dramatic Arts in New York City in 1958. While working as an NBC page on Jack Paar's *Tonight* show, he and

several other pages had their own Saturday morning TV show, "Al Rucker and the Seven Teens," on a Providence, Rhode Island NBC affiliate, where they performed skits to the current top hits. Bob's show-business career was interrupted when he was drafted into the Army in 1959. He married his girlfriend, Lorinda (Linda) Case, and she joined him in Germany, where he was stationed. They remained happily married until her death from Parkinson's Disease in 2020. Upon their return to the U.S., he worked in advertising sales at the *Milford Citizen* newspaper. He began directing plays and musicals in community theaters in southern Connecticut, including the musical *Oliver* at New Haven's Hopkins School in 1971. After directing several more shows there, he accepted the school's offer of a full-time position as a drama teacher and director in 1973. With the academic schedule leaving his summers free, he produced 12 successful seasons of dinner theater in Milford after he convinced a local Holiday Inn manager to let him build a set and cast and publicize plays by Neil Simon and other popular playwrights. Bob taught at Hopkins and directed several shows a year there until he and Linda moved to Brookline, Vermont in 1985. He then worked on the advertising staff of the *Brattleboro Reformer*, where Linda was the Night Managing Editor, until his retirement. He continued to teach public speaking and to direct plays and musicals in the Brattleboro area, bringing the total number of productions he had directed in his career up to 118. He loved cooking, gardening, eating, drinking, and traveling with Linda. They made their most recent trip to Europe in 2006, when they visited the German family whom they had lived with 46 years earlier during Bob's military service. Their 61-year marriage was an inspiration to all of their family and friends. Bob will be remembered for his boundless enthusiasm, his sense of humor, his creativity, and his special joy in seeing cast members with no acting experience blossom in lead roles. He is survived by his sisters Joan and Dorothy, his children Bob Jr., Ann, Julie, and Peter, six grandchildren, and a great-grandson. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: The family is planning a service in the spring, with a reception to follow.

• **Mary Elizabeth Piluski Folsom, 74**, died Jan. 4, 2024, in Ludlow, Vermont. Mary was born in Bellows Falls on July 28, 1949. She attended St. Charles School and graduated in 1967 from Bellows Falls High School. Mary worked at New England Telephone as a telephone operator. She also worked at Holmes Transportation and H.A. Manning Co. Mary enjoyed sewing, cooking, going for long walks and helping others. She also loved pets and children. Her son, David was the light of her life, and spending time with friends were important to her. Mary was a kind lady, who kept Jesus in her life. She also had pen pals that she kept in touch with. She is survived by a son, David Place of Chester; a brother, Stephen Piluski of Saxtons River; and several nieces and nephews. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: By Mary's request, there will be no funeral. A graveside service will be held at a later date.

• **Patricia C. Fusco, 86**, of Marlboro. Died unexpectedly on Jan. 7, 2024 at her home, following a period of declining health. She was born in Bennington, New Hampshire on Dec. 9, 1937, the daughter of Theodore and Gertrude (Cody) Call. Raised and educated in Glastonbury, Connecticut, she attended



public schools and was a graduate of Glastonbury High School. Following graduation, she continued her education earning an associate's degree. With her husband, she owned and operated Alcan Power Equipment, based at their home on Auger Hole Road. Previously, she worked at the former First Vermont Bank in Brattleboro, served as retrofit of turbines administrator at Vermont Yankee and, in her earlier years, worked for the Emhart Corporation in Hartford, Connecticut. For several years, Patricia was an active volunteer at the Winston Prouty Center in Brattleboro. She enjoyed travel and spending time with her family on Lake Champlain in their camper trailer. Most importantly, Patricia was a faithful and devoted wife and loving mother to her son. On Jan. 20, 1968, in Torrington, Connecticut, she was married to Thomas J. Fusco who survives. Besides her husband of nearly 56 years, she leaves one son, Steven Fusco, at home, and many nieces, nephews, great-nieces and great-nephews. She was predeceased by eight siblings. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: A graveside committal service in Williamsville Cemetery will take place in the springtime when the cemetery reopens. Donations to the Marlboro Volunteer Fire Department, P.O. Box 69, Marlboro, VT 05344. To offer condolences, visit atamaniuk.com.

David Cook of North Carolina and Michael Cook (Jeanette) of Virginia; two daughters, Linda Donohue (Dan) of North Carolina and Cherie McGrath of New York; three sisters, Cheryl Aplin of Brattleboro, Dolores Sylvester of East Dummerston, and Frances Brochu of Manchester, Connecticut; one brother, Alton King of Putney; six grandchildren, four great-grandchildren and many nieces, nephews, great-nieces and great-nephews. She was predeceased by siblings Raymond, Reginald, Frederick, Dennis, and Randall King; and Joyce Keeler, Clarice Short, Darlene Hutchins, and Sheila Lawrence. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: Graveside committal services in Meetinghouse Hill Cemetery will be conducted later in the springtime at a date to be announced. Donations to Vernon Advent Christian Church, 4554 Ft. Bridgman Rd., Vernon, VT 05354; or to Bayada Hospice, 1222 Putney Rd., Brattleboro, VT 05301. To offer condolences, visit atamaniuk.com.

• **Brent LaDeau, 66**, of Brattleboro. Died at home on Dec. 15, 2023, with family by his side. A beloved husband and father, Brent was born on December 28, 1956 in Claremont, New Hampshire to Barbara Jean and Donald LaDeau. He leaves behind Karen (Ferland) LaDeau, his wife of 48 years, his daughters Shannon LaDeau and Hilary Aplin, their spouses April Horton and Jason Aplin, and three grandchildren, Trevor, Dylan and Sophie. His family was always his greatest source of happiness and pride. He is also survived by his mother, Barbara Jean (Whitcomb) Stoughton of York Beach, Maine; Michael and Susan LaDeau of New Jersey; Joanne Stoughton and Herb Henry of Maine; Scott LaDeau and Tiffany Shepard of Maine; and sisters Lori, Leslie, and Michelle and many nieces and nephews. Brent also leaves behind his faithful canine companion, Lexy. He is predeceased by his father, Donald LaDeau, and his stepfather Perley Stoughton. Brent was known for his kindness and generosity. He was always ready to lend a hand or ear to anyone in need. He enjoyed snowmobiling, fly fishing, and kayaking. He listened to music by his nephew, Jon LaDeau, during treatments and enjoyed relaxing to Justin LaDeau's piano pieces. He fixed everyone's appliances and loved working on home renovations. He did not like heights but braved ziplines and cliff walks to be with his grandkids. He was a longstanding and active member of the Brattleboro Masonic Lodge. Brent was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer in March 2023. He handled his illness with grace and courage. He was ever loving and generous with the time he had. He had many wonderful friends and family and he will be deeply missed by all. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: The family will host a celebration of life and Masonic service on Feb. 2, from 5 to 7 p.m., at Ker Phaneuf Funeral Home, 57 High St., in Brattleboro. Donations to the pancreatic cancer organization, Pancan.org, at support.pancan.org/goto/BrentLaDeau or to Groundworks Collaborative, where Brent intended to volunteer in retirement, at groundworksvt.org. To view an online tribute, visit csnh.com.



• **Norma Avis Ives, 86**, of Vernon. Died peacefully in the comfort of her home, with her family by her side, on Jan. 4, 2024, following a period of declining health. Norma was born in Langdon, New Hampshire on Sept. 7, 1937, the daughter of Ronald and Martha (Chowanec) King. She was raised and educated in Westminster and Putney and attended Brattleboro High School. For many years Norma worked as an independent sales associate for the Stanley Home Products Company, based in Easthampton, Massachusetts. Gifted with an eye for elegance, art, and home furnishings, she was also an interior decorator. Her unique style and talents were on display in her home. In conjunction with her love for interior decorating, she also enjoyed gardening, knitting, and crocheting, and knitted many hats for newborns and babies over the years. She was first married to Lawrence Cook and, later, married Robert J. Ives in February 1968. Besides her husband, survivors include two sons,

and nine grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: Pursuant to his wishes, there will be no formal services. To send condolences, visit phaneuf.net.



• **Henry William "Billy" Nelson Jr., 76**, of Brattleboro. Died Jan. 4, 2024 in the comfort of his home, surrounded by family, following a lengthy battle with cancer. Billy was born in Brattleboro on Jan. 15, 1947, the son of Henry and Allettaire (Brockington) Nelson. He was raised in Brattleboro where he attended public schools and graduated from Brattleboro Union High School with the Class of 1965. Following graduation, he served in the Coast Guard. Working as a pressman all of his career, Billy was employed at the former *Town Crier*/Windmill Publishing Co. and later worked at the *Brattleboro Reformer* for a combined 40-plus years in the printing business. Billy was a member of American Legion Post 5, VFW Carl M. Dessaint Post 1034, Fraternal Order of Eagles, Brattleboro Aerie #2445, and the Benevolent & Protective Order of Elks, Brattleboro Lodge #1499. He played men's league softball in Brattleboro for many years and he and his wife also played on a bowling league at the French King Bowling Center in Erving, Massachusetts. Billy enjoyed deep sea fishing and day trip visits to the coast of Maine. He took great pride in growing vegetables in his garden. However, Billy's most favorite thing was spending time with his family and friends. He always made sure that his children and grandchildren had everything that they needed and in his final months he especially enjoyed long car rides with his wife. He was known by all of the pups in his neighborhood as "The Cookie Fairy," and he was famous to anyone else who knew him well for his lemon pepper grilled chicken wings. On March 8, 1975, at St. Michael's Episcopal Church he married Judith Adie, who survives. Besides his wife of 48 years, he leaves his three daughters, Sheri Ornate (Dave) and Dawn Wassilie, all of Alaska, and Michele Nelson Rayno (Ray) of Brattleboro; grandchildren Max, Jaxson, Kaitlyn, Freddie, Kelsea, and Colton Wassillie; William Rayno, and McKenzie Grover; step-grandchildren, Rebecca Short, and Katarina, Max, and Anthony Rayno; one brother, Edward Nelson (Dana) of Vernon; and two sisters, Donna Macie of Vernon and Carol Hazlett of Putney. Additionally, he is survived by many nieces and nephews, cousins, and great-grandchildren. Billy was predeceased by his parents and a grandson, Wyatt Wassillie. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: Friends are invited to call at Atamaniuk Funeral Home on Terrace Street on Saturday, Jan. 20, from 10 a.m. to noon. A reception will follow the calling hours, to be held at American Legion Post 5 on Linden Street. Billy will be laid to rest later in the year at Morningside Cemetery. Donations to the Oncology Department at Brattleboro Memorial Hospital, 17 Belmont Ave., Brattleboro, VT 05301; or to Bayada Hospice, 1222 Putney Rd., Brattleboro, VT 05301. To offer condolences, visit atamaniuk.com.



• **Susan Ann (Fitts) Thomas, 55**, died away peacefully at home, surrounded by family, on Dec 25, 2023. Susan had been battling health issues for several years. Born on April 6, 1968 in Brattleboro to Elizabeth Kimball and Arthur Bushey, Susan was a free spirit who loved and understood nature, and found God's beauty in all living creatures. Before her illness, she enjoyed going to church at Grace Christian Fellowship with her pastor Matthew Worral. She was a garden enthusiast, and an avid fisherwoman. She had a love for life and all its adventures and enjoyed spending time with family and friends. She will be missed by many, but will forever be in the hearts and memory of all who knew her. Susan was predeceased by her nephew, Scott Fitts Jr., and her brother, Scott M. Fitts. She is survived by her mother; a sister, Brenda Mecheski; brothers Timothy and Arthur Fitts; a daughter, Christine (Rabideau) James of Kansas; a son, David Rabideau of Florida; and many grandchildren. She is also survived by her ex-husband and lifetime friend, Gary Thomas; a niece, Christal Cassell; and a nephew Stephen Mecheski, whom she was close to, as well as many other nieces and nephews. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: None provided.



• **Bernard J. "Bernie" Mandeville Jr., 74**, of Hinsdale, New Hampshire. Died on Jan. 1, 2024, following a long illness. He was born in Northampton, Massachusetts on July 3, 1949 to Bernard and Penny Mandeville. He joined the Marine Corps in 1969 and served with the First Marine Division in Vietnam, earning the Combat Action Ribbon and attaining the rank of corporal. He retired from the Northampton Department of Public Works after 25 years of service. He also delivered mail as a contractor in Plainfield, Massachusetts for several years and was a bartender at the American Legion Post 236 in Haydenville, Massachusetts for 10 years. Bernie never met a stranger he didn't like and enjoyed a bourbon and conversation at veteran's clubs in the tri-state area. He was a lifetime member of the VFW, most recently of Post 4234 in Hinsdale. He also enjoyed crosswords and watching feeder birds out of his back patio door. Bernard was predeceased by his son Seth in 2023. He is survived by his wife Sharon, whom he married on Aug. 16, 2006; three children, Bernard III of Florida, Sandra and Giselle of Massachusetts; siblings Karen and Rae of Massachusetts;

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bc tv LOCAL PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Jan. 15-21

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Here We Are - Kevin O'Keefe, Circus Minimus: Mon 8p, Tues 3:15p, Wed 9p, Thurs 1:15p, Sat 12:15p, Sun 5:15p	Brattleboro Selectboard Mtg. 1/16/24: Tues 6:15p (LIVE), Thurs 1p, Fri 8:30p, Sun 8a
The World Fusion Show - Ep# 169 - Barbara Xu: Mon 5:30p, Tues 8p, Thurs 12:30p, Fri 11:30a, Sat 5:30p, Sun 2:30p	Brattleboro Housing Partnerships Board Mtg. 1/8/24: Mon 6:15p, Tues 8:30a, Wed 12p
Around Town With Maria - Jonas Fricke's Friends Remember Him 12/12/23: Wed 9:30p, Thurs 9a, Fri 12:30p, Sat 2p, Sun 6p	Marlboro Elementary School Board Budget Mtg. 1/11/24: Mon 6:45p, Tues 6a, Wed 12:30p
Brattleboro Area Chamber of Commerce - Annual Members Meeting 1/16/24: Fri 9:30p, Sat 9a, Sun 12:30p	Newfane Selectboard Mtg. 1/16/24: Thurs 8:30, Fri 5:30a, Sat 2:30p
Thorn in my Side - WINTER ROMANCE! December 29th, 2022: Mon 10a, Tues 8:30p, Wed 11a, Thurs 5p, Fri 7a, Sat 6p, Sun 4p	Vernon Selectboard Mtg. 1/16/24: Thurs 6p, Fri 8a, Sat 12p
Around Town With Maria - Demonstration in Support of Gaza 12/23/23: Mon 3p, Tues 9a, Wed 12:30p, Thurs 9:15p, Fri 3:40p, Sat 5:30a, Sun 9:30a	Windham Elementary School Board Mtg. 1/16/24: Fri 6p, Sat 8:30a, Sun 12p
Seasonal Specials - A Festival of Nine Lessons & Carols: Mon 7a, Tues 12:30p, Wed 9a, Thurs 4p, Fri 5p, Sat 8p, Sun 6a	West River Education District Board Mtg. 1/8/24: Mon 3:45p, Tues 5:30a, Sat 5:10p
At BMAC - Artist Talk: Aurora Robson: Mon 12:30p, Tues 5:30a, Wed 5:30p, Thurs 2:45p, Fri 10a, Sat 9p	River Valleys Unified School District Board Mtg. 1/8/24: Tues 9:30p, Wed 6p, Thurs 8:30a, Fri 12p
Couch Potato Productions - Soggy Po' Boys at the West River Park 10/8/23: Fri 2p, Sun 7:30p	Guilford Selectboard Mtg. 1/8/24: Mon 12p, Sat 6:30a, Sun 7p
Energy Week with George Harvey & Tom Fennell: Mon 9a, Tues 5p, Thurs 11a, Sat 7p	Jamaica Selectboard Mtg. 1/8/24: Mon 2:30p, Wed 8:30p, Thurs 7a
Vermontitude - Weekly Episode: Tue 11:30a & 6:30p, Wed 6a, Thu 1p, Sat 12p, Sun 5p	Brattleboro Planning Commission Mtg. 1/8/24: Mon 9a, Tues 12p, Thurs 11a, Sat 6:45p
News Block: WTSA News: Mon-Fri 12p & 6p, Reformer News Break: Mon-Fri 12:05p & 6:05p, BUHS-TV News: Mon-Fri 12:15p & 6:35p	Windham Southeast School District Board Mtg. 1/9/24: Mon 9:15p, Wed 8:30a, Fri 2:30p
St. Michael's Episcopal Church - Weekly Service: Wed 2p, Sat 7:30a, Sun 11a	Windham Southeast Supervisory Union Board Mtg. 1/10/24: Mon 5:30a, Tues 2:30p, Thurs 5p, Sat 11a, Sun 6p
Trinity Lutheran Church - Weekly Service: Wed 10a, Thurs 7a, Sun 3p	Community Forum - Brattleboro Legislators Forum 12/9/23: Wed 6:55p, Thurs 9:25a, Fri 12:55p
Guilford Community Church - Weekly Service: Wed 6:30a, Fri 8p, Sun 8a	Town Matters - Weekly Episode: Mon 6p, Wed 4:45p, Thurs 11a, Fri 11:30a, Sat 5p
St. Michael's Catholic Church Mass: Sat 4p (LIVE), Tue 6:45a & 2p, Thurs 8p	The David Pakman Show: Mon 8a, Tue 9a, Wed 5p, Fri 10:30a, Sun 5p

Note: Schedule subject to change.

View full schedule and watch online at brattleborotv.org

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‘Take a Seat’ hopes to build community by design

Contest invites people to envision six benches in Newfane where folks can sit and visit

By Virginia Ray
The Commons

NEWFANE—Town officials are inviting creative community members to design six new outdoor benches where community members can literally take a seat.

“Newfane is interested in finding ways to encourage our residents and neighbors to enjoy our beautiful town and have new places to be together,” says Selectboard member Jeff Chevalier. “I had the idea to put this competition together after the pandemic, when I realized how much I missed opportunities to see my neighbors casually and I wanted to have a spot just to sit and catch up with them.”

Each seating area will be on public land about the size of a bench intended to seat four people, which is what town officials are essentially asking folks to design.

Most sites will be visible from the road to encourage others to join those at the site.

According to a press release, designs may be whimsical or humorous, contemporary or traditional.

“The key consideration is that the design must accommodate at least four people who are seated,” the release reads. “Beyond that, creativity and imagination are encouraged.”

“I think it will be a good project,” Chevalier says. “Hopefully we can get some of our local artisans involved and I’ll be excited to see what people come up with for design ideas.”

Five locations for the benches have been chosen: the Town Office, Williamsville Hall, South Newfane Schoolhouse (now a community event space), the town forest, and the town common in front of the courthouse, which will see two benches.

Each artist or group of artists chosen to design the six benches/seating areas will receive \$2,000 to cover material and construction. Chevalier says the installation cost has been estimated for each at \$500, and the town crew will do that work.

After town residents were surveyed about potential uses for the town’s American Rescue Protection Act (ARPA) money and community gathering spaces were noted, the Selectboard voted to allocate \$15,000 for project — \$12,000 for the six winners and the balance to cover installation.

Ideas will be considered by a small committee of Newfane artisans. Applications are due by Feb. 15. Chevalier says the intention is to announce the winners at the March 5 town meeting. Installations are to be ready by June 1 although Chevalier adds, “the one thing I’ve learned in a couple of years on Selectboard is things have to be a little flexible.”

“I’d hate to rush it and not get the best product,” he says.

Artists are welcome to apply, whether they live in Newfane or not. Groups and organizations are also welcome to apply.

“We especially value collaboration and see the building of these sites as a wonderful way to get townspeople to work together in new ways. says Selectboard Chair Angela Sanborn. “Perhaps a Girl Scout troop has an idea and wants to ask some craftspeople to help them realize their plans. Perhaps an artist wants to work with a group of students from NewBrook Elementary or Leland and Gray to develop a design and build it. We welcome and encourage these collaborations.”

Application forms and competition details are available at newfanevt.com/design-proposal-application.

Boys & Girls Club announces winter programs

BRATTLEBORO—The Boys & Girls Club of Brattleboro begins 2024 at its Flat Street Teen Club with programming that offers a full range of skill-based programs focusing on workforce development, community service, environmental stewardship, and academic achievement.

The club is collaborating with HatchSpace, River Gallery School, the Art Lords, The Women’s Freedom Center, The New England Skateboard Association, Brattleboro Recreation & Parks, and the Brattleboro Police Department for these programs, which are free for members.

Membership is available for youth in the community in grades 6–12. Membership is \$25

for the year. No one is turned away for lack of funds. While all programs are free for members, space is limited to 6–12 participants per program, and registration is required. Find out more at bit.ly/748-bgc.

- Program highlights include:
- Dungeons and Dragons, Mondays, 5 to 6:30 p.m.
 - Girl Talk with the Women’s Freedom Center, Tuesdays, 5 to 6:30 p.m.
 - Minecraft, Wednesdays, 5 to 6:30 p.m.
 - Mural Mania with the Art Lords, Thursdays, 4 to 6:30 p.m.
 - Skateboarding Lessons with the New England Skateboard Association, Thursdays 4:30 to 6:30 p.m.
 - Free Throw Fridays with the

Brattleboro Police.

In addition to these offerings, the club will offer a Safe Sitter certification program on Thursdays, Feb. 29 and March 7 and 14. The club will also partner with HatchSpace to make new gaming tables after the February break.

The club is open Monday to Friday, 3 to 7 p.m., for members in grades 6–12. It offers the area’s only indoor skate park; a tech lab; a game room with a pool table, ping pong, and more; a performance space, and a music room.

They provide transportation from Brattleboro Area Middle School to the club every day and offer daily “Power Hour” homework help and academic support.

In alignment with the club’s mission, they have a technology policy that limits the amount of time members are able to be on their devices to provide a phone-free oasis for members and a chance to step away from their technology.

The club also offers after school programming at Retreat Farm for grades K–5. This outdoor, licensed program allows their youngest members to learn about the natural world, play in the woods, and gain skills and confidence through healthy risk taking and problem-solving. Limited spots are available. Learn more about Boys & Girls Club of Brattleboro on Facebook or visit bgcbrattleboro.org.

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Vigil on Jan. 18 will mark Homelessness Awareness Day

BRATTLEBORO—Join the Housing Coalition of Southeast Vermont, homeless and formerly homeless Vermonters, service providers, homelessness and housing advocates, faith communities, and other concerned citizens from Windham County “as we gather to engage with our neighbors, remember those who have died without a home, and renew our commitment to end homelessness in Vermont,” says


Fred Breunig, an organizer with the housing coalition.


The program at 4 p.m. at Pliny Park (on the corner of Main and High streets) will include a candlelight vigil and a community choir.

This is one of many events taking place across the state on Homelessness Awareness Day.

For more information, contact Breunig at fmbreunig@comcast.net.


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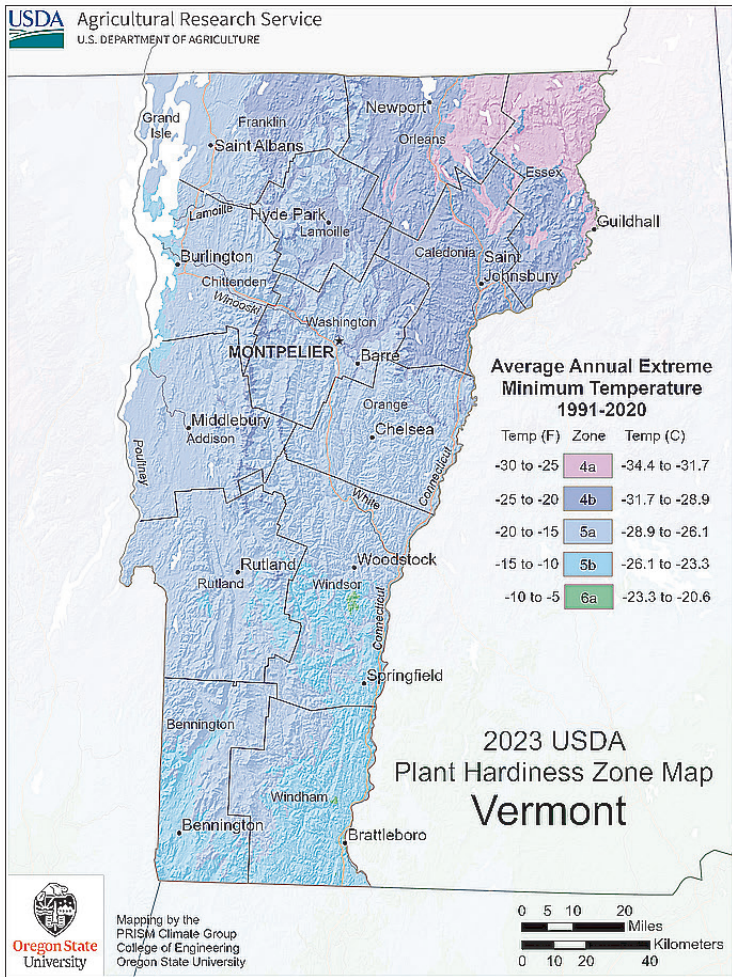
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The 2023 U.S. Department of Agriculture's Plant Hardiness Zone Map was released last fall. It was the first update to the map since 2012.

Plant zones in county change in 2024

The USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map now reflects a warmer climate in Vermont, but a UVM Extension specialist warns that the weather is also becoming more unpredictable

By Randolph T. Holhut
The Commons

BRATTLEBORO—January is the month when Vermonters pore over the seed catalogs and dream wistfully about how their flower and vegetable gardens will grow in the coming year.

And, for more than 60 years, one of the determining factors for which annuals and perennials will survive in Vermont is the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Plant Hardiness Zone Map.

The map assigns a zone number to an area, reflecting the average annual extreme low temperature in an area over a 10-year period. Gardeners use these zones to determine what plants will thrive in a specific place and when and how they need to be handled, planted, and tended.

Last fall, the USDA updated its zone maps for the first time since 2012, and the Windham County map has seen some adjustments.

West county towns such as Londonderry, Jamaica, and Wardsboro have moved from Zone 4b (20 to 25 degrees below 0) to Zone 5a (15 to 20 degrees below zero).

The rest of the county has moved from Zone 5a to Zone 5b (10 to 15 degrees below 0).

Most of Vermont is now in Zone 5a, with the Connecticut River Valley from Windsor to Vernon, parts of the Champlain Valley, and southwest Vermont south of Bennington in Zone 5b. Isolated pockets of Putney and Brattleboro, including downtown, are in Zone 6a.

Only the Northeast Kingdom is in Zone 4, with the coldest winter temperatures in the extreme northeast corner of Vermont.

So, what does this mean for Windham County farmers and gardeners? *The Commons* asked Vern Grubinger, the vegetable and berry specialist with University of Vermont Extension, for some advice.

He said that while the data suggest Vermont winters are getting warmer, growers should still be

cautious.

"Growers should plan for temperatures that are colder than the averages on the zone maps and select the plants that can survive colder temperatures," Grubinger said.

Extremes get more extreme

While growers in Vermont factor in the changes in the USDA maps when evaluating what to plant and where and when to plant it, Grubinger said older farmers tell him that the growing season used to be more predictable than it is now, and it's simply not that way any more — with 2023 being a prime example of the extremes of Vermont weather being more extreme.

In Windham County, we saw a brief burst of sub-Arctic air in early February wipe out the peach crop. In mid-May, an unexpected freeze wiped out the apple crop. In July, heavy rains and flooding left fields waterlogged, while long stretches of days breaking the 90-degree mark throughout the summer put further stress on plants.

As extreme as 2023 was for weather, climatologists say we can expect more years like it in the coming decade.

The Fifth National Climate Assessment, a report that evaluates the current effects and future trends related to climate change across the U.S., was released last fall. The Northeast Regional Climate Center at Cornell University took a deep dive into the report and found our region has gotten warmer and wetter over the past 60 years.

The report found that heat waves in the Northeast are happening more often, last longer, and are more intense than in past years. The Northeast has also seen warmer winters, with warmer nights and fewer cold days, a trend that will continue in the coming years.

The Northeast has also seen a 60% increase in the number of days with extreme precipitation

— defined as 2 inches or more of rain in a 24-hour period.

"While the changes in the new [USDA] map won't have a big impact on growers, it's the extremes in weather, as we saw this year, that will be the problem," Grubinger said.

Timing, and risk management

Grubinger said a big reason why 2023 was so hard on growers was the timing of the weather events. The deep freeze in February came at a time when peach trees are most vulnerable. Likewise for the May freeze that happened when apple trees were budding.

But he said the freeze that destroyed the apple crop in Windham County had little effect on high-bush blueberries, because it came after that crop's most vulnerable period.

And, with the late summer months being mostly dry, Grubinger said some growers were able to salvage a decent season with their fall harvests.

Growing anything in Vermont isn't easy, he said, but one way that some growers manage risk is doing more high-tunnel growing — those long plastic-covered tunnels you see at some local farms that allow farmers to grow greens and other plants outside the usual growing season.

Other ways that Grubinger said perennial growers can move the odds in their favor include optimizing irrigation and fertilization so plants are not stressed by drought or a lack of soil nutrients during the growing season.

Mulching also helps protect tree and plant roots from freezing in the winter, while burlap and snow fences can protect foliage from cold winds.

In short, he said, planning and preparation will improve the chances your garden can make it through the extremes of a changing Vermont climate.

"Early or late frosts are not going away," Grubinger said.

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Grant supports show, free workshop at NECCA for young audiences

Marta Mozelle Macrostie and her one-woman clown show, "Please Ship This Wet Gift," is coming to NECCA on Jan. 28.



COURTESY PHOTO

BRATTLEBORO—The New England Center for Circus Arts (NECCA) recently received a grant from the New England Foundation for the Arts to bring in a show specifically for family audiences as well as a free workshop by the performers, also for young people and their families.

Please Ship this Wet Gift will be performed as a one-hour matinee at 4 p.m. on Saturday, Jan. 27, at the circus school Trapezium, and the free workshop is on Sunday, Jan. 28, from 1 to 2 p.m.

Marta Mozelle MacRostie and her one-woman

clown show, *Please Ship This Wet Gift*, "is the perfect show to expand NECCA's options for young and family audiences," organizers said in a news release. "This upbeat and funny performance is one clown's presentation about terrible feelings, and provides an opportunity for family audiences to laugh together about feeling bad."

MacRostie is the artistic director of Brave Bucket, her company that makes puppet theater for family and adult audiences that she says is "playful, rooted in complex characters, and

tells original stories."

Using drawing, audience suggestions, made-up songs, puppetry, and cardboard sharks to explore dealing with the things in life that are unfair, scary, sad, and just really annoying, *Wet Gift* melds clown theater with puppetry expertise to bring compassion and lightness to the heavy stuff.

The show is funded in part by the New England States Touring (NEST) program of the New England Foundation for the Arts, made possible with funding from the National Endowment

for the Arts Regional Touring Program and the six New England state arts agencies.

Tickets for the Saturday show are free for children under 2, \$10 for children under 12 and seniors, \$15 for those over 12, and \$25 for VIP seats. The Sunday workshop is free, but pre-registration is requested. Tickets and registration are at necenterforcircusarts.org or 802-254-9780.

ECDC, Sandglass team up to tell the story of refugees in Vermont

BRATTLEBORO—The Ethiopian Community Development Council (ECDC) and Sandglass Theater invite everyone to experience the refugee journey firsthand through two events in Brattleboro. These events will raise awareness about the challenges and triumphs faced by refugees resettling in the community while also generating support for ECDC's vital work.

This is a fundraising event for ECDC, sponsored in part by the Doris Duke Building Bridges Program's grant to Sandglass Theater and the New England Foundations for the Arts National Theater Project's support of Sandglass's *Babylon* Project.

On Saturday, Jan. 20, at 3 p.m., Sandglass will present the film version of its award-winning production, *Babylon: Journeys of Refugees*, at the Latchis Theatre's main theater. This film uses puppets to offer a deeper understanding of the refugee experience, showcasing the resilience and hope of individuals forced to rebuild their lives in a new land.

Babylon was first shown as a work-in-progress event at Putney's Next Stage in April

2017. With the feedback from that event, Sandglass went on to create a much further developed and refined final version of the piece, which toured the Northeastern U.S. until March 2020, when the Covid pandemic caused all touring to be cancelled.

On the eve of a West Coast tour, with no further prospects to take the show on the road, Sandglass turned *Babylon* into a film, working together with Haptic Pictures in Guilford.

The result of this collaboration is a one-hour film of the live performance with close up portrayal of the puppets and actors. This event is recommended for audiences aged 14 and older.

Working with the USCRI Vermont (U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants), Sandglass conducted research and interviews with new residents, who immigrated to the U.S., to gain insight into their plight and the challenges of resettlement.

Babylon explores the relationship of refugees to their homelands, lost and new, and the conflicts that exist within the countries to which they flee. Using puppets and moving

panoramic scrolls, five actor/singer/puppeteers tell refugees' stories in original four-part choral songs.

At 10 a.m. that day, ECDC will host the Refugee Journey workshop, a board game developed by Laurie Stavrand (of USCRI Vermont), in collaboration with Sandglass' Jana Zeller. The event will take place at the Multicultural Community Center at 122 Birge St.

This immersive experience puts audience members in the shoes of a refugee, navigating bureaucratic hurdles, cultural adjustments, and personal challenges before they even board the plane to arrive in their new country.

This event has limited seating and reservations are required.

Tickets for both events are by donation: a \$5 suggested donation for the workshop, and \$10 to \$25 (sliding scale) for the film. To register for the workshop, visit bit.ly/748-workshop. To pre-order film tickets, go to bit.ly/748-film. Learn more about ECDC's work at ecdcus.org and about *Babylon* at sandglasstheater.org.



COURTESY PHOTO

Art Costa

Build cardboard creatures with sculptor Art Costa at BMAC

BRATTLEBORO—The Brattleboro Museum & Art Center (BMAC) invite the public to join Art Costa for a cardboard-sculpture-making workshop on Saturday, Jan. 27, from 2 to 4 p.m.

Inspired by Costa's own sculptures currently on display at the museum in an exhibit titled "Sounds Deep," this workshop will enable participants to discover the creative possibilities that can arise from this ubiquitous, recyclable material.

Costa's artwork in "Sounds Deep" takes viewers down below the surface of the ocean, into a world of strange, colorful creatures that seem extraterrestrial but are based on actual deep-sea organisms. Costa works with cardboard, sand, and other

natural or recycled materials, and participants in the BMAC workshop will do the same. They'll build and decorate their own version of a sea slug (also known as a nudibranch), starting with a simple cardboard form and adding color and animation to their abstract creatures.

Both the creatures and the recycled materials used to make them are Costa's way of sharing information about the life that teems deep in the oceans. They are tools to "inspire a collective effort to protect Earth's fragile environments," he says.

Participants in the workshop should feel comfortable using a paintbrush, scissors, and a low-temperature hot-glue gun. Any artist under the age of 10 or who

is unable to use these tools independently should be accompanied by a helper.

Everyone is welcome at this community event, and any questions or concerns about the skills needed to participate can be directed to Kate Milliken, BMAC manager of education programs, at education@brattleboromuseum.org.

Admission is \$35 and \$20 for BMAC members. All materials are included. Space is limited, so registration is required. To register, visit brattleboromuseum.org or call 802-257-0124, ext. 101. The workshop takes place next door to the museum at 28 Vernon St. There is parking available on-site.

Pianist performs at BMC on Jan. 19

BRATTLEBORO—The Brattleboro Music Center's Chamber Series continues Friday, Jan. 19, with pianist Benjamin Hochman, in a concert entitled "Resonances."

In all roles, from orchestral soloist, recitalist and chamber musician to conductor, Hochman says he regards music as vital and essential. "Composers, fellow musicians, orchestras, and audiences all recognize his deep commitment to insightful programming

and performances of quality," organizers say in a news release.

The program for the 7 p.m. concert at the BMC includes Carlo Gesualdo's *Madrigals* in five voices, arranged by Hochman; Oliver Knussen's "Prayer Bell Sketch," Op. 29; John Dowland's "Pavane Lachrymae," P. 15/MB54, arranged by William Byrd; George Benjamin's *Shadowlines, Six Canonic Preludes*; Josquin de Prez's "Ave Christie," arranged by Charles Wuorinen;

Galina Ustvolskaya's *Twelve Preludes*; and Ludwig van Beethoven's *Sonata No. 30* in E major, Op. 109.

Tickets are \$30 general admission and may be purchased through the Brattleboro Music Center website at bmcvt.org, calling 802-257-4523, by emailing info@bmcvt.org, or at the door. A limited number of reduced-priced tickets are available; call the BMC for information.

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Girl Scout Cookie season kicks off in Vermont

COLCHESTER—Girl Scouts of the Green and White Mountains kicked off the 2024 Girl Scout Cookie season in Vermont and New Hampshire with a cookie rally on Saturday, Jan. 6, as they prepared for the annual Girl Scout Cookie program.

“These Girl Scouts are unboxing their futures as young female entrepreneurs through the world’s largest entrepreneurial program for girls,” organizers said in a news release. “The rally featured games and other activities to introduce the newest Girl Scouts to the cookie program, teaching them how to safely take cookie orders and deliver them to their customers,

familiarizing them with the different flavors, and imparting valuable business skills.”

This year’s theme for the sale is “Unbox the Future,” which “aims to remove social barriers that often keep girls boxed in.” Nearly 700,000 Girl Scouts participate in the Girl Scout Cookie Program.

“All proceeds from cookie sales stay with local councils and troops to power Girl Scouts’ amazing experiences year-round,” say organizers.

Girl Scouts in grades K–12 can start their journey to fun, friendship, and new experiences by joining at any point in the year at [girlscouts.org/join](https://www.girlscouts.org/join). Adults can sign up there

to volunteer as well.

Girl Scout Cookie season is recognized nationally from January through April, but local timing varies. Girl Scouts are now taking cookie orders.

This season, cookie lovers can enjoy the full assortment of cookies, including fan favorites such as Thin Mints, Samoas, and Do-si-dos.

Orders can be placed by talking to a local Girl Scout, contacting a Girl Scout through the Cookie Finder at bit.ly/748-cookie, texting “Cookies” to 59618, or visiting [girlscoutcookies.org](https://www.girlscoutcookies.org) to sign up for notifications as soon as a local troop begins selling.

Water quality plan for Deerfield, Connecticut Rivers under discussion

BRATTLEBORO—State planners and regional water quality partners are hosting a virtual meeting on Wednesday, Jan. 24, at 6 p.m. to introduce the state’s kick-off of the update to the Tactical Basin Plan for the Deerfield and lower Connecticut Rivers and adjacent Connecticut River Tributaries (Basin 12).

This plan is being developed to protect and restore rivers, lakes, and wetlands in southeastern Vermont from Stratton to Vernon. Register in advance for this meeting at bit.ly/748-river.

The public is invited to provide input on regional water quality and river habitat concerns. Watershed Planner Marie Caduto will present an overview of the current conditions in the watershed and provide an update on the progress made since the 2020 plan was implemented.

Input can be submitted

during the meeting or via email to Marie.Caduto@vermont.gov or mailed to Marie Caduto, Basin 10 Comments, Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation, 100 Mineral St., Suite 303, Springfield, VT 05156.

The Tactical Basin Plan identifies actions that will protect or improve rivers, lakes, and wetlands through cost-effective projects, including floodplain restorations and dam removals.

The plan will set priority strategies focused on water quality and aquatic habitat to be implemented over the coming five years. One such project identified in the previous plan is the floodplain restoration work being implemented on Birge Street in Brattleboro.

Pre-register for the Jan. 24 meeting through the Windham Regional Commission at [windhamregional.org](https://www.windhamregional.org).



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The area encompassing Basin 12.

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

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

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

- Sign up to receive written notification** from your local electric utility of plans to apply herbicide on any ROW within 1000’ of your property or the property where you reside. Check nearby poles for tags identifying the utility and/or pole number, complete the form below and submit it to your local electric utility by mail before February 15th, 2024 to be added to the notification list. If determined to be qualified, you will receive notification from the utility at least 30 days prior to scheduled herbicide application.
- You are responsible to make your local electric utility aware** of the location of any potentially affected water supply, and of any other environmentally sensitive area where herbicide application ought to be avoided.
- Watch and listen for public service announcements** in newspapers and radio ads noting upcoming herbicide applications.
- Check with your local electric utility** regarding the vegetation management cycle near your particular line.
- You have the right** to request, in writing, that the utility refrain from applying herbicides in the process of clearing the right-of-way, and the utility may offer alternatives such as herbicide stump treatment or herbicide stem injections.
- You have the right** to refuse, in writing, the use of herbicides whatsoever at no cost to you if the type of lines in the right-of-way are **distribution lines**, bringing electric service directly to individual customers.
- You have the right** to refuse, in writing, the use of herbicides whatsoever by paying a \$30 administration fee if the type of lines in the right-of-way are **transmission lines** or **sub-transmission lines**, bringing electricity to or between substations.

For more details, or to ask additional questions, please contact your local electric utility, or one of the following:

(leave blank for local electric co. mailing address and phone)	<p style="text-align: center;">Agency of Agriculture Public Health & Ag. Resource Mgmt 116 State St., Montpelier, VT 05602 1-802-828-2431</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Department of Public Service Consumer Affairs & Public Information 112 State St., Montpelier, VT 05620 1-800-622-4496</p>
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Based on the information above, if you believe you qualify to be notified in advance of pending herbicide applications in the rights-of-way, mail the request below to your local electric company before February 15th, 2024.

Resident/Property Owner Request to be Added to Herbicide Treatment Notification Mailing List	
Name	Town/City of Affected Property
Street Address	Home Phone Number
Town	Work Phone Number
State	Zip Code
Electric Utility Account Number	O.K. to use work number? Yes No (circle one)
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Affected Property: <input type="checkbox"/> Year-Round Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Summer Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial Property <input type="checkbox"/> Water Supply <input type="checkbox"/> Organic Farm <input type="checkbox"/> Land Other (Circle all that apply)	
Line/Pole Identification: Utility Initials Pole Numbers	
Please fill out this request completely to help us determine if you qualify for herbicide treatment notification. MAIL THIS REQUEST TO YOUR LOCAL ELECTRIC UTILITY AT THE ADDRESS LISTED ABOVE BEFORE FEBRUARY 15TH, 2024	

arts & community CALENDAR

THURSDAY	THURSDAY CONT.	FRIDAY CONT.	SATURDAY CONT.	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY CONT.
18	<p>Community meals</p> <p>WILLIAMSVILLE Breakfast at Williamsville Hall: This monthly breakfast, offered by Friends of Williamsville Hall, is open to everyone. Enjoy homemade pancakes, pastries, tea, coffee, and orange juice.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ 8 - 10:30 a.m. Hall is ADA compliant. ▶ Free - donations appreciated. ▶ Williamsville Hall, Dover Rd. Information: williamsvillehall.com. <p>Ideas and education</p> <p>WEST DUMMERSTON "Wonder and Awe in Natural World": Dummerston Conservation presents a talk with Matthew Boulton: In this interactive talk, we'll explore the role of wonder and amazement - from the astonishing size of the universe to the tiny marvels of ice and snow - in our personal and communal lives - including the work of conservation. We'll examine recent scientific research on the life-giving power of awe and ways we can incorporate more of it into our everyday routines. All are welcome.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ 7 p.m. Matthew Myer Boulton is a writer and Emmy-winning filmmaker based in Keene, NH. He served on the faculty of Harvard Divinity School and is currently working on a book exploring the wonders of the Connecticut River valley. ▶ \$5 suggested donation split between Dummerston Community Center and Dummerston Conservation Commission. ▶ Dummerston Community Center, 166 West St. Information: 802-254-2703. 	<p>ill-informed engagement or covering up a scandal.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ 6:15 p.m. doors open, show starts 7 p.m. both days. An Evening with Jeeves & Wooster features two of their adventures, "Jeeves Takes Charge" and "Bertie Changes His Mind," with James Gelter as Bertie Wooster and Tony Grobe as Jeeves. Hors d'oeuvres served before the show and during intermission. ▶ Through Saturday, January 20. ▶ Tickets are \$5 each (cash only at door). ▶ Hooker-Dunham Theater, 139 Main St. Information: To reserve a seat, email bakerstreetreaders@gmail.com. <p>Film and video</p> <p>WILLIAMSVILLE "Shawshank Redemption" (Rated R): This 1994 film, based on Stephen King's 1982 novella, follows banker Andy Dufresne, played by Tim Robbins, whose been sentenced, despite his claim of innocence, to Shawshank State Penitentiary for the murders of his wife and her lover. Over 20 years, he befriends a fellow prisoner played by Morgan Freeman - contraband smuggler Ellis "Red" Redding - and becomes involved in a money laundering scheme led by the prison warden.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ 7:30 - 9:10 p.m. ▶ Your donation will help raise funds for Williamsville Hall. ▶ Williamsville Hall, Dover Rd. Information: williamsvillehall.com. 	<p>of death with no agenda, objectives or themes. It's a discussion group rather than grief support or counseling session.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ 1-3 p.m. "Brattleboro Area Hospice provides a broad range of services for living and dying well, focusing on end-of-life, bereavement, advance care planning. Programs reflect our community's values of kindness, decency, and dignity. All services free of charge and are available to anyone living in Southeastern VT or bordering NH towns." ▶ Free and open to the public. ▶ Putney Friends Meeting House, 17 Bellows Falls Rd. To learn more, visit: www.brattleborohospice.org. RSVP as space is limited: Email info@brattleborohospice.org or call 802-257-0775. <p>Visual arts and shows</p> <p>PUTNEY Reception for Alice Freeman's Show "Still Life" (Show runs through March 2): Alice says: "For me painting is all about color and the joy it produces: in the doing of it and in the looking at it. Watercolor is my preferred medium because of its unexpected quality and the knowledge that I never have complete control over it. Much of the magic happens on the paper after the brush has been lifted. I am attracted to brightness and intensity, while at the same time enjoying delicacy and detail. Watercolor has it all!"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Reception: 3-4:30 p.m. ▶ Free. ▶ Putney Public Library, 55 Main St. Information: 802-387-4407; putneylibrary.org/events. 	23	<p>tips, activities in each book and ways to put these ideas into practice."</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Free. ▶ Putney Public Library, 55 Main St. Information: 802-387-4407; putneylibrary.org/events. <p>Community meals</p> <p>DUMMERSTON Evening Star Grange & Senior Solutions host Senior Lunch: Menu: Chicken al King over Moodles. Vegetarian option is plant-based Hamburger in sauce over Noodles, Marinated Carrots. Bread Pudding for dessert.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ 11:30 a.m. 1:30 p.m. 12 noon: In-house seating. Reservations strongly suggested so we have an idea how much food to make. ▶ Donation of \$3 for those age 60 and above, \$4 age 59 and under. ▶ Evening Star Grange, 1008 East-West Rd. Information: Call Grange Hall: 802-254-1138 and leave your name, phone #, number of meals you will be eating in or take out.
19	<p>Performing arts</p> <p>PUTNEY Improvisational Artist and Musician Lonnie Holly with Afrofuturist Collective Mourning: Lonnie Holly devoted his life to practice improvisational creativity. His art, music, born out of struggle, hardship, curiosity, biological necessity manifested in music/drawing/painting/sculpture/photography/performance/filmmaking. Sculptures constructed from found materials in the oldest tradition of African American sculpture. Objects, already imbued with cultural/artistic metaphor, are combined into narrative sculptures commemorating places/people/events.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ 7:30 p.m. Holley's work is in collections of major museums worldwide. Next Stage provides beer, wine, cocktail cash bar. ▶ \$20 in advance, \$25 at door, \$10 livestream. ▶ Next Stage Arts Project, 15 Kimball Hill. Information: Advance ticketing closes two hours before showtime. <p>BRATTLEBORO The Readers: An Evening with Jeeves & Wooster: Bertie Wooster and his trusty valet, Jeeves, are creations of P.G. Woodhouse, who wrote 35 short stories and 11 novels about the pair. Wooster is a young, wealthy man who has never worked a day in his life while Jeeves is his "gentleman's gentleman," always on hand to press his trousers or brew his tea. The moneyed classes of England rely on these two men to solve the thorniest of social difficulties, like ending an</p>	<p style="text-align: center; vertical-align: middle;">20</p> <p>Music</p> <p>BRATTLEBORO Second Saturday with Sharon & Daniel: With playful harmonies, acoustic guitars, percussion, keyboards and upright bass, Sharon Leslie and Daniel Kasnitz perform fresh renditions of classic hits with a funky, jazzy twist. From standards to captivatingly re-worked top-40 to seasonal favorites. Enjoy fun and food without breaking the bank.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ 7 p.m. ▶ Admission is free. ▶ Latchis Pub & Latchis Underground, 6 Flat St. Information: More information: daniel.kasnitz@kasnitz.com, kasnitz.com. <p>Kids and families</p> <p>GUILFORD Storytime: Storytime usually starts with a song or two, before jumping into a book or a story. After that, who knows, it could be an action rhyme, a play, another song, some puppets, dancing with scarves. It all depends on the children in the room. Join us as we create a special time for young children.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ 10:30 a.m. Note: Storytime is still also offered on Tuesdays at 2 p.m. or 3 p.m. ▶ Free. ▶ Guilford Free Library, 4024 Guilford Center Rd. Information: 802-257-4603; guilfordfreelibraryvt.org. <p>Community building</p> <p>BELLOWS FALLS Meet with Your Legislators at the Rockingham Library: Chat with your Windham County Senators Nader Hashim, Wendy Harrison and Windham-3 (Brookline, Rockingham, Westminster) House Reps Michelle Bos-Lun, Leslie Goldman. Opportunity for community members to ask questions about issues addressed in the Legislature. Get updates about expected legislative priorities and pending bills. This meeting will help your senators/ reps understand what's important to you.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ 10:30 a.m. Come for a conversation about current issues and bring your questions. More community conversations are planned for the 3rd Saturday each month during legislative session February through May. Accessible to those with disabilities. ▶ Free. ▶ Rockingham Free Public Library, 65 Westminster St. Information: programming@rockinghamlibrary.org, 802-463-4270. <p>PUTNEY Death Cafe at Putney Friends Meeting House: At a Death Cafe people, often strangers, gather to eat snacks, drink tea, and discuss death. Our objective is "to increase awareness of death with a view to helping people make the most of their (&#64257;nite) lives". A Death Cafe is a group-directed discussion</p>	<p style="text-align: center; vertical-align: middle;">21</p> <p>Performing arts</p> <p>WILLIAMSVILLE Rock River Players announce Annual Meeting - open to the public: All are welcome to come hear a brief review of RRP's 2023 work and to hear plans - contribute to plans - for 2024's lineup of one-acts, full-length plays, guest presenter series, improv jams, cabarets.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ 3 p.m. on the lower level. ▶ Free. ▶ Williamsville Hall, Dover Rd. Information: williamsvillehall.com. <p>Music</p> <p>BRATTLEBORO Meditation & Creation: "A Duet of Sound and Color": Artist Julia Volodina and percussionist/gong specialist Stephan Brandstatter combine their talents to create an improvised soundscape and an original, abstract-expressionist work of art. Volodina will create a painting whilst working within the sound environment created by Brandstatter.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ 1 p.m. This improvised event, presented by the Latchis Gallery and Latchis Arts, takes place in Theatre 4, a performance space connected to the Latchis Gallery. ▶ Admission is free; donations accepted. ▶ Latchis 4 Gallery, 50 Main St. <p>The written word</p> <p>GUILFORD "Eclipse Folklore as Inspiration: A Creative Writing Workshop" with GennaRose Nethercott: Unleash your creativity under the shadow of upcoming solar eclipse. Eclipses have meant many things to many people throughout history - from end times omens to cosmic messages. In this workshop, we'll take a tour through eclipse folklore, myths, and superstitions, and then reimagine these old stories to create new ones of our own. This is a generative workshop; walk in with a blank page, walk out with new writing!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ 1 - 2:30 p.m. Open to all levels of writing, ages 14 and up. Bring a notebook and something to write with - no other materials needed. ▶ Free. ▶ Broad Brook Community Center, 3940 Guilford Center Rd. Information: More information, call 802-257-4603 or email staff@guilfordfreelibraryvt.org. 	24	<p>Well-being</p> <p>BRATTLEBORO Brattleboro Walk-In Clinic: Primary medical treatment for patients ages 18 to 64 in our community who do not have health insurance or who cannot afford their high deductibles or co-insurance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ 5 - 6:30 p.m. on Tuesdays. ▶ Brattleboro Walk-In Clinic, 191 Clark Ave. Information: 802-251-8484; brattleborowalkinclinic.com. <p>Community building</p> <p>PUTNEY Cultivating Community Book Group with Trish Roberts at Putney Public Library: Let's talk about how to build stronger connections in our lives and cultivate a deeper sense of belonging in our community. Each month we'll read a book published within the last three years that offers inspiring, actionable advice on how to grow a more connected world. Today, we'll discuss "We Should Get Together" by Kat Vellos. According to the publisher, this is "the handbook for anyone who's ready for better friendships, now."</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ 6:30-8 p.m. Putney Library cardholders can pick up a copy at the library. Millions struggle with ongoing ache: platonic longing, which is the unfulfilled wish for close/authentic/resilient friendships. But it doesn't have to be this way. Making/maintaining friendships during adulthood can be hard or - with a bit of intention and creativity - joyful. Combining expert research and personal stories pulled from conversations with hundreds of adults, "We Should Get Together" is the modern handbook for making and maintaining stronger friendships." We'll gather monthly to discuss strategies,
					<p>Community building</p> <p>BRATTLEBORO Board Gaming Guild offered at Brooks Memorial Library: Stop by to have a great time playing board games.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ 3:15-4:15 p.m. in the Children's Room. Appropriate for ages 8 and over. ▶ Free. ▶ Brooks Memorial Library, 224 Main St. No sign-up required. 802-254-5290; brookslibraryvt.org.

Music

Brattleboro Women's Chorus offers Workshop "Singing in the Spirit: African American Sacred Music Tradition" (Online): Dr. Kathy Bullock leads this Zoom workshop open to any singer near or far. Spirituals/gospel music are more than pleasing songs to listen to - they're powerful representations of the triumphant spirit and faith that defined African-American music and people. Bullock takes the audience on a musical journey from W. Africa, through the middle passage, to North American shores where African-American culture was forged.

- ▶ 7 p.m. Through songs/stories/performance, this participatory program lets the audience experience the power, beauty, joy of this music and culture.
- ▶ \$15 to \$25 per person (sliding scale).
- ▶ Zoom. Those registered will receive a recording as well. Advance registration required online to receive Zoom link: BrattleboroWomensChorus.org/workshops.

Kids and families

BRATTLEBORO LEGO-Palooza: We provide the LEGOs. You build. Do not bring your own LEGOs. Children cannot keep LEGOs, but if there is enough room, we will display them in the window.

- ▶ 3:30-5:30 p.m. this Thursday.
- ▶ Free and open to the public.
- ▶ Brooks Memorial Library, 224 Main St. Information: 802-254-5290; brookslibraryvt.org.

Community building

BRATTLEBORO Vermont's Annual Homelessness Awareness Day: Join the Housing Coalition of Southeast VT, homeless/formerly homeless VTers, service providers, homelessness and housing advocates, faith communities, other concerned citizens from Windham County as we gather to engage with our neighbors, remember those who died without a home, renew our commitment to end homelessness in VT. Program includes a candle-light vigil and a community choir. This is one of many events taking place across VT on Homelessness Awareness Day.

- ▶ 4 p.m. Fred Breunig, organizer, Southeast Vermont Housing Coalition.
- ▶ Free.
- ▶ Pliny Park, Corner Main & High St.

To submit your event: calendar@commonsnews.org

Deadline: 5 p.m. Friday

Rock River Players kick off 2024 season with its annual meeting on Jan. 21

WILLIAMSVILLE—The Rock River Players launch 2024 with several events planned for the next few Saturdays.

On Saturday, Jan. 21, at 3 p.m., the annual meeting of the Rock River Players will be held in the lower level of the Williamsville Hall on Dover Road. All are welcome to the event to hear a brief review of RRP's 2023 work and to hear plans, and contribute to plans, for 2024's lineup of one-acts, full-length plays, a guest presenter series, improv jams, and cabarets.

On Jan. 27 at 7 p.m., the Hall hosts *Rockin' The River: Three Duos and One Night of Hand-made Music* to benefit the Williamsville Hall and the Rock River Players, featuring members of Demolition String Band — Elena Skye and Boo Reiners, The Cucumbers — Jon Fried and Deena Shoskes, and Bard Owl — Annie Landenberger and T. Breeze Verdant.

All are seasoned performers and creators who will come together to swap songs and stories for a memorable winter's evening of music.

On Saturday, Feb. 3, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., the Rock River Players host an improvisation training at the Hall. This open-to-the-public workshop is led by Burlington-based musician and

actor, Karlie Kauffeld.

A Leland & Gray and University of Vermont graduate, Kauffeld co-founded and directed Leland & Gray's Summer Performing Arts Explorations for 11 years and served as artistic director of the school's 2018 Journey East.

Having studied short- and long-form improvisation at the Vermont Comedy Club with Nathan Hartswick and Natalie Miller, Kauffeld says, "I'm very happy to be coming back to the area and to lead another RRP improv workshop."

Workshop participants should wear comfortable clothing and bring their own lunches; snacks will be provided. The workshop is offered by donation. To register, contact Annie Landenberger at 802-451-6283 or verbatimvt@gmail.com.

The annual RRP Valentine's Cabaret is back on the weekend of Feb. 9-11, with an evening rich in sketches, solos, comedy, and song. Performances are Friday and Saturday at 7 p.m. and Sunday at 3 p.m. Admission is \$12 for cabaret-table seating; Valentine's fare will be offered. For advance purchase go to rockriverplayers.org.

For more information about the Rock River Players write info@rockriverplayers.org.



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MON.-THUR.	4:15 & 6:40

THE IRON CLAW R

FRIDAY	4:15 / 6:40 / 9:15
SATURDAY	2 / 6:50 / 9:15
SUNDAY	2 & 6:50
MON.-THUR.	4:15 & 6:50

MEAN GIRLS PG-13

FRIDAY	4:15 / 6:45 / 9:15
SATURDAY	1:45 / 6:45 / 9:15
SUNDAY	1:45 & 6:45
MON.-THUR.	4:15 & 6:45

THE BOY AND THE HERON PG-13

FRIDAY	4:15 / 7 / 9:15
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Volodina, Brandstatter reschedule Latchis show to Sunday, Jan. 21

BRATTLEBORO—On Sunday, January 21, at 1 p.m., the Latchis Gallery will host "Meditation & Creation—A Duet of Sound and Color," rescheduled after being postponed on Jan. 7 due to weather.

Artist Julia Volodina and percussionist/gong specialist Stephan Brandstatter will combine their talents to create both an improvised soundscape and an original, abstract-impressionist work of art. Volodina will create a painting while working within the sound environment created by Brandstatter.

This improvised event will take place in Theatre 4 of the historic Latchis Theatre complex, a performance space connected to the Latchis Gallery.

Before working on a painting, Volodina relaxes into a place of active meditation. She finds energy by shedding the chaos of daily life to clear her mind before putting paint to canvas. With this event she invites attendees to enter that space with her, and

follow the evolution of an artwork brushstroke by brushstroke.

Simultaneously, Brandstatter will create a soundscape, combining gongs, bells, tuned brass bowls, drums, chimes, rainsticks, and his voice.

"The effect the artists intend is for people to enjoy a time of peace and beauty, to join them in meditation and calming of the mind, to detach from the everyday and enjoy a moment of tranquility, creativity, sound and color," Latchis Arts Executive Director Jon Potter said in a news release.

For 25 years, Brandstatter has been an advocate for the spiritual and medicinal powers of the gong. He has assisted in healing sessions, celebratory events, weddings, memorials, sacred rituals, yoga practices, and gong baths. He espouses how sound and the power of the gong can help create health and well-being for people

and the planet.

It took almost 25 years for artist Volodina to break from the strictures of the Soviet Realism School of art in which she was trained to embrace Intuitive Abstract Impressionism as the reflection of her artistic vision, she says. In her studios in Vermont and Spain, she explores the interplay of line, color, and form and the practice of removing herself from the process and allowing the painting to develop on its own. She is currently the featured artist at the Latchis Gallery.

"This spontaneous invention of meditation, painting, and soundscape recalls the importance of chance in the moment of artistic creation that was espoused by John Cage and others in the 20th century," say the artists in a news release. "All that occurs in this event is part of the artistic and spiritual whole, between artists, audience and the



Julia Volodina

COURTESY PHOTO

surroundings, with the form and results unplanned."

Audience participation in the soundscape is encouraged as part of the creative process.

The Latchis Gallery, 50 Main St., is next to the Latchis Theatre. For more information, call 802-689-6596 or visit [facebook.com/juliartvt](https://www.facebook.com/juliartvt).

2024 Catholic Worker Calendars now available

BRATTLEBORO—Rita Corbin, a graphic artist and printmaker, became involved in the Catholic Worker movement while living in New York City in the 1950s. The co-founder of the Catholic Worker movement and *Catholic Worker* newspaper, Dorothy Day, hired Corbin to make illustrations for the newspaper, and they became friends.

Corbin became a lifelong contributor and was one of the three primary Catholic Worker artists, along with Fritz Eichenberg and Ade Bethune.

In 1954, she married Martin Corbin, editor and literary critic. They worked on *Liberation* magazine with activist Dave Dellinger, in New Jersey where their first three children (Dorothy, Maggie and Sara) were born. In 1964, the family moved to the Catholic Worker Farm in Tivoli, New York, and two more children (Coretta and Martin) were born. She began publishing the Catholic Worker calendar with her original art and hand lettering, as well as notecards and Christmas cards.

Corbin and her youngest

children moved to Brattleboro in 1981, and she lived in this area off and on until her death in 2011. She also spent a few years in Worcester, Massachusetts, developing strong ties with the Catholic Worker communities there.

Her work has appeared in many well-known religious publications, including *The Christian Science Monitor*, *Commonweal Magazine*, *Fellowship Magazine*, and *Catholic Digest*. Her artwork has been shown at Rockhurst College in Kansas City,

the Worcester Art Museum in Massachusetts, and the Sacketts Brook Gallery in Putney.

Corbin died in November 2011 due to injuries from a car accident. Every year since then, her children who live in the Brattleboro area continue to publish the calendar and cards using her artwork. Although the calendars are primarily sold by mail order through the *Catholic Worker* newspaper, there will be some still for sale at Everyone's Books in Brattleboro.

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Guilford Free Library presents creative writing workshop with GennaRose Nethercott

GUILFORD—GennaRose Nethercott will present a creative writing workshop on Sunday, Jan. 21. "Eclipse Folklore as Inspiration" will be held at 1 p.m. at the Broad Brook Community Center in Guilford Center. In this workshop, participants will take a tour through eclipse folklore, myths, and superstitions, and then reimagine these old stories to create new ones.

Nethercott is the author of a novel, *Thistlefoot*, the soon-to-be-published *Fifty Beasts to Break*

Your Heart, and a book-length poem, *The Lumberjack's Dove*, which was selected by Louise Glück as a winner of the National Poetry Series.

As a folklorist, Nethercott helps create the podcasts "Lore" and "Harlots," the latter of which she also hosts, and she tours nationally and internationally, performing strange tales — sometimes with puppets in tow. She lives in the woodlands of Brattleboro, beside an old cemetery.

Solar eclipses have inspired many writers, from Mark Twain through Stephen King, and are an important part of the folklore of many civilizations, ancient to modern. Vermont will get to see one (with roughly 96% totality in southern Vermont) on April 8.

The Guilford Free Library has been preparing for the eclipse since September with displays, activities, and books. In March, several instructor-led activities will also be presented. During eclipse activities, the library will

be distributing about 400 pair of safe eclipse viewing glasses to participants.

The writing workshop is free and open to all levels of writing, ages 14 and up. Bring a notebook and something to write with — no other materials are needed. For more information, call 802-257-4603 or email staff@guilfordfreelibraryvt.org.

As Nethercott describes it, this is a generative workshop: walk in with a blank page, and walk out with new writing.

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Next Stage hosts Lonnie Holley and Afrofuturist collective Mourning [A] BLKstar

PUTNEY—Next Stage Arts presents improvisational artist and musician Lonnie Holley in performance with Afrofuturist collective Mourning [A] BLKstar at Next Stage, 15 Kimball Hill, on Friday, Jan. 19 at 7:30 p.m.

"Lonnie's work over the past few decades has been a shining example of an outsider artist's work becoming so meaningful that the establishment has to take notice," Keith Marks, executive director of Next Stage, said in a news release. "The pairing of Lonnie's work backed by Mourning [A] BLKstar is one of those once-in-a-lifetime opportunities — Afrofuturism at its best."

Since 1979, Lonnie Holley has devoted his life to the practice of improvisational creativity. Also a sculptor with works

exhibited nationally, Holley did not start making and performing music in a studio, nor does his creative process mirror that of the typical musician. His music and lyrics are improvised on the spot and morph and evolve with every event, concert, and recording.

In Holley's original art environment, he would construct and deconstruct his visual works, repurposing their elements for new pieces. The layers of sound in Holley's music, likewise, are the result of decades of evolving experimentation.

A multi-generational, gender, and genre non-conforming amalgam of Black culture, the group Mourning [A] BLKstar is dedicated to sharing stories and songs of America's unfolding apocalypse. "Their music melds live instrumentation with hip-hop production creating sonic frequencies that illuminate the African Diaspora," say organizers.

Founded in Cleveland, the U.S.-based Afrofuturist collective continues touring their music across Europe and the U.S., playing festivals from Crossing Border in Berlin with Lonnie Holley to Big Ears Festival and Le Guess Who? in Utrecht.

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

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LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

When raising fees saves taxpayers money

As we face tightening finances in state government, the Legislature's decision to raise DMV fees for the first time in years was the fiscally responsible thing to do

WHAT DOES IT MEAN to be fiscally responsible? When it comes to Vermont transportation, it means being clear about where the rubber meets the road.

Like other states, we in Vermont pay for our transportation program using a mix of funding sources. Revenue comes from the gas and diesel tax, a portion of the motor vehicle purchase and use tax, revenue and fees associated with the use of the state's airports, and fees for driver's licenses and vehicle registrations.

In turn, these state transportation revenues unlock federal dollars to maintain and repair state and town roads and bridges, improve Vermont's railways and airports, fund public transportation, provide municipal grants to address clean water and climate resiliency, and create a 21st-century transportation system that's clean and affordable for everyone.

In most cases, for every \$2 the state invests, we can draw down \$8 in federal matching-grant funds.

Since entering office, Gov. Scott has touted his track

SARA COFFEY, a Democrat, represents Guilford and Vernon in the Vermont House of Representatives, where she chairs the House Transportation Committee.

record for not raising fees. In his State of the State address on Jan. 4, the governor continued to bash what the Legislature did last year in increasing fees for Department of Motor Vehicles.

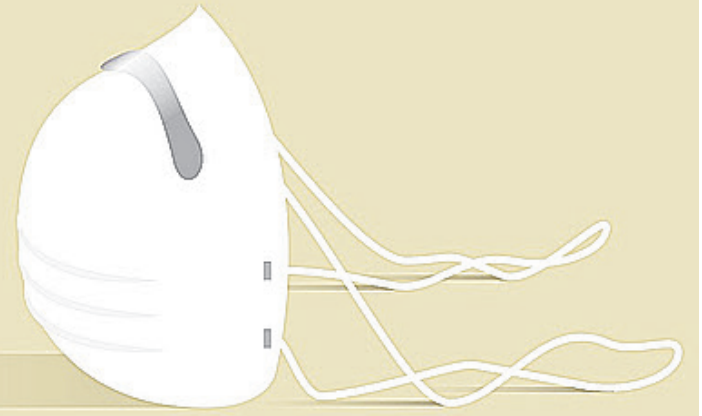
On the face of it, his approach might appear to benefit Vermonters, especially in what we all expect will be a very, very tight fiscal year. But in fact, it means that Vermont is losing out on opportunities to receive federal funding. This places an additional tax burden on Vermonters to make up the difference not collected in nominal fees.

Vermonters should understand that raising fees (which for most of us will have an impact of \$9 for a two-year license renewal) was the fiscally responsible thing to do in order to both balance the transportation budget

■ SEE TRANSPORTATION, C2

VIEWPOINT

A simple DEMONSTRATION of CARE



CROMACONCEPTUAL/PIXARBY

Covid is back with a vengeance. Masking is an intelligent, adaptive, compassionate practice. If you've stopped, it's never too late to start again.

AS MANY OF YOU are aware, Covid is badly surging all across the country. Infection levels are higher than during 90% of the pandemic.

I know many readers will instinctively want to ignore this piece. We are exhausted and traumatized by living within this unremitting pandemic, and so many are coping by dissociating.

Dissociation is a powerful and protective response to trauma, but it's not a state to live in endlessly, so please tune back in.

Masking is an intelligent, adaptive, compassionate practice. If you've stopped, it's never too late to start again;

VIDA KING is a born and raised Vermonter who's traded the Green Mountains for the Blue Ridge Mountains, for now. She spends her time caretaking, making art, and riding waves of grief, rage, and awe.

those of us who've always masked welcome your learning process.

You might find it ridiculous that when this country first introduced laws against drinking and driving, as well as laws enforcing seat belt wearing, people were outraged by their "personal freedoms" being infringed upon.

Nowadays, it's common sense to drive sober, wear a seat belt and, of course, ensure your children do, too. People who

don't take these measures are understood to be acting irresponsibly, compromising their own and others' safety.

Masking within a pandemic of an airborne, deadly, disabling virus is comparable.

It's a simple demonstration of care, for your well-being and for the well-being of those around you.

It is not "living in the past," as some might be misled to believe.

It's adapting to our current

reality and preparing for a near future where the rapidly changing climate will necessitate other masking as we navigate other pandemics and air contamination by wildfire smoke.

These are not pleasant truths to acknowledge, but we must be willing to face and adjust to them; our collective survival depends on actively caring for one another in tumultuous times.

IT IS NOW well-documented that Covid causes lasting damage to all major organ systems. It also suppresses the immune system very similarly to HIV, and each reinfection leaves you more susceptible to Long Covid and other serious illnesses.

■ SEE MASKING, C2

VIEWPOINT

In their own words

To understand the genesis of the violence and intolerance in Gaza, we must understand Zionism. Here are some quotes from Israel's Zionist founding fathers and military, political, and intellectual leaders.

SINCE THE ERUPTION of violence in Israel/Palestine on Oct. 7, some narratives have been espoused by apologists for Israel. First, they say that terrorist violence is unique to Palestinians/Hamas, and that Israel faces an existential threat to which it has the right to respond.

And they argue that this conflict is not about Zionism — and that to suggest such is simply to engage in antisemitism.

From the early days of the 20th century, violent attacks were carried out by Jews and Arabs upon each other. Many Arabs, not just Palestinians, were mistrustful of the influx of Zionists entering Palestine. They believed that the Zionist goal was to displace Palestinians in order to create a Jewish state.

By the time World War II had ended, organized Zionist terror groups and militias were operating in Palestine and targeting both the British and the indigenous Palestinians.

On April 9, 1948, these groups attacked an Arab village near Jerusalem, what is now referred to as the Deir Yassin massacre. Murder and rape were part and parcel of this attack, and it escalated tensions and spurred reprisals

DAN DEWALT, a frequent contributor to these pages and one of the founders of this newspaper, writes that if he didn't love his country, he "wouldn't spend so much time trying to get it to live up to its purported principles."

and further violence.

The sick interplay of attacks and reprisals, with ever-escalating degrees of violence and brutality, has continued in a steady cycle ever since.

IF WE WANT to understand the genesis of the violence and intolerance, then we must understand Zionism as its adherents immigrated to Palestine and began to build a future for themselves. The best source for understanding would be the words of these actors themselves.

Most of the quotes below — from some of Israel's Zionist founding fathers and military, political, and intellectual leaders — can be found in the second edition of Eve Spangler's *Understanding Israel/Palestine: Race, Nation,*

■ SEE IN THEIR OWN WORDS, C2

In Gaza, a response both rational and corrupt

' Hamas will not be known as the heroes of the Palestinian people, but as its gross liability. Thankfully, the failures of the Netanyahu administration will also be seen.'

WHAT IS ALL this happening? Without question, the effects of the Israeli military efforts in Gaza have been very harsh, causing significant suffering, and promising much more (even if the bombing stopped).

I read many dissenting critiques from people raging against Israeli actions, and against Israel and any sympathizers with words like *complicit*, *Green light*, *Genocidal*, *Sadistic*.

One phrase that I've read at demonstrations in Northampton, Massachusetts (and read about in Brattleboro) is for a *permanent cease-fire*.

I think that would be a good thing. But the thing about a cease-fire is that it's only one if it is mutual. I, and all Israelis, would love for Hamas to commit to *never* undertake any military actions on Israeli civilians — not massacres, not rockets, not burning fields. *Nothing. Ever.*

RICHARD WITTY is a former CPA who worked in Brattleboro for many years. He served as treasurer on the board of Vermont Independent Media, which publishes this newspaper. He notes: "I personally don't have TV and have not seen daily video of the results, so I reason from words, stills, and a few videos posted on Facebook."

If that were to happen, I expect it would be confidently reciprocated.

But there are explanations for why the Israeli response in Gaza is happening as it has been — explanations that are both rational and corrupt.

THE RATIONAL REASONS: On Oct. 7, Hamas and others whom they allowed to cross into

■ SEE RESPONSE, RATIONAL AND CORRUPT, C2



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Response, rational and corrupt

FROM SECTION FRONT

Israel, massacred more than 1,000 people in a few hours by automatic-weapons fire, snipers, close-range executions. There were dozens, if not hundreds, of rapes reported, some bodily dismemberment. It was gruesome.

Every reporter who witnessed the aftermath — and the live footage that Hamas and their associates recorded of the massacre — reported sickening experiences.

U.S. Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez was reported as emerging from the screening wailing in tears. Leftist Israel reporters like Gideon Levy of Haaretz reported on the gruesomeness of the massacre.

On Oct. 24, when the events were still a mystery — in terms of what happened, who did what — Hamas spokesman Ghazi Hamad from Beirut declared in an interview that Hamas would repeat, repeat, repeat until Israel was annihilated. Other Hamas officials from their more pragmatic political wing reiterated the same commitment.

The massacre itself would not have resulted in as brutal a military action by Israel. But the combination of the confirmed commitment to repeat indefinitely conveyed to Israel that there was no chance to contain Hamas short of destroying their military infrastructure (tunnels, weapons manufacture, siting). That there would be no

stable cease-fire possible.

To make matters worse, for Gazans and the world, Hamas sincerely, cynically, structurally removed themselves from all accountability to Gazan citizens, international law, and Arab world condemnation by hiding deep in the tunnels.

Israel bombed, and the civilians suffered. Israel sought access to the tunnels and, to do so, required clearing the ground. Hamas had food, fuel, and medical supplies, which they kept from the Gazan civilians, even as the hospitals ran short of medicines, fuel, and food.

They sincerely used Gazan civilians as human shields. The U.S. government concluded — much as Israel's did — that it would be necessary to remove Hamas from power and to destroy its military infrastructure.

THE CORRUPT REASONS include the failure of the Netanyahu government to assist long-term in the development of Palestinian national institutions — instead, adopting a divide-and-conquer strategy to keep the Palestinian Authority weak.

Also, the war will likely continue because Netanyahu personally needs to stay in office to stay out of jail. He has no plan for the day after. All prospects are problems.

Meanwhile, there is nowhere for Gazan civilians to run. Israel evacuated civilians in northern

Gaza, yet also bombed them as they fled south. Bombing the only safe place in Gaza does expose Israel to credible accusations of genocide.

Israel has firmly conquered Northern Gaza. It's no longer part of Hamas jurisdiction.

So, for Israel to end its military campaign now, a unilateral cease-fire — a good thing — would result in Hamas losing one half of Gaza, 25,000 total dead civilians (Gazan and Israeli), 12,000 dead Hamas fighters, and destruction of three-quarters of Gazan-habitable buildings. The blockade of Gaza will remain.

The only element of success of their effort will be to have rallied anti-Israeli sentiment in the U.S. and parts of the Arab world, but as soon as the results of their "success" are seen, they will quickly wither.

Hamas will not be known as the heroes of the Palestinian people, but as its gross liability.

Thankfully, the failures of the Netanyahu administration will also be seen.

Israel will unseat him as prime minister and elect a more moderate and competent Zionist government (that will include Arab parties, even the far-left ones).

Hopefully, that government will be able to reform some of the more fundamental injustices of the Israeli state.

In their own words

FROM SECTION FRONT

and Human Rights in the Conflict, along with their sources.

- *Theodor Herzl*, founder of the political form of Zionism: "Zionism demands a publicly recognized and legally secured homeland in Palestine for the Jewish people. This platform is unchangeable."

- "If you will it, it is no dream."

- *Yitzhak Epstein*, a Russian Jew who moved to Palestine in 1907: "In our lovely country there exists an entire people who have held it for centuries and to whom it would never occur to leave... The time has come to dispel the misconception among Zionists that land in Palestine lies uncultivated for lack of working hands or the laziness of the local residents. There are no deserted fields."

- And: "Among the grave questions raised by the concept of our people's renaissance on its own soil, there is one that is more weighty than all the others put together. This is the question of our relations with the Arabs. [...] This has not been forgotten, but rather has remained completely hidden from the Zionists, and in its true form has found almost no mention in the literature of our movement."

- *Vladimir Ze'ev Jabotinsky*, revisionist Zionist leader, author, poet, orator, soldier: "[It is the] iron law of every colonizing movement, a law which knows of no exceptions, a law which existed in all times and under all circumstances. If you wish to colonize land in which people are already living, you must provide a garrison on your behalf. [...] Zionism is a colonizing adventure and therefore it stands or falls by the question of armed force."

- *David Ben-Gurion*, primary national founder of the State of Israel as well as the state's first prime minister: "[L]et us not ignore the truth among ourselves[...]. [P]olitically we are the aggressors,

and they defend themselves."

- *Moshe Dayan*, Israeli military leader and politician: "What cause have we to complain about their fierce hatred to us? For eight years now, they sit in their refugee camps in Gaza and before their eyes we turn into our homesteads the land and villages in which they and their forefathers have lived."

- *Aharon Cizling*, Israeli politician and signer of Israel's declaration of independence: "Now we too have behaved like the Nazis and my whole being is shaken."

- *Yitzhak Shamir*, former Israeli prime minister: "Neither Jewish ethics nor Jewish tradition can disqualify terrorism as a means of combat. We are very far from having any moral qualms as far as our national war goes. We have before us the command of the Torah, whose morality surpasses that of any other body of laws in the world: "Ye shall blot them out to the last man" [...] But first and foremost, terrorism is for us a part of the political battle being conducted under the present circumstances, and it has a great part to play."

- *Amos Oz*, writer and Israeli veteran of the 1967 Six-Day War: "There is a growing sense that Israel is becoming an isolated ghetto, which is exactly what the founding fathers and mothers hoped to leave behind them forever when they created the state of Israel."

- *Primo Levi*, Holocaust survivor: "Everybody is somebody's Jew. And today the Palestinians are the Jews of the Israelis."

- *Hannah Arendt*, a German Jew who escaped from Germany after a brief imprisonment by the Nazis: "And even if Jews were to win the war, [t]he 'victorious' Jews would be surrounded by an entirely hostile Arab population, secluded inside ever-threatened borders, absorbed with physical self-defense to a degree that would submerge all other interest and activities."

If YOU ATTACK someone's home, expel them and occupy it for yourself, you do indeed face an existential threat from those who want their homes back. Those who were expelled face an even-more-dramatic existential threat, for they no longer have a home base from which to defend themselves.

Today, Israel is a nuclear power. The nation has access to the latest and most deadly weapons known to mankind. The sheer power of this weaponry has changed the extent of the threat they face.

Palestinians would like to be able to defend their homes and land, but they don't have the same means as the Israelis to do so.

The United States likes to think of itself as a worldwide keeper of the peace and a beacon of democracy. Yet we are the creators of — and, so far, the only ones to use — nuclear weapons on civilian populations.

Our president has recently sidelined our hobbled and discredited vestige of democracy, the U.S. Congress, and has sent tank munitions to Israel as an executive (read: kingly/authoritarian) decision. These are the munitions that are slaughtering children and adults alike, every day, in a futile attempt to kill an idea — the idea that Palestinians will always fight for their freedom and their homeland.

This quote by Shimon Tzabar, from an op-ed that appeared in *Ha'aretz* in 1967, offers a fitting conclusion.

"Our right to defend ourselves from annihilation does not give us the right to oppress others. Foreign occupation results in foreign rule, foreign rule results in resistance, resistance results in suppression, suppression results in terrorism and counter-terrorism. Victims of terrorism are usually innocents. Holding on to the Territories will turn us into a nation of murderers and murder victims. Let us get out of the Occupied Territories now!"

Transportation

FROM SECTION FRONT

and leverage some of the one-time opportunities with federal grants.

LAST FEBRUARY, the chief fiscal officer from the governor's Agency of Transportation testified to the House Transportation Committee that our state transportation fund was on trend to be \$15 million short.

In other words, we wouldn't have enough money to cover the projected budget or to "meet the match" — the amount Vermont must contribute to tap into those important federal funds.

Rather than provide a solution to address this financial gap, last winter the governor presented a transportation budget that had a \$10 million

deficit. His solution was to fill the \$10 million gap using a transfer from our general fund, rather than cutting expenses or proposing a new source of revenue.

When Vermonters are struggling to make ends meet, redirecting dollars from public safety or human services did not seem socially or fiscally responsible.

IN 2021, Congress passed the bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), which authorized \$1.2 trillion for transportation. This federal law presents Vermont with amazing opportunities to address many of our transportation infrastructure needs and provide good-paying jobs for Vermonters.

To tap into these opportunities, we must come up with state dollars to leverage the federal match, but we cannot do that at the expense of the most vulnerable Vermonters.

Last year, instead of siphoning away precious general fund dollars — dollars that pay for things like housing and child care — the Legislature rejected the governor's proposal and came up with a responsible long-term fiscal solution: We raised fees for

transportation-related services, fees that had not been raised since July 1, 2016.

The new Department of Motor Vehicles fee increases (effective Jan. 1) are expected to yield \$10 million for the current fiscal year to fill that \$10 million gap. For most Vermonters, the impact will be a \$9 increase for two-year driver's license renewal and a \$15 increase for annual car registration.

These revenues maintain the transportation infrastructure we all use and depend on.

Had Gov. Scott followed Vermont's prior, longstanding practice of proposing a fee bill once every three years, these fee adjustments would have been

much smaller and more incremental. However, even with this increase, Vermont's driver's license fees remain among the lowest in the Northeast.

IN EARLY January, the House Transportation Committee received a transportation revenue update from the Joint Fiscal Office. Transportation revenues are coming in \$5 million below budget for the current fiscal year. Had we not increased the fees, we'd be looking at a \$15 million gap — much more difficult to manage.

On Jan. 12, Gov. Scott's administration presented a proposal for the midyear FY24 budget adjustment, which was

thin on details about how we might address this shortfall in the current fiscal year.

With or without the collaboration of the governor, House Democrats are committed to finding equitable solutions to the fiscal challenges we face across the board.

We know we will be facing difficult budget decisions, and we hope that we will have a more collaborative relationship with Gov. Scott, so we can create a Vermont that works for everyone — not just the select few.

And a responsible transportation budget will help us get there.



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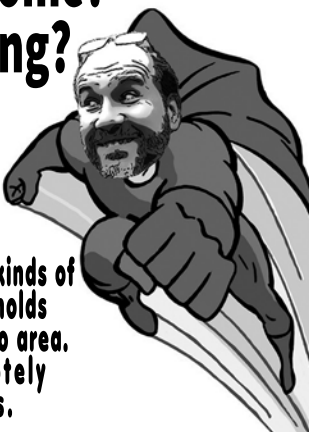
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Masking

FROM SECTION FRONT

More than 18 million Americans are living with Long Covid, and that number is steadily rising. If you read accounts of people suffering from debilitating Long Covid — and I encourage you to do so — you'd not wish it on yourself, and you certainly wouldn't want to be culpable for someone else developing this illness.

Taking Covid precautions seriously is a way to protect the most vulnerable among us. Sadly, individualistic thinking has caused most to "move on," to stop considering the most vulnerable, while also separating themselves from this category.

It is imperative for people to understand that everyone is vulnerable to Long Covid, including children — 1 in 6 kids who catch Covid will develop symptoms.

Children are our future; they deserve a chance at healthy, long lives. As adults, we're responsible for ensuring this. We must advocate for robust, science-based safety measures to be implemented in schools, which are hotbeds for virus transmission.

HERE ARE SOME resources to help mitigate the spread of Covid. Doing so would be a boon for overall public health; protecting the children in our communities protects us all.

- Dr. Michael Hoerger, assistant professor at Tulane University School of Medicine, warns of the severity of this current surge and outlines recommendations for how schools can keep kids safe. Everyone should share his letter (bit.ly/748-hoerger_letter)

with school administrations, district boards, departments of education, anyone who might have influence or decision-making authority when it comes to health and safety protocols in schools.

- For those interested in understanding how minimizing its seriousness became the dominant narrative around Covid, to the immeasurable detriment of public awareness, and people's health and survival, I highly recommend "How the press manufactured consent for never-ending COVID reinfections (bit.ly/748-neverending-covid)," a well-researched piece of writing.
- For those who want to better understand Long Covid, here are some eye opening accounts from *The Atlantic* (bit.ly/748-atlantic), the *Los Angeles Times* (shorturl.at/748-latimes), and *The Washington Post* (shorturl.at/748-wapo).

LASTLY, I want to acknowledge that if you feel stuck in dissociation, it's not surprising in a society that discourages people from feeling.

There's been so much lost to the pandemic, but our culture doesn't allow space for grieving and instead pressures us to push on in service of "business as usual" (read: racialized capitalism/the economy).

I invite you to grant yourself permission to grieve. Grief can be a transformative portal into a deeper relationship with oneself and with others, just as this pandemic could be a portal into practicing true reciprocal community care.

If we allow it to be.

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If we allow it to be.

AROUND THE TOWNS

Windham Southeast Pre-K sign-ups begin

BRATTLEBORO — The Windham Southeast School District offers pre-kindergarten education in Guilford, Putney, Dummerston, and Brattleboro (Oak Grove and an anticipated classroom at the Brattleboro Early Childhood Center at Canal Street School) for children who are 4 years old by Sept. 1, 2024. Pre-K follows the school calendar and is for a full school day.

Call the school to request a registration packet: Guilford residents, call 802-254-2271; Putney residents, call 802-387-5521; Dummerston residents, call 802-254-2733; and Brattleboro residents call 802-254-3740. Registration packets are due back to the school by Feb. 16. Space in these programs is limited; if there are more children than spots available, a lottery will be used to fill the classes.

Bingo & Game Night at Putney Central School

PUTNEY — The Putney Central PTO and the eighth-grade class will have a Bingo & Game Night on Friday, Jan. 19, from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m., at the school gym. All ages and families are welcome.

There will be multiple rounds of Bingo with prizes for each round. The final game will include a cash prize. Those not into Bingo are welcome to come play board games or bring their own cards and games to play with friends. There will also be raffle tickets sold at the door. Baked goods, snacks, and drinks will be available for cash sale.

River Gallery School hosts life drawing marathon

BRATTLEBORO — The Drawing Studio and River Gallery School present a weekend of life drawing workshops centered around diverse approaches to figure drawing and portraiture. These four workshops will take place on Saturday and Sunday, Jan. 20 and 21, at River Gallery School on Main Street.

There will be instruction, drawing time, and an integrated critique with each workshop. Enroll for one or both days. Full information can be found at drawingstudio.org/marathon or by calling River Gallery School at 802-257-1577.

Efforts for after school options in Putney to be discussed

PUTNEY — Efforts are underway to expand after school programming in Putney, and input from parents is needed and welcomed.

A team of community members, led by Katy Emond, are busy writing a 21st-Century Learning Centers grant request through the Vermont Agency of Education. A public meeting to hear about the grant and for community members to offer feedback will be held at the Putney Public Library on Sunday Jan. 21, from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. All are welcome.

Senior lunch in Dummerston

DUMMERSTON — Evening Star Grange and Senior Solutions will host a Senior Lunch on

Wednesday, Jan. 24, with take-out available from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., and in-house seating at noon.

The menu will be Chicken à la King over noodles with a vegetarian option of plant-based hamburger in sauce over noodles, and marinated carrots, with bread pudding for dessert.

Reservations are strongly suggested so that they will have an idea how much food to make. Call the Grange Hall at 802-254-1138 and leave name, phone number, the number of meals desired, and whether they are for eating in or taking out. A donation of \$3 is asked for those 60 and above, and \$4 for those 59 and under.



'Cultivating community' book group at Putney Library

PUTNEY — The Putney Public Library is launching a book group "to explore ways to build stronger connections in our lives and cultivate a deeper sense of belonging in our community."

Each month, participants will read a book, published within the last three years, that offers what the library calls "inspiring, actionable advice on how to grow a more connected world." Gatherings will occur once a month for participants to discuss "the various tips, strategies, and activities offered in each book and brainstorm ways to put these ideas into practice in our lives."

The first meeting, on Wednesday, Jan. 24, from 6:30 to 8 p.m. at the Library will discuss the book *We Should Get Together*

by Kat Vellos. Putney Library cardholders can pick up a copy at the library.

According to the publisher, *We Should Get Together* is "the handbook for anyone who's ready for better friendships, now. Millions of adults struggle with an uncomfortable and persistent ache: platonic longing, which is the unfulfilled wish for authentic, resilient, close friendships." The book resulted from the combination of expert research and personal stories pulled from conversations with hundreds of adults.

Monthly produce distribution in Putney

PUTNEY — The Vermont Foodbank and the Putney Foodshelf co-sponsor a monthly food drop of free produce and some nonperishables on the fourth Thursday of every month from 9 to 9:45 a.m. on Alice Holway Drive (in front of Putney

Meadows, the white building across from the Putney Co-op and Putney Fire Station).

The January Free Produce Distribution will be on Thursday, Jan. 25. All are welcome. This is a drive-up service. Bags provided.

Afternoon Tea fundraiser benefits Community Center

WEST DUMMERSTON — Everyone is invited to put on their finest attire and come to the Dummerston Community Center on West Street on Saturday, Jan. 27, from noon to 2 p.m., for a sophisticated Afternoon Tea affair with exquisite teas, delectable treats, and party games.

The cost is \$20 with the option to purchase a tea cup and bring it home. Reservations are required. Call or text 802-380-1424 by Thursday, Jan. 25. This fundraiser is to benefit the Community Center's new playground fund.

THE COMMONS CROSSWORD

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- 13. Trash panda
- 20. Wife, in Oaxaca
- 21. Tennis star Caroline
- 22. Moderate tempo
- 23. Belts and such?
- 25. Like some discounted tuition
- 26. Accept, as terms and conditions
- 27. Bears witness
- 29. Sought damages
- 30. Attack, as the fridge
- 31. "Death of a Salesman" salesman
- 33. Omani currency
- 36. Bygone MTV show
- 37. Cpl.'s commanding officer
- 38. Joan of folk
- 40. Facial feature that a commoner can't have?
- 44. Patronizes, as a restaurant
- 46. "Watch it!"
- 47. Bath bathroom
- 48. Major London insurer
- 51. Sell to the public
- 54. "Hamlet" setting
- 58. "Je t'_" ("I love you" in French)
- 59. Like IV fluids?
- 62. Nobelist Wiesel
- 63. Accumulation
- 65. Waze lines
- 66. Stylist's workplace
- 67. _ de México
- 69. Anthill population
- 71. "Donnie _" (2001 film)
- 73. Mosaic piece
- 79. Prosperity
- 82. Lotion ingredient
- 83. Area where sandals aren't allowed?
- 85. 6,288 ft., for Mt. Washington
- 86. Barry who sang (but didn't write) "I Write the Songs"
- 88. Greek sea deity who fathered the water nymphs
- 89. Brandishes
- 91. Seoul's nat.
- 92. The Jazz, on scoreboards
- 93. Major Canadian brewery
- 95. Lint store?
- 101. "I do it for the girls, _, and theys"
- 102. Scottish cap
- 105. Nail polish brand
- 106. Contact _
- 107. Force out
- 109. "Aladdin" parrot
- 110. "Sounds good"
- 112. Learned
- 115. Ticket hawk
- 118. Everywhere
- 121. The latter part of "looking high and low"?
- 123. Like some doors and scales
- 124. Happenings
- 125. Seyfried of "The Dropout"
- 126. Candor
- 127. Lawn grass
- 128. High-IQ club member

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Down

- 1. Scotch whisky brand
- 2. For laughs
- 3. Morale
- 4. Cheated
- 5. Haim bassist Haim
- 6. Totally engrossed

- 7. Sense of self
- 8. Palindromic address
- 9. Very harsh
- 10. Bank statement ID
- 11. Miller _ (beer)
- 12. The Bay State, informally
- 13. Sultana, e.g.
- 14. Filmmaker Hui
- 15. Many 1990s music purchases
- 16. 2019 box office bomb
- 17. Running by itself
- 18. Frolicsome mustelids
- 19. Embroidery implement
- 24. Casting slots
- 28. "Iliad" city
- 32. Jason Bateman crime drama
- 34. Comedian Gracie
- 35. French women's soccer powerhouse
- 38. Not good
- 39. Ready to sire
- 41. Düsseldorf's river
- 42. Do some research
- 43. Rule for a friendly soccer match?
- 44. Look at something the way Eisenhower does?
- 45. Casual tops
- 48. Scientist's workplace
- 49. Actor Simu
- 50. Greek O
- 52. "Inside the NBA" channel
- 53. Basketball center?
- 54. Cut out of a will
- 55. Second-person plural pronoun, in the South
- 57. Ryan Gosling, in "Barbie"
- 60. Director Judd
- 61. And so on: Abbr.
- 64. Pair of performers
- 66. Artist LeWitt
- 68. Actress Ruby
- 70. Room to maneuver
- 71. Beaver's project
- 72. In the style of

- 74. "À votre _!" (toast)
- 75. Vow
- 76. Corn serving
- 77. Reuben bread
- 78. Blue: Sp.
- 80. Liverpool FC color
- 81. Bolts, Volts, and Leaves, for short
- 83. Former Yankees skipper Joe
- 84. Language related to Dakota
- 87. Hang loosely
- 90. " _ a deal!"
- 92. Cold War inits.
- 94. Raft wood
- 95. Self-checkout restriction, sometimes
- 96. Famed Harlem theater

- 97. Fiddle
- 98. Einstein's E
- 99. Not overtly expressed
- 100. Range
- 102. Golf gimmes
- 103. Underlying intentions
- 104. Soccer star Alex
- 108. Sauce made with basil
- 109. Omar in Congress
- 111. Ore vein
- 113. Manual reader
- 114. Soap or chocolate bar brand
- 116. Pull an all-nighter, say
- 117. High point
- 119. _-à- (regarding)
- 120. Treebeard, for one
- 122. In particular: Abbr.

Last issue's solution

"Modern Maturity"

C	H	I	C	E	R	T	A	M	P	E	W	E	R	S	N	O	B								
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COLUMN | Sports Roundup

Bears girls' hockey team still searching for a win

It's no fun losing game after game, but the Brattleboro Bears girls' hockey team are not giving up.

In the Bears' defense, they are playing more experienced teams with more players. With the deck stacked that much against you, all that can be hoped for is to play competitively for as long as you are able and for the younger players to learn the lessons that need to be learned to become a better team in the future.

With just three seniors — forwards Greta Koenig, Lily Carignan, and Alex Gregory — on the roster, the Bears are a team that's already looking ahead to next season.

Against the Middlebury Tigers on Jan. 10 at Withington Rink, the Bears held the Tigers scoreless for the first nine minutes and played well. While Brattleboro had some trouble moving the puck out of their end of the ice, the Bears' defense was strong and goalie Nellie Sterling made several tough saves.

Then Middlebury broke through for a pair of goals, scored 17 seconds apart, by Lia Calzini late in the first period. The Tigers added seven more goals in the second period on the way to a 10-0 victory.

After the game, Brattleboro head coach Connor Little said those first nine minutes were "some of the best hockey we have played all season." Even though the Bears were trailing 2-0 heading into the second period, Little said he thought they had a chance to continue to play competitively.

Unfortunately, Little said, the Bears "weren't taking care of the little things," especially in the final 5:30 of the second period. In that span of time, the Tigers scored five goals, including a shorthanded goal. Everything the Bears were doing right at the start of the game, especially on defense, seemed to vanish.

With 12:50 left in the second period, Erin Mulcahy scored for the Tigers, and Calzini got her third goal of the night with 9:16 to play. Middlebury then took advantage of some mistakes by the Bears, and turned the game into a rout.

Lily Finn made it 5-0 with 5:26 left, and Sedona Carrara scored 16 seconds later for a 6-0 lead. Brattleboro killed off most of a power play late in the period after a Carignan penalty for crosschecking. The Bears then briefly had a 4-on-4 when Calzini picked up a penalty with 3:34 left, then had a 5-on-4 power play for 37 seconds when Carignan's penalty expired.

However, Quinn Doria scored a shorthanded goal with 1:53 remaining, and Julia Morrissey and Ireland Hanley both scored in the final 66 seconds for a 9-0 lead for the Tigers heading into the final period. Mulcahy closed the scoring with a goal with 10 minutes left in the game.

The Bears then suffered their eighth shutout of the season with an 8-0 loss to Burr & Burton on Jan. 13 at Withington Rink. Skylar Smith led the Bulldogs with two goals, and Kaelin Downey, Abby Kopeck, Katie Brownlee, Carmella Livingston, Elise Hornby, and Maisie Tuff also scored.

Now 0-10, the Bears' next game is on the road on



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.

Jan. 20 against Rice in South Burlington.

Girls' basketball

• Brattleboro turned back a late rally by the Mount Anthony Patriots and hung on for a 48-36 victory on Jan. 12 at the BUHS gym. Guard Reese Croutworst led the 5-4 Bears with 19 points.

• Bellows Falls took care of winless Green Mountain with a 43-22 win on Jan. 12 at Holland Gymnasium. Leading by seven at the half, the Terriers extended their lead to 11 at the end of the third quarter and held GM to just two points in the final quarter for the victory. Abby Nystrom and Laura Kamel had nine points each for the 5-4 Terriers, while 0-8 Green Mountain was led by Karen Vargas with 11 points.

• Leland & Gray put together one of its best efforts so far this season with a 63-32 win over Proctor on Jan. 12 in Townshend. The 4-7 Rebels led 37-13 at the half and did not allow the Phantoms to make a comeback in the second half.

• Twin Valley fell to 0-7 on the season after a 48-23 loss to Mount St. Joseph on Jan. 12 in Whitingham. MSJ led 22-6 at halftime as Lauryn Charron and Gabby Boudreau led the Mounties with 16 and 12 points, respectively.

Boys' basketball

• Brattleboro went up against the Champlain Valley Redhawks on Jan. 8 at the BUHS gym, and the defending Division I champions showed no mercy in an 85-29 victory over the Bears.

• CVU opened with an 18-0 run, led 31-2 at the end of the first quarter, and had a 33-point lead at the half. Luke Eaton led the Redhawks with 23 points as 13 of the 15 players who dressed for the game scored. It was a rough night for the Bears, who got seven points from Jackson Emery and six points each from Karson Elliott and Dillon Jenks.

• Against Monadnock Regional on Jan. 13 at the BUHS gym, Liam Hart hit a game winning three-pointer as time expired to give Monadnock a 53-51 victory. Keagan Systo led the 3-7 Bears with 22 points, four rebounds, and two steals.

• Springfield completed a season series sweep of Leland & Gray with a 64-56 win over the Rebels on Jan. 10 in Townshend. Oliver Kelly led the Cosmos with a career-high 22 points.

• The Rebels then lost 78-31 to White River Valley on Jan. 13 in Townshend to drop their season record to 2-8.

• Bellows Falls is in a bit of a slump. On Jan. 11 in Manchester, the Terriers lost to Burr & Burton, 65-34. The BF swoon continued with a 60-56 loss to Springfield on Jan. 13 at Dressel Gymnasium.



Brattleboro forwards Emily LaClair (8) and Avery Hiner (12) head to the locker room at the end of the second period of their hockey game against Middlebury on Jan. 10 at Withington Rink. Middlebury scored seven goals in the second period on the way to a 10-0 victory.

James Gultekin scored 26 points and Mick Wiese added 12 points to lead the 4-5 Cosmos. Bellows Falls, now 5-5, got 19 points from Cole Moore, 17 points from Jaxon Clark, and 16 points from Colby Dearborn.

• Twin Valley was beaten by Green Mountain, 54-28, on Jan. 11 in Whitingham.

• GM started hot with an 11-0 run and led 28-13 at the half. On defense, they held Twin Valley's Brayden Brown to just 10 points, with six coming in the final minute of the game with the outcome no longer in doubt. Austin Kubisek led Green Mountain with 19 points, while Wyatt Koch had 10 points and 10 rebounds.

• Twin Valley bounced back with a 58-54 win over Rivendell on Jan. 13 in Whitingham to improve their season record to 5-4.

Boys' hockey

• The Bears had a good week, playing Woodstock to a 4-4 tie on Jan. 10 at Withington Rink, and then defeating U-32, 3-1, on Jan. 13 in Montpelier.

• In the U-32 win, Evan Wright and Carter Mialkowski both had a goal and an assist. Alex Dick also scored, and goaltender James Fagley made 21 saves for the victory. Maddox Heise scored U-32's only goal and goaltender Angus Kurts made 28 saves in the loss.

• The 3-5-2 Bears host Stowe on Jan. 20 at Withington Rink.

Bowling

• After the first three weeks of the season, Brattleboro is ranked fourth in the state. Essex and Randolph both have 36 points to top the standings, followed by Windsor with 32 points, and the Bears with 31 points.

Nordic skiing

• The Brattleboro boys finished third behind Woodstock and Mount Anthony in a Southern Vermont League meet on Jan. 8 at Prospect Mountain in Woodford. Burr & Burton was fourth and Rutland came in fifth.

• With fresh snow from a storm the day before the meet, conditions on the course were not an issue. The Bears placed three boys in the top 10 as Willow Sharma (15 minutes, 30.6 seconds), Gabe Jeppesen-Belleci (15:50.2), and Nico Conathan-Leach (15:57.5) finished



Gabe Jeppesen-Belleci was the top finisher for the Brattleboro boys' nordic ski team during a Southern Vermont League meet at Prospect Mountain in Woodford on Jan. 8.

seventh, eighth, and ninth place, respectively.

• Also finishing for the Bears were Oliver Herrick (13th, 17:27.6), Desmond Longsmith (20th, 18:49.9), Eli Welch (31st, 21:37.8) and Galen Fogarty (34th, 24:12.8). Woodstock's James Underwood won the race in 14:26.3.

• In the girls' meet, Brattleboro finished second with 44 points behind Woodstock's 22. Mount Anthony and Rutland did not have enough skiers to record a team score.

• Katherine Normandeau placed fifth with a time of 19:13.4 to lead the Brattleboro girls, while teammate Maeve Bald took 10th in 20:58.9. Rounding out the scoring were Maayan Coleman (14th, 24:01.7), Addison DeVault (15th, 24:45.6) and Evie Kiehle (17th, 30:09.1). MAU's Tanis White won the race in 17:43.8.

Youth Nordic skiing program begins in Marlboro

• Looking for a fun winter activity for your kids? There's still

room in the Youth Ski Program at the Marlboro Nordic Ski Club, located on the former Marlboro College campus.

• Led by experienced and enthusiastic instructors, this program is open to grades K-8 and is free of charge — the only requirement is that families become members of the ski club. Kids will learn to cross-country ski, play games, make new friends, and enjoy the outdoors. Find out more at marlboronordicskiclub.org/youthskiprogram.

Senior bowling roundup

• Week 2 of the winter/spring season of the Brattleboro Senior Bowling League at Brattleboro Bowl on Jan. 11 saw Good Times (9-1) having a 5-0 week to take sole possession of first place. Stepping Stones II (7-3) is second, followed by Four Seasons and High Rollers (both 6-4), Stayin' Alive and Slow Movers (both 4-6), and Hairiers (3-7), and Four Pins (1-9).

• Debbi Rittenhour again had the women's high handicap

game (262) and series (721). Marty Adams had the men's high handicap game (262), while Fred Ashworth had the high handicap series (698). Four Seasons had the high team handicap game (944), while Good Times had the high team series (2,638).

• Robert Rigby had the men's high scratch series (647) with games of 246 and 219. John Walker had a 626 series with games of 214, 211, and 201. Peter Deyo had a 584 series with games of 219 and 203, Ashworth had a 575 series with games of 212 and 193, Warren Corrievau Sr. had a 551 series with a 216 game, Montgomery had a 551 series with a 216 game, and Adams had a 548 series with a 225 game.

• Carol Gloski had the women's high scratch series (471), with a 161 game, while Debbie Kolpa had the high scratch game (202), and Nancy Dalzell had a 180 game.



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