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Brattleboro, Vermont • Wednesday, December 20, 2023 • Vol. XVIII, No. 51 • Issue No. 745

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



The Whetstone Brook courses through Brattleboro on Monday after the region was pummeled with rain, some areas in Windham County up to 2 inches.

December rain, flooding hearken back to recent weather catastrophe

Rivers rise and roads close as up to 5 inches of rain falls on Windham County; Londonderry avoids repeat of devastating summer flooding

By Virginia Ray

ain hit hard and early on Dec. 18 in Windham County for a soggy start to the week before the Christmas holiday, at a time when things had barely been cleaned up from the big July flood in some towns.

The National Weather Service reported county rainfall between 2.44 inches (in Rockingham), and 5 inches (in Guilford). Had the rain come in the form of snow, the accumulation would ing flooding once again so for cording to the NWS office in

have totaled between 2 and 4

"I know this is the last thing Vermonters want to see right now, especially during the holiday season," said Gov. Phil Scott, who spoke briefly poststorm on Dec. 19.

'So let me say, although there will be damage to infrastructure, homes and businesses, we do not expect this to be the same scale as July," he continued. 'That being said, some of the same places that were impacted in July are currently experienc-

them, this is July, and it's a real gut punch."

The East Coast from Florida to Maine saw heavy precipitation and gusty winds with what the National Weather Service deemed "excessive rainfall" moving from the mid-Atlantic states into New England, lakeeffect snow downwind of the Great Lakes, and upslope snow over parts of the Northern

Central Appalachians. Here, by 7:10 a.m. on Dec. 18, East Dover reportedly had seen 2.31 inches of rain, acAlbany, New York. West Dover received 2.25 inches. The lowest at that hour of the morning were Bellows Falls and Rockingham, with just over 1 inch of rain.

By 12:45 p.m., East Dover was ringing in with 2.54 inches and West Dover with 2.42 inches, while Bellows Falls had risen to about 1.5 inches of rainfall.

The Guilford/Halifax area, however, took the lead, with a reported 5 inches of rain by 10:30 a.m.

The weather service also ■ SEE RAIN AND FLOODING, A2

State legislators have plenty to do in 2024

County lawmakers will return to Montpelier to address a housing shortage, a drug crisis, climate change, and other issues that top the legislative agenda

By Joyce Marcel The Commons

BRATTLEBORO—When the Vermont Legislature reconvenes on Jan. 3, state lawmakers, having already served the first year of their two-year terms, will hit the ground running.

A lot of legislation from the last session is still waiting to be dealt with.

According to Sen. Nader Hashim, D-Windham, "Last session, the House introduced 523 bills and the Senate introduced 157 bills. The cutoff date for new bills was Dec. 1, so we will know how many new bills will be introduced this upcoming session once we reconvene.

From new judges to mushrooms, from health care to paid family leave, from housing to fighting climate change, Windham County's legislative delegation is set to play a big part in the Legislature this coming year.

The Commons asked area legislators about their priorities for the coming session.

No paper next week

BRATTLEBORO—As usual, The Commons will not publish an edition for the last week of the year.

The next issue of the newspaper will appear Wednesday, Jan. 3, 2024. Deadline for news and advertising is Friday, Dec. 29. All of us at Vermont

Independent Media wish our readers warm holiday greetings, a safe end of the year, and best wishes for strength, prosperity, and resilience in the months to

Climate change: top priority

House Majority Whip Rep. Emily Long, D-Newfane, says leadership's first priority is further fortifying Vermont against climate change.

■ SEE **LEGISLATORS**, A4

Staffing crunch temporarily closes Windham school

Windham Elementary will close for remainder of the school year after months of tumult over the school's ultimate fate

By Peter D'Auria

WINDHAM—School board members have decided to temporarily shutter Windham Elementary School after administrators struggled to fill staffing positions at the tiny school.

The three-person Windham School Board voted on Dec. 14 to close the 15-student school and send kids to Townshend Elementary, roughly 10 miles away. Students will continue to attend Windham Elementary through this week and will begin ■ SEE SCHOOL CLOSES, A3

Bringing holiday cheer to Nicaragua

Local man starts fund to help his neighbors in a small farming village have a Christmas dinner

By Fran Lynggaard Hansen

UTNEY—Brattleboro native Ian Diamondstone has done a lot of traveling through his work buying certified organic specialty spices in Central America, but he's found a second home.

You know how it is," he says, smiling. "You travel to a country where you [...] feel at home, you

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want to spend more time there, and over time you find yourself returning. Along the way, you make friends and then it feels even more like home.

About six years ago, in Chichigalpa, a village of 73 subsistence farmers in Nicaragua, Diamondstone put down some roots — literally. He bought land and used local labor to build a house where he can stay during his frequent visits there.

Diamondstone has also had an additional project going over the last nine years or so: He donates to his neighbors so they can afford the ingredients for their special Christmas meal.

and devoutly Catholic," he says. "When Christmastime comes, ally kind," he says.

each family hopes to have a Christmas dinner, as it is the most important holiday to celebrate."

Like families in Vermont, Diamondstone points out, these families "hope to have a ham or a turkey with vegetables, potatoes, corn, or tortillas to celebrate the

"In Nicaragua, the meal costs \$10 to feed a family of about five people, but most don't have the money for the meal," he adds. For these farmers, "\$10 is a huge

Subsistence farming

In Chichigalpa, "everybody "This is an area that is deeply there is poor, but everybody there is very real and exception-

"I got there and I thought, 'How amazing there is still a place where people are living off the land. They don't pass judgment — 'we're all poor, and we're all in this together."

He points out that "families here don't make much money, and in some cases, a parent has gone out of the community or even the country, to earn money.

"For example, Donja Christina is a local woman who tends her daughters' and sons-in-laws' cows. She looks after them and earns a tiny bit of money here and there if something gets sold," Diamondstone says.

After the war in Nicaragua ended in 1990, the government gave families between 20 and 30

■ SEE CHRISTMAS MEAL, A6



From left, Ian Diamondstone's neighbor Francesca, Maritza's granddaughter, Diamondstone, Maritza, and Rigoberto in front of the gate to his home in Nicaragua.

Holiday Blues? poking for a therapist.

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Becky Philbrick FNP-C

ommons

A publication of Vermont Independent Media

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> Deadline for the Friday, December 29



change of ideas and information llows democracy to function and is the lifeblood of a community, Vermont Independent Media:

 creates a forum for community promotes local independent

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ABOUT THIS NEWSPAPER

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

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

The paper is published weekly, with the exceptions of the weeks of July 4

SUBMITTING NEWS AND TIPS

We welcome story ideas and news tips. Please contact the newsroom at news@commonsnews.org or at

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

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

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

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

Editorials represent the collective voice of *The Commons* and are written by the editors or by members of the Vermont Independent Media Board of Directors.

The views expressed in our Voices section are those of individual contributors. Bylined commentaries by members of the Vermont Independent Media board of directors represent their individual opinions; as an organization, we are committed to providing a forum for the entire community. As a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, Vermont Independent Media is legally prohibited from endorsing political candidates.

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Your advertising directly supports a better newspaper. The open display advertising rate is \$16.50 per column inch, and *The Commons* offers discounts. To place your ad, contact lori@commonsnews.org or nancy@commonsnews.org.

Advertising files can be saved as PDF (press-ready setting), as TIFF (600 pixels per inch), or printed as black-and-white hard copy.

We can design your ad, and you should not hesitate to ask us to do so. We love helping our clients.

DISTRIBUTION

The Commons distributes 8,050 copies per issue to 250 drops in almost every Windham County town, as well as in neighboring towns in Windsor County (Vt.), Cheshire County (N.H.) and Franklin County (Mass.). Please get in touch (circulation@commonsnews.org) if you would like us to consider adding your business.

Without our volunteers, this newspaper would exist only in our imaginations. Special thanks to: Simi and Mark Berman, Diana Bingham, Jim Maxwell, Rob Bertsche, Barbara Evans; Cameron Cobane, Shannon Ward, and

Hooker-Dunham Theater & Gallery; Clay Turnbull and NEC; **Brendan Emmett Quigley** and Joon Pahk In memoriam: Alan O. Dann, Judy Gorman,

Mia Gannon

■ Rain and flooding

FROM SECTION FRONT

reported windS of 41 mph at 8:25 a.m. in West Dover, with East Dummerston and Marlboro not far behind. The slowest wind speed in the morning was 15 mph in Stratton at 9:35 a.m.

The Brattleboro Department of Public Works, Fire Department, Police, and Selectboard all reported that staff members were helping 12 residents in the Mountain Home Park along Village Drive, Valley Road, and Edgewood Road to evacuate to higher ground.

"Some occupants have been advised to evacuate the lower section where problematic flooding does occur," Town Office Manager Kristen Martin said.

Bridges on Dettman Drive, George F. Miller Drive, and Meadowbrook Road were closed as water streamed across them. Other roads saw minor water

Also in Brattleboro, the heaviest rain came early but light rain continued through most of the day, along with high winds. Most of the heavy rain was, in fact, in western Windham County, as was most of the high wind that followed the rain.

At the height of the storm, more than 10,000 homes around Vermont were without power. In Windham County, more power outages were south and west of Brattleboro, according to Green Mountain Power. Those outages were consistent with where heaviest rain was reported throughout the day. Nearly all had power restored by late evening.

More trauma for Londonderry

Creeks and rivers rose quickly and flowed stormily.

At 1 p.m., Route 11 in Londonderry near the intersection of Route 100 was closed at the bridge over the West River due to flooding, and motorists were advised to expect delays and seek alternate routes.

In Londonderry near the West River, Mike and Tammy's Main Street Market and the Maple Leaf Diner closed at 12:30 p.m. "due to rising waters and to protect the safety of our employees and customers," owners Mike and Tammy Clough posted on Facebook as water was reported traveling across the road.

Main Street businesses, barely







A sign lingers on Route 30 in Newfane on Tuesday, some 24 hours after flooding closed area roads and schools.

ter lapping at their doors once again.

After the July flood, the Cloughs had to close their two shops for three and a half months.

Estimating about a \$100,000 loss — without counting revenue — the Cloughs soon learned that the only relief they were eligible for was a Small Business Administration loan.

Remembering that time, Tammy Clough said Monday, was "like PTSD."

But the storm did not dump as much water as in the summer, and the businesses reopened the next day.

"We had to do a repeat of putting everything up and getting out of town before anything hap-pened, but we were unscathed," said Clough. "A miracle. Maybe it was a small Christmas gift for

On the Londonderry Vermont Community Forum Facebook group, many underscored that folks were still reeling from the summer's catastrophe.

"Some of us have barely recovered or are still recovering from the last flood," wrote another business owner.

At 3 p.m. the Stratton sleep last night because he was so

recovered from summer, saw wa- Foundation shared a reminder to remember local families and businesses still recovering from the July flood, noting businesses were moving things to higher ground and roads were closing.

South Londonderry residents Donna and Andy Chambers haven't been able to live in their house since July 10.

The Chamberses left the 200-year-old home they bought eight years ago and have been like vagabonds, staying in several places, including the Londonderry Inn. They're now staying in Manchester.

The couple have said they were attracted to their home in part because it is so close to the West River. But the river rose to a new height during the July storm, and its damage rendered the house uninhabitable.

The Chamberses have said that grappling with FEMA and insurance companies has been extremely difficult and frustrating.

"After yesterday, yeah," said Donna Chambers. "We had two feet of water in our basement, but people moved stuff out for us. Our goal was to get back in there and now it's like, what? This is really crazy. Andy couldn't worried."

But the couple actually got good news after the storm.

We found out the carpenter is there today," said Donna Chambers, who said a different contractor gave the couple an estimate of \$60,000 to fix the kitchen floor before a friend did it "boom, boom, boom.

"We're on a fixed income. We got money from a GoFundMe, but getting someone who is a qualified carpenter who knew what to do it was the hardest part," she said.

"And FEMA wants us to fill out paperwork constantly and then they say they didn't get it. It happens all the time," Chambers continued.

"Here we are in the middle of this, and they're saying they didn't get the paperwork, and so we have to go in the house and dig through piles over and over again. We're just trying to keep afloat. And we've had wonderful support," she said.

We're very lucky to have had amazing, amazing support, Chambers added. "But it's still really, really hard."

Settling down

By late afternoon, town officials in Marlboro noted the road crew was out and repairing roads to reopen them soonest and then return to address mud caused by both the abundant rain and unseasonably mild temperatures during most of the storm.

The highway department here, as elsewhere, requested folks limit their driving due to the muddy conditions of roads in general.

Several issues from earlier in the day had been addressed, but Shearer Hill Road remained closed due to a culvert washout scheduled to be addressed Tuesday.

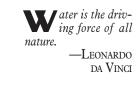
Whitaker Farm Road also remained closed, to be addressed "as soon as possible." North Pond Road is passable, but the Selectboard and Highway Department noted low-hanging phone lines there and advised awareness

Brattleboro Communications Coordinator Seth Thomas said that West Brattleboro was the most heavily impacted area in town. The residents evacuated from Mountain Home Park earlier in the day have been allowed to return home. The Department of Public

Works reported 19 roads sustained damage. Currently, Hescock Road, George F. Miller Drive, and Dettman Drive remain closed, while six other roads have reduced lanes. Crews were working on all affected roads the day after the storm.

The rain is subsiding, and the brook and stream levels are back within their banks," Thomas wrote on the evening of Dec. 18.

"Despite heavy flow rates caused by the storm, Brattleboro's infrastructure was able to handle the excess water. The wastewater treatment plant was flowing the equivalent of 6.2 million gallons per day, which is significantly higher than the normal flow of 1.5 million gallons per day.



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For 11 projects in county, \$4.6 million from the feds

Grants will fund home repair program, renovations to former Rockingham hospital building, and other work

By Virginia Ray

The Windham & Windsor Housing Trust (WWHT) and Greater Rockingham Area Services (GRAS) are two of 11 applicants in Windham County to receive Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and Recovery Housing Program (RHP) federal funding awards through the Vermont Community Development Program.

Governor Phil Scott and the Department of Housing and Community Development announced the recipients of a total

of \$4,591,000 on Dec. 14. In Brattleboro, WWHT is the sub-grantee that will receive a \$440,000 CDBG supplemental award to administer the Green Mountain Home Repair Loan Fund to provide affordable home repair financing and housing counseling services to eligible homeowners in Windham and Windsor counties.

WWHT Executive Director Elizabeth Bridgewater says the program includes providing low-cost loans and/or grants to income eligible homeowners to make repairs and/or undertake rehab projects to "improve the health and safety of their homes." Examples include installing new roofs or new heating systems, replacing outdated electrical wiring, and addressing mold.

"The Green Mountain Home Repair Program is a wonderful resource for homeowners in southeastern Vermont to improve the quality of their homes," Bridgewater says. "The low interest rates, small grants, and support from our team of home repair specialists help homeowners navigate the sometimes complicated process of developing a project, hiring a contractor, and getting the job done."

Hospital building renovations

A \$250,000 award, funneled through the town of Rockingham, is to help sub-grantee Greater Rockingham Area Services replace its oil heating system with a biomass wood chip system and make associated renovations to the building, the former Rockingham Memorial Hospital, at 1 Hospital Court.

GRAS Administrator Marty Gallagher has been working to raise the needed \$1.9 million for the project for several years.

"I don't think it's unusual when raising this much money that it takes this long," she says. "I think that's the norm. You have to be persistent. And every grant gets us one step closer."

The total project to upgrade energy systems at the former hospital includes replacing two boilers, 33 and 58 years old, respectively, with one new energyefficient biomass boiler, a boiler backup system, and a silo to store the wood chips used as fuel.

The plan will also reduce carbon dioxide emissions by an estimated 507%

Tenants collectively employ about 85 people and serve about 150 clients daily. Along with the Rockingham Health Center, GRAS tenants include Springfield Hospital's Windham Center for Psychiatric Care, North Star Health, HCRS (Health Care and Rehabilitation Services), Front Line Foundations of North America, the Rockingham Dental Center, and Greater Rock Fitness.

Falls Area Community TV (FACT), the region's local access cable studio, also operates from the facility.

To date, Gallagher has also received a \$817,980 grant from the Northern Border Regional Commission (NBRC), a federal/ state partnership for economic and community development within the most distressed counties of Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, and New York; a \$72,000 grant from the Vermont Capital Investment Program; \$50,000 in Efficiency Vermont incentives; and \$100,000 from the Bellows Falls Village ARPA fund. She has also successfully raised \$100,000 from community donations.

She has also applied for two additional grants, about which she should hear in 2024.



A postcard of the Rockingham Memorial Hospital in the 1950s. The building's renovation got a big boost with a \$250,000 Community Development Block Grant for the project.

"If I get those two grants, we'll be fully funded," Gallagher says.

Enhancing communities

"The Community Development Block Grant program continues to enhance communities throughout the state," said Scott. "With these grants, we are making child care more available, making public spaces more accessible, and adding affordable housing to cities and towns across Vermont.'

Scott thanked the state's congressional delegation — Sens. Peter Welch and Bernie Sanders and Rep. Becca Balint — "for their continued work to keep these federal dollars coming to Vermont.²

In a joint statement, the three lawmakers wrote that the CDBG program "helps create stronger and more resilient communities here in Vermont and around the country.

"This federal investment will jump start meaningful improvements in towns and cities across the state," they said. "CDBG funds provide the resources our communities need to make critical projects a reality. We look forward to seeing Vermonters benefit from this important work.

PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE DUMMERSTON DEVELOPMENT REVIEW BOARD

The Dummerston Development Review Board will hold a public hearing on Tuesday, January 16, 2024, beginning at 6:00 pm, at the Dummerston Town Offices, 1523 Middle Road, Dummerston Center and via Zoom video teleconference, for the purpose of reviewing the following applications:

• A review of application #3749; Whitman Wheeler, for Right of Way for access through parcel #279.1, under Sections 602 of the Dummerston Zoning Bylaw, 620 East West Rd., Dummerston, VT, a Residential District.

The hearing will be preceded by a site visit on Saturday January 13, 2024, beginning at or about 10:00 am.

• A review of application #3750; Adam Hubbard, ABF Freight, for Conditional Use, Right of Way, and Sign, under Sections 602, 665 & 720 of the Dummerston Zoning Bylaw, at parcel #828, 830 US Rt. 5, Dummerston, VT, a Rural Commercial

The hearing will be preceded by a site visit on Saturday January 13, 2024, beginning at or about 10:30 am.

The hearings and site visit are open to the public. Participation in these proceedings is a prerequisite to the right to take any subsequent appeal. Persons wishing to appear and be heard may do so in person, by a representative or by video teleconference, or through written comment. A copy of the applications is available for public review at the Dummerston Town Office during normal business hours or by email to: zoning@dummerston.org. To receive the Zoom video teleconference link email to: zoning@dummerston.org, or call: 802-275-5739 .

Dated: December 20, 2023 Roger Vincent Jasaitis **Dummerston Zoning Administrator**

VERMONT SUPERIOR COURT 30 Putney Road 2nd Floor Brattleboro, VT 05301 802-257-2800

www.vermontjudicary.org

PROBATE DIVISON Case No. 23-PR-05873

December 12, 2023

NOTICE OF HEARING AND ORDER FOR PUBLICATION **Estate of: Elwood Tenney**

This is to notify you to appear at court in connection with the above-named case for the following:

A Testate Estate Commencement Hearing will be held on: Petition to Open an Estate and Appoint Fiduciary

> DATE: TIME DURATION 1:30 PM

30 Minutes January 11, 2024

IF YOU DESIRE TO BE HEARD ON THE ABOVE MATTER, YOU MUST PARTICIPATE IN THE HEARING.

Objections to the allowance of the will must be filed in writing not less than seven days prior to the hearing. In the event that no timely objections are filed, the will may be allowed if it meets the criteria set out in V.S.A. 14 section 107(b)(1) or (2).

WebEx login information, please contact the Court. Any individual with a disability requiring assistance accessing the services, programs, and/or activities at

This hearing will be held by WebEx only. For instructions for participating by WebEx and for the

the Courthouse should contact the Clerk's office at the above address for further assistance.



It is hereby ORDERED that the notice of hearing as set forth in this Order be published in a newspaper of general circulation in Windham County, Vermont.

Publication Date: December 20, 2023

TOTAL COUNTY REVENUES

Windham Elementary School will be closed for the rest of the school year.

■ School closes

at Townshend in the new year. "This is a short-term emergency measure," said Windham Central Supervisory Union Superintendent Bob Thibault at the board meeting. "It's temporary, and it is the intent of the board to re-operate next school year. This is not a permanent decision.

The vote was 2–1, with Abigail Pelton, the chair of the three-person Windham board, the sole vote against closing the school.

The immediate reason for the closure was simple: The school is struggling to find staff. Windham Elementary usually employs three people: a teaching principal, a teacher, and an administrative

Jenna Cramer, the teaching principal, was placed on administrative leave in mid-October, just weeks after beginning in the role.

Parents alleged that Cramer had played a music video that included drinking, smoking, and violence during class, and the board fired her in November.

Cramer is appealing that decision, according to the superintendent, and a school board hearing, as provided under state law, took place on Dec. 14.

The other teacher is on a provisional teaching license and is supposed to be supervised by a licensed principal.

Jen McKusick, director of curriculum and instruction for the Windham Central Supervisory is ongoing.

Union, has been filling that role on an interim basis, Thibault told the school board.

A search for a replacement for Cramer has come up short, however. At a Dec. 5 school board meeting, Thibault reported that after interviewing two candidates, a hiring committee "was unanimous in not having a candidate to recommend to the board at this time."

Wrangling over cost, quality of education

Outside of staffing challenges, Windham has been wrangling over the fate of the school for

Some parents and community members believe the school should be permanently closed. The institution is too small to effectively educate kids, and maintaining it is expensive for residents, they argue.

Proponents of the school, meanwhile, say that keeping Windham Elementary running is key to a healthy community and that the tiny school offers students a unique and intimate educational experience.

A group of parents is suing the town of Windham and the state over the school, saying that its students are not receiving an appropriate education and should receive state tuition money to attend schools elsewhere. That case

FROM SECTION FRONT

On Dec. 14, Daniel Roth, a Windham School Board member, said that the decision to close the school temporarily could prevent the state Agency of Education from taking even more drastic action — such as closing the school permanently or forcing it into another district.

"We as a community, we as Windham, may lose the power that we have to direct our own district," Roth said.

Lindsey Hedges, a spokesperson for the Agency of Education, told VTDigger in an email that closing a school due to staffing challenges is "indeed a unique occurrence.

Hedges did not answer questions about the agency's stance on Windham Elementary, but she pointed to Vermont statute laying out the options if a school is failing to meet standards.

According to that statue, the agency is empowered to combine districts, close schools, or "assume administrative control" over a school.

Thibault, the superintendent, said that state officials have been paying close attention to events in Windham.

In communications with the district, those officials "reminded us of their statutory power," he said. "That's probably the best way to put that."

Additional Commons reporting by 7eff Potter.

Notice of Windham County Annual Meeting *TO ALL RESIDENTS OF WINDHAM COUNTY*

Pursuant to 24 V.S.A.133® Notice is hereby given that the Annual Windham County Meeting of the voters presenting the proposed budget for the county for the ensuing year will be held on:

Wednesday, January 24, 2024, at 4:00 PM at the Windham County Sheriff's Office 185 Old Ferry Rd Brattleboro, VT 05304.

If interested in attending this meeting via Zoom, please contact the Windham County Clerk at Countyclerk@windhamcountyvt.gov. Please provide your full name and the town in which you reside. The Zoom information, along with a copy of the proposed budget, will be emailed to you approximately 3 business days prior to the meeting date. Note: If you prefer to attend the meeting via phone, instead of via the web (Zoom), a dial-in number will be provided to you.

The following is a summary of the expenditures being proposed for the fiscal year Beginning February 1, 2024.

County Clerk's Office, Windham County Courthouse \$553,338.64 \$256,821.64 Professional Services \$37,100.00 Contract Services \$1,050.00 **Building & Grounds** \$203,000.00 Operational Expenses \$21,570.00 \$31,797.00 **Donations** \$2,000.00 Windham Probate Court

Building Expenses \$0.00 \$0.00 Operational Expenses \$0.00 Windham County Sheriff's Department \$499,500.18 \$274,086.39 Personnel \$78,365.00

Professional Services Contract Services \$11,680.79 **Building Expenses** \$30,525.00 Operational Expenses \$46,600.00 \$58,243.00 County Capital Reserve Fund

TOTAL COUNTY EXPENDITURES \$1,052,838.82 REVENUE Windham Superior Court Small Claims and Notary Fees \$24,000.00

County Capital Construction Fund TOTAL TO BE ASSESSED TO THE TOWNS OF WINDHAM COUNTY \$1.028.838.82 The tax rate is based on last year's Grand List as this year's list is not published until the end of December, January. Estimated Tax rate FY 24/25 0.01096. Actual tax rate should be known by the Annual County Meeting in January 2024. Copies of the

Lamont Barnett, Assistant Judge

complete proposed budget are available to the public during the county court's hours of Monday through Friday 8:00AM to 4:30PM at the county (Superior) Court on Route 30, Newfane, Vermont. Carolyn Partridge, Assistant Judge



Rep. Leslie Goldman, D-Bellows Falls



Rep. Michelle Bos-Lun, D-Westminster.

wealth in Vermont isn't gener-

And that wealth is "usually

gains on investments and things

like that," Kornheiser said.

"People make money by moving money around." As a result,

when a state taxes wages, that tax

does not by and large apply to the

equitable tax system, we want to

make sure that everyone's paying

their fair share," she said. "And

if we just focus on a fair share of wages and not on a fair share of

income, then we're really doing a

disservice to the Vermonters who

Kornheiser is part of a state-

wide coalition of people working

on the wealth tax issue. Two pos-

sible ideas: adding a surcharge to

the top percent, or re-examining

and overhauling the tax base so it

applies to wealth indicators like

Bills are being drafted right

This is a new way of looking

"I don't think there has been

the subject, Kornheiser said.

an income threshold proposal on the table before," she said.

"People say that if we do some-

thing like this, the rich will leave

the state. But there is a lot of re-

search showing that people don't

leave the state. And we certainly

don't have the lowest taxes in the

regardless of how much money they make," she said. "They

want to live in communities where

they have social relationships and

where their kids can get the edu-

Other House issues

Hashim, who passed his bar

exam this summer ["State senator

becomes lawyer by taking road

less traveled," News, Oct. 4],

has a few bills of his own that he

is looking forward to introducing.

screeners" to help school districts

that score low on reading skills, as

screeners would be made avail-

able through the Agency of

Education at no cost to the dis-

trict, and would be available to

the list and number of screeners

and publish that list to the dis-

"The agency would determine

He has also drafted a bill to

create two new judge positions,

one of which would be used for

a separate statewide docket for

municating with the judiciary

branch," he said. "The positions

would be float positions around

Rep. Mike Mrowicki,

D-Putney, is proud of the way

Vermont has handled at least

one crisis: women's health care,

which is under attack in many

'I drafted the bill after com-

As Hashim envisions it, "the

Bellows Falls has.

each district."

tricts," he said.

drug crimes.

the state.

other states.

One is establishing "literacy

cation that they need."

So, Kornheiser said, she as-

are in the bottom 95%.

third homes.

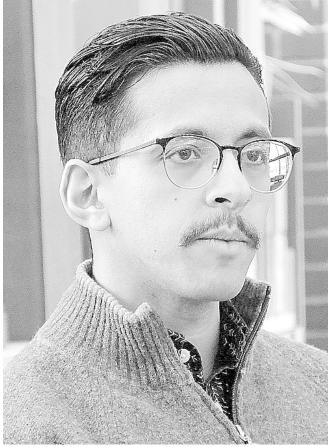
ready left.

"So if we're going to have an

ated through wages.

don't work here.'

bulk of their money.



Sen. Nader Hashim, D-Windham

■ Legislators "Many Vermonters have faced unprecedented challenges since we adjourned in May," Long said. "The catastrophic flooding we experienced over the summer has had a significant impact on our state, so we must stay focused on flood recovery and make Vermont more flood resilient in the future."

pact our ongoing climate discussions, including our work on modernizing regulations like Act 250. We will also continue our work to update Vermont's Renewable Energy Standard." In 2023, the state recognized

Doing so, she said, "will im-

that insufficient housing was everybody's problem. Since then, the issue has attracted much of the Legislature's attention.

"Housing will remain at the top of our list of priorities," Long said. "We will build on the nearly \$1 billion investments we have made over the last five years, including modernization of General Assistance Housing."

The latter program provides a safety net, at least in theory, for Vermonters who have emergencies ranging from medical to housing needs.

There is a lot more to do and it will take time, but I remain confident that as long as we stay focused on local and statewide solutions, we will continue to make steady progress on housing," Long said.

Expanding health care is an-

other priority. "Health and public safety are issues that impact the lives of all Vermonters at one time or another," she said. "The cost of health care is a growing burden. We know housing shortages, substance-use disorder, and mental and physical health challenges all contribute to the struggles many Vermonters are facing, so expanding access to affordable health care for Vermonters will continue to be a priority."

Government accountability is another priority for House leadership, she said.

"Are our investments and laws being implemented and monitored as intended, including within the required timeline?" Long asked. "Government in its entirety, including taxes and fees, should be a long-term benefit, not a burden for Vermonters."

Taxes and paid

family leave Rep. Emilie Kornheiser, D-Brattleboro, chairs the powerful Ways and Means Committee, which is tasked with writing the state budget. (Last year, it was one of the main bills vetoed by Gov. Phil Scott; his veto was overridden.)

Kornheiser also brought with her to the Legislature a bill promoting paid family leave. It has now passed the House with "a really, really strong vote," she said, and is ready for the Senate.

"I have been working this summer with a few senators and with advocates to make sure it's ready for Senate attention this year,' Kornheiser said. "But it's not in my chamber anymore, so it's a little bit out of my hands."

A law like paid family leave costs money, and Kornheiser is deeply involved in ways to raise state revenue. One idea she is considering right now is a wealth tax. While controversial tax-the-rich proposals are nothing new, her method would be different, she

explained. "The scenario playing out in Texas, where a woman had to "Even before we were a country, we taxed property beleave her state to get needed recause it was the clearest way of productive health care, would not happen in Vermont, because of recently passed laws," Mrowicki how people held their wealth," Kornheiser said. "Over the last few hundred years, we've moved

from that to taxing the value of In April, the Legislature homes and wages. passed a bill to ensure access to

use that money to pay their gender-affirming health care, bills, she said. But most of the and Gov. Phil Scott signed it into law in May. Then, in November, voters approved Proposition 5, That wealth belongs to "the % that [U.S. Sen.] Bernie which establishes in the state Constitution an "individual's Sanders talks about," Kornheiser right to personal reproductive said — "the very, very wealthy people who live in Vermont but

autonomy."
Next, Mrowicki sees a need to protect agriculture from climate change.

"Locally, our fruit growers were hit hard by the killing freeze in May, and I'll be pushing to try and get them and orchards across the state some funding to get them through to next year," ie said.

Also on Mrowicki's priorities list is a new version of Vermont's lauded and successful Bottle Bill, enacted in 1973 to clean up litter; it is now a major recycling law. A revised law would, among other things, expand what can be redeemed. For example, recycling a wine bottle might bring in 15 cents.

The governor vetoed the bill

We will be voting in the first week of the session to over-ride that veto," Mrowicki said. "Since it's been over 50 years since Vermont passed it's original bottle bill, it's time a new bill reflects the times we are in."

Mrowicki will also be working on laws to keep such hazardous chemicals as PFAS out of the groundwater and PCBs, such as those found in the Bellows Falls schools, out of the air.

Another of Mrowicki's priorities is putting an end to gun violence. Vermont's reputation as a relatively sane and safe place was trashed across the world recently when three young Palestinian men were shot in Burlington.

We will be introducing legissumes that wealthy property owners who would leave over lation to hold people accountable high taxes "have probably alfor these crimes," he said.

Mrowicki is also leading an "People choose where they live effort to wean Vermont from its state pension investments in oil companies.

The good news here is that oil companies are not the blue chip investments they used to be, Mrowicki said. "There are so many other options for investing. This is something I'll be taking the reins on in the House — the Senate passed it last year."

Mrowicki said that State Treasurer Mike Pieciak is working with lawmakers on the issue and that they have "been able to bring together various factions that have not yet agreed on this, and we hope to find a mutually agreeable solution.'

Transportation and climate change

Rep. Sara Coffey, D-Guilford, is the chair of the House Transportation Committee, which serves as both a money and a policy committee.

In 2023, her committee wrote and guided to passage an \$850 million transportation budget, the largest in the state's history. The law provided money for dozens of major paving and town highway projects, as well as funding to encourage more Vermonters to transition to electric vehicles.

Coffey sees the Transportation Committee as a place to do significant work in addressing climate change.

"In the coming session, our focus will be on how we can develop and sustain a 21st-century transportation system that is clean, affordable, [and] accessible for all Vermonters," Coffey said.

The committee members will look "at how to best help municipalities adapt and prepare for climate change; ensure equitable access to affordable and reliable electric vehicle charging; accelerate the adoption of electric vehicles in Vermont; support in-Most people earn wages and reproductive health care and novation in public transit service

to better serve all Vermonters; create more walkable and bikeable communities; and take bold steps for meeting Vermont's carbon reduction requirements."

FROM SECTION FRONT

Safe childbirth is another of Coffey's priorities. With the Women's Legislative Caucus, which she co-chaired last year, she will be working to help pass a bill that expands access to doula care.

The bill would require Medicaid to cover services by doulas, professionals who provide physical and emotional support to birthing parents and families during and after pregnancy, labor, and delivery.

"It's a tool to improve health outcomes for women and infants by improving the experience of care and lowering costs by reducing non-beneficial and un-wanted medical interventions," Coffey said. "With 22 additional co-sponsors, we hope to get this bill across the finish line.

In 2021, Coffey was the lead sponsor of legislation that created the Better Places Program, a non-competitive, community matching grant program that allowed Vermonters to create vibrant public places.

"We have seen great projects in Windham County that have been supported the Better Places program, including the High Street mural in Brattleboro and the creation of a community park in Algiers Village in Guilford,"

Coffey said. "This session I will be working to advocate for ongoing funding for this program, because we see that these kinds of placemaking projects have such positive im-

pacts in communities," she noted. Another representative who devotes the majority of her time to transportation issues, Rep. Mollie Burke, D-Brattleboro, works closely with Coffey on the Transportation Committee. Burke's prime motivation is cutting carbon emissions and helping communities deal with future

flooding events. "We hope for extensive resilience planning, design, and implementation," said Burke, who noted that Vermont is currently not on target to meet its mandated emissions reduction goals.

'We want to provide a variety of transportation options to help Vermonters access jobs and age securely in their communities. We want to improve public health and reduce transportation costs while reducing our carbon emissions."

She described these options as "immediate and crucial undertakings that will require investments to meet our targeted emissions reductions while addressing issues of equity and affordability."

"Our proposals are still being finalized, but we have a number of broad areas for inclusion," she said. "These include helping municipalities to plan for and adapt to climate change, promoting more electric vehicle use and adding more charging stations, expanding public transit, and supporting more walkable and bike-able communities."

Solving the drug problem

Rep. Tristan Roberts, D-Halifax, thinks Vermont is not even close to solving its drug problem.

"Many recover from this disease if given time and the tools to heal," Roberts said. "But we haven't mustered the resources to get everyone into treatment, and not everyone accepts treatment."
And, he said, "We're also not

building enough of the one thing everyone agrees would help most housing.

Roberts said that the emergency workers he knows say they are frequently cursed out just after saving someone's life.



Rep. Tristan Roberts, D-Halifax

emocracy is the recurrent suspicion that more than half of the people are right more than half the time.

GOTAN OPINION?

(Of course you do! You're from Windham County!)

Got something on your mind? Send contributions to our Letters from Readers section (500 words or fewer strongly recommended) to voices@commonsnews.org; the deadline is Friday to be considered for next week's paper. When space is an issue, we give priority to words

that have not yet appeared elsewhere.

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





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Rep. Emilie Kornheiser, D-Brattleboro

"In counteracting their overdose, the EMT interrupted their high and wasted their drugs," he said. "Hence the cursing."

"We've long expected the public safety officers who protect and serve our communities to face this abuse. The staff at the courthouse, from security on up to the judges, are doing their part for justice with the imperfect tool of the law," Roberts said.

Society counts on those staffers — including correctional officers, probation officers, and parole officers — to save lives, he said.

"The tools we give them? Threadbare staffing, inconsistent programming, and outdated facilities," Roberts said. "I will do my utmost to work with the Legislature and the governor this session to set a better course for our state. I will look for any place to intervene in the cycles of addiction and dependency playing out around us."

A health care problem: underinsurance

Former longtime nurse practitioner Rep. Leslie Goldman, D-Bellows Falls, spent her summer studying the health care system.

"Almost all of us have had experience with primary care, hospitals, labs, emergency rooms, and long-term care, either personally or with our families and friends," she said.

"Many times we get excellent care, but as a system we know that compared to other developed countries, we have the most expensive health care system per capita coupled with health outcomes that are comparatively

worse," Goldman said.
While the Scott administration frequently and proudly points out that only 3% of Vermonters have no health insurance, it rarely follows up with the statistic that 40% of Vermonters are underinsured, she said.

"This means that we have difficulty affording co-payments and deductibles, leading to delay in care resulting in worse outcomes and more costs," Goldman said. "We need to address this inequity."

In addition, she cited "considerable concern regarding the sustainability of our hospitals — like Springfield Hospital's recent filing for bankruptcy. That hospital is not the exception."

She said that watching hospital budget presentations has taught her "that many of our hospitals have razor-thin operating margins, which has raised considerable concern that they could be next"

The Green Mountain Care Board and the Agency of Human Services have been tasked by the Legislature with implementing Act 167 — global hospital bud-

gets — passed in 2022.

"This would move us from the fee-for-service model we are familiar with to a global budget model," Goldman said. "Global budgets focus on the health of an entire population that the hospital serves and incentivizes the hospital to invest in keeping the population healthier."

One of the provisions of the bill, she added, "is to have community conversations about these ideas, which were carried out this fall."

A report will soon be issued, and a new set of conversations will be announced, said Goldman, who described herself as "very committed to a sustainable,

population-based health care system in my work on the Health Care Committee."

The Health Care Committee is also looking at a bill to increase income eligibility for people who are receiving Medicare to get help with premiums.

"When some individuals reach 65 and change their health insurance to Medicare, there can be considerable increased costs compared to the insurance that they were paying for prior to that," Goldman said. "This leaves less dollars for day-to-day expenses and could put considerable stress on budgets for the elderly."

Goldman said her committee will also be looking at how the schools can fund mental health services without leaving "less money to pay for the education of our students, which is crucial for their future."

She is also interested in helping to keep Vermont's emergency system operational.

"Current reimbursement rates do not cover the full cost of emergency medical services," she said. "Services are struggling to keep pace with the needs of our community."

An Emergency Medical Services Coordination Study will provide recommendations to the Legislature for improving "the efficiency, effectiveness, and coordination of EMS," she said.

"The Health Care Committee will be digging into these recommendations, and I am working with staff at the Vermont Department of Health as we learn more about this," Goldman said.

"unit for Othe to provide to provide child."

"Mu ing is a said."

The housing crisis

Sen. Wendy Harrison, D-Windham, has been actively looking for ways to help solve the housing crisis. She believes that Brattleboro has already taken important steps in that direction.

"The town of Brattleboro has been encouraging creation of new housing for years, and last year it served as a good example when we discussed housing in the Economic Development and Housing Committee," Harrison

"The town encourages the conversion of large single-family homes to multiple units; has reduced parking requirements, which are often a barrier to redevelopment; and promotes 'gentle infill,' such as tiny homes and accessory dwelling units, in existing neighborhoods," she said.

Continuing this work, this summer Harrison served on the Mobile Home Task Force, a temporary group authorized by the Housing Opportunities Made for Everyone (HOME) Act, a new

law enacted last year.

Mobile homes may be one way
of solving the affordable hous-

ing crunch.

"I just went to Wilmington to see a new type of mobile home that is net-zero ready, meaning that if solar panels are added—and if the location gets sun—the overall energy costs of the home will be close to zero," Harrison said.

The Mountain Home Park in West Brattleboro is considering these units for residents currently in the floodplain, she said.

Harrison is also a supporter of the concept of "duplex by right," also a part of the HOME Act.

"It means that anywhere a single-family home is permitted to be built, the owner of a lot in that area may build a duplex or modify a single-family home to be a two-family home," Harrison said.

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Sen. Wendy Harrison, D-Windham



State Rep. Mollie Burke, D-Brattleboro.

"Duplexes are an effective way to increase the amount of housing while keeping the overall feel of the community," she said. "For Vermonters who need additional income, they can use the extra unit for rental income."

Others, she added, "may want to provide home for a parent or child."

"Multi-generational housing is a traditional way to share costs and child care, but has been not permitted in some places," Harrison pointed out. erty tax, Hassessment. Pointing of toration at Marrison pointed out.

Floodplain restoration is another of her concerns.

"I want to find ways for the state and the towns to increase floodplain restoration, such as was done [in Brattleboro] at Melrose Place and is currently happening at 'Sawdust Alley' at the end of Birge Street," Harrison said. "The Senate Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs visited Melrose this fall and was very impressed."

Stormwater utilities, a way to fund the stormwater management of ditches, culverts, ponds, and floodplains, need to be created, Harrison said.

"The difficulty is getting them set up," she said.

Five towns in the Lake Champlain area have already established stormwater utilities.

"Part of the bill includes funding for multiple smaller towns to work together and use one consultant to establish their individual utilities," Harrison said. "I want to make it easier for any town, especially small towns, to establish these utilities; they are going to need the revenue to address flooding."

Stormwater utilities also provide an incentive for property owners to reduce their wastewater generation.

Property owners could be charged according to "the amount of stormwater that comes off their property," Harrison said, a fee that "provides an incentive to reduce impact."

One example: A large commercial property with a lot of asphalt parking, through which

stormwater cannot absorb into the ground, "would maybe reduce the lot size to save money," she said.
"The goal is to have as much

as possible," Harrison continued.
"And to have streams, brooks and rivers carry the water."

This would not be a property tax, Harrison said, but an

of the water go into the ground

assessment.
Pointing out the floodplain restoration at Melrose Terrace, she said that these measures will help towns maintain ditches and cul-

verts and will fund their replace-

ment or upgrades.

"Many of these are a real problem because they aren't big enough to handle the debris — trees and tree stumps — that get stuck in them and create a dam," Harrison said. "Then you've got flooding on the other side. It's a more fair way to fund these projects, and it's already used in

Another bill Harrison is working on would, if enacted, require a town to require bus service when it reviews a new development.

A state mushroom? Finally, how about those

mushrooms?

Vermont."

Rep. Michelle Bos-Lun (D-Windham-3), a devoted mycophile, recently submitted a bill to create the Vermont State Mushroom. church at alls com or 802-25 view of some obit.ly/744-art.

"I did this after consulting with some important stakeholders, like the elementary students of Windham Elementary School and the middle school students of the Compass School in Westminster," Bos-Lun said.

"Both groups of students spent time learning about the wonders of wild mushrooms, and after considering diverse contenders, students at both schools chose the same mushroom genus by a majority vote," she added.

When the vote was tallied, *Hericium americanu*, "commonly known as Bear's Head Tooth, was the winning mushroom," she said.

AROUND THE TOWNS

Dummerston DMV office to reopen on Jan. 2

BARRE — The Vermont Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) office in Dummerston, which was closed following flooding in July and has remain closed since then due to staffing issues, is scheduled to reopen on Jan. 2.

Amy Tatko, DMV's director of communications and outreach, confirmed the reopening date in an email to *The Commons* on Dec. 12.

Windham County lawmakers made reopening the Dummerston office a priority. Its closure has meant that residents needing in-person services have had trek north to DMV offices in Springfield and White River Junction.

Registrations and renewals can be done online at dmv.vermont. gov/mydmv. In-person appointments can be made online at vtdmv.cxmflow.com/Appointment/Index/57479cc4-a999-4eee-a392-0a7a474a17aa.

WNESU seeks input for superintendent evaluation process

WESTMINSTER STATION

— The Windham Northeast
Supervisory Union (WNESU)
Board of School Directors is required to provide oversight and
policy direction to their superintendent of schools, Andy Haas.
As one part of that process, the
board is conducting a brief survey. Students, teachers, parents, community members, and
WNESU staff are all invited to
provide their valuable insights.

"Even if you feel you don't have direct experience, your perceptions and comments are helpful," the board said in a news release. "In part, the survey is requesting input on organizational vision, direction, and leadership by the superintendent; the superintendent's role in promoting a positive learning environment for students; and the superintendent's role in welcoming active engagement from parents, families, and community members."

Responses are anonymous with submissions due by Thursday, Dec. 14. The survey is available at wnesu.org.

Art Gift Sale at All Souls features local artists

WEST BRATTLEBORO— The Art Gift Sale at All Souls Church, 29 South St., continues until Sunday, Jan. 7. On sale are affordable, original works of art to take home in time for unique holiday gift-giving, along with cards and calendars featuring the artists' work.

The original paintings, photographs, and multi-media creations on display were created by Maisie Crowther, Marie Gorst, Elizabeth Lewis, Beth McKinney, Trish Murtha, Ann Newsmith, and Lois Reynolds. Also available are cards and calendars featuring the artists' work. As items sell, they will be replaced by new art, so stop by often to check out the latest additions. Prices start as low as \$5, and most items are less than \$50.

The Art Gift Sale is open every Sunday from 11 a.m. to noon, and by appointment. Contact the church at allsoulsvtart@gmail. com or 802-257-4710. For a preview of some of the artwork, visit bit.ly/744-art.

'Elf' movie and gift exchange in South Newfane

SOUTH NEWFANE — There will be a free special showing of the movie *Elf* on Saturday, Dec. 16, at 8 p.m. at the South Newfane Schoolhouse, 387 Dover Rd. At intermission, there will be a "white elephant" gift exchange. Participants are asked to bring

Tarticipants are asked to oring

a wrapped gift under \$20 for the exchange. It should be something that you'd be happy to take home, and preferably made by a local artist or artisan, or purchased from a local business. "Onesies" and pajamas are strongly encouraged, and folks wearing them will qualify for a drawing. Organizers say the event is "BYOB: Bring Your Own Bean bag, Blankets, comfy camp chairs, and adult beverages."

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).

Due to the holiday season, the December Free Produce Distribution will be on Friday, Dec. 22. All are welcome. This is a drive-up service. Bags provided.

Rec. Dept. hosts Winter Mini Camp

BRATTLEBORO — The Brattleboro Recreation & Parks Department staff announces they will offer a daily Winter Mini Camp Tuesday through Friday, Dec. 26 through 29, from 8:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

They say each day will be "a fun-filled morning packed with games, sports, activities, arts, crafts, and more." A snack will be provided but they ask that campers bring a drink and lunch.

This program will take place at the Gibson-Aiken Center and is for children 5–11 years old. They require a minimum of six participants to run the program, with a maximum of 20 kids. Note that on Thursday, Dec. 28, campers will meet at the Nelson Withington Skating Facility at Living Memorial Park, and should bring skates (if they have them), a sled, and warm clothes.

Registration is required by Thursday, Dec. 21. No phone registrations will be accepted. The fee for Brattleboro residents is \$15 a day, \$18 a day for nonresidents. For more information, call the Gibson-Aiken Office at 802-254-5808.

Museum set to move into Pool Nature Center

MARLBORO — The Southern Vermont Natural History Museum has announced that it will dedicate the former Pool Learning Center on 117 Adams Cross Rd. as the Pool Nature Center. The building and adjacent grounds were given to the museum by the Pool Learning Center after the center closed. In addition, an adjacent parcel was given to the museum by the Wilmington Masonic Lodge to make a total of 7.5 acres.

According to the museum, "Bill and Janet Pool were both strong advocates for preserving the area for wildlife. Bill spent much of his time engaged in wildlife photography. There is an adjoining 200+ acres of land that the Pools set aside for wildlife preservation that is currently held by the Wilmington Masonic Lodge."

The museum says it plans to use the site for its summer day camp and other educational purposes. With the closure of its site at the Hogback Overlook, the museum is relocating programs and many of its live animals to the Pool Nature Center.

Currently, the site is not open to the public except for special programs and events. However, starting next summer, the museum will be opening up hiking trails. For more information, visit vermontmuseum.org, or facebook. com/vermontmuseum.



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MILESTONES

Births, deaths, and news of people from Windham County

Obituaries



 Isabelle Gander, 94, of Brattleboro. Died peacefully in her sleep on Dec. 10, 2023 at Vernon Homes. Born Mary

Isabelle Salamone in Westfield, New York, on July 6, 1929, she was salutatorian of her high school and throughout her long life carried an abiding belief in the power of education. One of the first members of her family to graduate from college, Isabelle received her B.A. from Skidmore College in 1951. She went on to receive her M.S. in education from Fredonia State College in 1955. Early in her career as an educator, Isabelle decided to move to New York City, and there, through a tight circle of friends, Isabelle met her future husband, Roderick Gander. They were married in December 1955, and settled in New York City where they raised their three children. She was an elementary school teacher and later for many years, the director of the Collegiate Nursery School. In 1980, Isabelle and Rod moved first to Marlboro, Vermont, and later to Brattleboro. A strong believer in social services, Isabelle worked over the years at Youth Services, Vocational Rehabilitation and, later, as an employment representative at the Vermont Association of Business Industry and Rehabilitation. In later years, she spoke often and proudly of her contributions during that time in helping found and establish the Gathering Place in Brattleboro. In 2002, during her husband Rod's successful run for the Vermont State Senate, Isabelle was right by his side helping with his campaign. That support continued in later years throughout his long battle with cancer, which he lost in 2007; they had been blessed with 52 years of marriage. Isabelle continued to stretch herself with new experiences and an ever-expanding circle of friends. In her retirement years, Isabelle started a small business, buying and selling antiques. Even more rewarding was her volunteer work at Brigid's Kitchen and she continued to help there right up until the time of the Covid shutdown. Being an avid reader, she also took great pleasure in her book club. All who knew Isabelle were aware of her kindness and consideration for others, as well as her toughness and fierce independence. She imparted these qualities to her children, along with a love of literature and a passion for social justice. children, Mac Gander, Jim Gander

(Mike Conley): granddaughters Bridget Shea-Gander (Landon Elliott-Knaggs), Michaela Shea-Gander, Nellie Pierce, and Ella Gander; her great-grandson Noah Shea-Elliott, and several nieces and nephews. Isabelle was predeceased by her husband Rod Gander, her two brothers Charles Salamone and Leonard Salamone, and her grandson Philip Pierce. MEMORIAL INFOR-MATION: A remembrance celebration will be held at a later date. Donations to St. Brigid's Kitchen, 38 Walnut St., Brattleboro, VT 05301. To share a memory or offer condolences to the family, visit atamaniuk.com.



 Dante John Papale, 94, of Townshend. Died on Dec. 3, 2023 at Vernon Hall. He is survived by four

daughters, Deborah (James) Walsh of Keene, New Hampshire, Laurie (Joseph) Rinfret of Vernon, Jane (Greg) Moore of Derry, New Hampshire, and Susan (David) Morse of Westminster; his son, Gus Papale of Brattleboro; and 11 grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren. John's wife, Doris Kramer Papale, predeceased him in 1987. He was born at home on August 17, 1929 in Derby, Connecticut, the youngest of four children of Agostino Papale and Marie Rose Capuano Papale. John grew up in an Italian family and did not speak English until he entered school. He graduated from West Haven High School in 1947. His senior yearbook said this about him: "born in the country, bred on the farm; a little more studying wouldn't do any harm" He would have agreed with that. He started a small printing business, Sunnyside Press, while still in high school and then started D.J. Papale Press. This eventually became Venture Magazine, where he was publisher and editor. John's father was a brick mason and taught him the trade. Throughout his life, he took pride in the masonry and stone work he did, building many beautiful fireplaces and stone walls. He married Doris Kramer on Aug. 26, 1950. John built his first house in West Haven, Connecticut when he was 20 years old. John worked construction his entire life, starting as a laborer then eventually moving up to project manager. During this time, he moved to Chesterfield, New Hampshire, built a house for his family, and started his own business, the Spofford Inland Corporation. He eventually became project manager for a private construction company in Burlington where he Isabelle is survived by her three worked on hospitals, treatment plants, and schools. John spent

(Justyne Ogdahl), and Liz Gander his retirement in Townshend. Milestones are published as community news at no cost to families, thanks to financial support of our members and advertisers. Send them to news@ commonsnews.org. Though we ask that content for this column be sent by Friday at 5 p.m., we will do our best to include late obituaries. Please alert the newsroom at 802-246-6397 for post-deadline urgent submissions. We

will always do our best to accommodate contributors in their time of grief.

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He had many interests, and at times sold real estate, ran a successful antique business, and ran a bed-and-breakfast. He loved dabbling in day trading in the stock market and did that until his death. He leaves behind children, grandchildren, and greatgrandchildren who will miss him very much. Memorial informa-TION: A private funeral was held on Dec. 9. John was interred in the family plot in Oakwood Cemetery in Townshend. Funeral arrangements were under the direction of Atamaniuk Funeral Home of Brattleboro. To share a memory or offer condolences to the family, visit atamaniuk.com.

• Deborah Swisher, 73, of Rockingham. Died on Nov. 24, 2023, at home in Rockingham. Deborah was born Jan. 8, 1950, in Springfield, Vermont to Charles and Flora (Parkhurst) Anderson. Debbie worked at Vermont T's for more than 15 years and later at NewsBank, both in Chester. Debbie loved making crafts and crocheting, and gifted most of her handmade treasures to children, family, friends, and several care facilities. She had an annual fun-loving holiday tradition of making Christmas cookies with her children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. Debbie was a member of the Bartonsville Grange for 20 years, where she held multiple offices including Master for four years and was a member of the Executive Committee. Most of all, Debbie loved spending time with her family. Debbie is survived by her children, Gloria (Paul) Thomas of Walpole, New Hampshire and Patrick (Fawna) Start of Johnson; sisters Judy Chernouski, Nancy Rodgers, Charlyn Start, and Sandy Kiablick; grandchildren Kristina Thomas, Selina Meisenhelder, Holly Strait, Taylor Palmer, and Natalie Start, and eight great-grandchildren. She was predeceased by her parents and Gary Swisher, her husband of 25 years. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: A graveside service will be held in the spring in Houghtonville Cemetery. Donations to the Bartonsville Grange, in care of Nancy Rogers, 243 Lower Bartonsville Rd., Chester, VT 05143. Julia



Rebecca (Wilkins) Wheeler, 93, of Brattleboro. Died on Dec. 1, 2023 at

Pine Heights Nursing Home in Brattleboro. Julia was born on Nov. 6, 1930 in Londonderry to the late Elmer Paul Wilkins and Lizzie Lorena (Payne) Wilkins. She was the wife of the late Graydon H. Wheeler. Julia grew up in Londonderry and attended school in a oneroom schoolhouse. She developed rheumatic fever in her senior year, while she did not graduate with her class, she did receive her diploma in the mail.

≡≡AMERICAN

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EGION

She met her husband, Graydon, while working at the Rollins Inn in Windham. He also delivered grain and hay to her family farm. They were married on Dec. 29, 1951. They eventually moved to Hadley, Massachusetts and, while she lived there, she had several jobs. She was a cook for Keto's restaurant, the Florence Inn, Zeta Nu fraternity at UMass, and the VA hospital in Northampton. She then moved her family to Belchertown, Massachusetts, where she worked as an aide at the former Belchertown State School until she retired. After several years in Belchertown, Julia and her husband moved back to Vermont to the Brattleboro area. They resided in Mountain Home trailer park until her husband's death in

into Pine Heights nursing home. In her younger days, Julia enjoyed horseback riding, camping, going on her son Robert's boat, and traveling to see her daughter Liz and her son Graydon. She loved spending time with her family, especially on holidays. She always hosted dinners and barbecues throughout the years, and enjoyed cooking, baking, knitting, and cross-stitch. Upon moving into Pine Heights, she enjoyed arts and crafts but, most of all, her Bingo days. She always seemed to come out the biggest winner at Bingo. Julia is survived by her children, sons Robert R. Wheeler and his wife, Carol, and Graydon L. Wheeler and his wife Irene, and daughter Lorena L. Hubler and her husband Darren. Julia is also 2011. Shortly after, Julia moved survived by her grandchildren:

Sara McKelvey, BJ Kelley, Erik Wheeler, Graydon H. Wheeler II, and Chrystal Lizotte and her husband Kevin; and great-grandchildren Mateo, Chloe, Macie, Mckenzie, Jeremiah, and Phineas. Julia recently attended a gender reveal for her granddaughter, Rebecca, and learned she would be having a great-granddaughter due April 2024. Julia is also survived by her former daughter-in-law Katherine Wheeler of Belchertown, withwhom she remained close. MEMORIAL IN-FORMATION: Burial will take place in the spring at Glebe View Cemetery in Londonderry. Ker Phaneuf Funeral Home in Brattleboro has been entrusted with arrangements. For more information, visit phaneuf.net.

■ Christmas meal

acres deep in the country so long as they agreed they would farm and live there.

As their children grew, each was given a chunk of the family's land. Now, a generation or so later, little huts and shacks dot the

landscape in the village. "Most of the houses are built with wide boards or sheets of metal and dirt floors, though a few have poured concrete, Diamondstone says. "They all have outdoor kitchens which might have a roof over it and be attached to the home so that one can cook in the rain on a fire stove or open fire. Inside there is usually one bed where people sleep on a straw mat, or on the ground or on a hard plank board.

Wash is done on a washboard, and laundry is hung outside to dry often, as a couple of chickens or ducklings or a piglet are run-

What little money folks have from growing a few vegetables or making some tortillas recirculates through the village. That money is used in payment for someone else to buy some milk or a chicken.

This is what subsistence farmers do," Diamondstone said. "They get by with little money, and what little they have, they might use to get their child a notebook and pencil so that they can go to elementary school, or purchase a foam mattress, or pay for a cell phone, after they pay for their food.

Putting down new roots

Several years ago, Diamondstone heard about an elderly couple in the village who owned 20 acres and a house that and 1970s. She is also an attorney was falling over. They wished

"The couple wanted to get an apartment in town, where life wouldn't be so difficult for them. They could walk easily to market and get what they needed right around them. They had established citrus, banana, and lime trees, but otherwise, they had no income," remembers Diamondstone, who asked if he could purchase their property, as he travels every few weeks to the area.

He began sending money a little at a time until he owned the property.

Their home was a small, falling-down shack, so I had that removed, and I hired the people in the village to build me a small, square brick home on a stone platform."

Feeling it would be important to invest in the village, Diamondstone had the bricks made locally and all the work done by the villagers.

"One must be flexible when living in a poor village," he said. "The building was done by local people, who didn't always know what they were doing. I had to do the roof three times. The foundation wasn't level, so that was redone as well."

But the small house is now

complete, with a wraparound porch so that the San Cristóbal volcano — the most active one in Central America and the Pacific Ocean — can be seen while sitting on the porch.

A little caretaker's cottage was also built, and Diamondstone hired his neighbors to add to the already-established citrus, banana, and lime trees. They have planted coffee, cashew fruit trees, avocados, and much more.

'Because I've hired my neighbors and they greatly appreciate the work, they will come by with bags of baby trees, and now there are hundreds of them on the property," he says. "These are kind, thankful people who want to help me because I helped them. It's a wonderful community, and together, we are reforesting the land."

Diamondstone initially went to the village he now calls home because of his work looking to find a market for ramón seed ["A tall order," News, Nov. 8], which now grows on his property. He found that farming operations of the tiny community had been certified organic, but its residents didn't have a market for its product.

'I met these people nine years ago. We got there, and I didn't know what to expect. We met with the board of directors and 320 women in the area for a little project to generate just a little bit of income.

So much has happened since

Through his work, he met a 65-year-old woman, Maritza, who was a Sandinista fighter, a revolutionary woman during the Nicaraguan War during the 1960s who works in the courts, mostly for free, helping women get child support and alimony from nonpaying husbands to support their children.

Maritza is also an agronomist who is trying to save the forests in Nicaragua and works with Diamondstone "to get an income to these poor people so that they have a small, dependable source of income," he says.

"Also on our team is a man named Rigoberto, who is also a protector of the forest," he adds. "He donates his time and works to keep a truck running so that we have transportation as we travel from village to village. He was also a Sandinista rebel during the war."

Another man, Carolos, has also joined the team.

'The four of us work together for the good of the villages," Diamondstone continues. "We are a group of four on the ramón seed team trying to generate income for these families in 30 to 40 communities spread across the jungled forests of rural Nicaragua.

A Christmas meal

Years ago, Maritza asked Diamondstone if he could help 10 families buy Christmas dinner. "I thought to myself, 'The

\$100 she needed to help these

FROM SECTION FRONT

families will likely feed as many as 150 people," he says. That sounded "so easy to do," says Diamondstone, who agreed

to the request. Maritza distributed the money just before Christmas, and each family signed a receipt showing that they received the cash to fund the dinner. Families mostly purchased the food from the other subsistence farmers in the village, which was great for the local economy. The families were beyond grateful.

The following year, Maritza asked Diamondstone to fund Christmas dinner again.

"I asked her, 'How many families need the money? How many families are there?' She told me that there were 73 families and listed them by name." He gave her \$300 and asked her to pick 30 families who would receive Christmas dinner.

When I think of all the money that people spend here during the holiday season, it seemed a miracle that 30 families, or about 150 people, could enjoy Christmas dinner for \$300. It was a pleasure to fund the project once again.'

That got Diamondstone thinking and, a few years later, he had saved enough money to give Maritza \$730 to fund Christmas dinner for all 73 families.

"She sent me pictures of each family holding their receipt for the dinner money, and families are obviously thrilled to be able to have their once-a-year special dinner," he says.

He hasn't gone out of his way to make it known who's funding Christmas dinner, and he expects nothing in return.

Maritza sometimes introduces him as the person who bought their Christmas meal, and he gets to experience his neighbors' genuine appreciation.

Their face will light up, and they will say 'Thank you, thank you, it is so special," he says. "It is a pleasure to be able to give to the community, just as they give to me.'

This year, he needs to raise just about \$1,000 for 100 families, and he decided to try some fundraising to ensure that Christmas dinner remains a tradition for years to come.

Diamondstone has set up a GoFundMe crowdfunding campaign to raise \$5,000 to guarantee Christmas dinner for his neighbors for the next five years.

If he can raise more money, he says, he will invest carefully in the hopes that the fund will become self-supporting.

"I've had friends who have heard what I am doing and have given me a little money here and there as part of their own family giving project, and I am grateful for their help," Diamondstone

"A lot of the people we are feeding are elderly. Their children have left to look for work in other countries. These elderly people are sitting in their shacks and don't have any income at all,' he notes.

For them, he says, \$10 "is a huge amount of money.

"Ideally, if we could get 100 families Christmas dinner every year, that would be amazing, Diamondstone says.

To sponsor a Christmas dinner, visit Diamondstone's GoFundMe page at bit.ly/745-christmas-dinner or send checks directly to him at 10 Pierce Rd., Putney, VT 05346. He plans to hand-deliver this money to each family.

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BUHS senior named delegate to U.S. Senate Youth Program

Eva Gould, one of two from Vermont, wins a \$10,000 scholarship and will meet with U.S. leaders during a week in D.C.

By Virginia Ray

BRATTLEBORO—The Vermont Principals' Association has announced that Brattleboro Union High School senior Eva Gould is one of two students in the state named a 2024 United States Senate Youth Program (USSYP) delegate.

Annually, two students from each state are selected for a \$10,000 cash scholarship and an all-expenses-paid, week-long trip to Washington D.C. This year's selected student delegates to represent Vermont are Gould and Chris Alfano, a senior at Burr & Burton Academy in Manchester.

A Vermont Principals' Association press release calls both students "very impressive Vermont high school students."

'They submitted incredible application packets, have lots of evidence of great school and community leadership, and had very impressive interviews with the VPA USSYP committee that makes the final selections," says

The United States Senate Youth Program, established in 1962 by Senate resolution, is a unique educational experience for outstanding high school students interested in pursuing careers in public service.

Its 62nd annual Washington Week is scheduled to be held in person in Washington, D.C. March 2–9, 2024.

The two student leaders from each state, the District of Columbia, and the Department of Defense Education Activity (which operates a school system for children of U.S. military families around the world) will spend the week experiencing their national government in action. Students must be actively serving in high-level elected or appointed leadership positions to qualify to apply.

Student delegates will hear major policy addresses by senators, cabinet members, officials from

the departments of State and Defense, and directors of other federal agencies, as well as usually participate in meetings with the President and a justice of the U.S. Supreme Court.

All transportation, hotel, and meal expenses will be provided by The Hearst Foundations.

In addition, each delegate will also be awarded a \$10,000 college scholarship for undergraduate studies with encouragement to pursue coursework in history and political science.

Gould appreciates every opportunity

"I love being involved in my school," Gould says. "I truly want the best for Brattleboro and its schools. I feel the impact you have on your community is so important, and I hold that close to me."

Gould plays two varsity sports in addition to filling her academic schedule and working as much as she can throughout the year.

She is a member of Student Council and the National Honor Society. She played a major role on the recent committee to rename the school mascot and has been a student representative to the BUHS School Board.

Gould says her biggest accomplishment to date is founding the PeaceJam chapter at the high school.

The international organization was developed by Nobel Peace Prize laureates as a vehicle to teach peacemaking to young people. The BUHS chapter members are among the 1.3 million youth in 40 countries participating in

"Last year, our bike drive was monumental," she says. "It was so wonderful to even the playing field by bringing transportation to people who need it while

positively impacting the Earth." The organization, she says, "has brought a great community to our school and connected us town-wide. The engagement is something you don't see

"We had Jody Williams, Nobel Peace Prize laureate, speak a couple years ago and [we] now host monthly speakers for the school," Gould says. "PeaceJam has a whole curriculum focused on Nobel Peace Prize laureates and international leaders that we work through while also planning our Billion Acts of Peace sub-projects.'

The latter is PeaceJam's goal of documenting one billion individual actions and programs "to change the world." According to the project's website, more than 110 million acts of peace in 171 countries have been recorded.

Gould's family owns and operates Lilac Ridge Farm in West Brattleboro, which she says "has been a big inspiration.

"I have a big family that I love so much [...]. I love how passionate my family is about caring for animals, producing healthy food, conserving the land, and recently making the most delicious creemies," Gould says.

"Growing up on Lilac Ridge is something I wouldn't change for the world," she adds.

The senior says placing in the top six Vermont students in the U.S. Senate Youth program is "an absolute honor," especially given the "intensive selection process."

"The final six then go through an interview in front of seven VPA members, from which the final two are chosen," Gould says.

"I was the last interview of the day in Montpelier. With some bad car luck, I ended up having to spend the day up north waiting for AAA to come," she adds. "When I found out, I was so thrilled and I couldn't quite process the news.'

She recalls that when she learned the news, she "was eating pizza with my Dad so it was a fun moment to share together."

The opportunity this presents is so great, and I could not be happier. To meet and be able to chat with our country's leaders is amazing," Gould says.

"I can't wait to see in-depth how our country is run from within the Capitol," she adds. "I also am so excited to meet the other outstanding students from across the nation. It will be so interesting to learn everyone's roots, interests, and accomplishments.'

She predicts that it will be "a great group.

"I am most excited for the judicial branch as I have a strong interest in law and justice. I also am fascinated by history, politics, culture, and business," says Gould, who recently applied "to a bunch of universities" and hopes to major in business and/or political science.

"I am very excited to be part of and encourage women in leadership," she says.





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Dry January' encourages 'substance over substances' in 2024

BRATTLEBORO—Windham release. "Examples include alco-County Prevention Partnership (WCPP) is encouraging the community to go substance-free in January 2024.

"Substances can be anything we use out of habit to comfort ourselves in times of stress, uncertainty, loneliness, or boredom," said organizers in a press

hol, cannabis, sugar, technology or caffeine.'

They invite others to join them on "a powerful and transforming journey in the new year, prioritizing substance over substances boost your energy and attention, discover new interests and activities, and create healthy habits for long-term wellness.

mental and physical well-being,

While WCPP says they recognize "that giving up alcohol,

fantastic way to reclaim your and that "starting out can be difficult, and breaking free from previous patterns is no easy task," they say that doing so "gets simpler with time, and the benefits are tremendous."

By participating in this campaign, "you will become a part Valley Community Partnership, caffeine, cannabis, technology or of a caring community that and West River Valley Thrives,

WCPP called Dry January "a sweets can seem intimidating" understands your challenges, of- working together "to support a fers encouragement, and celebrates every step along the road," WCPP said.

The Windham County Prevention Partnership is a collaboration between Building a Positive Community, Deerfield

comprehensive effort to promote wellness and prevent the use/ misuse of substances, primarily by youth and young adults, in

Windham County.' For additional information or to sign up for Dry January, visit wcpp.link/sos.

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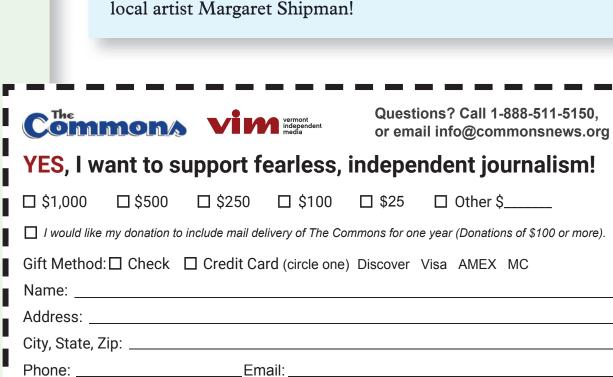
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COLUMN | Creative Conversations



'Anyone can enter this space and feel like they're a woodworker'

HatchSpace's mission: to make woodworking accessible to all, breaking barriers and cultivating a diverse community of makers

BrattleboroANY WILL REMEM-BER the space as the former Brattleboro School of Dance. Along the three flights of stairs at 22 High St. is the familiar dark gray, worn a bit more, but with cool signage — made from wood, of course — pointing to HatchSpace.

Consisting of five shop spaces in 8,000 square feet, the nonprofit states its mission is "to celebrate and advance the learning, practice, and cultural varieties of woodworking. We provide anyone with access to the tools and training necessary to build the things they love."

"All are welcome here," it's said on the HatchSpace website,

ANNIE LANDENBERGER is an arts writer and columnist for The Commons. She remains involved with the Rock River Players, the community theater that she founded and directed for years. She also is one half of the musical duo Bard Owl, with partner T.

and "financial assistance is always available to anyone experiencing hardship. Historically marginalized people including women and members of the [Black, Indigenous, and people of color] and [gender nonconforming] communities are welcome here."

HatchSpace offers a range of classes on various schedules, from bowl turning and wood finishing to kerf bending and workshop essentials. Private

instruction is also available.

Members (at \$49 monthly) have access to the third-floor power and hand tools and the second-floor digital fabrication space, which offers a fullscale CNC (computer numerical control) router, as well as laser cutting and advanced milling

equipment. I had a chance recently to talk with HatchSpace's executive

■ SEE HATCHSPACE, B3



HatchSpace's Lars Hasselblad Torres, executive director, and Jesse Pompei, education coordinator, with some of what Hasselblad Torres calls the nonprofit's "beautiful wood inventory.'

COLUMN | Deeper Dive

A sci-fi/horror/comedy classic returns to the big screen



Gizmo, one of the lead characters in the horror comedy classic "Gremlins," which will be screened at Epsilon Spires in Brattleboro on Dec. 22.

Epsilon Spires celebrates the season with the 1984 darkly funny Christmas film. And ugly sweaters.

BrattleboroHIS YEAR, Epsilon Spires presents a Christmas event worthy of its reputation. Pop culture, satire, and unusual music fill the bill on Friday, Dec. 22, when the downtown arts organization will screen the comedy-horror hit, Gremlins.

Guests are encouraged to wear their best — or worst ugly holiday sweater to win gift certificates to local businesses and other prizes. Mulled cider,

WENDY M. LEVY, a former reporter and columnist for this newspaper, contributed this piece on behalf of Epsilon Spires. The Commons' Deeper Dive column gives artists, arts organizations, and other nonprofits elbow room to write in first person and or be unabashedly opinionated, passionate, and analytical about their own creative work and events.

eggnog, and other seasonal treats will be served.

Before the movie begins, Synthesizer Santa, a.k.a. Jolly Olde Synth Nick, will play unorthodox versions of Christmas

carols and holiday music. Synth Santa, an entertainment industry veteran, decided to revamp his act with the latest technology in sonic possibilities. ■ SEE 'GREMLINS', B2

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THURSDAY

Recreation

BRATTLEBORO "Thorn In My Side" - Last episode of the year!: This original award-winning game show was created by Ben Stockman, Colin Hinckley, James Gelter, Jesse Tidd, Shannon Ward. Each month, three contestants will compete in bizarre challenges that fit that month's theme. Show is aimed for adult audiences.

- ▶ 8 p.m.
- ► Tickets are by donation. \$10 suggested.
- ► Hooker-Dunham Theater, 139 Main St. Information: 802-281-3232; hookerdunham.org.

The written word

BRATTLEBORO Brooks Memorial Library Annual Book Sale & Raffle: Friends of the Library's Annual Book Sale is open through the end of the year during regular library hours. Most items are \$2 or less and you have the opportunity to purchase raffle tickets for 13 unique and fabulous literary-themed gift baskets. Proceeds from the sale benefit patrons of the Brooks Memorial Library

- ► Raffle tickets are \$2 for 1 ticket, \$5 for 3 tickets.
- ► Brooks Memorial Library, 224 Main St. Information: 802-254-5290; brookslibraryvt.org.

Well-being

GUILFORD Taize Worship Service on the Winter Solstice:

A Taize worship service involves song and chanted prayers, meditation, period of silence, liturgical readings. Prayers consist of "short chants, repeated again and again." It's a simple, meditative form of worship calling us to dwell deeply on Christ's presence around and within us. Mantra songs (like "Jesus, Remember Me"), prayerful silence, short readings guide focus of the prayer in candle-lit environment. Taizé originated at a monastery in Taizé, France. ▶ 7 p.m.

- Guilford Community Church,
- 38 Church Dr. off Rte. 5. Information: 802-257-0994.

Community building

GUILFORD Guilford Cares Senior Support Group at Broad Brook

THURSDAY CONT.

Community Center: Talk with fellow seniors about what's on your mind. Feel like talking especially around this holiday? Participants say they feel uplifted and lighter after chatting with folks who are in the same age range. Laugh, listen, share experiences, ideas. Deb Albright - retired nurse and professional facilitator - helps the group follow simple guidelines, but participants determine what comes up for discussion. Deb brings beverages and cookies too!

- ► 1-2 p.m. on the 1st and 3rd Thursday of each month.
- ► Free.
- ► Broad Brook Community Center, 3940 Guilford Center Rd. *Information: More information* or to request a ride, contact Guilford Cares: 802-579-1350, guilfordcaresvt@gmail.com..

FRIDAY

Kids and families

BRATTLEBORO BONNVVale **Environmental Education Cen**ter: Little Explorers - Nature Playgroup for Children ages 3-5 and their Caregivers: Enjoy a morning of nature play and exploration with BEEC's Naturalist Educator Kristina Weeks and her 3-year-old child.

- ► 10-11:30 a.m.
- ► Free.
- ► Bonnyvale Environmental Education Center, 1221 Bonnyvale Rd. Information: 802-257-5785; beec.org.

Community meals

PUTNEY Putney Monthly Free Produce Distribution: The Vermont Foodbank and the Putney Foodshelf co-sponsor a monthly food drop of free produce and some non-perishables usually on the 4th Thursday of every month. Due to the Holiday season, December Free Produce Distribution will be Wednesday, 12/22. All are welcome.

- ▶ 9 a.m. 9:45 a.m. This is a drive-up service. Bags provided.
- ► Putney Foodshelf, 10 Christian Sq. Information: 802-387-

SATURDAY

Well-being

BRATTLEBORO The Brattleboro Zen Center In-Person Medita**tion:** This group chants briefly and then sits in silence for a half hour. All are welcome to join this peaceful action, either in-person or from wherever they might be. ► 1 p.m.-1:35 p.m. on Satur-

- days. ► Free.
- ► Wells Fountain, south side Windham County District Courthouse, Jct . Putney Rd. & Main St. (Rte 30).

SUNDAY

Community building

w. Brattleboro All Souls **Church Hybrid Worship Ser**vice (In-Person/Zoom): After breakfast there will be a service of seasonal stories ranging from picture story books to possibly the Christmas Chapter from Wind in the Willows. All Souls musicians are also being asked to give us a chance to sing or listen to appropriate music. Plus, Dan Kasnitz and Maisie Crowther are also participating in the planning - we hope to have an interesting variety.

- ▶ 9 a.m.: Community Breakfast. 10 a.m.: Worship Service.
- Donations welcome.
- ► All Souls Unitarian Universalist Church, 29 South St. Information: 802-254-9377; ascvt.org.

Dance

BRATTLEBORO Brattleboro Conscious Dance: Move your

body, dance to great tunes, meet our sweet dance community. Conscious dances are a beautiful way to: tone and regulate your nervous system, explore/process events and emotions, explore experience of freedom, reconnect with your inner child, practice vulnerability, engage the sacred, experience community, honor yourself, release all that no

SUNDAY CONT.

- ► 12-2 p.m. "Brattleboro Conscious Dance happens on 2nd, 4th and 5th Sundays of the month, year-round! All ages/ stages welcome. Let's co-create a sacred container that feels safe, inclusive, and accepting where all parts of you are welcome: laughter, tears, anger, joy, stillness, movement, shaking, rolling, stomping, toning. No previous experience, special shoes or partner needed. Bring a water bottle.".
- ▶ \$15 to \$25 suggested cash donation or via PayPal or Venmo (user name for both is @ ParaLabs).
- ► Inner Heat Yoga, 464 Putney Rd. Information: 12/24: tinyurl. com/m72ez626, 12/31: tinyurl. com/m72ez626,.

Celebrations and festivals

westminster west Congregational Church of Westminster West celebrates Christmas with two Christmas Eve Services.: First service is an all-ages service centered around telling Christmas story through carols, storybooks, shadow puppet play concluding with Silent Night by candlelight. Led by Rev. Susie Webster-Toleno, pianist Malcolm Toleno, puppeteers Tom Griffith and Leslie Turpin, it takes place around firepit in front of the church.

- ► First service, 5 p.m.: Dress for comfort. If weather is truly inclement, all but the fire moves indoors. Second service, 11 p.m.: In church sanctuary, this contemplative service has quieter tone and is a chance to pause/ reflect before Christmas day. Service of lessons/carols held mostly by candlelight with worshipers having chance to light a memorial candle for communion table, reminding us that joy and sorrow are always woven together. Holy Communion offered to all who wish to partake, and Rev. Webster-Toleno shares brief sermon. Music by Malcolm Toleno and other congregation members. Service ends at or slightly before midnight, concluding with jubilant postlude "Joy to the World" as we welcome birth of the Christ Child.
- Donations welcome. ► Congregational Church of Westminster West, 44 Church St. Information: More information: westminsterwest.org or contact the pastor: 802-579-8356.

WEDNESDAY

WEDNESDAY CONT.

All-new, original feature film set in Element City, where fire-, water-, land- and air residents live together. Story introduces Ember, a tough, quick-witted, fiery young woman whose friendship with a fun, sappy, gowith-the-flow guy named Wade challenges her beliefs about the world they live in.

- 2 p.m. on lower level. Bring friends and join us for a free movie and popcorn!.
- Free.
- ► Gibson-Aiken Center, 207 Main St. Information: More info, call Gibson Aiken Office: 802-254-5808 Mon.-Fri. 9 a.m.-12 noon and. 1-5 p.m. Follow on Facebook or Instagram..

SATURDAY

Performing arts BRATTLEBORO The Baker Street

Readers celebrate New Year's by performing "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 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. Moneyed classes of England rely on these men to solve the most thorny of social difficulties, like ending an ill-informed engagement or covering up a scandal.

- ► 6:15 p.m. doors open, 7 p.m.: show. Featuring two of their adventures: "Jeeves Takes Charge" and "Bertie Changes His Mind," w/ James Gelter as Bertie Wooster and Tony Grobe as Jeeves, plus special guests Jessica Gelter, Bruce Holloway, Kaya Blouin. Hors d'oeuvres served before show and during intermission.
- Through Sunday, December
- ► Tickets: \$15. ► Hooker-Dunham Theater, 139 Main St. Information: To reserve a seat, email bakertreetreaders@gmail. com. More information: facebook.com/bakerstreetreaders.

SUNDAY

Kids and families

BRATTLEBORO New England **Center for Circus Arts: Decem**ber Youth School Break Camp: In NECCA youth camp, your child (ages 3-17) will receive top-notch instruction in a noncompetitive environment. They'll get a sense of pride and increased confidence as they learn communication skills, perseverance, and self-determination, as well as how to be a spectacular acrobat, aerialist, juggler, or clown.
► Full and half-day sessions.

- ► Through Friday, December
- ▶ \$60 to \$80.
- ► New England Center for Circus Arts (Trapezium), 10 Town Crier Dr. Information: Register: tinyurl.com/3wbxxs86.

Film and video BRATTLEBORO Brattleboro

Recreation and Parks offers Free Movie Matinee: "Disney and Pixra's "Elemental":

Music BRATTLEBORO Amidons/Bode/

Murphy/Tracy New Year's Eve Concert at the Brattleboro Music Center: Becky Tracy & Keith Murphy, Stefan Amidon & Zara Bode, and Peter & Mary Alice Amidon present their 22nd Brattleboro New Year's Eve concerts.

- 5 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. \$20 adults, \$5 ages 6 to 14,
- free for under age 5.
- ► Brattleboro Music Center, 72 Blanche Moyse Way. Information: Tickets at bmcvt.org or call 802-257-4523.



TUESDAY

Instruction

BELLOWS FALLS Rockingham Free Public Library hosts Tech Time Tuesday Classes: January 2: New Year, New Device: Did you get a new device for the holidavs and need some help? Drop into the library to get the New Year started with your innovative technology. January 9: Google Suite - Digital Tools for Connection and Collaboration: Improve these skills using Google's online tools such as Calendar, Chat, Docs, Drive, Gmail, Meet. If you don't have existing Google account, we'll help set one up for you. (More classes below!)

- 2 p.m. Tuesday classes in January in Downstairs Programming Room continue: Jan. 16: Drop-In Tech Help: Quick tech help option. Registration not required - walk in and spend 5-15 min. with librarian to ask your tech questions. Jan. 23: Social Media Etiquette/Tips: As social media channels evolved to become a primary ways people communicate in the modern world, learn how social media etiquette revolves around online guidelines to allow you to connect/promote. Jan. 30: Drop-In Tech Help: Quick tech help option. No registration needed. Just walk in and spend 5-15 min. with a librarian to ask your tech questions. Learn more about different applications and digital library resources. Drop-in sessions are first come, first served. Providing your own personal devices encouraged, though library laptops are available for class use.
- ► Through Tuesday, January 30, 2024.
- Free.
- ► Rockingham Free Public Library, 65 Westminster St. Information: 802-463-4270; rockinghamlibrary.org.

Well-being

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

► 5 - 6:30 p.m. on Tuesdays. ► Brattleboro Walk-In

Clinic, 191 Clark Ave. Intormation: 802-251-8484 brattleborowalkinclinic.com.

To submit your

event: calendar@ commonsnews.org

> Deadline: 5 p.m. Friday

'Gremlins'

He replaced outdated concepts like reindeer and jingle bells with mono- and polyphonic synthesizers, vocoders, electronic drum machines, and sequencers.

After Synth Santa finishes his set, the ugly holiday sweater contest and film will begin.

Gremlins, released in 1984 to critical acclaim and commercial success, was directed by Chris Columbus (director of *Home* Alone), with Steven Spielberg as executive producer.

Darkly funny and often scary, Gremlins drags out numerous holiday- and B-movie tropes to poke fun at them.

What's a holiday film without a family drama? *Gremlins* has that. An inventor dad who can't seem to succeed, whose child has to pick up the slack. A cute family dog whose life is threatened by a mean, old, lonely

woman. A love interest with a secret.

But Gremlins is also a sciencefiction horror film, so add to the mix a character in search of something who travels to an unusual and mysterious location to find it. Another character has a horrifying childhood story that explains why she doesn't like Christmas.

And, the B-movie common denominator: a supernatural being that seems cute, friendly, or alluring at first, but then, due to human folly, transforms into an intractable menace.

Because this film is also a dark Christmas comedy, the menacing creatures don't just go about their usual business of maiming and killing everyone and everything they see. They also pause their destruction long enough to don their Santa

FROM SECTION FRONT

apparel and screech Yuletide tunes to terrified neighbors.

The satire doesn't end there. With a nod to the knowledge that Christmas has also become a secular holiday centered around neverending materialism, this film's plot device is a present that magically reproduces itself. The gift that keeps on giving!

But, Gremlins, like many old B-movies, has a lesson: Be careful what you wish for.

Gremlins is rated PG and is not suitable for young children. Doors open at 7:30 p.m., and the contest and musical performance begins at 8 p.m. Tickets are on a sliding scale(minimum \$5).

Epsilon Spires is located at 190 Main St. in Brattleboro. For more information, or to purchase tickets in advance, visit epsilonspires. org.

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■ HatchSpace

director, Lars Hasselblad Torres, and its education coordinator, Jesse Pompei. With long racks of wood and workshop classrooms behind us, we sat at a massive worktable talking over the steady buzz of machines.

Hasselblad Torres, with a background in developmental economics and the arts - primarily photography had moved from Washington, D.C. to run the Generator Makerspace in Burlington before taking over at Artisans Asylum in Boston.

"I burnt out on that and was looking to get back to Vermont," he says — and then, somebody introduced him to Tom Bodett, the founder of HatchSpace, "and here we are."

The leadership of HatchSpace, opened in 2019 under the direction of Greg Goodman, then shut down by Covid, was assumed by Hasselblad Torres in March

Pompei started her career life as a journalist, then became smitten with woodworking and design and earned a Master of Fine Arts degree in furniture design from the Savannah College of Art and Design before doing a 20-year stint as an elementary school teacher.

She'd worked seasonally for Snow Farm: The New England Craft Program in her hometown of Williamsburg, Massachusetts and eventually left teaching and 'came to HatchSpace to work because there is no open shop like this in western Mass."

"I came to use the space and then one thing led to another, and in April of 2023 Lars reached out for a new education coordinator," Pompei says.

ANNIE LANDENBERGER:

Where else would one go to find something like HatchSpace in this region?

LARS HASSELBLAD

TORRES: You say "like HatchSpace," and there are not any like this. We have a beautiful wood inventory because we are primarily a woodworking space. We're a community workshop: we're open to everyone.

Maker spaces tend to skew white, male, older, nerdy. I've been in a lot of them, trust me. Jesse does an amazing job at making this space open and accessible to women.

JESSE POMPEI: I don't mind saying that can sometimes be a barrier — not only being a woman, but also your level of skill. There are other spaces that feel unwelcoming to women, to people of color, to those of a particular skill level.

Anyone can enter this space and feel like they're a woodworker.

- L.H.T.: And the LGBTQIA community. Our simple mission is to make the joy and benefits of woodworking accessible to
- A.L.: But before anyone actually can touch a tool they need to go through a training?
- **J.P.:** We offer a tool test, and we walk people through the tools with the intention of their being able to come to work here independently.
- **L.H.T.:** People come to us with different skill levels: If someone comes to us with prior knowledge, we don't want to waste their time with a remedial woodworking class when they could get to work right away on that passion project that brought them in here.

If you say you're qualified, we say, 'Give it a go on our test.' And if someone needs a refresher, Jesse does a good job at pairing them with the right level of class or private instruction that preps them for the test.

- **J.P.:** There's no charge for the test; there is for the instruction, unless they get a scholarship.
- **L.H.T.:** We gave away \$4,500 in scholarships this year.
- A.L.: What about special needs?
- L.H.T.: Not yet. We're looking to build programs for people in recovery to derive some therapeutic and developmental benefits from woodworking, but we haven't done it yet because it's really expensive relative to what we can make to have a staff member dedicated to oneon-one support. We're slowly growing into it.
- **A.L.:** What is Tom Bodett's level of involvement at HatchSpace these days?
- **L.H.T.:** Soup to nuts. He's obviously the founder and he remains the visionary, the bighearted driver of this thing. That said, we're trying to create

more room for young, new voices, for fresh talent to manage where that very big-hearted involvement is.

Tom doesn't have to run it now. He can transition to the founder role. He's very talented, and he's used to getting very involved, hands-on. There's no question he's our biggest champion ally, kind of a big uncle.

- J.P.: Mascot.
- **L.H.T.:** Cheerleader.
- **I.P.:** He has set the tone for all the things Lars and I have been talking about with the welcoming and community. That started with his vision.
- **A.L.:** For folks who've been using the hand and power tools, has their interest in digital fabrication been piqued knowing that that facility is downstairs? Do you think some will want to move on and explore there?
- L.H.T.: Yes, but I think the real hesitancy is the software barrier. That makes the argument for "why I'm a hand-tool guy," because they just don't want to learn the software. And that's fine.
- J.P.: I want to learn Shaper Origin [a hand-held CNC] router] so badly. It can enhance add some detail — to what I do, not take away. But it can be a barrier for anyone, and so we say, "Listen, in a three-hour class — you can learn this."
- **A.L.:** What percentage of work done here is digital fabrication?
- L.H.T.: A much smaller percentage, maybe 5 or 10%.
- A.L.: I'm curious: What do you think about digital versus hand- or power-tool made when it comes to craft?
- **L.H.T.:** I would say digital and handmade. In my opinion, craft processes have always relied on innovation. Just think about steel at the most basic level: How do you get a sharp edge? There's a lot of technology and innovation involved and, if we discount that, we're doing a disservice to the industries that have supported craft over the years.

CNC machines are just an augment to the process. There is no substitute for the human hand, but there's a world of choice about where to apply it.

J.P.: There are schools in which it's hand tools or nothing. Computer-aided is going against tradition. But I'm of the school of "Yeah, I can wash my clothes down by the river, or I can use the washing machine."

I just put a class on the calendar on how to make dovetails using a jig. Yes, there is an art to making hand-cut dovetails that is tied in with a level of craftsmanship and history and perfection. And, yes, there is a fine eye that can tell the difference between a handmade dovetail and a machine-made one, but if you're looking to just make

a dovetail—L.H.T.: The economy has moved on, and for us to be relevant and supportive and responsive to the next generation of crafts, we can't stand on hubris. I have friends who use the CNC machine in their craft, though one may or may not know it.

There is a quality of digital design that's not natural to the hand. It's only through the math of algorithms and polygonal structures that you come up with this unique design that frankly would be almost impossible to create by hand.

- **A.L.:** So who teaches the Shaper Origin class?
- J.P.: One of our board members, Andrew Cunningham, who also runs our BIPOC Maker Night every Monday that's affiliated with The Root Social Justice Center.
- **L.H.T.:** We maintain that every Monday as a space for them to come together and make, showing them what HatchSpace is all about so that they can come back here as makers and continue what they've started
- A.L.: What kind of outreach are you doing with high school
- **J.P.:** We started a program in November for home schoolers ages 12 to 18. I've reached out to a couple of high schools with the idea of offering internships. That's in the future; it could just be a great partnership.

So far, we have a lot of middle and high school offerings. We've also done camps specifically for middle school girls: Rosie's Girls, in collaboration with Vermont Works for Women. We've offered skateboard making classes for middle

school kids on up. Everything we're trying to do is about community, and that's

A.L.: You're building community, but also when you expose kids to a set of tools whatever they may be — you're potentially opening up a career

Tom's message, too.

L.H.T.: To that point, we do work with BDCC [Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation]. We go to their career pathway fairs three or four times a year; we'll show up and offer woodworking-as-a-trade pathways.

We try to work with them to expand the narrative about the workforce shortage and the really good livelihood that can be made in woodworking. We put ourselves in the middle to bridge the gap.

- A.L.: What are your plans for HatchSpace?
- L.H.T.: We have three areas we're focused on short- and long-term.

First, to grow our education offerings from bespoke oneoff classes to those that are very nicely scaffolded so you can progress upward in your skills acquisition over time.

We want to turn that into a more explicit workforce development pipeline, so if you do 40 hours on the table saw you can get a certificate, for instance. Construction math, shop safety — we want to orient what we're doing naturally here with the needs of workforce development.

The second is entrepreneurial support — every now and then, someone will come in who says, "I want to make this thing" line of chairs, meditation stools, carved spoons, whatever.

So what we can do right now is support them with producing prototypes, but we'd like to get to a place where we could be more of an incubator — where they could actually crank out their first hundred units.

The third is to look at retail in two areas.

One, to provide fee-forservice design and fabrication work. We have the talent, so let's match it up with the market of need. The second is product. How can we help someone be even more successful in selling that product, leveraging our market visibility, partnership, etc. etc.?

Also, within that there's this community layer. We know we want to launch this program for people in recovery, but the basic idea is: How can we support people in recovery by making the benefits of woodworking accessible and to support those ed to generate income

We want to continue our partnership with Vermont Works for Women, too.

J.P.: And we want to continue to grow opportunities for young folks. The feedback I have received from parents is that there is such a need for this — not just for workforce building, but also the building of confidence. Maybe they don't want to become a woodworker for their career, but now they have seen what is possible by using their hands and tools, which can then lead to other opportunities.

It's opening opportunities for children, teens, young adults, women, people of color, LGBTQIA.

L.H.T.: Linking that to Tom [Bodett], it's connecting what we're doing at HatchSpace with the broader vision of this building. High Street and Green. This is Tom and Rita's

oodworking matters. It's more than a pastime or hobby — being a woodworker means that you know the satisfaction and pride that comes from using your hands and mind to build beautiful, functional objects, and that you're as interested in the process as the outcome. Amid the speed and chaos of the modern world, woodworking gives us a place where we can slow down, pay attention, and take the time to do things right.

—Aimé Ontario Fraser



Live Music

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

latchispub.com

FROM SECTION FRONT



HatchSpace reopened in its new headquarters: 8,000 square feet of space in founder Tom Bodett's High Street and Green building.

[Ramirez, Bodett's wife] legacy project.

The core idea is to build a one-stop shop in downtown Brattleboro. Maybe it's not going to be wood, but as a result of being here, a young person can get to know Dan [Chiaccio] in First Proof Press [a community printmaking facility in the building], and they're able to combine their creative confidence in wood carving with block print making.

Who knows? We want this building to be a place where once you've got that confidence you can discover other creative pathways. It could be ceramics, it could be photography, but here's where you can unleash that curiosity.

J.P.: There's also the idea of a couple or a group of folks coming for the weekend, each taking different workshops — a ceramics workshop, a photography class, woodworking and then all coming together to share a meal at A Vermont Table [a restaurant also in the building].

This four-story building houses a multitude of opportunities.

For more information on HatchSpace, its classes, and other offerings, benefits, and scope, visit hatchspace.org.

Samplings of work by HatchSpace staff, stewards, members and volunteers is on view and for sale at the HatchSpace Harmony Lot gallery through Sunday, Dec. 24. See the website for shopping hours.

NOW PLAYING at the MOVIES

latchis.com | 802.246.1500

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MONDAY 6:45 & 8:40

TUE.-TH. 4:15 / 6:45 / 8:40

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802.257.4523 bmcvt.org



BMC rings in the New Year with two concerts on Dec. 31

Tracy and Keith Murphy, Stefan Amidon and Zara Bode, and Peter and Mary Alice Amidon present their 22nd Brattleboro New Year's Eve concerts on Sunday, Dec. 31, at the Brattleboro Music

Two performances — at 5 and 7:30 p.m. — are scheduled for this annual holiday "Smorgasbord of Traditional Song & Dance Tunes," with an evening of New England, Appalachian, Irish and French-Canadian dance music, fiddling from around the world, and a feast of singing.

Tickets are \$20 for adults, \$5 for those ages six to 14, and under five free. Advance tickets can be purchased through the BMC website at **bmcvt.org** or by calling 802-257-4523.

Keith Murphy (guitar, mandolin, piano, foot percussion) and Becky Tracy (fiddle) have been mainstays of the local traditional music scene for years, though they are known widely for their approach to traditional music.

They have played together and separately in many configurations and have been part of doz-ens of recording projects. They are founders and teachers of the Traditional Music program at the BMC.

While the pair of Zara Bode

BRATTLEBORO—Becky and Stefan Amidon are not known as a duo per se, they are part of musical groups The Sweetback Sisters and The Devil Makes Three. Amidon is a percussionist, multi-instrumentalist, and bass singer. Bode is a vocalist. "Both artists are sure to delight with their marvelous and eclectic musical selections," states the

> Peter and Mary Alice Amidon are freelance musicians, dance educators, choral arrangers/leaders, and publishers of music and dance materials.

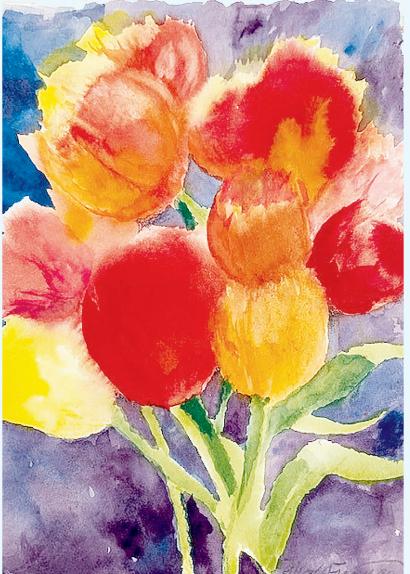
Mary Alice is a member of, and Peter co-music director of, the Guilford Community Church Choir, and of Hallowell, southeastern Vermont's hospice singing group. Their choral arrangements and compositions are sung by church and community choirs across the U.S. and UK.

In June, Peter and Mary Alice were awarded the 2023 Brattleboro Unsung Hero Award by Compassionate Brattleboro for their local community work. And in October a celebration was held honoring the two, along with their New England Dancing Masters colleagues, with the 2023 Country Dance and Song Society's Lifetime Contribution





Putney Public Library exhibits recent watercolors by Alice Freeman



Artwork by Alice Freeman is now on display at the Putney Public Library.

PUTNEY—"Still Life," a series of recent watercolors by Alice Freeman, is now on exhibit at the Putney Public Library through March 2.

"For me painting is all about color and the joy it produces: in the doing of it and in the looking at it," Freeman said in a news release. "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."

Alice Freeman grew up in Williamstown, Massachusetts, and moved to East Putney in 1972. She started painting in watercolor almost immediately. She has studied painting with Naoto Nakagawa, David Rohn and, most recently, with Lynn Zimmerman.

Freeman has exhibited at the Stratton Arts Festival, the West Village Meetinghouse, the AVA Gallery in Lebanon, New Hampshire, and at Art on the Mountain in Wilmington. Her work is in several private collections. In 1982, she was accepted as a participant in the Vermont Artists' Week at the Vermont Studio Center in Johnson.

In the 1990s, Freeman took a lengthy detour into furniture painting and teaching at the Vermont Craft Center at Frog Hollow in Manchester, and she spent the first 15 years of the 21st century designing and making quilts, an art she still enjoys. Several years before the pandemic, Alice's love of painting in watercolors returned. The paintings in this exhibition are a sampling of her watercolors since then.

Freeman and her husband, author Castle Freeman Jr., have lived in Newfane since 1975, together with many long-haired Dachshunds.

Putney Public Library is located at 55 Main St. This art show, like all library programs, is free. The library is open Monday through Friday, 10:30 a.m. to 6 p.m., and Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Shows by Noyes, Forman open at CSAG

presents a pair of solo shows: Water Way" by MC Noyes, premiering the artist's newest series of ink wash paintings, and Judi Forman, showing the artist's newest work creating one-of-akind jewelry. Both shows are on view through Feb. 10.

Michael C. Noyes, based in

Bellows Falls, has long maintained an oil painting practice which has been influenced by the artist's study of ink wash on paper, and of Chinese calligraphy and painting. The artist's newest series, "Water Way," evolved into using ink wash as a primary medium

include handmade Xuan and volve learning to grind inks to a Mulberry paper of several thicknesses, each made respectively paper, brushes, inks and colors

that have not yet appeared elsewhere.

tree and leaves, and rice stocks, along with other ingredients and lengthy processes used for over a thousand years in China. Brushes consist of natural hairs, all with specific purposes made, for example, from goat, sheep, rabbit, weasel, bear, and horse. The traditional ink sticks are composed of pressed powdered pigments bound with gelatin. These are ground with water on a stone to emulsify a thick ink.

"I am drawn to the immediacy, permanence, and challenge which ink wash painting presstatement. "The traditional tech-The materials the artist uses niques are hard to master and inproper consistency, choosing the

GOTAN OPINION?

(Of course you do! You're from Windham County!)

Got something on your mind? Send contribu-

tions to our Letters from Readers section (500

words or fewer strongly recommended) to

voices@commonsnews.org; the deadline is

Friday to be considered for next week's paper.

When space is an issue, we give priority to words

BELLOWS FALLS—Canal from the bark of the Blue to use, and then applying one Street Art Gallery, 23 Canal St., Sandalwood tree, the Mulberry color at a time. The preparation which goes into one brushstroke is most of the process. This is why calligraphy is practiced to gain the skills needed to paint. It is attempting to control the uncontrollable.

Noyes's first handmade stab bound book of original paintings, a collaboration with Len Emery Photography, is also to be presented during the Water Way solo show, and is entitled "Bubble Book 1." This book is a representation of using bubbles on the surface of flowing water as a visualization tool to detach ents," Noves wrote in their artist the mind from intrusive thoughts and bring it back to the present.

Judi Forman, based in Westminster, is a metal artist working with silver, copper, niobium, and steel, using techniques such as anodizing, imprinting texture, and drawing with colored pencil. She uses patinated copper, colored pencil, and silver to create works such as "Three Birds Brooch and Pendant."

Forman often designs compositions inspired by nature, on and with the multiple surfaces she has shaped. Multiple pieces are often riveted together to present the final work. Forman's most recent work, using colored pencil on copper, adds both bright color and texture to the artist's jewelry.

"I find inspiration in the work of my teachers and other jewelry artists, but then it boils down to just what happens between me and the materials," she wrote in her artist statement. "I love the synergy between the metal, my ideas and the tools. Some of my favorite pieces are the result of serendipity such as how a particular piece of copper responds to the heat of a torch on a particular day and acquires a one-of-akind patina."

Canal Street Art Gallery is open Tuesday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. For more information, go to canalstreetartgallery.com online, call Mike Noyes by phone at 802-289-0104, or send emails to artinfo@canalstreetartgallery.

Baker Street Readers ring in New Year with 'Jeeves & Wooster'

BRATTLEBORO—The Baker Street Readers will celebrate New Year's by performing An Evening with Jeeves & Wooster on Saturday and Sunday, Dec. 30 and 31, at the Hooker-Dunham Theater and Gallery, 139 Main St.

The Readers are most known for reading Sherlock Holmes mysteries but are changing things up with another of England's famed literary duos. Bertie Wooster and his trusty valet Jeeves are the creations of P. G. Wodehouse, 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 most thorny of social difficulties, like ending an ill-informed engagement or covering up a scandal.

An Evening with Jeeves & Wooster will feature two of their adventures, Jeeves Takes Charge and Bertie Changes His Mind, with James Gelter as Bertie Wooster and Tony Grobe as Jeeves and special guests Jessica Gelter, Bruce Holloway, and Kaya Blouin. To celebrate the New Year, hors d'oeuvres will be served before the show and during intermission.

Shows begin at 7 pm. Doors open at 6:15 p.m. Tickets are \$15, cash at the door only. To reserve a seat, email bakertreetreaders@ gmail.com. For more information, visit facebook.com/ **bakerstreetreaders**

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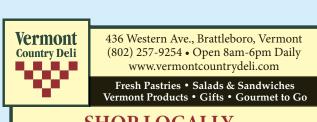
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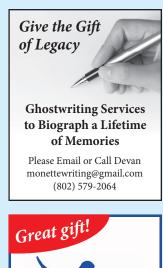
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Retreat Farm founder steps down as board president

Buzz Schmidt leaves after a decade of service

By Virginia Ray

BRATTLEBORO—Buzz Schmidt is stepping down as president of Retreat Farm's board of directors and Lisa Whitney will

take that leadership role. "It's a big moment for the farm, for sure," says Schmidt, the organization's founder. "I feel very good about the transition; I think it's the right thing to happen.

He says it "makes total sense because we have a really good team in place, and it's really important that they have the latitude to do what they have to do and feel the responsibility to do it."

"I'll still be around, if needed, in a pinch, but I don't expect to be," he said. "It's the right time for this to happen."

When Schmidt first visited the farm in 2013, he immediately saw the promise and potential of the neglected but otherwise magnificent historic property.

"I've driven by it forever, since I had a driver's license," says Schmidt with a laugh. "I'd always been drawn to the property but never been on it."
He says he "went in and imme-

diately fell in love with it."

Schmidt had conversations with the Windham Foundation, which had acquired the property in 2001 and, in turn, ultimately granted the property to the thennewly formed Retreat Farm, Ltd. organization.

The team was so critical to making it all work," says Schmidt. "Obviously, it wasn't just me, it was a number of people who worked to transition the property

to a public space."
He says it's "really important to me that I'm not credited with this exclusively; it was the staff, early board members,

Dec. 18-24

CHANNEL 1078

Here We Are - Susan Avery, Author: Mon 8p, Tues 3:15p, Wed 9p, Thurs 1:15p, Sat 12:15p, Sun 5:15p

The World Fusion Show - Ep# 167 - Andy Akiho: Mon 11:30a, Tues 4:30p, Wed 5p, Thurs 9:30a, Fri 2p,

BCTV Open Studio - Careers in

Education - The Paraeducator and Teacher Pathway: Mon 10a, Tues 3:45p, Wed 9a, Thurs 1:55p, Fri

Mitchell Giddings Fine Arts - Dan Welden: Mon 12:30p, Tues 9a, Wed 3:30p, Thurs 9:15p, Fri 1:15p, Sat 5p, Sun 6:30p

Hooker Dunham Presents – Vermont Suitcase Company presents The Feeble Fantastic: Mon 7a, Tues 12:30p, Wed 11a, Thurs IOa, Fri 2:30p, Sat 6p, Sun 4p

Couch Potatoe Productions - Gun Sense Vermont Vigil at Pliny Park I1/2/23: Mon 10:35a, Wed 9:35a, Fri IOp, Sat 2:35p, Sun 6:35a & 9p

Brattleboro Gallery Walk -December 1, 2023: Thurs 5:30p, Fri I1:30a, Sat 8:30p, Sun 6p

Keeping Up with Senior Solutions - Ep 31 - Memory Cafe with Valerie Stuart 11/21/23: Mon 11a, Tues 1:30p, Wed 5:30p, Thurs 9a, Fri 10a, Sat 8p, Sun 8:30p

Sing Nowell - Songs & Carols for Midwinter & Christmastide: Mon

Energy Week with George Harvey & Tom Finnell: Mon 9a, Tues 5p, Thurs 11a, Sat 7p

Vermontitude - Weekly Episode: Tue 11:30a & 6:30p, Wed 6a, Thu 1p, Sat 12p, Sun 5p

News Block: WTSA News: Mon-Fri 12p & 6p Reformer News Break: Mon-Fri

12:05p & 6:05p B**UHS-TV News**: Mon-Fri 12:15p & 6:35p

St. Michael's Episcopal Church -Weekly Service: Wed 2p, Sat 7:30a, Sun 11a

Trinity Lutheran Church - Weekly Service: Wed 10a, Thurs 7a, Sun 3p

Guilford Community Church -Weekly Service: Wed 6:30a, Fri 8p, Sun 8a

St. Michael's Catholic Church Mass: Sat 4p (LIVE), Tue 6:45a & 2p,

Thurs 8p

1:15p, Tues 8p, Thurs 2:30p, Fri 3:30p, Sat 9a, Sun 12:30p

Sat 9p, Sun 8p

9:30p, Sat 2p, Sun 6a

the funders, and the Windham Foundation.'

"I just count myself lucky to have landed in the midst of all this," Schmidt says.

Fulfilling a vision
The 500-acre farm on Abenaki homelands at the edge of Brattleboro's downtown consists of forest, farmland, waterways, and nine historic structures that Schmidt and his team have worked to transform into a multifaceted anchor institution for southeastern Vermont and central New England.

"Buzz's love for Retreat Farm inspired him to pour his time, energy, and self into the Farm," says Communications and Finance Managing Director Lindsay

Over the years, Schmidt's enthusiasm and fortitude "have challenged all of us to step into the possibility of this special place bringing new opportunities, resources, and programming to Brattleboro. I can't imagine what the fate of this property might have been without Buzz's vision."

For 10 years, Schmidt has volunteered, working with staff members to restore the historic farmstead as a heritage site; to transform Farmhouse Square from concrete paddocks into a community gathering space; to place more than 240 acres of land into organic agricultural practice; to create educational, recreational, and cultural resources; to nurture start-up programs and nonprofits, including the Atowi Project; to clear and rebuild more than 10 miles of trails for public use; and much more.

Among recent projects, the Hogle Wildlife Sanctuary Trail revitalization effort is "pretty far along," says Schmidt.

The trail work, paid for with

LOCAL

PROGRAM

HIGHLIGHTS

CHANNEL 1079

Brattleboro Selectboard Mtg. 12/19/23: Tues 6:15p (LIVE), Thurs 1p

Montpelier Connection - Wendy Harrison 12/12/23: Fri 5p, Sat 11a & 5:30p, Sun 11:30a

Community Forum - Brattleboro Legislators' Forum 12/9/23: Wed 9:30a

Landmark College Graduation -Fall 2023 Commencement: Thurs

Newfane Selectboard Mtg. 12/18/23: Wed 6p, Thurs 8:30a, Fri

Brattleboro Housing Partnerships Board Mtg. 12/18/23: Wed 8:30p, Thurs 6a, Fri 2:30p

River Valleys Unified School District Board Mtg. 12/18/23: Thurs 6:45p, Fri 8a, Sat 12p

Vernon Selectboard Mtg. 12/19/23: Thurs 9:15p, Fri 5:30a, Sat 2:30p

Windham Elementary School Board Mtg. 12/19/23: Fri 6p, Sat 8:30a, Sun 12p

Windham Southeast Supervisory Union Board Mtg. 12/20/23: Sat

Brattleboro Development Review Board Mtg. 12/20/23: Fri 8:30p, Sat 6a, Sun 2:30p

Brattleboro Charter Revision Commission Mtg. 12/21/23: Sat 6p, Sun 8:30a

Mariboro Elementary School Board Mtg. 12/21/23: Sun 8:30p

Town Matters - Weekly Episode: Mon 6p, Wed 4:45p, Thurs 11a, Fri 11:30a, Sat 5p

The David Pakman Show: Mon 8a, Tue 9a, Wed 5p, Fri 10:30a, Sun 5p

Windham Southeast School District Board Special Mtg. 12/20/23: Sun 6p

8:30p. Sun 6a

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

PLEASE NOTE NEW CHANNEL NUMBERS!



Lisa Whitney, left, will take the reins as Retreat Farm board president as longtime board President Buzz Schmidt, middle, steps down and Kristin Sullivan steps into the executive director's role.

Agency of Natural Resources, was undertaken to "make the trail safer and replace the derelict structures on it and provide a little-bit-better access to the water on the far end," he says.

Now most of the improvements on the far side of the Meadows are in place, and all the bridges have been replaced.

"We still have work to do at the Route 30 trailhead, and that will happen next summer," Schmidt says. "For the most part, it's done, and it's fabulous.

Restoring the 190-year-old North Barn has truly been a labor of love. The Farm has collaborated with the Brattleboro Museum & Art Center, River Gallery School, The Stone Church, HatchSpace, and other community partners "to create a welcoming space that celebrates the community and gives Brattleboro another place to gather," he says.

The North Barn is intended to emerge as a community center par space, and we're all really proud Prouty Center.

grant money from the Vermont supreme, with space for proms, of it. It is amazing. It's beautiful nonprofit fundraisers, meetings, presentations, music, art, dance, and any other event to bring folks together, including some private parties. The barn will have a dinner seating capacity of 250 and a concert/lecture capacity of 600.

The Barn is on track for completion in late spring. The \$6 million project is largely grant funded, with one U.S. Department of Agriculture Community Facilities loan and private and government grants

Schmidt says what's left to raise is \$250,000 for furnishings, for which donations are welcome at retreatfarm.org/donate.

"I saw the schedule of events that is expected, and it's really gratifying," says Schmidt, who toured the barn Dec. 14.

Many nonprofit events will dominate, but there will be private events as well," he says. "I think on balance it will be seen as an iconic community gathering

in there already; you can tell what it's going to be like."

Passing the torch

In October, Schmidt began to transition the Farm's leadership for his departure by bringing on Dr. Kristin Sullivan as executive

"Now Buzz leaves incredibly big shoes to fill," Sullivan says, calling Schmidt "a true visionary [who] has built a remarkable asset for Brattleboro and all of New England by bringing Retreat Farm to where it is today.

"It has been an honor to continue his legacy while shaping the Farm's future," she continues.

She will do so with Lisa Whitney, the new board president, citing her "commitment to community engagement and

Whitney is a trained social worker, an active community member, and current director of campus operations at the Winston

"I am extremely excited to help shepherd the committed, talented, and highly competent Retreat Farm staff and board through this next phase of exciting growth," she says, crediting Schmidt and predicting that the community will "honor his vision for and commitment to this place for a long time."

"There's no doubt that our current staff and board team will ride through this transition well together," Whitney continues. "Retreat Farm is an amazing asset and we look forward to sharing even more of it with our community and region."

The board has unanimously named Schmidt the founder and president emeritus in honor of his work and impact.

Those who want to honor Schmidt are encouraged to donate to the Retreat Farm's Community Roots Fund (retreatfarm.org/

Lilac Ridge Farm debuts 'Farmhouse Gallery'

The Lilac Ridge Farmhouse Gallery opened on Saturday, Dec. 16, with a photography show, "Ames Hill By Jill," by Jill

It marked a new chapter for the West Brattleboro farm on Ames Hill Road. Lilac Ridge co-owner Amanda Ellis-Thurber said in a news release it was something she has long wanted to do.

The farmhouse is really suited for something like this," she said. "It's an Air BnB that we rent out, and we have it set up pretty simply so that guests can feel comfortable."

Ellis-Thurber said she asked her neighbor and friend, Stahl Tvler, to be the first one to exhibit. She said she follows Stahl Tyler's "beauty of the day" postings on Instagram and appreciates how Stahl Tyler always

WEST BRATTLEBORO— finds scenic spots, many of them that I would have thought of dofrom right around Ellis-Thurber's

"I always tell her that she should do more with them,' said Ellis-Thurber.

came to her with the idea in late September. "Amanda and Ross [Thurber] have so many plans for their farm. They are always trying out new things," she said. "Like this summer, they started the Creemee Stand, with organic maple milk, the only one of its kind, as I understand it." Positioned right next to the pickyour-own flower area, "it became a nice little neighborhood hangout spot," she said.

When Ellis-Thurber pitched the idea of doing a photography show and sale, Stahl Tyler said she was surprised and even initially dismissive. "It's not something

ing on my own," she said.

Photography is a "only a hobby" for Stahl Tyler.

"I actually figured that Amanda would forget about it, that maybe Stahl Tyler said Ellis-Thurber it was not something she was that serious about," Stahl Tyler said. "But if you know Amanda, you know she can be pretty persuasive. After she asked me the third time, and she insisted that she really wanted me to do it, I agreed to try to pull this together.'

Stahl Tyler followed Ellis-Thurber's prodding, and the two carefully planned how to turn the house into the "Farmhouse Gallery" for four hours on a Saturday afternoon. She reviewed more than eight years' worth of daily photos, her "beauty of the day" habit she started in 2015. From that huge collection of around 3,000 photos, she

thinned it down to 77, which were mounted in various sizes for sale.

"The majority of the photos are very local," she noted, "within walking distance of Lilac Ridge. It is really an easy place to always find beauty. I've taken photos of tomatoes in the rain, pumpkins in that golden light we get in October, and cows. There are always lots of photos of cows.

Stahl Tyler said that she has included two photos that are not from Brattleboro, but are from more like three hours' drive from here. "I thought it might be fun for people to try to identify which two are the outliers," she said.

For more information about the gallery, contact Amanda Ellis-Thurber at lilacridge@comcast. net or 802-380-4029.

BMC rings in the New Year with two concerts on Dec. 31

BRATTLEBORO—Becky Tracy and Keith Murphy, Stefan Amidon and Zara Bode, and Peter and Mary Alice Amidon present their 22nd Brattleboro New Year's Eve concerts on Sunday, Dec. 31, at the Brattleboro Music Two performances — at 5 and

7:30 p.m. — are scheduled for this annual holiday "Smorgasbord of Traditional Song & Dance Tunes," with an evening of New England, Appalachian, Irish and French-Canadian dance music, fiddling from around the world, and a feast of singing. Tickets are \$20 for adults, \$5

for those ages six to 14, and under

five free. Advance tickets can be purchased through the BMC website at bmcvt.org or by calling 802-257-4523.

Keith Murphy (guitar, mandolin, piano, foot percussion) and Becky Tracy (fiddle) have been mainstays of the local traditional music scene for years, though they are known widely for their approach to traditional music.

They have played together and separately in many configurations and have been part of dozens of recording projects. They are founders and teachers of the Traditional Music program at

and Stefan Amidon are not known as a duo per se, they are part of musical groups The Sweetback Sisters and The Devil Makes Three. Amidon is a percussionist, multi-instrumentalist, and bass singer. Bode is a vocalist. "Both artists are sure to delight with their marvelous and eclectic musical selections," states the news release. Peter and Mary Alice Amidon

are freelance musicians, dance educators, choral arrangers/leaders, and publishers of music and dance materials. Mary Alice is a member of,

and Peter co-music director of, While the pair of Zara Bode the Guilford Community Church

Choir, and of Hallowell, southeastern Vermont's hospice singing group. Their choral arrangements and compositions are sung by church and community choirs across the U.S. and UK.

In June, Peter and Mary Alice were awarded the 2023 Brattleboro Unsung Hero Award by Compassionate Brattleboro for their local community work. And in October a celebration was held honoring the two, along with their New England Dancing Masters colleagues, with the 2023 Country Dance and Song Society's Lifetime Contribution

Brattleboro Food Co-op donates more than 1,500 Thanksgiving meals, plans to do likewise for Christmas

BRATTLEBORO—While community who need it most." there was no Community Thanksgiving Dinner in Brattleboro this year, the Brattleboro Food Co-op filled the gap with something new: distributing hundreds of free meals within the span of just a few hours.

According to a news release, the Co-op implemented the event "after months of discussing ways

The majority of the meals —

more than 1,000 — were delivered to unhoused people staying in motels, and about 200 were handed out at the Co-op.

"kitchen staff took over the Coop's conference room to fill hundreds of microwavable to-go containers with generous helpings of mashed potatoes, green to get more food to people in the beans and carrots, and turkey and community relations. "We

"The ingredients for the meals were donated by one of the Coop's vendors. Originally thought to be enough food for 800 meals, as they were assembled, the team The day before the holiday, realized they would be able to offer almost double that amount."

"Feeding people in this community is the reason the Co-op is here," said Amy Crawford, the Co-op's manager of marketing

breast," according to the Co-op. are directed by our Ends policies—and our hearts—to create an open, welcoming environment, and to contribute to a just economy. We are so happy that we were able to do this.

The Co-op is also coordinating food donations with area food shelves and shelters in the days before Christmas. On Monday, Christmas Day, they will be serving food on site at the Co-op between 11 a.m. and 2 p.m.

Note: Schedule subject to change.

View full schedule and watch online at brattleboroTV.org

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Read about it in the Town & Village section at www.commonsnews.org **Brattleboro Community Television – 257-0888**

'We were spared'

Southern Vermonters deem Monday's flooding 'not as bad as we've seen' — yet still not good

By Kevin O'Connor VtDigger

ONDONDERRY— Beverly Jelley woke Monday to fears of yet another surge of stormwater. Twenty-four hours later, the 81-year-old local business owner gave thanks for something else: a torrent of commu-

nity support.
The three-decade operator of Jelley's convenience store on Route 100 — having rebuilt from top to bottom twice, after 2011's Tropical Storm Irene and last summer's record rains — watched Tuesday as dozens of family members and friends put back nearly \$300,000 of equipment they had pulled out the morning and afternoon before.

"Everybody just appeared, Ball Mountain Brook. and we started packing," Jelley recalled of this week's effort to save a business that reopened Oct. 30, after five feet of July floodwater, nine dumpsters of debris and nearly four months of repair.

The store owner was one of many southern Vermonters who breathed a sigh of relief Tuesday after freak winter-solstice-week rain closed roads and schools.

"It was not as bad as we've seen," Jamaica Town Clerk Sara Wiswall said of damage in that nearby town. "When you do it over and over again, you get used to it."

At the height of Monday's storm, first responders from Rescue Inc. used a boat to evacuate three out-of-state skiers from a Jamaica rental property near the stop the owners of Ludlow's

As the water receded Tuesday, the town highway crew worked with graders and gravel to repair the impassable Dalewood, Goodaleville and Pikes Falls

"Pikes Falls is closed where we just replaced the culvert," Wiswall told one caller to her

Hanging up, the Jamaica clerk shrugged.

"We're still fixing things from July, and we're still paying for Irene," she said. "Trust me, we really are."

Nearby towns such as Andover, Chester, Ludlow, Plymouth and Weston — all hard hit this summer — reported few major problems this week. But that didn't

not-yet-open Blue Duck Deli from emptying their basement along the banks of the Black

"It was a nail-biter watching the radar, watching the river, said Craig Kovalsky, who wound up in the New York Times after last summer's storm. "We were nervous, but we still had some

Back in Londonderry, Jelley said she was grateful the sandbags around her store held, given that she drained her finances after the July flood.

"It may take us a day or two to get our product back where it belongs, but I feel so blessed, the octogenarian said. "We got a bit of water in a couple of spots, but we were spared.



Londonderry residents on Tuesday put back nearly \$300,000 of inventory and equipment they had pulled out of Jelley's convenience store on Route 100 the day before.



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- Hinsdale Food Pantry
- Our Place Drop In Center (Bellows Falls)
- Putney Foodshelf
- Townshend Community Food Shelf

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After flooding returns to Vermont, state officials assess the damage

Governor: 'Seeing homes and businesses surrounded by water once again has been heartbreaking'

By Emma Cotton

MONTPELIER—Vermont officials began assessing damage Tuesday after several inches of rain fell on many parts of the state the day before, flooding towns, closing roads and prompting several rescues.

Following July's devastating floods, the rain caused widespread anxiety as state and local officials watched rivers jump their banks, in some cases flooding businesses and basements. By Tuesday afternoon, most waterways had receded, though many remained swollen.

"Some rivers are still at flood stage and most have extremely strong currents," Public Safety Commissioner Jennifer Morrison said at a press conference Tuesday afternoon in Berlin. "Everyone is encouraged to stay clear of floodwaters.

As of Tuesday afternoon, no injuries or deaths had been tied to the event, but the storm caused disruption across the state, closing 40 roads by Monday night and sending students from 120 schools home early on Monday afternoon, according to members

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of Scott's cabinet.

"Seeing homes and businesses surrounded by water once again has been heartbreaking," Scott said at the Berlin press conference Tuesday. "I feel for those who are just getting back on their feet after this summer's flooding, and they're now dealing with water in their homes and businesses

He called for "anyone who is able" to reach out to neighbors and help their communities clean up from yet another flood.

Public safety

Swift-water rescue teams performed 12 rescues around the state on Monday and Tuesday, according to Morrison. One rescue involved removing three people from a house in Jamaica. Nine others involved rescuing people from vehicles caught in floodwaters, including in Lyndonville, Waterbury and Richmond.

While two swift-water teams remained staged early Tuesday afternoon — in Waterbury and Colchester — Morrison said she expected to call off those teams later that day. The State **Emergency Operations Center** remained activated, and towns

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Gov. Phil Scott speaks about statewide flooding during a press conference in Berlin on Tuesday, Dec. 19.

center through their emergency management directors.

While a number of warming shelters had opened in response to the flooding, a shelter in Cavendish was the only one still operating Tuesday afternoon. Morrison directed Vermonters in need of immediate shelter to call 211 and refer to a state webpage listing open shelters.

On Monday night, 18 people stayed at an emergency shelter at the Barre Auditorium organized by the American Red Cross, according to Jennifer Costa, a spokesperson for the Red Cross' Vermont chapter. Such shelters host people who need to evacuate their homes and don't have another safe place to stay, she said.

By Tuesday morning, all 18 residents were able to either return home or find alternative shelter, according to Costa. The Red Cross planned to close the

could continue to contact the "this area just went through very to Heather Bouchey, interim similar trauma six months ago."

> Morrison also referred residents to guidance from the Vermont Department of Health intended for Vermonters who are returning to flooded homes.

> To report damage to their homes, Vermonters can use the 211 website, which will help the state determine whether it has met the threshold to apply for a federal disaster declaration. That would unlock federal money to help manage the aftermath of

> Scott said Tuesday after-noon that it was "very difficult to tell at this point" whether Monday's flooding would qualify for assistance from the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

"It will be close if it does, but we'll just have to wait and see what the damages are," he said.

Schools closed

The extent of Monday's storm took many education offi-

secretary of the state Agency of Education. At Tuesday's press conference in Berlin, she called the event a "mass early dismissal."

"I'm quite convinced that our superintendents and our princi-pals did not anticipate when they showed up for a regular Monday that they would then almost literally have to turn around and send kids home," Bouchey said. "They all did it and got kids home safely.

The closures generally resulted from a need to find alternate bus routes after the rains had flooded or closed roads, she said.

On Tuesday, six school districts — including 54 schools remained fully closed, and more schools delayed opening as officials assessed road conditions, according to Bouchey.

No schools were expected to close on Wednesday, she said, but kindergarten through sixth grade students at Moretown Elementary School will go to Harwood Middle School and High School for the remainder of the week as a result of damage to the elementary school's heating system and to some classrooms.

While the state Agency of Transportation had only closed 15 state roads by 5 p.m. on Monday, that number rose to 40 by 9 p.m., according to Transportation Secretary Joe Flynn. By Tuesday afternoon, all but seven state roads had reopened.

All railway repairs made after the July floods withstood Monday's storm, Flynn said at the Berlin press conference.

Officials were on the watch for potential landslides. Some slopes began to slide after the storm in July but did not fully collapse. Now, some of those slopes may be threatened, and the state has received several reports of slopes that have already given way. However, Vermont's partially frozen soils are less likely to give way than they would have been at another time of year, Secretary of Natural Resources Julie Moore said at Tuesday's press conference.

Only one slide remained problematic from the perspective of the Agency of Transportation, Flynn said, along Route 2 in St. Johnsbury. Other landslides took place in Wardsboro, Springfield and Chester.

Officials with the Agency of Natural Resources' dam safety team monitored the state's flood control dams "literally through-out the night," Moore said.

The dams do all continue to perform admirably under this second really significant test this year," she said.

The team also communicated with emergency managers for municipalities and contacted owners of dams considered "high" and "significant" hazards to ask that they assess whether damage had taken place. State engineers planned to visit some of the dams in person to inspect them, Moore said. There was no reported damage to hydroelectric dams.

Municipal drinking water appears to be safe throughout the state, with no "do not drink" or "boil water" notices in place. The state was working with officials from Woodstock, Fairfax and Richmond, all of which received high flows into their drinking water systems, to understand

whether problems exist. Fifteen wastewater treatment plants experienced flood-related problems, including overflows of untreated or partially treated wastewater and combined sewer overflows, "all of which have resolved with receding floodwaters, and without permanent damage or disruption of service,' Moore said.

A wastewater treatment facility in Johnson, which was hit hard in July, was flooded Monday, but "the data that was collected this morning indicate that their effluent quality is unaffected," Moore said Tuesday.

In terms of river erosion, Moore said this event was less destructive than the July floods.

"That said, there are engineers on the ground working with the towns of Chester, Ludlow, Wardsboro, Brattleboro, Springfield, Strafford, Jamaica, Randolph, as well as several communities in the Mad River Valley and the greater Montpelier area, to address river-related concerns and damage that's been reported to town-owned culverts," Moore

The storm

Originating in the Gulf of Mexico, the storm brought an unusually large amount of moisture to the Northeast, according to Eric Myskowski, a forecaster with the National Weather Service in Burlington. Warm temperatures melted much of the state's existing snowpack, exacerbating the flooding from rainfall, he said.

At a press conference on Monday, Scott said he was surprised by the extent of the storm's damage. Asked Tuesday whether there was more the state could have done to prepare, Scott said there wasn't.

"We'll learn something from this storm," he said.

The governor said there was more rain than he expected, and the snowmelt added to the flooding. The state was dealing with a number of variables at once, and they were playing out differently in different locations.

"Across the state, this seemed like it was much broader geographically than maybe the storm in July, but not as intense, and we didn't suffer the damage,

Most of the state's rivers had receded by Tuesday morning, with the exception of the lower Winooski River, which was still at major flood stage at 10:30 a.m., particularly near Essex Junction, according to Eric Myskowski, a forecaster with the National Weather Service in Burlington. The river's waters were expected to recede throughout the day Tuesday.

In several areas across the state, the weather set new records for temperature and rainfall. In Burlington, the minimum temperature of 44 degrees broke the previous record of 39 degrees, set in 1996. At 59 degrees, the temperature in Montpelier on Monday broke the old record of 50 set in 1949.

Burlington has never seen as much rainfall on Dec. 18 as it did on Monday. At 2.2 inches, the city broke its previous record of 0.85 inches, set in 1954.

Myskowski said it's difficult to connect any single event to climate change but said "there's been a higher frequency of heavier rain events during the winter in the last 10 to 15 years.'



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CROSSWORD D3

Wednesday, December 20, 2023 page D1

VIEWPOINT

'Why don't they just get a job?'

Some general answers to some common questions about giving money to people on the streets of Brattleboro

WAS HAPPY to hear the issue of so-called "panhandling" discussed at a recent Selectboard hearing, where board member Daniel Quipp made a key point: You don't have to choose between giving money to someone holding a cardboard sign and donating to a nonprofit organization. You can give a little or a lot to either or both.

Nonprofit organizations do their best to provide longterm solutions to chronic issues of lack of shelter, hunger, transportation, clothing, medical care, etc., whereas when you give cash (or a gift card) to someone on the street, you're helping address a more immediate need.

Over the last few months, I've talked to well over a dozen of my neighbors who live on the street by day and wherever they can by night. I've learned enough to give at least general answers to some common questions about why or why not give them money.

First, let me assure you that those immediate needs do not usually involve getting a dose of some drug. (I admit that, if you count sugar and caffeine, the percentage goes up.)

• Why don't they just get a job? My biggest surprise when I started getting to know my friends was how many don't have any kind of picture identification — and may not have, or remember, their Social Security number.

How could they not have an ID? Well, maybe they never

DAVID BLISTEIN,

a scriptwriter for documentary films and an author, publishes a Substack newsletter, Fields of Vision (davidblistein.substack. com), where he is writing "Street Cred," a series of essays that profile the lives and circumstances of his unhoused neighbors in downtown Brattleboro. (Note that he's changed the names he uses here.) Some of these stories were featured in the Voices section on Sept. 20. "This is a big topic, and I welcome comments, corrections, and criticism," he says.

had a driver's license, let alone a passport. More likely, they lost it as they moved from place to place, or someone stole their wallet or bag and threw it away after taking out any cash. Or they got evicted and the landlord threw everything into the dumpster. It may have even been confiscated by the police after a misdemeanor arrest.

And they never had the means (or understood how) to retrieve or replace it.

Meanwhile, you cannot get work without an ID unless someone is willing to pay you under the table. The logistics of getting an ID are very complex; they are different in different states and usually require jumping through enough hoops to get you a job teaching at NECCA.

Also, if they do have an ID and can get a job, that job is

■ SEE **PANHANDLING**, D3

VIEWPOINT



Tahseen Aliahmad (left), Kinnan Abdalhamid (middle), and Hisham Awartani (right) — are shown wearing keffiyehs. The three Palestinian American men were shot in Burlington on Nov. 25.

Wear the keffiyeh with pride. Wear it with knowledge.

'These simple cotton scarves represent not only our struggle for freedom, they are also a powerful representation of Palestinian heritage and culture, which Israel continues to try to erase'

s A Palestinian American, some of my earliest memories involve the black-and-white Palestinian scarves called keffiyehs. My sister and I were photographed in them as babies. They covered our strollers in rallies and protests before we could even say the word "Palestine." We tied them around our hips and shoulders as we played the make-believe belly dancers or Arabian princesses that we later came to recognize as exotified,

Hollywood versions of our culture. As I got older and traveled to places **SAMIA ABBASS** is a Palestinian American who lives in Brattleboro. She invites you to find out more about Palestinian food and culture, including the keffiyeh, at a tabling event at the Brattleboro Food Co-op later in December, on a date to be determined.

like Northern Ireland, Ecuador, and Nepal, I saw keffiyehs held up as global symbols of liberation and solidarity with oppressed people. They appeared in struggles for freedom around world, from the Indigenous people of South America to urban Black Lives Matter protesters in the United States

- all connected ideologically to the Palestinian resistance movement.

THE TRADITIONAL square black-andwhite cotton scarf is a powerful icon rooted in Palestinians' connection to our land. The scarves are embroidered

■ SEE KEFFIYEH, D2

MEMOIR

'I SURELY RUINED CHRISTMAS'

What started as the worst feeling ever became my favorite holiday memory

Brattleboro

LOVE THE HOLIDAYS and always have. My mother and I typically took the lead to deck the halls, create artistic presents for others, and most notably, decorate the Christmas tree together.

Don't get me wrong in thinking that my dad and two older brothers weren't in the holiday spirit; my mom and I had our little special traditions together.

Our house was a home-based daycare, and parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, friends, and everyone in between were always coming and going, with upwards of a dozen children a day. It was a full-on zoo - and we loved it.

My mom decided to create a contest, where the person to most accurately guess how many

■ SEE RUINED CHRISTMAS?, D3





The pleasant energy of a quiet country neighborhood and a sense of serenity from a tucked away deck that overlooks terraces filled with mature shrubbery and the woods beyond. The first floor features a light filled kitchen/dining with a brick fireplace (propane insert), and sliders to a very private deck. A large living room, a sitting room/den and a half bath. Upstairs a spacious primary bedroom with ensuite 3/4 bath. There are two other good sized bedrooms and a full bath off the center hall. At the back of the house, a two story flex space offers so many possibilities! The first floor has a small kitchen and sliders to the deck. A spiral staircase takes you up to a light filled aerie with treetop views. There is a full bathroom and a closet. The finished lower level offers a separate game/playroom, laundry area, a cedar closet, and a utility room. There is a separate craft/workshop space that walks out to a patio with views to the lower lawn. 1.58 acres; front and side yard with garden/play space, a fenced in dog area; back yard is terraced down to a lower lawn with a garden/storage shed. 2 car garage with a smaller third bay for garden/snow equipment. The driveway is paved. 3 miles from downtown Brattleboro.. Golf course close by. **EXCLUSIVE: \$499,000**



PHOTOILLUSTRATION BY JASON M/UNSPLASH

VIEWPOINT

For Jews on the Left, a terrible position

'A House resolution feels like one more step in the process of marginalizing progressive Jews. Speaking up in favor of Palestinian lives becomes more risky every day.'

Guilford o we now have a House of Representatives with a large majority, in passing a resolution on Dec. 5, willing to back the totally bogus and dangerous statement "anti-Zionism is antisemitism.'

Reading the list of Democrats who voted in favor, it includes some who are thought of as progressives, such as Maxwell Frost (D-Fla.) and Ruben Gallego (D-Ariz.). Rep. Becca Balint (D-Vt.),

who is Jewish and is personally acquainted with me and so many other progressive anti-Zionist Jews, voted present — on a statement she knows is a com-

This resolution feels like one more step in the process of marginalizing progressive Jews. Speaking up in favor of Palestinian lives becomes more risky every day.

The Jews I know are divided between those in the camp of Jewish Voice for Peace, an organization that calls itself the largest anti-Zionist Jewish group in the world, and those who have fallen back on their traditional upbringing, believing "any threat to Israel is personal, and I will support Israel.

Since many of those pro-Israel Jews are also humanists, they will all accept that NANCY BRAUS, until recently an independent bookseller, is a longtime activist who contributes often to these pages.

Netanyahu is a monster, that he has to go — but....

There have been decades when secular Jews in the United States have felt almost a part of the multicultural society that many Americans believe is our birthright.

Jews have always been a very small minority in the United States, but we have played a large role in the Left. Iews were heavily represented in the Communist and Socialist parties, and have been leaders in peace, environmental, and labor

As the Republican Party has become ever-more-Christian-Nationalist, the party's support of Israel has become more intense and, in many ways, more convoluted.

The strange explanation of the evangelical support for Israel is theological and has to do with the far-right obsession with "the End Times." Any Jews who believe these Republicans are their friends are seriously in error. These same defenders of Israel will

tell you that they believe, if they are honest, that we Jews will all descend into the fires of hell upon the return of Jesus the hateful one these Christian Nationalists worship.

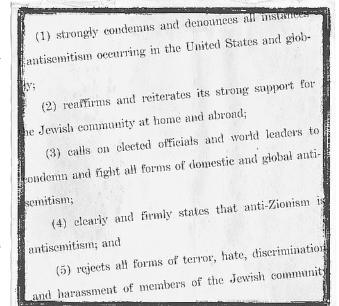
In the United States, a country where free speech is supposed to be a value, where Donald Trump is getting away with breaking gag orders by threatening judges and court employees, we are watching the suppression of citizens' ability to support Palestinians' lives.

In an unprecedented assault on speech, people have lost jobs for such benign activities as posting a statement declaring that a genocide is taking place in Gaza

Others have been fired for working to organize a boycott of Israeli products, others for demanding a ceasefire.

Even when the first BDS (boycott, divestment, sanctions) campaign began in 2005, it felt like the powers-that-be were not going to accept this happening. Academics were blacklisted for participating. Some states even have laws banning BDS, and in February, the Supreme Court refused to review these

The antisemitism in the United States is nothing new.



As a child, while on my way to school, kids from the Catholic school would yell at us that we killed Jesus. Large corporations

would not hire Jews.

However, since the rise of Donald Trump and his cult, Hitler has been evoked in a positive way ever more frequently. At first, when a Hitler quote would be noticed, it was often cited as a "mistake," or a "good quote no matter who said it.'

Overtly antisemitic statements, such as Marjorie Taylor Greene's Jewish space lasers

causing fires in California, are now accepted by the Right.

We are sure we will be safe, that our friends, neighbors, and connections would protect

But this is the exact trajectory of the Third Reich, which spread stories about Jewish perfidy, making us more threatening to the German population over time. By the time Hitler was clear about his genocidal intent, it was too late for millions to escape.

WE ARE LIVING in a country where Christian Nationalism and fascism are on the ascent, even though the polls clearly show this is not a majority opinion. Hating Jews, like anti-Black racism and anti-immigrant fervor, is a longstanding weapon of the U.S. Right.

At a time when we are facing the most terrifying existential crisis of our lives — a question of whether the planet can sustain life after a couple of centuries of capitalist destruction - antisemitism is being used again to rally the white base and to take their eyes off of the real problems of wealth inequality and the environment.

Israel has no right to kill thousands of innocent Palestinian citizens.

Israel has no right to send settlers into the West Bank to burn out Palestinians' generational holdings.

Israel has no right to withhold power, food, water, or medical care in Gaza.

Israel has no right to rule Gaza or the West Bank.

I am a Jew. I would likely be fired from any academic job for these statements.

In another year or two, could I be arrested and imprisoned for these statements?

■ Keffiyeh

with three patterns: waves to represent fishing nets and Palestinians' connection to the Mediterranean Sea; a leaflike line pattern for olive trees, a staple crop of Palestine and a symbol of Palestinian resilience; and a border of bold lines denoting the historical trade routes that passed through this region of the world.

Originally worn by nomadic Bedouin as protection from the elements, keffiyehs were also a way for them to differentiate themselves from fellahin (villagers or peasants), according to Wafa Ghnaim, a Palestinian expert on Palestinian embroidery (tatreez) and traditional Palestinian dress. The scarf emerged as a po-

litical statement with the 1936 revolt against British colonial

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rule when Palestinian resistance fighters used keffiyehs to hide their faces. In the 1960s, the keffiyeh's power and symbolism were reinforced as a tool of the Palestinian nationalist movement worn by freedom fighters like Leila Khaled and Palestine Liberation Organization Chairman Yasser Arafat.

In the 1980s and 1990s, under Israeli military law during the first Palestinian intifada (which means "shaking off"), Israel made it illegal for anyone in the occupied Palestinian territories to cover their faces with a keffiyeh. As such, these simple cotton

scarves represent not only our struggle for freedom, they are also a powerful representation of Palestinian heritage and culture, which Israel continues to

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FROM SECTION FRONT

try to erase by killing the journalists and librarians who narrate our stories, by arresting theater workers, by destroying our books and museums, and by outlawing even basic human expressions like Palestinian joy at the release of our prisoners.

Today, with the help of global capitalism, keffiyehs have entered the mainstream fashion market, bedecking runway models and incorporated into major fashion brands. So, when I see someone wrapped in a keffiyeh on the subway or walking down the street, I always wonder, Do you know what you're wearing? Do you know what it

As Israel carries out its brutal war against Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank, the Palestinian solidarity movement has once again been pushed to the center of the world stage.

Hirbawi, the sole remaining factory that makes keffiyehs in the West Bank, has been sold out for months. Meanwhile, I've seen more keffiyehs in the United States than perhaps any other time in my life — including here in Brattleboro. I've also gotten a lot of questions from people about whether it's OK for those who are not Palestinian to wear them.

From my perspective, as one Palestinian person, my answer to the question is: Wear the keffiyeh with pride if you know what it means, what it stands for, and what you stand for when you put it on.

Remember that the keffiyeh is rooted in resistance, both armed and nonviolent, because that is part of the history and struggle of Palestine in the face of occupation and apartheid.

Remember that the keffiyeh refers to the symbols, beliefs, and stories associated with a Palestinian culture — our music, language, dance, symbols, and food - which is being actively erased and co-opted.

Wear the keffiyeh if you stand for resistance against oppression, the yearning for freedom, the deep roots of Indigenous struggle for liberation that lives within Palestinian heritage and is central to our identity as a people.

Recognize that your calls must extend beyond a ceasefire to demands for an end to the occupation and freedom with justice for Palestinians. Anything less silences and marginalizes our history and our context within larger themes of structural violence, colonialism, and imperialism.

So wear the keffiyah! Wear it in solidarity. Wear it with pride. Wear it with knowledge.

LETTERS FROM READERS

Passing the moderator's gavel in Newfane

own Meeting in March 2024 will be my last as Newfane town moderator. The time has come to hand the gavel to someone new. I will not be seeking reelection.

Town moderator is an elected position with a oneyear term. To be on the ballot, candidates for the position must submit a petition with 15 signatures of Newfane voters to the town clerk no later than 5 p.m. on Jan. 29, 2024.

I thank Newfane voters for allowing me the honor of moderating municipal meetings for the past 16 years, and I'm glad to answer questions about the position for anyone interested

> Deborah Lee Luskin Williamsville

Thoughts on stretching 3SquaresVT, other benefits

E: "For Vermonters, a cascade of crises lead to food insecurity" [News, Dec.

As noted in this article, extra benefits for food stamps were given during the Covid years, but those benefits are no longer available.

The average food stamps per senior is only about \$180 a month. The fact is, benefits are exhausted within three weeks depending on if a family is cooking a big meal for the holidays.

In Massachusetts, the Healthy Incentives Program offered limited produce to Food Stamps recipients due to the floods this year. Although farmstands do provide vegetables that qualify for benefits, many seniors and disabled individuals do not have vehicles to get to these venues.

As we know, the food banks are a supplement to, or even the primary source, of one's meals. The average food bank overall provides the same foods upon each pickup: canned vegetables, a macaroni and cheese box, spaghetti sauce, noodles, canned fruit, peanut butter, cereal, canned beans, tuna fish, and maybe 1 lb. of hamburger or fish.

In summer, fresh vegetables are available. And some even provide paper products or holiday grocery store vouchers. Many food stamp recipients go to more than one food bank two to three times a month to feed their family. They still find the same menus.

Many churches provide free suppers, but again, let's remind the readers of the hardships for seniors and disabled people who must struggle with picking up food benefits during winter conditions.

School children can apply for free lunches. Seniors can receive the basic Meals on Wheels program of varying quality. But these lunches are about \$90 per month unless home care waives this fee.

less-costly meals for each of us is key to good health. Doctors fail to ask about our meals. Poverty is increasing for the working poor, seniors, average income is \$35,000.

not eligible for food stamps (SNAP) since the program lars and the application is a disadvantage.

as any medical costs out of pocket — such as total printout of prescription costs from pharmacy and transportation costs to medical appointments – can determine your cost. Also, if you're on subsidized rent, be sure to submit all your medical costs, as this will

Turners Falls, Mass.

what would happen on Oct. 7,

it causes one to wonder about

Food security for nutritious,

children, and disabled — the In conclusion, many are

went over income by few doleight pages long. Seniors are at So encourage all to apply,

reduce your rent. **Betty Tegel**

Netanyahu's motivations. Did he basically know what was coming? (Though I have to think he could not have known exactly what would transpire — at least, I cannot believe he would knowingly

allow such brutality.) Did he figure he could use the insurrection, as he has, as a motivation to basically get rid of the Gaza "problem" once and for all? My main point here: If Sen.

Bernie Sanders would only run and be able to show Biden another way, regarding Israel, maybe Biden would take the political leap needed. Bernie and his more enlightened politics influenced or inspired some of Biden's policies early on in his presidency. Perhaps he needs that where Israel is

Perhaps Biden thinks he has it all figured out: that we need Israel, and if we ask for moral consideration from Israel, the country will no longer be an ally. But this stance is weak and foolish. Hold onto a loyal friend, but lose our soul?

concerned!

We must put conditions onto any money given to Israel, as Bernie Sanders has strongly stated. Please, Bernie, step forward in a real way to lead the way!

Arlene Distler Brattleboro

Hold onto a loyal friend, but lose our soul? 'm writing to express my

frustration with President Biden and, in particular, his Israel policy, which seems to be "Israel, no matter what." While I agree that Hamas

needs to be ousted as ruler of Gaza, that is something that can only be accomplished politically. It's been many years since Palestinians had the opportunity to vote Hamas out. În fact, Îsraeli Prime Minister Netanyahu was supporting

It has been written and stated by those who've been reporting from Gaza for years that the people are not much behind Hamas. So why all the killing of Palestinians when this can be accomplished by other means?

It's up to Israel to allow voting to happen and to put forward other organizations or individuals! Ultimately, however, the people of Gaza must have political and human rights and be able to create their own independent

Given reports that Israel had some intelligence about

'Newspaper' bashes Republicans, hates America

don't care that Dan DeWalt founded this "newspaper"; I'm sick of hearing from him. And I'm also sick of Nancy Braus, "who contributes often to these pages." (Too often!) These people hate Israel, and they hate America.

Then you print two full pages of "poetry" regarding the Israel-Hamas war. Actual poets must be rolling their

Elayne Clift is the worst columnist ever. All she does is bash Republicans every chance she gets. She calls Trump "morbidly obese." Isn't fat-shaming something liberals disapprove of? But when it comes to Trump, anything goes — right, Elayne? She also says he's an "obvious psychopath."

My hope for 2024 is that Trump will be re-elected, and The Commons will fire nasty woman Elayne Clift.

Tim Grant Belchertown, Mass.

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Panhandling FROM SECTION FRONT

often part-time, seasonal, and/ or has unpredictable hours i.e., it usually isn't enough to pay the rent.

My friend Bruce now has a job working around 15 hours a week at a reasonable wage, and you can see him walking downtown in the morning with his heavy-duty sleeping bag, having been outside another night as he saves enough to share a room somewhere with someone. (Now that Dec. 15 has passed, he might be able to get a housing voucher — a process that isn't as straightforward as you might think.)

Melissa is an experienced machinist, but she's told me employers don't like hiring people who live on the street, particularly if they suspect the applicant has had issues with drugs.

• Why don't they just go to the shelter? Usually, our shelter is filled, and several dozen people are literally left out in the cold. It's not just the number of beds. If people have a history of showing up drunk or stoned, are violent, obstreperous, or disruptive, they won't get too high on the waitlist (if they can get on it at all).

• Doesn't the shelter give out tents and sleeping bags? Sometimes. Until they run out.

There are several places that people tent around town. But when the areas get too visible or, I guess, when enough people complain — those in tents are given 24 hours to leave their

I admit I've been appalled by the trash that accumulates around some tents. One couple was very appreciative when I gave them construction trash bags so they could keep their site clean.

Not to be overly dramatic, but we have free trash bags for dogs, right?

Aren't there tent heaters? Yup. You can get a heater and propane for about \$100 — if you've managed to save up \$100. Those little green propane tanks cost \$8 to \$10 and last a few days.

If you scrounge up the money for a larger tank, it's way more cost-effective. However, if you run out of propane in the early evening, you have to find your way to Tractor Supply to

Plus, heaters are worth a lot on the street. If you get one, someone might steal it. (I know one guy who carried his with him everywhere he went.)

• Aren't there places to get free food? Yes. On some days. At some times. The local restaurants are very generous and, as best they can, they provide food to those who need it.

St. Brigid's kitchen serves free lunch from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. four days a week. Foodworks is a great source of food for many low-income people. It's open three hours a day, five days a week.

But if you live in a tent, food attracts animals, you don't have refrigeration, and you have no legal way to cook.

By the way, I hear that dumpsters behind supermarkets are good places to find free food.

• There are lots of places to get free clothes, right? That is true. Experienced Goods is great. It's open seven hours a day, five days a week.

One Sunday evening, a friend of mine was offered a construction job for the next day, expected to reach a high of 35 degrees the next day. He needed work boots and gloves. It's hard to get those items at 5 p.m. Sunday without some serious money or determined dumpster diving.

• Why do they need gas money? I confess that requests for gas money always make me a little suspicious. My friends can usually borrow a car in exchange

for filling an empty tank. I know them well enough now to believe they are usually going where they claim — although, sometimes, it does seem they ask for more money than they

• Where do they need gas to go? Wal-Mart at 8 p.m. Sunday to buy those boots or warm gloves.

should strictly need for gas.

A trip to someplace for a short, supervised visit with their children in foster care. Like my friend Carol, a single mother whose house burned down. She needs to build her life back from nothing before she can care for her kids safely

To get to the Methadone or Suboxone clinic in the morning and back. Until they get "takehomes," they need to go every day. From towns as much as 30 miles away. They may be eligible for Medicaid rides. But getting one is hit or miss.

To visit a partner in a hospital who has been taken for surgery or, perhaps, yes, an overdose.

One of my neighbors just wanted to go to see her grandfather in a hospital 60 miles away before he died.

· Doesn't Medicaid pay for healthcare? Not to be crude, but if you are living on the street and don't have Medicaid, you're screwed.

• Why wouldn't you have Medicaid? Undoubtedly you'd be income-eligible. But maybe you didn't get the renewal notice because you're no longer at vour latest temporary address. (Many people use the shelter address.) Or you're stuck in a gap between losing insurance and getting approved for Medicaid. Or you're being investigated for Medicaid fraud. Or you just missed an appointment because you weren't clear when to go where.

My friend Jake had a bad bike accident. No Medicaid. The hospital treated him, but he needed the \$40 for the follow-up doctor visit. Hopefully, the hospital will forgive the \$10,000+ charge.

Becky needed emergency surgery in Massachusetts. She was released with a Massachusetts prescription for an antibiotic that the drug store in Vermont said they couldn't

What can we do right here right now?

I don't know what I'm about to suggest is legal or practical. I don't know who would fund this. I don't know what volunteers would be willing to do.

But here are three ideas that might be worth exploring.

1. Have people work with the Drop-in Center specifically to help people who need IDs. (The Groundworks folks there are juggling a lot of needs.)

2. Have people trained to understand how to negotiate available services spend time in the downtown and other parts of town from about 4 to 8 p.m. several evenings a week to ask people about their immediate needs and ultimately connect them with services. They might be supplied with blankets, protein bars, etc. to hand out. (I haven't read all of Tracy Kidder's book Rough Sleepers, but he shares ideas about how this sort of concept worked in Boston.)

3. Set aside an area for camping (to deal with overflow from the shelter) that has a water supply, trash receptacles, and other basic shelter needs.

I know some people are concerned that, if all these services are provided, Brattleboro will attract even more people to live on the street.

Well, it's important to note that many smaller towns like ours are beginning to have bigcity issues. It'd be great if we could get ahead of the curve.

2 WINDHAM COUNTY

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Hi! I'm Tao and I am a big boy weighing around 80 pounds. I am pretty reserved but once I warm up to you, I won't ever leave your side! I seem to do well with some other dogs and I may benefit in a home with another dog. I love to go on long walks and hikes and would love an active household where I can run and play a lot.



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



MJ and Cullen are brothers that came to WCHS together after their owner could no longer care for them. They can live in a home with other cats, dogs, and kids. Come meet them today!

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■ Ruined Christmas?

ornaments were on the tree would win a huge gift basket filled with fancy Irish chocolates, gift cards, and other wonderful surprises.

The contest became a yearly tradition, one filled with suspense that would build enormously.

ONE CHRISTMAS, when I was 11 years old, we had packed 583 decorations on the tree. Many of our favorites were Scottish and Irish antique glass bulbs. My mom and I would typically pick up

the tree, set it up, and spend a whole day running up and down to the attic with box after box of ornaments and hang them up. It took a whole day, and our tree had to be as tall and wide as possible, basically filling up our entire living room to accommodate the sheer volume of decorations.

So there we were, almost finished, and I was ready to hang the very last ornament

on the highest bough. We scooted the stepladder in as close as it could get to the tree, and I clambered up to wire it on, with pride beaming from my mom's face.

I stretched as far as I could to grab the perfect branch. As I began affixing my handmade silver popsicle stick sleigh that I made in kindergarten, the whole tree began to lean my way.

An eye-hook — connected to wire that was supporting the tree — popped out from the wall, pulled by the sheer weight of it all. The whole tree fell forward.

I dove off the ladder. My mom ran over, and we watched, as if in slow motion, the biggest and best Christmas tree that's ever fa-la-la-la-ed fall, crashing and smashing down onto the floor.

When my dad and brothers came running in to survey the devastation, I broke down into tears. I surely ruined Christmas. Our community game would FROM SECTION FRONT

be cancelled. I was solely responsible. And, and, and, and more.

My Mom directed my brothers to quickly run to the garage and get work gloves, and we went about the task of untwisting the wires and cleaning up the glass, while my mom mopped up the water.

After our tree was re-set (with more secure wiring), and the unbroken ornaments from the back were redistributed evenly to the front, we all looked at the tree with a deeper appreciation. We cranked up the tunes and had hot chocolate.

A Christmas tree represents longevity and how we hold onto memories of our past. What started as the worst feeling ever became my favorite holiday memory. We worked through an issue, and it was lovely because we shared the moment together.

82 83 84

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BRENDAN EMMETT QUIGLEY

THE COMMONS CROSSWORD

"Games on Repeat"

Across

- 1. Banned water pollutant
- 4. Format for this puzzle's title
- 11. Fixed food portions
- 18. Real Madrid rahs 20. Type of boot
- 21. Spousal greeting
- 22. Precisely so Streak on a solo
- takeaway game? 25. Bitter conflict
- "Speaking __ parent ..."
- 28. Theological topic 29. Haka dancer
- Two decks of cards
- for bridge?
- Speck
- 36. Pick-and-roll league "The World Above" singer
- 38. Comprehend 1986 Art Spiegelman
- graphic novel **Buster of ESPN**
- 43. Reached Tests usually taken lying down
- 46. Egg holders 47. Actress Deutch of
- "The Politician" 48. Initialism that means "Let's not talk about work"
- 49. Quotation puzzle's baton? 54. Pilgrim's belief
- 56. Shrubs bearing plums 57. Narrative poetry collection
- 58. Stand-up comic __ Martin 59. TV producer Chaiken
- 60. "Move over"
- 61. Cuban dough 62. Can-do
- 63. Brilliant stroke while solving logic puzzles?
- 65. Nonsense in a word game? 67. Env. letters
- 68. Completely convinced 69. Politico Nikki
- 70. "__ the breaks"
- 71. Tip-top
- 72. It may be rounded up 73. Like a windmill 74. Possession question
- 75. Acts out police operations? 78. Dark genre
- 79. Home of the ibex 80. Workers' rights grp.
- 81. Judicial seat 82. "The Equalizer" channel
- 85. Life line? 87. Accounts receivable stamp
- 88. Small door user 89. Mawlid religion
- 91. Starting reporter
- 92. French-lesson verb
- 94. Knack for a tileplacing game?
- Toward the back
- 99. Morsel in cereal 101. Story
- 102. Peak in Thessaly 103. Python Chapman who's good with codes?
- 108. Have on
- 109. Inferior performer
- 110. Flashlight power source 111. French town
- 113. Most to the point 114. Sinema's title, briefly
- destroyed in 1944 112. Marking on butterfly wing

60. Makes a point? Down 61. Cries in a thin voice 62. Detest

101

Smoked from a bong, say

65. Blended scotch brand

66. Morality pundit

69. Cornrows, e.g.

72. Sleeveless blouse

74. "Squid Game" prize

78. Peacekeeping grp.

81. Gym equipment

82. Tiny apartments,

sarcastically

83. Brew with a red

"In/Out"

76. Chinese calendar animal

77. Designer genes material

Last issue's solution

A L I T O S I M E O N

GOLEM CHOPRAGAGONEG

B E S I D E T H E P O T O B L I G A T E

S O T H E N A N E M I A A L E T I S

R A G D O L L M E R C H A N T M A R E S

J O T A C C O U N T S T R E A T I S E

A U T O H A R P S A R A H S T U D

S U P E R V I L L A D I V E C O M E D Y

R I G S M Y E R S D E M E A N O R

B L E E D D R Y G I V E M E A M U T E

L A T T E R D A Y S A T S N O T A T E D

T I O C T O N I S S A N R A T S O N

H A W A I I A N S E L F D I S C I P L E

A N E C D O T E T R I T E R E F R E M

L A L A N S W S T M A R K S A Y S O

A L A O P E N H E R E T I C

E T A N E T L Y E S A H A R A

CRUELLA FIRE

E R R S A C R O S S U T U R N

A L O F T E O C E N E P E R T

N U R S I A W A X V I C M E G

73. Legally binding

105 106

110

102

111

triangle logo

85. "Caddyshack" star

Dictator's command

90. Cause of some school

cancellations

93. Man of many words

98. Urgent notices: Abbr.

104. Wahoo served at a luau

105. Award for Adele: Abbr.

107. "A harmony parallel with

nature," per Cezanne

EDITMENU

84. Apply heavily

87. Still life subject

88. Software thief

91. Cookie holder

95. Vendors' spots

100. Diplomat's must

106. Long, thin fish

96. EGOT award

- 1. Brandenburg's capital 2. Debate-ending procedure
- 3. Lowered enclosure at a zoo 4. Polished off
- 5. Cardinals who
- represent the pope 6. Tenant
- of Invisibility (Harry Potter artifact) 8. 2021 WS winner
- 9. Finger food?

109

112

- 10. Music festival allotments
- 11. Jungle charger
- 12. Melody 13. Crossword type
- 14. Little bit 15. Low-scoring soccer tie
- 16. At hand
- 17. Nation with the oldest capital city in the world
- 19. Steps over a fence
- 20. Freelancers work on it
- 24. Personal goals 26. One with a large DVD
- collection, perhaps
- "Yeah, sure thing, pal" 32. Adana inn
- 33. Truck food 35. "Wow! Just wow!"
- __ Gerald R. Ford 42. Maggie Haberman's
- newspaper, for short 45. Relieved (of)
- 46. Parlor purchase 47. Flies past
- 48. Mortise fitting 49. Orally
- 50. Crawled (with) 51. Pervades
- 52. "Let's do lunch sometime!" 53. Navy bases?
- 54. Like a surefire
- 56. Reprimands
- baseball closer
- 55. Colorful cuppa
- 59. "Dune" actor Oscar __

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Wednesday, December 20, 2023 page D4

COLUMN | Sports Roundup

Wildcat boys top Terriers in Green Mountain Tournament

he Twin Valley boys' basketball team swept last week's Green Mountain Holiday Tournament in Chester to take the trophy as champions.

In the opening round on Dec. 12, Bellows Falls rolled to a 70-38 win over Mount St. Joseph. A 15-0 run in the first quarter set the tone, and despite some improved play by the Mounties in the second quarter, the Terriers had a 29-11 lead at the half.

BF scored 24 points in the third quarter to take a 53-24 lead, which allowed the Terriers to give the reserves plenty of playing time in the final quarter. Thirteen different players scored, led by Colby Dearborn with 19 points. Cole Moore added 10 points, Jaxon Clark scored eight, and reserves Blake Bertrand and Will Hallock each chipped in seven.

In the other opening round game, Twin Valley beat Green Mountain, 67-43, to set up a championship game between the Wildcats and the Terriers on Dec. 14.

The championship was a dandy as two evenly matched teams played a game that, despite being a mid-December early season contest, had a March playoff level of intensity.

Twin Valley freshman guard Brayden Brown was the hero in this game, leading all scorers with 23 points. Sixteen of those points came in the second half, including a pair of free throws with 3.2 seconds left in regulation to give the Wildcats a 51-48 victory.

Bellows Falls trailed 14-9 after the first quarter, but outscored Twin Valley 11-6 in the second quarter to take a 20-19 lead at the break. BF got the lead up to seven early in the third quarter before the Wildcats rallied to tie the game, 30-30, with three minutes left in the third. From that point on, it was close all the way to the end with four lead changes and three ties in the fourth quarter before Brown's last-second free throws settled the matter.

Besides Brown's performance, the other keys to the Wildcats' victory were going 10-for-13 from the free throw line and Noah Dornburgh sinking five three-pointers — three of them during the third quarter, on the way to a 17-point night. Bertrand, Clark, and Moore each scored 11 points to

lead the Terriers.

The Wildcats improved to
3-1 with the victory, while
Bellows Falls finished the week

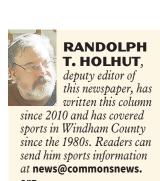
Girls' basketball

• Leland & Gray lost to Long Trail School, 32-28, in the championship game of the Green Mountain Holiday

Tournament on Dec. 14.

The Rebels advanced into the final by beating Green Mountain, 48-33, on Dec. 12, while LTS topped Mount St. Joseph, 49-25, to set up the title matchup. In the win over GM, Samantha Morse led the Rebels with 18 points, while Maggie Parker added 15.

It was a defensive game, with neither Long Trail nor Leland & Gray able to do much scoring. The Rebels led 21-17 at halftime and had a 24-20 lead



heading into the fourth quarter. But with two minutes to play, LTS guard Olivia Cole-Bugay took control of the game, setting up Meara Morgan for the go-ahead basket for a 27-26 lead. Cole-Bugay then connected on a jump shot to make it 29-26 with 1:14 left. Parker scored on a lay-up with 12.7 seconds left to cut the LTS lead to 30-28, but Cole-Bugay sank a pair of free throws two seconds later to clinch the victory.

Cole-Bugay finished with 20 points to lead LTS, while Parker was the Rebels' high scorer with 11 points. Morse had eight points for the Rebels in the first half, but sat out the second half after colliding with LTS forward Rose Johnson just before halftime and taking an elbow to the head. The Rebels ended the week with a 1-3 record.

• Things have been rough for Twin Valley, who are gamely trying get through a season with only eight players on the team.

Against Proctor on Dec. 12, Isabel Greb had 42 points, 10 steals, and eight rebounds as the Phantoms beat the visiting Wildcats, 51-30. Junior forward Alana Bevilacqua led the Wildcats with 15 points, while eighth-grader Kate Oyer added 10 points.

Only six Twin Valley players were available for their game against Bellows Falls on Dec. 15 at Holland Gymnasium, and the result was a 61-22 loss to the Terriers.

BF led 31-3 at the half, as Twin Valley struggled to score. Oyer led the Wildcats with 14 points and went 8 for 18 from the free throw line, while Bevilacqua added seven points.

Abby Nystrom led the Terriers with 19 points, Veronica Moore added 13 points, and Laura Kamel chipped in with 12 points. Eight of the 10 Terriers who played got into the scoring column as first-year coach James Pecsok spread the minutes around.

• Brattleboro went up to St. Johnsbury on Dec. 15 and lost to the Hilltoppers, 50-35. Kaia Anderson led the Hilltoppers with 18 points. Reese Croutworst was the Bears' high scorer with 10 points, while Aliza Speno added nine points. The 2-1 Bears have another long road trip on Dec. 21 when they travel north to face Champlain Valley.

Boys' basketball

• Brattleboro had a mostly positive week, with wins over Mount Greylock and Woodstock and a loss to St. Johnsbury.

Hosting Mount Greylock on Dec. 11, the Bears came away with a 51-38 victory. Guards Johnathan Haskins and Keagan Systo each scored 11 points and were part of a defensive effort by the Bears that forced 23



RANDOLPH T. HOLHUT/THE COMMONS

turnovers.

On the road against Woodstock on Dec. 13, Jackson Emery, Haskins, and Systo combined for 50 points as the Bears picked up a 66-62 win. Emery had 17 points and 11 rebounds, Haskins had 16 points and 15 rebounds, and Systo scored 17 points, including eight free throws in the final quarter.

The down note was a 90-49 loss to the St. Johnsbury Hilltoppers in a Saturday matinee at the BUHS gym on Dec. 16. The Hilltoppers were too big, too quick, too skilled, and too much for the Bears. St. Johnsbury opened with a 9-0 run in the first two minutes of the game, led 30-12 at the end of the first quarter, and built up a 57-23 advantage by halftime.

Rex Hauser led St. Johnsbury with 31 points. Harry Geng added 25 points, and Kerrick Medose scored 10 points. Haskins led the Bears 18 points, while Karson Elliott and Jackson Emery scored 11 and 10 points, respectively.

Don't read too much into the loss to the Hilltoppers, since it was a mid-December game against one of the best teams in Division I. The Bears, now 2-2 under their new coach Winston Sailsman Jr., have lots of talent, and will keep getting better as the season progresses.

• Leland & Gray lost to Springfield, 51-32, on Dec. 11. They then picked up their first win of the season with a 60-38 victory over Arlington on Dec. 14 in Townshend to improve to 1-2.

Bowling

• Brattleboro had its first home match of the season at Brattleboro Bowl on Dec. 16, and the defending state champs defeated Fair Haven and Windsor.

The Bears came out on top in individual match play with a cumulative team score of 1,632. Windsor was second with 1,551 and Fair Haven was third with 1,371.

The varsity quintet was led by Alyssa St. Louis, who had a 218 in her first game and a 162 in her second. Close behind were Thomas Bell (149, 196), Mateo Lopez Corse (138, 190), Austin Pinette (137, 176), and Charlie Forthofer (138, 128).

In best-of-three Baker play, second-seed Windsor swept No. 3 Fair Haven, 132-128, in the first game and 139-102 in the second game. In the champion-ship round, Brattleboro swept Windsor, 186-128, in the first game and 202-180 in the second



Alyssa St. Louis was Brattleboro's top bowler on Dec. 16 as the Bears won a three-team match against Windsor and Fair Haven at Brattleboro. St. Louis rolled games of 218 and 162.

game.

The Bears will be back in action on Dec. 30 at Valley Bowl in Randolph when they have a match with Burlington, Craftsbury, and Randolph.

Ice hockey

• The Brattleboro boys got their season off to a rough start with an 8-2 loss to the Burr & Burton Bulldogs in Manchester on Dec. 13 and a 10-1 loss to the Hartford Hurricanes on Dec. 16 in the home opener at Withington Rink.

Things looked promising for the Bears in the first period against Burr & Burton.
They had a 2-1 lead on goals by Evan Wright (assisted by Henry Schwartz) and Rowan Lonergan (unassisted). But the game slipped away from the Bears in the second and third periods as the Bulldogs scored seven unanswered goals, including a pair of shorthanded goals late in the game.

Senior goaltender James
Fagley made 21 saves in goal for
the Bears, with freshman goalie
Silas Gooding recording one
save in mop-up duty in the final
minutes of the game.

Against Hartford, the Hurricanes had no problems lighting the lamp against the Bears as Ezra Mock had three goals and Cavan Benjamin and Nate Clark had two goals each. Jaden Poirier, Nolan Morlock, and Tighe Hrabchak each added a goal. Nunu Mayer and Nick Facto combined for 19 saves in goal for the Hurricanes.

• The Brattleboro girls got shut out by Woodstock, 8-0, at Withington Rink on Dec. 13. Woodstock goaltender Meridan Bremel earned the shutout as Hannah Gubbins had three goals and two assists to lead the Wasps. Gracelyn Laperle added a pair of goals, Fiona Piconi and Margaret Mello each had a goal and an assist and Ryann Hughes also scored.

Now 0-2, the Bears go on the road to face Hartford on Dec. 20. The Hurricanes beat the Bears, 10-1, in Brattleboro's season opener on Dec. 9.

Senior bowling roundup

• Week 15 of the fall/winter season of the Brattleboro Senior Bowling League at Brattleboro Bowl on Dec. 14 saw Four Seasons (51-24) and No Splits (48-27) remain in the top two spots. There is a four-way tie

for third between High Rollers, Skippers, Stepping Stones, and Hairiers (all 43-32), followed by Four Pins (35-40), Dumblebor (34-41), and PEWJ (27-48).

Twin Valley

defenders Cody Magnant (5) and

Brayden Brown (15)

move in on Bellows Falls guard Colby Dearborn (2) during first-

half action

in the boys

game of

the Green

Mountain

on Dec. 14

in Chester.

Tournament

Holiday

championship

Debbie Kolpa had the women's high handicap game (282) and series (661), while Peter Deyo had the men's high handicap game (276) and series (719). No Splits had the high team handicap game (920) and series (2,632).

Deyo had the men's high scratch series (632) with games of 247, 198, and 187, while Robert Rigby had a 624 series with games of 258, 186, and 180. Warren Corriveau Sr. had a 594 series with games of 213, 196. and 185, John Walker had a 591 series with games of 213, 192, and 185, and Duane Schillemat had a 547 series with games of 215 and 186. Gary Montgomery had a 526 series with a 182 game, while Al Dascomb had a 188 game and Fred Ashworth had a 184 game.

Kolpa had the women's high scratch series (494) and game (218). Mary Parliman had games of 170 and 151, Carol Gloski had a 157 game, and Nancy Dalzell had a 153 game.

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