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In Putney, a housing crisis flies under the radar

More than 40 people are unhoused in one small town, and residents struggle with a crisis that's seemingly invisible

By Ellen Pratt
The Commons

PUTNEY—People experiencing homelessness live in a range of conditions.

Some live in motels, like the more than 93 Brattleboro households participating in the state's General Assistance Emergency Housing Program. Others, largely uncounted, live in tents in the woods, in friends' barns and sheds, in cars, garages, and campers — all situations that do not meet all the human needs for comfort and security.

In Putney, approximately 40 people live outside and in

campers, according to Fire Chief Tom Goddard, who keeps this count through his "well-person" checks.

"There's been a fairly decent increase in homelessness in Putney since the end of the pandemic," said Goddard. "We're starting to see camper trailers popping up everywhere. Sometimes that's the only option these folks have for any type of actual shelter."

Some residents of this town of 2,600 are "couch and floor surfing" until they can find housing, reported Laura Chapman, operations manager at the Putney

■ SEE PUTNEY HOMELESSNESS, A6

Brattleboro starts the budget process for FY25

Town eyes 2% rise in operating expenses, with numerous other projects still under discussion, as is the use of ARPA money

By Virginia Ray
The Commons

BRATTLEBORO—A first look at the draft proposal of a \$22,473,369 operating budget for fiscal year 2025 shows a 2% increase (\$434,692) to the current fiscal year's \$22,038,677 operating budget.

As the budget process continues, any — or none — of 13 potential additional expenses could be included in it.

Calling it the "first bite" when reviewing the proposal as such on Nov. 21, Selectboard Chair Ian Goodnow said while the board could pass the "base budget sandwich" without adding to it, he appreciates the process.

"I think it's a more transparent way for the Selectboard to consider budget alternatives for additional things the town can take on and actually understand the impact to the General Fund and to the taxpayer," he said.

As presented in this budget scenario, a 1% proposed property tax increase would cost each individual taxpayer an additional \$17 annually (or about \$4 each quarter) per \$100,000 of property value.

In the draft budget, personnel compensation would increase by 8%, including an overall 4% cost of living adjustment, and services and supplies by 7%.

Current staffing capacities in all departments remain consistent with levels this year, and no new programs or staff positions,

except the Emergency Medical Services program previously approved by the Selectboard, are included.

Personnel costs, Town Manager John Potter says, as projected are consistent with already approved collective bargaining agreements and include a level-funded cost of living adjustment of 4%.

Staff compensation totaled \$12,836,470 in this year's budget. The base budget for FY25

■ SEE BUDGET, A3

Westminster names new town manager

Louis Bordeaux of Bernardston, Mass., brings government and retail management experience to the job

By Robert F. Smith
The Commons

WESTMINSTER—After the position has been vacant for 18 months, the town has hired Louis Bordeaux as its new town manager, effective last week.

A resident of Bernardston, Massachusetts, Bordeaux has worked in local government for just over a decade. Prior to that, he had a long career in mid- and upper-level retail management.

Bordeaux said that he got into politics at the urging of a friend in 2012, when a three-year seat on the Bernardston Selectboard opened up. He ran and won "by

a landslide," he said.

"But it was a little humbling," he added, "when I attended my first town meeting. At the end of the meeting someone came up and said, 'So you're Lou Bordeaux? I voted for you, but you're not who I thought I voted for!'"

Despite that start, Bordeaux said he enjoyed the work and learning how small-town government functions. He worked on the town's Finance Committee, where he said he "got an education on how towns operate and handle finances."

When the position of town coordinator opened, he realized he'd

"love to do that," and he got the job in 2018. He served for over five years.

When he learned that the town manager position was open in Westminster, he thought it could be a good opportunity for him to use his management and town politics experience.

"This was the essence of what I'd already been doing," he said. "So I drove up and checked out the town and the commute with one of my sons."

He liked the town, concluded that the commute would be doable, applied for the job, and got it.

■ SEE TOWN MANAGER, A6



Dierdre Baker, organizer of the town's community Christmas Breakfast and a cancer survivor, was the Grand Marshal of the 2012 Brattleboro Fourth of July parade.

RANDOLPH T. HOLHUT/THE COMMONS

'One of the **BEST PEOPLE** I ever knew'

Deirdre Baker, a beloved community volunteer, endured a decade of surgeries for cancer before dying in a weekend blaze

By Kevin O'Connor
VtDigger

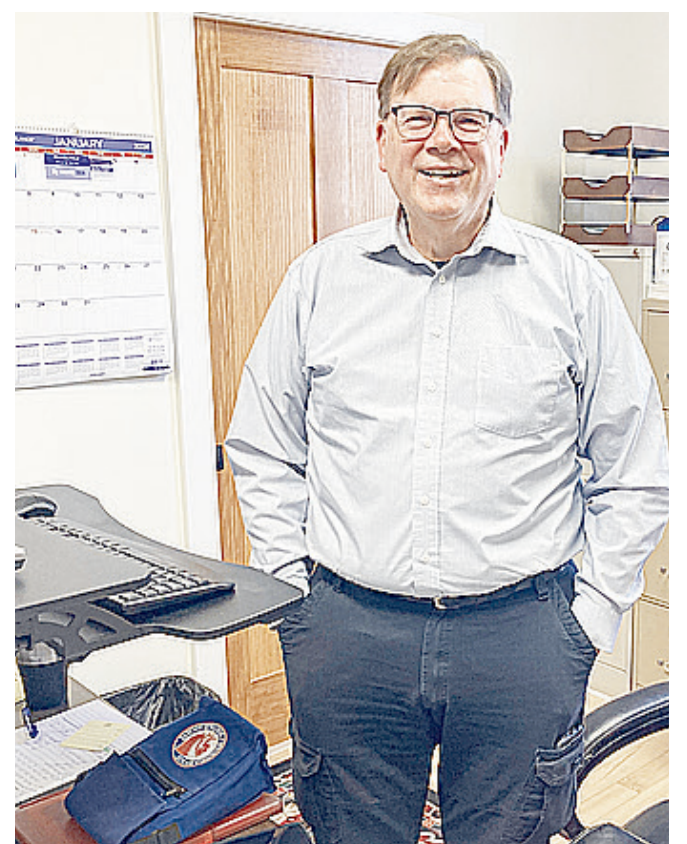
BRATTLEBORO—When Deirdre Baker was named grand marshal of this town's Fourth of July parade in 2012, she didn't let that morning's storm clouds dampen her spirits.

She already had weathered too much for that.

The year before, Baker was planning a free public Christmas breakfast when, set to celebrate her 50th birthday, she was unable to shake a stuffy nose. Doctors said it wasn't a cold or allergies, but instead sinus cancer. To reach and remove it, they'd have to sacrifice her right eye.

Many people would have melted down. Baker instead bucked up, enduring six operations and just as many weeks of radiation before donning a pirate patch to feed 800 people a holiday meal and lead an annual

■ SEE DEIRDRE BAKER, A2



ROBERT F. SMITH/THE COMMONS

After 18 months without a town manager, Westminster recently hired Louis Bordeaux of Bernardston, Massachusetts for the position.

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TOWNSHEND

Journeying away to see the world — and our connections

Leland & Gray students to travel to the Mississippi Delta, the Mekong Delta, and France to study food and culture

By Virginia Ray
The Commons

TOWNSHEND—A group of Leland & Gray High School students will spend the spring semester exploring food systems and culture here at home, then travel south to several Gulf Coast states, as well as Vietnam and France, to study how food is grown, produced, distributed, prepared, and consumed.

To raise money and help pay the estimated \$140,000 needed for the 15 students and three teachers expected to participate, the group prepared and served a Community Dinner in Town Hall on Nov. 3. They raised about \$6,000 at the meal, for which food was all locally sourced and donated.

Students will receive credit in 20th-century social studies, natural history, math, and English for the course, and their work will culminate in a “Voices and Portraits of Journey Away” project to be shared with the public in late May 2024.

Junior Wyatt Houle says for him, “understanding agriculture and food systems in other countries is a powerful means of appreciating cultural diversity, fostering global connections, and building a more harmonious world.”

Houle says food “serves as a worldwide bridge that brings people from various backgrounds, offering insights into traditions, ecosystems, and societies.”

“As we explore different culinary traditions and agricultural practices, we gain a broader perspective on the world, nurturing empathy, tolerance, and respect for various worldviews,” he continues.

“This knowledge equips us to tackle global challenges collaboratively, while the culinary and cultural experiences we gather enrich our lives and turn us into more informed, compassionate, and globally conscious individuals, laying the foundation for a brighter, interconnected future,” Houle adds.

Sophomore Grace Wright participated in a similar project last year and visited New York City and New Orleans while studying natural disasters.

“I had a lot of fun and learned a lot,” Wright says. “My family’s been a part of study abroad things, and they learned a lot of important life lessons. I thought, ‘Why not try it?’”

She believes it’s “really important to learn about where our food is from, because many people are buying bad food, and it’s good to source local food.”

“Especially in Townshend, there are a lot of farms, and to support local farms is everything,” Wright adds.

She also believes “it’s good to travel while you’re young.”

“A lot of people look back and say they wish they’d traveled, but no one looks back and says they wish they hadn’t,” she says. “It’s good to value other cultures. Learning about that can change your way of life and help you appreciate what you have a lot more.”

Ely White, a junior, also participated in the program last year and “thoroughly enjoyed it.”

“I love to travel and have always dreamed of traveling the world, and gaining that experience at such a young age is really important,” he says. “It offers the ability to step outside your comfort zone and see things you wouldn’t have seen. Your economic status or whatever doesn’t matter — you can go no matter who you are; that’s one of the amazing things about the program.”

White also considers food to be “an important part of culture,” which he finds “interesting.”

“Learning about how foods are grown produced and distributed will be really interesting to me, and I hope will teach me also about how to make new foods,” he says.

Reinvigorating the China program

Journey Away Director Jessa Harger was hired after the pandemic to “breathe some fresh air” into the then-Journey East program, which was based in travel to China.

She used Project-Based Learning (PBL) time — 100 minutes each week for middle and high school dedicated to the new program on Wednesdays — and set out to redesign the Journey East program while raising money for and designing a program to study climate disasters in New York City and New Orleans.

Last year, a group of students, including Wright and White, spent 10 days traveling by train to New York City and New Orleans, interviewing people in both locations about their experiences with major storms such as Hurricanes Katrina and Ida in New Orleans, and Superstorm Sandy in New York City.

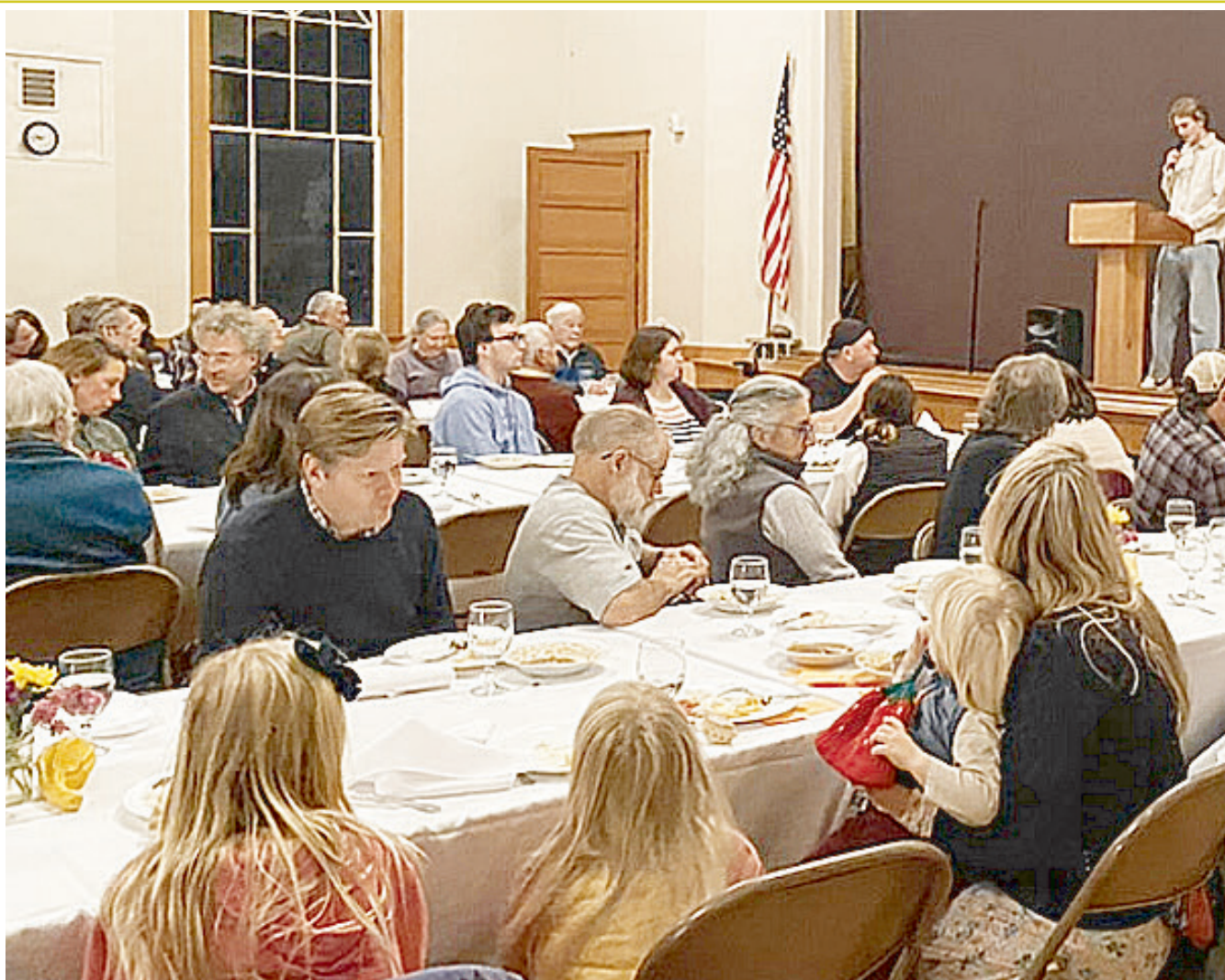
As it turned out, the new program was just what Harger was looking for, and Journey Away became the new vision for the school’s foreign travel program.

“It opened things up,” says Harger. “We don’t have to just go east; we can go anywhere.”

Raising the funds

With Journey Away open to all students, fundraising is essential.

Apart from fall fundraising, the course has received a \$15,000 grant from the Stratton Foundation, which also contributes \$22,000 overall to Leland and



Leland & Gray students raised approximately \$6,000 at a community dinner at the Townshend Town Hall last month. The funds will go toward Journey Away, a spring semester abroad program that will take the kids from southern Vermont to the Gulf Coast, to Vietnam, and to France to compare and contrast cultures and food systems.

Gray’s Project-Based Learning initiatives. The West River Education District continues to support Journey Away with \$31,000 each year as part of the Leland & Gray school operating budget.

Grant applications are in process with a number of local foundations, and Harger will be applying for the Farm-to-School Vision Grant with the Vermont Agency of Agriculture.

‘It’s not nothing’

Harger is also working with other programs that focus on helping youth around food systems in partnerships, such as Food Connects and Shelburne Farms.

She clearly has a passion for helping her students not only broaden their horizons but better understand food systems and culture — at home and abroad.

“Getting these kids from rural New England out in the world is not nothing,” she says, noting that last year one girl had never been to a city before she stepped off the train in New York.

“And for so many students, having random adults in the world taking these kids seriously really changed things for them. Plus their ability to work together and understand cultural context. It’s remarkable, really. It’s moving,” Harger says.

“We’re looking at food — everything from how it is grown to how it is produced, distributed, prepared, and consumed,” she adds. “Food is so much part of Vermont culture. You can’t go anywhere without someone proudly handing you a slice of apple pie or a piece of cheese.”

The study, says Harger, also includes working with hunger questions, including, “How are we going to solve world hunger when the global population is due to hit 9 billion people in the next 50 years?”

And, she adds, “we’re looking at small-scale farms in the East versus massive tracts in the west growing only a few products; corn, soy, wheat, and rice are grown the most.”

Selecting the itinerary

Students will return to the South, says Harger, because, “when we were in New Orleans last year looking at climate disasters and mitigation strategies, we learned there are a lot of

geographical similarities between the Mississippi Delta and Mekong Delta in Vietnam. Additionally, many refugees from Vietnam immigrated to the Southern states during and after the Vietnam War, bringing Vietnamese culture to the Mississippi Delta.”

The common bond of students in both New Orleans and the West River Valley — that both have seen their homes damaged or destroyed by extreme weather caused by climate change — is also a part of the choice.

“Here in central Windham County, we know well the destruction that comes with severe storms, which is something that folks in the Gulf states have been experiencing for a long time,” Harger says.

“We can learn a lot about adaptive practices from the places we visit, as the entire world is faced with these increasingly dramatic and destructive storms,” she adds.

In addition to food culture and production, the trips will include explorations of how the region’s history and culture intertwine.

The first stop is to be Birmingham, Alabama, where students will spend time exploring the Jones Valley Teaching Farm, Birmingham Civil Rights Institute, and the Equal Justice Initiative.

In Leland, Mississippi, they will learn about food and land cooperatives organized by Black folks during the Civil Rights era.

In New Orleans, the group will volunteer with Common Ground Relief in the Ninth Ward, the area of the city that suffered the most from Hurricane Katrina, helping plant sea grass in salt marshes and working in a local food hub.

“It’s impossible to explore the topics of climate and food without also understanding racial justice and equity,” says Harger. “Blues and jazz are big in the Delta, and we will try to see some music and learn some music history while in the area, too.”

From New Orleans, students will depart for Vietnam and spend a week living at a farm stay in the Mekong Delta region before heading north by train to Hanoi and Ha Long Bay. This will be the first school-sponsored international trip since the pandemic.

“Many Vermont students have family members that were impacted by the Vietnam War, and we will look at ways in which repair has happened for the landscape and people of Vietnam,” Harger says.

In France, the group will look at fruit and dairy production to “see the similarities and differences between food production in Vermont and France” and spend time exploring the concept of “terroir,” or food being special because it’s from a special landscape, as expressed through culture.

“Everywhere we go we will explore the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals and make observations about where and how they are, and are not, implemented,” says Harger. “We will look at large- and small-scale farms to learn various practices and techniques. We hope to share meals with all of the people we meet with to learn ways in which food brings people together.”

While the choice to travel to the East has no particular tie-in to the lifting of travel bans to Mongolia and China, says Harger, Leland & Gray has had a long-standing commitment to cultural exchange, starting with the Journey East program.

“Journey Away has enabled students to explore different themes and parts of the world, and if it makes sense to revisit the partnerships with inner Mongolia and China in the future, we certainly can,” Harger says. “It’s an

absolute privilege to be able to take these kids and show them the world.”

To donate to the Journey Away program, visit app.99pledges.com/fund/journeyawa.

Home energy assistance funding released for the 2023–24 heating season

WATERBURY—The Department for Children and Families (DCF) announced the release of \$12 million in Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) funding for households that heat with fuel oil, propane, kerosene, coal, electricity, and natural gas. This funding helps keep thousands of Vermonters warm during the winter months.

The benefit was sent directly to certified fuel dealers on behalf of approximately 13,000 households, and the average benefit was \$933 per household. Individual notices of benefit amounts are being mailed to program participants. Earlier this year, 1,897 households that heat with wood and pellets were issued benefits.

This year’s fuel price is expected to average about \$4.25 per gallon, a 56-cent per gallon reduction over last year’s average price. The LIHEAP benefit is used to help supplement heating budgets, and the Department

encourages any Vermonter who believes they may be eligible for the benefit to apply.

Households may be eligible for Seasonal Fuel Assistance if their gross household incomes are equal to or less than 185% of the federal poverty level. For example, a family of four with a gross monthly income of up to \$4,625 may qualify for the benefit.

Households may be eligible for Crisis Fuel Assistance if their gross household incomes are equal to or less than 200% of the federal poverty level and they are experiencing a heating crisis (e.g., out of fuel and have no money to buy more). For example, a family of four with a gross monthly income of up to \$5,000 may qualify for the benefit.

For more information, visit the Fuel Assistance page at dcf.vermont.gov/benefits/fuel, or contact the Benefits Service Center at 1-800-479-6151 to apply.



Students work to prepare the locally sourced community dinner.



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COLUMN | Deeper Dive

'Cut and fit, cut and fit'

Brattleboro contractor finds his niche in preservation of windows in historic buildings, including Pierce's Hall in Putney

HISTORICAL RESTORATION is an art form that attempts to preserve and connect us with our roots. In Putney, one of our historical landmarks is Pierce's Hall, built circa 1831, which has served as a community center and dance hall for over a century.

A committed group of citizens has kept the hall operative for decades, restoring the roof and providing space for monthly contra dances, pot-lucks, celebrations, community presentations, and even food shelf pop-ups.

Once upon a time, the Ladies' Aid Society used the building for making care packages for soldiers during the world wars. Recently, building maintenance has been carried out on a shoestring budget with lots of elbow grease.

WHEN PIERCE'S HALL was the 2023 winner of a matching grant through the 1772 Foundation and the Preservation Trust of Vermont, Thomas McLoughlin's name was highly recommended for the restoration work involved.

IRENE CANARIS is a writer from East Putney and secretary of the board of the East Putney Community Club, Inc., the nonprofit associated with Pierce's Hall and Contradance. 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.

Originally a building contractor from New Jersey, McLoughlin came to southern Vermont in 2007 with his family to join his brother and sister-in-law, Charlie and Mary McLoughlin, high school teachers at Brattleboro Union High School.

As a young man, Tom McLoughlin had an early interest in historic restoration. Raised in the New Jersey suburbs, he recalls taking apart the windows in his childhood house, built circa 1920, to see how they worked.

McLoughlin later found a vocation for his interests in the restoration of historical home features for clients, saving them from major expenses in modern window replacements. He worked as a contractor in his home state for 25 years before moving to Vermont.

It took three years for McLoughlin to find steady window restoration work in Vermont. He went door to door distributing fliers and became involved with Efficiency Vermont. Word of mouth and collaboration with local builders gave him a boost.

His focus on energy efficiency made him realize how many people "never opened their windows because they were painted shut or they were really drafty," he said. From 2010 to 2015, he concentrated on energy efficiency through window restoration. Preserving existing windows is a strong sustainability action recommended by Efficiency Vermont. McLoughlin is also a member of the Seon Group, an organization focused on the science of sustainable building practices. A Vermont restoration



A close-up view of one of the decorative fans that grace the windows of Pierce's Hall in East Putney.

architect contacted McLoughlin for a bid on the restoration of the Fletcher Memorial Library in Ludlow through the Preservation Trust of Vermont.

He now divides his time between work for private homeowners and historic restoration. Word has gotten out — today, McLoughlin has contracts all over the state, and he is featured in the Preservation Trust's Vermont Restoration Directory.

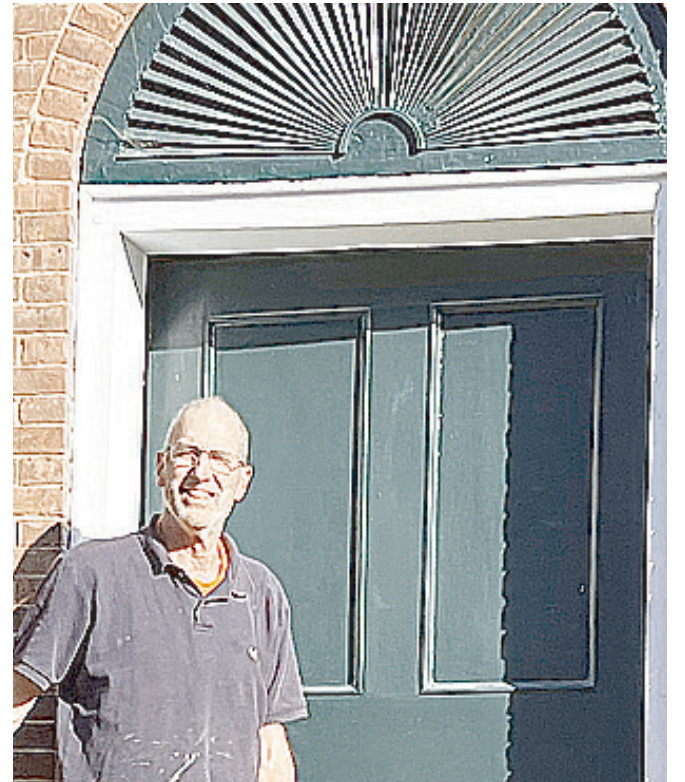
In his many years restoring windows in Vermont, McLoughlin has worked on numerous churches, libraries, and historic homes. Lately, he has worked on one-room schoolhouses throughout Vermont and is currently finishing up the historic windows of the Wood Block Opera House in Hoosick Falls, New York.

ONCE PIERCE'S HALL completed its community fundraising efforts, McLoughlin was retained to restore all 11 of the building's windows and the entry door. Each window was removed to his shop, and muntins were replaced. Period glass was restored when possible.

An interesting feature of the Pierce's Hall work is the restoration of the 1831 decorative fans. The work was completed through a matching grant from the Vermont 1772 Foundation and the Vermont Historic Preservation Fund.

McLoughlin's lifelong passion for taking things apart and reconstructing them was definitely put to a test. "It was fun for a while," he says.

There is no template for the mathematical construction of



Tom McLoughlin, a historic restoration specialist, worked on many of the windows and the entry door to Pierce's Hall in East Putney.

the fan, he said. Each individual blade has its own dimension, angle, and twist.

"Every fan blade is a different length and a different shape," he says. "Luckily, the arch was intact, and it had grooves. The grooves were there, so I just had to work backwards from the grooves to the center, or the sun. Cut and fit, cut and fit. Each of the old blades were nailed in with a little cut nail, which is a really fine nail made by blacksmiths at the time."

The fans themselves served no function beyond the ornamentation of their day, but the present-day bats love them as a place to hide away.

McLoughlin works with his new colleague, Adam Grimes, who has a master's degree in art history and applies his art and historic preservation knowledge daily, in a hands-on manner. Grimes and his partner have recently moved to Brattleboro, where McLoughlin and his family also reside.

Can media help solve society's problems?

Online discussion looks at 'solutions journalism' as a benefit to a healthy democracy

BRATTLEBORO—The public is invited to attend a Media Mentoring panel discussion on Thursday, Nov. 30, at 7 p.m. on Zoom about a different approach to media that seeks to uncover and report on how people are trying to solve problems — not just the bad news, but what's working and why — offering communities with information they need to participate in a healthy democracy.

Leading this global shift in journalism is MMP guest David Bornstein, CEO and co-founder of the Solutions Journalism Network, which is working

to establish a leading shift in journalism as an integral part of mainstream news — rigorous and compelling reporting on responses to social problems.

Bornstein has been a journalist for 30 years. From 2010-21, he co-authored the "Fixes" column in *The New York Times*, which focused on social innovation. He is the author of *How to Change the World: Social Entrepreneurs and the Power of New Ideas*, which has been published in 25 languages; *The Price of a Dream: The Story of the Grameen Bank*, and *Social Entrepreneurship: What Everyone*

Needs to Know.

Joining the discussion from *The Commons* is Editor Jeff Potter and News Editor Randy Holhut. Joyce Marcel, writer of award-winning cover stories for Vermont Business Magazine and a government reporter for *The Commons*, will moderate.

News reporters and editors, non-profits, Selectboards, freelance journalists, changemakers, and anyone who wants to be part of the solution are invited to attend.

To get the Zoom link to this presentation, visit bit.ly/742-solutions-journalism.

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COLUMN | *Creative Conversations*



Kris Yunker holds a monthly funk residency at The Stone Church in Brattleboro with a rotating crew of topnotch musicians.

Funk night residency brings mix of music to area

Kris Yunker curates lineups of 'who's who of top regional players' at Stone Church

When Guilford-based keyboardist Kris Yunker, 39, moved to the area three years ago, he said to himself "Brattleboro needs a funk night." He got in touch with Robin Johnson, and the owner of the Stone Church loved the idea.

The Stone Church's final funk night of 2023 will take place Wednesday, Dec. 6. The series will start up again on Wednesday, Jan. 3, 2024.

Previous special guests of Funk Night have included Russ Lawton, Eric Kalb, Fuzz Sangiovanni, Tim Palmieri, Elise Testone, Molly Es, Johnny Trauma, Billy Ruegger, Jon Fisher, Pierre Aleksis, Dan Thomas, and Colin Jalbert.

A much-sought-after professional musician, Yunker has played (and continues to play)



VICTORIA CHERTOK covers arts and entertainment in Vermont for The Commons. She is a classically trained harpist and received a B.A. in music at Bucknell University.

in various projects and bands, including Alan Evans Trio, On The Spot Trio (with his musical brother guitarist Danny Mayer), Jen Durkin and the Business, Wubakia, Soulive, Drew Angus, Love Raptor, and The 7 Day Weekend, just to name a few.

In 2017, he played and toured with the band Goose, just before recording his first solo album, "Bicoastal Waves."

He has just accepted the keyboardist position with Bearly Dead, a Boston-based Grateful Dead tribute band. He also started a Hammond organ funk trio, Yunker Funker.

He has recently released a

single, "To Be Fair," with Karl Denson, Will Bernard, Mike Dillon, Alan Evans, and the BT/ALC horns (Brian "B.T." Thomas and Alex Lee-Clark) on the Vintage League Music label. He also teaches keyboard students at his home studio, records tracks for other musicians, and works on his girlfriend Kelly Burr's web series *If We Really Were Witches*.

Yunker has lived all over the country, including in his home state of Texas, in Hawaii, and in Santa Cruz, California, where he attended college. He settled in southern Vermont because "the town of Brattleboro spoke to me," he says.

"I wanted to be close enough to the city but also in nature, because I feel more inspired whenever I'm in a more natural environment," Yunker adds. "I love the community of Brattleboro, and it surely has great, conscious-minded people."

"You can really feel how enmeshed Kris is with the scene here, how much care he takes to cultivate the relationships and build the musical synergy. And he's just an absolute bomb player, so fun to watch. Funk nights are pretty magical," says Erin Scaggs, director of programming and community outreach at The Stone Church.

Yunker invites a rotating cast of special guests who share similar views about him and his funk night residency.

"It's not often I get to play such a fun, fulfilling gig with

■ SEE YUNKER, B4

Holiday arts roundup 2023

A winter season of creative arts activity

By Annie Landenberger
The Commons

(ascvt.org).

This season seems to be the perfect time to support area artists and presenters, performers, and craftspeople — an apt opportunity to show gratitude for the riches that the arts bring to our lives in southern Vermont.

This year's abundance runs the gamut, promising chances to buy great one-of-a-kind gifts and to enjoy top-notch entertainments.

Here's to warming up to the cold, finding light in the darkness, and stepping out to embrace the arts. Enjoy!

Fairs, Markets, Workshops

Festival of Trees:

Governor Hunt House Community Center, Vernon, Dec. 1–3, will feature dozens of beautifully decorated holiday trees, with valuable merchandise and gift certificates under each tree. Raffle tickets will be sold to attendees, and each tree — with the accompanying gifts — will be taken home by a winner. Baked goods, kids' activities, Christmas tree lighting, and Santa's arrival, Friday, 4:30 p.m.; carols by the tree, 4:30–4:45 p.m.; pictures with Santa, 5–6 p.m.; Saturday: Fireplace photos with Santa and Mrs. Claus, 1–4 p.m. All proceeds support the Community Center (governorhunt.org). Information: govhntccc@gmail.com.

All Souls Unitarian Universalist Holiday Bazaar:

Dec. 2, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. In addition to crafts and edibles, find the All Souls' first-ever Art Gift Sale, featuring affordable, original selections. West Village Meeting House, 29 South St., West Brattleboro

• **Brattleboro Flea Holiday Pop-up Market:** Dec. 1, 1 to 7 p.m., and Dec. 2, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., Brooks House Atrium, 132 Main St., Brattleboro (brattleboroflea.com).

Brattleboro's Gallery Walk:

Dec. 1, 5 to 9 p.m., hosts a pull-out-all-the-stops event featuring tree lighting, a cappella carolers, and a panoply of art and craft all along the route. Check out Brattleboro Museum & Art Center and galleries at 118 Elliot, Harmony Collective, Vermont Center for Photography, Mitchell-Giddings, Gallery in the Woods, Vermont Artisans Designs, Gallery 34. And don't miss the art hanging at Martocci's or the unique wares at ZPots, Beadniks, and Cara Wolff Jewelry. Hatchspace celebrates winter sharing craft and products made by budding woodworkers and seasoned, perennial craftspeople, and Centre Congregational Church pitches in selling handmade quilts (brattleboro.com).

Brattleboro-West Arts' exhibit hangs in the Brooks House Atrium (see above) through January 2024

with works by BWA members Jen Wiechers, Kay Curtis, Maisie Crowther, Cyndi Ferrante, Jason Breen, Naomi Lindenfeld, and Steve Lloyd. Individual artists can be contacted directly through brattleboro-west-arts.com to purchase exhibited artwork or to inquire about other work.

Brattleboro Winter Farmers' Market,

Saturdays, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Live local music and hand-crafted gifts; produce and products from local farms. At the Winston Prouty Center, 209 Austine Drive, Brattleboro (brattleborowinterfarmersmarket.org).

■ SEE HOLIDAY ARTS, B2



Vocal Ensemble Seraphic Fire performs in Grafton on Dec. 2

GRAFTON—Grammy-nominated vocal ensemble Seraphic Fire brings their a cappella voices to Vermont for a Christmas concert at the Grafton Brick Meeting House, 2 Main St., on Saturday, Dec. 2, 2023 at 7 p.m.

The South Florida-based choir will perform festive carols from varied traditions alongside newer takes on classics

from contemporary composers. Seraphic Fire's associate conductor, James K. Bass, will lead the ensemble of 13 singers.

Bass is also the Director of Choral Studies at UCLA Herb Alpert School of Music and won the 2020 Grammy for Best Choral Performance for his work as choirmaster on the Naxos recording of *The Passion of Yeshua*.

This is the only performance by Seraphic Fire Christmas outside of South Florida, making this a special opportunity for Northerners to hear this nationally recognized choral ensemble. Tickets are \$35 and may be purchased at SeraphicFire.org/christmas-on-tour or by phone at 305-285-9060.

Grammy-nominated vocal ensemble Seraphic Fire comes to the Grafton Brick Meeting House on Dec. 2.

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Holiday arts

Chester Fine Art and Craft Fair is Dec. 9, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. at the First Universalist Parish on North Street in Chester. Cotton Mill Hill Open Studios: Dec. 2, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Handmade chocolates, pottery and jewelry; art, circus and jazz shows. Cotton Mill Hill, Brattleboro (cottonmillholidaysale@gmail.com).

Wilmington Works! Bright Lights Makes Market: Dec. 9 and 10 in historic Memorial Hall, Wilmington (brightlightsmarket@gmail.com). Townshead Holiday Festival: Dec. 3, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Craft fair, Festival of Trees, tree lighting. At 1 p.m. (weather permitting), festively attired horses and riders begin a horse parade starting at Leland & Gray Union Middle High School. At 3 p.m., there's a community reading of a shortened version of A Christmas Carol at Townshead's Town Hall (townsheadpubliclibrary@gmail.com).

Wardsboro Holiday Craft Fair: Dec. 2, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., local vendors with handmade items. Wardsboro Town Hall, Main Street, Wardsboro (wardsborovermont.com). Meadows Bee Farm hosts its annual Field House Holiday Festival of crafts Dec. 2, 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., 1276 Windham Hill Rd., West Townsend (meadowbee.com).

Carols: Seraphic Fire, a South Florida-based, Grammy-nominated choir, performs festive carols from varied traditions alongside newer takes on classics from contemporary composers on Dec. 2, 7 p.m., Dartmouth College, plays pieces based on holiday carols. Epiphany Spire, 190 Main St., Brattleboro (epiphanyspire.org). Friends of Music at Guilford's annual Community Messiah sing: 1 at 1 p.m. Bring your own score or borrow one on site. All donations go to Groundworks Collaborative for feeding and housing those in need. Nonperishable food items and winter clothing in good condition will also be accepted. At Centre Congregational Church, 193 Main St., Brattleboro.

A cappella Christmas season: On Dec. 8 and 9, the Guilford Chamber Singers perform both traditional and contemporary carols, followed by a story from Don McLean and caroling at the Broad Brook Community Center, 3940 Guilford Center Rd. (broadbrook@gmail.com). Festive Christmas

celebratory show full of music, dance, community singing, and more. Latcha Theatre, 50 Main St., Brattleboro (latcha.com). Next Stage Arts' holiday show: Dec. 1, 7:30 p.m., features Kat Wright and Brett Hughes, two of Vermont's most beloved songbirds. 15 Kimball Hill, Putney (nextstagearts.org). St. Michael's Episcopal Church service of Lessons and Carols: Dec. 10, 4 p.m. With the selection of seasonal readings and the singing of Advent carols with the congregation, the St. Michael's choir will offer a diverse set of old and new Advent anthems by Victoria, Rutter, Skempton, Vaughan Williams, and Lauridsen. This yearly tradition of scripture and music is the first to be directed by St. Michael's new music director, Keane Southard. 16 Bradley Ave., Brattleboro (stmichaelsvt.org). Southeaster Choral choir: songs of Ben Patton and Anna Patton: This program on Dec. 9, 7 p.m. is chock-full of close harmonies, surprising topics, poignancy, and humor. (annamery@gmail.com), West Village Meetinghouse, 29 South St., West Brattleboro.

Sweet Christmas Country Christmas Singalong Spectacular: Dec. 20, 7 p.m., at the Stone Church, 210 Main St., Brattleboro (stonechurchvt.com). Vermont Jazz Center's Big Band Scholarship Fundraiser: under the direction of Rob Freeberg, at Dec. 1, 7:30 p.m. Story, this issue. 72 Cotton Mill Hill, Brattleboro (vjazz.org). Two world premieres from Vermont Symphony Orchestra's Brass Quintet and Counterpoint: The Christmas Truce for choral by Rick Rowden with original rock score by Rob Kozicki and book by Joe Tracz, a journey of self-discovery, friendship, and resilience, can be seen Dec. 1-3 and 7-9, 7 p.m., with additional matinees at 2 p.m., on both Saturdays. New England Youth Theatre, 100 Flat St., Brattleboro (NEYT.org). Good King Wenceslas: Vermont Suite: Company program runs Dec. 8-9, 7:30 p.m., at Hooker Dunham Theater, Brattleboro, Dec. 9, 2 p.m., at Broad Brook Community Center, Guilford, Dec. 10, 2 p.m., Main

Prouty Center, Thomas Hall, 209 Austine Drive, Brattleboro. (winhamphilharmonic.org). Ballet Folies, from Bellows Falls Rotary and Wild Goose Players, promises to entertain with lighthearted songs, Rotary's holiday skit, and a live and silent auction. Dec. 7, 7:30 p.m., Bellows Falls Opera House, 7 The Square, Bellows Falls (bellowsfallsoperahouse.com). The Percy Jackson Musical: The Lightning Thief, by Rick Rowden with original rock score by Rob Kozicki and book by Joe Tracz, a journey of self-discovery, friendship, and resilience, can be seen Dec. 1-3 and 7-9, 7 p.m., with additional matinees at 2 p.m., on both Saturdays. New England Youth Theatre, 100 Flat St., Brattleboro (NEYT.org). Good King Wenceslas: Vermont Suite: Company program runs Dec. 8-9, 7:30 p.m., at Hooker Dunham Theater, Brattleboro, Dec. 9, 2 p.m., at Broad Brook Community Center, Guilford, Dec. 10, 2 p.m., Main

Street Arts, Saxtons River; and 7 p.m., Wild Goose Players, venue to be announced, and on Dec. 14, 7 p.m., at Next Stage Arts, Putney. Wardsboro Curtain Call's Christmas classic, Yes Virginia, There Is a Santa Claus, as a dramatized radio broadcast. Dec. 9 at 7 p.m., and Dec. 10 at 2 p.m., Wardsboro Town Hall (facebook.com/WardsboroCurtainCall). Winter Cabaret: Weston Playhouse performs Dec. 1 and 2 at 7:30 p.m. at Walker Farm in Weston (westontheater.org). Dance/Circus/Puppetry: The Nutcracker: Brattleboro School of Dance stages annual performance at Brattleboro Union High School Auditorium Dec. 15-17. Tickets are available primarily in person at the 181 Main St. studio (brattleboroschoolofdance.com). Winter Circus: Of Myth & Mushrooms: New England Center for Circus Arts' holiday show runs Dec. 15-17 with performers from recreational

classes, youth performance troupes, and the professional training program with special guest artists. At the Trapparium, 10 Town Center Drive, Brattleboro (centerforcircusarts.org). Triepcke: Quebecois theater company Les Sages Fous performs a mysterious puppetry show between a man and his bike on Dec. 1 and 2, 7:30 p.m., at Putney Central School's gymnasium. Presented by Sandglass Theater (sandglasstheater.org). The Gaza Monologues: Brattleboro area community members present a staged reading on the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. The Gaza Monologues (gazamonologues.com) are testimonies written by ASHTAR youth in 2010, after the first war on the Gaza Strip. Admission is by donation to the ASHTAR Theatre's Psycho-social Relief Intervention Campaign. Wednesday, Nov. 29, 7-9 p.m., Hooker-Dunham Theater, 139 Main St., Brattleboro. Information: gazamonologuesbrattleboro@gmail.com.

Cetera Christmas: A 1984 horror-comedy Christmas fable wreath has on the tropes of classic holiday films. Dec. 22, 8 p.m., Epiphany Spire, 190 Main St., Brattleboro (epiphanyspire.org). Writing to the Light Writing Circle: Led by Deborah Lee Luskin; Dec. 10, 1 to 3:30 p.m., Moore Free Library, 23 West St., Newfane (moorefreebrattleboro.org). Brattleboro's Holiday Mini Book Fair: Local Write Action author Cheryl Wilong, Steve Minkin, Arlene Dittler, Barbara Morrison, and others will sign and sell their books, and Point View Brattleboro's Legacy of Words, will be for sale at the Write Action table. Dec. 9, noon to 3 p.m., Books House Atrium, 12 Main St., Brattleboro (info@writeaction.org).

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Yunker

not only musicians that I've looked up to for so long, but also have become some of my best friends," says Mike Oehmen, a saxophonist based in Hartford, Connecticut who plays with Mihali and West End Blend, and Yunker, who will return to play on Dec. 6.

The Commons caught up with Kris Yunker recently by phone to talk about his Funk Night Residency, his passion for vintage instruments and gear, and what he likes about playing this style of music. Here's an excerpt of the conversation.

VICTORIA CHERTOK: What have you been up to lately?

KRIS YUNKER: I've been recording tons of albums with the Alan Evans trio and The 7 Day Weekend, with special guests Elise Testone and Sonya Rae Taylor. There are singles currently out and available on all streaming services with full albums coming out soon.

V.C.: Cool! Let's talk about your Funk Night residency at the Stone Church. Your next one is on Dec. 6. Who will be joining you on stage?

K.Y.: I'll have Adrian Tramontano, drummer for Kung Fu and Twiddle; he also had a band called Psychedelic Breakfast. Justin Henricks, guitarist, will play with Beau Sausser; he has a band, Wurliday. Mike Oehmen, tenor sax, plays with Mihali and West End Blend, and Gershon Rosen, on trumpet, plays with Bella's Bartok.

V.C.: What is the origin of Brattleboro's Funk Night?

K.Y.: It started in February 2023, so we're closing in on about one year now. I've lived in the area for three years, and anywhere I move, I like to get residencies going. Funk night just works.

I was thinking of doing it at the former Metropolis but I was like, let me hit up Robin [Johnson] and see what he thinks. He loved the idea.

A few months later we got it rolling. I've always liked the idea of having a regular thing where I can pull in all the musicians that I don't get to play with regularly; a nice rotating cast.

V.C.: How do you describe Funk music?

K.Y.: Funk is music that gets in your soul that makes you

move and dance. It originated from James Brown and spread out in all facets of music after Brown started doing his thing.

I try to cover all of that — like jazz, disco, funk, jam bands, etc. I'm an organ player myself, and I gravitate towards a lot of funky organ-player music. It's interrelated. It really gets you moving on the dance floor.

V.C.: What do you like about performing at the Stone Church?

K.Y.: I love the vibe at the Church and everyone who runs the place. They are all really good people, and they create a great atmosphere. It also sounds great, and they have really good lights.

I'm all about the vibe with places that I play in. If the vibe is high and it feels good, that is one of the most important parts of a show.

V.C.: When did you first start playing keys, and who were your early music influences?

K.Y.: At age 2, I started playing my mom's piano. She started teaching me piano, and I started taking up organ in high school — I got into the music of American keyboard player and composer John Medeski.

My dad introduced me to Jimmy Smith. I grew up in Texas and was listening to The Doors, Herbie Hancock, Stevie Wonder and big-band music. Oscar Peterson is one of my biggest piano influences.

V.C.: When did you know you wanted to do this professionally?

K.Y.: I knew in my soul my whole life — especially when I did piano performances as a kid and everyone would tell me it was really great. I just knew in every fiber of my being that this is what I came here to do on this planet.

It's always been a struggle to figure out how to make that work. The artist life is a lot different from the normal career path for people. I had to make ends meet with weird jobs like construction, farmers' markets, and iPhone sales.

At some point, I said to myself, "I want to make my entire income from music." That was, like, five years ago. I've gotten to that point now, and it is solidly that career.

V.C.: You play a variety of

FROM SECTION FRONT

organs and pianos, from vintage Fender Rhodes, Ludwigs, and your favorite Hammond A-100, to modern synthesizers with MIDI technology. Which of those do you bring to Funk Night?

K.Y.: I like to bring different vintage keyboards; they have a lot more depth to them, because they have strings and metal parts. They have a life of their own.

The clavinet is like the funky stringed instrument on Stevie Wonder's "Superstition." I sometimes bring out the Fender Rhodes. I have two digital keyboards that I hook up to my computer for bass sounds.

V.C.: You call the Hammond organ "one of the toughest-built things ever in America," likening it to a 1950s refrigerator, and you've said also that "it is the focal point of [your] gig array."

K.Y.: Laurens Hammond was a clockmaker; he invented the first synchronic clock and came up with the idea. They were building things that last for a long time. The Hammond organ was the first electric organ made to just be a stand-in for pipe organs for churches that couldn't afford the large pipe organs.

And then this guy built a Leslie speaker for it to toss the sound around. Even though Hammond didn't want his organ sold that way, the instrument just became an iconic piece of American music, rock 'n' roll, and all music. It's become an iconic piece.

My Hammond A-100 organ still functions even though I've put barely any work into it. They were built in Chicago in the 1950s, and it was the price of a car back then.

V.C.: Did you have any formal piano training?

K.Y.: I had a piano teacher and did all the band classes in school. Jim Carmichael was the local church organist in town who taught me classical piano and theory. I went to Cabrillo College in Santa Cruz, California and studied with Ray Brown, who was Stan Kitman's arranger. He was well known for his jazz arrangements. I studied jazz with him for four years.

V.C.: You play with lots of other bands and have guested with other bands. Tell me about Goose and Beary Dead.

Schweigert work at Crowell Gallery

NEWFANE—For the month of December, the Crowell Art Gallery, 23 West St., presents "There and Back Again," an exhibit by Carol Schweigert. A reception with the artist will take place on Saturday, Dec. 9, from 1 to 3 p.m.

Schweigert returned to oil painting during a brief visit to Vermont in the summer of 2007. Ready to take a break from her illustration and design work, she signed up for a Plein Air workshop in Bennington.

"Plein Air, with its swift application, seemed to fit easily into my life," she said in a news release. "I found it was the process of painting, as much as the final image that I enjoyed. The abstract expressionism of my past art education became so 'last century' to me."

Schweigert moved to southern Vermont nearly four years ago, traveling about the area with her French easel enjoying the fresh air. "Plein air painting hints of an extreme sport with slippery slopes, lightning storms, and friendly cows," she said. "You win a few and lose a few."

She said she is intrigued by the contradiction of carrying a 19th-century kit into the 21st



"From the Marina" by Carol Schweigert.

century to find out what makes a piece live in the moment.

Schweigert paints in both oil and gouache, indoors and out. While she relishes the spontaneity of Plein Air, during a very rainy season, she paints from her own photographs. The exhibit at the Crowell Art Gallery provides a glimpse of her 16 years of work. She is a member of the National Association

of Women Artists, Brattleboro Urban Sketchers, Concord Art, and the Artists Group of Charlestown.

The gallery, located in the Moore Free Library, is open Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from 1 to 5 p.m., Thursdays from 1 to 6 p.m., and Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

like that they are high energy; they do funky versions of Dead songs.

I get to do what I want to do as a keyboardist. For me, it's fun to explore and use the songs as a platform to launch into something else. I am a jazz head. I love and appreciate the Grateful Dead but don't consider myself a Deadhead.

It's cool. It's a perfect fit.

Funk Night at the Stone Church, 210 Main Street, Brattleboro, takes place on the first Wednesday of each month.

The next one is on Wednesday, Dec. 6. Doors open at 7 p.m.; show is at 8 p.m. For more information and to buy tickets, visit stonechurchvt.org. For more information about Yunker, visit krisyunker.com.

Latchis Gallery features artist Julia Volodina

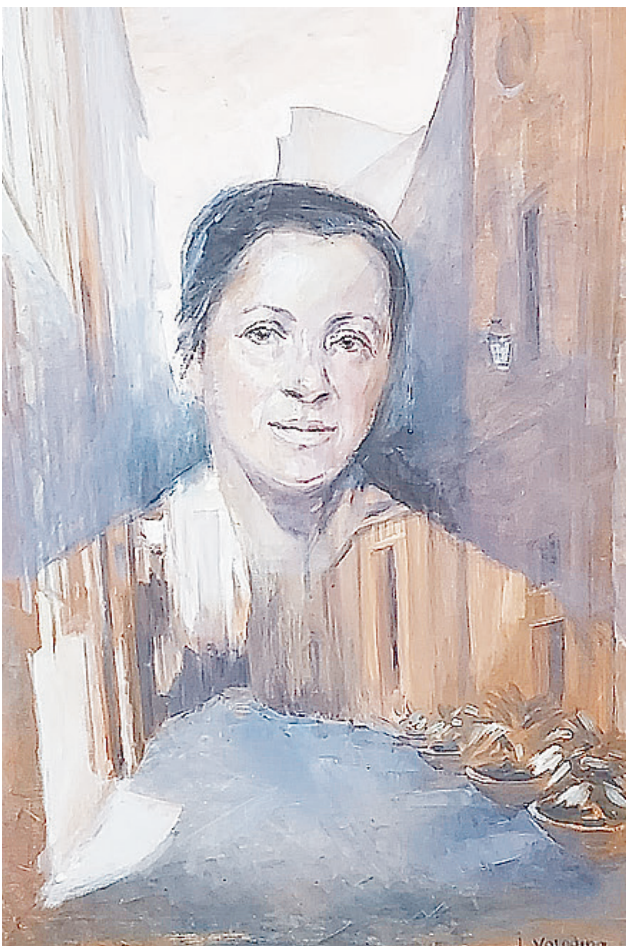
BRATTLEBORO—On Dec. 1, during Gallery Walk, artist Julia Volodina will bring her decades of experience as a portrait artist to a demonstration and discussion of portrait painting at the Latchis Gallery, part of the historic Art Deco hotel-theatre-pub complex at 50 Main St.

She'll create a watercolor portrait of one of the attendees, chosen at random, and speak about her approach to creating portraits and some of her experiences from all over the world painting people's faces.

The artist will be accepting commissions during her residency as Featured Artist at the Latchis Gallery.

Volodina, a resident of Brattleboro and Cañete La Real, Spain, completed rigorous art training in Russia, starting at age 12 through art college at the prestigious Saratov School of Art. Her work has been shown in Spain, Russia, Japan, Canada, and Brattleboro, and she has worked as a professional portrait artist for 30 years. She also hosts retreats/painting trips for artists to Spain.

Visit facebook.com/juliartvt for updates on her residency at the Latchis, and view her portfolio and full website at juliavermont.com.



"Baba" by Julia Volodina.

Art by Carrie Gelfan on display at Oxbow Gallery

EASTHAMPTON, Mass.—"Processions," a series of collages by Westminister artist Carrie Gelfan, will be on exhibit at the Oxbow Gallery, 40 Cottage St., Easthampton, Massachusetts, during the month of December. There will be an opening reception for the artist on Friday, Dec. 1 from 5 to 7 p.m. The public is invited.

The collages represent various groups of people on the move. They were completed within

the last two years, using mostly materials the artist already had on hand at home, such as packing cardboard, newspaper, *New Yorker* magazines, sheet music, maps, construction paper, wall paper, and life drawings.

Gelfan studied art at Antioch College in Yellow Springs, Ohio; Cabrillo College in Soquel, California; and at the Art Students League in New York City, where she studied with portrait artist William Draper and with Will

Barnett.

Her work has been shown in numerous New England venues, both solo and group shows, and she is currently a member of the Oxbow Gallery.

Regular gallery hours are Thursday to Sunday, noon to 5 p.m. and Fridays, noon to 7 p.m. For information, call the Oxbow Gallery at 413-203-1196 or visit their Facebook page. For more information about the artist, visit carriegelfan.com.

NEYT presents 'The Lightning Thief: The Percy Jackson Musical'

BRATTLEBORO—*The Lightning Thief: The Percy Jackson Musical* is set to take the stage at New England Youth Theatre (NEYT) for eight performances, running from a grand opening scheduled for 7 p.m. Friday, Dec. 1, through Saturday, Dec. 9.

Adapted from *The New York Times* bestselling novel, this story follows Percy Jackson, a 12-year-old boy moving through the ever-so-relatable trials of adolescence. "This fantastical adventure rooted in Greek mythology promises to captivate audiences with its compelling characters and quest-centered narrative," say organizers. This local rendition is directed by Gabriel Pasculli and choreographed by NEYT Artistic Director Malia'Kekia Nicolini.

Two additional performances for sixth-grade students reading the Percy Jackson books in school are set for Thursday and Friday, Dec. 7 and 8. These community

shows are district-wide events that will "bring literature to life" for students in the Windham Southeast Supervisory Union while also giving NEYT actors community service hours.

As described by NEYT: "In [Percy's] search for belonging, the extraordinary occurs as he discovers that he is a demigod. Aided by his closest friends, Percy embarks on an epic journey as he travels into the Underworld, where he attempts to save his mother and prevent war from breaking out. This coming-of-age tale is both endearing and edgy, with a musical score accompanied by a live rock band. Adventurous and imaginative in spirit, this tale is a must-see for all."

"Each character has an underlying challenge similar to what people go through in their everyday lives" says ninth-grader Alex Aither, a lead actor in the musical. "They have the same issues

that people have in our world, and it's cool to see how characters so young go about solving their issues in a fantasy realm."

Organizers say while the play certainly touches on challenges relevant in adolescence, its relevance expands beyond this specific time of life.

Director Gabriel Pasculli reinforces this sentiment. "What I love about this show is that everyone has superpowers, whether they are children of gods or not. Everyone is coming with something special and trying to find their place in the world."

Show times are Fridays, Dec. 1 and 8, and Thursday, Dec. 7, 7 p.m.; Saturdays, Dec. 2 and 9, 2 p.m. and 7 p.m.; and Sunday Dec. 3, 2 p.m. Tickets are on sale at \$11 for students, \$13 for seniors, and \$15 for adults, and may be purchased by calling 802-246-6398 or by visiting NEYT.org.

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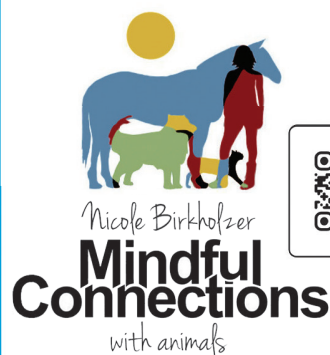
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Scholarship Gala will raise thousands of dollars for musicians for whom Vermont Jazz Center's offerings are beyond financial reach

THE VERMONT JAZZ CENTER'S Big Band will present its Annual Scholarship Gala — the primary fundraiser for the VJC Scholarship Fund — on Friday, Dec. 1, at 7:30 p.m.

This year, the band will feature guest vocalist Alexis Cole, a singer who has performed at celebrated venues including The Carlyle, Carnegie Hall, Birdland Jazz Club, Jazz at Lincoln Center, and the Blue Note. She has also sung as a soloist with the Boston Pops Orchestra and the Detroit Symphony Orchestra.

For six years, Cole served in the U.S. Army as the lead singer for the West Point Band's Jazz Knights. For her concert at the VJC, Cole will be singing the arrangements that were prepared for her by Scott Arcangel, the Knight's pianist and arranger.

Cole's most recent release (2021) is a collection of that repertoire, *Sky Blossom: Songs From My Tour of Duty*. She will sing some classics, include swing tunes like "Our Love is Here to Stay," "You Make Me Feel So Young," "Beyond the Sea," and "Social Call."

She will also sing bossa novas such as "Corcovado," "Triste," and "Estate."

She has recorded a dozen albums as a leader with such luminaries as pianist Harry Pickens and guitarist Bucky Pizzarelli. She has also appeared as a guest with pianist Harold Mabern on his album *Afro Blue*.

Cole is a world traveler who posts details of her journey on her blog. Originally from



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

Queens, New York, she received her undergraduate degree from William Paterson University and a master's degree in jazz performance from Queens College.

Directly after college, she served as an AmeriCorps volunteer and then went to study music in Mumbai, India with the Jazz India Vocal Institute. From 2000 to 2005, she traveled extensively in Europe, busking and hitchhiking.

In 2020, Cole founded **JazzVoice.com**, an online educational community featuring singing classes with some of the top names in vocal jazz. In 2021, she cofounded the annual Virginia Beach Vocal Jazz Summit.

Formerly a professor of jazz voice at SUNY-Purchase and William Paterson University, Cole recently resigned from academia to work on a new project, **musicauditions.com**, to help emerging musicians find performing opportunities around the world.

THE VJC BIG BAND, under the leadership of Musical Director Rob Freeberg, is made up of area professional musicians who come together to enjoy the rewards of playing invigorating, challenging, and historically significant repertoire while raising money for the VJC's Scholarship Fund.

The fund grants an annual average of \$27,000 worth of scholarships to students, offsetting fees for ensembles, private lessons, and VJC's

world-renowned summer jazz workshop. By attending this event you will be contributing to the scholarship fund; all proceeds will be earmarked towards benefiting students who otherwise would not be able to pursue their musical dreams.

This concert will be a hybrid event, with both live stream and in-person components. You can come to the Jazz Center to dance to the 16-piece band or create an intimate dance party in your home. Livestream viewers are encouraged to make an online donation to the Scholarship Fund in lieu of purchasing a ticket.

Freeberg, a seasoned trumpeter and big band conductor, leads the VJC's large ensemble with finesse and skill, drawing on his respect for the jazz legacy, an unerring ear, and decades of experience leading his own big band in the New York City region.

He moved to Dummerston in 2012, after retiring as director

of bands at New Rochelle (N.Y.) High School, where he taught for 30 years. He also serves as the musical director of the VJC Sextet and performs with the Windham Philharmonic.

This year the VJC Big Band celebrates its 19th season, thanks in great part to the persistence and organizational skills of its band manager, baritone saxophonist Sperm Fox. Organizing 16 musicians is no small task!

The VJC Big Band was originally a collaborative project initiated by Fox and Howard Brofsky (a.k.a., Dr. Bebop), the VJC's mentor and former board president, who died in 2013.

Previous headliners of this benefit concert have included Evan Arntzen, Amanda Carr, Houston Person, Dave Stryker, Samirah Evans, Rich Greenblatt, Mark Anagnostopoulos, Rebecca Holtz, Kevin Mahogany, Miles Griffith, Peter Eldridge, Wanda Houston and timbalero Eguie Castrillo.

In addition to Freeberg and Fox, the members of the 2023 VJC Big Band include trumpeters Don Anderson, Rick Anderson, Haneef Nelson, and Joe Conti; woodwind

players Michael Zsoldos, Matt Steckler, Carl Clements, and Donna Morse; trombonists Tim Atherton, Priyanka Magavi, Dave Sporny, and Amaranth Cole; and rhythm section members Eugene Uman (piano), Wes Brown (bass), and Steve Rice (drums).

Admission to this hybrid in-person/livestream event is offered for a sliding fee, starting at \$30. All seats are general admission and available at **vtjazz.org** and by emailing **Alina Kulpaviciute at alina@vtjazz.org**, who can also assist with accessibility needs. The streaming of this concert can be accessed at **vtjazz.org** and at **facebook.com/VermontJazzCenter/live**.

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DECEMBER 1-7

NAPOLEON R
FRIDAY 3:45 & 6:40
SAT. & SUN. 2 & 6:40
MON.-THUR 3:45 & 6:40

THE HOLDOVERS R
FRIDAY 4 / 6:45 / 9:10
SATURDAY 2 / 6:45 / 9:10
SUNDAY 2 & 6:45
M / W / TH. 4 & 6:45

THE HUNGER GAMES: BALLAD OF SONGBIRDS & SNAKES PG-13
FRIDAY 4 & 7
SAT. & SUN. 2:15 & 7
MON.-THUR. 4 & 7

WISH PG
FRIDAY 4:15 / 6:35 / 8:30
SATURDAY 2 / 6:35 / 8:30
SUNDAY 2 & 6:35
MON.-THUR. 4:15 & 6:35



Alexis Cole

Next Stage hosts Argentinian duo César Lerner and Marcello Moguilevsky

PUTNEY—Next Stage Arts presents Argentinian duo César Lerner and Marcello Moguilevsky playing their musical fusion of klezmer, tango, jazz, and South American folk music at Next Stage, 15 Kimball Hill, on Saturday, Dec. 2, at 7:30 p.m.

The duo has played together for more than 40 years. "Lerner and Moguilevsky are masters of their craft, threading various cultural ideas together into something new and exciting," Keith Marks, executive director of Next Stage Arts, said in a news release. "The thought that we're bringing artists from around the world to our region feels positive for our community."

Lerner is an Argentinian composer, pianist, accordion player and percussionist. Internationally renowned, he has composed the music for some of the most successful films in Argentina. For more

than 20 years, he has been directing "Drum Circle," a platform for inclusion through music in areas of social services, art and education.

Moguilevsky is a multi-instrumentalist musician (clarinet, bass clarinet, soprano sax, recorder, harmonica and piano); composer, singer, and teacher. Since 2011, he has been Director of the Music Department of the National Fund and Professor of Musical Language in Fine Arts of the Universidad Nacional de La Plata (UNLP), in Buenos Aires.

This performance is supported in part by the Harold Grinspoon Foundation and by AARP Vermont. Tickets are \$20 in advance, \$25 at the door, and \$10 for access to the livestream at **nextstagearts.org**. Next Stage will provide a beer, wine, and cocktail cash bar. For information, call 802-387-0102.

DECEMBER 15 - 17
WINTER CIRCUS
OF MYTH & MUSHROOM
NECCA's annual holiday circus show that's perfect for all ages!

INFO & TICKETS (802) 254-9780
Brattleboro, VT
CircusSchool.org

GOVERNOR HUNT HOUSE Festival of Trees

Purchase raffle tickets and win one of our many beautiful holiday trees — along with all the merchandise and gift certificates underneath it!

Friday, Dec. 1, 4 - 8pm
Saturday, Dec. 2, 11 - 8pm
Sunday, Dec. 3, 11 - 3pm

At the Governor Hunt House Community Center, 322 Governor Hunt Road, Vernon VT

Admission \$5 or \$15 per family

More info: **governorhunt.org**

MEDIA MENTORING PROJECT

Not Just the Bad News... Can Media Help Solve Society's Problems?

The public is invited to attend a panel discussion about a different approach to media that seeks to uncover and report on how people are trying to solve problems — not just the bad news — but what's working and why — offering communities with the information they need to participate in a healthy democracy.

Panelists (from left to right):
David Bornstein - CEO and co-founder of the Solutions Journalism Network.
Jeff Potter - Executive editor of *The Commons*.
Randy Holhut - Editor of *The Commons*.

Who should attend?
News editors, non-profits, selectboards, reporters, freelancers, change-makers, and anyone who wants to be part of the solution.

Moderated by Joyce Marcel
Writer of award-winning cover stories for *Vermont Business Magazine* and government reporter for *The Commons*.

Join us via Zoom Thursday, November 30 at 7pm!

To register for the Zoom link, scan the QR code or email **vermontartsliving@gmail.com**

BRATTLEBORO MUSIC CENTER chamber music series

Musicians from Marlboro
Saturday, Dec 2 7:00 pm
BMC Auditorium 72 Blanche Moysse Way, Brattleboro, VT
Tickets: \$30 A limited number of reduced price tickets are available, please call the BMC for information.

Williams Blake Songs
Grime Oboe Quartet
Brahms Piano Quartet in A Major, Op. 26

802.257.4523 **bmcvt.org**

Sandglass Theater presents 'Tricyckle'

PUTNEY—Sandglass Theater will present the Québécois theater company Les Sages Fous (Wisdom Fools) for two performances of *Tricyckle*. The performances are on Friday and Saturday, Dec. 1 and 2, at 7:30 p.m. in the Putney Central School gymnasium.

A man in a Québec town, born in a cardboard box, roams the city collecting other people's junk. Why? And how does this junk transform his life and, possibly, ours?

Tricyckle is a dream-like adventure of mystery and transformation. A renegade "carny" from the Fairground rides a tricycle and pulls a trailer full of objects that seem most insignificant; boxes and scraps of things rusted and broken. However, hidden within is a deep puzzle of buried memories and fragmented

dreams.

His tricycle becomes his accomplice, transforming itself at moments into a Wheel of Fortune, a Ferris wheel, a punch clock, a beautiful woman, and a beast. His trailer and the boxes within it reveal secrets, changing into cityscapes, back alleys, cargo ships, and fairgrounds. Through a strange and curious ritual of introspection, the tricycle guides the man to relive the cycles and images of his life in a search for freedom.

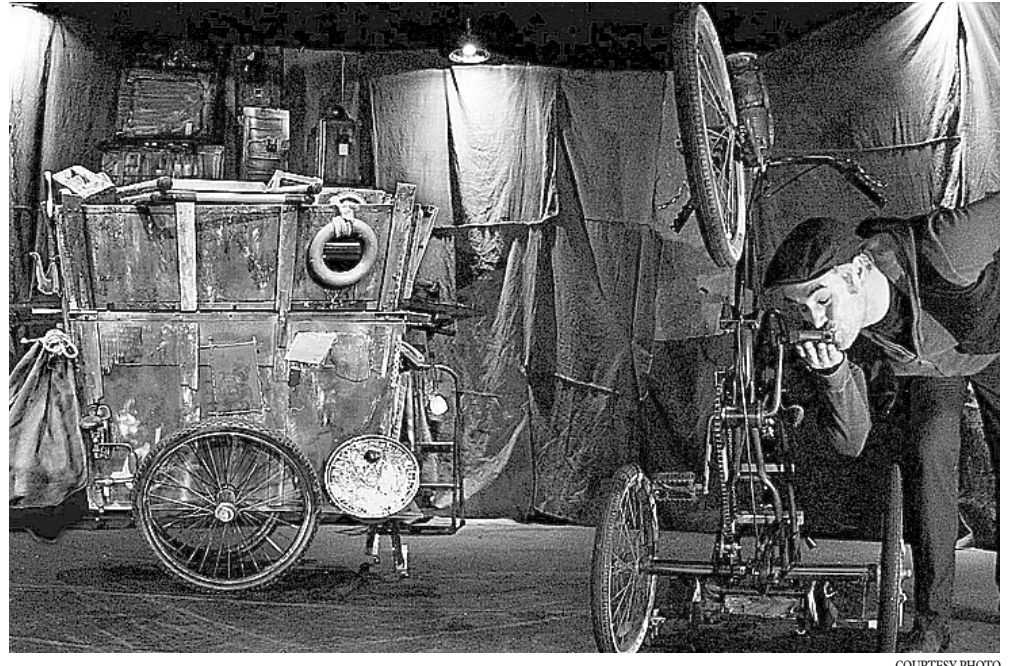
Les Sages Fous are inspired by men who roam the city of Trois-Rivières on their old tricycles, looking for all kinds of materials they carry on their makeshift trailers. The company is also inspired by people who make folk art — those who are not professional artists with all the baggage

and allegiance to the institutions involved.

With *Tricyckle*, Les Sages Fous say they hope to break down barriers between high culture and popular art. Les Sages Fous will be "transforming the Putney Central School gymnasium into a magical space for unusual theater with an intriguing musical score composed solely of invented instruments created with found objects," say organizers.

Les Sages Fous has been creating original puppetry performances for twenty years in Québec as well as abroad, and during that time, Les Sages Fous and Sandglass Theater have sustained a rich history of collaboration and exchange.

Tickets for *Tricyckle* are available at sandglasstheater.org and at the door; \$20 general admission,



COURTESY PHOTO

Les Sages Fous' "Tricyckle," will be presented at Sandglass Theater on Dec. 1 and 2.

\$18 for students and seniors, and \$16 for EBT & Medicaid cardholders.

Tricyckle is co-presented by the Putney Central School. It is funded in part by touring support from the Québec government, a grant from The Vermont Arts Council with support from the National Endowment for the Arts, and the New England States Touring program of the New England Foundation for the Arts, made possible with funding from the National Endowment for the Arts Regional Touring Program and the six New England state arts agencies.

arts & community CALENDAR

THURSDAY	FRIDAY	FRIDAY CONT.	SATURDAY	SATURDAY CONT.	SUNDAY	SUNDAY CONT.
30	1	<p>Hunt Rd.) Proceeds help pay Center's annual operating expenses. Questions: govhuntec@gmail.com. governorhunt.org.</p> <p>Visual arts and shows</p> <p>BRATTLEBORO New Works by Lahri Bond / Meet the Artist: Lahri Bond illustrates/designs magazines, posters, books, CD covers and recently completed environmentally themed murals and public works. Profoundly affected as a child by Russian-born surrealist Pavel Tchelitchev's classic "Hide and Seek" painting at the Museum of Modern Art in NYC, he formed a life-long love of artistic use of Cryptesthesia - images are camouflaged within images and hidden meanings revealed to consciousness through sensory hallucinations.</p> <p>► 12/1, 5-8 p.m. Meet the Artist Opening. Bond's work is also deeply informed by the natural world. Much of his imagery was inspired by or come directly from forests/woodlands of New England and wild areas of the UK. This painting series combines Bond's kinship with elemental forces of the natural world with exploration of Celtic folklore, myths, archetypes of his family's Scotland home. Because of multi-layered, detailed rich nature of his art, he's begun to describe his work as <i>Celt-edelic</i>.</p> <p>► Through Saturday, December 30.</p> <p>► Free.</p> <p>► Gallery in the Woods, 145 Main St. Information: 802-257-4777; galleriinthetwoods.com.</p> <p>BRATTLEBORO Gallery Walk: Art Show Opening: 12/1/2023: Art show opening at the Brattleboro Museum and Art Center during Gallery Walk showcases the work of Jonas Emmanuel Fricke.</p> <p>► 5-8 p.m. This show opened on 11/15 and continues until 12/15.</p> <p>► Through Friday, December 15.</p> <p>► No admission charge during Gallery Walk on 12/1.</p> <p>► Brattleboro Museum & Art Center, 28 Vernon St. Information: 802-257-0124; brattleboromuseum.org.</p>	<p>Kids and families</p> <p>ATHENS Kids Christmas Bazaar and Cookie Swap</p> <p>► 1 p.m. - 3 p.m.</p> <p>► Athens Brick Meeting House/Community Center, 2 Meeting House Rd., (just off Rte. 35).</p> <p>GRAFTON Christmas Trees: Freshly cut Vermont trees on sale will benefit the Fire/Rescue Scholarship.</p> <p>► 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.</p> <p>► Grafton Firehouse, 711 Rt. 121 East.</p> <p>Arts and crafts</p> <p>MARLBORO Marlboro Makers Fair: Marlboro Community Center welcomes 14 crafts people for a one-day Makers' Fair and sale. Holiday-related and other handmade goods in ceramics, fiber arts, photography and other crafts will be on display. Proceeds go directly to the artists with 10% to benefit the Community Center. Please come check it out!</p> <p>► 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.</p> <p>► Marlboro Community Center, 524 South Rd. Information: More Information: marlborocommunitycenter.org.</p> <p>GUILFORD Winter Craft Market: Join us for our first Winter Craft Market at the beautifully restored Broad Brook Community Center. Find unique holiday gifts, ornaments, and crafts made by local artisans alongside activities for the whole family including gingerbread house-making and other hands-on crafts. We'll have delicious homemade winter soups, chili, salads and delectable treats for sale as well.</p> <p>► 10 a.m. - 3 p.m.</p> <p>► Broad Brook Community Center, 3940 Guilford Center Rd. Information: More information, visit: broadbrookcommunitycenter.org/events/winter-craft-market.</p> <p>BRATTLEBORO Brattleboro in Stitch-ers: Bring a work in progress to sew, knit, crochet, embroider, or mend. Sewing machines, irons, and companionship will be provided. Working on a secret project for a special gift? We have lots of space and plenty of good company. All ages and skill levels are welcome.</p> <p>► 11 a.m. - 2 p.m. on Saturdays.</p> <p>► Free.</p> <p>► Brooks Memorial Library, 224 Main St. Information: 802-254-5290; brookslibraryvt.org.</p> <p>Dance</p> <p>WINCHESTER Monadnock Tri-State Dance Club and Live Music by "Playin' Possum"</p> <p>► 5:30 p.m. Potluck Supper. Bring a dish to share. Non-alcoholic beverages available. 7-10:30 p.m. live music, dancing, 50/50 raffle.</p> <p>► \$12. Everyone is welcome.</p> <p>► Elm Community Center, 21 Durkee St. Information: More information: Call Tom: 978-249-6917 or 978-790-9322. Or call Barbara: 802-722-9205 or 802-376-0317.</p> <p>Ideas and education</p> <p>BRATTLEBORO Asian Cultural Center of Vermont ACCVT presents: "The Revival of Shamanism in China": Presentation and film by Susan Ross Grimaldi focuses on a Daur shaman from Inner Mongolia. Nowadays, shamans are regarded as heroes and cultural treasures in their homeland in northeast China. The fact that shamans are again practicing healing in China is an important development. What makes this documentary outstanding is the rare opportunity to know the words of the shaman's chant, which have been translated from their original language of Daur into English.</p> <p>► 2-4 p.m. Susan presents background history on the re-emergence of shamanic practices in China. Her dedication to cultural preservation has led her to the Amazon basin in Brazil, rural China, and to the most remote northern taigas of Mongolia, where she filmed shamanic traditions. She'll share translated words of ceremonial chants and show the 30 min. documentary video she produced: "Singing, Daur Shaman of Inner Mongolia, China".</p> <p>► Free.</p> <p>► CX Silver Gallery, 814 Western Ave. Information: 802-257-7898; cxsilvergallery.com.</p> <p>Celebrations and festivals</p> <p>BELLOWS FALLS Rockingham Library Community Holiday Party and Raffle: Plenty of holiday refreshments and live music. Winning tickets for the Friends' Holiday Raffle will be drawn. All proceeds from the raffle benefit the Friends of the Rockingham Library.</p> <p>► 11 a.m. - 1 p.m.</p> <p>► Free.</p> <p>► Rockingham Free Public Library, 65 Westminister St. Information: More information: Emailprogramming@rockinghamlibrary.org or call 802-463-4270.</p> <p>Film and video</p> <p>GREENFIELD Garden Cinema & Liberty Tax Service offer Free Holiday Movie: "A Christmas Carol" (1938): Each week the theater will show a</p>	<p>holiday movie till Christmas eve morning. Today's film stars Reginald Owens ("Marry Poppins") as Ebenezer Scrooge, Gene Lockhart ("Miracle on 34th Street") as Bob Cratchit, Ann Rutherford ("Gone with the Wind") as the "Ghost of Christmas Past," Lionel Brahman in his career defining role as the "Ghost of Christmas Present."</p> <p>► 10 a.m.: Movie. 9:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.: Meet Santa at theater as part of JingleFest. Gift cards ready for those who want to grab a Hanukkah, Christmas, or Kwanza gift.</p> <p>► Greenfield Garden Cinema, 361 Main St. Information: 413-774-4881.</p> <p>SUNDAY</p> <p style="text-align: center;">3</p> <p>Well-being</p> <p>PUTNEY Blight: Fungi and the Coming Pandemic (In Person/Livestream): Blight is about devastating impacts of emergent (or relatively new) fungal pathogens across species. Wildlife, crops, forests and humans are potential hosts for deadly fungal pathogens. Following readings of chapter excerpts from Emily Monosson's book, there'll be plenty of time for in-depth discussion of problems of fungal pandemics, epidemics, possible strategies for prevention, resurction or protection of susceptible species.</p> <p>► "We no longer take payments at the door/onsite: Pre-register only. For those choosing online option, you'll receive a reminder email a day prior to lecture date which includes link to livestream via YouTube/brief instructions."</p> <p>► \$8 each individual lecture via credit card.</p> <p>► Putney Community Cares, 54 Kimball Hill. Information: Click on Register Now button: learn.uvm.edu/olli/brattleboro.</p> <p>W. BRATTLEBORO "The Holidays: What About Grief?": Dec. 3, Dec. 10, Dec. 17: Come to one session, or any number of sessions. These are "stand-alone" events. Bring your favorite mug for coffee or tea. We'll sit together and co-create a safe space to hold you and all your feelings while the holidays are swirling around.</p> <p>► 2 - 4 p.m.</p> <p>► Free.</p> <p>► West Village Meeting House, 29 South St. Information: Email bevermont@gmail.com for more information and to confirm your attendance.</p> <p>Community building</p> <p>W. BRATTLEBORO "Home Again": Our service on the 1st Sunday in December celebrating Groundworks Collaborative (In-Person/Zoom): "We'll share our offerings with Groundworks Collaborative- this has become an annual ASC tradition. Join guest speaker Josh Davis in his last official appearance as Exec. Dir., as well as musician Alouette Iselin who leads us in her two beautiful songs for the season."</p> <p>► Variety of pre-service activities offered: 8:45 a.m. Choir Rehearsal begins. At 9 a.m. these activities take place: Children's Religious Exploration class, Adult Coffee & Conversation, followed by Quiet Meditation.</p> <p>► By donation.</p> <p>► All Souls Unitarian Universalist Church, 29 South St. Information: Go to our website, ascvt.org, Sunday shortly before 10 a.m. to join via Zoom.</p> <p>Dance</p> <p>BRATTLEBORO West Coast Swing</p> <p>► In Thomas Hall: Beginners Lesson: 3-3:45 p.m., Intermediate Lesson: 3:45-4:30 p.m., Open Dance: 4:30-6:30 p.m.</p> <p>► \$20 for lessons and dance, \$10 dance only.</p> <p>► Winston Prouty Campus, 209 Austine Dr. Information: Bonnie: 802-249-8646.</p> <p>Celebrations and festivals</p> <p>SAKTONS RIVER Yulefest Returns to Saxtons River: Children's craft fair will be followed by concert featuring Brattleboro Union High School's Shoulder Narrows a cappella group and Vermont Academy chorus.</p> <p>► 2:30 p.m. Children's craft fair. 3 p.m. concert.</p> <p>► Free.</p> <p>► 24 Main Street Community Center (formerly Christ Church of Saxtons River), 24 Main St. Information: 802-869-2340.</p> <p>SAKTONS RIVER Yulefest Returns to Saxtons River (Part 2): Santa's Village hosts visits with Jolly Elf, story time, model train, kids' crafts, cookies, cocoa. Local artists/artisans offer jewelry, candles, relishes/jams, bread, jigsaw puzzles, personalized ornaments, wooden ware, gloves, and more for holiday gift shopping. Grafton Historical Society will sell wreaths.</p>		
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					5	
					6	

To submit your event: calendar@commonsnews.org

Deadline: 5 p.m. Friday



COLUMN | Sports Roundup

Turkey Trot draws nearly 200 runners

Lots of sun and reasonable temperatures for a November morning in Vermont greeted runners on Thanksgiving for the Red Clover Rover's annual Turkey Trot on Upper Dummerston Road in Brattleboro.

There were 198 runners at the starting line for the 3-mile race, which was won by Peyton Joslyn, 16, of Swanzey, New Hampshire. A sophomore at Monadnock Regional High School, he was the top male finisher for the second straight year in 16 minutes, 42 seconds.

Nico Conathan-Leach, 16, of Guilford was the runner-up in 17:26. Jace Joslyn, 18, of Swanzey was third in 17:36.

Sarah Lange, 32, of Brattleboro was the top female runner for the second straight year. She was fifth overall in 17:46. Stephanie Jordan, 25, of Florence, Massachusetts was the second woman across the finish line and 10th overall in 19:07, while Eve Pomazi, 25, of Brattleboro was third (12th overall) in 19:28.

In keeping with the spirit of the day, proceeds from the race were once again donated to Groundworks Collaborative and the Vermont Foodbank. For a full list of finishers, visit redcloverrovers.com/results.shtml.

Field hockey standouts get together in Manchester

Vermont's top field hockey players gathered at Burr & Burton's Taylor Field in Manchester on Nov. 19 for a pair of games that offered one more chance to showcase talent and have some fun.

Bellows Falls and Brattleboro players were featured in the Senior Game as Brattleboro sent Alex Gregory, Erika Favreau, Emma Gragen, Sadie Mills, and Mallory Newton, while Ava LaRoss and Eryn Ross represented BF.

Playing for the Orange team, Gragen and LaRoss each had a goal and an assist in a 2-2 tie against the Blue team, which was coached by BF's Bethany Coursen and featured Gregory and Favreau.

The Rising Stars games featured sophomores and juniors including BF's Emma Bazin, Hadley Gleim, Nola Sciacca, and Izzy Stoodley, and Brattleboro's Leah Lane, Emily LaClair, and Elina Young.

Bazin, Gleim, and Lane played on the Blue team, which defeated the Yellow squad with Stoodley and LaClair, 2-0.

In the second game, the Orange team with Sciacca and Young played their Yellow counterparts to a 1-1 tie.

North All-Stars win football classic

The 22nd annual North-South All-Star Football Classic was played at Norwich University's Sabine Field on Nov. 18, and the North squad won for the second straight year, 33-29.

Bellows Falls and Brattleboro players helped the South keep this game a nail-biter until the very end. Brattleboro linebacker Jackson Emery blocked a North punt and dove on the ball in the end zone for a touchdown in the first quarter and Bellows Falls running back Walker James caught a 20-yard pass from Burr & Burton quarterback Jack McCoy just before halftime.

Also playing for the South team was Brattleboro running back Noah Perusse, while Bellows Falls was also represented by running back Jesse Darrell, quarterback/tight end Cole Moore, and guard Jaxon

Clark.



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

All-State football teams selected

Brattleboro tight end Jackson Emery, offensive lineman Jett Emery, defensive lineman Sam Madow, and defensive back Jack Cady were all named to the Division I All-State first team as the Vermont Football Coaches Association announced their selections on Nov. 17.

Selected to the Division I second team were Brattleboro running back Noah Perusse and offensive lineman Justin Packard. Both Emerys were second team selections as defensive linemen, along with defensive lineman Evan Velez, inside linebacker Justin Packard,

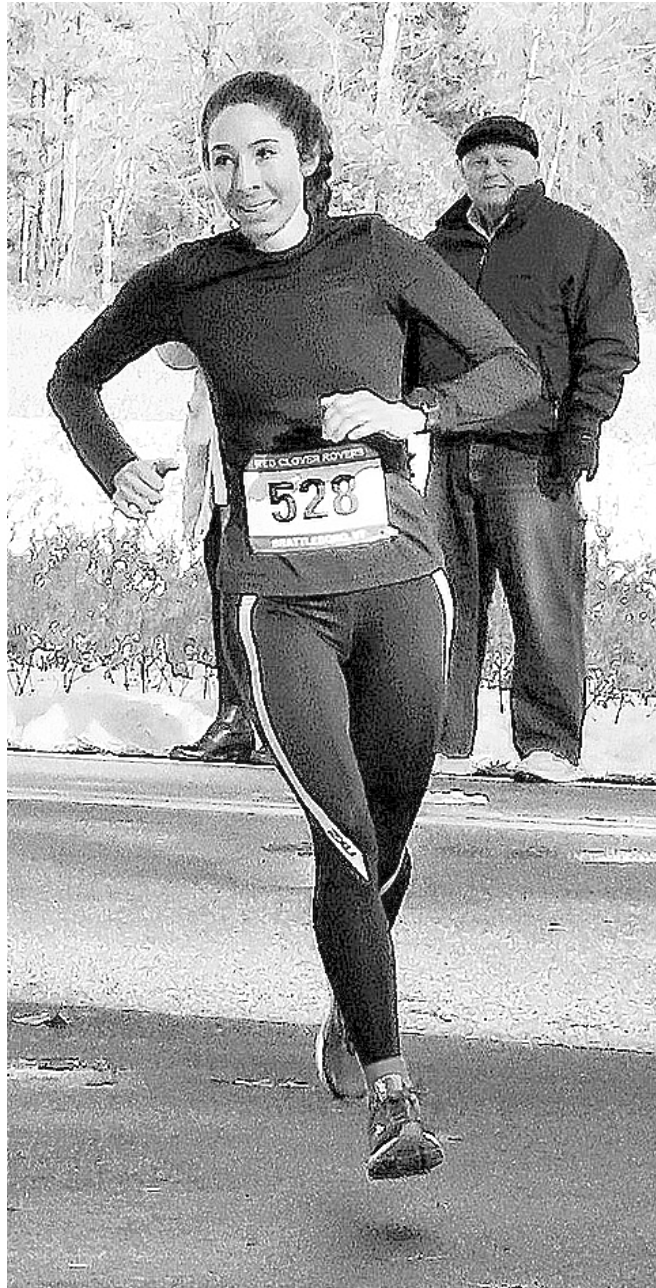
In Division II, Bellows Falls offensive lineman Will Hallock, running back/kick returner Walker James and fullback Remy Lacroix, and quarterback/tight end Cole Moore were all first-team selections.

Moore was also a first-team selection on the defensive line, while teammates Darrell and James are first-teamers at defensive back. Defensive back Jaxon Clark and linebacker Jackson Lovell both earned honorable mention.

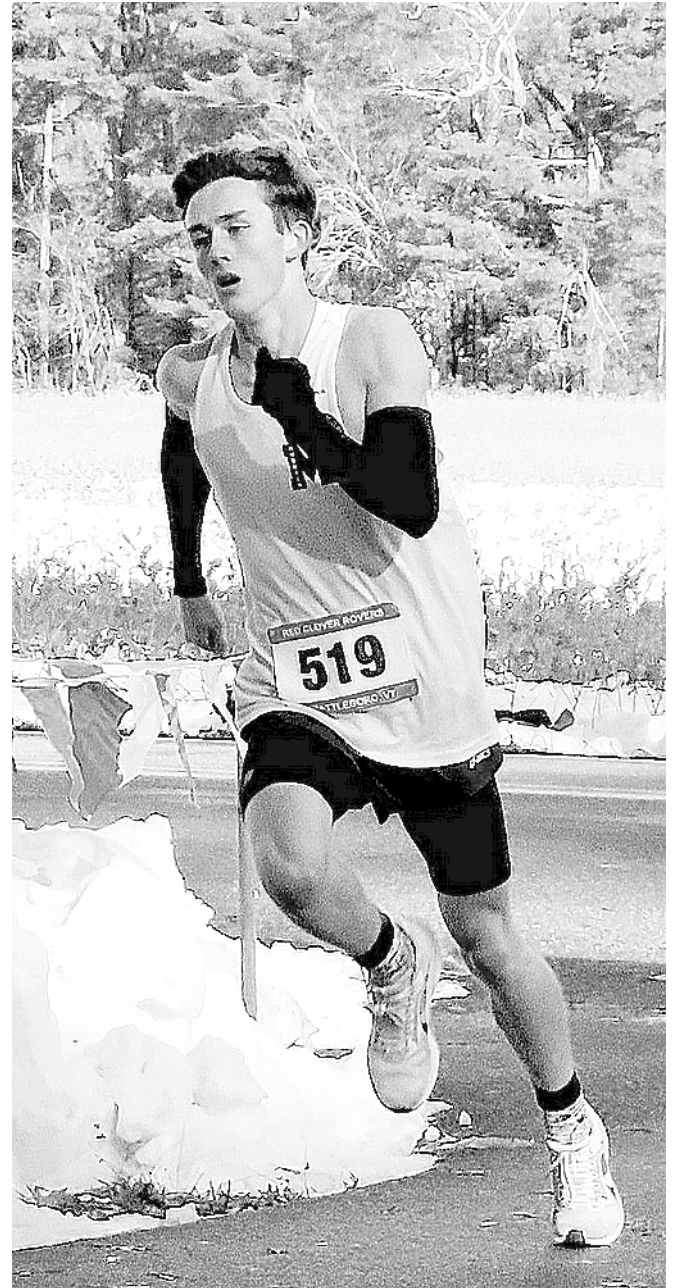
Skiers face sticker shock this season

The 2023-24 ski season began last week in Windham County with Mount Snow and Stratton both opening with a handful of trails for the early bird skiers and snowboarders. Magic Mountain in Londonderry plans to open on Dec. 16.

However, the days of hopping in the car on the spur of the moment after a big snowstorm and heading out for an affordable day of skiing or riding seem to be over. A recent report from Babette Stolk at



Sarah Lange of Brattleboro was the top female runner for the second straight year at the annual Brattleboro Turkey Trot road race on Nov. 23.



For the second straight year, Peyton Joslyn of Swanzey, New Hampshire was the top male finisher at the annual Brattleboro Turkey Trot road race on Nov. 23.

VT Digger found that there are very few places where you get a lift ticket at a Vermont resort for less than \$90. Some have doubled their walk-up prices in the past decade.

Why? The resorts want you to buy a season pass instead, which is a better deal if you do a lot of skiing and riding. If you are an occasional snowsport, you're going to pay a lot more for a spontaneous day on the slopes.

At our three big local ski resorts, a day pass costs \$144 at Okemo, \$150 at Stratton, and \$154 at Mount Snow. The most expensive day pass in Vermont

is at Stowe, which will set you back \$219. By comparison, an Epic season pass is \$719 at Okemo and \$969 at Mount Snow, while an Ikon season pass at Stratton is \$1,309.

There is also a push to get skiers and riders to buy tickets in advance online, rather than walking up to the ticket window when you arrive at the resort. Also, more ski areas are limiting the number of lift tickets they sell each day to keep the slopes from getting too crowded.

However, there are options if you don't want to spend a lot to have a good day on the slopes. Magic Mountain's adult day passes are \$89 online, \$99 at the mountain, with a \$10 discount for youths under 17, seniors over 70, and military, police, and fire personnel. Magic also offers a great deal for Vermonters on season passes — \$534 for adults 30 and up, \$454 for young adults 18-29, \$254 for youths 6-17, and \$424 for seniors over 70 as well as for military, police, fire, EMS, nurses, and teachers.

There's also the alternative to the Epic and Ikon passes, the Indy Pass (indyskipass.com). For \$399 (\$199 for kids) for the basic pass, you get limited access to 35 downhill and cross-country ski areas in New England and upstate New York, including Magic Mountain and nearby Berkshire East in Charlemont, Massachusetts.

If you want to go downhill, and don't mind going uphill under your own power, there's the Uphill New England pass. Uphill New England (uphillnewengland.org) is a non-profit that works with ski areas to provide a single purchase pass and mobile app, as well as a streamlined set of liability waivers, for uphill skiers. For \$215 (\$135 for students and National Ski Patrol members), you get access to 12 New England ski areas, including Berkshire East and Bromley Mountain in Peru, Vermont.

Then there is the ultimate

day of inexpensive skiing and riding, the \$5 lift ticket at the Brattleboro Ski Hill at Living Memorial Park. A 12-ticket punch card is \$50, an individual season pass is \$75 and a family pass is \$200. More information can be found at brattski.org.

One reason why the lift tickets are still just \$5 is because the Brattleboro Ski Hill is 100% volunteer run, including snowmaking and grooming. If you'd like to learn more about volunteering, schedule a training, or make a donation to keep the resource available for everyone, email them at brattleboroskihill@gmail.com.

Also the Brattleboro Ski Hill will again be pairing with Mount Snow to provide instructional lessons for beginner skiers and snowboarders ages 7-14 years old. The lessons will occur every Thursday for six consecutive weeks except for the week of February winter school vacation break. The sign ups will be done online only, and will open up in early December. Keep an eye on brattski.org for more details.

Jingle Bell Jog takes place Dec. 2

The Brattleboro Area Chamber of Commerce presents the eighth annual Jingle Bell Jog on Saturday, Dec. 2. This 5K run starts at 9:30 a.m. at the Heart Rose Club on Green Street (the former Shiners Hall) and winds its way through the streets of Brattleboro.

The event is a fundraiser for the Chamber's "Skills for Success" scholarship fund which provides assistance to students who will be pursuing a technical, trade or other non-traditional post-secondary education.

Costumes are encouraged but not required. Come dressed as an elf, a Grinch, Santa, or any holiday-inspired character - or just come as you are. Awards

will be given for the fastest runners, best costume, and most money raised. Hot cocoa will be served.

The entry fee is \$20, \$50 for a team of four or more, and free for runners under age 17. Register by noon on Nov. 30 at runreg.com/jinglebell-jog-2023%20. For more information, email greg@brattleborochamber.org or call 802-254-4565.

Senior bowling roundup

Week 12 of the fall/winter season of the Brattleboro Senior Bowling League at Brattleboro Bowl on Nov. 21 (a couple of days early due to Thanksgiving) saw Four Seasons (40-20) have their third straight 4-1 week to hold onto first place. High Rollers (35-25) had a 0-5 week to fall into a second place tie with Hairiers and Skippers (both also 35-25), followed by No Splits (34-26), Stepping Stones (32-28), Dumblebor (31-29), Four Pins (29-31), and PEWJ (21-39).

Pamela Greenblott had the women's high handicap game (266) and series (649), while Peter Deyo had the men's high handicap game (282) and series (731). Stepping Stones had the high team handicap game (895), while High Rollers had the high handicap series (2,535).

Robert Rigby had the men's high scratch series (634) with games of 226, 216, and 192, while Deyo had a 625 series with games of 226 and 216 and Warren Coriveau Sr. had a 574 series with games of 209 and 189. Milt Sherman had a 542 series, Duane Schillemat had a 530 series with a 190 game, and Wayne Randall had a 512 game.

Greenblott had the women's high scratch series (475), while Shirley Aiken had the high scratch game (175). Nancy Dalzell had games of 169 and 164, and Diane Cook had a 159 game.



Brattleboro linebacker Jackson Emery (7) scored a touchdown on a blocked punt in the North-South All-Star Football Classic on Nov. 18 at Norwich University.

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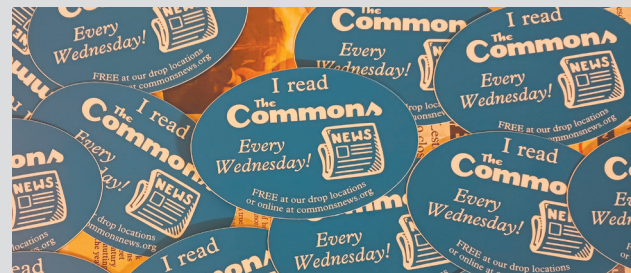
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VIEWPOINT



A sign from a candlelight vigil in Brattleboro on Monday in support of three Palestinian students who were shot in Burlington.

U.S. financial support of war crimes undermines our own national interests. It also makes us complicit.

WASHINGTON is preparing to send a \$14.3 billion year-end genocide bonus to Israel so it can continue to carry out war crimes while thumbing its nose at global calls for an enduring ceasefire. That's \$14.3 billion — with a *b* — on top of about \$3 billion that we send Israel every year; a total of \$260 billion in military and economic aid since World War II, according to U.S. News. There is no strategic rationale behind our blank checks to Israel. On the contrary, America's myopic support for Israel's brutal occupation, illegal settlements, flagrant land theft, and apartheid undermines U.S. interests and makes us all partners in Israel's war crimes.

DAN DEWALT, one of the founders of this newspaper and a longtime activist for social justice, clean energy, peace, and restorative justice, describes this piece as “a collaboration with another Windham County citizen whose job status would be at risk were they to disclose their name.”

FAR FROM “stabilizing the Middle East” — a colonialist concept in itself — the U.S. role in Israel's displacement and brutal occupation of Palestinians has been the cause célèbre of Islamist extremists. In a video of Osama bin Laden aired by CBS in 2008, the 9/11 mastermind said, “The Palestinian cause has been the main factor that, since my early childhood, fueled my desire, and that of the 19 freemen [Sept. 11 bombers], to stand by the oppressed, and punish the oppressive Jews and their allies.”

A 2017 report by the Center

for Strategic and International Studies said that while most Arab youth do not support extremist violence, those who do are “often reacting to a crisis in Israeli-Palestinian relations.” Washington's patronage has allowed Israel to become the bully in the regional schoolyard with nuclear capacity that has spurred Tehran's aspirations. And despite Israel's diplomatic ties with a growing number of Gulf states, the Arab street has not been won over. “Public opinion among the vast majority of Arabs remains, at core, far more

sympathetic to the Palestinians and wary of cooperation with Israel,” observed the Brookings Institution in 2020. Aiming to stifle criticism of its genocidal response to Hamas's brutal Oct. 7 attack, Israel is equating Hamas with Isis. But even Time magazine points out the faulty comparison. Hamas is a nationalist Islamic movement that seeks the creation of a Palestinian state. Unlike Isis, it does not aspire to an Islamic caliphate or a transnational Islamist movement. Has Hamas refused to recognize Israel? Yes. Has Israel ever formally defined its borders? No. Why would Hamas accept the existence of an amorphous Israeli state that has steadily stolen more and more Palestinian land and water since Israel was partitioned

■ SEE FUNDING ISRAEL, D4

VIEWPOINT

Mourning our dead, betrayed by the world

‘The demonization of Israel is so pervasive that we are afraid to show support for our ancestral homeland’

THIS IS A scary time to be Jewish. Our world turned upside down on Oct. 7. Innocent Israelis were brutally murdered while their Hamas assassins happily filmed the torture of children in front of their parents and parents in front of their children. We are mourning our dead and are horrified by the utter cruelty and hatred of Hamas.

We feel betrayed by the world, as it turns a blind eye to Hamas's cynical tactics of using Gazans as human shields and portrays Israel as an aggressor that intentionally kills innocent Gazans.

The demonization of Israel is so pervasive that we are afraid to show support for our ancestral homeland. And the peace we desperately want for Israel (which has received 10,000 rockets since Oct. 7), and its neighbors, seems farther away than ever.

Some Palestinian-rights activists claim that the Oct. 7 massacre was a form of justified resistance and that Israel had it coming.

Two days after the attacks, as Israelis were trying to identify mutilated, charred, and decapitated bodies, 31 “social justice” groups at Harvard held Israel “entirely responsible.”

A Cornell professor said he was “exhilarated” by the attacks.

A Yale professor called it an “extraordinary day.”

LIKE THE NAZIS who burned down synagogues and blamed

RHONDA WAINSHILBAUM is an artisan and a civic volunteer, living and working in Massachusetts, just over the Vermont line.

the destruction on the Jews, victim blaming continues today. Anti-Zionism is the socially acceptable way to enact a double standard, blame Israel, and excuse Palestinian violence.

We see that the compassion and respect that the Left shows other vulnerable minorities does not apply to us.

We know from history that our neighbors can turn on us, as they did during the Holocaust and, later, in Muslim-majority countries, when 900,000 Jews were expelled after the creation of Israel.

We see that terrorists who committed mind-numbing acts of violence against unarmed civilians — including babies and children — are being called freedom fighters.

Gazan civilians joined in to loot from the burnt farms and houses. The terror group did not kill right-wing settlers in the occupied West Bank, but farmers and peace activists in undisputed territory, many of whom regularly volunteered to bring Gazans to hospitals in Israel to receive care.

HAMAS'S PLANNED MASSACRE is not the same as Gazans who are killed unintentionally because Israel needs to bomb a building that is hiding a tunnel, and

■ SEE MOURNING OUR DEAD, D4

DISPATCH

Peace and solidarity

Hundreds in support of the civilians of Gaza call for a lasting end to bombing and depravation — and an end to U.S. funding of war crimes

ON NOV. 19, a passionate group of about 200 people came together to declare support for a ceasefire in the latest and most lethal fighting in Israel and Palestine.

The group was unified in the message that we strongly oppose collective punishment of Palestinian civilians, most of whom have nothing to do with Hamas and some of whom oppose Hamas.

Starting from the Brattleboro Food Co-op walkway, we chanted and sang our way up Main Street. The demonstrators carried signs in support of an immediate ceasefire and expressed their dismay that that these innocent Gazans have been subjected to widespread bombing and have been deprived of water, electricity, and communication with the outside world.

NANCY BRAUS, a longtime activist who contributes often to these pages, and **STEVE WANGH**, a retired New York University professor and playwright, contributed these words. Filmmaker **ROBBIE LEPPNER** of Shaftsbury, who is working on a feature-length documentary about the Bread and Puppet Theater, captured the images used here.

They proclaimed these actions war crimes — and demanded that the United States government stop funding the weapons for this cruelty with our tax dollars.

THE MARCH was organized by an ad hoc group of local activists, both Jewish and non-Jewish.

■ SEE DEMONSTRATION, D4



The peaceful, pastoral views to meadows and hills will captivate you! The ever changing cloudscapes and the way sunlight dances with shadows add everyday delight! In West Guilford, nestled away on 18 acres, this 1868 square foot, contemporary six room home, surrounded by mature woodlands was built by the current owners in 1974. Planned with simple lines outside, designed inside with personality and large windows for the kitchen, living room and primary bedroom to enjoy the lovely views. There are vaulted ceilings, light filled rooms, front entry w/cedar closet, a spacious living room with a centerpiece fireplace, a loft library with a sleeping alcove, the cheeriest of eat in kitchens with plentiful storage, counter space, views and a 16' x 10' deck. The versatile layout offers a dining room if desired, or a office/den as it is used now. The primary bedroom has a three quarter bath with a shower. A stackable laundry was added to the craft room/bedroom closet. The 20 foot long covered deck off the living room and primary bedroom looks over a lawn, a rambling stone wall to the meadow and mountain views. Entry porch has EV charger. There is two bay basement garage with high ceilings, ample work space, washer, dryer and laundry sink. The 32 x 40 barn has a workroom and a loft.

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‘All tears fall to the same earth’

Our region’s poets respond to the Israel-Hamas War

In a 1916 letter, Robert Frost described his vision of a complete poem as “one where an emotion finds the thought and the thought finds the words.”

It is impossible not to be affected by raw emotion and grief when contemplating the sheer scope of death and destruction in this latest chapter of many years of conflict and contradiction: In the Oct. 7 attacks on Israel, Hamas took the lives of 1,200 people and took 240 people hostage. By Nov. 24, some 14,500 people have been reported killed by Israel’s retaliations.

Members of Write Action, a community-based, grassroots writers organization with its membership base in southeastern Vermont, have submitted this collection of poems. For a variety of reasons, The Commons usually leaves poetry to other publications and venues, but when Arlene Distler brought this idea forward, we agreed

that a special feature in this week’s Voices section could bring a fresh approach to helping words, ideas, and universal truths resonate in an increasingly polarized environment. And make no mistake — this environment is polarized. Just before we first wrote these words on Monday, three young people of Palestinian origin were shot in Burlington. Don’t think for a moment that it couldn’t happen here.

May these words from our region’s poets (including Vermont’s former poet laureate) speak to a common humanity and serve as a clarion call for us — all of us, from those who are trying to learn and understand what is going on to those who are approaching these issues with deep convictions and moral clarity — to retain and maintain grace, compassion, fairness, and respect. —Jeff Potter, editor

Bearing Witness

The children of Gaza with piercing dark eyes
are caught by the camera,
faces smudged with ash, dirt, blood
confused, not yet old enough for anger, for anguish,
not yet old enough to know what they’ve lost.

On the other side of the fence
that separates the powerful
from the powerless,
there too are pictures of children —those captured or
killed
parents, siblings in grief, worried
as days roll on with no mercy
on either side.

Screams, the blank stares of children,
their bodies contorted, limp
carried through rubble
by hands that had loved them,
tended them.

Grief knows no language barrier.
Now do you get it?
Is this what it takes for two peoples
to recognize their kindred humanity?

—Arlene I. Distler, Brattleboro

Beneath an Ancient Olive Tree

As I stopped to take a needed rest beneath an ancient
olive tree,
within a peaceful desert grove southeast of Ashkelon,
I heard a whisper, “What once had been will never be
again for thee.”

A lonely desert lark — it sang a mournful dirge, but for
whom I could not see.
The song I heard exclaimed all joy and peace herein would
soon be gone,
as I stopped to take a needed rest beneath an ancient
olive tree.

Next spoke the wind. She sighed a sigh of sadness — a
tearful elegy —
perhaps a warning that this peaceful desert grove was
weak and wan.
I heard a whisper, “What once had been will never be
again for thee.”

The tree, itself, appeared to reach out weeping — its
olives rancid, foul debris.
No one resolved to take its branches. I sensed apocalypse
anon,
as I stopped to take a needed rest beneath an ancient
olive tree.

I heard thunder in the desert. I saw Negev’s scarlet
scree
spread out across a stark terrain at break of dawn.
I heard a whisper, “What once had been will never be
again for thee.”

This peaceful desert grove, it is a site I had longed to
see.
So, I came, but saw instead a tribulation — peace, a
sacrificial pawn.
As I stopped to take a needed rest beneath an ancient
olive tree,
I heard a whisper, “What once had been will never be
again for thee.”

—David Kent Young, Stratton

I woke with the word “rage” embedded in “tragedy.”

GAZA / GUILFORD

1.
the rage :: in tragedy
not arable :: unbearable

the ache :: in treachery
and spite :: with no respite

scant rations :: for generations
the rift :: is short shrift

the lure :: despite failure
the loss :: is colossal

how vile :: to be servile
literate :: obliterated..

2.
Shots ring through autumn.
They trigger no panic.

Who’s sighting a rifle
or hunting for winter?

Our pal will stop over
with quick-frozen venison.

I’ll offer fresh cider
but it doesn’t agree with him.

We chop trees for the stove.
I pay in the kitchen.

This warmth changing hands
is our benediction.

—Verandah Porche, Guilford

I called my Israeli cousins living in a horrible war
Who grew up in South Africa so our relationships were
poor.
When we tried to talk politics
We thought we were going to find a fix.
But we hear different news
Which lead us to different views.
I stopped trying to convince
No longer did we slide down a cliff.
We told stories about our lives
Which led us to discover our ties.
We continue to send love every single day
We hope to keep our differences at bay.

—Lynn Levine, East Dummerston

Current Conditions

“[Every day the adult human body produces] 200 billion red blood cells, 10 billion white blood cells, and 400 billion blood platelets[...].” —“The origins of bone marrow as the seedbed of our blood,” Barry Cooper, M.D.

I look at the images in the news
and have to turn away
my gorge rising

I attend an event
at our local school
and find myself
hypervigilant

I hear a plane
fly overhead
and struggle to imagine
running with my children
to the nearest shelter

Look — a pheasant runs across the road
flash of blood-red face

—Nancy A. Olson, Putney

Did Max Ehrmann Ever Doubt?

“And whether or not it is clear to you, no doubt the universe is unfolding as it should [...]. [I]t is still a beautiful world.” —from “Desiderata” by Max Ehrmann

Hamas has invaded Gaza and
it’s difficult to determine whether
the universe is unfolding as it should or
whether it’s a catastrophic mess not
to be confused with history as it
intensely repeats itself until peace is
foreign and tomorrow’s promise not clear.

A notification on my phone interrupts to
break my news feed obsession — a text from you

about tickets for tonight’s star performance by
a young neighbor in the local high school play
where there’s also a fundraiser at intermission
and brownies I promised to bake for
her class’s travel to — of all places — Vietnam.
So maybe things do reset if not resolve in time
and I can stir the mixing bowl, regain my calm

more easily than one who ducks from Hamas’s bombs
shelters a child and disappears more quickly than

I swallow the last taste of chocolate on the edge
of the bowl, place a pan in the oven and wait
for the stage lights with their full-house applause to
shine on our young friend as she takes a bow while
you and I glance at one another,
nod our heads in recognition.
It is still a beautiful world.

Not in surrender to fire nor fury
the forest leafs out at dawn.

—Anna N. Jennings, West Townshend

I keep tying and untying my shoelaces
splitting hairs over definitions
in the absence of meanings
like little dolls bundled preterm
on the hospital floor
cold like the memories of tortured pasts
genocide, holocausts
8 million then, now unimaginable
to the point of forgetting
where we came from
and why we are here

—Stephen Minkin, Brattleboro

Lives Lost

Where does the story start?
How did it begin?

Can we trace the path that brings us here today?
The same path that ends at the heels of our feet

Tracks of countless footsteps left in dirt, sand, mud
Laid across soils forever stained

We can’t tell which ones wielded the sword — or fell to
it
Which ones drew blood — or bled

But today we can tell — we just need to look up
Look up to see the swords in hands

The blood still red, flowing
Cries still piercing the air

Do the cries of innocents leave their own mark?
Do they share the same fate?

All tears fall to the same earth
Wet the same path of countless words and lives lost

Only the story never dies

—Mel Martin, Newfane

Drooling After a Perfect World

(after Framy Choi)

The woods, this morning
were perfect
mostly golden
soggy underfoot
following a seep down

Next to the brook, a wolf maple
beheaded
arms akimbo, above
a trunk thickened
with centuries

Danny is in the Negev
Trees, buildings, people
all blasted
Sitting shiva for soldiers
died in service,
And civilians
by terror
What’s the difference?
They’re all dead.
The hostages and
Palestinians fear and
maybe wish
they were
Who thought war was a good idea?

Perfect sunshine
running water
I sit in paradise
Around me, decay
decomposition
death

A tree
unable to get up
feeding legions:
beetles, worms,
fly larvae

I’ve come to Paradise
Shot through with
spider thread
Back to a tree
filled with dread
afraid I’ll get lost while
lusting to spear a
white-tail dead

—Deborah Lee Luskin, Williamsville

Metta 4 Peace

Last night we watched a film, *Levitated Mass*,
about one man’s vision for an installation
a massive project involving many
working together in a concerted effort
to accomplish this man’s dream —an enormous boulder
moved through the streets, communities
where people came out to gawk, to cheer,
to stare in wonder
at the huge rock, and the four enormous trucks pulling it.
Over 100 miles it traveled
to its L.A. museum destination.
Many of us thought of peace in Israel
watching this immovable rock being moved
amid celebration, the impossible possible,
children gleeful.
It could have been called Hope.

—Arlene Distler, Brattleboro

My Fears, Nov. 19, 2023

I fear the chaos in thought the unexamined chaos in
thought
I fear the inhumanity its power to shape events
I fear the impossibility of pausing, stepping back from
the static
I fear ambient projectiles blowing up dreams
I fear Trump, MAGAs, Putin Republicans, Biden’s failure
to step aside
I fear the extinction of the Commandment Thou Shalt
Not Kill
I fear Humpty Dumpty and the Emperor’s New Clothes
I fear the bombs and cruelty
genocides and holocausts
the cries of child ghosts in shrouds
I fear the deniers, the justifiers
I fear my own indifference
and yours

—Steve Minkin, Brattleboro

‘Not so Deep as a Well, Romeo, but It Will Do’

Sometimes reading the news
is like hearing from cat after cat,
crying about the monstrous dogs
with no mention of the mutilations
of songbirds or mice.
Truly horrific true stories
about kittens chased mercilessly,
feline spines, bit in two by the evil dogs,
and no mention of the ratcheted claws
and the thrashing hind feet,
gutting the squirrels who could only
squirm to get free
and were left headless
on doorsteps at dawn.
A blessing on both your houses.

—Rolf Parker-Houghton, Brattleboro

The Silence

*You standing at the doorsteps, enter
and drink Arabic coffee with us
(you might sense you’re human like us)
you standing at the doorsteps of houses,
get out of our mornings,
we need reassurance that we
are human like you!*
—Mahmoud Darwish

*I want peace right now while I’m still alive.
I don’t want to want like that pious man who wished for one leg
of the golden chair of paradise. I want a four-legged chair
right here, a plain wooden chair. I want the rest of my life
peace now.*
—Yehuda Amichai

is deafening here because it amplifies
the ordnance exploding “over there,”
which no matter how hard I try
not to hear, it continues to boom
inside the ear inside my ear
where the sounds of that intransigent,
ancient war exceed the speed
of light on the wings of news.
I’m whispering because I can hardly speak
in the din that cripples my tongue.
I’m releasing doves from inside
my chest through the door I’ve opened
for them — each one a priest delivering
an elegy for a child or parent or sibling
or friend who’s died at the hand
of the enemy whose God is the same
monotheistic deity with a different name.
I play a song in vain to subdue the silence
like a patient on the ward who hears
so many voices simultaneously
they cause him to scream.
Can you hear? The scream grows
louder and louder inside the silence.

—Chard de Niord, Westminster West

Ursula K. Le Guin at the Border

Ursula, who died five years ago,
told me in an essay,
that fantasy literature
allows people to read stories
of outrageous behavior
without triggering the identities
of nations people feel
partisan about,
so that compassion can sweep the reader
into the caressing currents
before they have a chance to resist
the final powerful tug
of that great ocean,
and their prejudice has a chance
of getting washed off
into the relief of grief.
Outrageous behavior by Martians
against the people of Pluto
and by the people of Pluto
against the people of Mars
can be recognized by everyone
as unacceptable, indefensible, unjust,
and — most importantly — avoidable.

Bombs aren’t just for maiming and killing people,
they have other important purposes.
And bombs aren’t just dropped anymore,
relying on some hotshot young ace pilot, with
excellent vision, a steady hand, and a good aim.
No, that’s so December 1941.

Bombs are guided by lasers now
and the reporter, writing in 2022, pointed out
it is no accident, that they landed
on Anthedon Harbour in Gaza,
exactly where the archeologists had been working
on a world heritage site,
a place where ancient Greek and Egyptian,
then Philistine, then Byzantine, then Arab sailors,
displaced each other
and docked their boats

for more than 3,000 years
and left their homes,
and their engraved stones,
and even their bones, now all blown to bits
by a bomb and then another bomb,
craters replacing the carefully measured
transect lines of the archeologists.
The news story featured Palestinians outraged,
over what was done,
and more importantly,
who had done it.

On the West Bank, in 2021,
an ancient wall that was protecting
the oldest Israelite unhewn altar stones
was ripped out of the earth of Mount Ebal,
by a Palestinian road crew.
The news story featured Israelis outraged
over what was done,
and more importantly
who had done it.

Ursula, I know I’ve fucked it up
by not setting today’s news on Mars,
and just stealing it from the newspapers
in some attempt to frame
parallel stories that will be brushed aside
by some readers as some attempt
to create false equivalence.
And these last lines
are just a placeholder
for the ones that will allow some reader
to cradle another person’s pain,
like a crying newborn
they tenderly welcome
into their lives.

—Rolf Parker-Houghton, Brattleboro

Wisdom

better to look out a window
than listen to the radio

one crow footprints a white roof
pecks reconnects with snow

by mid-day warmed to ice pellets
a treachery incomparable to war

that devastates scares up another
holocaust as protestors not per-

ceiving rooted complexity are wise
to scream for ceasefire to scream

against persecutors power-grabbers
death’s stench along numerous roads

as the crow gathers strength wings high
onyx feathers stark contrast

to what falls imprints disappearing
amid calls of prayer across air-currents

—Louise Rader, St. Johnsbury

We open our eyes on this the second day of the
hostage exchange
the second day of the cease fire in the land of sand
under the auspices of Gods in all languages.

We rise from our beds

on this the second day of the ceasefire declared in the
land of dates.

We bow our heads to the hostages exchanged
released from dark tunnels
who walk slowly
exhausted and dazed
into light.

We see the tears of the families who wait.

We bow our heads to those buried under rubble whom
we cannot see or name.
We open our eyes on this the second day of the
hostage exchange.
bow our heads to body parts
let go of how why when..

We open our eyes on this the second day of the
hostage exchange
arranged by the brokers of peace cloaked in opulent robes
who drink from golden bowls.

We stare at the hands of the clock
pray the cease fire will never end.

—Toni Ortner, Putney



Demonstration

FROM SECTION FRONT

Kate Casa of Brattleboro, who has many connections with Palestinian people — including some who have been slain in the most recent attacks — led the organizing effort. One of the groups supporting this action was Jewish Voice for Peace, which had sponsored demonstrations for justice in Israel/Palestine all across the country.

At the Common, Alex Fischer of Brattleboro spoke eloquently about the Jewish Voice for Peace involvement in the opposition to Israeli oppression of Palestinians, Tim Stevenson of Post Oil Solutions spoke about the importance of what grassroots organizers are doing, and the Bread and Puppet Theater performed. The group then walked peacefully back down Main Street for the conclusion of the event.

At one point, a few pro-Israel counterprotesters yelled hostile words, and there was a bit of back-and-forth, but the marchers kept chanting words of peace and solidarity with the

innocent people who have been caught up in the hostilities. The large majority of the crowd on the streets and in the stores was supportive of the marchers' demand for a cease-fire.

Vermont's U.S. representative, Becca Balint, has responded to the call from Vermonters for a stop to the fighting by publishing a statement in support of an immediate cease-fire. U.S. Sen. Bernie Sanders has issued a powerful statement demanding conditions on the billions of dollars of aid we send to Israel annually. Senator Peter Welch waited until Nov. 28 to support an "indefinite" cease-fire.

Organizers said that unless the situation on the ground improves a lot, this won't be the last protest Brattleboro will witness demanding peace and a two-state solution, and they urged all Vermonters to contact our congressional delegation to let them know that we oppose the unquestioned funding of Israel with American dollars.



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Funding Israel

FROM SECTION FRONT

into existence by the United Nations in 1948?

SETTING ALL facts and logic aside, Washington parrots Israel's propaganda. Like the now-discredited beheaded babies claim, President Biden has dispensed with the facts as he takes his Hamas talking points straight from Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's script.

Mainstream media props up the narrative, reporting first and fact-checking later, if at all, while studiously omitting Israel's original encouragement of Hamas as a counterweight to the influence of the Palestine Liberation Organization.

The media also avoids mentioning Israel's history of violent responses to any Palestinian nonviolent resistance, from the first intifada to the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement (which is now illegal in 35 U.S. states) to Gaza's Great March of Return, whose poet muse lost his 10-year-old son and was himself badly injured when Israel bombed his home last month.

What's more, this blindered allegiance to Israel is stoking both Islamophobia and antisemitism in the United States, widening the gaping U.S. socio-cultural chasm at a time when anyone with an itchy trigger finger and a Fox News education can voice his opinion with an AK-47.

This illogical U.S. support for Israel exists primarily for one reason: American politicians know they will face the wrath of the Israel-first crowd if they whisper even the vaguest criticism of the Jewish state. Ask those members of Congress brave enough to call for a cease-fire in Gaza. Attack ads have popped up in at least seven districts, reports The Guardian, and several members are suddenly facing well-funded primary opponents.

We should be calling this what it is: a foreign government and its agents interfering in U.S. elections to the detriment of U.S. national interests.

But no, we continue to look the other way, handing Tel Aviv the platinum card with no strings attached, mimicking Israel's propaganda, and acting as its No. 1 apologist on the world stage.

AS OF NOV. 23, Israel has slaughtered more than 13,000 Gazans, including 5,600 children.

Another 6,000 are missing, buried under the rubble. Of 35 hospitals, 26 cannot function, and half of all homes have been destroyed.

Now the rains have started. More than 1 million humans are sheltering in bombed-out buildings and tents with rain dripping down their backs and soaking their clothes.

With almost no food or drinking water to be found, infants, children, the elderly, the sick, and the injured go to bed wet, hungry, and thirsty. Once a brief respite from the hell enveloping them, now even sleep is a luxury Gazans can no longer find.

Back here in the United States, our elected leaders are gathering with friends and family in their warm homes, a fire crackling in the woodstove, the table loaded with food, Palestinian children's blood on their hands.

It makes for messy holidays.

The Commons

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Mourning our dead

FROM SECTION FRONT

Hamas prevents them from leaving. The equivalence of the two is unfair and infuriating.

Activists use the euphemism "occupation," but in fact, all Israelis left Gaza in 2005. Hamas redirected billions of dollars in humanitarian aid into building a war machine at the expense of its own citizens.

Why does Gaza lack water? Hamas repurposes their water infrastructure to build deadly rockets. Why do Gazans live in poverty? Billions of dollars were spent on weapons and tunnels.

Can you imagine what Gaza would look like today if these funds had been spent on peacefully developing their seaside country instead of on destroying Israel?

Hamas hoards fuel as Gazan households run low, stores weapons in and around schools, hospitals, and mosques, and fires rockets from populated areas.

Their cynical objective is to maximize the casualties of their own people to enrage the world against Israel.

PROTESTORS CALL FOR a "cease-fire," which would keep Hamas armed and committing more atrocities. They chant "from the river to the sea" and "intifada," words and phrases that call for a violent slaughter of Jews in their homeland. They shout "genocide," implying that Israel is on a mission to wipe out Palestinians.

If this were the case, why would the Israel Defense Forces do everything in its power to minimize civilian casualties — sending countless messages, phone calls, and pamphlets warning Gazans to leave the combat zone? Hamas set up roadblocks to prevent the exodus and, on Nov. 4, they attacked Israeli forces working to

provide a safe passage for residents to flee south from Gaza City.

Indeed, it is Hamas that openly plans for the extinction of Jews.

WE MOURN the innocent loss of civilians in Gaza who are exploited by Hamas, which controls the region with an iron fist. After the horrifying atrocities of Oct. 7, what alternative does Israel have but to disarm its forces?

Activists should promote coexistence for both sides, denounce Hamas, and acknowledge the role that their jihadist mentality has perpetrated on the peace and well-being for of all people in the region.

If Hamas puts down arms, there will be peace.

If Israel puts down her arms, she will be annihilated.