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



RANDOLPH T. HOLHUT COMMONS FILE PHOTO

**Roger Allbee, former chief executive of Grace Cottage Hospital and a member of the Windham Aging collaborative, says that the escalating needs of a growing elder population in Windham County will come with diminishing abilities to pay for the services seniors will need.**

*Vermonters will need more resources, funding, and collaboration to grow older in Windham County, says a new collaborative working to address the issue*

## Can Vermonters **age** with dignity, respect, and autonomy? **Not easily.**

By Joyce Marcel  
*The Commons*

**B**RATTLEBORO—This is no country for old people. And that’s a problem, because there are lots and lots of them, with more coming. One person who is looking at the consequences of these demographics is Roger Allbee, the former Vermont Secretary of Agriculture and former chief executive officer of Grace Cottage Hospital in

Townshend. He is one of the founders of Windham Aging, a collaboration of people concerned with the challenges of aging in Windham County. Windham Aging was begun in 2020 by Allbee, Dr. Carolyn Taylor-Olson, and Dr. David Neumeister. The collaboration of 10 health agencies plans to identify Windham County’s existing resources, future needs, and best strategies, and then inform legislators and state and local officials — the people who can figure out how to effect these changes.

Windham Aging will then track their progress. “Windham County has one of the older growing populations in the state,” Allbee said. “And we said, ‘What’s this going to mean for all the things that affect the aging population in terms of health care? In terms of housing?’” He sees it “even in the small town I grew up in, in Brookline, where there’s a wonderful couple I know.” “They’re money-poor but land-rich,” Allbee said. “They both are in a position where

they can’t really get around anymore. One is in a nursing home now. The other one is still living alone, but can hardly walk. And they couldn’t find a room together, because they didn’t qualify for a Medicaid room that was a double room. So they’re living separately.” Once, aging was different in rural America, Allbee said. “Back when I was growing up in Brookline, the party line on the telephone was important,” Allbee said. “People knew what was going on.” ■ SEE AGING, A2

## WSESU confronts homelessness among its students

School staff, social service agencies try to find safe alternatives for students in difficult living situations

By Ellen Pratt  
*The Commons*

**B**RATTLEBORO—The Windham Southeast Supervisory Union (WSESU) has identified 90 school-aged children and youth in the district who are experiencing homelessness. This is 10 more than were identified last year and includes about seven “unaccompanied youth” — older teenagers who are separated from a parent or

guardian. Tricia Hill is the district’s McKinney-Vento liaison (named for the federal legislation that funds the position), required at every school district that receives Title I funds. In this position, Hill identifies homeless youth and addresses the barriers to their success in school. In a recent interview, Hill, who started in the position this school year, and her predecessor, Carole ■ SEE HOMELESS STUDENTS, A6

## Brattleboro will take McNeill land

The town will rescind its claim for cleanup expenses in the aftermath of the 2022 fire that claimed the life of brewmaster Ray McNeill

By Virginia Ray  
*The Commons*

**B**RATTLEBORO—Nearly a year to the day after fire destroyed McNeill’s Brewery and took the life of its iconic owner, Reagin “Ray” McNeill, the Selectboard voted on Dec. 5 to authorize Town Manager John Potter to sign a purchase and sale contract to pass the property to the town, pending an environmental inspection. In return, the town will release its current claim against the estate to recoup expenses post-fire. Selectboard Chair Ian Goodnow explained the town had been responsible for putting out the fire and demolishing the building, which was deemed a public safety hazard by the day

after the Dec. 2, 2022 fire. It was razed on Dec. 3, 2022. “Through the estate moving forward, there’s a way for the town to potentially recoup some of that loss,” Goodnow said. Town Counsel Robert “Bob” Fisher noted the McNeill estate is insolvent, meaning its liabilities exceed its assets, which amount to the lot of land and “a couple thousand in a bank account,” Fisher said. The land, according to town assessors’ records, is worth \$45,000. “The town is unlikely — very unlikely — to recover its full claim as against the estate,” Fisher said, adding the proposal to sell the land to the town in exchange for release of the town’s claim against the estate was made by McNeill’s ■ SEE MCNEILL LAND, A6

## In Putney, bringing a rural focus to harm reduction

Robin Rieske and Dakota Roberts distribute overdose emergency kits, which contain Narcan, across Windham County

By Ethan Weinstein  
*VTDigger*

**P**UTNEY—Robin Rieske arrived to town with five overdose emergency kits. The red metal boxes with a glass front resembled a square version of a small fire extinguisher cabinet. But rather than putting out flames, the tools inside could reverse an opioid overdose.

Two hours later, Rieske had distributed the day’s supply — a fraction of the 175 boxes she and colleagues have helped hand out in recent years to businesses and community groups across southeastern Vermont. Her work is part of a coalition of groups called Community Substance Use Response, or CSUR, a collaborative effort focusing on substance use prevention, harm reduction, treatment, and recovery in Windham County.

Windham County has the second highest rate of overdoses for its population size, trailing only the comparatively tiny Essex County, according to data from the Vermont Department of Health. While Brattleboro, Windham County’s largest town, displays the county’s opioid epidemic most visibly, nearby rural areas deal with the same issues. “In Brattleboro, it’s public,” said Dakota Roberts, a harm reduction specialist with the AIDS Project of Southern Vermont, who was working alongside Rieske in Putney late last month. The rural areas around the town have more “functional addicts,” he noted — people who are employed, housed, and may be able to more easily hide their drug misuse.



ETHAN WEINSTEIN/VTDIGGER.ORG

An overdose emergency kit contains the overdose reversing drug Narcan, a mask for rescue breathing, and information on recovery resources.

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

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

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

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

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Without our volunteers, this newspaper would exist only in our imaginations.

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In memoriam:

Alan O. Dann, Judy Gorman,  
Mia Gannon

## Aging

FROM SECTION FRONT

People aged together. Today, it doesn't work that way. It's totally disconnected in many ways."

Allbee says that housing and transportation are issues.

"I remember when I was running Grace Cottage Hospital, we created a very robust community health team," he said. "We even set up a transportation system so that people who needed to get to the hospital had a way to get there."

Allbee acknowledged that Southeast Vermont Transit's MOOver does provide door-to-door transportation, for "riders age 60 or over and for persons with ADA-defined disabilities," according to its website ([moover.com](http://moover.com)).

"But transportation is a critical issue," he said. "Socialization is a critical issue. Food and nutrition are critical."

Allbee tells the story of someone who regularly delivers Meals on Wheels.

"He's probably in his 60s," Allbee said. "And he said, 'The greatest enjoyment I get out of it is meeting people and talking to them.' They're really looking for the socialization that comes with the meal. And that's a way for people to find out what's going on in the home or if somebody's in a dire situation."

The state's policy is that people should age in place, Allbee said. "Many people want to age in place. Even my late mother wanted to age in place. But there's a certain time when that's not possible."

And when that time comes, families find that the state lacks assisted living facilities.

"And then what do you do?" he said.

As part of a group of people trying to create West River Senior Housing, Allbee, a member of the board of Valley Cares, the nonprofit that runs the facility, said that the state balked at the premise of the senior housing and assisted living facility in Townshend.

"The state [initially] said, 'You can't do it. We want people to age in place,'" he said.

Furthermore, "the whole issue becomes Medicare, Medicaid, and private pay," said Allbee, who also serves on the board of Thompson House, a nursing home and rehabilitation center in Brattleboro.

"And the situation you encounter is that if you have too many Medicaid patients, because the rate doesn't cover the cost, the facility can't survive," he explained.

"Yet the demographics of our population is that we have many more Medicaid patients because of their income level than we have Medicare and private pay," Allbee continued.

"All these issues are creeping up on us," he said.

The big question, in light of needed services, is how to pay for them.

"The working population needed to support the tax revenue that can support these services is declining," Allbee said. "It creates a dilemma that nobody really is prepared to address yet."

That dilemma? "It's going to take more resources, it's going to take more funding, it's going to take more collaboration," he said.

### State steps up with a strategy

The country as a whole has an aging population, led by the age cohort called the baby boomers which covers the generation defined as people born from 1946 — when the soldiers came home from World War II — up to 1964, plus the folks who were born a bit earlier but are still alive.

Old age may not be for sissies, as the old saying goes, but aging in a rural environment adds even more challenges.

According to the Vermont Department of Health, rural Vermont has the fourth-oldest population in the nation. One in four Vermonters is over 60. As of 2020, the percentage of Vermonters age 65 and older exceeds the percentage of those younger than 20. By 2030, one in three Vermonters will be over the age of 60.

Clearly, in a population already full of people competing for scarce services — homeless people and those struggling with mental health issues or substance abuse disorders — the needs of the elderly have long been ignored.

Awareness, followed by planning, has now begun, though it might be too late to help people who are older right now. But the Health Department has just released "Age Strong Vermont: Our roadmap for an Age-Friendly State."

The first premise of the draft report ([bit.ly/744-aging](http://bit.ly/744-aging)) is that "older Vermonters should be able to direct their own lives as they age, and be granted dignity, respect and autonomy when it comes to decisions affecting their lives."

When the state surveyed the population, it first asked, "How important is it for our elected officials to prioritize and invest in a Multisector Plan on Aging?" Of those responding, 81% said "very or somewhat important."

When asked if the state currently has the resources to address the needs of its older population, 64% said no.

"The proportion of older adults living alone increases with age," according to the state in a summary of statistics for Windham County ([bit.ly/744-aging-windham-cty](http://bit.ly/744-aging-windham-cty)).

"Older adults who live alone are at higher risk for loneliness, injury from falls, and cognitive decline. The prevalence of adults who do not receive the social and emotional support they need also increases with age," the introduction continues.

The Department of Health also notes that about a third of all older adults fell in the past year and warns that cognitive decline increases among adults 80 years and older. It also points out that those aged 60 to 69 are most prone to not seeing a health care provider, and those in that age bracket are most likely to engage in risky drinking of alcohol.

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Warren Patrick, who lived at Valley Cares' housing in Townshend for years, stands next to some of his photos in this 2011 photo. He died in 2020 at age 109.



The state initially balked at plans for West River Senior Housing in Townshend because state policies encourage aging in place.

Windham County has the second-oldest population in the state, the statistics say.

"One in three Windham County residents are over the age of 60 (34 percent or 15,480 adults)," it says. "Since 2001, Windham County has experienced a decreasing youth and an increasing older adult population. An increasing older adult population creates new challenges and emerging health risks."

### Obstacles to graceful aging

Just think about rural aging. So many Vermonters live down dirt roads in single-family homes. Rural living fosters what Vermonters value most — independence.

But aging can clash with independence.

Most people are reluctant to stop driving, for example. While they continue, they can make unsafe driving conditions for everyone else on the road. And when the car keys finally get retired, independence goes by the wayside; older people can never leave home again without support. It's a brutal choice.

Loneliness is a huge issue. Many older Vermonters have raised children who have since left home, and left the state, leaving them without family nearby to call on for help.

In most towns, seniors can rely on volunteers to drive them to their medical appointments, but what if an older person wants to attend a concert or a lecture at the library? Or have tea and a gossip with a friend?

The for-profit health care system has grown increasingly difficult to use. In Vermont, doctors are almost impossible to find. Waiting lists are growing. And costs for patients remain high, even with the help of some form of Medicare.

Leaving an isolated home and moving into town requires housing that, at the moment, does not exist. And the competition for whatever affordable housing does exist is fierce.

Social Security does not cover the costs of living; as a supplemental source of income it is fine,

but it can leave a person who does not have other means dependent on dog food for nutrition.

With a restricted budget, it is hard to pay for heat during the winter months. In 2010, a long-time resident of West Townshend was found frozen in his kitchen in February, three months after he was last seen alive. The state medical examiner determined he died "due to cold environmental temperatures."

Nursing homes around the state are folding. And if a person can even find a bed, it can wipe out a lifetime of savings in just a few years.

To add insult to injury, many young people, with the dismissive phrase "OK, boomer" at the ready, collectively blame seniors for the diminished state of the world they're inheriting — wars, income inequity, famine, drought, wildfires, climate change, etc. — and want nothing more than to see them vanish from the Earth.

And yet, people are living longer.

### Backing from BMH

The new CEO of Brattleboro Memorial Hospital, Christopher Dougherty, is an enthusiastic member of Windham Aging.

"Every part of living impacts health, and vice versa," Dougherty said. "Everything that people do with their lives are impacted by their health, whether that be good or bad."

He believes that one particular success of the collaborative comes in how it has integrated "community work with what our health systems and health care entities need to do to be a major part of that."

"The challenges are just enormous," he said. "But they are really things that are not insurmountable."

As part of this community work, BMH is participating in a six-month certification program, the Age-Friendly Health System, a national program established by the Institute for Healthcare Improvement and the American Hospital Association.

"We're in a cohort right now to take a stepwise approach towards implementing and becoming an age-friendly health system," Dougherty said. "It's based on evidence-based practices that show these are the best ways to help the elderly."

This system focuses on four key areas it calls "the Four Ms." "The first 'M' is what matters," Dougherty said. "What matters to the elderly population? What is it that they're looking for? What are their outcome goals? Their care preferences? [...] It is the starting point."

The second "M" is medication. "It's how we can help with medication planning," Dougherty said. "How can we prevent people from being overly medicated."

The third "M" is mentation, or the use of one's mind. Specifically, this area seeks to prevent, identify, and treat mental health issues like dementia and depression.

"The fourth and final 'M' is mobility," Dougherty said. "Making sure that older adults can move safely every day in order to maintain function, and to do what matters."

As BMH works its way through the Age-Friendly Health System process, it will begin to implement changes.

"I'd say we'll start to see changes within the next six months and continue on an ongoing basis," Dougherty said. "The goal established by Windham Aging is to shoot for a timeframe of 2040 for having all of the older populations thriving in Windham County."

Windham Aging acknowledges aging Americans have been virtually ignored for years.

"We see our greatest mission is to educate people to understand what we're dealing with today," said Neumeister. "Like a shortage of primary care. Not enough nursing homes. We need more nurses. Hospitals are holding patients because there's no place to send them, and they can't send them home."

And no answers to those problems are coming soon. "We're not looking to the short term, to be honest," he said.

"But the problem is going to be worse and worse. It doesn't turn around until 2037. So we've got two decades. It's a little like global warming; it's happening around us. We are experiencing it in slow motion, like the frog in the boiling water."

According to Neumeister, Windham Aging sees the next 17 to 20 years as critical.

"We have a 20-year opportunity to create change," Neumeister said. "We're not limited by what state agencies do. We're not limited by other funding sources. We're not limited by policies that exist right now. We're going to change them because we have to."

We don't have a choice, he said. "If we don't do something about the aging population and its cost curve, there won't be housing and transportation for people over 60," Neumeister said. "We need to start educating people. More people need to understand, and in a big way."

*Windham Aging will hold a listening session to hear community concerns and ideas about housing as it relates to aging on Wednesday, Dec. 13 at 4:30 p.m., at the Winston Prouty Campus on the fourth floor of Holton Hall, 130 Austine Drive, Brattleboro. Registration is requested for this event; visit [windhamaging.com/consultations](http://windhamaging.com/consultations).*

AROUND THE TOWNS

**Dummerston DMV office to reopen on Jan. 2**

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

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

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

Registrations and renewals can be done online at [dmv.vermont.gov/mydmv](http://dmv.vermont.gov/mydmv). In-person appointments can be made online at [vt.dmv.com/flow/Appointment/Index/57479cc4-a999-4eee-a392-0a7a474a17aa](http://vt.dmv.com/flow/Appointment/Index/57479cc4-a999-4eee-a392-0a7a474a17aa).

**WNESU seeks input for superintendent evaluation process**

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

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

Responses are anonymous with submissions due by Thursday, Dec. 14. The survey is available at [wnesu.org](http://wnesu.org).

**Art Gift Sale at All Souls features local artists**

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

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

The Art Gift Sale is open every Sunday from 11 a.m. to noon,

and by appointment. Contact the church at [allsoulsstart@gmail.com](mailto:allsoulsstart@gmail.com) or 802-257-4710. For a preview of some of the artwork, visit [bit.ly/744-art](http://bit.ly/744-art).

**'Elf' movie and gift exchange in South Newfane**

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

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

**Monthly produce distribution in Putney**

PUTNEY — The Vermont Foodbank and the Putney Foodshelf co-sponsor a monthly food drop of free produce and some nonperishables on the fourth Thursday of every month from 9 to 9:45 a.m. on Alice Holway Drive (in front of Putney Meadows, the white building across from the Putney Co-op and Putney Fire Station).

Due to the holiday season, the December Free Produce Distribution will be on Friday,

Dec. 22. All are welcome. This is a drive-up service. Bags provided.

**Rec. Dept. hosts Winter Mini Camp**

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

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

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

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

**Museum set to move into Pool Nature Center**

MARLBORO — The Southern Vermont Natural History Museum has announced that it will dedicate the former Pool Learning Center on 117 Adams Cross Rd. as the Pool

Nature Center. The building and adjacent grounds were given to the museum by the Pool Learning Center after the center closed. In addition, an adjacent parcel was given to the museum by the Wilmington Masonic Lodge to make a total of 7.5 acres.

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

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

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

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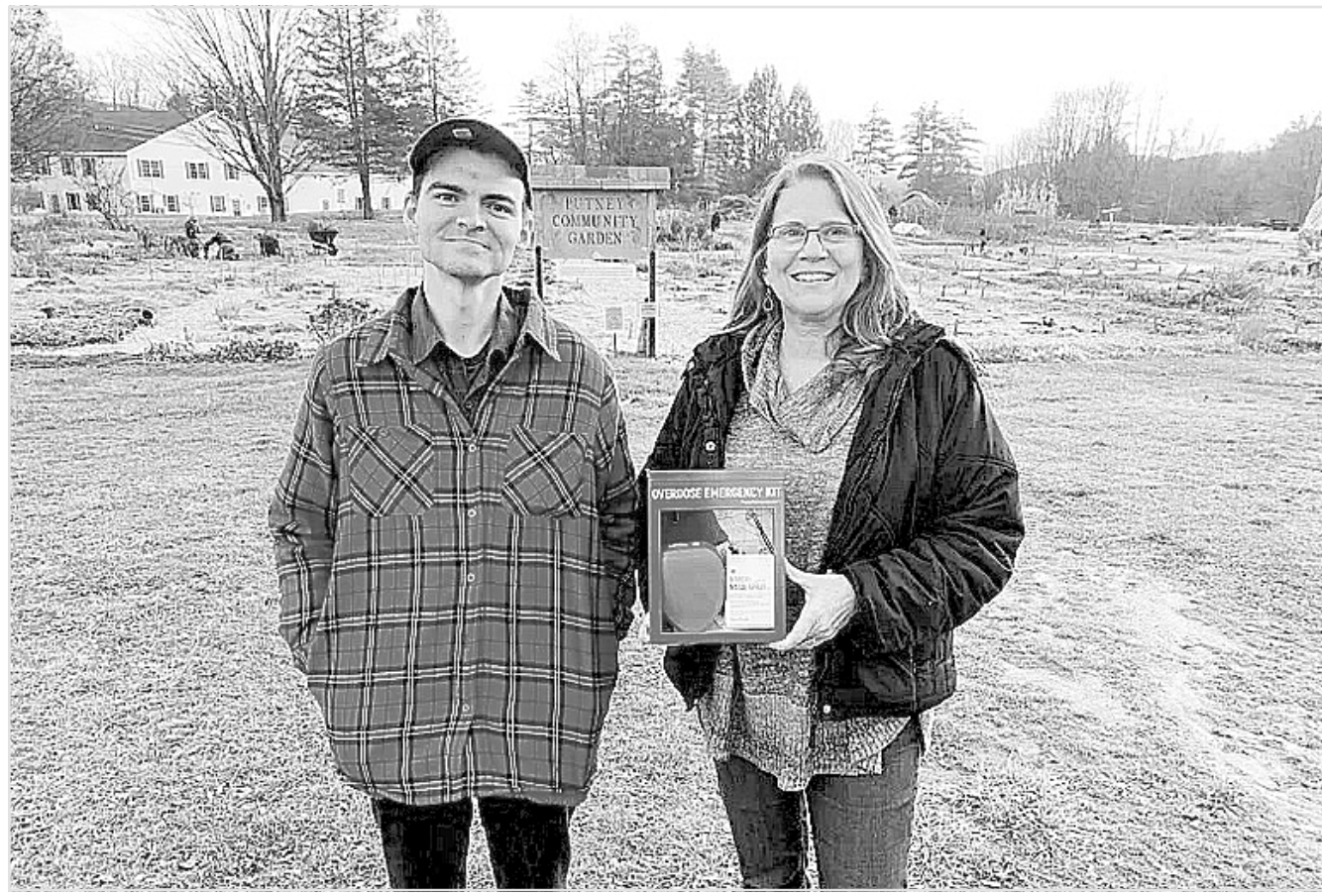
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Dakota Roberts, left, and Robin Riese distribute overdose emergency kits in Putney.

**Harm reduction**

engage in conversations with whoever has brought him the drugs, directing them toward recovery and harm-reduction resources.

"When they're able to be safe and clean and know what they're taking, they will," Roberts said.

On this late November day, Roberts and Riese had no trouble convincing local business owners to carry the overdose-reversing drug Narcan.

At the Putney Diner, Owner Eleni Maksakuli welcomed the overdose kit. In the past, the diner had an employee in recovery from opioid misuse, she said, who wound up relapsing while still employed.

Maksakuli wondered what more she could have done to help the former employee, and whether the paycheck from the diner only enabled the person.

"You feel like you fail," she said.

Roberts was quick to dispel her regrets. A job gives a person in recovery stability and connections, he said. Unemployment, in his experience, would more likely send someone back into using.

Maksakuli also suspects people sometimes make use of the diner's bathroom as a place to do drugs. "What can you say, 'You can't use our bathroom?'" she asked.

The emergency kit, which she planned to store where staff could easily access it, would offer a little peace of mind, Maksakuli said.

In rural areas, where people must use a car or rely on an infrequent transit bus to reach everyday needs, the barrier to accessing substance-use-disorder services is much higher than in urban areas, said Elias Klemperer, a co-director at the University of Vermont's Center on Rural Addiction and an assistant professor of psychiatry and psychological science.

"Just by definition of being rural, there are often fewer

providers around," he said. "It makes increasing access to harm reduction even more important."

Klemperer divided resources into two primary categories: treatment and harm reduction.

Treatment includes medications for opioid use disorder like methadone and Suboxone, highly regulated drugs that people typically can use only through daily trips to a provider or limited take-home supplies.

While the treatments are effective in all geographic settings, people prescribed the drugs in rural communities often face a larger burden to access them, Klemperer noted.

In Windham County, Brattleboro has a methadone clinic, but residents in the northern and western parts of the county have a lengthy trip to reach it. The state is in the process of seeking proposals for a new methadone site potentially in southern Vermont, which could provide easier access to medication.

Harm reduction, according to Klemperer, includes resources like clean needles, drug-checking supplies, and Narcan — the work Riese and Roberts were pursuing in Putney.

At each stop — like the town's food co-op and the library — the pair provided a quick rundown on how to respond to an overdose. First, call 911, they said. Before administering Narcan, check whether the person is breathing, they said.

The overdose-reversing medication, they assured everyone, would not cause harm if the person wasn't overdosing on an opioid.

Each emergency kit they distributed includes two doses of Narcan, a face mask for rescue breathing, information on how to access recovery resources, and a copy of Vermont's good Samaritan law, which helps protect

someone responding to a suspected drug overdose from legal repercussions.

After three decades in state government, Riese has enjoyed spending the last year outside it. Her departure has allowed her more flexibility to pursue projects without navigating a bureaucracy.

"It allows me to not have to justify my work," she said.

Yet, working outside of government presents new challenges. Community Substance Use Response relies on fundraisers, donors, and grants, so money can be tight. A source of state funding that helped sustain the

FROM SECTION FRONT

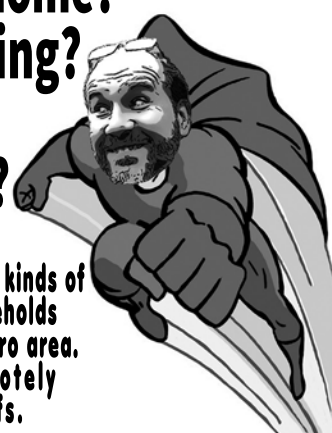
organization is drying up, Riese said.

In October, Riese made a presentation about the group's work to Vermont's Opioid Settlement Advisory Committee. The committee has since invited Community Substance Use Response to submit a budget for how Riese and her organization could use a portion of that pot of state dollars.

Where exactly CSUR's funding will come from going forward remains up in the air. But Riese will continue helping those affected by opioids — that much is clear.

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## MILESTONES

Births, deaths, and news of people from Windham County

## Obituaries

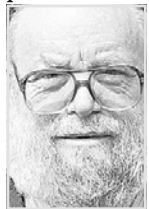
• **Dorothy M. Boudrieau, 73**, was born Dec. 31, 1949 in Plattsburg, New York, daughter of Maurice and Marie (Golden) Monette. She attended schools in the Bellows Falls area and married Anson Boudrieau Sr. on Aug. 20, 1966 at St. Charles Church in Bellows Falls. Dorothy worked at Maplewood Nursing Home in Westmoreland, New Hampshire since 1983 as an LNA, activity aide, and unit assistant before retiring in 2014. She loved her grandchildren very much and enjoyed taking them camping. She also enjoyed scrapbooking, sewing, and many crafts. She really loved her family and friends. Dorothy and her husband were members of the North American Family Campers Association (NAFCA), Springfield Chapter #1 and Mantowa Chapter #40. Dorothy was predeceased by her parents, her husband, her sister Shirley Plummer, and her son Anson Jr. Dorothy is survived by a son, James Boudrieau (Jane) of Tollesboro, Kentucky; a daughter, Zandra Lockerby (Samuel) of Charlestown, New Hampshire; and six grandchildren and 14 great-grandchildren. Survivors also include sisters, Verda Raymond of Bellows Falls, Theresa Naucedar of Rockingham, and Edith Weilder of Bellows Falls, as well as 20 nieces and nephews and several great-nieces and great-nephews. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: A service was held on Dec. 7 at Fenton & Hennessey Funeral Home in Bellows Falls.

• **Lyndon Ernest Corriveau, 73**, of Windham. Died on Dec. 3, 2023. He was born on March 10, 1950 in Brattleboro to Olive (Amsden) and Joseph Corriveau. Lyndon is survived by his brother, Warren; his daughter Linda Ewens and her husband Gary Jr.; his son James and his wife Crystal; and his son David. He also leaves behind seven cherished grandchildren. Lyndon was preceded in death by his parents, his first wife, Sandra (Perry); his second wife, Christine (Forbes); and his granddaughter Tressa McKinney. Lyndon attended Brattleboro Union High School and went on to spend many years at the *Brattleboro Reformer*. He also worked at Stratton Mountain in the housekeeping department. Lyndon was a member of Valley Bible Church in Windham. His faith was important to him, and he cherished his time spent worshipping with fellow congregants. He will be remembered for his love, dedication, and the impact he had on the lives of those around

him. He will be deeply missed by his family, friends, and all who knew him. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: Services to honor and celebrate Lyndon's life will be held on Saturday, Dec. 16, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., at Valley Bible Church in Windham. Donations to Valley Bible Church, 3264 Windham Hill Rd., Windham, VT 05359.

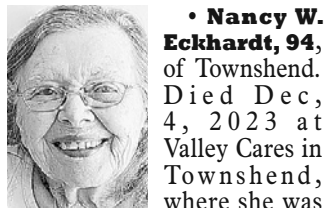


• **Eugene "Gino" Joseph Descoteaux, Jr., 83**, of Spofford, New Hampshire. Died on Oct. 25, 2023, at Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center in Lebanon, New Hampshire. Anyone who met Gino would call him a character. He was stern and steadfast, yet chivalrous and polite. He reserved his laughter until he was with his closest of companions. To know him was to love him. Not just for the wildest of tales he told of his time spent as a master welder and master electrician with IBEW Local 490. Not just for his golf game and beautiful carpentry, or his pristine lawn. Not just for the favors he was always apt to hand out to those in need. Even when he was upset, you could still see the happiness in his eyes. They were soft and filled with pride and joy. Joy for his beautiful wife, Karin Descoteaux, with whom he spent 43 beautiful and love-filled years. Joy for his four daughters and their families: Leann Descoteaux of Keene, New Hampshire; Sue and Steve Brabec of Old Lyme, Connecticut; Terra Descoteaux and Todd Craig of North Walpole, New Hampshire; and Jessica and Seth Pichette of Brattleboro. They all share a piece of his charm and wit. Joy for his grandchildren: Megan Brabec, Amanda Driscoll, Becca Brabec, Madeline Wilson, and Neve and Noland Pichette. Joy which spread across the greens of a golf course, and pride for the house he poured his heart and soul into making a home. The kind of pride so infectious it followed the gifts he made by hand — cutting boards, bird houses, cat trees, and dog feeders, just to name a few. People loved him for his soft eyes and warm smile, and for the respect he showed others. While he may no longer be physically here, so much of him will live on. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: None provided.



• **Jerome J. "Jerry" Driscoll, 87**, of Bondville. Died on Dec. 7, 2023. Jerry was born May 31, 1936 in Philadelphia and grew up in its suburbs. After high

school, he served briefly in the Navy. He married Sue Ann Jones and they were blessed with five children. He worked for several companies, including Havertown Printing and American Fiber-Velope (AFV). He became plant manager of a new location of AFV, and moved the family to Illinois. In 1982, Jerry and Sue moved to Sue's hometown of Bondville. In Vermont, Jerry worked with Sue in her cleaning service and also with a local logging and firewood business. He served on the Rescue Squad of the Winhall Volunteer Fire Department and was the department's treasurer. He was a valued member of the town's Planning Commission and was appointed Zoning Administrator. As a lifelong Catholic, he was active in several lay ministries and organizations, including Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Marriage Encounter, and Cursillo. He was ordained into the Deaconate at the age of 70 and appointed to serve the parishes in the West River Mission. He was a compassionate and generous man who supported numerous charities, especially those concerning the well-being of children. In addition to his devotion to church, family, and community, Jerry enjoyed bowling, model railroading, playing chess, and watching football. He was predeceased by his wife, a son, his sister, and a niece. Jerry is survived by his children: Kathleen (Daniel) Lord of Bondville, Julia (Joseph) Bjorn of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, Robert (Stella) Driscoll of Bristol, Wisconsin, and Virginia (Bruce) Swan of Salisbury; and seven grandchildren, 10 great-grandchildren, three nieces, and a nephew. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: A funeral mass was held Dec. 13 at St. Michael's Catholic Church in Brattleboro. Burial and committal rites will be held at a later date. Donations to Covenant House, P.O. Box 758636, Topeka, KS 66675-9986 ([covenanthouse.org](http://covenanthouse.org)). To offer condolences, visit [atamaniuk.com](http://atamaniuk.com).



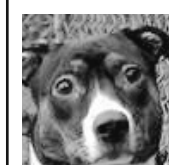
• **Nancy W. Eckhardt, 94**, of Townshend. Died Dec. 4, 2023 at Valley Cares in Townshend, where she was a resident for nine years. Nancy was born on July 28, 1929, in Greenwich, Connecticut to Hawley G. and Lorraine H. (Finch) Willson. She was blessed three years later with a brother, Jay Green Willson. Though he was her little brother, it was not long before he literally became her "big" brother, as in later life she stood about 5-foot-2 and Jay was 6-foot-5. During her early years she lived with her family in Southbury, Connecticut on a farm owned by her grandparents, Edna and Gilbert Finch. The family eventually moved to Greenwich, where she attended Greenwich High School, graduating with the Class of 1948. She participated in basketball, softball, Contemporary Affairs, Girl's Glee Club, Student Council, and she was a varsity Cheerleader. Her yearbook picture caption read, "Her character is sweet, charm is her forte." After graduating high school, Nancy attended Mary Washington College at the University of Virginia in Fredericksburg from 1948 to 1950. Quotes from "The Battlefield" yearbook from college included "Hotshot!", the "girl with the wonderful personality," the "best big sister a girl could have," and "your ready wit and crazy antics made us laugh."



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Hi, my name is **Tammy!** I am a bit nervous at first but once I get to know you I will be right by your side. I do have a lot of energy and loves to play with my toys. I may be able to live with another dog or cat if we are introduced slowly. Kids can be scary and would do better in a home with older children.



Hi, my name is **Aladdin!** I am a sweet boy who is nervous at first. Once I am bonded with you, I will make a great little companion who would love to snuggle on the couch with you. I have lived with other small dogs before. I would do best in a home without any kids because they can be scary.

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After graduating with an associate's degree, she enrolled in the Ward School of Airline Training in Worcester, Massachusetts, and successfully completed the training to become a TWA Stewardess-Hostess. She generally flew routes from Boston to Kansas City, Missouri. One memorable passenger of hers was Ol' Blue Eyes himself, Frank Sinatra. During her senior year of high school, Nancy began dating a classmate from Old Greenwich, David B. Carlson Jr. As can happen, this relationship grew stronger until, on July 28, 1951, they were married. Their first child, Jennifer, was born in 1952. Two boys followed—Christopher in 1954, and Peter in 1956. Nancy excelled as a mother and a housewife as the children grew. In 1964, The family moved from Greenwich to Washington, D.C., where David began working for Housing and Urban Development. While in Washington, Nancy volunteered as a "candy-striper" at Sibley Memorial Hospital, where she assisted the nursing staff. Two years later, David and Nancy decided to part ways, and Nancy, along with the three children, returned to Greenwich. She found employment with the Putnam Trust Co., working as a travel agent in the Riverside office. In 1968, Nancy met and began dating William E. Eckhardt. The two eventually married on Oct. 10, 1970, at Christ Episcopal Church in Greenwich. They first settled in Old Greenwich, until finding a home of their own in Fairfield, Connecticut. In 1974, Nancy and Bill moved to Top Notch Farm in Townshend and spent the next 42 years there, becoming deeply involved in the local community. Nancy became a member of the Eastern Star, and joined the West River Valley Chorus, singing and bell-ringing with them for many years. Nancy also worked at the medical office of Drs. Bresnahan, Tortolani, and Sinusas in Brattleboro as a receptionist for many years, retiring in 1991. She enjoyed gardening, becoming quite proficient at growing beautiful flowers during the warmer months. She loved the birds that visited her feeders, especially the hummingbirds. Cats, dogs, chickens, horses, cows, and even the neighbors' bison, were all welcomed to her yard (well, maybe not the bison!) She was an avid Boston Red Sox fan, as well as a New England Patriots fan (though she was secretly a long-time New York Giants fan). She excelled at needlepoint, embroidery, and quilting, and was known far and wide for her baking skills, especially her pumpkin bread. Her greatest love, though, was reserved for her family, especially her 10 grandchildren and 13 great-grandchildren. She would always ask, "How is the family?" Nancy had a deep faith in God, which kept her steady through the hills and valleys of life. She and Bill joined the Jamaica Community Church and served in several different capacities there for many years. The Eckhardts were very outgoing, and made numerous lifelong friends over the years. She will always be remembered as a caring and thoughtful person, who had a smile ready for all those whom she greeted. She will be sorely missed here, but we are sure she is smiling in heaven. Nancy was predeceased by her parents, as well as her husband of 52 years, William E. Eckhardt; a granddaughter, Rebecca Harris; her brother, Jay G. Willson; her son, Christopher Carlson; and a niece, Sandra McMurray. She is survived

by her daughter, Jennifer Harris; her son, Peter (Roxane) Carlson; nephew Gary (Beverly) Willson and niece Lauren (Tom) Johnston; and sister-in-law Carol Willson. Also surviving are nine grandchildren, Todd (Kathryn) Einig, Tracey (Travis) Farrell, Kristin Grossbach, Amy Carlson, Jaclyn (Michael) Kruse, Rachel Carlson, Sarah (Justin) Adams, Jared Carlson (Clarissa Taylor-Wesley) and Jason (Kayla) Carlson; and 13 great-grandchildren, Ava Einig, Madelyn and Freya Adams, Alan and Joshua Grossbach, Shayla and Sharice Dennis, Brayden, Grayson, and Emersyn Kruse, Evangeline and Oaklen Carlson, and Wesley Carlson. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: A celebration of life service was held at Jamaica Community Church on Dec. 9. Donations to Jamaica Community Church, P.O. Box 54, Jamaica, VT 05343, or Grace Cottage Hospital, 185 Townshend Rd., Townshend, VT 05353. To offer condolences, visit [atamaniuk.com](http://atamaniuk.com).



• **Teresa "Terry" Gray, 66**, of Hinsdale, New Hampshire. Died peacefully with her family at her side on Dec. 7, 2023 at Pine Heights nursing home following an extended period of declining health. Terry was born in Worcester, Massachusetts on Oct. 26, 1957, the daughter of Wilfred and Yvette (Houle) Laliberte. Along with her four brothers and family, she was raised and educated in Auburn, Massachusetts, graduating from Auburn High School with the Class of 1975. Following graduation in June 1975, Terry became employed with C&S Wholesale Grocers, then located in Worcester, Mass. In 1981, the company relocated her and her daughter to Brattleboro. C&S became more than just a job for Terry. She devoted the next 48 1/2 years of her life to her work and cherished all of the friends and family that she met along the way. Terry enjoyed sewing, taking cruises, and spending time with her family, especially her grandchildren, and her two pugs which brought her much joy. In August 1992, Terry met her soulmate. She married Douglas Gray III on Aug. 18, 2012 at the Crosby House in Brattleboro. The couple had been together for a total of 30 wonderful years. Besides her loving and devoted husband, she leaves a daughter, Danielle Laliberte and Travis Carpenter of Dummerston; grandchildren Rachael White and Gavin Carpenter; a step-son, Ethan Gray and his daughter, Persephone; and several nieces, nephews, and cousins. She was predeceased by her parents and brothers Richard, Paul, and Gerald Laliberte. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: Friends are invited to call at Atamaniuk Funeral Home on Saturday, Dec. 16, from 10 a.m. until noon. A reception will follow the calling hours to be held at American Legion Post 5 on Linden Street. Donations to the Windham County Humane Society, P.O. Box 397, Brattleboro, VT 05302. To offer condolences, visit [atamaniuk.com](http://atamaniuk.com).

• **Whitney "Whit" Hartshorne, 95**, of Townshend. Died Nov. 20, 2023 at Grace Cottage Hospital. He was born on Feb. 8, 1928 in Cherry Hill, New Jersey. He later moved to South Newfane with his parents, the late William Bibb Hartshorne and Marion (Ford) Hartshorne and his brother Gaywood (Woody) Hartshorne. He was a graduate of Yale University with a degree in finance. He married Patricia Heath on Sept. 19, 1953. They lived in Brattleboro and Naperville, Illinois prior to moving to Springfield, Vermont in 1964. Whit started his career at the Newfane Bank and then went to work at Vermont Research as their comptroller. After leaving Vermont Research, he started his own business, selling electric

tuners. One of his clients was Jerry Garcia from the Grateful Dead. He met his second wife, Rosmarie van den Burgh, after his first wife passed away in 2002 and they moved to Rutland, then to Brandon, and ultimately Townshend. Whit was a wonderful husband, father, grandfather, brother, and friend. He will be remembered playing all types of card games, crossword puzzles, and going for walks/hikes in his spare time. He loved his family very much and will be greatly missed. Survivors include his wife, of Townshend; his daughter Carol Funk and husband Steven Funk of Scarborough, Maine; grandchildren Catherine and Eric Funk, and stepdaughter Margaret van den Bergh. He was predeceased by his first wife, Patricia, in 2002 and his son, Bill, in 1971. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: A private burial and celebration of life will take place at the Meeting House Hill Cemetery in Brattleboro at a later date. Donations to the Windham County Humane Society, P.O. Box 397, Brattleboro, VT 05302, or the Alzheimer's Association, 22512 Gateway Center Drive, Clarksburg, MD 20871.



• **Patricia R. Wilder, 80**, of Jamaica. Died on Dec. 3, 2023. Patricia was born on Sept. 28, 1943, in Norwalk, Connecticut to the late Claude and Rose (Emond) Violette. Patricia attended high school in Ridgefield, Connecticut. She attended Johnson State College, where she pursued legal studies, accounting, and child psychology. Many will fondly remember Patricia from her days working at Stratton Mountain and the Weston Village Store. Patricia was a parishioner of Church of Christ in Brattleboro. She also volunteered her time as a social worker liaison for the Jamaica Volunteer Fire Department. When not working or volunteering she was known as a "YouTube crafter," making many a trip to the Dollar Tree for DIY craft supplies and inspirations. She was also a very talented painter. In addition to her parents, Patricia was predeceased by her son Peter Kramer, her sister Susie Hartson, and her daughter-in-law Rose Kramer. Patricia is survived by her children: her son Wayne Kramer of Kingston, New York; her daughters Dawn Smith and her husband Steve of Rutland, and Sonya Kramer of North Springfield; her sons Claude Kramer of Cleveland, Tennessee and Otto Kramer of Jamaica; sisters Diana Mills of Greensboro, North Carolina, Linda Violette of South Yarmouth, Massachusetts, Dorothy Violette of Danbury, Connecticut, and Claudia Keller of Concord, New Hampshire. Patricia also leaves behind 15 grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: A funeral service was held Dec. 9 at the Church of Christ in Brattleboro. Donations to the Neighbor's Pantry, in care of Second Congregational Church, 2051 North Main St., Londonderry, VT 05148. To leave a message of condolence, visit [phaneuf.net](http://phaneuf.net).

## Services



• A memorial service celebrating the life of **Thomas B. Ragle** will be held at Guilford Community Church on Monday, Dec. 18, at 1:30 p.m. The service will be live streamed and can be viewed at [youtube.com/watch?v=6YA8cnkQ9Uc](http://youtube.com/watch?v=6YA8cnkQ9Uc). Mr. Ragle, 96, of Guilford, died on Nov. 26, 2023. To offer condolences, visit [atamaniuk.com](http://atamaniuk.com).

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BRATTLEBORO



A person with a sign asking for money sits outside the Brattleboro Food Co-op.

KEVIN O'CONNOR, VTDIGGER.ORG

# Town brings municipal response to panhandling back to the table

## Selectboard struggles to address complaints voiced in a 1,000-signature petition in the shadow of court rulings that asking for money on public property is constitutionally protected speech

By Kevin O'Connor  
VTDigger

BRATTLEBORO—As local leaders here tell it, residents who see people asking for spare change along downtown streets, parking lots, and traffic medians are expressing both sides of the coin.

“A highly sympathetic view might hold that panhandling is essential to a poor person’s survival and should not be restricted or discouraged in any way,” Town Manager John Potter wrote in a recent memorandum to the Selectboard.

“A less sympathetic view might see the behavior as contributing to chaos, community disorder and crime, as well as a postponement of attempts to address underlying problems,” he wrote.

Brattleboro is one of at least seven Vermont communities that once ratified anti-solicitation ordinances — joining Barre City, Bennington, Burlington, Montpelier, Rutland Town, and Winooski — only to drop or stop enforcing them in light of a 2015 U.S. Supreme Court decision against rules that curtail free speech protected by the First Amendment.

But that hasn’t deterred residents from complaining.

“While it is important to

acknowledge that some individuals may be facing difficult circumstances, allowing unrestricted panhandling poses significant challenges that cannot be ignored,” said a recent **Change.org** petition directed to the public and signed by more than 1,000 people.

“The sight of individuals begging on street corners can create negative perceptions about Brattleboro’s overall livability, potentially deterring potential residents or investors from choosing our town as their home or place of business,” the petition continued.

In response, the Selectboard began talking at a Dec. 5 meeting about possible solutions — only to end nearly 90 minutes later with more questions than answers.

“I think we’re all stuck on what to do,” Selectboard member Daniel Quipp said.

### Other towns look at the issue

The discussion comes as other Vermont cities and towns are contemplating their own conversations. In a recent speech about public safety, Rutland Mayor Mike Doenges noted the need for his municipality to talk about panhandling.

“I don’t know that we have a

fix,” Doenges told the city Board of Aldermen. “Although not illegal, it does make many feel unsafe and at times even harassed or threatened.”

The American Civil Liberties Union of Vermont is unaware of other communities debating the issue, although it has released an open letter reminding that “laws seeking to ban panhandling have consistently been struck down by state and federal courts,” Communications Director Stephanie Gomory said.

Local officials note that for all the talk of a problem, they have little hard data to confirm or deny its prevalence.

The Brattleboro Police Department reports “frequent” calls about related disorderly conduct, traffic safety, and wellness checks, but doesn’t track complaints about solicitation because it isn’t a crime.

“Brattleboro Police are aware and supportive of protecting people’s First Amendment rights,” the department said in a statement released in advance of the Dec. 5 Selectboard meeting.

Municipal leaders echo that sentiment.

“It is good to reflect on the likelihood that panhandlers are not down-and-out by choice; that asking people for money is probably a last resort for them; and it can negatively impact their sense of dignity and contribute to depression,” Potter wrote in his memorandum. “Despite a wide range of social services available in Brattleboro, there are clearly unmet needs for cash that can be satisfied through direct donations requested by panhandling.”

### Deferring the deterring

But facing public complaints, the Selectboard reviewed — and ultimately rejected — several proposed deterrents.

The first suggestion was to revise the town’s former anti-solicitation ordinance to prohibit “aggressive panhandling” that is “threatening, intimidating, or coercive.”

“An ordinance specific to panhandling would be challenged,” Potter told the board, “and would require further decisions regarding a legal strategy and associated expenses.”

A second was to ban soliciting in designated “safety zones” such as busy intersections, medians, and other high-traffic areas — a suggestion the town manager said would also spark legal questions.

A third was to require a business license or permit for panhandling, although a 2021 federal ruling awarded \$150,000 to a man who sued a Missouri county that called for a solicitation license.

Brattleboro leaders also weighed a public relations campaign to promote charities that address poverty.

“It could be the Selectboard’s policy to exercise its own free speech, through signs on public

property, that discourage people from giving money to panhandlers,” said Potter, offering such examples as “say no to panhandling, say yes to helping agencies serving those in need.”

But at the close of the meeting, the five-member board could only agree to tackle the larger issue of “safety” at a later date.

“We can walk out of here and pretend that the problem doesn’t exist, pretend that we don’t all receive emails, pretend that we’re just going to sit here and operate from some higher moral ground and ignore what people are feeling,” Selectboard member Peter Case said. “This board leaving this meeting tonight without some sort of plan in place to explore, come back with, and discuss is irresponsible.”

In response, Quipp said taking no action was a statement in itself “because asking for money is not a crime.”

Residents have voiced differing opinions on the issue. Petition signers attached comments saying they feel unsafe being solicited by strangers and fear donated money is paying for drugs. For their part, authors of several recent newspaper opinion pieces have

## Petitions now available for 2024 Town Election

BRATTLEBORO—Candidate petitions for Brattleboro town officers, Windham Southeast School District (WSESD) board members, and Town Meeting members are now available at the Town Clerk’s office. Town elections will be Tuesday, March 5 at American Legion Post 5, 32 Linden St.

The 2024 Annual Representative Town Meeting will begin on Saturday, March 23, at 8:30 a.m., in the gymnasium of Brattleboro Union High School at 131 Fairground Rd.

All petitions must be filed with the Town Clerk’s office no later than 5 p.m. on Monday, Jan. 29 for a candidate’s name to be placed on the ballot.

All forms for town officers and WSESD board members must be returned with at least 30 valid signatures of registered Brattleboro voters.

Candidates for Town Meeting Member must file a nomination petition, issued by the Town Clerk’s office, with at least 10 valid signatures of voters from the district where the candidate lives.

Incumbent Representative Town Meeting Members will be mailed a Notice of Intent form in early January.

Officers to be elected:  
• Moderator (one year; David Gartenstein, incumbent)  
• Lister (three years; Katherine N. Dowd, incumbent).

• Selectboard (three years; Ian Goodnow, incumbent).

• Selectboard (one-year seats; Peter Case and Franz Reichsman, incumbents).

• First Constable (one year; Richard H. Cooke, incumbent).

• Second Constable (one year; Gary Corey, incumbent).

• Trustee of Public Funds (three years; Deborah Zak, incumbent).

• Unified School Directors (three years; Robin Morgan and Tim Maciel, incumbents, plus one year remaining of three-year seat held by Matt Schibley).

Representative Town Meeting Members to be elected:

• District 7: 14 members for three years, six members for two years, and six members for one year.

• District 8: 16 members for three years, one member for two years, and one member for one year.

• District 9: 16 members for three years, one member for two years, and one member for one year.

The actual number of Representative Town Meeting Members to be elected is subject to change based on resignations prior to the ballot deadline.

For more information, visit [brattleboro.gov](http://brattleboro.gov) or reach out to the Town Clerk’s office at 802-251-8157 or [townclerk@brattleboro.gov](mailto:townclerk@brattleboro.gov).

called for more understanding and compassion.

“In a world of increasing uncertainty, climate chaos, and political polarization, we’re shutting out the voices of the most vulnerable citizens of Brattleboro,” resident Paula Melton wrote in a Viewpoint for *The Commons* [“Safety? For whom? ‘Calm’? About what?,” *Voices*, Aug. 16].

“Instead of listening to them, we are amplifying the voices of those who already enjoy the most resources, power, and privilege,” Melton wrote.

Brattleboro writer David Blistein is chronicling the plight of those seeking money on a Substack site ([davidblistein.substack.com](http://davidblistein.substack.com)).

In one story, he recalled giving someone \$5, only to see the recipient immediately hand it to a drug dealer. In another, he asks a second person on the street why that happened. “You’ve got to stop the pain,” Blistein quoted the man as saying.

Municipal leaders have yet to figure out how.

“Some people are OK with a certain level of disorder in urban areas, while others are genuinely scared of it and alter their lives accordingly, avoiding certain public spaces,” Potter said. “All of which is to say that there are no easy solutions for the community as a whole in addressing the issue of panhandling.”

### GOTAN OPINION?

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



that have not yet appeared elsewhere.

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

BELLOWS FALLS

## Liberty Food Fest celebrates sustainable, local, and regional food systems

BELLOWS FALLS—The first-ever Liberty Food Fest is set for Thursday through Saturday, Dec. 14-16, in Bellows Falls and Walpole, New Hampshire. It will feature local farmers, restaurateurs, and environmentalists presenting on local food systems.

“Lunatic Farmer” Joel Salatin of Polyface Farms of Virginia’s Shenandoah Valley and Ojibwe Leader Winona LaDuke of White Earth Farms in Minnesota headline this three-day fest, which kicks off Thursday evening with Salatin at The Hungry Diner restaurant in Walpole.

Hungry Diner owners Caitlin and Chris Caserta will speak on Friday afternoon, Dec. 15, at the Bellows Falls Opera House on “Making Farm to Table Work.” Also speaking will be Kristin Canty, who directed the documentary movie, *Farmageddon*, which explores the “unseen war on American family farms.” The film will be shown at the Opera House on Friday afternoon at 12:30.

Besides the Casertas and Salatin, the Fest includes talks by several New England farmers, environmentalists, and politicians.

LaDuke is a well-known

environmentalist who co-founded the White Earth Land Recovery Project to buy back lands and create jobs at the White Earth Indian Reservation in Minnesota. She also operates a 140-acre industrial hemp farm at the reservation and was the vice-presidential nominee on the Green Party ticket in the 1996 and 2000 elections.

LaDuke will speak on “Being Connected to the Land” at 11 a.m. on Saturday, Dec. 16, at the Opera House. She will be followed by organic farmer and Maine State Sen. Craig Hickman, who has championed his state’s food sovereignty law to remove burdensome regulations on small farmers.

The fest has been organized by documentary filmmaker and Saxtons River resident Graham Meriwether, whose documentary, *Farmers for America*, narrated by Mike Rowe, was recently aired on PBS stations around the country. He and Salatin, a farmer featured in the film, will head up a screening of the film on Friday evening at 7 p.m. at the Opera House.

For details on the event, the schedule, and the costs of the event, visit [libertyfoodfest.com](http://libertyfoodfest.com).

*The Commons*

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## Homeless students

FROM SECTION FRONT

Rayl, who held the position for six years, talked about the challenges and successes of this work.

Because of the stigma associated with homelessness, it can be difficult to identify students who could benefit from the services provided by the district. Hill prioritizes educating the public and school staff about the program so that families can be referred for services.

“Everyone at the school is an essential partner — from the parents to the teachers, to the custodians to the cafeteria workers — anybody can identify a child,” she said.

The U.S. Department of Education’s definition of homelessness is more expansive than the definition used by the federal government to determine eligibility for housing assistance.

In this context, children whose nighttime residences aren’t “fixed” (doesn’t change), regular (used on a nightly basis), or adequate (meets the family’s needs) are considered homeless and therefore eligible for McKinney-Vento program assistance.

This definition includes substandard housing and living situations where families are “buddying up,” or sharing housing that would be deemed overcrowded.

“This definition captures families and students who are precariously housed, not just those who are literally homeless,” said Katy Preston, state coordinator for homeless education in Vermont.

Preston, a Vermont Agency of Education employee, works with the 52 school districts or supervisory unions in the state with McKinney-Vento liaisons.

### Many homeless youth are ‘not seen’

In the 2021-22 school year, Vermont school districts identified 1,312 homeless children and youth, up from 1,006 in the previous year. Of those children and youth, 55% were in buddying-up situations.

Of this year’s \$322,500 federal McKinney-Vento program allocation to the state, \$250,000 was awarded to seven local school districts, including the WSESU. Those school districts that do not receive these grants fund their programs with Title I dollars.

Hill thinks there are “many more” unaccompanied youth in the community than she has been able to identify. Many of these youth are “not seen,” said Rayl.

“What happens with these kids is they are in and out of school,” she said. “Maybe there’s a family fight, or maybe there’s drug use or stress in the family. They’re out for two weeks, then they’re back, and then they’re out again and nobody really sees that.”

Being able to identify and support these older youth is why Hill spends two of her five days a week at the high school. “It was a huge success when one of these students let me know he got his learner’s permit,” she said.

Russell Bradbury-Carlin, executive director of Youth Services in Brattleboro, agrees that it’s very difficult to identify unaccompanied youth.

“It’s really hard to get the number of these youth because you don’t see them,” he said. “They do a lot of couch-surfing. It might sound like they’re doing sleepovers, like it’s fun.”

For them, the process of securing shelter “often starts with them staying with a friend or a friend’s family for a short time,” Bradbury-Carlin continued.

“Then they go to another friend for a short time, and then they run out of their close friends. And then it’s friends of friends,” he said.

“And then they stay with someone who knows someone,” Bradbury-Carlin said. “Often those situations tend to become riskier, more dangerous. Some of these youth end up being trafficked in some way.”

### Consistency, stability are in their best interest

One of the biggest challenges Hill faces in her position is ensuring that children experiencing homelessness can stay in their school of origin — the last school they attended before becoming homeless.

The McKinney-Vento Act, which authorizes the school district liaison programs, protects a student’s right to remain in the school of origin, as well as the right to receive transportation to and from the school of origin.

In rural Vermont, this can be expensive. When a bus schedule can’t be worked out, the program provides reimbursement for mileage for transportation or funds private transportation.

“If we’re saying that what would be in the best interest for a child is to have consistency and stability, [for the child to remain] where people know them, then



Workers from Renaud Bros. in Vernon demolish the remains of the McNeill’s Brewery on Dec. 3, 2022.

JEFF POTTER COMMONS FILE PHOTO

## McNeill land

FROM SECTION FRONT

estate lawyers.

Fisher said taking the deal “gives you options,” as the lot is next to the parking garage and the land that wraps around it. The town could, of course, opt to sell the site, ultimately.

The transaction is contingent on the environmental inspection, which could consist of several tiers and which Fisher said is fairly standard in commercial real estate transactions.

The lawyer said he would confer with the town Planning Department about who might perform the inspection and when. He said at present he is thinking it will be several months out.

Fisher also said the first phase of the inspection would be to

review the history of the site and neighboring parcels. A second phase of testing, which might require drilling for contaminants/hazardous material, could then be recommended. If a problem is found, the contract could be terminated, Fisher said.

In March 2020, with Covid spreading, McNeill had closed the pub he opened in the late 1990s, but his daughter Eve Nyrhinen told *The Commons* right after the fire that her father had plans to reopen and had continued to brew.

Fire Chief Leonard Howard explained at the time that McNeill had been told in June 2022 that the building was unsafe and that if a fire broke out,

Howard would not put others’ lives at risk to enter the structure.

Nyrhinen also noted that the building had not passed its regular inspection, a fact underscored in a press release from the Brattleboro Fire Department on Dec. 5, 2022 that included both an engineering report from Stevens & Associates from that previous June and McNeill’s acknowledgement of that report.

“Basically, the 200-year-old wooden building was not designed for literal tons of brew tanks and equipment,” Nyrhinen said. “I don’t know if it was officially condemned or all-but-condemned, but he was not allowed to reopen to the public. He was working

with a guy named Bill to try to repair and restore the building but he had a limited budget and the work was going much more slowly than he had hoped.

“He was told he needed to move out for his own safety, that if there were a fire, the crew wouldn’t be able to go in to rescue him due to the instability of the building. There hadn’t been a fire in his 30-ish years there and he had an extensive sprinkler system, and he himself wasn’t worried about the structural stability, so he stayed. He was planning on rebuilding with an outdoor patio and a barbecue. A new, better, McNeill’s.”

they should be able to stay in that school of origin,” said Rayl.

Hill says that the program has also paid for laundry cards and equipment for students participating in school-sponsored sports.

“I’m the person that kind of helps put the family in touch with other resources that they might need to access, like a housing coordinator,” Hill said. “I let them know where they can find food

in town.”

“I’m just being a point of contact and partnering with these parents to make sure that they’re feeling supported,” Hill added.

Rayl acknowledges that education may not be a priority for some families experiencing homelessness.

“We’re in the business of providing education, but for some families, it may not be their priority, understandably,” she said.

“Whether or not your child is in school, or whether or not you show up for a meeting when your life is nothing but meetings — you know, it’s just hard to imagine the circumstances of some people’s lives.”

Rayl defines program success as “kids coming to school.”

“If they don’t have the school experience, it’s going to condemn them to even more of the instability and insecurity that they’re

already experiencing,” she said.

“I’m so proud of this district,” Rayl said, “for its will and intention to support the program and to recognize the need. There’s a massive vulnerability out there and you can never do enough because the problem is bigger than what there are resources for. I am just very proud to be associated with WSESU.”

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COLUMN | Arts Notebook

Mosaic  
Mural Project  
underway for  
Brattleboro's  
Pliny Park



Mary Lacy at work on another mural of the sort proposed for the Brattleboro Area Chamber of Commerce's building overlooking Pliny Park.

'a space for social connection and contemplation'



Mary Lacy, left, and Corrine Yonce will be leading the installation of a mosaic at Pliny Park in Brattleboro.

COURTESY PHOTO

Brattleboro  
ON DEC. 2, a cluster of townspeople and arts followers gathered for a public meet-the-artists evening to hear plans for a new community arts project — a mosaic mural for Pliny Park at the corner of Main and High streets.

The work will be mounted on the south side of the building — owned by the Brattleboro Area Chamber of Commerce — that frames the park at its north end.

In the warmly lit, well-appointed gathering space of Epsilon Spires, a nonprofit that supports social impact through art and science, a two-artist team commissioned for the project, Mary Lacy and Corrine Yonce, each offered a window into her own art, followed by an explanation of their collaborative process and an invitation for community participation.



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

That community role in the scheduled summer 2024 creation/installation will invite a range of input, from suggestions for the theme of the mural, to donation of funds to make it possible, to donations of found objects and castoffs to be used in the mural, to the actual hands-on creation of the piece, which will span the full canvas of the plastered wall.

"The initial idea bloomed from a conversation Greg [Lesch, executive director of the Brattleboro Area Chamber of Commerce] and I had about how the Pliny Park wall is underutilized and brainstorming

how it could be activated and beautified by a community art project," says Jamie Mohr, director of Epsilon Spires.

In summer of 2022, the organization facilitated the High Street Mural project, resulting in an expansive, 2,280-square-foot work that, as described on its website, "supports cultural tourism in our region and inspires a sense of co-ownership and pride in our shared public spaces."

When initiating that, Mohr said in a recent news release, she "learned that every public space presents different

SEE MURAL, B3

'Elma and the Top' makes its local debut at the Latchis



BRATTLEBORO—Latchis Arts presents two holiday screenings of the film *Elma and the Top*, an original musical by Newfane composer, filmmaker, and writer Robert Fritz, on Saturday and Sunday, December 16 and 17, at 4:00 p.m.

With songs by Fritz and Denis Smith, *Elma and the Top* tells the story of Elma, the smallest elf in the North Pole, who tries and tries to be of use but just can't find where and how she fits in. It is also the story of the Top, who finds out there is more in life than it originally thought. Together, the stories show that no matter what the past has been, we can start again, and we are always given a new chance to reach our most important dreams.

*Elma and the Top* had its live

SEE 'ELMA AND THE TOP', B2

The cast of "Elma and the Top."

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■ 'Elma and the Top'

FROM SECTION FRONT

theatrical debut in December 2022 in Atlanta, Georgia, featuring a cast of professional singers, actors, dancers, and musicians. "It charmed Atlanta audiences last year," says organizers. This will be the first screening of the film version in Fritz's home community.

"What a cast — a group of some of the most talented people on the planet! This is no exaggeration. They have come together to tell a story that almost all of us have lived at one point or another in our lives, and that is being the underdog, the person who tries to belong, but somehow doesn't fit in no matter how hard they try," wrote Fritz in the Playbill for the show.

TubaChristmas returns to Brattleboro

WEST BRATTLEBORO—On Sunday, Dec. 17, TubaChristmas brings together local players of various brass instruments, including the tuba and euphonium (also known as a baritone horn), to rehearse and perform Christmas carols specially arranged in four parts.

The public is invited to a culminating concert and sing-along in the church sanctuary of the First Congregational Church, 880 Western Ave. at 3 p.m.

TubaChristmas events take place in over 300 cities throughout the United States and in several foreign countries.

Retired Brattleboro Union High School band director, Steve Rice, serves as host and music director for the local TubaChristmas. He took the reins from the late Bruce Corwin, director of the Brattleboro American Legion Band.

TubaChristmas events are overseen by the Harvey Phillips Foundation. According to the information they provide, Harvey G. Phillips was inspired to create this annual event honoring his mentor and teacher, the tubaist William J. Bell (born Christmas Day, 1902). The first concert was held on Dec. 22, 1974, on the skating rink at Rockefeller Center in New York City, a site that continues to host TubaChristmas annually.

Events in large cities attract hundreds of musicians. The Brattleboro version is typically much smaller in scale, with 12 to 20 players. Organizers say "the warm, rich, organ-like sound of the tuba-euphonium choir has won the ears and hearts of every audience, helping to make TubaChristmas an established Christmas tradition throughout the world."

Participants should arrive for registration at 12:45 p.m. Rehearsal starts at 1:15 p.m. Each participant needs a copy of the music book, a music stand, and the \$10 registration fee. Anyone who needs help obtaining a book should contact Rice at 802-451-9072 or steve@9072@gmail.com (subject: TUBACHRISTMAS). There is no admission fee charged for the concert and a free-will offering will be collected to benefit the church's mission to serve the West Brattleboro community.

'(Good) King Wenceslaus' comes to Next Stage Arts

PUTNEY—Next Stage Arts, 15 Kimball Hill, hosts Vermont Suitscase Company's first-ever winter tour, featuring *(Good) King Wenceslaus*, on Thursday, Dec. 14, at 7 p.m.

*(Good) King Wenceslaus* invites audiences to follow King Wenceslaus and his Page, Edith, as they embark on a comedic and enchanting journey through the deep and crisp and even snow of Medieval Europe.

Set against the backdrop of a traditional

Christmas carol, the play "weaves a delightful narrative," exploring themes of meaning and goodness with "a blend of quick-paced physical comedy, stage magic, and puppetry — all expertly performed" by a cast of four actors, organizers say. "The play promises to captivate audiences of all ages with its inventive storytelling and festive spirit."

For ticket information, visit [nextstagearts.org](http://nextstagearts.org) or call 802-451-0053.



The mural project is proposed for the wall of the Brattleboro Area Chamber of Commerce building.

■ Mural

challenges, attributes, and unique character.

"The cracked plaster facade of [the Pliny Park] site inspired our artistic direction to go towards creating a mosaic, mural, and the medium itself invites a new opportunity for the community to engage with the creative process and share co-ownership of the artwork," she continued.

materials.

Recently, Lacy, who attended New York University, has been spending more time in her studio and has just opened her second solo show at Sogno's Arts, a gallery in Burlington.

Gerrine Yonce, 63, is based in her bio, "is an artist, fair- and affordable-housing advocate, and documentarian" who attended University of Vermont and the Maryland Institute College of Arts.

"Yonce often combines visual art with ethnographic media, including audio interviews, household objects, and photographs," her bio continues. "Her story-centered figurative paintings and installations dig into the concepts of home and housing from a community and personal perspective."

With this vision in mind, Mohr researched potential artists, finding Lacy and Yonce, who "both have an impressive background in creating large-scale mural projects and mosaics that involve community engagement and social practice."

Indeed, perusing the website for each artist — [marlyart.com](http://marlyart.com) and [yonce.com](http://yonce.com) — one could be struck by the innovation, the experience, the vision, and the embracing of the public that each manifests in different ways.

Lacy, originally from Jericho, has grown into her practice as a muralist, first marking that growth with a 2017 nine-city mural tour, which, she says in her brief biography, was "sponsored by Benjamin Moore" and involved "her personal bucket truck [taking] her everywhere from a seven-story building [in Manhattan] to the rural towns of the Mississippi Delta, to just off Route 66 in Gallup, New Mexico."

"It is our hope that this project will help Pliny Park further its potential as a space for social connection and contemplation, where people can search the finished piece and see how each of their contributions dynamically release."

"This project is a dream-come-true situation for the two of us," Lacy said at the event. "Gerrine and I are close friends and talk about art all the time together and the opportunity to collaborate in this way [after having done a community mosaic for the city of Burlington] is a really big deal."

Lacy and Yonce have different backgrounds but the overlap, Yonce explained at the event, is that they both "think about art in community."

She stressed that "we're really about working with and in community [...] we're still in the very early stages of the planning process, but we're here to get to know people and to start to build a relationship."

Yonce is the founder of the Voices of Home project, a seven-year partnership with the Vermont Affordable Housing Coalition and housing providers across the state, where she interviewed residents about "home" and co-created art installations and portraits.

She lives and works in Winooki and teaches tenant skills and fair-housing workshops with the Fair Housing Project of the Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity.

The Dec. 2 event was the first step toward turning the vision of an expansive mosaic mural into reality this June. The intention is that the finished piece will tell, according to the press release, the "collective story of the surrounding community through embedded objects donated by the public."

Such objects include "tiles, plates, beads, buttons, small toys, mirrors, plastic letters, and other personal trinkets (that will withstand weather)."

The memories and personal meanings embedded within these objects will have a conversation among neighbors and in community.

The work of both artists incorporates, to varying degrees, found objects, recycled refuse, and items with provenance. All present could see, in slides and in person, the mosaic materials and reclaimed waste, from signage to shoes, found materials, tiled, mixed, and matched.

In turn, discussing one of her works, Lacy referred to her "mosaic brain" as she showed pieces incorporating cracked plates and smashed them at the event. "Everyone gets excited about bringing plates and smashing them at the event," she said. "The smashing is a great cathartic feeling and fun," she adds, but the sorting is where people start talking and getting to know each other. People will be able to come and see the space as it's developing and appreciate what they've added."

The process is organic art. It is expected — hoped — that the project will be supported by Vermont Better Places, "which is how we funded the creation of the High Street Mural," Mohr explains. "Better Places is a 'crowd-granting' initiative run by the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development to create inclusive and vibrant downtown spaces throughout Vermont," Mohr added. "As the project coordinator, I have to raise 33% of the project costs through small donations using the crowdfunding platform Patronicity. Once this goal is reached, these donations will then be matched 2-to-1 by the state."

To inquire about future mosaic mural events, to meet the artists, and to learn how to participate, contact [openopenopen.org](http://openopenopen.org). And stay tuned for the donation campaign launch party beginning in January, Mohr adds.

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# Fingerstyle guitarist Hiroya Tsukamoto offers masterclass, concert at Stage 33

BELLOWS FALLS—Fingerstyle guitarist Hiroya Tsukamoto will lead a comfortable, informal masterclass for players of all levels of ability and accomplishment on Sunday, Dec. 17, at 11 a.m., at Stage 33 Live, 33 Bridge St., in advance of his 2 p.m. concert.

Wisdom on scales, thumb placement, tunings, improvisation, and more will be presented “with kindness and patience and easy laughter by one of the best fingerstyle players in the world,” say organizers. Tsukamoto will demonstrate fingerstyle techniques, including chords and basic theory, breaking down elements such as tone and rhythm and explaining how to apply them to a practice routine. Questions “will be warmly received.”

Born and raised in Kyoto, Japan, Hiroya Tsukamoto received a scholarship to Berklee College of Music and relocated to the U.S. Since then, he has been performing internationally, including at the United Nations, the Blue Note in New York, and on Japanese National Television. He has released seven albums. In 2022, he won second place in the Walnut Valley Festival’s International Fingerstyle Guitar Championship.

According to concert organizers, he is a “dizzily agile fingerpicker who always chooses

beauty over bombast.” His concert performances are an “eclectic, immersive, and mesmerizing impressionistic journey filled with earthy, organic soundscapes rich in subtle detail.”

Stage 33 Live is a casual and intimate industrial-rustic listening room in a former factory hosting local, regional, and national performances and presentations of original material, say promoters.

The cost of the workshop is \$30. Participants should bring their instrument as well as a lunch, or those attending can choose from several local restaurants before the concert.

This workshop is strictly limited to 10 participants. Walk-ups will only be accepted if there’s still room. Registration and more information can be found at [stage33live.com](http://stage33live.com).



Hiroya Tsukamoto

## Green River Carol Sing marks its 60th anniversary

GUILFORD—Guilford welcomes the return of a special holiday tradition, with the 60th anniversary of the Green River Carol Sing on Sunday, Dec. 17, at 5 p.m., at Green River Community Church.

It’s the first time in four years the Green River Village Preservation Trust (GRVPT) has been able to host the community event after the pandemic forced

multiple years of cancellations.

This community event started in the early 1960s to raise funds to restore, rebuild, and maintain the 185-year-old Green River Community Church. Traditionally scheduled for the last Sunday before Christmas, the Carol Sing is a mix of scriptures and carols, ending with a candle-light version of “Silent Night.” Michael Mario will again lead

the service and Ned Phoenix will play the historic Estey organ that he repaired this past spring. Following the service, hot cider and traditional holiday cookies and treats will be served in the vestibule.

Attendance is free, but donations are appreciated for the GRVPT, which provides the labor and finances to maintain the church, the Timber Crib dam, the

Green River swimming areas, and the Green River Meadows conservation area.

The GRVPT is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. It receives no local, state, or federal support and is totally reliant upon volunteer help and individual donations. For more information, call 802-254-4813 or visit [greenrivervillage.org](http://greenrivervillage.org).

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## Boniff, Taylor bring holiday concert to BF

BELLOWS FALLS—Karla Bonoff and Livingston Taylor come “Home for the Holidays” with what Ray’s the Roof Productions calls a “seasonally spiced concert” at the Bellows Falls Opera House on Saturday, Dec. 16. Ray’s the Roof is partnering with Next Stage Arts, KOOL-FM, and Falcetti Pianos to bring this show to Bellows Falls.

“These are quintessential performers,” said Ezra Veitch of Ray’s the Roof Productions in a news release. “Both are superb songwriters, and both really know how to connect with audiences. We are at work on our 2024 schedule, but this is a spectacular way to finish the 2023 season.”

Bonoff and Taylor have joined forces for “an unforgettable performance of song and joy,” featuring seasonal classics, including songs from Bonoff’s critically acclaimed holiday album, *Silent Night*, as well as some of their best-known songs.

In the late 1970s and 1980s, Bonoff wrote hits for Bonnie Raitt, Wynona Judd, Lynn Anderson, and Linda Ronstadt, including “Someone To Lay Down Beside Me.” Taylor has written songs for and toured with his brother James and artists such as Linda Ronstadt and Carly Simon, and for the last 20 years, has taught a course on stage performance at Berklee College of

Music in Boston.

The stage is home for Bonoff and Livingston, who have always maintained busy annual touring schedules. Now they say they are excited to be “back home in New England” with a performance that will be intimate, familiar, enthralling, and inspired by the essence of the season.

The Bellows Falls Opera House is located at 7 The Square. Doors at 6:30 p.m., showtime is 7:30 p.m. Adult beverages will be provided by PK’s Irish Pub. Tickets are available online and at the door. For further information, call 802-387-0102 or visit [BellowsFallsOperaHouse.com](http://BellowsFallsOperaHouse.com).

## CSAG seeks entries for ‘Truth Telling’ art show

BELLOWS FALLS—Canal Street Art Gallery (CSAG), 23 Canal St., presents “Truth Telling: Finding Reconciliation Through Art.” Opening Friday, Jan. 19, and on view through March 2, the Truth Telling exhibit supports community well-being and resiliency by providing a safe and accepting space to use art as a way to interact with difficult subject matter.

To include all artists, Truth Telling is curated through an open call for entry, and firstly reaches out to Abenaki, Pennacook, and Wabanaki Peoples. Upon announcing the Truth Telling show, CSAG enacts its Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). RAP’s are created to help steer organizations’ visions, missions, and actions with respect to relationships, advocacy, and opportunity for Indigenous communities.

Image submissions for CSAG’s Truth Telling show are due Jan. 9. Artists may submit one to three artworks. The exhibition fee is a sliding scale: \$0–\$18 for one entry, \$0–\$36 for two entries, and \$0–\$54 for three entries. Artwork delivery is on Tuesday, Jan. 16. To submit, visit [bit.ly/744-csag](http://bit.ly/744-csag).

Along with the announcement of the Truth Telling exhibit, the gallery shares its land acknowledgment: CSAG is located on Ndakinna (our home), the traditional ancestral homeland of the Abenaki, Pennacook, and Wabanaki Peoples past and present. The gallery, sitting along the Kwenitek, or Long River (Connecticut River), next to the Kchi Pontek, or Great Falls (Bellows Falls), gives gratitude to the land and waterways and the alnôbak (people) who have stewarded Ndakinna throughout the generations.

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

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ESSAY

# Changing seasons, changing lives

*‘Transformation — that’s what it all seems to be about. If leaves can do it year after year, millennia after millennia, perhaps we might give it a try, too’*

**A**UTUMN HAS COME and gone here in Vermont, red and yellow leaves raining into the air, covering the brown ground with a carpet of color. Oh, it was gorgeous! I was sorry to see the green of summer go, but the process of change is its own magical performance.

For me, after so many years in California with its subtle shifting of seasons, I love the Northeast’s slam-bang seasonal dramas that change colors and vistas almost overnight, opening long views where, just days ago, dark forest filled the spaces. It is like changing sets between acts in the theater, shifting the mood that prepares the audience for the next scene of the play.

Nature, here on the ground, seems to do it that quickly — overnight, in fact — forcing us to get out the flannel underwear and cook up hearty soups while we’re still scratching our mosquito bites!

I love this place, although I feel like an anxious mother fearing for her child, because the economy here is broken and folks who cannot quite make do are reluctantly leaving. But, I plead with them, it probably won’t be much better almost anywhere they go because this breakdown may be the template for our times pretty much everywhere! Please stay, I tell them, and work with the community you know!

So, how do we shift to ways of surviving together, when change is not only inevitable, but is also necessary, given our lopsided economy and political absurdities?

THE NEWS FROM our longtime neighborhood in Berkeley is that nobody is safe there anymore. Masked desperados swarm the streets with guns, smashing windows and stealing cars and battering old ladies out walking their dogs on the sidewalk.

It’s happening right where Herb and I raised our children,

**CAROLYN NORTH**, a Putney resident for a little over a year, regularly writes on her website ([carolynnorthbooks.com](http://carolynnorthbooks.com)) a brief piece, “like a prose poem, about the state of the world through the lens of her daily life,” she says. “My purpose has been to help reassure folks that we can get through these hard times if we remember to do it together.”

letting them out to run free and play Snake in the Grass with the other kids on the block. That was then. Now our street has become a war zone!

In my Pollyanna soul, I have to see all this as a larger event, the end of an era, as the old, dysfunctional order inevitably falls apart — the politics, the economy, the racism — and good riddance to it!

But how shall we live, we ask, and what will we have to give up in the process? How will we mimic the grace of maple leaves curling, letting go of their supporting branches and, as their colors change, drift like slow-twirling dancers to the ground?

I WONDER IF learning how to dance, itself, may be a clue, practicing how to move beautifully through space to the sounds of the world. And finding our voices to sing its changing song.

And telling stories to one another of our lives and our peoples’ histories, moving freely and dressed gorgeously in every color of the world as we learn who we each are and where we have come from.

And learning, not only from one another, but from our whole extraordinary universe through so much time and space.

And peering through clouds of knowing even older and further than that, wondering who was here before, what they looked like and where they

■ SEE SEASONS, C2

RESPONSE



Harvard University President Claudine Gay testifies before the House Education and Workforce Committee on Dec. 5.

# Hate speech against Jews is OK?

I cannot recall when I have ever felt such strong personal outrage. How can I stand in solidarity with the Left?

**Q**UESTIONED AT A Congressional hearing, the president of the University of Pennsylvania would not say that calling for the genocide of Jews violates the university’s anti-bullying or harassment code of conduct.

She said such speech is “context-dependent” and only violates University rules if it “turns into conduct.” The presidents of Harvard and MIT gave similar testimony at the Dec. 5 hearing.

By that logic, couldn’t racist students burn a cross on campus and advocate lynching in order to intimidate Black students, and the University would consider that to be protected speech?

Yeah, but Jews are different. Hate speech against Jews is OK, isn’t it?

Perhaps these Ivy League universities should look the other way and accept demonstrations advocating rape. Women should understand that advocating that they be raped is not intimidation or harassment. It is free speech, isn’t it?

**STEVEN K-BROOKS**, now retired from active real estate brokerage, writes on his website, [Blog88.org](http://Blog88.org). Contact him at [IntoxicatingWriting@gmail.com](mailto:IntoxicatingWriting@gmail.com). This piece is in response to “No more money for Israel” [Viewpoint, Nov. 29].

A Nov. 3 *New York Times* opinion piece by Gabriel Diamond, Talia Dror, and Jillian Lederman, “What Is Happening on College Campuses Is Not Free Speech,” details antisemitic hate speech, apparently tolerated by administrators.

They wrote that in a recent online discussion forum, “Jewish students at Cornell were called ‘excrement on the face of the earth,’ threatened with rape and beheading and bombarded with demands like ‘eliminate Jewish living from Cornell campus.’”

They also reported that “the targeting of Jewish students didn’t stop at Cornell: Jewish students at Cooper Union huddled in the library to escape

an angry crowd pounding on the doors; a protester at a rally near New York University carried a sign calling for the world to be kept ‘clean’ of Jews; messages like ‘glory to our martyrs’ were projected onto a George Washington University building.”

According to the *Harvard Crimson*, after the Oct. 7 Hamas attacks, the Harvard Undergraduate Palestine Solidarity Committee and 33 other student groups at the university “drew intense campus and national backlash [...] for signing onto a statement that they ‘hold the Israeli regime entirely responsible for all unfolding violence’ in the wake of a deadly invasion of Israel by the Islamist militant group Hamas.”

“There was no mention of Hamas,” wrote Diamond, Dror, and Lederman. “The university issued such a tepid response, it almost felt like an invitation.”

On Oct. 15, at Cornell, at a pro-Palestinian rally, Russell Rickford, an associate professor of history, said he was “exhilarated” by Hamas’s terrorist attacks; he apologized and is on a leave of

■ SEE HATE SPEECH, C2

LETTERS FROM READERS

Not the enemy

**R**E: “Foes of planned housing project return to court” [News, Nov. 15]:

Reporters write articles for publication; however, it is editors and managing editors who write the headlines and subheads.

Calling attention to an additional filing in Superior Court to review WWHT’s proposed housing project, Virginia Ray’s piece alerts the reader that words do indeed matter. One online dictionary defines a *foe* as “a person who feels enmity, hatred, or malice toward another”; they are the “enemy.”

Is that really what is happening here?

Growing numbers of Putney residents and beyond feel this is an ill-conceived, profit-seeking-only build that bypasses zoning regulations and environmental issues which will define the

town of Putney for decades to come.

No matter how many times Windham & Windsor Housing Trust Executive Director Elizabeth Bridgewater continues to gaslight the public, it is everyday Vermonters who will suffer the consequences.

The only way to correctly assess that these two lots are contiguous would be to dig up and eliminate Alice Holway Drive altogether. The two patches of land are near each other, but they are divided by a public thoroughfare. They are near each other, but they are not contiguous.

Are Putney residents who have a vision of preserving open green space really the enemy? It’s so sad that throughout history anyone who challenges the status quo on any issue is labeled a “villain” or a “nutter”!

**Barb Raskin**  
Putney

So much ‘us’ and ‘them,’ so little nuance. Where’s the humanity?

**I**n the public discourse of the Israeli-Gaza conflict, I am struck by how few comments I have heard that represent both and thinking — not only in local news and opinion outlets, but everywhere.

Is it not possible to hold both the sorrow for the merciless attacks on Israeli civilians and the rampant killing of Palestinians?

Except for those in the most extreme camps of this bloody debate, I cannot imagine that people who speak for one side or the other are actually “OK” with the incredible loss of life, not to mention the terror and trauma of those who are surviving. Why is this not acknowledged even when an opinion on a particular side is expressed?

At the center of this are

human beings who laugh, cry, love, play, learn, work, and try to live, just as we all do. Not a faceless mass of “them” but actual individual people.

To me, this seems absent in public dialogue. There is so much sweeping “us” and “them” with little to no nuance. Is it any wonder that violence (physical and verbal) toward Jews and Muslims is escalating?

On the local level, I have heard numerous stories of members of our community who are Jewish not being treated as such, but in ways that are harmful and that seem to dehumanize them, as nameless “others” in the us-vs-them dichotomy.

And, though it was not local to Brattleboro, there was the cold-blooded shooting of three Palestinian students in Burlington. There may be more local incidents of “othering” our community members

who are Muslim that I have not heard about.

Why? Why in a community that prides itself on inclusion are we falling to this level?

Why are we not holding it all — the pain, fear, anger, and all the hard emotions — in such a way that we continue to see each member of our community as the human being that they are?

A friend recently mentioned, “Act from your values and not your beliefs,” and I am going to repeat this multiple times every day. I am going to commit to not thinking and talking from the hill of my opinions and try to meet others in the valleys where we can meet one another, human-to-human.

I know I will often fail in doing so, but I will keep trying.

For me, striving for justice and freedom is not mutually exclusive to maintaining this commitment. I think it is the only

way we can truly do so.

**Jennifer Jacobs**  
Brattleboro

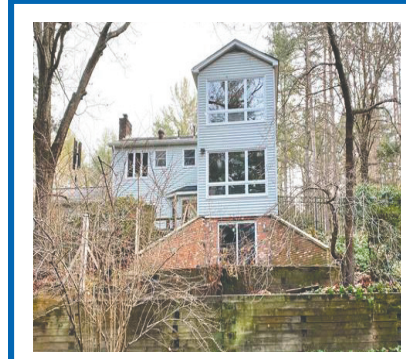
A better alternative to affordable housing in Putney

**R**E: “In Putney, a housing crisis flies under the radar” [News, Nov. 29]:

The affordable housing article presents developers, past Selectboard members, and other town employees as progressive and compassionately concerned about the homeless and low-income residents, and those of us questioning the project as troublemakers who look down on the poor and needy.

But it’s a farce to call an \$11.7 million project affordable and progressive! That construction fee breaks down to \$468,000 per apartment, which is

■ SEE LETTERS, C2



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Looking forward to seeing Dunklee around (and sneaking up in the pancake line)

RE: "Talented, humble, and irreplaceable" [News, Nov. 22]: Now that I'm no longer a regular reporter at this newspaper, it's probably OK for me to admit this in public: One of my favorite assignments was interviewing Lester Dunklee. Oh, but I sure was intimidated. (Not that that stopped me, of course.) I moved to Brattleboro in 1994. About a year later, I got a job slinging coffee at Mocha Joe's. One afternoon, I was working with former owner Ellen Tucker-Capy, and she said she had to run an errand. Some little piece of one of the shop's

coffee machines needed repair, and she was headed around the corner to see Lester. "See who?" asked little 21-year-old me. "Lester Dunklee," said Ellen. "He owns that machine shop over on Flat Street. Without Lester, this town would fall apart." As I stuck around town and got to know more people who make and build things, Lester's reputation grew bigger and bigger in my mind. "Gotta go see Lester," was the common refrain, along with, "He can fix anything." Fast-forward a few decades, and little 21-year-old me had grown up (well, more or less...) into a reporter in search of interesting stories. One that was sent my way was a request to do a feature on Lester and his machine shop, because, yes, he was still holding the town

together. All those tales about this mysterious and magical person named "Lester Dunklee" bounced around in my head as I prepared to make my initial contact with him. I called, he answered the phone — like a regular person! — and I asked if I could come see his shop and interview him about what he does. Instead of offering some smug, self-important reply, Lester softly — shyly? — chuckled and said, "Well, sure, I guess that would be all right." On the appointed day, in I went, and gawked like a yokel at the wondrous mechanical things sitting on the floor and flying overhead, while Lester told me the story of his family's shop, his childhood spent there, how he fared during Tropical Storm Irene, and the joys and challenges of running

a machine shop. All the while, guests came and went and called on the phone. This one needed a little part for his push-mower. That one was delivering tall canisters of oxygen or some such thing. Another was looking for an odd little bolt. Yet another was a down-on-his-luck downtown wanderer who stopped in for some fellowship. Lester met them all with patience and assistance. I had so much fun, hanging out in the shop, looking around at his collection of toy frogs and metal things, waiting for Lester to help someone before I resumed my interrogations. And I got paid to do this! Since then, every year — including this one — when I would attend the West Dummerston Volunteer Fire Department's pancake breakfast, Lester always did this

tricky, magical thing. I'd be there, at the end of the service line, with a plate of pancakes in my hand, looking around for Lester and not seeing him anywhere. Every single time, as I was about to ask someone, "Is Lester here?," I'd hear a quiet, familiar voice to my right: "Hello. Are you still writing for the newspaper?" How did he sneak up on me like that? Congratulations to Lester Dunklee on his retirement. It's well-deserved. I look forward to seeing him around town and having him sneak up on me in the pancake line. But, oh, Brattleboro, I'm worried about you and your machines! Sincerely, Wendy M. Levy Bellows Falls



Wendy M. Levy's cover story about Lester Dunklee appeared in the Sept. 28, 2016 issue. To read it, visit bit.ly/376-lester.

to having sex to protect one's virginity. I have not voted for a Democrat or Republican for president since 1988, when I voted for Micheal Dukakis. Since then I've recognized every Democratic and Republican nominee for president to be a pure sleazeball. I was one of those who voted for Jill Stein in 2016 because I could not stomach a vote for Hillary Clinton. As bad as the choice was back in 2016, today the choice is even more ridiculous. I believe the real threat to democracy is the two-party system that we have in this country, and not Donald Trump. In the last election I voted for Liam Madden for U.S. representative, mostly because he explicitly came out against the two-party system. He correctly recognized that this system is too-easily manipulated by oligarchs and other big-money interests. It is too bad that this message was not digested by many voters. The idea that Donald Trump is a threat to our democracy is such a paper tiger. Trump is way too stupid to figure out a way to overturn our system and make himself dictator for life. Besides, the façade of democracy that our two-party system provides is way too valuable for the oligarchs who run this country to maintain social control.

If the institutions that protect our so-called democracy cannot stand up to Donald Trump, then there is no reason to think it can stand up to the Democrats, either. After all, the Democrats wanted to pass an act that essentially nationalized our so-called democracy, but with no safeguards that ensured the fairness of our elections. Without any ability to know that an election was carried out fairly there is no point in "democracy." Democracy is one of my greatest concerns and that is why I had to reply. I would like to see instant runoff voting instituted here in Vermont for all members of the lower chamber in the statehouse, and for statewide elected officials. The state Senate ought to be one statewide district where representatives are chosen in proportion to the popular vote among various political parties. All votes need to be subject to verification by audit, and the election process must be transparent. My proposals would be a boon to real democracy locally, and an example for the nation to follow. Let's get real about democracy, Ms. Cliff, and what is truly a danger and what is truly not a danger!

Edward C. Morris Brattleboro

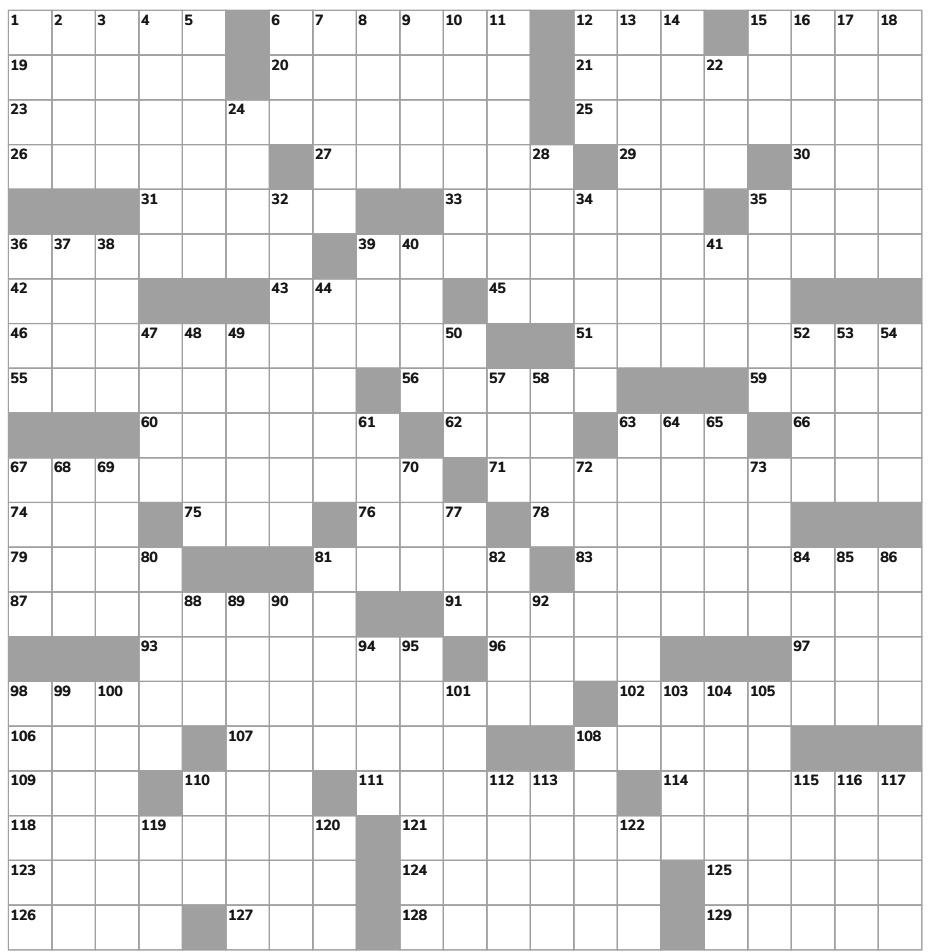
THE COMMONS CROSSWORD "In/Out"

Across

- 1. Animated clay being in Jewish folklore
6. Actress Priyanka \_\_ Jonas
12. Comic's bit
15. Universal donor blood type, briefly
19. Bush court appointee
20. Second son of Jacob and Leah
21. Place for copy, paste, and undo
23. Where to find a pan?
25. Legally bind
26. "After that..."
27. Hemoglobin deficiency
29. Part of IPA
30. Anagram and synonym of "it's"
31. In the air
33. Geologic epoch from the Greek for "new dawn"
35. Impudent
36. Soft homemade toy
39. Horse traders?
42. Huntsville's st.
43. Not covered
45. Religious dissenter
46. Write down some stories?
51. Scholarly discourse
55. Bluegrass instrument
56. Author and actress Vowell
59. Poker variety
60. Whence Saint Benedict
62. Hive product
63. Old \_\_ (London theatre)
66. Eldest March sister
67. Phenomenal country estate?
71. `Cheers` or `It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia`?
74. Waze fig.
75. Court divider
76. Caustic substance
78. Most of Algeria
79. Fixes, but not in a good way
81. Clinton press secretary Dee Dee
83. Air
87. Squeeze every penny out of
91. Request from a too-loud trumpeter?
93. Emma Stone title role of 2021
96. Gift of Prometheus
97. Fluoride, for one
98. Contemporary standardized tests?
102. Marked, musically
106. Messes up
107. Direction for this answer
108. Road reversal
109. Madre's brother
110. Computing exec, for short
111. Leaf automaker
114. Betrays
118. Language with only eight consonants
121. Follower of one's own religious teachings?
123. Amusing story
124. More hackneyed
125. Actor \_\_ Zimbalist Jr.
126. `\_\_ Land` (2016 film)
127. Sydney's st.
128. Writer of the shortest Gospel
129. Authority

Down

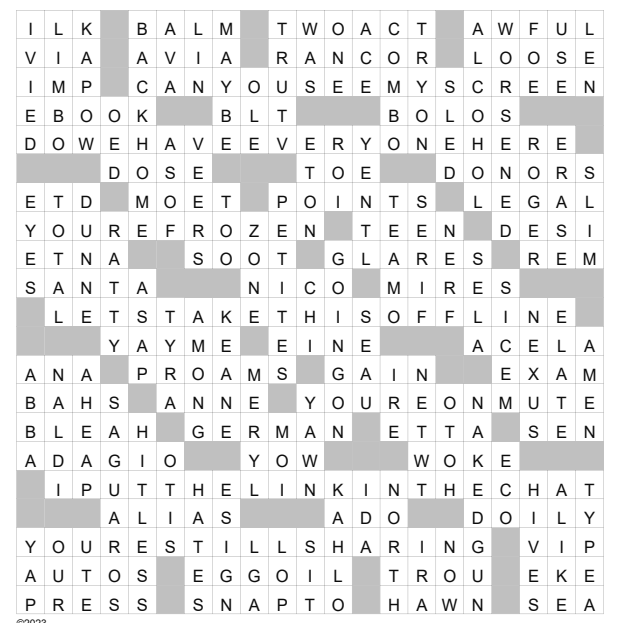
- 1. Chats at length
2. Margarine
3. Enumerate
4. United Arab Emirates carrier
5. \_\_ Especial (best-selling beer brand in the US)
6. Winter hrs. in Houston
7. Drum set part
8. Portent
9. Nickname for José
10. Tenant
11. City sacked during the Crusades
12. Prefix meaning 34-Down
13. Promotion at the top of a website
14. Home stadium of the Patriots and Revolution
15. Texter's "wow"
16. Less cluttered
17. Whole
18. Company
22. Draw
24. Keto alternative, in organic chemistry
28. Continuous pain
32. Puts the pedal to the metal
34. Habitat for humanity?
35. Formal agreements
36. South Asian royal title
37. Felipe of baseball
38. Agreement superseded by the WTO
39. Boyz II \_\_ (R&B group)
40. Tolkien tree creatures
41. Soccer great Hamm
44. Student
47. Top-notch
48. Make butter or ice cream
49. Sculpt
50. Toothy tool
52. "I feel seen," online
53. Brought action against
54. Envelope-pushing
57. "Cool!" in the 1980s
58. WWII foes
61. Partner in a cause
63. Quite forceful
64. Start of Caesar's boast
65. Pianist Chick
67. Nikola Jokic, for one
68. Water Works or Electric Company: Abbr.
69. Part of a book or website
70. Agreement at sea



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Last issue's solution

"Who's Zoomin' Who?"



PUBLICATION OF THE COMMONS CROSSWORD IS UNDERWRITTEN BY

Be Sure To Check Our Full Program Schedule @ brattleborotv.org
bc tv LOCAL PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS
Dec. 11-17 CHANNEL 1078 CHANNEL 1079
PLEASE NOTE NEW CHANNEL NUMBERS!
Here We Are - Greg Worden, Vermont Artisan Designs: Tues 8p, Wed 5:30p, Thurs 1:15p, Fri 9:30p, Sat 12:15p, Sun 5:15p
The World Fusion Show - Ep# 167 - Andy Akiho: Tues 4:30p, Wed 11:30a, Thurs 12:30p & 5:30p, Fri 7:30a, Sat 8p, Sun 4:30p
Marina Plunge for Charity 2010-2013 - in memory of Deirdre Baker: Mon 6:30p-9:30p
BCTV Open Studio - Project Feed the Thousands 2023: Mon 5:30p, Tues 8:35p, Wed 11a, Thurs 2:30p & 5p, Fri 7a, Sat 8:30p, Sun 4p
At BMAC - Exploring Bioplastics as Art Materials 11/30/23: Mon 10a, Tues 3:15p, Wed 12:30p, Sat 2p, Sun 6:30p
Around Town With Maria - The Gaza Monologues: Mon 6a, Tues 9a, Wed 9p, Thurs 1:55p, Fri 12:30a, Sat 10a
Vermont Humanities - Classic Films of the 1950s with Rick Winston 11/29/23: Wed 4:15p, Thurs 9a, Fri 2:30p, Sat 9p, Sun 12:30p
Keeping Up with Senior Solutions - Ep. 30 - Vet to Vet 11/20/23: Mon 12:30p, Tues 10:45a, Thurs 6a, Fri 5p, Sat 9a, Sun 5:50p
Around Town With Maria - Lighting of the Brattleboro Christmas Tree 12/1/23: Wed 9a, Thurs 9:15p, Fri 6:15a, Sat 3:15p, Sun 2:15p
Energy Week with George Harvey & Tom Finnell: Mon 9a, Tues 5p, Thurs 11a, Sat 7p
Vermontitude - Weekly Episode: Tue 11:30a & 6:30p, Wed 6a, Thu 1p, Sat 12p, Sun 5p
News Block: WTSN News: Mon-Fri 12p & 6p, Reformer News Break: Mon-Fri 12:05p & 6:05p, BUHS-TV News: Mon-Fri 12:15p & 6:35p
St. Michael's Episcopal Church - Weekly Service: Wed 2p, Sat 7:30a, Sun 11a
Trinity Lutheran Church - Weekly Service: Wed 10a, Thurs 7a, Sun 3p
Guilford Community Church - Weekly Service: Wed 6:30a, Fri 8p, Sun 8a
St. Michael's Catholic Church Mass: Sat 4p (LIVE), Tue 6:45a & 2p, Thurs 8p
Landmark College Graduation - Fall 2023 Commencement: Sat 10a (LIVE)
West River Education District Board Mtg. 12/11/23: Wed 6p, Thurs 8:30a, Fri 12p
Guilford Selectboard Mtg. 12/11/23: Wed 8:30p, Thurs 6a, Fri 2:30p
Jamaica Selectboard Mtg. 12/11/23: Thurs 6p, Fri 8a, Sat 12:15p
VT Nuclear Decommissioning Citizens Advisory Panel Mtg. 12/11/23: Thurs 3p, Sun 6p
Townshend Selectboard Mtg. 12/12/23: Thurs 8:30p, Fri 5:30a, Sat 2:45p
Windham Southeast School District Board Mtg. 12/12/23: Fri 6p, Sat 7:15a, Sun 12p
Windham Southeast Supervisory Union Board Mtg. 12/13/23: Fri 8:30p, Sat 4:45a, Sun 2:30p
Putney Selectboard Mtg. 12/13/23: Sat 6p, Sun 8:30a
Dummerston Selectboard Mtg. 12/13/23: Sat 8:30p, Sun 6a
Brattleboro Selectboard Mtg. 12/15/23: Mon 8:40p, Wed 8:40a, Thurs 11:10a
Newfane Selectboard Mtg. 12/4/23: Mon 9a, Tues 7:45p
Vernon Selectboard Mtg. 12/5/23: Mon 6:15a, Tues 6p, Wed 3p
Town Matters - Weekly Episode: Mon 6p, Wed 4:45p, Thurs 11a, Fri 11:30a, Sat 5p
The David Pakman Show: Mon 8a, Tue 9a, Wed 5p, Fri 10:30a, Sun 5p

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VT State Inspection Check your sticker to see if it's due!

# arts & community CALENDAR

THURSDAY	THURSDAY CONT.	SATURDAY CONT.	SUNDAY CONT.	THURSDAY
14	<p>► <b>Putney Public Library, 55 Main St. Information: 802-387-4407; putneylibrary.org/events.</b></p>	<p>► <b>4 p.m. both days. Proceeds are shared with New England Youth Theatre and Brattleboro Music Center.</b></p> <p>► <b>Through Sunday, December 17.</b></p> <p>► <b>Admission is by suggested donation of \$10 - no one turned away for lack of funds.</b></p> <p>► <b>Latchis (Films), 50 Main St. Information: latchis.com.</b></p>	<p><b>on premises). Food can be brought in or delivered. Bellows Falls Pride is an initiative of the Rockingham Arts and Museum Project, founded in 1997.</b></p> <p>► \$20.</p> <p>► <b>Moose Lodge Family Center, 59 Westminster St. Information: Wheelchair accessibility, food available for purchase, other questions - call Moose Lodge at 802-463-4054.</b></p>	21
<p><b>Performing arts</b></p> <p><b>PUTNEY Vermont Suitcase Company Presents: (Good) King Wenceslas:</b> Join our merry band of actors and puppets as we tell the yet untold story of a king whose reputation for good deeds leads to unexpected havoc. Comedy ensues! Fun for every age!</p> <p>► 7 p.m.</p> <p>► \$10 adults, \$8 seniors, \$1 kids. Advance ticketing closes two hours before showtime.</p> <p>► <b>Next Stage Arts Project, 15 Kimball Hill. Information: 802-387-0102; nextstagearts.org.</b></p>	15	<p><b>Well-being</b></p> <p><b>BRATTLEBORO The Brattleboro Zen Center In-Person Meditation:</b> This group chants briefly and then sits in silence for a half hour. All are welcome to join this peaceful action, either in-person or from wherever they might be.</p> <p>► 1 p.m.-1:35 p.m. on Saturdays.</p> <p>► Free.</p> <p>► <b>Wells Fountain, south side Windham County District Courthouse, Jct. Putney Rd. &amp; Main St. (Rte 30).</b></p>	<p><b>Music</b></p> <p><b>GUILFORD 60th Anniversary of the Green River Carol Sing: Carols and Scripture:</b> This community event started in the early 1960's to raise funds to restore, rebuild and maintain the 185-year-old Green River Community Church. Traditionally scheduled for the last Sunday before Christmas, the Carol Sing is a mix of familiar carols and scripture, ending with a candlelight version of Silent Night. Michael Mario once again leads the service, playing the historic Estey organ he repaired. All are welcome.</p> <p>► 5 p.m. Local children serve as ushers and ring church bell. Following the service, hot cider/traditional holiday treats will be served in vestibule. Carol Sing is sponsored by Green River Village Preservation Trust, a non-profit dedicated to preservation and sharing the historical, physical, community resources of Green River Village.</p> <p>► Donations welcome.</p> <p>► <b>Green River Church, 147 Green River Road (in Green River Village). Information: greenrivervillage.org.</b></p>	<p><b>The written word</b></p> <p><b>BRATTLEBORO &amp; #65279; Annual Book Sale &amp; Raffle:</b> Friends of the Library's Annual Book Sale is open through the end of the year during regular library hours. Most items are \$2 or less and you have the opportunity to purchase raffle tickets for 13 unique and fabulous literary-themed gift baskets. Proceeds from the sale benefit patrons of the Brooks Memorial Library.</p> <p>► <b>Raffle tickets are \$2 for 1 ticket, \$5 for 3 tickets.</b></p> <p>► <b>Brooks Memorial Library, 224 Main St. Information: 802-254-5290; brookslibraryvt.org.</b></p>
<p><b>Community building</b></p> <p><b>Guilford Gazette Meets (via Zoom):</b> New members invited. We'll be developing the February edition.</p> <p>► 9 a.m.</p> <p>► Free.</p> <p>► <b>Zoom. Information: Request the meeting link at cathi@guilfordfreelibraryvt.org. Call 802-257-4603 for information.</b></p>	<p><b>Kids and families</b></p> <p><b>BRATTLEBORO Bonnyvale Environmental Education Center: Little Explorers - Nature Playgroup for Children ages 3-5 and their Caregivers:</b> Enjoy a morning of nature play and exploration with BEEC's Naturalist Educator Kristina Weeks and her 3-year-old child.</p> <p>► 10-11:30 a.m. Same program is also offered 12/22.</p> <p>► Free.</p> <p>► <b>Bonnyvale Environmental Education Center, 1221 Bonnyvale Rd. Information: 802-257-5785; beec.org.</b></p>	<p><b>Community building</b></p> <p><b>BRATTLEBORO Brattleboro Flea Holiday Pop-Up Market:</b> Behold the magic! Market will feature 16 local makers selling their original art, crafts, gifts and provisions - something for everyone on your list! Products for sale include ceramics, jewelry, cards and prints, knits and apparel, candles, medicinal products, beauty products, ornaments, home decor, freshly brewed (and retail) coffee and much more! All handmade by small, independent makers local to the Brattleboro area.</p> <p>► 11 a.m.-5 p.m. in the Atrium.</p> <p>► <b>Brooks House, 41 Harmony Pl. (Main and High St.). Information: Find out more at brattleboroflea.com and follow us at @brattleboroflea on Instagram and Facebook for updates.</b></p>	18	22
<p><b>Community meals</b></p> <p><b>WILLIAMSVILLE Breakfast at Williamsville Hall:</b> Enjoy homemade pancakes, pastries, tea, coffee, orange juice.</p> <p>► 8 - 10:30 a.m. monthly. Hall is ADA compliant.</p> <p>► <b>Breakfast is complimentary (donations for the Hall are appreciated) and open to everyone.</b></p> <p>► <b>Williamsville Hall, Dover Rd. Information: for more information: williamsvillehall@gmail.com or visit williamsvillehall.org.</b></p>	<p><b>Visual arts and shows</b></p> <p><b>BELLOWS FALLS MC Noyes: Ink Wash Paintings / Judi Forman: One-of-a-Kind Metal Jewelry:</b> MC Noyes "Water Way" solo show premieres the artist's newest series of ink wash paintings and Judi Forman solo spotlight, shows the artist's newest work creating one-of-a-kind jewelry.</p> <p>► 12/15, 5-7 p.m.: <b>Join Canal Street Art Gallery on 3rd Friday Gallery Night to celebrate and meet the artists. Family friendly. Wheelchair access: Call 802-289-0104 upon arrival.</b></p> <p>► <b>Through Saturday, February 10, 2024.</b></p> <p>► Free.</p> <p>► <b>Canal Street Art Gallery, 23 Canal St. Information: Gallery Regular hours: Tuesday to Saturday 10-5.</b></p>	<p><b>Community building</b></p> <p><b>GREENFIELD Year-End Reflections on the Gaza Crisis:</b> WWAC member Rev. Nicholas Porter, Founder/Exec. Dir. Jerusalem Peacebuilders (www.jerusalempeacebuilders.org), a non-profit, interfaith ministry that partners with Jewish, Christian and Muslim educators to provide Middle Eastern adults/youth with skills, relationships, and confidence needed to be effective leaders/change agents. Hallmark of his global ministry has been promotion of education/healthcare essential to human progress/interfaith understanding.</p> <p>► 6 p.m. <b>Session guided by Chatham House Rules to promote thoughtful civilized dialogue, free exchange of ideas around this highly charged topic without attribution. Basically, all agree that what is said in Salon stays in Salon. We'll also share a short period of silent meditation to together focus intention to work toward positive change, a fitting close to a deeply troubling year. Refreshments served.</b></p> <p>► Free.</p> <p>► <b>One Eighteen Elliot, 118 Elliot St. Information: RSVP: windhamworldaffairscouncil@gmail.com. Let us know how many friends you will bring.</b></p>	<p><b>MONDAY</b></p>	<p><b>FRIDAY</b></p>
<p><b>Community meals</b></p> <p><b>NEWFANE Newfane Senior Lunch:</b> Appetizer: Cheese Puffs, Green Salad, Shepherd's Pie, Bread, and Tapioca Pudding for dessert! This delicious meal is sponsored by Senior Solutions and prepared and served by hard working volunteers from the church and community.</p> <p>► 12 noon.</p> <p>► <b>Suggested donation for this meal: \$3.50.</b></p> <p>► <b>Newfane Congregational Church, 11 Church St. Information: Questions? Call Winnie Dolan at 365-7870.</b></p>	16	<p><b>Celebrations and festivals</b></p> <p><b>WEST TOWNSHEND Farm-To-Table Holiday Supper with Chef Neal Myers plus Live Music:</b> Menu: Ham, green beans, and scalloped potatoes. We'll also have live music.</p> <p>► 5 - 7 p.m.</p> <p>► <b>Meal is donation-based, with suggested price of \$18, but we'll accept any offer from those who can't afford it.</b></p> <p>► <b>West Townshend Country Store and Cafe, Rte. 30. Information: 802-874-4800; info@westtownshend.org.</b></p>	<p><b>MONDAY</b></p>	<p><b>FRIDAY</b></p>
<p><b>Ideas and education</b></p> <p><b>BRATTLEBORO Members &amp; Friend Salon: Year-End Reflections on Gaza Crisis - Conversational gathering of intellectuals/artists/politicians:</b> Rev. Nicholas Porter is Founder/Exec. Dir. of Jerusalem Peacebuilders (www.jerusalempeacebuilders.org), a non-profit, interfaith ministry that partners with Jewish, Christian and Muslim educators to provide Middle Eastern adults/youth with skills, relationships, and confidence needed to be effective leaders/change agents. Hallmark of his global ministry has been promotion of education/healthcare essential to human progress/interfaith understanding.</p> <p>► 6 p.m. <b>Session guided by Chatham House Rules to promote thoughtful civilized dialogue, free exchange of ideas around this highly charged topic without attribution. Basically, all agree that what is said in Salon stays in Salon. We'll also share a short period of silent meditation to together focus intention to work toward positive change, a fitting close to a deeply troubling year. Refreshments served.</b></p> <p>► Free.</p> <p>► <b>One Eighteen Elliot, 118 Elliot St. Information: RSVP: windhamworldaffairscouncil@gmail.com. Let us know how many friends you will bring.</b></p>	<p><b>Kids and families</b></p> <p><b>SOUTH NEWFANE Calling all people with an affinity for Elf culture! Elf Movie Night &amp; "White Elephant" Gift Exchange:</b> "We bring this holiday classic to you by request and add a twist: At intermission we'll host a "white elephant" gift exchange - something you'd be happy to take home - preferably made a local artist/artisan. Or consider purchasing from one of our family-owned local businesses such as: The Newfane Store, Dutton's, Fayetteville Antiques, WW Building Supply, all in Newfane; Lawrence's Smoke Shop in Townshend; or Dover the Moon in East Dover."</p> <p>► 8 p.m. <b>Participants are asked to bring wrapped gift under \$20 for the exchange. Onsie/PJ's strongly encouraged and folks wearing them will qualify for a drawing. Bring your own bean bag, blankets, comfy camp chairs, adult beverages. Cleverly Home Services is sponsoring this event.</b></p> <p>► <b>Free and open to everyone. Donations accepted.</b></p> <p>► <b>South Newfane Schoolhouse, 387 Dover Rd. Information: RSVP and more information: tinyurl.com/2p85b6uw.</b></p>	<p><b>WEST DUMMERSTON Gingerbread House Decorating Party at the Dummerston Community Center:</b> "Join your friends/neighbors for a fun afternoon of listening to holiday music, eating yummy snacks, decorating gingerbread houses. You will receive a full sized pre-assembled gingerbread house and a lot of different edible items to decorate with."</p> <p>► 2 - 4 p.m.</p> <p>► \$20 per house.</p> <p>► <b>Dummerston Community Center, 166 West St. Information: RSVP by calling or texting 802-380-1424 so we can make sure there are enough houses.</b></p>	<p><b>MONDAY</b></p>	<p><b>FRIDAY</b></p>
<p><b>Ideas and education</b></p> <p><b>BRATTLEBORO Members &amp; Friend Salon: Year-End Reflections on Gaza Crisis - Conversational gathering of intellectuals/artists/politicians:</b> Rev. Nicholas Porter is Founder/Exec. Dir. of Jerusalem Peacebuilders (www.jerusalempeacebuilders.org), a non-profit, interfaith ministry that partners with Jewish, Christian and Muslim educators to provide Middle Eastern adults/youth with skills, relationships, and confidence needed to be effective leaders/change agents. Hallmark of his global ministry has been promotion of education/healthcare essential to human progress/interfaith understanding.</p> <p>► 6 p.m. <b>Session guided by Chatham House Rules to promote thoughtful civilized dialogue, free exchange of ideas around this highly charged topic without attribution. Basically, all agree that what is said in Salon stays in Salon. We'll also share a short period of silent meditation to together focus intention to work toward positive change, a fitting close to a deeply troubling year. Refreshments served.</b></p> <p>► Free.</p> <p>► <b>One Eighteen Elliot, 118 Elliot St. Information: RSVP: windhamworldaffairscouncil@gmail.com. Let us know how many friends you will bring.</b></p>	<p><b>Kids and families</b></p> <p><b>BRATTLEBORO Latchis Arts presents two holiday screenings of the film "Elma and the Top":</b> Original musical by Newfane composer, filmmaker, writer, Robert Fritz. Songs by Fritz and Denis Smith, "Elma and the Top" tells the story of the smallest elf in the North Pole who tries to be of use but just can't find where and how she fits in. Also the story of The Top, who finds out there's more in life than it thought. The stories show no matter what the past has been, we can start again, always given a new chance to reach our most important dreams.</p>	<p><b>CELEBRATIONS and festivals</b></p> <p><b>BELLOWS FALLS 'Santa's Belles' Holiday Drag Show (Ages 18 and up):</b> Unique show celebrating and showcases talents of entertainers and athletes! Enjoy performances by VT's premiere drag queens and celebrate local Gay Games Guadalajara medal winners, Roger Baraby (track) of Windsor and Carl Anhalt (water polo) of Bellows Falls. Performers for 'Santas Belles': Anita Cocktail, Emoji Nightmare, Rita Cocktail, Katniss Everqueer, Moxxi Hart and Jack Rose, and Prince Muffin. Music by Mama Dukes.</p> <p>► 8 p.m. <b>Doors open. 9 p.m. Show. Cash bar (ATM</b></p>	<p><b>SUNDAY</b></p>	<p><b>THURSDAY</b></p>
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<b>WEDNESDAY</b>  <span style="font-size: 48px; font-weight: bold;">27</span>	<p>3-17) will receive top-notch instruction in a noncompetitive environment. They'll get a sense of pride and increased confidence as they learn communication skills, perseverance, and self-determination, as well as how to be a spectacular acrobat, aerialist, juggler, or clown.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Full and half-day sessions.</li> <li>▶ Through Friday, December 29.</li> <li>▶ \$60 to \$80.</li> <li>▶ New England Center for Circus Arts (Trapezium), 10</li> </ul>	<p><b>Town Crier Dr. Information:</b> Register: <a href="http://tinyurl.com/3wbxxs86">tinyurl.com/3wbxxs86</a>.</p> <hr/> <p><b>Film and video</b> <b>BRATTLEBORO Brattleboro Recreation and Parks offers Free Movie Matinee: "Disney and Pixar's "Elemental":</b> All-new, original feature film set in Element City, where fire-, water-, land- and air residents live together. Story introduces Ember, a tough, quick-witted, fiery young woman whose</p>	<p>friendship with a fun, sappy, go-with-the-flow guy named Wade challenges her beliefs about the world they live in.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ 2 p.m. on lower level.</li> <li>Bring friends and join us for a free movie and popcorn!</li> <li>▶ Free.</li> <li>▶ Gibson-Aiken Center, 207 Main St. Information: More info, call Gibson Aiken Office: 802-254-5808 Mon.-Fri. 9 a.m.-12 noon and. 1-5 p.m. Follow on Facebook or Instagram..</li> </ul>	<p>To submit your event: <a href="mailto:calendar@commonsnews.org">calendar@commonsnews.org</a></p> <p><b>Deadline:</b> <i>5 p.m. Friday</i></p>
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# The Commons

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As a special thank you, all first-time donors will be entered into a drawing to win a painting by local artist Margaret Shipman!

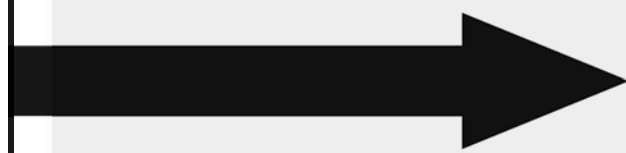


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**COLUMN** | *Sports Roundup*

# Bears sweep L&G Tip-Off Tourney

The Brattleboro Bears girls' basketball got their season off to a great start with wins over the Burr & Burton Bulldogs and Arlington Eagles in the Leland & Gray Tip-Off Tournament on Dec. 8 and 9 in Townshend.

The hosts were not as fortunate, as the Rebels started their season with a 30-23 loss to Arlington and a 42-28 loss to Burr & Burton in the tournament.

The opening night of the tournament saw the Bears grind out a 36-24 win over the Bulldogs. Brattleboro led 18-12 at halftime, and outscored Burr & Burton by the same margin in the second half.

Reece Croutworst led the Bears with 10 points. Abby Henry and Aliza Speno each added seven points, while Kate Pattison, Mallory Newton, and Montana Frehsee each chipped in four points.

Josie Powers led the Bulldogs with 11 points, but only three of them came in the second half as the Bears' defense never let Burr & Burton gain momentum.

Bears coach Karen Henry, who is replacing Chris Worden this season, said she didn't know what to expect from her team against Burr & Burton.

"Last year, they knocked us out of the playoffs, so it is huge boost for us," she said.

Henry said the Bears are putting more emphasis on defense. "We're still trying to figure it out," she said.

There were some first game jitters, but Henry said she was impressed with how Croutworst, Henry, and Pattison attacked the basket, particularly in the second half, as well as the inside play of Frehsee.

Henry and assistant coach Barb Barrett say they are working to get the Bears to play a more up-tempo game on offense. With all five starters back from last season's team and the speedy Croutworst and Henry running the offense, they gave a preview of what the offense will look like against the Bulldogs.

"You can always clean things up a little bit," said Henry.



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

• Against Arlington in the other tourney opener, Leland & Gray kept it close in the first half as the Eagles had a slim 16-13 lead at the break, but the Rebels were held to just 10 points in the second half as they struggled on offense.

Sidney Herrington led the Eagles with 15 points, while Mary Sanderson (nine points), Maggie Parker (eight points), and Samantha Morse (five points) accounted for all but one point of the Rebels' offensive output.

The Rebels, who made it to the Division IV semifinals last season, lost a lot of their front court strength with the graduation of Hannah Greenwood and Abby Towle. Parker and Sanderson, both seniors, are charged with picking up the slack and providing leadership.

Morse, Sanderson, and Abigail Emerson are the Rebels' backcourt rotation. All three played lots of minutes last season, and played most of the game against Arlington. Parker is anchoring the front court, with Jacy Stillwagon, Kianelise Pena, and Molly Bingham in the mix. On defense against Arlington, the Rebels mostly played a 2-3 zone, which had limited success against the Eagles.

• In the championship game, Brattleboro took care of Arlington, 48-35. The Rebels lost the consolation game to the Bulldogs, 42-28. Julia Decker had 14 points to lead Burr & Burton, while Ainerose Souza chipped in nine points.

While the Rebels are starting the season 0-2, they have the talent to bounce back quickly and be in the hunt for another long playoff run.



Brattleboro guard Abby Henry (3) reaches in to try and steal the ball from Burr & Burton guard Ainerose Souza (2) during the first half of their girls' basketball game in Townshend on Dec. 8. Looking on are Brattleboro guard Kate Pattison (11) and Burr & Burton guard Macy Mathews (23).

## Boys' basketball

• St. Johnsbury had four players in double-figures as the Hilltoppers rolled over the visiting Brattleboro Bears, 84-28, on Dec. 8.

The Hilltoppers were led by Harry Geng with 16 points. Kerrick Medose chipped in 14 points, Rex Hauser scored 13 points, and Carter Bunnell added 10 points. Jackson Emery led the Bears with seven points.

• Twin Valley had mixed results in the Bob Abrahamson Tip-Off Classic in Proctor on Dec. 8 and 9. In the first game, the Twinfield/Cabot Trojans handed the Wildcats a 77-53 loss.

The Trojans opened the game with 12-3 run, and stayed in control the rest of the way. They led 38-30 at halftime and 63-42 after three quarters.

Three-point shooting paced the Trojan attack as Tej Stewart scored 31 points, with four threes. Meles Gouge added 19 points. Brayden Brown led Twin Valley with 19 points.

Twin Valley bounced back with a 55-51 win over the Poultney Blue Devils in the tourney's consolation game. Poultney led by as many as 12 points in the third quarter before the Wildcats rallied for the victory.

Brown had a big night for the Wildcats, scoring 22 points. Noah Dornburgh added 14 points and Steven Oyer scored seven points for the 1-1 Wildcats.

Proctor defeated Twinfield/Cabot, 81-72, to capture the tourney title.

• Bellows Falls opened their season with a 61-43 win over Leland & Gray on Dec. 8 at Holland Gymnasium. It was the season opener for both teams.

## Girls' basketball

• Bellows Falls picked up a big road victory in their opener with a 61-17 win over Mill River on Dec. 9. The Terriers opened up a 16-3 lead after one quarter and led by 21 at the half. BF hosts Twin Valley on Dec. 15, at 6 p.m., in the home opener for the Terriers.

• Twin Valley narrowly lost their season opener to Sharon Academy, 36-29, on Dec. 9. Alanna Bevilacqua was the Wildcats' leading scorer with 13 points.

## Bowling

• Top-seeded Brattleboro was upset by Fair Haven, 2-1, in the



Leland & Gray guard Mary Sanderson dives for a loose ball between a pair of Arlington defenders during the first half of their girls' basketball game in Townshend.

Kickoff Classic on Dec. 9 at the Rutland Bowlerama. Burlington took home its first victory in the event, defeating Essex 2-1 in the finals. Fair Haven was a semifinalist, losing to Essex 2-0. Hartford lost to Burlington 2-0 in the semifinals as well.

Brattleboro will host Fair Haven and Windsor in the Bears' home opener at Brattleboro Bowl on Dec. 16 at 10 a.m.

## Girls' hockey

• Brattleboro opened the season with a 10-1 loss to Hartford at Withington Rink. The Bears host Woodstock on Dec. 13 in the home opener at Withington Rink.

## Skating through the holidays

• If you're looking for a great holiday gift, how about giving a season pass for ice skating at Withington Rink at Living Memorial Park?

Season passes for Brattleboro

residents are \$40 for students, \$50 for adults, and \$80 for families. If you live outside of town, the cost is \$55 for students, \$65 for adults, and \$105 for families. If you don't have skates, you can rent them for \$3 a day.

The Recreation & Parks Department offers a variety of programs for skaters of all ages, from figure skating lessons to speed skating sessions. For more information, give the rink a call at 802-257-2311, call the Rec. Dept. at 802-254-5808, or visit the Rec. Dept.'s website at [Brattleboro.gov](http://Brattleboro.gov).

## Senior bowling roundup

• Week 14 of the fall/winter season of the Brattleboro Senior Bowling League at Brattleboro Bowl on Dec. 4 saw Four Seasons (47-23) remain in first place, while No Splits (43-27) went 5-0 to stay in second place. High Rollers and Skippers (both 41-29) are tied for third, followed by Stepping Stones

(40-30), Hairiers (38-32), Dumblebor (32-38), Four Pins (30-40), and PEWJ (25-45).

Mary Parlman had the women's high handicap game (239) and series (673), while Norm Corliss had the men's high handicap game (257) and series (673). High Rollers had the high team handicap game (881) and series (2,548).

Robert Rigby had the men's high scratch series (562) with games of 204 and 200, while John Walker had a 558 series with games of 219 and 192. Gary Montgomery had a 554 series with games of 204 and 192, Skip Shine had a 532 series with games of 182 and 181, and Warren Corriveau Sr. had a 516 series with games of 202 and 182. Fred Ashworth had a 206 game and John Laamanen had a 188 game.

Carol Gloski had the women's high scratch series (510), with games of 191 and 172. Pam Greenblott and Shirley Aiken each had a 173 game, while Nancy Dalzell had a 168 game.



Karen Henry is the new head coach of the Brattleboro Bears varsity girls' basketball team this season.

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