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BRATTLEBORO

Town Meeting boosts measures for climate change

Annual Representative Town Meeting also bumps up human services allocations for next year in a \$23 million town budget

By Virginia Ray
The Commons

BRATTLEBORO — Representative Town Meeting members went through several hours of discussion regarding non-binding resolutions after members increased the fiscal year 2025 budget by \$70,000 for climate change concerns and passed a total budget of \$23,063,830 — a 4.3% increase over this year's — by a 65-41 vote.

The budget is predicated on \$17,701,970 being raised in

property taxes.

Members gathered at the Brattleboro Union High School gymnasium on March 23. A quorum, defined as 50% of all potential RTM members plus one for this purpose, was set at 77. Despite inclement weather, there were 87 representatives present at the start of the meeting.

RTM members needed to approve, by Australian ballot, borrowing money to build a secondary water storage tank at the Pleasant Valley Reservoir for an

■ SEE BRATTLEBORO ART.M, A3

WSESD voters, citing student needs, pass \$65.8M budget

Bottom line: hold legislators accountable for a difficult funding formula and last-minute decisions at the ballot box in November

By Virginia Ray
The Commons

BRATTLEBORO — After about 80 minutes of discussion, 242, or 1.7%, of Windham Southeast School District (WSESD) voters agreed to a \$65,846,891 budget for fiscal year 2025 at its annual meeting on March 19.

The breakdown of voters in attendance at Brattleboro Union High School was: 120, or 1.3% of eligible voters, from Brattleboro; 35, or 2.2%, from Dummerston; 49, or 2.8%, from Guilford; and 38, or 1.9%, from Putney.

Moderator Steven Brown quickly dispatched articles electing him as moderator, Frank Rucker as treasurer, and Mo Hart as board clerk, and agreeing to pay school board members \$7,000 each annually and the chair \$9,000 annually.

11th-hour legislative changes wreak budget havoc

Shaun Murphy, board member and Finance Committee chair, explained that education taxes are based on several factors: the "yield" set by the legislature in May; the weighted student average; a common level of appraisal (CLA); and individual school district expenses. The state dictates all but the yield, which the

legislature determines annually.

The budget represents a 3% increase from this year and includes a 16% increase in health-care costs and a 4% increase in salaries. The budget plans for level staffing with 435 staff members, and enrollment has slightly declined, primarily from students opting out of the district through school choice.

CLA is a method of ensuring that each town pays its fair share of education property tax to the state education fund even if its grand list is not at 100% of fair

■ SEE WSESD ANNUAL MEETING, A3

COLUMN | Reporter's Notebook

On the MAINSTAGE

Becky Chan, a former area resident and Brattleboro Union High School graduate, finds connection through the art of storytelling — on this night, about her journey from Putney to the FBI to 'The Moth'



FRAN LYNNGAARD HANSEN/THE COMMONS

Becky Chan, a BUHS graduate and former Putney resident, takes the stage at The Moth Mainstage Event in Tarrytown, New York, this past Saturday, where she presented her story of immigration and 22 years as an FBI agent.

Tarrytown, N.Y.

BECKY CHAN sits casually with us, her friends, chatting about our youth in Brattleboro. Fellow graduates of Brattleboro Union High School class of 1976, we have traveled to Tarrytown, N.Y., to see Chan perform in "The Moth in Tarrytown," a Moth Mainstage event.

Chan, who now lives in Seattle, has invited us to see her live on stage tonight during her short return to the East Coast.

She shows no signs of stage fright or nervousness, and before she takes the stage it's difficult to imagine that she's about to deliver a 12-minute story



FRAN LYNNGAARD HANSEN, a

Brattleboro native with deep connections to local history and to people everywhere, is a Commons reporter and columnist.

about her life as an immigrant, having moved from Hong Kong to Putney when she was 15. This personal history then leads to a 22-year career as an FBI agent, and the way these two stories fit together mesmerizes the audience into stunned silence.

The Moth — a nonprofit

organization "dedicated to the art and craft of storytelling," according to its promotional materials — claims to have "presented over 50,000 true, personal stories, told live, without notes to standing-room-only audiences and via radio, around the globe" over its 27-year run.

Listeners to public radio may be familiar with the nationally syndicated-Moth Radio Hour, a weekly program of stories like Chan's recorded at events like this one. Each year, people download more than 1 million episodes of the weekly Moth Podcast.

Appearing at a live event can be a long process for storytellers, and it can

■ SEE 'THE MOTH', A5

The LION in WINTER

After nearly a half century in the U.S. Senate, Patrick Leahy is enjoying his retirement years

By Joyce Marcel
The Commons

BRATTLEBORO — Some people call him St. Patrick.

Former U.S. Sen. Patrick J. Leahy, along with his wife, Marcelle, are beloved by many in Vermont for many reasons.

First, for their accessibility and second, for their clear and obvious love of Vermont. Third, for being on the right side of most of the issues Vermonters care about. Fourth, for their wit, charm, warmth and grace. And fifth, for Sen. Leahy's record of ensuring that Vermont would get its slice of the federal-funding pie.

When Leahy went to

Washington in 1975, he was Vermont's first-ever Democratic senator. He was the most junior in status but only the second-youngest member of the Senate — the youngest was a whippersnapper from Delaware named Joe Biden.

By the time he retired in 2023, Leahy was the longest-serving member of Congress to have served solely as a senator. He was also twice president pro tempore of the U.S. Senate — meaning he was two heartbeats away from being president of the United States — from 2012 to 2015 and again from 2021 to 2023.

While the 83-year-old Leahy enjoys his retirement, his former Senate colleague is running



RANDOLPH T. HOLHUT COMMONS FILE PHOTO

Sen. Patrick Leahy visited the Retreat Farm in Brattleboro in 2021 to announce \$3 million of federal funding to create a food center at the historic site.

for a second term as president. That explains why Leahy was in Washington for President Biden's State of the Union speech on March 7, and maybe why Marcelle was invited by Jill Biden

to have lunch at the White House with a few current and former Senate spouses while they were in town.

"Marcelle got the biggest hug from Jill Biden when she came

in," Leahy said. "That was nice. I had a chance to chat a little bit with the president. 'Hey, do you remember that time in Vermont...?' We were laughing

■ SEE LEAHY, A2

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‘The Moth’

take even longer for the audio of the story to get on the radio.

CHAN'S PUBLIC SPEAKING story begins when she lived in Washington, D.C. While working for the FBI, she was a member of Toastmasters International, a nonprofit group that helps participants gain speaking and presentation skills through a network of worldwide clubs.

"When I first got to Quantico [...] the room was filled with all these people who were so important," Chan remembers. "I had to introduce myself, and I felt so shy and intimidated. I went to Toastmasters to practice public speaking [and] to feel more comfortable talking about myself."

Chan notes that she was one of only three people in that room in Quantico for whom English was not their first language. Chan was only the second Chinese American woman to be hired in the FBI's 116-year history.

She has traveled extensively, both for the FBI and for personal pleasure, visiting friends in many countries. She speaks Cantonese, Mandarin and English, and had opportunity to use all three during her time with the bureau.

Chan's curious personality has encouraged her to speak with people of all ages, religions, and cultures. Though she's still a bit shy, she's the kind of person who is easy to converse with. People are naturally drawn to her.

"Storytelling is like traveling the world. I love diversity, getting out, meeting new people, and living through another person's life by seeing it through their eyes," she says with a broad smile. "At Moth Mainstage events, the audience can travel through another person's story. You hear from people you would likely not have the opportunity to meet otherwise."

Eventually, Chan found her entry point to The Moth by attending its Story Slams. At these live events, anyone can put their name in a hat and, if drawn, take the stage and tell a five-minute story — or not. No one has to volunteer, and most of the audience is simply there to enjoy the show. She attended six Story Slam events and was picked to present four times.

At Story Slam, the Moth staff randomly picks volunteers who become judges. After each presentation, each judge holds up a card indicating a score from 0 to 10.

"It's pretty nerve-racking to go to an event and not know whether you'll be telling a story or not, and then getting judged, but it taught me a lot and it was exhilarating," says a smiling Chan.

CHAN REMEMBERS one of the first stories she shared. It involved her junior year at BUHS and the American Legion's Girls State Auxiliary event.

Girl's State, a week-long, invitation-only program, aims to develop leadership skills in high school seniors. According to the Auxiliary's online literature, "The focus of the program is Vermont town, county, and state government. Delegates are elected and appointed to offices within the Legislative, Executive, and Judicial Branches of government, which culminates in a mock State Legislature."

Chan, a well-liked leader and athlete in her class, was among the five chosen by faculty to represent BUHS at the event — a high honor. However, when the American Legion Auxiliary discovered that Chan was not a U.S. citizen — she had not yet lived in the United States long enough to be eligible to apply for citizenship — her offer was rescinded.

On April 11, 1975, the *Brattleboro Reformer* reported that "in one day, 500 of her friends and teachers at Brattleboro Union High School, where Ms. Chan is a junior, signed petitions saying that she should go and receive the 'citizenship training' at the convention before she decides to become a full-fledged American. Among the signatures on the petition are the names of the other four nominated and elected representatives to the convention from BUHS."

An uproar in Brattleboro ensued over the following weeks, inspiring letters to the editor in the *Reformer* and, later that month, an editorial by then-editor Norman Runnion. The other four chosen delegates refused to attend without her.

Eventually the decision was reversed, and Chan was allowed to attend Girl's State.

"That was an important time in my life," she remembers.

"My friends stood up for me, the community stood up for me, and I felt supported in my new country. I was an immigrant; I didn't expect that to happen. It's a good story to share."

Another way to pitch a story is by calling a designed phone number, which will give the caller one minute to leave a recording to catch the ear of the staff. If chosen, they might be invited to tell their story at a Mainstage Event, as Chan had in New York City the previous week.

Chan's presentation in Tarrytown was her fourth Mainstage event. She has also been invited to present in Seattle; Jackson Hole, Wyoming; and New York City. Her biography in the event program gives the audience a glimmer of her voice:

"Becky Chan retired in Seattle after 22 years with the FBI. An avid gardener, she volunteers, forages the wild, and hones her story telling skill as a freelance writer for the [Northwest] Asian Weekly, a community newspaper. Becky emigrated from Hong Kong to the U.S. with her family in 1971 and settled in Putney, VT where she learned to square dance, skinny dip, and make pizza out of Velveta cheese, Chef Boyardee sauce, and English muffins. It's only after working in NYC she realized what real pizza is."

"A graduate of Brattleboro Union High School, she was the 1976 440-yard dash Vermont State Champ. Becky also ran track at North Carolina State University, 'alongside' Joan Benoit Samuelson, the 1984 Olympic Gold Medalist in the marathon. Joan has no recollection of ever running with Becky."

THE TARRYTOWN EVENT is about to begin. The other storytellers for the evening come to join Chan and her friends before they head into the green room backstage. Chan introduces them to her friends.

Dave Kalema is a Ugandan American filmmaker. Cleyvis Natera is an author. Jameer Pond is a video director. Mindy Raf is a solo artist, stand-up comedian, and songwriter.

Chan's friends are struck by the bond among these five people, who appear to know each other well but actually met only days before.

In fact, all the Moth staff and storytellers appear outgoing, confident, and extraordinarily friendly, not only with one another, but with Chan's friends as well. These storytellers fancy meeting new people with backgrounds unlike their own.

The lights blink, and the stars of the evening scurry away as the audience, which packs all 843 seats of the Tarrytown Music Hall, sits down. It's a gorgeous venue. Built in 1885, the Rockefellers, the Vanderbilts, and the societal elite once filled this room. Chan and the other storytellers will walk a stage where Louis Armstrong, Miles Davis, and Dave Brubeck variously performed jazz, and Woodrow Wilson and Teddy Roosevelt held events for their respective presidential campaigns.

But on this night, one at a time, each storyteller will craft a tale that will keep the audience fully engrossed.

"Everybody has a story, an experience to share," Chan says to her friends before the curtain goes up. "It's up to us to bring a diverse community of storytellers together to allow the audience to experience lives different from our own."

She disappears backstage. A single violinist stands in the spotlight, playing a solo rendition of the Moth theme music. Then host Amber Wallin, a Los Angeles-based comedian and filmmaker, warms up the audience and educates us about how long storytellers are allowed to speak and other rules for the evening.

The theme for the event is "A Point of Beauty," which also happens to be the name of the latest Moth anthology in book form.

As each storyteller arrives onstage, the host reads their answer to the prompt, "Tell us about a time when you couldn't look away." Answers range from the sight of a nude male beach in Hawaii to the magic of a grandmother's hands seasoning food.

Four storytellers thrill us with tales of basketball, hip-hop, a sick child, and a father grappling with his polyamorous lesbian daughter's relationships.

And then Chan, the final presenter of the evening, takes the stage. Dressed in black and full to the brim with humor and wisdom, Chan, the senior storyteller on tonight's stage, weaves

an astonishing story about bringing Cheng Chui Ping, a Chinese woman who ran a human smuggling operation, to justice.

"Sister Ping" — or "the Snakehead," as she was also known — was arrested for bringing over 3,000 Chinese people into the United States illegally, which earned her over \$40 million in the process.

Chan manages to weave her childhood in Hong Kong, her immigrant story from Putney, her education at BUHS, and the capture of a notorious smuggler into a story that keeps the audience moving from laughter to tears to awe. When it's over, the applause is thunderous.

She has told a version of this story all four times at Moth Mainstage, adding information, changing the format, tweaking the words and the humorous lines each time she does.

Kate Tellers, director for the evening's presentation of Moth Mainstage, is a huge fan.

"Becky has lived hundreds of stories in her life, and I want to hear them all," she says enthusiastically.

"I appreciate that she can find humor in a situation so close to her own identity. She steps confidently out of her comfort zone at each event, and manages to quickly connect with the audience, and through them, with people across the country."

Tellers goes on to explain that Moth storytellers can "tour" only until they reach the holy grail of storytelling — being recorded for *The Moth Radio Hour*. At that point, they must stop touring. She pictures Chan touring for some time.

"This woman is filled with interesting stories," Tellers says. "I want to hear them all."

For her part, Chan enjoys the challenge of storytelling, and her connection with the other presenters and her audience.

But there is one more reason she keeps going.

"I have this sense of responsibility, especially now, to educate people about the immigrant experience," says Chan with conviction.

"One way to do that is to share my personal stories of living, working, and becoming an American citizen, and then working for the FBI," she continues. "How can people understand what that is like if I don't share my own story?"

FROM SECTION FRONT



With a Chinese dragon in the background, Chan and her friends head to The Moth event. From left: Becky Chan, Fran Lynggaard Hansen, Ann Turner Tripp, and Pam Lane.

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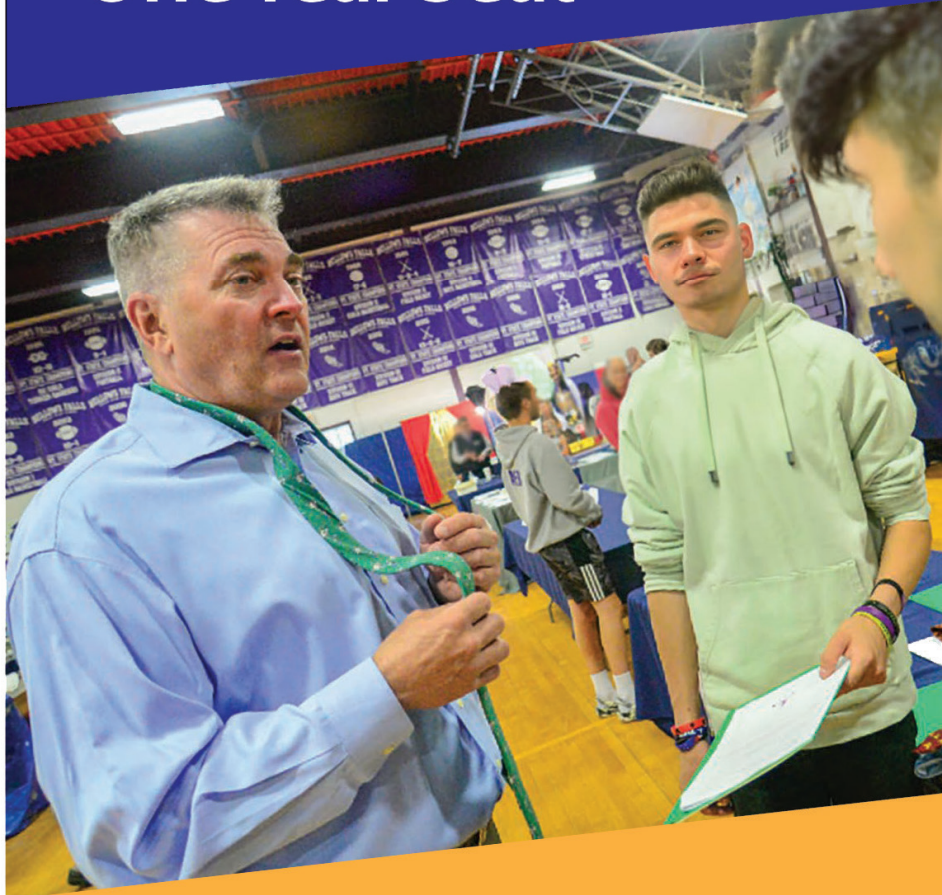
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COLUMN | Deeper Dive

Don't miss the solar eclipse on April 8

Vermonters will have a prime seat for this rare celestial event — and experience perspective-altering awe

DO YOU HAVE Monday, April 8, circled in red on your calendar? Just in case you are someone who isn't excited about the upcoming total solar eclipse, I want to make sure you know why you should be. If you have seen lunar eclipses and partial solar eclipses, you might think April 8 will be similar. Consider this: the sun is so bright that even a 90% eclipse could go unnoticed if you weren't watching for it.

That is not the case with a total solar eclipse.

I first became aware of how different this experience might be when I read Annie Dillard's essay "Total Eclipse." Dillard is a Pulitzer Prize-winning writer best known for her poetic and keen observations of the natural world. Here is her description of the light just before totality: "The sun was going, and the world was wrong. The grasses were wrong; they were platinum. Their every detail of stem, head, and blade shone lightless and artificially distinct as an art photographer's platinum print. This color has never been seen on Earth. The hues were metallic; their finish was matte."

I was intrigued, but because Annie Dillard can find the majestic in the mundane, I have begun looking for accounts by ordinary mortals as well. All recount a similar feeling of otherworldliness and awe.

HERE ARE the recommendations I have gleaned.

First, get yourself to the zone of totality. In Vermont, the southern reach of that 70-mile-wide band runs just below Middlebury, Barre, and St. Johnsbury. The closer you are to

PATTI SMITH is a wildlife rehabilitator and naturalist at the Bonnyvale Environmental Education Center in West Brattleboro. The Commons' Deeper Dive column gives artists, arts organizations and other nonprofits elbow room to write in first person and/or be unabashedly opinionated, passionate, and analytical about their own creative work and events.

the middle of the band, the longer totality lasts. At the southern limit, it will last for just two minutes. You can add another minute and a half by driving a bit farther north.

From Brattleboro, you can drive straight up Interstate 91 for 2.5 hours to the Canadian border town of Newport. You'll want to choose a spot with a big view of the sky. The Vermont eclipse will begin (depending on your longitude) near 2:15 p.m., with totality achieved at 3:30 p.m. The moon's shadow will depart an hour later.

Veteran eclipse chasers' advice to first-timers is to just soak it in. Don't try to take photos. Totality is short and rare. There are, however, a few things worth watching for.

The strangeness begins several minutes before totality, when it begins to darken noticeably and only the very edge of the sun illuminates the Earth; look for the phenomenon Dillard describes. Shifts in the light spectrum and within our eyes result in the world taking on a silvery cast. Certain features, especially shadows, take on an uncanny crispness.

At the moment of totality, you can remove eclipse glasses and feast your eyes. The mountains along the edge of the moon will flash with sunlight in a phenomenon called Bailey's Beads. The sun's corona will form a silvery band around the black disc of the moon and may appear as silky strands reaching

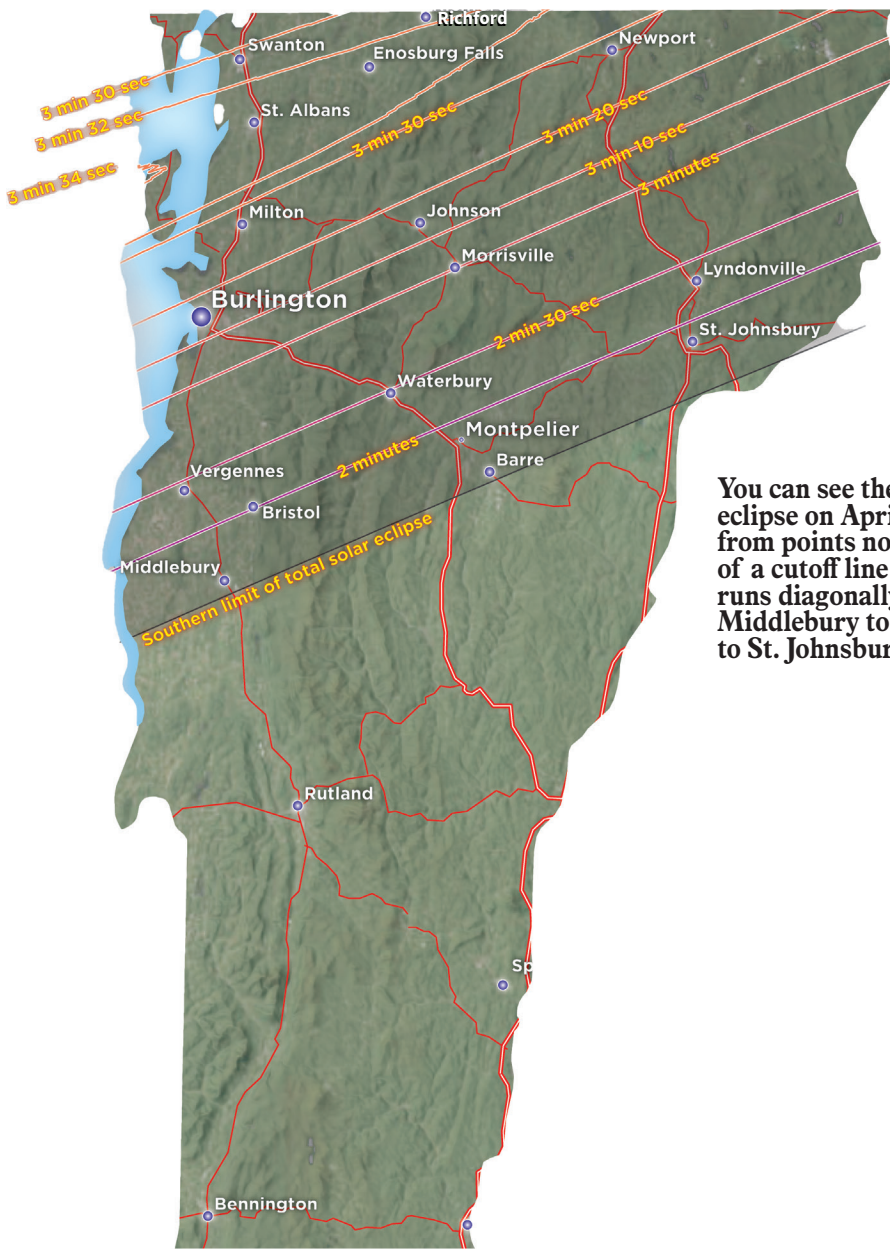
into space. If the sun ejects plasma, the Diamond Ring effect will be seen.

The sky will darken to an indigo blue, and the planets and brightest stars will appear. With the sun and the planets arrayed along the same arc, Earthlings will have a glimpse of the order of our solar system. On April 8, Uranus and Jupiter will be above the sun; Venus, Saturn, and Mars will be below it.

There is a 60% chance that skies will be cloudy on April 8. I will plan to head to the zone of totality anyway, just to see the sky grow dark in midafternoon.

If you're thinking you'll just wait for the next total solar eclipse to come to Vermont, you'll have to wait until 2106.

IT'S TRUE THAT the eclipse will last only a few minutes, but how often do we have opportunities to experience perspective-altering awe?



MICHAEL ZEILER/GREATAMERICANECLIPSE.COM

You can see the total eclipse on April 8 from points north of a cutoff line that runs diagonally from Middlebury to Barre to St. Johnsbury.

Here's another reason to go see the eclipse — intense shared experiences have been shown to build feelings of trust and camaraderie.

Maybe, if all of America sees the eclipse together? It's worth a try.

If you want to learn more eclipse science and celebrate the solar system, the Bonnyvale Environmental Education Center will be hosting "Summoning the Eclipse" on Saturday, April 6 from 1 to 3 p.m. You can register for this

family-friendly event at beec.org or by calling 802-257-5785. Admission includes eclipse glasses, an essential part of eclipse-watching gear.

AROUND THE TOWNS

Rec. Dept. hosts annual Egg Hunt

BRATTLEBORO — The Brattleboro Recreation & Parks Department will present their annual free Egg Hunt on Saturday, March 30, at the lower softball field at Living Memorial Park. In case of mud or rain, the alternate location will be inside the Nelson Withington Skating Facility.

Egg hunts will start promptly at 9:30 a.m. (for ages 4 and under) and 9:45 a.m. (for ages 5 and older). There will be six stuffed animal prizes for each age group. Each child needs to have a basket or container to collect the eggs. For more information, call 802-254-5808.

Spring Fling at Whitingham Free Public Library

JACKSONVILLE — Spring is in the air at the Whitingham Free Public Library at the Municipal Center on Route 100. Join them on Saturday, March 30, from 10:30 a.m. to noon, for a Spring Fling Party.

Kids and parents/caregivers can enjoy crafts, activities, stories, and fun snacks. Call 802-368-7506 to register.

Rabies clinic in Newfane

NEWFANE — Dr. Miles Powers will be holding a rabies clinic at NewBrook Fire Station on Saturday, March 30, from 10 a.m. to noon. Rabies vaccinations for dogs and cats are \$15,

distemper shots are \$25, and the cost for both is \$35. If you would like to get other vaccinations at this time, call Powers at 802-348-7918 to make arrangements.

The Townshend Town Clerk will be at the clinic as well, so that town's residents can register their dogs. Dog licenses are due on April 1. For more information on licenses for Townshend dogs, call 802-365-7300, ext. 1.

Easter Treasure Hunt at Guilford Community Park

GUILFORD — The Guilford Community Church is sponsoring a free Easter Treasure Hunt at the new Guilford Community Park on March 30, at 3 p.m., for children ages 3-13, rain or shine.

According to organizers, the Easter Bunny will be hiding treasures of toys and treats throughout the Guilford Community Park, with children then hunting for them among the tulips, under the new timber-built pavilion, around the Labyrinth, in the grass, and on the children's play equipment. In case of inclement weather, the hunt will move into the church's Zeller Hall under the sanctuary.

Parents are asked to pre-register their children by before noon on March 29 at bit.ly/758-hunt, so there will be enough toys for all participating. Each treasure hunter will receive an individualized clue based on age prior to the noncompetitive hunt. Children do not need to bring baskets or containers and do not need to be residents of Guilford.

Light refreshments will be available for sale to help support the church's youth and family programs, which include Sunday school classes and an interfaith youth group with community service projects and trips for teens.

For more information, email guilfordchurch@gmail.com or call Church Administrator Debra Zagaeski at 802-257-0994.

Sugar-on-snow dinner served at Evening Star Grange

DUMMERSTON — Evening Star Grange, 1008 East-West Rd., will host a Maple Sugar on Snow Dinner on Saturday, March 30. The menu features baked ham with homemade baked beans, and homemade potato salad and cole slaw, with maple sugar on snow for dessert.

There will be two seatings, at 4:30 p.m. and 6 p.m. Tickets are \$15 for adults, \$7 for children 5-11. Reservations are required, and no takeout meals will be available. Call 802-254-1138 to reserve a seat.

Creative writing workshop focuses on eclipse

BRATTLEBORO — Eclipses have meant many things to many people throughout history — from end-times omens to cosmic messages. Writers are invited to unleash their creativity under the shadow of the upcoming solar eclipse on April 2, at 7 p.m., in the Community Meeting Room of Brooks Memorial Library, 224 Main St.

Acclaimed author GennaRose Nethercott will lead a world tour through eclipse folklore, myths, and superstitions. Participants will then re-imagine these old stories to create new ones of their own in a free generative workshop; walk in with a blank page, and walk out with new writing. This is open to all levels of writing experience, ages 14 and up. Register in advance at info@brookslibraryvt.org, or in person at the library.

Estate planning talk offered in Guilford

GUILFORD — Guilford Cares will host Jonathan D. Secrest, an attorney with the Brattleboro law firm of Secrest & Darrow, who will present an overview on estate planning, including the most important issues to consider and the biggest mistakes to avoid, on Thursday, April 4, at 1 p.m., at the Broad Brook Community Center, 3940 Guilford Center Rd.

Topics will include wills and trusts, lessening the burden on your heirs, providing for minor children or those with special needs, families with children from prior marriages, protecting assets in the event of a nursing home stay, and avoiding or reducing estate taxes. He said he looks forward to questions, and hopes to make these important matters clear, understandable, and even interesting.

During his career, Secrest has worked as an attorney for the federal government, argued before the Vermont Supreme Court, and testified before the Vermont Legislature on improvements to the state's probate laws which he helped draft. He has drafted complex wills and trusts, including special needs trusts, advised clients on business succession issues, and counseled clients regarding elder law and Medicaid planning.

For further information, contact Guilford Cares at 802-579-1350 or guilfordcaresvt@gmail.com.

Applications now open for Crosby-Gannett Fund

BRATTLEBORO — Funding is now available for Vermont organizations in the Brattleboro area through the Crosby-Gannett Fund grant program at the Vermont Community Foundation. The purpose of the Crosby-Gannett Fund is to support endeavors that contribute to the betterment and vitality of the Brattleboro area.

The Crosby-Gannett Fund evolved its giving strategy last year and will now award a grant to one applicant annually. The grant term will be active for three years, and the grantee will receive \$7,500 per year, totaling \$22,500 over the three-year period.

The goal of this model is to provide reliable capacity-building support to creative ideas and community-based organizations that will enable meaningful improvement in the Brattleboro area. Applications must be submitted by 5 p.m. on Tuesday, April 30. Visit vermontcf.org/crosby-gannett to learn more and apply.

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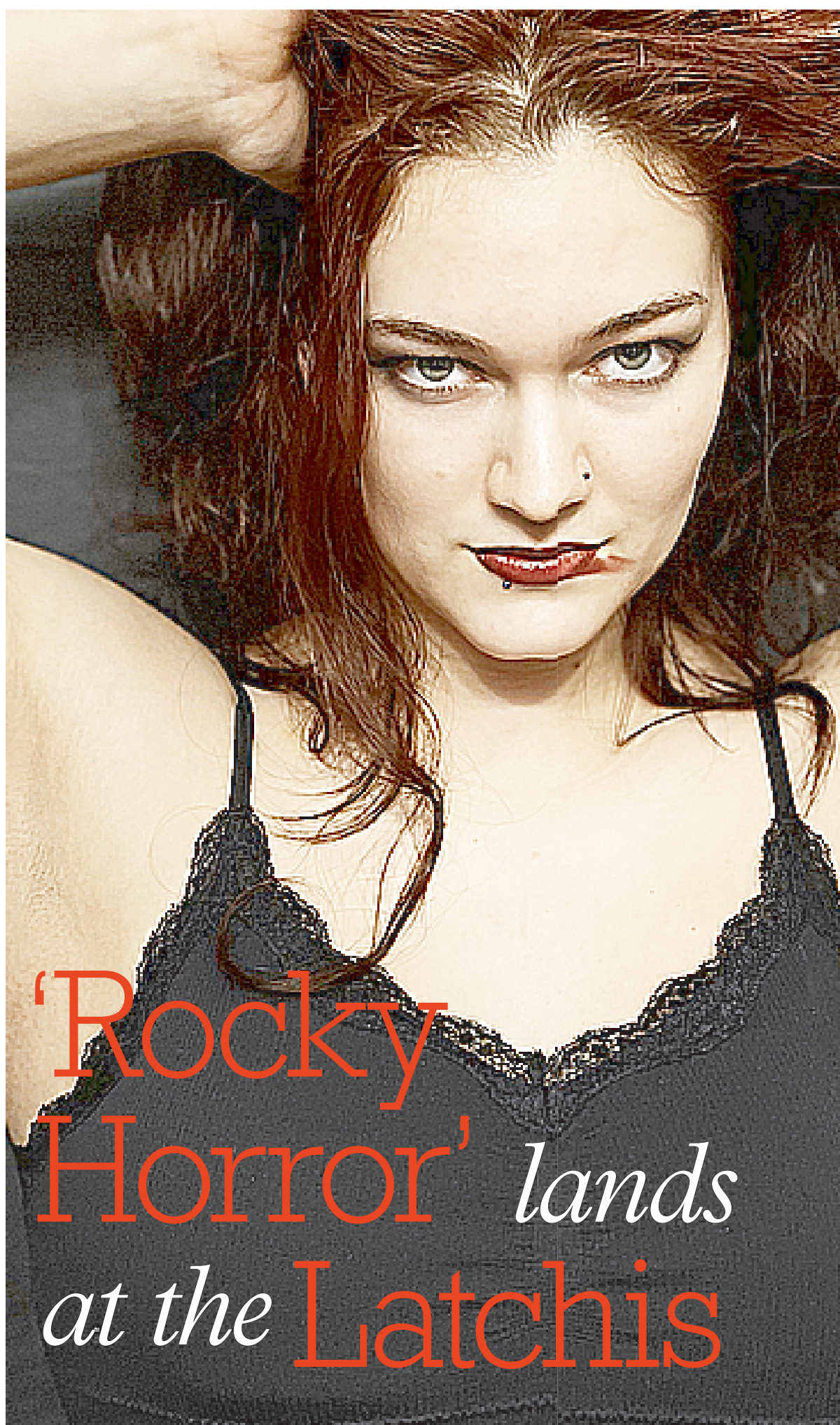
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'Rocky Horror' lands at the Latchis

Brattleboro will have its own monthly screening of the cult classic, with top-tier shadow cast

By Annie Landenberger
The Commons

BRATTLEBORO—Raise your hand if you're ready to do the time warp again!

Thanks to a collaboration between Kinetic Theory Theatre (KTT) and the Latchis Theater, you can soon bellow this iconic tune from *Rocky Horror Picture Show* (RHPS) — en masse and in Brattleboro. Complete with shadow cast and all its quirky culture, RHPS will soon be a monthly feature on the area arts scene.

RHPS mania first swept the country nearly 50 years ago, and it endures today. A 1975 independent musical comedy horror film based on the 1973 stage musical production *The Rocky Horror Show*, RHPS is, according to Wikipedia, “a tribute to the science fiction and horror B movies of the 1930s through the early 1960s.”

As encapsulated in *The Rough Guide to Film*, “A young couple, Brad and Janet, enter the alternative universe of Dr. Frank-N-Furter, a transvestite from the planet of Transsexual in the galaxy of Transylvania, who has created the perfect man, Rocky Horror, with the help of his twisted assistants.”

Though the film never got traction in standard 2, 7, or 9 p.m.-type showings, it took off as an after-hours cult darling — soon to become a classic.

Film critic Roger Ebert, describing Rocky Horror as “not so much a movie as more of a long-running social phenomenon,” wrote that “inside the theater, the fans put on a better show than anything on the screen.”

“They knew the film by heart, chanted all of the lines in unison, sang

■ SEE ROCKY HORROR, B3

Camille Echeverri as “Magenta” in the *Ones From The Vaults* shadow cast production of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*.



'Spring Group 2024' exhibit opens at MGFA

BRATTLEBORO—Mitchell-Giddings Fine Arts, 183 Main St., invites everyone to visit a large group exhibit of new and recent work, “Spring Group 2024,” opening with an artist reception Saturday, March 30, from 5 to 7 p.m.

The exhibition will continue through May 12 and features a diverse selection of paintings, prints, glass, and sculpture by Amy Arbus, Josh Bernbaum, Matt Brown, Rona Lee Cohen, Mutsu Crispin, Jim Giddings, Jon Gregg, Karen Kamenetzky, Lisa Mackie, Petria Mitchell, Gene Parulis, Lauren Pollaro, Jessie

Pollock, Torin Porter, Todd Reuben, David Rohn, Joseph Salerno, Tim Segar, Larry Simons, and Jen Violette.

“Fascinated by how two-dimensional art can change the way we see our world,” Brown says he produces woodblock prints utilizing the Japanese hanga method, employing a handheld barren (rather than a printing press), water and ground pigments, one hand-carved block for each color.

For 25 years, glassblower Bernbaum has been heating, blowing, shaping, carving, or sandblasting glass to create his signature vessels, while Giddings presents watercolor paintings of water, viewed as purely abstract or totally realistic.

Photographer Parulis says his digitally manipulated, dye-infused aluminum prints represent his attempt to depict

the power, wonder, and mystery of nature and his felt response to it.

Reuben, exhibiting for the first time at Mitchell-Giddings, produces one-of-a-kind, highly polished, abstract stainless steel sculpture, sometimes plated with 24-karat gold.

Lee Cohen, from Bakersfield, “responds to our kinetic world with simplicity and humor,” say organizers. She paints varied and familiar objects into “paintings of particular completeness and quiet.”

Salerno, from Johnson, revisits places multiple times in order to document over time the shifts in color, light, and atmosphere.

For more information about the exhibit, visit mitchellgiddingsfinearts.com, or call 802-251-8290.

“Red Table, Turquoise Vase,” by Rona Lee Cohen.

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“A Quiet Place” by Joshua Dallaire.

HCRS to host art show

BRATTLEBORO—Health Care and Rehabilitation Services (HCRS), southeastern Vermont’s nonprofit community mental-health agency, will host its fifth multidisciplinary art exhibition to be held at the 118 Elliot Gallery throughout the month of April. The opening reception is scheduled for Friday, April 5, from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m., featuring live musical performances and light refreshments to enhance the vibrant atmosphere. Showcasing the diverse talents of artists within the HCRS

community, both seasoned professionals and emerging talents, both people receiving services and their staff, event organizers promise a celebration of creativity and resilience, “offering a glimpse into the rich tapestry of artistic expression nurtured by the nonprofit agency,” they say. HCRS cordially invites the community to join them at the opening reception. Additionally, the public is encouraged to explore the artwork during designated open hours at 118 Elliot: Fridays (April 12, 19, and 26) 4

to 7 p.m., Saturdays (April 6, 13, 20, and 27) noon to 4 p.m., and Sundays (April 7, 14, 21, and 28) noon to 4 p.m. The organization’s dedicated staff, Jonathan Mattoon and Nickie Godin, spearheaded the annual exhibition, extending their passion for art wellness to those they support, say organizers. “More people are beginning to recognize the connection between art, healing, and public health,” Mattoon said in a news release. “Our show is an excellent opportunity for the community to view

Putney Library hosts Peeps diorama contest

PUTNEY—It’s time again for the Putney Public Library’s annual Peeps Diorama Contest. The brightly colored marshmallow treats are on the shelves and ready to star in a diorama about a favorite book. Entry forms are available at the library or online at bit.ly/758-peeps. This program is free. Dioramas must be brought to the Library between Monday, April 1, and Saturday, April 6, during normal library hours (Monday to Friday, 10:30 a.m. to 6 p.m.; Saturdays, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.). Here are the rules: • Even if you are not a resident of the town of Putney, you can still enter or join a family team, but only current Putney Library cardholders may vote (one ballot per library card). • Dioramas should be crafted from a standard-sized shoebox. • The diorama must be based on a book or have a literary theme. All characters must be played by Peeps candy, but any shaped Peep is allowed. Entrants are asked to limit the use of food items (besides Peeps) in their diorama. • The contest is open to all ages, with separate categories for children, adults, and families; one entry per person. All entries must be submitted with an entry form. • Entries become the property of the library and will be used for public display. Dioramas may be picked up during the week of Tuesday, April 16–23. Any dioramas not retrieved will be disposed of. • All entries must be in good taste. The Library reserves the right to omit any entries it feels are not appropriate for public viewing. Voting and display of all entries will take place in person at the library from Monday, April 8, through Saturday, April 13. Winners will be announced and awards given on Tuesday, April 16, at 5 p.m. A winner from each category will receive a \$25 gift certificate to Everyone’s Books in Brattleboro.

the creative expressions made by our staff and the individuals we serve across our agency.” Founded in 1967, HCRS is a nonprofit community mental health agency serving Vermonters in Windham and Windsor counties. HCRS serves more than

4,000 individuals every year through its mental health, substance use, and developmental disabilities programs. Visit hcrs.org for more information.

Rocky Horror

along with the songs, did dances on stage, added their own unprintable additions to the screenplay, and went through a lot of props like toilet paper and water pistols,” he said. Ebert described it as “a strange exhibitor-audience relationship, because the regulars were essentially buying tickets so they could attend their own show.”

The longest-running theatrical release in film history, RHPS has seen countless shadow-casts acting — shadowing — in front of the projection and heartily welcoming audience participation. The Latchis Theater screens RHPS annually at Halloween, but Stephanie Abrams, founding director of KTT, said it was a wonder that Brattleboro didn’t have its own monthly RHPS roundup. Abrams, a mime for 30 years and a circus performer for 27, moved to Brattleboro last June with her partner, Patrick Branstetter, who’s originally from Bethel. An alumnus of the ever-popular, rocking, and stomping performance art group Blue Man Group, Branstetter wanted to return to his native state. He now owns Old Timey Piano Craft on Cotton Mill Hill, where he rebuilds pianos.

Abrams’ KTT is a theater and school she founded in Los Angeles, specializing in the teaching and producing of mime and physical theater. That operation folded in the pandemic but lives on in Brattleboro, where Abrams works with private clients both virtually and in person, and runs workshops at circus schools around the country. “I teach pre-professional and professional artists how to incorporate storytelling into their circus work,” she said. Circus Smirkus engaged Abrams to direct its 2023 summer tour, which facilitated her introduction to Vermont. She’d taught at New England Center for Circus Arts for a short stint, but decided not to return last fall, and instead to pursue her work coaching mime and contortion. Moving to the area has been, Abrams admits, “a major culture shock. I’ve lived in cities my whole life; this is the most rural I’ve ever lived.” She regularly enjoys a city hit, though. “I love the train proximity: I can just get on the train here and arrive at [New York City’s] Penn Station” when she visits her daughter, a college freshman, and cultivates connections for engagements, she says. When she moved to Brattleboro, Abrams recalls, “I swore that I wasn’t going to produce shows. I’d produced a lot

of shows — tons of shows — in Los Angeles. But I got here and felt like there wasn’t work here I was excited about doing: I try to push boundaries. [...] I felt like [RHPS] needed to happen. “I knew about the Latchis. I heard they do Rocky Horror but only once a year and with no live performance. I’d never heard of running the film with no live cast.” She got in touch with Latchis Executive Director Jon Potter, and he immediately bought in, Abrams reports, stressing his commitment to supporting local artists and engaging a high-quality troupe. Soon Abrams assembled what was dubbed The Ones From the Vaults, a 13-member shadow cast troupe comprised of area performers — some up-and-coming and others professional: Darcy Biddle, Francesca Bonfiglio, Aubrey Clinedinst, Camille Echeverri, Anniken Jogl, Henry Koski, Rin Leopard, Elliot McGary-Walters, Nathan Olson, Katie Russo, Esther Van de Lagemaat, and the award-winning Abrams herself. As it happens, most are circus performers and “that makes a unique group, for sure,” Abrams says, but the cast will change over time as some circus folks move on and other performers step up to partake. “I joined a Rocky Horror shadow cast myself when I was only 14 years old,” Abrams explains, “and it truly shaped who I became as a performer.” “I had seen the movie and was a fan,” she continues. “I was drawn to the aesthetic because I’m a goth kid at heart and love all things sort of dark and weird, so already it pulled me in, but it also just showed me as a young performer that you can do things on stage and on film that are not what everybody else is doing. The RHPS cast I joined became a family — it gave kids in my community a place to be ourselves.” She adds that, in theater, people are taught “to say ‘yes,’ and so it is.” In the RHPS shadow world, if a cast member wants to insert a new movement, a good joke, a twist, it’s a “yes.” “Shadow casting started off as a fan response,” says Abrams, “and now there’s a huge fandom,” the culture of which embraces LGBTQ+ communities, among many others. “[It’s] a welcoming space for everyone. We want people from all walks of life to come and see and experience it,” she says. “I know that there are folks here who saw the movie originally in the ’70s — there are three generations of Rocky Horror fans out

there and we want all those people to come on,” as a KTT media release describes it, “this strange journey as [The Ones From the Vaults] bring the characters to life and perform this outrageous musical live in front of the screen.” “It’s sort of underground ... libertine,” Abrams offers. “Audience are encouraged to come dressed up in costume and we’ll have prop kits for sale, so you’ll get your [own collection of] things to throw and we’ll prompt you when to do that.” Even the media release beckons: “Become a part of the experience. Don’t dream it, be it!” In KTT’s press materials, cast members reflect on the experience. Jogl comments: “The thing I love the most about Rocky Horror is the escape from judgement and grids of expected behavior. Right and wrong, good and bad, pride and shame are flipped on their head. In real life, I always feel like I’m either too much or too little, and it’s so nice and freeing to get to let that go for a little bit!” The joint venture between Kinetic Theory Theatre and the Latchis Theatre runs the first Saturday of every month, starting April 6, at the Latchis upstairs ballroom theatre.

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FROM SECTION FRONT

“The film starts at 11 p.m.,” Abrams adds, “but we want to encourage people to get there early — at 10 — because the pre-show is part of the whole experience. It’s not just about going to see a movie.” Audiences are encouraged to get a pub drink if they wish, tune up their “Time Warp,” check out the finery, purchase a prop kit, and grab a seat to hold onto for the imminent dynamic dive into otherworldly action.

Though Dr. Frank-N-Furter says, “It’s not easy having a good time! Even smiling makes my face ache,” organizers would bet Brattleboro can prove him wrong. Tickets are \$20, available at the door and in advance at latchis.com.

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Documentary film on Vermonters struggling with food, housing insecurity comes to Brattleboro

BRATTLEBORO—*Just Getting By*, a new documentary film by Bess O'Brien focused on Vermonters struggling with food and housing insecurity will tour Vermont from March 22-April 12th. The movie will play the Latchis Theatre on Sunday, March 31, at 7 p.m.

The film is described as "a sweeping and yet intimate look at the lives of Vermonters who are struggling with food and housing insecurity. Vermont has the second-highest rate of homeless people in the United States, right after California. One third of Vermonters struggle to put food on the table. These are big issues for a small state. *Just Getting By* focuses on these issues in the lives of everyday people."

Just Getting By tells the stories of working families who are homeless and accessing food

shelves and soup kitchens and people who are living in temporary hotel/motel programs. In addition, the film focuses on New Americans grappling with the cost of living in America, Native people creating innovative farming practices, and folks on the ground providing services to their fellow Vermonters in need. It explores the challenges and incredible resiliency that low-income Vermonters bear witness to every day.

The film was shot during 2022-23 by director O'Brien and cinematographer Patrick Kennedy. "We wanted to capture the day-to-day lives of Vermonters who were living paycheck to paycheck and who were struggling to keep food on the table and a roof over their head," O'Brien said in a news release. "We also wanted to show the incredible resiliency

and courage of folks who have very little and still manage to get up every day and strive for a better life."

She said their hope is by touring the film across the state, they can raise consciousness about pressing issues of food and housing insecurity.

The movie is produced by Kingdom County Productions. There will be a Q & A session after the screening of the movie with O'Brien, folks from the movie, and audience members. Tickets are \$15 and can be purchased at the door. For more information, visit kingdomcounty.org or email O'Brien at bobrien@pshift.com.



Colby Lynch is one of the people featured in Vermont filmmaker Bess O'Brien's new documentary "Just Getting By."

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BMC Chamber Series presents 'Castle of Our Skins: Love and Justice' on March 30

BRATTLEBORO—The Brattleboro Music Center's Chamber Series presents "Castle of Our Skins: Love and Justice" on Saturday, March 30.

This portrait concert, set for 7 p.m. at the BMC, features the music of Adolphus Hailstork, and includes such works as Deep River rhapsody for string quartet, "Who Is Sylvia?" Sanctum rhapsody for viola and piano, String Quartet No. 2, Variations on "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot," and "Summer. Life. Song."

Hailstork has written numerous works for chorus, solo voice, piano, organ, various chamber ensembles, band, orchestra, and opera. Among his early compositions are "Celebration," recorded by the Detroit Symphony in 1976; "Out of the Depths" (1977), and "American Guernica" (1983), and two band works which won national competitions.

"Consort Piece" (1995), commissioned by the Norfolk (Virginia) Chamber Ensemble was awarded first prize by the University of Delaware Festival of Contemporary Music.

"We're excited to return to the BMC and not only highlight the music of one of our favorite composers, but literally bring him along for the ride," artistic director and violist of Castle of our Skins Ashleigh Gordon said in a news release. "Adolphus is a prolific composer with a joyful

spirit and truly inviting energy to be around."

Community members are invited to meet the composer at a pre-concert talk with Adolphus Hailstork at 6:15 p.m. at the BMC. Seats for this free talk are first-come, first-served.

In addition to Gordon on viola, performers include Matthew Vera and Mina Lavcheva, violin; Jing Li, cello; Sarah Bob, piano; and Brianna Robinson, soprano.

Born out of the desire to foster cultural curiosity, Castle of

our Skins is a concert and educational series dedicated to celebrating Black artistry through music. From classrooms to concert halls, Castle of our Skins invites exploration into Black heritage and culture, spotlighting both unsung and celebrated figures of past and present.

Tickets are \$20 (or \$25 at the door) and are available online on the BMC website at bmcvt.org, by calling 802-257-4523, or by emailing info@bmcvt.org.

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Solebello, Berardo co-headline concert at Stage 33 Live

BELLOWS FALLS—Carolann Solebello and Marc Douglas Berardo will co-headline a concert at Stage 33 Live, 33 Bridge St., on Sunday, April 7, at 7 p.m.

Solebello is a performing songwriter from New York City, best known as a founding member of Americana trio Red Molly. She now tours as a solo troubadour and with modern folk foursome No Fuss and Feathers.

"Her smooth, pitch-perfect voice, compelling lyrics, and warm yet accomplished acoustic guitar work nod to rural folk traditions while an urban sense of rhythm and sophisticated phrasing plant her firmly in the present," organizers wrote in a news release. "She's won a pile of songwriting awards, and is currently working on her sixth solo album."

Solebello has a history with Bellows Falls, having been a three-time performer at the Roots On The River festival plus appearances at fabled local venues Oona's and Boccelli's.

Berardo composes "song-length fictions that mine deep feelings and real-life lessons and situations, and delivers them with an engaging onstage presence and deft storytelling," organizers said. "His sharply drawn, award-winning song-portraits cast a net on unusual and beguiling characters — circus retirees, ex-pats in Florida rum bars, union ironworkers, old poets, aimless New York City debutantes, near-death car crashes, hard-nosed fishermen, and the changes that experience brings to everyone."

He has shared bills with heavyweights like The Doobie Brothers, NRBQ, The Riders of the Purple Sage, and Cheryl Wheeler.

Tickets are \$20 in advance through stage33live.com or at the door. Advance tickets guarantee entry. All ticket proceeds go to the performers. Seating is limited, and the event will be recorded and filmed.

BMAC hosts art talk with Samira Abbassy on April 3

BRATTLEBORO—The Brattleboro Museum & Art Center (BMAC) invites the public to explore the idea of the human body as a spiritual, psychological, and biological vehicle during an online conversation with artist Samira Abbassy and BMCAC Director of Exhibitions Sarah Freeman on Wednesday, April 3, at 7 p.m.

Abbassy will discuss her work currently on view at the museum in the exhibit "Out of Body," which Freeman describes as "a connection between the physical and the intangible," and "a collection of objects that feels precious and mysterious, yet also domestic and very human."

Abbassy, who was born in Iran and grew up in London, says she finds inspiration in the concept of faith healing, or remote psychic healing. In her paintings, drawings, and sculpture, she references imagery from 11th- to 17th-century Islamic medical and anatomical manuscripts, as well as 15th-century European alchemical symbols that combine

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RESPONSE

Let's look the entire truth in the eye

'The October attack is but the latest act of horrific violence that has rocked Palestine and Israel. Conflict has been the ongoing reality in Palestine ever since the Zionist project to give Jews a homeland at the expense of the Palestinian inhabitants became aggressively active 100 or so years ago.'

TIM WESSEL'S Viewpoint chastising Vermonters who are advocating for a ceasefire in Palestine was grounded in half-truths and speculative musings. The most astonishing error was the statement that "this war" started on Oct. 7, 2023. The October attack is but the latest act of horrific violence that has rocked Palestine and Israel. Conflict has been the ongoing reality in Palestine ever since the Zionist project to give Jews a homeland at the expense of the Palestinian inhabitants became aggressively active 100 or so years ago.

Starting in 1931, Zionist militias and later the Israeli Defense Forces planned and conducted massacres in Palestinian towns and villages.

The extent of the violence was debated and lamented in 1948 by Israeli leaders at the time, but the prevailing view aligned with one expressed by Yitzhak Shamir in 1943, before he became prime minister:

"Neither Jewish ethics nor Jewish tradition can disqualify terrorism as a means of combat. We are very far from having any moral qualms as far as our national war goes. We have before us the command of the Torah, whose morality surpasses that of any other body of laws in the world: 'Ye shall blot them out to the last man.'"

In 1982, as many as 3,500 Muslim Palestinians in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps in Lebanon were murdered, raped, and tortured by Israel's Lebanese Christian Phalangist proxies under the watch of Ariel Sharon, who, while castigated by Israeli leaders at the time, went on to become a major political player and prime minister.

Even when Palestine was not under direct military assault, the reality of the occupation was not merely one of lost land and inconvenience. Between 2008 and Oct. 7, 2023, over 5,000 Palestinians were killed by air- and surface-launched explosives and live ammunition. In that same time period, 319 Israelis were killed by Palestinians.

In addition, a steady stream of kidnappings (euphemistically called "detentions"), torture, and water and land deprivation — plus control over Palestinian rights to marry, work, worship, and thrive — have kept occupied Palestine under a tight lid of oppression and misery, enduring for multiple generations of people trying to stay alive there.

WESSEL THINKS that Palestinians who have remained in Israel since 1948 are accorded full

Newfane

DAN DEWALT, a frequent contributor to these pages and one of the founders of this newspaper, writes that if he didn't love his country, he "wouldn't spend so much time trying to get it to live up to its purported principles." This piece is in response to "Few signs of support. Literally." [Viewpoint, March 20].

rights of citizenship. In reality, a plethora of laws favor Jewish land ownership, building permits, and religious/cultural rights at the expense of the Palestinians.

Just as Barack Obama's presidency did not signify the end of racism in the United States, neither do the rights of "Arab-Israelis" (a construct used by authorities and parroted by the media to deny the existence of the Palestinians' status as a people) indicate any equality of rights in Israel.

Wessel implies that the genesis of the word "genocide" means that it refers exclusively to the violence perpetrated against the Jews by the Nazis. Native Americans, Armenians, and Tutsis are just three examples of how men in power are more than willing to engage in genocide in order to meet their goals.

He questions the use of "genocide" by referencing the population growth in Gaza over the past 25 years. Nobody accused the Israelis of genocide until this latest indiscriminate and all-encompassing revenge that is their response to the Hamas attack.

Even the U.S. judge at the International Court of Justice voted in accord with the overwhelming ruling that South Africa's claim that Israel is committing genocide has more than enough legal merit to continue to the next phase of the tribunal proceedings.

WESSEL CHARACTERIZES those who speak out in support of Palestine as being played by the propaganda machine of Hamas. This is a little rich, considering that his talking points are part and parcel of the rhetoric generated by AIPAC, which is one of the most powerful pro-Israel propaganda machines influencing U.S. politics today.

He also doesn't realize that "ceasefire" intrinsically refers to *all* firing — in this case, both Israeli and Palestinian. He doesn't realize that not a single supporter of Palestinians supports rape.

We abhor and condemn all rape — be it by Hamas or Israeli soldiers, as in the ongoing sexual assault of Palestinian women prisoners — as a horrible tactic used by combatants (including Americans) around the world.



A march in Brattleboro earlier in March drew 150 in a global call for ceasefire. COURTESY OF SOUTHERN VERMONT FOR PALESTINE

WESSEL THINKS THAT we don't bother to understand the history underlying this conflict.

In fact, we are constantly deepening our learning and understanding of the true nature of the history and today's realities in Palestine precisely so that we can correct the one-sided, partial story propagated daily by Israel's apologists.

Indeed, on Sunday afternoons during the month of April, Southern Vermont for Palestine will be offering a series of films and discussions at the Latchis Theater about the true nature of life

in Palestine. These events — available to all, with or without a donation to defray costs — seek to enlighten rather than embitter.

Some actions are so egregious that they can be defended only by attacking the credibility or intentions of those who criticize them. Sadly, that seems to be the case here.

We would do better to look the entire truth in the eye, to understand how it has come to be, what our own nation's complicity is, and what we can do about it.

RESPONSE

We mean the words we are saying

We are ashamed that our tax dollars are being used to kill instead of create a world where all life can thrive.

Brattleboro

I WANT TO acknowledge that many people (Tim Wessel included) are projecting their fears, skewed perspectives, and beliefs rooted in (white/colonial) dominance culture to a movement whose ultimate goal is the collective liberation of all (oppressed) people.

For those of us calling for a ceasefire, for a free Palestine, for collective liberation, and for self-determination — we mean the words we are saying.

We are not calling for the death of a people — and we certainly are not, with the support of U.S. taxpayer dollars, actively extinguishing thousands upon thousands of innocent human lives and causing unimaginable humanitarian and environmental destruction while celebrating our efforts. We are ashamed that our tax dollars are being used to kill instead of create a world where all life can thrive.

The movement for Palestine is supported by and inclusive of anti-Zionist Jews, including many of our community members here in Brattleboro, who have been advocating for a free Palestine for decades — certainly well before Oct. 7 — based on the historical understanding that Palestinians have faced forced

HANNAH SORILA aims to align intention and impact in global education and education abroad. She strives to challenge the field of global education to become more ethical, decolonial, sustainable, and accessible. This piece is in response to "Few signs of support. Literally." [Viewpoint, March 20].

displacement, ethnic cleansing, and an apartheid system on the land that their people lived on for generations before the settler colonial state of Israel was invented.

They further understand that safety for Jews derives from making common cause with other historically oppressed communities, not from creating a fortress on stolen land exclusively for themselves.

The problem is not with Judaism, but rather with Zionism — and the two are not the same, which is why critiquing Zionism is not the same thing as antisemitism.

We stand against the oppression of any human being, because our fight is for the collective liberation of all human beings from all systems of oppression, including (but not limited to)

Islamophobia and antisemitism.

I ENCOURAGE all folks, but especially those who align with Tim's dangerous perspective, to slow down and consider: *What if I am wrong? What if I am wrong for supporting Palestinians as they stand up against Israel's genocidal actions and occupation? What if I am wrong for supporting the genocide of Palestinians who are standing up for liberation from Israeli occupation?*

As I witness the complete annihilation of 32,512 Palestinians — more than 13,642 of whom are children (based on the number of Palestinians killed by Israel in Gaza since Oct. 7, as of March 23, 2024) — I ask: Am I wrong for calling for an immediate and permanent ceasefire and end to the genocide?

As I witness the displacement of more than 1.5 million Palestinians, while also acknowledging the 750,000 Palestinians displaced during the 1948 Nakba, am I wrong for calling on Israel to end their ethnic cleansing of Palestinians?

As I witness the forced starvation and dehydration and the intentional destruction of hospitals and other essential infrastructure and services, am I wrong for calling for an end to the siege and blockade, and for immediate,

unrestricted humanitarian aid?

As I witness the kidnapping, detention, torture, and killing of Palestinians in the West Bank, am I wrong to call for an end to the settler colonial Israeli occupation and apartheid system?

And finally, as I consider that these statistics barely scratch the surface of the absolute devastation that every Palestinian is facing right now — each of whom has and has had stolen dreams and fears and hopes and breath that fills their lungs — am I wrong for seeing them in their humanity, and for standing beside them as they fight for liberation and self-determination in their sacred homeland?

Look around you. Look around the world. The U.S. has been nearly alone in its unconditional support of this genocide, whereas a majority of the world — as well as a majority of Americans — support an immediate and permanent ceasefire.

Join the movement for liberation at sovt4palestine.org; we are advocating for a better world for you, too, whether you join us or not.

Palestine will be free within our lifetime.



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Brattleboro's Reese Croutworst (1) and Laura Kamel of Bellows Falls (10) were both selected to their respective Southern Vermont League girls' basketball All-Star teams.

Brattleboro's Willow Sharma was selected to the Southern Vermont League's boys' Nordic skiing All-Star team.

SVL announces all-star teams for Nordic, basketball

The Southern Vermont League (SVL) recently announced their all-star teams for basketball and Nordic skiing for the 2023-24 season, and several of our local athletes were honored.

• Selected to the A Division girls' basketball first team was Brattleboro's Reese Croutworst. Teammates Kaitlyn Pattison and Abigail Henry received honorable mention.

• C Division girls' first team selections included Leland & Gray's Maggie Parker and Laura Kamel and Abby Nystrom of Bellows Falls. Receiving honorable mention were Nola Sciacca of Bellows Falls, Karen Vargas of Green Mountain, and Mary Sanderson of Leland & Gray.

• Brattleboro's Johnathan Haskins was a first team selection in A Division boys' basketball. Jack Cady received honorable mention.

• Green Mountain's Tanner Swisher and Twin Valley's Brayden Brown were named to the C Division first team. Honorable mentions went to Caleb Merrow of Green Mountain and Noah Dornburgh of Twin Valley.

• Brattleboro's Willow Sharma and Gabrielle Jeppesen-Bellici were selected as first-team SVL all-stars in boys' Nordic skiing. Teammate Oliver Herrick was a second-team selection.

• Katherine Normandeau and Maeve Bald were Brattleboro's two first-team selections to the girls' Nordic squad. Teammate Maayan Coleman was named to the second team.

Special Olympics hosts Winter Games in Wilmington

• Special Olympics Vermont hosted the 2024 Winter Games on March 15 at the Hermitage Club in Wilmington. More than 125 delegates, including athletes and coaches from eight local programs, trained and competed in alpine skiing and snowboarding.

• This was Special Olympics Vermont's first Winter Games since 2019. The delegations that competed included Addison, Central Vermont, Chittenden, Adaptive Sports at Mount Snow, Northshire, Randolph, Rutland, and Smugglers' Notch Adaptive.

• With 23 athletes, the Adaptive Sports at Mount Snow team had the largest contingent, including athletes from Twin Valley High School and Brattleboro Union High School. Leah Autumn Blowers finished third in the Snowboarding Novice giant slalom, slalom, and Super G, while Bryce Brogan was first in Alpine Novice



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giant slalom, slalom, and Super G, and Brady Pike Lackey was first in slalom and Super G and second in giant slalom.

• In Alpine Intermediate competition, Kayli Nicholson was first in slalom and second in giant slalom, while Emma Davis was third in slalom and Super G, and fifth in giant slalom. Cort Freeman was first in giant slalom, second in Super G, and third in slalom; Kelsey Griffin was second in giant slalom, fourth in Super G, and sixth in slalom; and Trevor Morris-Boyd was third in giant slalom and Super G, and fourth in slalom.

• Dylan Keitz was first in giant slalom, second in slalom, and third in Super G, while Margaret Elise Straus was first in giant slalom and Super G and fourth in slalom and Lauren Strol was fourth in giant slalom and fifth in slalom.

• Owen Sundberg was first in slalom and Super G and second in giant slalom, and Thomas Young was first in Super G, second in slalom and fourth in giant slalom.

• The Alpine Advanced competition saw Brendan Mulcahy finish first in Super G and second in slalom and giant slalom, while Bobby Petrie was third in Super G and giant slalom and fourth in slalom. Ryan Krug was fourth in Super G, fifth in giant slalom, and sixth in slalom. Christopher Straus was first in slalom and third in Super G and giant slalom, while Nathaniel Joseph Straus was fifth in slalom and Super G and sixth in giant slalom, and Ryan Weisberg was second in giant slalom and fourth in slalom and Super G.

• A lack of snow forced the cancellation of the cross-country skiing and snowshoeing competition at Rikert Outdoor Center in Ripton on March 9.

The last sporting goods store in town?

• When I started working in Brattleboro 35 years ago, the thing I liked about it was how much it reminded me of what Northampton, Mass., was like when I was growing up in the 1960s and 1970s. Even

though the late 1980s and early 1990s were the last gasp for many of the traditional retail stores on Main Street in Brattleboro, there were still enough of them left to remind me of what Northampton was like when I was a youth, before the malls and shopping plazas opened and decimated that downtown.

• The process took a little longer in Brattleboro, but the big box stores and online retailers have pretty much finished off the traditional retail store. The decision by Sam's to close its flagship Main Street store was pretty much the coda for the old downtown Brattleboro.

• But Peter "Fish" Case apparently didn't get the memo that operating an independent retail store is a tough way to make a living in the digital age. Last fall, Case took over Burrows Sports on Main Street after Robert "Woody" Woodworth decided it was time to retire. As an avid triathlete, Case was a loyal Burrows customer, and a natural to be the caretaker of the store that was founded by Pliny Burrows in 1935.

• While Burrows is one of two bicycle shops in downtown Brattleboro, Case said in an email that his store will ideally "be taking up the slack from the void left by Sam's once it closes. We will likely start with more clothing and then expand into other sports."

• Sam's was the last store in town where you could get a baseball glove, a tennis racquet, or camping gear. While Burrows won't be selling everything that Sam's did, Case said he hopes his store can give people "a local option for their sporting needs. It is something we're going to try to achieve while staying loyal to our current customer base."

• With help from Julia Chase, the store's longtime general manager, and mechanic Joe Mardeusz, Case is learning the ropes of running a Main Street business.

• "I felt like the shop has done well, even after a nonexistent winter," Case said. "But I was informed by Julia that the winter was not good. But now, with the transition into cycling and bike season along with all the racquet sports, I'm eager to see what this season brings. We have a large selection of e-bikes coming in that will work for a wide variety of folks, so I'm excited."

Hall of Fame honors go to Baker, Coffey, Natowich

• The Vermont Principals' Association recently announced its Hall of Game Class of 2024. Among

the 10 members who will be inducted in May is Jenna (Coffey) Wilson, of Victor, New York, who was a stand-out three-sport athlete at Bellows Falls Union High School from 1999-2002.

• Coffey led her basketball team to back-to-back Division II state championships in 2000 and 2001, with a combined record of 41-4. In 2002, she guided her team to the Division I runner-up title.

• During her high school track & field career, she won nine individual state titles in four years. Coffey won the Division II 100 meter dash state title all four years of her career and then added State titles in the 100 meter hurdles and 200 meter dash in 2000, 2001 and 2002.

• Coffey led her track and field team to two Division II team titles, in 2001 and 2002. Her track & field accomplishments earned her a full athletic scholarship to the University of Vermont, where she was team captain in 2005 and 2006.

• The VPA Hall of Fame induction ceremony will take place on Friday, May 10, at the Capitol Plaza Hotel and Conference Center in Montpelier.

• Two Brattleboro sports legends were among the 12 newest inductees to the Vermont Sports Hall of Fame — five-time Vermont Men's Amateur golf champion Shawn Baker and long-time BUHS football and baseball coach Andy Natowich.

• After winning the state's high school title in 1981, Baker won a record five Vermont State Amateur golf championships in a seven-year span from 1983 to 1989. He also was a three-time NCAA Division II All-American for Central Connecticut State (1983, 1984, and 1985), where he finished as high as third in the national championship as an individual.

• Now a PGA professional on Long Island, Baker's pro career included an appearance at the 2005 Barclays Classic and qualifying for the 2015 Senior PGA Championship.

• A longtime football and baseball coach winning multiple state championships in both sports, Natowich spent his entire high school coaching career in Brattleboro and was one of the top coaches of his era in southern Vermont.

• Natowich led Brattleboro to three state football titles (1950, 1957 and 1965) and three baseball titles (1951, 1956 and 1961). His record in football was 113-53-3 and, in 24 baseball seasons, he was 201-158. He came to Brattleboro in 1945 after being a football all-American at Holy Cross

and a brief stint with Washington in the NFL. The BUHS football field is named in his honor.

• Baker and Natowich will be formally inducted on Saturday, April 27, during a ceremony and dinner at the Delta Marriott Burlington Hotel in South Burlington.

Super Fun Bike Day coming soon

• The Brattleboro Recreation & Parks Department will host a Super Fun Bike Day at Living Memorial Park on Saturday, April 20, in cooperation with the Brattleboro Kiwanis Club, Brattleboro Fire & EMS and the Brattleboro Police Department.

• This program will run from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., and feature a helmet-fitting session, safety information, a bike rodeo and more. If you are in need of a new helmet, they will be available for free for kids and adults, courtesy of the Kiwanis club.

• In the event of rain, the event will be held in the Nelson E. Withington Skating Facility. For more information, call the Rec. Dept. at 802-254-5808.

Senior bowling roundup

• Week 12 of the winter/spring season of the Brattleboro Senior Bowling League at Brattleboro Bowl on March 21 saw first place High Rollers (38-22) have a 0-5 week, while Stayin' Alive (36-24) and Stepping Stones II (35-25) went 4-1 and 5-0, respectively, to move closer to the top of the standings. Four Seasons (32-28), is in fourth, followed by Good Times (26-34), Hairiers (23-37), Four Pins (22-38), and Slow Movers (16-44).

• Debbie Rittenhour had the women's high handicap game (244) and series (687) while John Walker had the men's high handicap game (257) and series (745). Four Seasons had the high team handicap game (926) and series (2,647).

• Walker had the men's high scratch series (712) with games of 246, 237 and 229. Robert Rigby had a 568 series with games of 209 and 202. Warren Corriveau Sr. had a 565 series with a 212 game, Gary Montgomery had a 543 series with a 193 game, and Marty Adams had a 505 series with a 211 game. Peter Deyo had a 195 game and Skip Shine had a 191 game.

• Carol Gloski had the women's high scratch series (512) with games of 178 and 174. Sandy Ladd had a 177 game, Debbie Kolpa had a 174 game and Vikki Butynski rolled a 173.

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