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

## Advocates will seek \$200 million from state for housing needs

Girding for a worsening housing and homelessness crisis in Windham County and the rest of Vermont, organizations champion the idea of building permanently affordable housing to create long-term availability and stability

By Ellen Pratt  
*The Commons*

For the first time, Vermont's affordable housing and homelessness advocates have joined forces and are calling for more than \$200 million in public funding to address the state's housing and homelessness crises.

Prioritizing the urgent need for more permanently affordable housing — housing built on the condition that rents will always be capped — the Housing

& Homelessness Alliance of Vermont (HHA-V) is asking the Vermont Legislature for \$160 million in one-time funding for the Vermont Housing & Conservation Board (VHCB), which funds the construction and preservation of affordable housing.

"Permanent affordability tackles the inventory problem — we need more housing — but it also invests public dollars in a long-term solution: holding

■ SEE HOUSING, A5

## SEVCA forms new partnership with area thrift stores

*Collaboration will help fill a void left by closure of Good Buy stores in Bellows Falls, Springfield*

By Robert F. Smith  
*The Commons*

WESTMINSTER—The closure of Southeastern Vermont Community Action (SEVCA) Good Buy Thrift Stores in Springfield and Bellows Falls leaves what could potentially be a huge hole for helping financially struggling individuals and families get necessary clothing, furniture, and household goods.

To prevent that outcome, SEVCA has announced the implementation of a new partnership with thrift stores throughout Windham and Windsor counties.

Stores participating in the Thrift Store Network voucher program, which started Jan. 1, will honor SEVCA-issued vouchers given to qualifying community members who will be able to access free clothing, furniture, and housewares in their neighborhoods.

Participating stores will also direct customers to other establishments in the network that have the products and services that they need. For instance, not all stores will carry children's clothing or furnishings, while other stores might specialize in those products.

### Can a good network be better than a good store?

In some ways, said Christopher Meyer, SEVCA special project and community outreach coordinator, this new approach might be an improvement.

While SEVCA's stores and other local thrift shops have worked mostly independently in the past, these changes have caused SEVCA to create a network for the remaining thrift stores in the region — one that will offer vastly improved communication.

"I think we're going to find that sometimes a good network can be better than a single good

■ SEE THRIFT STORE NETWORK, A6

## Inspired to LEARN

*Nearly two decades after graduating from high school as a teen mother, Rachael Morse earns her college degree, with top honors and big dreams to see the world. And survey it.*

By Fran Lynggaard Hansen  
*The Commons*

**B**RATTLEBORO—Rachael Morse's life is a testimony to hard work, determination, and never, ever giving up despite life challenges that many, even most, would find insurmountable.

The 36-year-old Brattleboro native just graduated magna cum laude from Southern New Hampshire University with a bachelor of science degree in geoscience.

Morse's thirst for knowledge is never-ending: "Statistics,



COURTESY PHOTO

Rachael Morse recently graduated magna cum laude from Southern New Hampshire University with a Bachelor of Science degree in geoscience.

physics, chemistry, coding computers — I love learning about it all," she says.

While graduating from college honors achievement for a student of any age, it conveys even more power for Morse, a longtime hair stylist in the area who manages Main Street Hair Shop at 103 Main St.

In 2006, Morse received her high school diploma from Brattleboro Union High School, with her then-2-year-old daughter, Dominique, looking on in the audience.

At the time, the teen mother told the *Brattleboro Reformer*, "It's hard to keep up with all

your work and get anything done."

But getting things done is exactly what Morse's life has always been about. And it's never been easy.

"I was homeless while in high school," Morse says. "I lived in Morningside Shelter with my daughter."

When she was much younger, she also lived at Kurn Hattin Homes for Children in Westminster, which, according to its website, "serves as a charitable home and school for boys and girls who are affected by tragedy, social or economic hardship."

After high school, Morse attended Keene Beauty Academy and received her cosmetology license.

"I felt I needed to go to school to have a skill that I could rely on while I raised my two children," she says proudly. Dominique is now 19 and in college, and her son, Damien, is a sophomore in high school.

### 'A beautiful place to learn geology'

Morse, who got started on her college studies in 2020, attending classes remotely during

■ SEE GRADUATE, A5

## A sad FAREWELL

*Retreat Farm says goodbye to Carlos, the ox who served as its 'official greeter' for over 18 years*

By Virginia Ray  
*The Commons*

**B**RATTLEBORO—Retreat Farm is mourning the loss of its beloved Carlos, the nearly-2,000-pound, 7-foot-tall ox who was born on the farm where he became the iconic greeter for thousands of visitors over his lifetime.

So are dozens of Carlos's human friends in the area.

"If you don't live here, you may not know just how many people love Carlos and what an institution he has been," wrote Allyson Wendt on Facebook. "He will be sorely missed."

Wendt added: "To echo another friend's sentiment, I truly love living in a place where the passing of an ox results in a social media feed full of tribute posts."

The sad news came from the Retreat Farm in a news release and

■ SEE CARLOS, A2



JOSHUA STEELE PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF RETREAT FARM

Retreat Farm said goodbye to 18 1/2-year-old Carlos the ox, the beloved member of the farm and a star attraction for visitors of all ages.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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### In memoriam:

Alan O. Dann, Judy Gorman,  
Mia Gannon

## Carlos

FROM SECTION FRONT

social media posts on Tuesday.

"Today we made the impossible decision to say farewell to Carlos the Ox," said Retreat Farm Executive Director Kristin Sullivan on Jan. 2. "As a beloved family member, his departure leaves a hole in our hearts and in our community."

"Carlos lived a long and storied life enriched by the thousands of visitors who showered him with love and affection," wrote Lindsay Fahey, the farm's managing director of communications and finance in a press release announcing his passing. "Carlos sparked awe and wonder, instantly providing a calm and grounding effect to those who had the privilege of standing in his magnificence."

Calling Carlos's longevity "a testament to the high level of care he received from dedicated caregivers throughout his life," Fahey noted that during the past year Carlos has received weekly health evaluations to monitor his mobility, weight, appetite, and responsiveness.

"Though Carlos was initially in great shape going into winter, as the weather got colder, we noticed a dramatic change in his overall demeanor, comfort level, and mobility due to old age and severe, debilitating arthritis," Sullivan said, adding that Farm administrators held many discussions with veterinarians from Green Mountain Bovine & Equine Clinic, based in West Chesterfield, New Hampshire.

She wrote that the parties considered all possible options for Carlos and tried a new medication to reduce his discomfort and pain.

"Ultimately, his quality of life was the most important factor, and he showed us it was his time," Sullivan said. "We chose to have Carlos pass peacefully and comfortably in his pasture at the home he loved for 18½ years."

Carlos was born at Retreat Farm in April 2005. His mother was one of the last generation of dairy cows here, a red Holstein/Brahma cross.

"While we will continue to mourn the loss of Carlos for years to come, we want to reaffirm our commitment to building an animal program that honors Retreat Farm's long agricultural history, showcases local producers, and connects people to the land and regional food system," Sullivan said.

### One of many special connections

Mark French has known and loved Carlos for years.

"I wish I had pictures of the reactions I would see on people's faces when I told them that my best friend was a one-ton ox named Carlos," he said Tuesday. "What made it even more special was when I told them that his favorite food was a donut."

French first met Carlos in the summer of 2016.

"I had stopped in at Retreat Farm to see the animals at their petting zoo inside the main barn," he said. "While the kids were all attracted to the rabbits or baby chickens, I had an instant connection to Carlos."

French remembers that the ox's head "was sticking out of a hole in the wall that had been made for him so people could see him and feed him hay — provided they stayed outside of the yellow box that had been taped on the floor."

"From the moment I made eye contact with this huge beast, something told me he would never do anything to hurt me," he says. "This was something that held true for the years I knew him."

French approached Carlos with a handful of hay and, as he began to eat, he broke the yellow line rule to pet and talk with the gentle giant.

"People were shocked that he was so peaceful, and that I was so bold," French said.

This pattern of visits would repeat until one day an employee at the Farm told French that Carlos's favorite food was a doughnut.

"Once I knew that, I was continually bringing him doughnuts to eat. He would either let me feed them into his mouth, or he would use his lizard-like tongue to take them straight from my hand," he says.

"Over the years as people would watch, some would ask if they could feed him as well," French continues. "The joy that he gave to adults and children alike was beyond measure. The laughter and smiles that he received when being fed his doughnuts melted away anyone's problems, even if just for a few moments. And to see Carlos interact with his pen-mate, Pipp the goat, was even more endearing



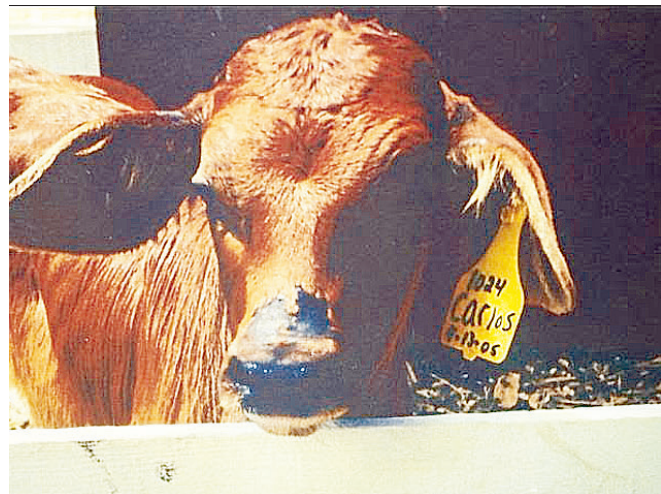
Mark French offers a donut to Carlos, who he considered his "best friend."

and lovable."

French started to share his videos of Carlos and in 2018 wrote and published a children's book, *Donuts for Carlos*.

The ox "made the world a better place," he says. "I will miss him eternally."

*A celebration of Carlos's life will be held in April to honor his birthday and legacy. Retreat Farm invites you to share photos and memories of Carlos for inclusion in the celebration, along with ideas and input to inform the creation of a permanent memorial for Carlos. Send questions, ideas, photos, and memories to Sullivan at [ksullivan@retreatfarm.org](mailto:ksullivan@retreatfarm.org).*



Carlos as a young ox.

## AROUND THE TOWNS

### Family Yoga series begins at Townshend library

TOWNSHEND — Townshend Public Library will offer a monthly Family Yoga program series, with the first session on Saturday, Jan. 6, at 9:30 a.m. The library is partnering with West River Valley Thrives to offer this series.

Brittany Frost will be leading sessions on the first Saturday mornings of the month. Participants should bring yoga mats if they have one. This free 45-minute session will take place in the library's Kids' Room and is open to all community families.

### Annual Cabin Fever Supper served in Westminster West

WESTMINSTER WEST — The 16th annual Cabin Fever Supper, a fundraising dinner, will be served on Sunday, Jan. 7, at 5:30 p.m., at the Westminster West Congregational Church, 44 Church St.

Over a meal provided by Tristan Toleno, diners will join their neighbors in celebrating this little patch of the planet. Attendees are advised to "bring a strong appetite and be prepared to share or enjoy short tales highlighting the quirky country life of 'West West' and its environs."

The menu features fennel and garlic chicken with kale, with vegan and gluten-free dishes that include mushroom and herb penne pasta, white beans with basil, and roasted squash with sage and olive oil. Bread and dessert are included.

The cost is \$20 for adults, \$10 for children, and kids under 4 eat free. Wine will be offered for sale by the glass. Call 802-387-5694 with questions or email [tomgriffith1051@gmail.com](mailto:tomgriffith1051@gmail.com) to volunteer: set up, serve, or clean up. No reservations will be accepted.

### 'Old Tools and Industries' exhibit opens Jan. 7

DUMMERSTON — The Dummerston Historical Society will host an open house at its building in Dummerston Center on Sunday, January 7, from 1 to 3 p.m. to introduce a major new exhibit, "Old Tools and Industries of Dummerston."

Featured will be an assortment of tools from more than 100 years ago and many photographs of mills, dams, quarries, railroads, and farms from the same era. Donations of historical artifacts are most welcome. Old photographs can be copied and returned. Those who wish to share should contact Charles Fish at [cfish05346@gmail.com](mailto:cfish05346@gmail.com) or 802-254-2554.

Also on display will be a collection of material related to Dr. Grace Burnett, including photographs and her medical library.

The Historical Society will be open Sunday, Jan. 21, from 2 to 4 p.m., for its annual meeting and to view the exhibit.

Dummerston Historical Society welcomes all visitors; one does not need to be a member to attend programs. Programs are free of charge and the building is accessible. Refreshments will be served.

### Tech Time Tuesdays offered at RFPL

BELLOWS FALLS — The Rockingham Free Public Library will host Tech Time Tuesday classes, with drop-in sessions at 2 p.m. every Tuesday during the month of January in the Downstairs Programming Room. Learn more about different applications and digital library resources.

Drop-in sessions are first come, first served. Providing your own personal devices is highly encouraged, however library laptops will be available for class use. Upcoming Tuesday classes include:

- Jan. 9: Google Suite — Digital Tools for Connection and Collaboration. Improve your digital collaboration and communication skills using Google's online tools, such as Calendar, Chat, Docs, Drive, Gmail, and Meet. Those without an existing Google account will receive help to set one up.

- Jan. 16 and 30: Drop-In Tech Help. This is the quick tech-help option at the library. No registration is required; walk-ins are welcome. A librarian will be available for 5-15-minute sessions to answer tech questions.

- Jan. 23: Social Media Etiquette and Tips. Social media channels have evolved to become one of the primary ways people communicate in the modern world. Participants will learn how social media etiquette revolves around online guidelines to allow promotion and personal connection.

For more information, email [reference@rockinghamlibrary.org](mailto:reference@rockinghamlibrary.org), call 802-463-4270, go to [rockinghamlibrary.org](http://rockinghamlibrary.org) or stop by the library at 65 Westminster St.

### Senior meal served in Dummerston

DUMMERSTON — Evening Star Grange and Senior Solutions present their first Senior Lunch of the new year on Wednesday, Jan. 10, with take-outs available from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., and in-house serving at noon. The menu will be shepherd's pie (with a vegetarian shepherd's pie option), broccoli salad, and garlic bread, with pineapple upside down cake for dessert.

Reservations are strongly suggested. Call 802-254-1138 and leave a message with a name, phone number, number of meals desired and whether they are for eating in or taking out. A donation of \$3 for seniors 60 and above and \$4 for younger folk is suggested.

### Online help available for escaping abuse

BRATTLEBORO — There's a new tool to help people escape abuse. Available at [bit.ly/746-help](http://bit.ly/746-help), it's an online guided interview that helps Vermonters prepare forms to ask for protection from abuse.

According to Vermont Legal Aid and Legal Services Vermont, the tool "provides simplified questions and explanations to guide users and ensure more complete and accurate filings. Normally, someone who needs a protection order fills out four paper or PDF forms to give to the court. Now they can use their smartphone or computer to work through one web-based, guided interview." They say those seeking help may also visit that website if they want to talk to an advocate about abuse they are experiencing.

For other general civil (non-criminal) legal information and help finding free and low-cost civil legal aid, help, and services, visit Vermont Legal Aid and Legal Services Vermont's website at [vtlawhelp.org](http://vtlawhelp.org).

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# A joyful noise

Estey Organ Co. — once the world’s largest manufacturer of pump and pipe models, pioneering equal pay for women and higher education for people of color — continues to resonate today

By Kevin O’Connor  
*VtDigger*

BRATTLEBORO—The story of Jacob Estey begins like a Charles Dickens novel: Born into poverty in 1814, the late New Englander was farmed out as a child laborer at age 4 and ran away at age 13, only to establish a namesake local company that became the largest organ manufacturer in the world.

Estey sold pump models to families seeking entertainment in the days before electronics, as well as pipe instruments to such luminaries as automaker Henry Ford, who rolled into Brattleboro in 1915 to see one specially crafted for his Michigan mansion.

But soon after finishing its biggest project in 1952 (a \$65,000 commission for Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University), the company was sold to a New Jersey firm in 1953 and shuttered in 1960.

End of story? Hardly. Talk to historians, and they’ll tell you how the Estey Organ Co. — a pioneer of equal pay for women and higher education for people of color — lives on in century-old instruments still making music everywhere, from Maine’s South Paris Baptist Church to California’s Universalist Unitarian Church of Santa Paula.

“Half a million organs went all over the world,” Barbara George, a volunteer leader of Brattleboro’s Estey Organ Museum, said in a recent interview. “People still get in touch with us from as far away as Australia.”

Estey sold 500,000 smaller reed organs for homes and churches from its founder’s start in 1852 to the factory’s finish 108 years later. It additionally fashioned 3,261 larger pipe instruments for bigger public buildings.

The legacy of the manufacturer also resonates through its records, which document each instrument in a folder containing everything from an initial letter of interest to a final shipping order.

That paperwork, filling more than 150 boxes, sat for years in the attic of one of seven slate-shingled factory buildings that still stand on Birge Street. Then the head of the national Organ Historical Society discovered the dusty collection during a recent visit to Vermont.

“Oh, my gosh, this is a treasure

trove!” W. Edward McCall recalled telling his hosts.

And so, Organ Historical Society archivists have moved the material to their repository outside Philadelphia, where they’re set to sort and scan everything for public online research.

“It’s a lot of work,” McCall said of the effort. “But the Estey Organ Co. was really well regarded and had quite a following. You can see by the amount of material the depth of its success.”

## A company’s rise and fall

Jacob Estey didn’t foresee such acclaim when he became a plumber’s apprentice at age 17 and moved on to sell lumber, slate, and marble before trying his hand at melodeons at age 38.

“Estey confessed quite readily that he didn’t have a lot of talent for music,” Dennis Waring, author of the book *Manufacturing the Muse: Estey Organs and Consumer Culture in Victorian America*, said in a recent Brattleboro lecture. “But he saw that music was set to become an important part of American expression.”

Soon after the start of the Civil War, Estey branched out into organs for homes and churches, all while bucking tradition by paying men and women the same wage and underwriting a building at North Carolina’s Shaw University, the first in the nation dedicated to higher education for Black women.

Tapping such advances as the steam engine and telegraph, the company shipped product to every continent except Antarctica, promoting its reach “from the far-off pines of Siberia to the golden shores of the Pacific.”

Estey’s factory would manufacture 200,000 pump organs before his death in 1890, then expand into larger pipe instruments at the turn of the 20th century and portable models used by U.S. Army chaplains during World War II.

The arrival of the television age upended everything. The company hoped to compete by introducing its first electronic organ in 1954, only to fall by the cultural wayside and fold its Brattleboro operations in 1960.

“Barely surviving the jazz age, the domestic organ was not to endure the onslaught of new music



Archivists remove records from Brattleboro’s former Estey Organ Co., this year for relocation to the national Organ Historical Society near Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

and contiguous technologies, especially rhythm and blues and its offspring, rock ‘n’ roll,” Waring writes in his book.

## More than 1,000 questions

But Estey’s closing hasn’t stopped people from contacting local historians with questions about specific instruments.

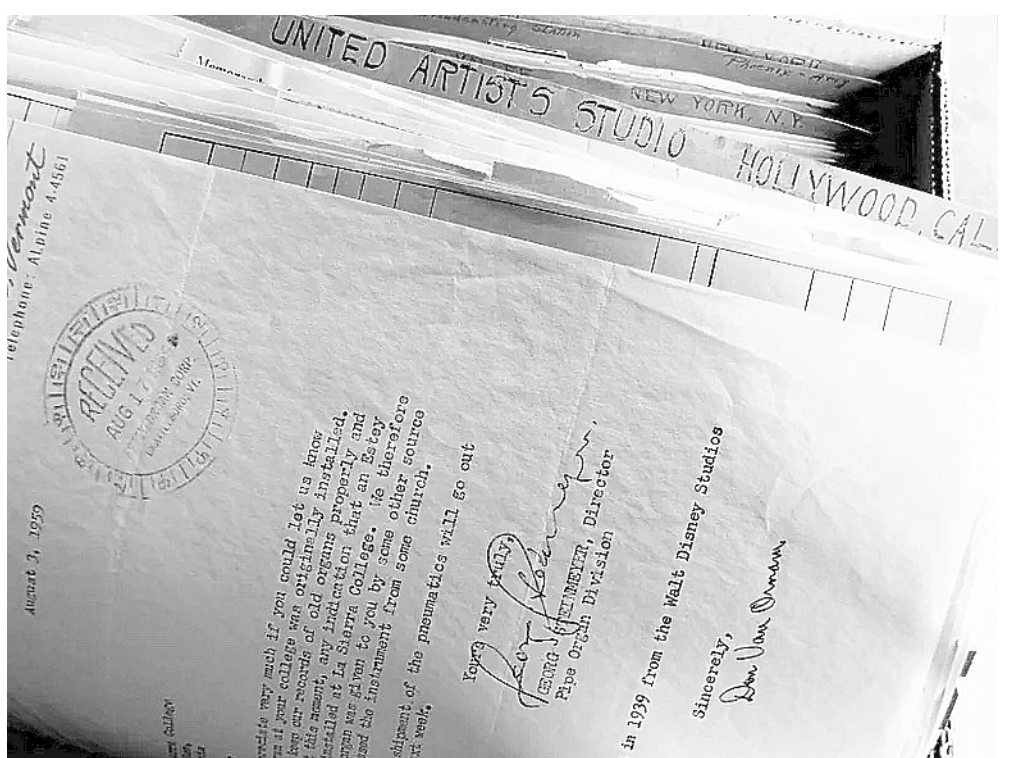
“I was wondering if there is any information for Opus 2633 built for St. John’s Catholic Church in Rumford, Maine,” a parishioner recently wrote. “I just became the third organist since 1927 to serve as music director and would like to know more. It’s approaching its 100-year anniversary, and we are looking to restore it to its full potential.”

A Michigan musician sent a similar inquiry about an Estey organ installed in 1909 at St. Paul’s German Evangelical Lutheran Church in Detroit.

“The church has been in many hands since it was built and it currently operates as a recording studio for up-and-coming musical artists,” he reported. “I would like to gather whatever information I can to share with the building owners about the instrument as it’s 113 years old.”

Over the past several decades, Brattleboro Historical Society member John Carnahan researched the records to answer what fellow volunteers estimate were more than 1,000 questions. But when Carnahan retired, his colleagues understood the documents required a more publicly accessible home.

“These need to be in their own



Brattleboro’s former Estey Organ Co. kept a folder (including this one for Hollywood’s United Artists studio) containing the paperwork for each of the 3,261 larger pipe instruments it built.

place, where people can come and do research,” George said at the Estey Organ Museum, which is open only on Saturdays from May to October.

The Organ Historical Society will provide that opportunity, both in-person and online.

“We’ll organize the papers

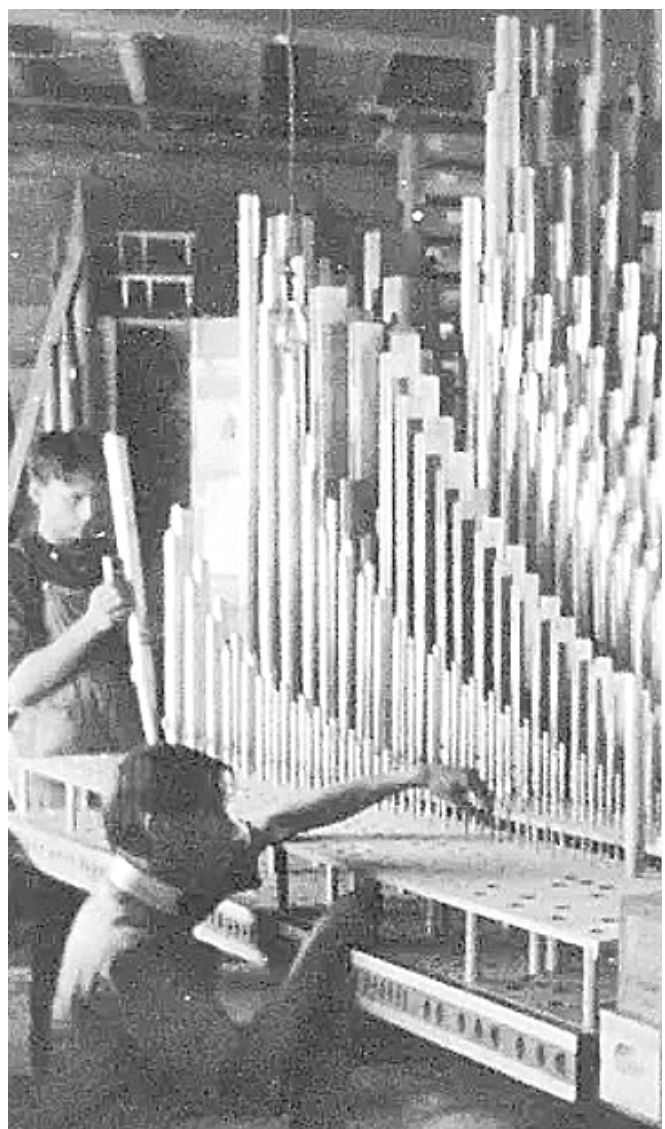
and write finding aids,” McCall said, “so when someone calls up, we’ll be able to provide that information.”

Brattleboro will continue to remember the company through the museum, a nearby roadside historic site marker, and an “Estey Fest” of public music and

education programs next fall.

“What this guy was about, how we did it, and the positive effect that he left for us to enjoy,”

Waring concluded in his recent lecture, “is a wonderful story that is not appreciated nearly enough by the town, state, country, and larger world.”



Workers at Brattleboro’s former Estey Organ Co., constructed 500,000 instruments from 1852 to 1960.

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## MILESTONES

Births, deaths, and news of people from Windham County

## Obituaries



• **James Anthony Eno, 93**, of Westminster. Died Dec. 15, 2023 at Springfield (Vt.) Health and Rehabilitation Center, following a short illness. He was born on July 9, 1930 in Bellows Falls to Charlie Eno and Theresa DeNuzzi. James graduated in 1948 from Bellows Falls High School, and married Nora O'Brien on Nov. 27, 1954. James proudly served in the Army during the Korean Conflict, where he held the rank of sergeant first class and earned the Army Commendation, National Defense Service, and United Nations Service medals, plus the Korean Service Medal with three bronze service stars. James worked as a meat manager for First National Stores for more than 50 years, and was a member of the Knights of Columbus and American Legion Post 37, serving as post commander. James was an avid Yankees fan and took part in many a spirited debate with Red Sox fans. James is survived by his children Michael Eno and his wife, Pam, of Ludlow, Timothy Eno and his wife, Brenda, of Bellows Falls, Jane Eno-Oevermann and her husband Dieter of Springfield, and John Eno of West Palm Beach, Florida; grandchildren Christopher, Justin and Keith Eno of Bellows Falls, Meagan LeBlanc of North Carolina, Eric LeBlanc of Greensburg, Pennsylvania, and Elizabeth, Isabella, and Victoria Eno of Florida; and several great-grandchildren. He is also survived by a sister, Jeanette LaFoe of Connecticut. He was predeceased by brothers John, Joe, and Charles Eno. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: A funeral Mass was held on Dec. 20 at St. Charles Church in Bellows Falls.

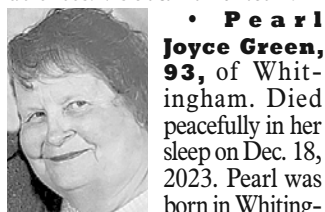


• **Paul L. Nub Fisher, 72**, of Hinsdale, New Hampshire. Died Dec. 15, 2023 in the comfort of his home, surrounded by his loving family, following a courageous battle with cancer. Paul was born in Brattleboro on Oct. 17, 1951, the son of the late Kenneth and Mary Marie (Cormier) Fisher. He was raised and educated in Guilford, graduating from Brattleboro Union High School with the Class of 1970. A gifted athlete while a student at BUHS, Paul excelled in varsity sports, especially baseball, and was an extraordinarily gifted pitcher known for his knuckleball. The late coach Carl Tenney considered Paul the caliber of player who could be in the major leagues if presented with the opportunity. Paul savored competition and never gave up an opportunity to display that. For 16 years, Paul was employed in the grounds and maintenance department for the Thicket Hill Residential Park. Previously, he had worked for several years in carpentry for Don LaValley Construction. In his early years, Paul assisted his parents who, at the time, owned and operated the Guilford Country Store in Algiers. Paul was an ardent outdoorsman who enjoyed sharing his love for hunting with his son, grandchildren, and sons-in-law. Paul also liked to go fishing, play tennis,

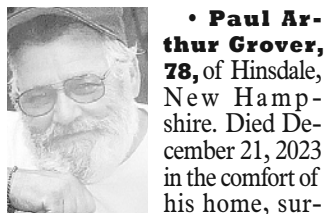


• **William Henry "Willie" Gembarowski, 74**, of Brattleboro. Died peacefully at his home with his family at his side on Dec. 23, 2023, after living with cancer for several years. Willie was born on May 26, 1949, the oldest son of Zowie and Lorraine (Pichette) Gembarowski. He was a St. Michael's High School graduate in the Class of 1967 and continued his education at New England College of Accounting and Commerce in Manchester, New Hampshire, until he joined the Army in 1969. He married Mary "Midge" Haus in 1970 before leaving to proudly serve his country. He was stationed at Schofield Barracks in Hawaii for three years, during the Vietnam War. Following his honorable discharge from active service, he returned home to Brattleboro with Mary to settle down and start a family. They purchased a home in 1975, where they would raise their family. Willie went to work at The Book Press as a printer and was employed by the company for 25 years, after which he started to pursue an interest in woodworking. In 1996, he purchased another lovely home that he worked on renovating, and that had space for a large wood shop in the garage. Willie loved making things and keeping his workshop and home in perfect order. He later worked for Southeastern Vermont

Community Action, for Jancewicz & Son and, well past retirement age, took a job at Hilltop Montessori School that involved planning and building shelving and storage space and being around a lively crowd of children, which he always enjoyed. Willie also enjoyed caring for the yards and gardens around his homes, cooking for others, woodworking, and helping others. He will be remembered for his spirit of friendship and generosity. He cherished time spent with his family, especially his seven grandchildren. Although his illness kept him from doing some things, he continued to spend time with family and friends and orchestrated how to gather the people he loved to spend time together and eat good food. Willie is survived by his ex-wife and best friend of 60 years, Mary Gembarowski of Brattleboro; three daughters; Jessica Justin (Stephen) of Grosse Point Park, Michigan, Katrina Gembarowski of Brattleboro, and Alexa Gembarowski of Brattleboro; grandchildren Amelia Noël, Simon Henry, Eliza Jane, Louisa Claire, Malina Marie, Alice Elizabeth, and Katherine Margaret; siblings Caroline Hammarlund (Erik) of Brattleboro, Daniel Gembarowski (Diane) of Texas, Joseph Gembarowski (Renée) of Brattleboro, Noël Swtzen (Jean-Marc) of France, Rebecca Gembarowski (Tim) of Brattleboro, and his longtime friend and partly, Anne Senni. Additionally, he is survived by an uncle, Albert Pichette of Florida, an aunt, Annette Seaman of New York, and many nieces, nephews, and cousins. Willie was predeceased by both of his parents and one brother, Zachary Gembarowski. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: Willie was a communicant of St. Michael's Roman Catholic Church. A funeral Mass and interment with military honors will take place later in the springtime. Donations to Bayada Hospice, 1222 Putney Rd., Brattleboro, VT 05301. To offer condolences, visit [atamaniuk.com](http://atamaniuk.com).

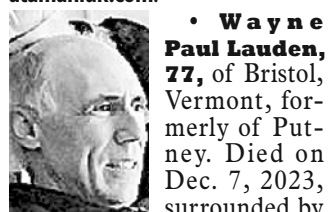


• **Pearl Joyce Green, 93**, of Whitingham. Died peacefully in her sleep on Dec. 18, 2023. Pearl was born in Whitingham on May 3, 1930, the daughter of the late Truman and Alice (Harvey) Powers. She attended "The Schoolhouse" in Whitingham. Pearl was a seamstress and worked at Brattleboro Memorial Hospital for more than 20 years. She was devout in her Christian Faith and was a member of the Brattleboro Church of Christ. Pearl enjoyed sewing, knitting, and traveling to be with her children. She cherished time spent with her family. Pearl was preceded in death by her husband Robert Green, and daughter-in-law Linda Green. Pearl is survived by her children, Robert Green of Wilmington, Ellen (Mark) Starr of Catskill, New York, Myrna (Phillip) Culver of Addison, Marcia (Daniel) Nelson of Wilmington, Mitchell (Dora) Green of Halifax, Diana (John) Kentfield of Westminster, Jennifer (Scott) Grover of Burlington, Iowa, Beth Green of Whitingham, Brian (Rebekah) Green of Whitingham, and Wanda Green of New Haven, Vermont. She is also survived by 42 grandchildren, 53 great-grandchildren and 2 great-great-grandchildren. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: Funeral services were held Dec. 23 at the Municipal Center in Jacksonville. Donations to St. Jude's Children's Hospital, in care of Covey-Allen & Shea Funeral Home, P.O. Box 528, Wilmington, VT 05363. To send the family personal condolences, visit [sheafuneralhomes.com](http://sheafuneralhomes.com).

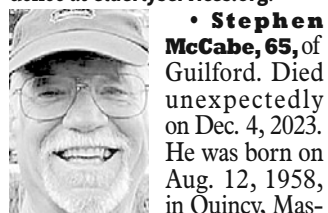


• **Paul Arthur Grover, 78**, of Hinsdale, New Hampshire. Died December 21, 2023 in the comfort of his home, surrounded by his family, following a lengthy period of declining health. Paul was born in Brattleboro on May 10, 1945, the son of Earl and Dorothy (Reid) Grover. A lifelong resident of the area, he attended Brattleboro public schools, including Brattleboro Union High School. He worked all of his career as a truck driver employed by Pride Transport and CR England Transport, both of Salt Lake City, Utah. His last position prior to retiring was with Zaluzny Excavating of Vernon. Paul had an appreciation and love for classic cars and was the proud owner of several classics that included a 1976 Buick Riviera, a 1979 Oldsmobile Cutlass, and a 1951 Ford. He was a longtime member of the Now & Then Car Club. Paul was known for his unique sense of humor. He loved a good joke and enjoyed making people laugh. He was a faithful and devoted husband and a loving father, grandfather, and great-grandfather as well as a friend to many. He was

first married to Ginger Stacy who predeceased him. He later married Bonnie L. Cleveland on May 7, 1988 in Greenfield, Massachusetts, a balcony wedding ceremony for family and close friends. Besides his wife of 35 years, survivors include his four children, Christopher Grover (Tessa) of Swanzey, New Hampshire, Eric Draper of Keene, New Hampshire, Jennifer Bush (Ron) of Keene, and Linda Goodnow of Hinsdale; one sister, Joyce Kane of Rocky Hill, Connecticut; grandchildren Kira, Joshua, Eric, and Landon; a great-grandson, Grayson; many nieces and nephews, and several cousins. Additionally, Paul leaves his beloved Sheltie, Abby, who he adored. He was predeceased by a sister, Gail Gilbeau; a brother, Earl Dewey Grover; and a granddaughter, Kaitlyn Hope Goodnow. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: In keeping with Paul's final wishes, there are no formal funeral services scheduled. A celebration of his life will be held at a later date with burial of his cremated remains in Meetinghouse Hill Cemetery. Donations to Rescue Inc., P.O. Box 593, Brattleboro, VT 05302; or Monadnock Humane Society, 101 West Swanzey Road, Swanzey, NH 03446. To offer condolences, visit [atamaniuk.com](http://atamaniuk.com).



• **Wayne Paul Louden, 77**, of Bristol, Vermont, formerly of Putney. Died on Dec. 7, 2023, surrounded by his family, following a rapid advancement of Alzheimer's disease. The son of Elizabeth (Hoffacker) and Ernest Lauser, he was born in Philadelphia on July 30, 1946 and raised in Media, Pennsylvania. A talented musician and inherently creative, Wayne was classically trained in trumpet at Temple University and was devoted to the arts in all forms. He wrote countless tunes and songs (including a full-length opera), played eight instruments, and explored sound design, stagecraft, puppetry, and storytelling. Holding true to his beliefs as a Quaker pacifist, Wayne became an anti-war campaigner, protester and organizer, blockading ports in canoes to disrupt arms shipments to conflict zones and training civil-rights protesters in non-violent resistance. During the Vietnam War, Wayne walked 500 miles to personally return his draft card to the desk of the Secretary of Defense. He was imprisoned as a conscientious objector, and later was given presidential pardon by Jimmy Carter. Wayne then settled in Windham County, where he was a performer, a first responder, and paramedic, in addition to building two houses in Putney where he raised his family. His love for the outdoors inspired him to hand-build a cedar double kayak in which he navigated Vermont's waterways by paddle and homemade sail. Wayne retired to Bristol and quickly found his community of friends by hosting a weekly music jam. Despite the increasing difficulties of Alzheimer's disease, his unique combination of curiosity, musicality, warmth, and grace remained firmly intact. Many blessings unfolded: Wayne became an enthusiastic member of the Project Independence community, where his spirit and interests were nurtured, and his love of kayaking continued through the support of the NDAA Adaptive Kayaking program. Wayne received TLC in his final weeks at Addison Respite Care Home at Helen Porter. Wayne left the world a better (and more interesting) place than he found it, and he lived his final days as he had all others — with a song in his heart. Wayne is survived by the love of his life, Sue Hawkins, his sons Jon and Jesse (Suzie Wyman), granddaughter Anna, daughter-in-law Stephanie, and many well-loved friends. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: A celebration of Wayne's life will be held at Holley Hall in Bristol on Saturday, Jan. 6, at 1:30 p.m. Refreshments will follow, and musicians are invited to bring an instrument for a concurrent Wayne Fest jam session. Donations in Wayne's honor may be made to Project Independence at [elderlyservices.org](http://elderlyservices.org).



• **Stephen McCabe, 65**, of Guilford. Died unexpectedly on Dec. 4, 2023. He was born on Aug. 12, 1958, in Quincy, Massachusetts. Steve attended Pembroke Elementary School, and later graduated from Silver Lake Regional High School in 1977. He enjoyed sports, particularly weightlifting during his younger years. Steve's professional journey began in the printing business in Massachusetts, relocating to The Book Press in Brattleboro. With dedication and skill, he later transitioned to become a Journeyman Electrician with Interstate Electric, where he excelled in his work

until his retirement in 2021. Steve, known for his kindness and gentle nature, was a man of deep compassion and generosity. He found solace in the beauty of nature. Whether it was mountain biking, kayaking, skiing, hiking, fishing, or camping, he embraced every moment, especially when accompanied by his cherished grandson, Cole. Steve loved to travel, and was a wonderful companion with an acute sense of direction. He looked forward to more trips and adventures during his retirement. With a sweet tooth and a love for family traditions, Steve took pride in preparing special breakfasts for his loved ones, particularly during the holiday seasons. In the summer months, you could find Steve relaxing on the back deck with an ice cold G&T, surrounded by the beautiful gardens his wife Beth cultivated. Steve is survived by his wife, Beth McCabe, and his four stepchildren, Erin Yudin, Andrea Yudin, Carla Yudin, and Ronald Yudin, whom he loved as his own. He was a doting grandfather to Cole, Remi, and Jackson, their playfulness bringing immeasurable joy to his life. Steve is also survived by his brothers, Barry McCabe (Denise) and Kevin McCabe (Maryellen), his sisters, Kerry McCabe and Lenore McCabe, his niece, Casey McCabe (Andre Dean), and nephews, Matt McCabe (Erin) and Shane Ebanks. He was preceded in death by his parents, Ruth (Smith) and Bernard McCabe. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: A private service was held to honor and celebrate Steve's life. Donations to the Windham County Humane Society ([windhamcountyhumane.org/donate](http://windhamcountyhumane.org/donate)), or the Vermont Suicide Prevention Center ([healhandlearning.org](http://healhandlearning.org)).

• **Edith "Ede" Baker Thomas, 92**, of Marlboro. Died peacefully, with her family by her side, on Dec. 15, 2023 at Grace Cottage Hospital in Townshend. Born Aug. 20, 1931, in Marinette, Wisconsin to Lester and Ramona Baker, Ede was a graduate of Marinette High School. She attended Northwestern University (1951) where she earned a B.A. in Music and an M.M. in Music Education. Immediately following graduation, she moved to Hartford, Connecticut with a violin, a bicycle, and a promise of a job teaching music in the Hartford Public Schools. While singing with the Simsbury Light Opera Company in a production of *Iolanthe* by Gilbert and Sullivan, she was cast opposite J.B.C. "Tommy" Thomas, who quickly became her true love on stage and off. They married and lived in Hartford for 40 years, where they raised their two sons and two daughters, spending every summer on Ames Hill in Marlboro. In 1992, after 30 years of teaching elementary-school music and directing children's chorus at the Unitarian Universalist Church, she and Tommy retired to Marlboro. Ede was an accomplished vocalist, pianist, and violinist and was very active in the arts community of Hartford and southern Vermont. As a performer she was a longtime member of the Blanche Moyses Chorale, singing in every performance for over 35 years. She was also a violinist in the Windham Orchestra and was a participant in a number of chamber ensembles over the years. As a volunteer, Ede was the head usher at the Marlboro Music Festival for many years and often housed visiting performers. Never truly retiring, Ede was the Choir Director at All Souls U.U. Church in West Brattleboro for nearly 30 years, where she also served on the Board of Directors and Search Committee. Ede was passionate about teaching children to sing and directed children's choirs every summer at the Marlboro Meeting House. Full of energy and a love of life, Ede was a friend to all and a stranger to none. She laughed generously and had a charming sense of humor. Never idle, there was always a friend to share a smile with, a sewing project to work on, a piece of furniture to refurbish, a watercolor to paint, a flower arrangement to make, a jigsaw puzzle to assemble, homemade crackers or a pie to bake, a game of Scrabble to play, or songs to sing. She accepted every opportunity to help those around her with her overflowing generosity. She will be greatly missed by her family, friends, and community. Ede was preceded in death by her parents and husband; a son, Burr Thomas; and a sister, Ramona Baker Anderson. She is survived by her sister, Elizabeth Baker Stackhouse of Minnetonka, Minnesota; daughter Martha Thompson (Norman) of Louisville, Colorado and grandchildren Norman Anderson and Ellen Thompson; daughter Ellen Gawler (John) of Belgrade, Maine and granddaughters Elsie (Lao Gil-lam), Edith, and Molly Gawler; and son Newell Thomas (Danni Cauley) of Barrington, Rhode Island and grandsons Casey (Rebekah

and Ian (Gretchen) Thomas, and William and Patrick Cauley; and great-grandsons, Caspian and Mica Gawler. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: A memorial service will be held at All Souls Unitarian Universalist Church in West Brattleboro on Monday, Jan. 8, at 1 p.m. Donations to Blanche Moyses Chorale, 72 Blanche Moyses Way, Brattleboro, VT 05301, or Marlboro Cares, Marlboro Alliance, P.O. Box 165, Marlboro, VT 05344.

• **Richard W. Tenney, 89**, of Clermont, Florida, husband of Virginia (Worden) Tenney, died Dec. 28, 2023 in Clermont. A funeral Mass will be held on Saturday, Jan. 6, at noon, at St. Michael's Roman Catholic Church in Brattleboro, with interment to follow in Taft Cemetery in Dummerston. Friends are invited to call at the Atamaniuk Funeral Home in Brattleboro from 10 to 11:30 a.m., before Mass. A full obituary will appear in a future edition of *The Commons*.

• **Michael A. "Tiddy" Tidd, 75**, of Rockingham. Died on Dec. 8, 2023, at the home of his brother and sister-in-law, Kevin and Tina, in Walpole, New Hampshire, where he spent the last week of his life in the company of many close friends and family. He was born August 21, 1948, in Bellows Falls, the son of James Anthony Jr. and Margaret (Clapper) Tidd. Mike attended schools in Bellows Falls, including St. Charles School, and graduated from Bellows Falls High School with the Class of 1966. After graduation, he enlisted in the Marines and served in Vietnam. On his return to the area, he worked in carpentry and was a bartender at Meatland and, later, American Legion Post 67 in Chester, and Pioneer House, as well as other local establishments. He was also a member of Post 67.

Michael was an avid outdoorsman and deer hunter and loved to share his passion of hunting with others. He enjoyed every aspect of being outside and preferred it to being in a building: everything from weed whacking and mowing the lawn to snowshoeing, biking, fishing, and canoeing or just a stroll with Sadie. Everyone knew Tiddy because he never drove. He hitchhiked most everywhere or rode his bike for shorter treks. While hitchhiking, Tiddy acquainted himself with a lot of people and he could make short work of getting many miles away, once he got to Route 103. Tiddy truly enjoyed an outdoor adventure, often with a fire and a beverage with his many friends, and later spent countless weekends camping with his nieces and nephews and his brothers. Mike is survived by one sister, M. Ellen Jones, and one brother, Kevin Tidd; stepsisters Joanne Condosta and Nancy Swain; and stepbrother, John (Butch) Davis. One of Michael's favorite titles in life was that of uncle, and he had many nieces and nephews by which he will be greatly missed, and his forever friend, Gail. Michael was predeceased by his parents and younger sister, Sharon T. Singleton. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: Following cremation, there will be a celebration of his life, with military honors, at American Legion Post 67 in Chester on Jan. 6 from 1 to 5 p.m. Michael planned every aspect of his final arrangements and would love for all his friends and family to come together for one final celebration in his honor. In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to the DAV or any organization of your choice that helps children of fallen veterans. Although Michael didn't have any children of his own, he loved them all.



• **Vera von Krusenstiern, 93**, formerly of Brattleboro. Died peacefully, with her family by her side, on November 14, 2023, in Vernon. Vera was born in Bonn, Germany on April 4, 1930, the daughter of Ernst Dohany, a newspaper publisher, and Elisabeth (von Bruchhausen) Dohany. She spent her early years in the small village of Buchheim outside the Black Forest city of Freiburg im Breisgau. After attending the University of Freiburg, Vera began working as a newspaper reporter. On June 15, 1956 in Frankfurt, Germany, she married fellow reporter Alfred von Krusenstiern, a Baltic German whose parents had fled from the Bolshevik Revolution. Together, they moved frequently during the early years of their marriage as Alfred took reporting assignments in Frankfurt, Berlin, London, Washington, D.C., and New York. In 1965, the couple and their three young sons took the transatlantic ocean liner S.S. Bremen from Bremerhaven to New York. Leaving post-war Europe behind, Vera and her husband adopted America as their new home, and thereafter only returned to Germany and Europe for visits. After three years in

■ STORY CONTINUES ON FACING PAGE

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Hi, I'm **Maggie!** I am a sweet older gal that loves to hangout on your lap. I am timid, so fast, unexpected movements startle me. I would do best as the only animal in the home, as well as no young kids. I need a nice, quiet home to retire in. Could it be yours? I am in foster, if you are interested in adopting me call 802-254-2232 or email us at [info@windhamcountyhumane.org](mailto:info@windhamcountyhumane.org)

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Arlington, Virginia, Vera and the family moved to Hastings-on-Hudson, New York. Then, following twenty-five years in New York, they retired to Whidbey Island, Washington. One year after celebrating their 50th anniversary, Alfred died in 2007. Vera later moved to Brattleboro, where her youngest son and his family reside. As was typical during the 1960's and 1970's, Vera left her own career behind and assumed the role of mother and homemaker. She embraced that role as her duty but did so with fierce independence and unbreakable strength. While shy by nature, Vera enjoyed both social banter and intellectual discussion. A voracious reader, she retreated to her books in the evenings after preparing extraordinary meals for her family and frequent guests. As a mother, and as a friend, Vera was unsentimental and no-nonsense. Yet her steadfast nature was giving and generous. She expressed love and friendship not with demonstrative words but with quiet deeds. She was also known for her sardonic humor that was always singularly funny. Vera and Alfred's time in Hastings-on-Hudson gave rise to a legacy that still resonates. Together they created an impromptu salon-like atmosphere in their home. Guests, young and old, European and American, floated in and out, some stayed for tea, others stayed for a meal and still others stayed overnight for a day, a week, and extraordinarily, some actually even stayed for months. An unusual blend of American informality and old European hospitality gave rise to a "Gemütlichkeit" that left a lasting impression on all who visited them. Vera is survived by her three sons, Friedrich (Lenore) of Brookline, Massachusetts, Johann Adam (Elizabeth) of Bellingham, Washington, and Konstantin of Brattleboro. Her legacy extends through eight grandchildren and two great-grandchildren, and through nieces and nephews in Germany, Italy and France. She was preceded in death by her husband of over 50 years, Alfred von Krusenstiern. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: In celebrating Vera's life, memorial contributions in Vera's name may be made to Latches Theater, 50 Main St., Brattleboro, VT 05301 or online at [latchesarts.org](http://latchesarts.org). Vera admired and supported this historic art deco theater where she went to see live performances, films, and Metropolitan Opera simulcasts. To offer condolences, visit [atamaniuk.com](http://atamaniuk.com).

**• James L. "Jim" Wood, 99**, of Brattleboro. Died Dec. 8, 2023 at the home of his daughter in Bartlett, Tennessee. Jim was born in Brattleboro on Jan. 7, 1924, the son of Joseph and Louise (Phillips) Wood. He was raised and educated in Brattleboro, attending local schools including Brattleboro High School. He went on to proudly serve his country in the Navy during World War II, stationed in both the European and Pacific Theaters of operation. Following his honorable discharge, Jim returned home to Brattleboro. For 22 years, he had been employed at the former American Optical Company and the former American Stratford, both in Brattleboro. For a number of years, he owned and operated the former Kingsley Market at the corner of lower South Main and Canal Street. Jim was a member of American Legion Post 5, VFW Carl M. Dessaint Post



## Housing

community assets in perpetuity," said Executive Director Elizabeth Bridgewater of Windham & Windsor Housing Trust (WWHT), a local, nonprofit developer of affordable housing.

VHCB offers grants and loans to nonprofit housing organizations, like WWHT, around the state. Since its establishment in 1987, VHCB has contributed to the development of more than 15,000 permanently affordable homes in Vermont.

### More is needed

HHAV was created this year through the merger of the Vermont Coalition to End Homelessness and the Vermont Affordable Housing Coalition.

Representatives from WWHT and Groundworks Collaborative, which runs an overnight shelter for people experiencing homelessness in Brattleboro, serve on the HHAV board.

Another priority for the HHAV: Funding for unhoused Vermonters to remain sheltered in area motels through the fiscal year.

This year's \$200 million request to the Legislature is in line with previous years' asks, noted Jess Graff, HHAV board member and associate director of statewide housing advocacy programs at the Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity. "It's a big number, but it's still less than what's actually needed," she said.

The Vermont Housing Finance

1034, and the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks, Brattleboro Lodge 1499. For several years, he was a volunteer driver for the DAV, taking area veterans to their medical appointments at the VA Medical Center in White River Junction. A man of faith, Jim was a communicant of St. Michael's Roman Catholic Church. Jim will be remembered for his easygoing, pleasant personality and spirit of friendship. He enjoyed fishing, gardening, and taking afternoon rides and day trips. He especially enjoyed visits to the coast of Maine. Most of all, Jim enjoyed time spent with his family, both in New England and Orange Beach, Alabama. On April 17, 1948, in Ashuelot, New Hampshire, he was married to Florence Grzelecki, who predeceased him on Dec. 12, 2000. Survivors include two daughters, Sandra Vallon (Richard) and Deborah Henrikson, both of Bartlett; one son, James E. "Chip" Wood (Susan) of Rochester, New York; and eight grandchildren, 16 great-grandchildren and many nieces, nephews, great-nieces and great-nephews. He was predeceased by brothers Robert, Joseph, and Donald; sisters Barbara Perkins, Dorothy Warwick, and Shirley Hayes; and a son-in-law, William Henrikson. MEMORIAL INFORMATION: Graveside committal rites and burial with military honors will be conducted in the springtime in Evergreen Cemetery in Winchester, New Hampshire, where he will be laid next to his beloved wife. Donations to Rescue Inc., P.O. Box 593, Brattleboro, VT 05302; or St. Michael's School, 48 Walnut St., Brattleboro, VT 05301. To offer condolences, visit [atamaniuk.com](http://atamaniuk.com).



Agency estimates that 30,000 to 40,000 homes are needed by 2030 to meet projected demand across all income levels.

### 'Stakes are high'

During the pandemic, the state initiated several new housing programs using federal recovery and stimulus funding. One such initiative, the Vermont Housing Improvement Program (VHIP), provides grants of up to \$50,000 per unit for construction of and repairs to rental units.

Bridgewater noted that while the VHIP program is a valuable tool in the state's toolkit for creating new homes, it doesn't require that these homes be perpetually affordable. New homes created through the program must remain affordable only for five years.

Bridgewater and other affordable housing advocates are concerned that with the sunset of federal stimulus funding, there will be a temptation to "take our eye off the ball" of investing in permanently affordable homes.

"What happens to a family living in one of these (VHIP) homes when the rents go up after that five-year window is lifted?" Bridgewater said. "If they can't afford the higher rent, there's stress and chaos. And in this market with vacancy rates so low (i.e., very low turnover of housing units), there's potentially homelessness. The stakes are high."

She added her view that "we're in a new environment of really having to articulate why affordability strategies are ultimately more effective in the long run."

Advocates argue that by preserving affordability for the longest possible time, the public

sector can serve the most people possible and maximize the return on public investment.

### Permanent affordability helps relieve the pressure

In this environment of low wages — especially in southern Vermont — and high construction costs, which show up in high rents, it's more important than ever for the state to preserve affordability, Bridgewater said.

With some of the lowest wages in the state, many Windham County residents are "housing cost-burdened," defined as spending more than 30% of their income on housing.

More than half of Brattleboro residents who pay rent or mortgage are cost-burdened, according to the 2021 Brattleboro Housing Action Plan. Some 30% of renters are "severely cost burdened," paying more than half of their income on housing.

It currently costs about \$500,000 to build a modest apartment or small home in the state, compared to about \$370,000 in 2022, according to the Vermont Housing Finance Agency, an affordable housing organization that finances loans for lower- and middle-income Vermonters.

Because private developers need to charge higher rents to cover these costs, the creation of affordable housing is largely left to the public sector.

HHAV is also calling on the state to address the potential for "massive additional homelessness" on April 1, when hundreds of Vermont households experiencing homelessness are set to be evicted from motels where they

have been sheltering since the start of the pandemic.

"We need to recognize that come April 1 there won't be enough housing units, or enough shelter spaces, or enough capacity in the service delivery system to house everyone in the June cohort," said Peter Elwell, Interim Director of Groundworks Collaborative. "We can't have April 1 come and have the impact be 'Gee, it didn't work out for everybody but we did the best we could.'"

The state provides shelter in motels to unhoused Vermonters through the General Assistance Housing Program.

Motel shelter is generally available for 28 or 84 days depending on eligibility, or during adverse weather. The state expanded eligibility during the pandemic and, through legislation passed in June, most households currently in the program are eligible to stay until April 1, 2024. Fewer than half (549) of this "June cohort" of 1,289 households have transitioned out of the motel program since June.

HHAV is proposing that households in the June cohort who are still unhoused on April 1 be able to stay in the motel program for the remainder of the fiscal year. HHAV is asking the Legislature to provide \$6 million in the Budget Adjustment Act — the routine mid-year legislation to adjust the state budget — for this purpose.

### State faces significant challenges

The Scott administration is proposing "the development of temporarily expanded shelter

FROM SECTION FRONT

capacity for April 1," said Chris Winters, commissioner of the Department for Children and Families, in an email to *The Commons*.

These shelter options include congregate, semi-congregate, or non-congregate shelters, or expansion of existing shelter capacity in the five communities where most users of the services currently reside: Chittenden County, central Vermont, Rutland, Brattleboro, and Bennington, Winters said.

With three months to go until April 1, the administration cites "significant challenges" to standing up these temporary shelters, including finding appropriate locations and staff for them, funding the appropriate number of beds, and getting community buy-in for the effort.

Concerned about the potential for a "warehousing approach" by the administration, HHAV advocates for an approach that supports a progression from emergency shelter to more stable and sustainable housing. Advocates have been wrestling with how to best deliver this support since before the pandemic.

"The housing and homelessness crisis has developed over decades," said HHAV Vice-Chair Lindsay Thrall, who is also the Connections Program manager at Evernorth, a nonprofit developer of affordable housing in Vermont, Maine, and New Hampshire.

"So it's not going to be solved in one year, even if all of the HHAV's legislative priorities were enacted. But these are investments that we have to make long-term to slowly solve this problem," Thrall said.

FROM SECTION FRONT

## Graduate

the pandemic, says that her inspiration for further learning came after she lost a client to Covid.

While driving to his services in Barre, Morse noticed the granite quarries that line the road to the cemetery.

"I'm so fascinated with the Earth," she says. "I found myself wondering, 'How do we know where to find the rocks we quarry in Vermont?'"

That question turned out to be the spark that led her to enroll in college.

"I realize that getting a science degree is a long way from cutting hair," she says. "I never thought I'd be into science. But in thinking about it, all my favorite teachers in high school were science teachers."

Geoscience, explains Morse, encompasses what previous generations of students knew.

The field "includes so much more than rocks and volcanoes," she says. "It studies the processes that form and shape the Earth's surface."

The study also includes the natural resources we use and how water and ecosystems are interconnected.

Some of her friends didn't get it: "They kept asking me, 'Mines in Vermont? How are you going to study that?'" she says.

"They didn't realize that we have so many mines in Vermont, including copper mines," Morse adds. "Most people don't realize that. And with climate change, flooding, and changes in our topography, this is the best time to be in this field."

Geoscience, she says, "is more important than ever in Vermont. It has to do with cartography and of mitigation of hazards like contamination of water sites. This field has grown by 30% in our state."

"Did you know that we have over 900 mines in Vermont?" she says. "It's such a beautiful place to learn geology."

### Overcoming challenges

Getting her college degree was no easier than getting her high school diploma, though the challenges were different, Morse says.

"My children are both older now, but my living situations haven't always been easy," she says.

"During college, I moved to a new apartment, which turned out to be a disaster," she adds.

"I didn't know when I moved in that I was in the same building as the town's worst drug dealer. I suffered through four drug raids while I was going through college."

Morse lost her job when the salon where she was working was sold. She ended up with no heat or hot water, and she found herself in a new relationship that ended with her becoming a survivor of domestic abuse.

"It's been an interesting life, that's for sure," she says with a rueful chuckle.

Despite formidable circumstances, she's still getting things done.

"I'm a very determined person," she says. "I don't get

distracted with the difficulties of life."

She maintained a 3.8 grade point average and graduated with high honors. She was a member of the National Society for Leadership and Success, an organization that promotes support and opportunities on college campuses for future leaders.

And, through her studies and life challenges, Morse continued to cut hair.

"My cosmetology license is still my income, and the people I serve are my family," she says. "Cutting hair continues to be the way I support myself while I plan my next move."

And, she says, "my clients are so important to me."

"They have supported me with hope and encouragement," she says. "I won't leave them."

### Ready to get outside

Despite her staying put for now, Morse is making long-term plans for her next big achievement.

"I'd like to be a field geologist and land surveyor," she says. "My first degree is a good step in the right direction."

That direction will lead to her taking more classes — this time, from the University of Maine — and earning a graduate certificate in surveying engineering technology. By the time she's 38 years old, she plans to take the state board test to become a surveyor.

Morse notes that recent college graduates are often looking for jobs where they can work

remotely from a computer.

She feels differently. "It's not yet time to change jobs," she says. "If I were to take a job in geoscience now, I'd be stuck behind a computer. I need to move my body. I love my job, but a few years from now, I'll be ready to get outside and move through the forests," she says, excitement rising in her voice as she thinks about her future.

"The average age of land surveyors in Vermont is 59. It's getting to be a lost art. I already have clients who tell me that they are having difficulty finding someone to do the work," she notes.

And travel is in her future as well, she says.

"My work station on Main Street is full of maps. I ask each client to put a pin on the map for where they are from, and I ask them about that area of the USA. I have another map of the world that one can scratch off each country. Other clients scratch off the country where they are from, and I have them tell me what it is like there."

She also has a sand collection. "When one of my clients is going to travel, I ask them to bring me back some sand from where they are visiting. I mark each container and learn about where the sand is from," she says.

"It's a great way to learn about the world," Morse says cheerily. "It gives me a giant bucket list to work on." Eventually, she'll start her new career to fund that giant list, she notes.

"I have jars and jars of sand," she says.

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## Thrift store network

FROM SECTION FRONT

store," Meyer said.

As SEVCA prepared for the closing of its stores, it worked with Black River Good Neighbor Services in Ludlow, the Chester-Andover Family Center in Chester, and the Community Closet at Immanuel Episcopal Church and Busy Bees, both in Bellows Falls, to take up the slack.

Meyer said that SEVCA anticipates several more stores will join this group. Up to date information will be available on SEVCA's website ([sevca.org](http://sevca.org)) and on its Facebook page ([facebook.com/SEVCAorg](https://facebook.com/SEVCAorg)).

In an interview in December, prior to the closing of the Good Buy stores, Meyer added that two crews and two trucks would be delivering products and equipment from the closing stores to the other local thrift shops, making sure "to keep the things we have in the communities we serve," he said. That would have included everything from the inventory to shelving and racks.

Nancy McAuliffe, a volunteer at the Community Closet, said in December that her store had already begun working with Busy Bees, which specializes in new and used children's clothing. The Community Closet will focus on clothing for adults and was starting to transfer its children's clothing inventory to Busy Bees.

"The various shops have already started helping each other," McAuliffe said. "We've been sharing our merchandise and racks."

Meyer said that developing the network has opened other means of cooperation.

SEVCA, which has a highly trained weatherization crew, is working with the Community Closet in alleviating some moisture problems there — a project that it might not have had the resources to do on its own.

In a press release, SEVCA noted that it has operated thrift stores in Windsor and Windham counties since 1970 with dual purposes: to offer low-income community members access to free and low-cost furniture, housewares, and clothing, and to be a locus of economic development.

This new network allows shoppers utilizing vouchers to



ROBERT F. SMITH/THE COMMONS

**Chester-Andover Family Center in Chester is one of the participants in Southeastern Vermont Community Action's (SEVCA) new Thrift Store Network.**

choose where they go to meet their specific needs, and the program also holds the potential to bring income to local small businesses.

"No one is happy that we are closing," Meyer said. "But the reality is what has happened to nonprofit funding following Covid. A lot of money was available when Covid was hitting, but that has really fallen off since this past March."

The flooding in July 2023 "has also aggravated the situation," Meyer said.

Local thrift shops have also served as an important community resource for people seeking to make donations of new and well-used clothing, housewares, and furniture.

People wishing to donate will eventually be able to check the SEVCA website and contact individual stores regarding what they will accept, where they can take donations that they may not accept, hours of operation, and other information. That information was not available on

the website at press time.

Meyer noted that one of the most difficult parts of the SEVCA stores closing has been the loss "of the amazing staff and volunteers that we have had working at these stores for years."

He added that personnel lived in the towns the stores served — a key element for the thrift stores' effectiveness.

"We again would like to thank our community for their long and loyal support for SEVCA Good Buy stores, both as shoppers and as donors," said Kathleen Devlin, the organization's special projects administrator, who served as interim executive director last year.

Josh Davis, most recently the executive director of Groundworks Collaborative in Brattleboro, began work as executive director on Jan. 1.

For more information, contact SEVCA at 802-885-7074 or visit [sevca.org](http://sevca.org).

## Berg nominated for U.S. service academies

BUHS senior, among those 19 applicants from Vermont, hopes to attend Air Force Academy

By Virginia Ray  
The Commons

BRATTLEBORO — Brattleboro Union High School senior Ben Berg has received a congressional nomination to the Air Force Academy.

Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., Sen. Peter Welch, D-Vt., and Rep. Becca Balint, D-Vt. recognized 19 young Vermonters who are being nominated to be members of the class of 2028 at U.S. service academies.

The nominees were recognized at a reception at the Vermont State House on Dec. 30.

Applicants to the academies — the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, the United States Naval Academy, the United States Air Force Academy, the United States Coast Guard Academy, and the United States Merchant Marine Academy — must receive nominations as part of their application requirements.

While there are other political nomination sources that applicants may qualify for, a congressional nomination is the most common.

Berg has been involved in his school community throughout his high school career, serving on the Windham Southeast Regional School Board and helping establish his school's Student Advisory Council. A licensed pilot, Berg is passionate about flying, community, and service.

He says his interest in the military academies, especially the Air Force Academy, "combines a few areas of my life I'm very passionate about," including "people," "understanding how the world works," "how we interact as a society," and "what morals we live by."

His interest has already driven him to be involved in school governance and to be interested in what others think.



COURTESY PHOTO COMMONS FILE

Ben Berg

"I try to be aware and open-minded and understand perspectives other than my own," says Berg. "Finding that purpose is something I feel I need to do."

He says that he is excited that "the service academies start with leadership and character; being part of a team; functioning at the highest level in any environment, despite any restriction, consequence, or obstacle; and accomplishing something for the world."

Berg was impressed and encouraged by the statehouse meeting.

"That was huge, an amazing ceremony," he says. "When you're sitting in a room with the Vermont federal delegation and 19 seniors who have put so much effort into themselves and country and feel drawn to serve their country, it's incredibly inspiring." "I knew I could trust and rely on them and have confidence in their judgment," Berg says. "I admire my fellow nominees so much."

Berg says he was also "really impressed with our representatives for taking the time to have a 45-minute roundtable discussion with us and show they care, and their admiration for the work ethic and motivations of the nominees."

He says the elected officials pointed out that some students who are nominated will not earn admission to the Academy of

their choice.

"We all accept that," Berg says, adding that the Vermont delegation urged students who don't make it not to lose their passion and motivation.

At the roundtable, says Berg, each nominee was asked about aspirations. He was again impressed that when someone spoke, all the nominees turned their swivel chairs toward the speaker to "fully observe and address and be attentive to whoever was speaking."

Of his fellow nominees, Berg says, "we're all excited to serve, and we're all trying to do good for this world."

Berg, whose nomination also includes the U.S. Naval Academy, has applied to only the Air Force Academy. He says he might hear back about his admission there anytime, from now through mid-April.

Meanwhile, he's appreciating his last few months at BUHS and reflecting back over his years there.

"Senior year is going great," he says. "I'm staying busy with calculus and physics, but also involved in the community and meeting with different leadership groups. I'm just really appreciative, thankful, and excited."

Vermont high school students interested in learning more about attending a U.S. Service Academy can visit [bit.ly/746-service-academies](http://bit.ly/746-service-academies).

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## Second-Saturday Synthfest Series at Stage 33 Live

BELLOWS FALLS—Two electronic music performance concerts will celebrate synthesizers, circuit-bending, and sound manipulation on the second Saturdays of the first two months of 2024—Jan. 13 and Feb. 10—at Stage 33 Live, 33 Bridge St.

Each session will open with a meet-and-greet at 6 p.m., where concert-goers can get a close look at the gear, talk with the performers, and settle in. Five 20-minute performances will begin at 7 p.m.

The players will be in the center of the room, with the audience in the round encouraged to roam throughout the show. “The performances are expected to range from cinematic and lush to computeresque and urgent,” say organizers. “It may get loud.”

Session 1 performers on Jan. 13 include three from New York City—Metamyther, cameron.way, and makamqore—along with Thomas Nöla of Vermont and B.B. Dozer of New Hampshire.

Session 2 performers on Feb. 10 include Repairer of Reputations from Rhode Island, Acacia Bridge from New York, and three from Vermont: Thorny, Malcolm McShinsky, and Uke Meri.

There is a suggested \$10 donation in advance through [stage33live.com](http://stage33live.com) or at the door per event, but no one will be turned away for lack of money. All proceeds benefit the performers. Advance donations guarantee entry if the session sells out. Seating is limited. All performances will be recorded and filmed.

## Vermont Arts Council grant awarded to Garden Path Elder Housing

BRATTLEBORO—Garden Path Elder Living recently received a Creative Aging Grant award from the Vermont Arts Council. The grant will fund the “Wisdom in Our Community” program for residents at Bradley House, Garden Path’s Level III Residential Care Home.

The Wisdom in Our Community program consists of arts-based projects that elicit personal and family stories. The program will be led by teaching artist Susan Rosano, who will provide arts instruction and memory prompts to the residents.

Participants will learn how to make a poem out of a short story and how to create a watercolor splash painting to illustrate their poems. Rosano will also teach simple drawing skills, so elders can create a poster illustrating the path of their life. In addition, participants will explore collage

to tell a personal or family story. Each class will end with snacks as opportunities for residents to socialize. The class will meet for eight weekly sessions in the art room at Bradley House.

All materials funded by the grant will become part of the art room’s creative supplies, including a dedicated computer printer and small laptop to type and print the poems, stories, and watercolors by residents.

For more information about this and other programs at Bradley House, contact Michael Jones, Garden Path activities director, at [mike@gardenpathelderliving.org](mailto:mike@gardenpathelderliving.org).

Bradley House is a licensed, nonprofit residential care home with more than 50 years of experience serving elders in Brattleboro. To learn more about programming at Bradley House, visit [gardenpathelderliving.org](http://gardenpathelderliving.org).



Emily Mason is among the many Vermont artists represented in the collection of Robert L. and Muriel Crowell. An exhibit of works from the collection will be presented at the Crowell Gallery in Newfane through February.

## Crowell Art Gallery highlights the Robert Crowell Collection

NEWFANE—The Crowell Art Gallery, 23 West St., will kick off its 2024 exhibition schedule with the Robert L. Crowell Art Collection.

Bob Crowell was a strong supporter of the arts, and shortly before his death in 2001, he traveled to southern Vermont in search of works he felt reflected the vast diversity of the artistic culture of the area.

The gallery, once a 200-year-old barn owned by the library, was transformed into

an eclectic art venue by Crowell and his wife, Muriel, in 2000. Contemporary pieces by Mallery Lake, Jules Olitski, Emily Mason, and Wolf Kahn hang alongside works by Janet Fish, Eric Aho, Roger Sandes, James Urbaska, Marcy Hermansader and others.

Johnny Swing’s “Penny Chair” and Jim Florschutz’s wood and stone “Shrine to the Sun Shaman” sculpture are included in the collection and are on view during library hours. The public is invited to visit the

gallery and to learn about these artists and their contributions to the richness of our region. The exhibit will be up through the end of February.

The Crowell Art Gallery is in the rear of the Moore Free Library, a nonprofit private library reliant on charitable donations, grants, and community support. The gallery is open during the library’s operating hours: Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday, 1 to 5 p.m.; Thursday, 1 to 6 p.m.; and Saturday, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

James Gelter and Tony Grobe—shown here in their usual accoutrement for readings of *Sherlock Holmes*—will perform as Jeeves & Wooster.



COURTESY PHOTO COMMONS FILE

## ‘Jeeves & Wooster’ postponed by Covid

BRATTLEBORO—Due to a performer testing positive for COVID-19, The Baker Street Readers postponed their performances of *An Evening with Jeeves & Wooster* from Saturday and Sunday, Dec. 30 and 31, to Friday and Saturday, Jan. 19 and 20. The show will still be performed at the Hooker-Dunham Theater and Gallery, 139 Main St.

The Readers are most known for reading Sherlock Holmes mysteries but are changing things up with another of England’s famed literary duos. Bertie Wooster and his trusty valet Jeeves are the creations of P. G. Wodehouse, who wrote 35 short stories and 11 novels about the pair.

Wooster is a young, wealthy man who has never worked a day in his life, while Jeeves is his “gentleman’s gentleman,” always on hand to press his trousers or brew

his tea. The moneyed classes of England rely on these two men to solve the most thorny of social difficulties, like ending an ill-informed engagement or covering up a scandal.

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

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

## Gifford hired to lead BCTV

BRATTLEBORO—Brattleboro Community TV (BCTV) has hired current Springfield Area Public Access Television (SAPA-TV) executive director and Brattleboro resident Johnny Gifford as their new leader.

“We could not be more excited to have found Johnny, and for the new perspectives and opportunities he’ll bring to the BCTV community. He has the experience, he has the vision, and he has the community media values to bring BCTV to the next level,” Board President Alex Beck said in a news release. “While we had an incredible slate of candidates, Johnny has a passion for community media that was hard to match.”

Before joining and eventually leading SAPA-TV, Gifford had a long history of experience from places ranging from Harvard University’s Media Production Center and Hauser Studio to small-town high school radio and television stations.

When asked what his feelings are about starting in a new role, Gifford said he was “incredibly excited to be joining the active, dynamic team at BCTV.” He said he has been “invested in community media for half of my life, and have been living in Brattleboro for the past year and a half and have loved being part of the community.

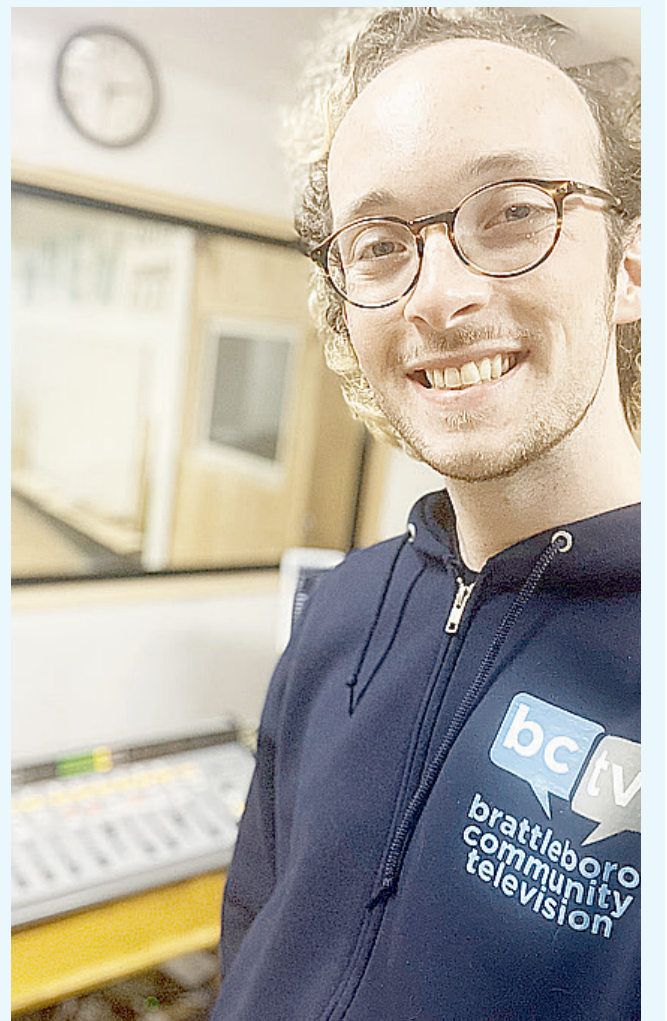
Becoming BCTV’s leader feels like the perfect next step for me, and so I encourage everyone to stop in, say hi, and learn more about BCTV.”

Along with his history in radio and working in school-based community media stations, Gifford intends to explore more opportunities to partner with community organizations around supporting Brattleboro’s music scene and engaging more youth in film and video production.

Gifford said his objective is to use his role at BCTV to “amplify the voices of everyday people through education, art, and digital media, and to encourage civic involvement and transparency of government.”

While he will spend the next few weeks transitioning into the position, BCTV staff said in a news release that Gifford has not been shy in diving right into the work. As soon as he joined the BCTV team, he helped outgoing Executive Director Cor Trowbridge in covering one of December’s biggest and most important productions, Landmark College’s graduation.

Gifford will be the full-time Executive Director starting in mid-January, and by the time BCTV is set up for live coverage of the Harris Hill Ski Jump in February, he’ll be running the show.



COURTESY PHOTO

Johnny Gifford, the new executive director of Brattleboro Community Television.

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SRAG member Ann Newsmith will have a solo display of landscape and floral watercolors at the Rockingham Medical Group office.

## Saxtons River Art Guild sponsors three exhibits

SAXTONS RIVER—Members of the Saxtons River Art Guild (SRAG) will display their work in three southern Vermont locations during January and February. These exhibits feature a variety of media, including watercolor, oils, acrylics, and colored pencil, as well as varied subject matter.

Currently on display at the Rockingham Medical Group at 1 Hospital Court in Bellows Falls is a solo display of watercolors by Ann Newsmith of Brattleboro, featuring landscapes and florals. Additionally at this site is a

group exhibit featuring Donna Cary, Lori Ebare, Barbara Greenough, Kathy Greve, Ellen Howard, Donna Lund, Marjorie Layman, Linda Rothchild, and Liz Winchester-Larson.

These exhibits are open Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., through Feb. 28.

Starting Jan. 10, the Whiting Library, 117 Main St., Chester, will showcase work from SRAG members Cary, Ebare, Greenough, Greve, Newsmith, and Winchester-Larson as well as pieces by Carolyn Berglund, Nancy DiMauro, Sandy Greene, Ellen Howard, Marjorie Layman, Donna Lund, Lainie Senechal, and Kris Stewart.

The Chester exhibit will be open Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., and Saturday, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. A reception for the artists will be held on Saturday Jan. 13, from 11:30

a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at the library, with a snow date of Saturday, Jan. 20. Artists from the Saxtons River Art Guild will be present to talk about their artwork, and refreshments will be available. Call 802-875-2277 for more information.

In Brattleboro, another group of SRAG artist members will display their work at Ramunto's during regular restaurant hours. The participants include Berglund, Greene, Greve, Lund, Greenough, and Winchester-Larson.

The Saxtons River Art Guild is a nonprofit organization that promotes and encourages the fine arts, with about 80 members throughout the Monadnock region in New Hampshire and the southern Connecticut River Valley area of Vermont. For more information, contact President Winchester-Larson at [lizart39@yahoo.com](mailto:lizart39@yahoo.com) or 603-876-5083.



Carolyn North and Toni Ortner

## Toni Ortner, Carolyn North to read at Putney Library

PUTNEY—The Putney Public Library, 55 Main St., presents a pair of Putney writers on Thursday, Jan. 11, at 6:30 p.m. This event is free.

Carolyn North had been living in Berkeley, California, until a year and a half ago when she returned to Putney, the place she says she loves the best in the world. She is the author of 18 published books, and has taught improvisational dance as a healing modality in Berkeley for four decades. North will read from her book, *Freeflow Stories*. North says her current focus

is preparing and reassuring people, through her writing, to manage big societal shifts by working together. She has three grown children and four grown grandchildren and lives in Putney.

Toni Ortner, also a Putney resident, has had 31 books published by small presses. The most recent is *Focused Light from a Distant Star* by Kelsay Books. The book honors women's art of the last few centuries. Her website, [toniortner.com](http://toniortner.com), shows a full bibliography of her published books with reviews and

directions on where to purchase them.

Ortner was vice-president of Write Action for 14 years and hosted the Write Action Radio Show in which she interviewed writers and they read their work. She hosted the Putney Writers Salon through the Putney Library on Zoom during Covid. She will read from *Focused Light from a Distant Star* accompanied by a slideshow of art by the women artists who inspired this writing.

## NOW PLAYING at the MOVIES



<b>JANUARY 5-11</b>	
<b>THE BOYS IN THE BOAT</b>	PG-13
FRIDAY	4:15 / 6:40 / 9
SATURDAY	1:45 / 6:40 / 9
SUNDAY	1:45 & 6:40
MON.-THUR.	4:15 & 6:40
<b>WONKA</b>	PG-13
FRIDAY	4:15 / 6:50 / 9:05
SATURDAY	2 / 6:50 / 9:05
SUNDAY	2 & 6:50
MON.-THUR.	4:15 & 6:50
<b>THE BOY AND THE HERON</b>	PG-13
FRI. & SAT.	4 / 7 / 9:15
SUNDAY	1:45 & 7
M / TU / TH	4 & 7
<b>MIGRATION</b>	PG
FRIDAY	4:15 / 6:45 / 8:40
SATURDAY	2 / 6:45 / 8:40
SUNDAY	2 & 6:45
MON.-THUR.	4:15 & 6:45

## Brattleboro Concert Choir presents 'Songs for the People' Jan. 13, 14

BRATTLEBORO—The Brattleboro Concert Choir presents "Songs for the People" in two concerts on Saturday, Jan. 13, at 7 p.m. and Sunday, Jan. 14, at 4 p.m. at the Latchis Theatre.

According to Music Director Jonathan Harvey, "Songs for the People" is "a concert for this moment in history, consisting of music by living America-based composers that grapples with contemporary issues like climate change, immigration, and racial injustice."

Harvey added that "every piece on the 'Songs for the People' program grapples with these ideas and is written by a living America-based composer. A majority of the composers represented here were born after

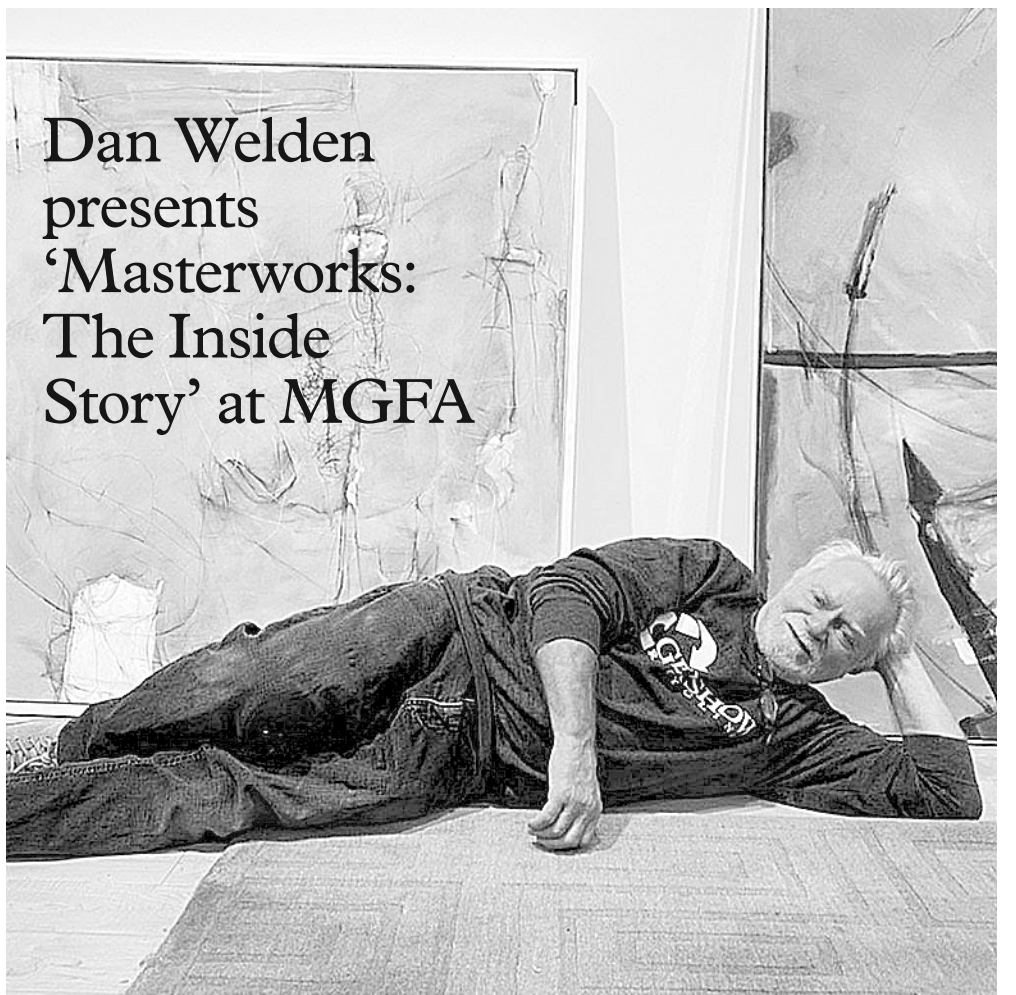
1980, and a majority of the compositions are less than 10 years old. This is music for our time and place."

Composers include well-known names such as Eric Whitacre and Frank Ticheli, as well as fast-rising young composers Joel Thompson, Mari Esabel Valverde, B. E. Boykin, Sydney Guillaume, and others.

As Harvey notes, "This is today's choral music, speaking to today's world."

Tickets are \$20 general admission in advance, or \$25 at the door. Youth tickets are \$10 and free for those 12 and under. Advance tickets can be purchased through the Brattleboro Music Center website at [bmcvt.org](http://bmcvt.org) or by calling 802-257-4523.

## Dan Welden presents 'Masterworks: The Inside Story' at MGFA



BRATTLEBORO—Mitchell-Giddings Fine Arts, 183 Main St., invites everyone to "Masterworks: The Inside Story," a reception and conversation with artist and master printer Dan Welden, on Saturday, Jan. 6, at 4 p.m.

As his exhibit "Dan Welden Solo 100" (open through Jan. 14) draws to a close, the public is invited to view more than 50 "masterworks" — impressions, or

prints pulled by hand by Welden — as he recounts personal tales, anecdotes, and the intimate details of his collaborations with artists Kiki Smith, Eric Fischl, Elaine and Willem de Kooning, Kurt Vonnegut, Roy Nicholson, Dan Flavin, David Salle, and others.

Since inventing the solarplate printing process, Welden has introduced his techniques to

countless printmakers and artists worldwide. He has established professional and individual friendships over the decades and continues to work alongside many masters brought together for the first time and featured at Mitchell-Giddings Fine Arts in this current exhibition.

For more information, contact the gallery at 802-251-8290 or visit [mitchellgiddingsfinearts.com](http://mitchellgiddingsfinearts.com).

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

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

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

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

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

County Clerk's Office, Windham County Courthouse	\$553,338.64
Personnel	\$256,821.64
Professional Services	\$37,100.00
Contract Services	\$1,050.00
Building & Grounds	\$203,000.00
Operational Expenses	\$21,570.00
Insurance	\$31,797.00
Donations	\$2,000.00
Windham Probate Court	
Building Expenses	\$0.00
Contract Services	\$0.00
Operational Expenses	\$0.00
Windham County Sheriff's Department	\$499,500.18
Personnel	\$274,086.39
Professional Services	\$78,365.00
Contract Services	\$11,680.79
Building Expenses	\$30,525.00
Operational Expenses	\$46,600.00
Insurance	\$58,243.00
County Capital Reserve Fund	\$0.00
TOTAL COUNTY EXPENDITURES	\$1,052,838.82
REVENUE	
Windham Superior Court Small Claims and Notary Fees	\$24,000.00
TOTAL COUNTY REVENUES	\$24,000.00
County Capital Construction Fund	\$
TOTAL TO BE ASSESSED TO THE TOWNS OF WINDHAM COUNTY	\$1,028,838.82

The tax rate is based on last year's Grand List as this year's list is not published until the end of December, January. Estimated Tax rate FY 24/25 0.01096. Actual tax rate should be known by the Annual County Meeting in January 2024. Copies of the complete proposed budget are available to the public during the county court's hours of Monday through Friday 8:00AM to 4:30PM at the county (Superior) Court on Route 30, Newfane, Vermont.

Carolyn Partridge, Assistant Judge

Lamont Barnett, Assistant Judge

## Sarasa Ensemble presents 'French New Wave Baroque' music at BMC

BRATTLEBORO—The Sarasa Ensemble presents "French New Wave Baroque" on Thursday, Jan. 11, at the Brattleboro Music Center.

The 7 p.m. concert will feature Ashley Solomon, flute; Susanna Ogata, violin; Jennifer Morsches, piccolo cello; Timothy Merton, cello; and John McKeen,

harpisichord.

The "nouvelle vague" of French Baroque music heralded a wealth of chamber music from the likes of Couperin, Jacques de la Guerre, Mondonville, and others. According to the BMC's news release, "Telemann caught the wave with great panache, resulting in his gorgeous set of 'Nouveaux Quatuors Parisiens' for flute, violin, viola da gamba, cello and harpsichord."

The Sarasa Ensemble is a collective group of international instrumentalists and vocalists who perform classical music of outstanding quality, spanning the 17th to the 21st centuries, on both period and modern instruments, and bring this music to diverse communities.

Tickets are \$20 general admission in advance, or \$25 at the door. Advance tickets can be purchased through the BMC website at [bmcvt.org](http://bmcvt.org) or by calling 802-257-4523.

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# Latchis Arts presents two film series in January

BRATTLEBORO—Latchis Arts begins the new year with a pair of film series.

The Movies for Kids program returns Saturday, Jan. 6, with screenings of family-friendly films by donation on Saturdays and Sundays at 11 a.m.

The series opens on January 6–7, at 11 a.m., with *The Lego Movie*. This “hilarious and heart-felt” 2014 release features Emmet (Chris Pratt), an ordinary Lego figurine who always follows the rules, but then gets mistakenly identified as an extraordinary being who is key to saving the world. He finds himself drafted into a fellowship of strangers on a mission to stop an evil tyrant (Will Ferrell) from conquering the world.

It is rated PG and has a score of 96% on Rotten Tomatoes. Common Sense Media says its suitable for ages 6 and up.

The series continues on Jan. 13–14 with *Pokemon Detective Pikachu*, followed on Jan. 20–21 with *The Neverending Story*. January’s screenings wrap up on Jan. 27–28 with *Pee-Wee’s Big Adventure*.

Latchis Arts’ Movies for Kids screenings will be offered by donation through March, supported by its program sponsor, Brattleboro’s Sunrise Rotary Club.

The Latchis’ Off the Beaten Path film series, featuring films that may have flown under the radar but shouldn’t have, returns in January.

The series opens with screenings of *Saltburn* on Jan. 6–7, at 4 p.m. This is a comedy-drama-thriller about a student at Oxford University who finds himself drawn into the world of a charming and aristocratic classmate, who invites him to his eccentric family’s sprawling estate for a summer never to be forgotten. It is rated R and has a 79% on Rotten Tomatoes.

The series continues on Jan. 13–14 with *Dream Scenario*, about a hapless family man (Nicolas Cage) who finds his life turned upside-down when millions of strangers suddenly start seeing him in their dreams. It is rated R and is at 91% on the Tomatometer.

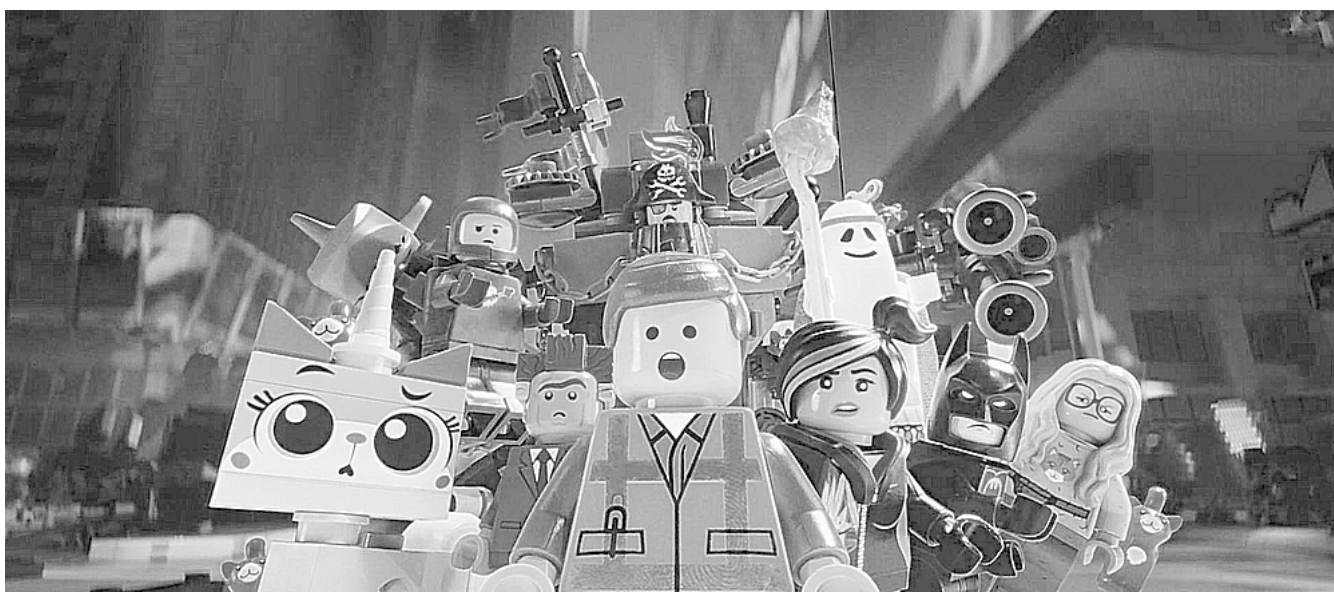
On Jan. 20–21, the series features *The Persian Version* about an Iranian-American woman whose efforts to find balance and embrace her opposing cultures are challenged when a secret is revealed. It is rated R and has a 92% on Rotten Tomatoes.

On Jan. 27–28, Off the Beaten Path features *Maestro*, a love letter to life and art, chronicling the relationship of Leonard Bernstein and Felicia Montealegre Cohn Bernstein. It is rated R and is at 79% on Rotten Tomatoes.

For more information on both film series, visit [latchis.com](http://latchis.com).



“Maestro” will screen Jan. 27–28 as part of the Latchis Theatre’s Off the Beaten Path film series.



“The Lego Movie” will show as part of the Latchis Theatre’s Movies for Kids program.

## DiTrani Brothers, Jason Scaggs at Next Stage on Jan. 6

PUTNEY—Next Stage Arts and Twilight Music present roots, ragtime, and jazz quartet DiTrani Brothers plus Jatoba’s multi-instrumentalist/singer Jason Scaggs at Next Stage, 15 Kimball Hill, on Saturday, Jan. 6, at 7:30 p.m.

DiTrani Brothers play “bent melodies and driving rhythms, play perilous tunes for the hopeful, with elements of Balkan music and early American jazz/swing,” notes a news release. “They deliver both wistful and raucous performances at venues ranging from The House of Blues in New Orleans to DIY backyard stages.”

Originally from North Bend, Washington, brothers Bobby and Walker DiTrani say they began writing songs together while traveling across the country, playing music on the streets. Since then, they’ve recorded two albums and toured throughout the U.S. with drummer Eddie Gaudet. Now a quartet with acoustic bassist Benjamin Richards, they’ve just released their third album, *Dust Harvest*.

Jason Scaggs’s music began in the heart of Appalachia, his home state of Virginia, “and that mountain sensibility shines through his music to this day,” say organizers. “The twang of his guitar, much more assertive in his Jatoba days, has since been tempered with the addition of effects and looping to create an indie flavor and full sound which belies it coming from one person.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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# Rockingham's first cannabis dispensary opens its doors

*Rolling Twenties proprietor Joe Ruggiero says he wants to overcome stigma and stereotypes of those who consume the substance*

By Robert F. Smith  
The Commons

BELLOWS FALLS—It's taken over 20 months, but Rolling Twenties cannabis dispensary, at the junction of Darby Hill and Rockingham Road (Route 5), had a soft opening on Jan. 1, and its grand opening is scheduled for Saturday, Jan. 6.

Rolling Twenties is owned by Joe Ruggiero, under 802 420 LLC. Pat Greenleaf will manage the store with a full staff of six, including two cannabis experts known as budtenders, who have experience at other dispensaries around the country.

Ruggiero is a well-known, longtime entrepreneur in the community. He is the owner of Ruggiero Trash and a newly created logistics company.

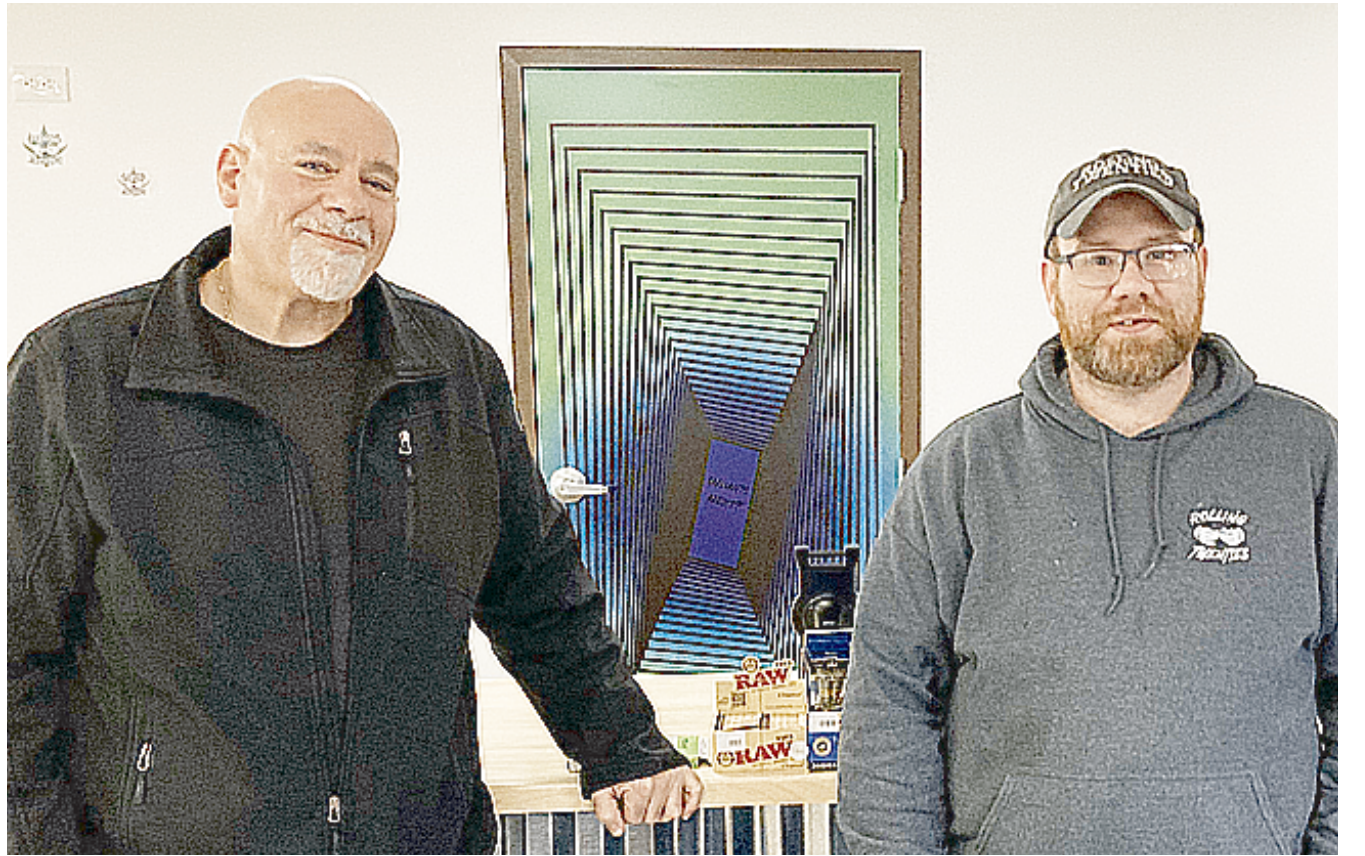
There were limited hours for the soft opening, and the store will continue with a 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. schedule after that. Ruggiero said that they will be working out an exact schedule once the store is open, depending on demand.

The new store has permits to be open seven days a week from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.

You have to be at least 21 years old to enter the store, and have a government-issued photo ID.

Ruggiero has spent the startup time remodeling the dispensary, a former surveying and real estate office, repainting the building a deep red and green, making the building accessible and more energy efficient, and adding several layers of security.

He referred to the last two years as a steep learning curve for cannabis growers and retailers, as



Joe Ruggiero, left, owner of Rolling Twenties dispensary in Rockingham, stands with the shop's manager, Pat Greenleaf.

well as for Vermont's Cannabis Control Board, which administers the state regulations for both the medical use program and its adult use program.

He said that the firm first applied for permits to open the store in April 2022. It was pre-qualified at the state level, and then had to work with the town of Rockingham and the Vermont Agency of Transportation to get local permitting. Those local hurdles included addressing parking and entryway issues, all of which were resolved earlier this year.

Ruggiero said that after that point, things turned around fairly quickly for him as far as getting local permits.

"Once I had the information in hand, I came in to the town very prepared," he said.

Rockingham was one of the towns that had a referendum on its ballot as to whether the town should permit a cannabis dispensary. The question passed, but barely. In addition to the dispensary, the town has also permitted two indoor grow businesses.

Ruggiero said that he got his local permitting in June of 2023,

and since then has worked closely with the Cannabis Control Board finishing up the process.

### Overcoming stigma

Both Ruggiero and Greenleaf said that part of the problem with the legalization of cannabis has been getting past the stigma and mythology that has developed around the product.

Archaeological evidence shows cannabis use in Europe, Asia, and Africa going back at least 12,000 years. Written evidence of cannabis use in the same region goes back 2,500 years. Humanity has a very long record of association with cannabis and hemp for medical, industrial and recreational reasons.

Going back for nearly a century, media have portrayed the image of the addle-brained stoner — someone who is always in a daze, becomes lazy, and gets nothing done.

Such misrepresentation, along with more sinister political and racial issues, led to cannabis being outlawed in some states as early as 1906. It was officially declared illegal, even for medical uses, when the federal Controlled Substance Act was passed in 1970. At that time, cannabis was listed in the Schedule I tier of dangerous drugs, where it and several hallucinogenics were lumped with hard drugs like heroin.

While the Controlled Substance Act remains federal law, cannabis is now legal in 38 states for medical use and 24 states for recreational use. This has resulted in the dilemma of cannabis growing and sales being a federal crime with serious penalties, while at the same time an activity that is legal in the majority of states. Efforts have been underway for some time to update federal law to coincide with the actions of the states.

Many people have turned to medical and recreational cannabis as a way to deal with illness, pain, and nausea, to avoid having to take powerful addicting opiates, and as a milder, healthier recreational alternative to alcohol.

Ruggiero said that he knows many people who have switched to edible cannabis instead of drinking alcohol, as a way to avoid alcohol's damaging effects on the body and mind.

"I know a lot of people that used to like to drink who are moving to edibles," Ruggiero said. "A



Rolling Twenties, a cannabis dispensary, opened this week in Rockingham.

lot of professional, hard-working people use cannabis. This is not the world of a Cheech and Chong movie."

### Keeping things local

One of the goals of Vermont in rolling out legalized cannabis was to keep things as local as possible, similar to the state's craft beer industry. The goal is to support small businesses and keep big national or international business chains from coming in and taking over both the supply and distribution of cannabis in the state.

Under state law, participants in the cannabis program — from growers to distributors to retailers — must be Vermont residents, and all products must be produced in the state.

"A lot of the growers — the majority, in fact — are organic, growing cannabis in what they call living soil," said Ruggiero, who is working with six local growers.

"I like the fact that it's being regulated," Ruggiero said. "It creates some issues, but it helps guarantee that we have a healthier, safer product for everyone."

Keeping production local has had some problems, including the fact that there is still not an adequate supply of product. The fact that 2023 was a very wet year

in Vermont created problems with poor bud growth and crops being lost to mold and mildew.

While up-to-date figures are hard to come by as more growers and dispensaries are being licensed regularly, approximately 360 Tier 1 licensed growers operate in Vermont, as well as two testing laboratories, 86 manufacturers in all tiers, 12 wholesalers, and 77 retailers.

Vermont has a 14% tax on cannabis, including food and beverages, in addition to the 6% state sales tax. Some local municipalities have also added a small town sales tax as well. In its first 10 months, legal, taxable cannabis sales reached \$67 million.

James Pepper, chair of the Cannabis Control Board, said earlier this year that taxable sales are likely to reach the Board's projection of \$100 million to \$150 million, bringing in a minimum estimated \$20 million in tax revenue for the state.

*Rolling Twenties, at 440 Rockingham Rd., will have medicinal cannabis, edibles, vapes, concentrates, and drinks, in addition to traditional bud. The store will also carry cannabis-based CBD-products for animals. It will offer special rates for seniors and veterans. For more information, visit [rollingtwenties.com](http://rollingtwenties.com).*

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OPEN LETTER

# ‘I know you are out there somewhere’

*‘You didn’t choose to become addicted to stuff like cocaine, crack, or heroin, but somehow it found you and then really spoke to you, lulled you into the lifestyle that has taken you away from me and your family’*

Brattleboro

DEAR SON,  
My December birthday came and went last week. I thought I might’ve heard from you, but I did not. And then came Christmas Eve and Christmas Day and, as family and friends gathered at home to celebrate, there was something missing.

I didn’t hear from you. I know you are out there somewhere; I try and believe you are OK, but my mother’s intuition tells me otherwise. Yet, because I am your mom and I love you, I will remain hopeful.

You didn’t choose to become addicted to stuff like cocaine, crack, or heroin, but somehow it found you and then really spoke to you, lulled you into the lifestyle that has taken you away from me and your family.

The year 2023 held promise. My memoir was on track to being published. Your three-year prison sentence was to end early — you worked hard in a recovery program earning your certificate, which gave you “good time” off your sentence. We were looking forward to May, when you would be released back into the world, into a sober house close by. We had great conversations and good belly laughs together.

Your birthday breakfast in September held an ominous tone. I told you it would “kill me” if you started using again, to which you replied, “Yeah, it will kill me, too.”

Little did I know “it” had already called your name and you

**SUSAN AVERY** is the author of *Addicted: Our Strength Under the Influence*, published in 2023 under her pen name, *Annie Augustus Rose*. She is a facilitator for Nar-Anon Family Groups.

had answered as before — and here we were face to face and you had already spiraled into using.

WHEN IT BECAME clear, by your own admission, that you were using just a few short weeks later, I was disappointed yet not surprised, because I’ve been walking this road right alongside you for ... how long now?

Sadly, addiction takes our loved ones from us and turns them into entities — beings we barely recognize. Ghosts, really. Yet, somehow the faces are still so familiar.

In October, I watched a 2022 interview where Matthew Perry, of *Friends*, your all-time-favorite show, sat across from Diane Sawyer and spoke of his struggle with addiction.

I thought something was off, untruthful.

Not three weeks later, he died, at home, by drowning in his own hot tub — the cause, the coroner concluded, was “acute effects of ketamine.”

My thoughts — *how sadly cruel* — went immediately to his mom and dad. They had their hopes and dreams for his well-being dashed once again. But this time, the grieving would be

■ SEE MOM’S LETTER, C2

COLUMN

# The KINDNESS of STRANGERS

Reaching out to one another brings us closer to one another and keeps us safer than we realize — and it might get you invited to a birthday party when you’re stranded in China



Inset: Two young women on their way to a birthday party offered a lifeline.

FRAN LYNNGAARD HANSEN (PHOTO); WIKIMEDIA COMMONS (MAP)

Springfield

THE CHINESE TOWN of Hangzhou is the place where centuries ago the silk industry began. Since it was only a few hours from the school where I worked, I took a bus there for a long weekend and explored the city’s many silk museums and traditional gardens.

When traveling alone, I begin with a list of must-see places and their addresses, then I wander the streets to see where I end up.

Sometimes, as was the case on this cold January day, I walk for hours. I saw red lanterns hanging in anticipation of the most important holiday of the year, Chinese New Year. Colorful lights adorned the outside of the small shops and restaurants. Like any city, each neighborhood had a different feel to it. I strolled for hours.

Roaming the streets of cities all over



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

the world in this fashion has provided me so many wonderful adventures and opportunities. In Vietnam, I landed in an enormous wholesale flower market, where stunning orchids, fragrant jasmine, and other tropical flowers of every description scented the air.

In Kuwait, I found myself sitting with a couple on the banks of the Persian Gulf, where I learned that locals instead refer to this body of water as the Gulf of Arabia. I still don’t know what kind of fish we caught, but the

experience was happily memorable. In Japan, I ran into the daughter and granddaughter of a Japanese soldier who fought in the Battle of Okinawa during World War II. All of us were on a pilgrimage to trace the steps of our family members. We shared stories from each side of the battle as we waited for the bus to go to the Okinawa Prefectural Peace Memorial Museum. My father, thankfully, returned home. Their relative, sadly, had not.

MY TIME IN Hangzhou was turning out to be atypical to these past experiences. Later, I would check a guidebook and discover how easy it is to get lost in this city. Originally built around 700 B.C.E., the streets are antiquated, winding, with a dense network of rivers, the largest of which is the Yangtze.

After three hours of walking, the

■ SEE KINDNESS OF STRANGERS, C2

LETTERS FROM READERS

On taking protest to the street

Action opposing military support of Gaza war shut down ‘business as usual’

Protesters chanting, “Ceasefire now,” “Shut it down,” and “No more money for Israel’s crimes,” closed off Brattleboro’s Main Street for more than an hour on Saturday, Dec. 23, one of the busiest shopping days of the year.

After a brief rally in a small downtown square, the group moved into Main Street, where about a dozen activists blocked traffic with signs and images of babies killed in Gaza, while some 50 people lined the sidewalk chanting and singing in support of an end to Israel’s assault on Gaza.

They called on Vermont’s congressional delegation to support a resolution introduced by Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders that would require the U.S. government to investigate human rights abuses conducted with weapons supplied by the United States. They also called for all three of Vermont’s members of Congress to actively support an immediate and enduring ceasefire.

“When we stand by the side of the road with our signs, the system just continues along, paying no attention,” said Dan DeWalt, one of the action’s organizers.

“Today’s protest is stopping traffic because a great crime is being committed in our name, and business as usual cannot continue,” DeWalt said. “Our own laws demand that we cannot supply weapons that violate international law. At this moment, our weapons are participating in what is becoming a genocide.”

“If we are a nation that can turn a blind eye to horrific violence done with our weapons, then we are a nation that has lost its soul.”

Normally packed with traffic at midday on a Saturday, a full block of Main Street was emptied of cars as the protesters strung yellow tape across the road and displayed banners reading “Not my tax \$ for genocide,” “Permanent ceasefire,” “Shut it down,” “Not in our name,” “No more U.S. \$ for Israel’s war crimes.”

The event was part of a national effort, Shut It Down 4 Palestine, which calls for no business as usual as long as the

U.S. supports Israel’s ethnic cleansing of Gaza, where more than 20,000 people have been killed in the past 2½ months, more than half of them women and children.

Addie Mahdavi Newfane

For Gaza protest, blocking of Main Street was a mistake

On Dec. 23, I, joining many others, attended the Pliny Park (Brattleboro) protest of the Israeli bombardment of Gaza.

I think it is irrefutable that the Hamas attack on innocent Israeli citizens on Oct. 7 was horrific and an abomination. In my opinion, however, the actions of Israel’s Netanyahu-led right-wing government have been an abomination for years now, encouraging more and more Israeli settlement of Palestinian lands.

Also, I believe the unquestioning support of the U.S. for Israel, and the extensive military support that has gone along with it, are now an abomination, even if not originally so.

For the most part, I found



ADDIE MAHDAVI, COURTESY PHOTO

Shut It Down 4 Palestine protesters block traffic in downtown Brattleboro on Dec. 23.

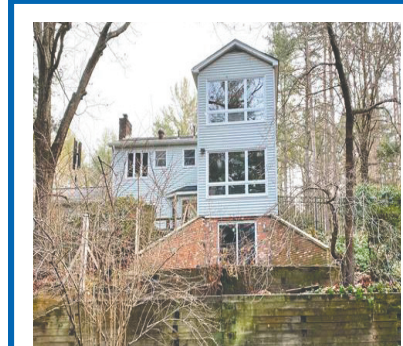
the Pliny Park protest well-run. When an obvious Israel supporter marched up and down High Street waving an Israeli flag, no one tried to stop her. When a self-avowed Zionist yelled at the top of his lungs, trying to interrupt the protest speeches, no one tried to stop

him. Several of the anti-Gaza-bombing, pro-Palestinian-land-rights speakers were themselves Jewish and were more effective because they made that clear.

At one point, there was an announcement that a civil disobedience action was soon going to take place, which was news

to at least some of us in attendance. The protesters (myself included) then moved across Main Street, and those participating in the civil disobedience proceeded to occupy the middle of the street between High and Elliot.

■ SEE PROTEST IN THE STREET, C4



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

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## Kindness of strangers

streets grew increasingly narrow. As the sun began to set and darkness began to fall, I realized I was in the wrong part of town. I sensed that I might not be safe to be in this neighborhood after dark. As I continued walking, I listened for traffic so that I could get out to a larger street and hail a cab.

A large Chinese man, bald, in his late 50s, sailed by on his motorbike, wearing a black motorcycle jacket, silver chains, and no helmet. He smiled and waved at me.

I pretended not to notice him, as his actions were culturally inappropriate. It could have meant that he thought I was looking for a date, or more. Many Chinese men, watching U.S. movies, assume that all American women are fast and loose. I am not.

Hearing more traffic as rush hour began about four blocks away, I began to walk with purpose in the direction of the noise. Motorcycle Man drove around the block and sailed past me again, this time waving, smiling, and beeping his horn. I ignored him, which was difficult to do on an empty mostly residential street.

Thinking I could cut him off by walking over a traffic bridge, I watched from above as I paced quickly across the eight lanes above the traffic for his bike. I realized as I crossed the road that it would be tough to hail a cab on these heavily trafficked highways at the end of the workday. Traffic was moving fast, but I was boosted by the thought that I think I managed to lose my admirer.

I positioned myself at the end of the on ramp between the flowing traffic on my left and the cars joining them on the right side on-ramp. I knew that most taxis driving onto the highway likely already had a passenger inside, but I was feeling more anxious to get back to my hotel.

I scanned the roofs of the cars for an unlit taxi sign. Seeing none, I threw up my left hand to be sure I wouldn't miss one in the bright light of setting sun that wouldn't allow me to see so far back. I moved my head continuously, looking from left to right, trying to be sure I didn't miss any taxi opportunities.

Five minutes went by, then 10, then 15. Still no cab.

As sky displayed a gorgeous sunset, I realized I didn't have my bicycle clips with me to give me a safety stripe anywhere on my dark clothing. Being out here in traffic would become downright dangerous within a few minutes.

Compounding the matter of limited taxis, most local drivers don't like to pick up foreigners — a common issue all over China. The Chinese are a proud people who will avoid a foreigner out of concern about the quality of their English or needing to admit they don't speak it.

I thought about doubling back, but I also noticed that I didn't have enough internet service to get walking directions and I was likely at least one hour, and possibly two hours, from my hotel.

Then there was the matter of the man on the motorcycle. Did he live nearby? Had he given up the hunt for foreigner love?

MY LEFT ARM aching, I threw up my right hand as I spotted a cab about four cars back. My heart sank as I saw right behind him Motorcycle Man, grinning and beeping his horn and waving to get my attention. I felt like a deer in the sights of a hunter and panic began to rise in my belly. I had no escape.

The taxi slowed and I rushed to the door, willing to open it even as the car was moving. The driver sized me up with a glance and sped away.

Feeling desperate, I put my hands together as a sign of my pleas for his help and chased the car while running in the breakdown lane even as the taxicab driver sped up.

Suddenly, Motorcycle Man appeared beside me, just 5 feet away, patting the small seat behind him inviting me to join him. There was a lecherous grin on his face. He had trapped me.

I was momentarily terrified — an unusual feeling for me. I tried to take some deep breaths to calm my belly so that I could plan my next move.

Suddenly, I heard a car laying on the horn just ahead of me, as though there was an accident. Both Motorcycle Man and I looked in that direction. Apparently, the taxi driver had been watching in his rear-view mirror and has decided to help me.

I ran for it.

Motorcycle Man scurried to start his bike and catch up with me as I approached the cab, dove into the backseat, and slammed the door shut.

“Go!” I yelled instinctively to the driver, as I recovered my

breath from the run to the cab. He didn't need to understand my English, as he saw the situation for himself. Motorcycle Man was in hot pursuit, beeping his horn and riding the bumper of the cab.

“Oh,” said the taxi driver. “No good.”

He motioned me to slump down in the back seat so that Motorcycle Man wouldn't be able to see me. My American mind overtook me, and I started to wonder if Motorcycle Man had a gun.

I slumped down and lay flat on the bench seat, but because traffic had slowed, Motorcycle Man maneuvered his bike such that he was now looking in the back seat window. I sat back up and looked away from the sneer on his face and tightened my seatbelt.

Suddenly, my driver floored the gas pedal and began to weave in and out of the slowing traffic to outmaneuver Motorcycle Man. His hands were glued to the steering wheel while he continued to divide his attention between his three rearview mirrors.

I divided my attention, focusing first on the driver, then Motorcycle Man, and then on scanning the traffic, hoping to spy a police car. I saw none.

“Bad man,” said the driver in broken English, now making his own fear visible to me. I wondered if he regretted picking me up. Would he insist I leave the cab?

We weaved and bobbed in the traffic lanes and we saw the bulge of cars ahead of us beginning to break up. The driver hit the gas pedal again and made a successful run for the largest hole in a slew of cars.

We left Motorcycle Man in the dust, and I began to breathe a tiny bit easier. The driver did not until we had about a quarter-mile distance between us, and then he smiled as he pointed to the nearest exit where he saw Motorcycle Man leave the highway in defeat.

We smiled at each other in the rear view mirror as the driver asked, “Go?” as he pointed ahead, using his hands to ask me my destination.

I hadn't a clue where we were.

I CHECKED the internet, which was now strong, and tried to find a map to show me where we were. I discovered that we were about 10 minutes away from a small fishing village. Wuzhen Water Town is an hour north of Hangzhou and is known as the “Venice of China” because of its ancient canals and houseboats along the waterways. I showed the name of the town to my driver. He nodded his head and took me to the next exit.

Ten minutes later, I was walking the lit canals, stunning against the dark night sky. I sighed with relief as I walked and began to calm down from my near-miss adventure.

The town was sleepy with few people about and the stores turning out their lights and locking their doors. After a 30-minute walk, I checked the taxi stand where my driver left me off. There was no taxi waiting. I scanned the streets. Not only were there no cabs, but there also were barely any cars.

Knowing that I was still an hour away from my hotel and that this small town would close for the evening, I tried to formulate a plan. I attempted to find someone who spoke English to advise me how to find a taxi. The first five people wouldn't even meet my gaze, meaning that they either wouldn't or couldn't help me.

I walked quickly toward the one shop that was still open. Two young women — the last people I saw anywhere on the street — were inside purchasing flowers. I scurried over to get inside before the shopkeeper locked the door.

As I entered the shop, the two women were chatting excitedly. One was holding a big bouquet of roses and baby's breath; the other, pink Stargazer lilies. They talked and laughed with each other as they paid for their flowers. I pretended to look around the shop, knowing that if I purchased something, the shopkeeper would likely be more willing to help me.

The two women finished their transaction and left the store. I approached the shopkeeper and in painfully slow words, asked in Mandarin if she spoke English. She did not and showed me to the door, which she quickly locked behind me.

FEELING A TINY BIT unnerved, I yelled a friendly “Hello!” in English as I hurried to meet the two women.

“Can you help me?” I asked, with more angst in my voice than I intended to show.

The women looked at each other.

“English?” I asked as they began a quick conversation in Mandarin. I sincerely hoped that they were trying to decide who wanted to take on the challenge, but I greatly feared that they would be too shy to try, even if they did speak a bit of English.

To try to make it easier, I said, “Taxi,” and I gestured toward the taxi stand in the middle of the town square. They looked at each other again.

“No,” the first brave woman said, “no taxi.” She put her hands together as if going to sleep, to show me that there will be no more work today.

My panicked face elicits some sympathy.

“You go where?” one asked.

“Hangzhou,” I replied.

“No Hangzhou, no taxi,” the second woman said.

They looked at each other and begin speaking in Mandarin. I watched from the sidelines, trying to read their body language to get a clue what might be happening. They began to giggle, nodding and smiling at each other, then glancing at me.

“We go birthday party,” the first woman says. “You come!” She continued giggling as she pointed to a restaurant just down the street.

It was now almost 8 o'clock, and I hadn't eaten dinner. I thought about the offer for just a few seconds, considering that I could go to the party and perhaps make a connection there to get back to my hotel. The young women were unsure if I had made up my mind, so they linked their arms in mine and said, “Come!”

I relaxed and smiled at them both, and we headed toward the restaurant silently, linked in a happy chain of arms full of flowers.

While the conversation might have been limited, their offer of hospitality, their kindness to strangers, is common within the culture, though not often extended to foreigners only because of the language barrier. I felt very fortunate for their invitation. I suddenly realized I should offer a gift to the person celebrating as part of the celebratory protocol. I stop walking.

“Gift!” I exclaimed with a bit of shame.

They knew exactly what I'm thinking, but already had a plan.

“You gift!” said the first.

“You sing Happy Birthday,” said the second.

“OK!” I exclaimed as we entered the restaurant.

I REMEMBERED a Chinese wedding I attended where I had brought a wedding present, only to realize that the true gift that everyone was expected to bring was a talent of some kind.

I thought while watching as each guest went to the stage with their offering to the newly married couple. Children sang songs, or played an instrument. One child did an acrobatic routine. Grandparents gave speeches; friends told stories about the couple.

FROM SECTION FRONT

## Mom's letter

FROM SECTION FRONT

their final act.

No more lingering in the constant wondering of “when,” grieving their son who was still alive but not “alive,” wounded with each breath.

SO TODAY, as I do every day, I think of you and pray for your safety.

“Any word from your son?” people ask. I shake my head no, or comment, “Nothing.”

Which is why I knew I wanted to write this letter to you.

Because I choose to believe addiction has not taken you from us as it has taken Matthew Perry, so I say, “I know you are somewhere, perhaps wondering how or why this happened to you and how these lonesome feelings of shame and isolation, of rejection and detestation, could be your life.”

The insidious nature of addiction — it takes our loved ones away from us and from themselves, too.

In the meantime, I'll still wait for my phone to ring until I hear otherwise.

Love,  
Mom

Suddenly, I was surprised to be the last person escorted to the stage as the crowd seemed to think I knew what was expected. I sang a song that I had sung at my sister's wedding in Denmark as my sudden contribution to the event.

So it wasn't totally surprising that singing *Happy Birthday* would suffice for the birthday person.

A hostess escorted us to the private room at the back of the restaurant. Inside were two large tables that each held about 10 people. At the front of the first table a man in his early 40s rose to welcome his guests. He greeted each young woman with a smile as they presented him with their bouquets.

After a brief discussion with them, he turned to me and said, “You are the birthday singer! Thank you for coming! Please eat dinner with us!”

Amazed at his generous hospitality, and ability to speak English, I was guided to the head of the second table. As he gestured for me to sit down, he told me that I was to be his guest of honor. He hadn't expected he would ever be lucky enough to meet a real American, and so he hoped I would stay and enjoy a meal with his friends and relatives.

He then spoke in Mandarin to the other nine people at the table. I guessed that he must be saying the same thing to the others as they all began to stand and shake my hand.

Then I was encouraged to sit down and sample the 20 or so dishes at the huge table. Because this was a distinctive celebration, many were special dishes with shrimp and other exotic fish. I was expected to sample them all.

Fortunately, I had lived in China long enough to thank my host kindly, and refuse a tall glass of Baijiu. Made for over 5,000 years, Baijiu, also known as “firewater,” is a specialty alcohol that is 80 to 120 proof. Just a few sips can make a person instantly regret-

ful. Otherwise, the party offered fantastic food, many friendly people who wanted to practice their English, and a welcoming crowd.

I sang *Happy Birthday* in both Danish and English, and the Baijiu helped spark both a rousing round of applause and an encore.

But as the hour grew later, despite my asking several people, no one knew how I was going to get back to my hotel. Folks smiled and encouraged me not to worry about it and just enjoy the party.

A FEW HOURS LATER, around 10 p.m., as the party guests began to leave, the two young women brought me outside where a taxi was waiting.

I was incredulous.

“We glad have you,” one said. “Uncle Wei drive you to Hangzhou.”

I could only suppose that “Uncle Wei” is a friend of a friend or a relative. A cab driver, he had been encouraged to come to the party only to bring me home.

An hour later, as we pulled up to the hotel, I took out my wallet, expecting a huge bill. I noticed Uncle Wei hadn't turned on the meter, which could mean only one of two things. Either he expected a huge sum — or he expected no money at all.

I took the largest Chinese paper money available out of my wallet, 100 yuan, the equivalent of about \$20 U.S., and handed it to him with a smile. If there had been a bill, it would likely have been around this amount.

Wei refused it with a big smile.

I tried again. He refused.

Instead, he made a fist with his left hand, and I covered it with my right, and we shook our hands up and down. This traditional Chinese way of shaking hands is more intimate, saved for good friends and family members. It was his way of telling me that I should stop offering him money, that he was happy to help me, as apparently, I was close to someone he knew at the party. To continue to offer him money would be an insult.

FOR 10 YEARS, I traveled the world while working as a teacher with thousands of interactions with strangers in more than 30 countries. I most often traveled alone. Only three incidents like the one with Motorcycle Man occurred, each one ending with kindness, grace, and perhaps just a smidgen of good luck.

It is true that bad things sometimes happen in this world. But I would venture that while we fear the bad the most, it is the good things that happen with strangers that data say occur more often. Our fear tells us not to interact with unfamiliar people, even though the chance of something good happening is statistically more likely.

There have been rough years since the pandemic began in 2020. Even though we have just greeted a new year, it is off to a rocky start. There are wars, worry about our next presidential election, the effects of last year's inflation that lowered the buying power of our wages, and heating bills that are sky high. Collectively, the world is in deep negativity as we wonder what might happen next.

I would suggest that we consider not giving in to our fears and remember that the vast majority of the time, people are good, and that eventually, things work out in the end. If they haven't yet worked out, it isn't the end yet!

We read in the news about murder, drugs, crime, homelessness, and addiction so often that we become fearful of not just strangers, but sometimes our neighbors and even our friends.

Reaching out to one another, trusting a pure motive before we close ourselves off, brings us closer to one another and, I believe, keeps us safer than we realize.

Start in January, saying hello to someone unlike yourself. Perhaps that person will be of a different race or speak a foreign language. That person might have a different sexual orientation or might practice a different religion.

Especially reach out to people who frighten you, or whom the media has suggested you should be afraid of. Ask them questions about their life with an open spirit, or buy them a cup of coffee and just sit and talk. You might just make an unexpected friend or learn something new.

My experience has proven to me, again and again, that offering openness and kindness — that even asking for help from a stranger — most often brings so many unexpected pleasures. It makes the world a more welcoming so place.

And really — that's what the world needs just now: closeness, trust, and caring.

All you need do is set your fear aside and give it a whirl.

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<b>Here We Are - Jonathan Harvey, Brattleboro Music Center, Choral Conductor.</b> Tues 5:15p, Wed 9p, Thurs 1:15p, Fri 9:55a, Sun 5:15p	<b>Brattleboro Selectboard Mtg. 1/2/24:</b> Tues 6:15p (LIVE,) Thurs 1p, Sat 5:15p, Sun 7:30a
<b>The World Fusion Show - Ep# 168 - Mark Allan Stone.</b> Thursday 12:30p, Friday 9:30p, Sat 2:30p, Sun 1p	<b>Vernon Selectboard Mtg. 1/2/24:</b> Thurs 6p, Fri 8a, Sat 2:30p
<b>Couch Potatoe Productions - Soggy Po' Boys at the West River Park 10/8/23:</b> Mon 3p, Tues 12:30p, Wed 4:30p, Thurs 9a, Fri 10:30a, Sat 8p, Sun 1:30p	<b>Newfane Selectboard Mtg. 1/2/24:</b> Fri 6p, Sat 8:30a, Sun 12p
<b>Hooker Dunham Presents Good King Wenceslas:</b> Mon 10:35a, Tues 8p, Wed 3:30p, Thurs 2:30p, Fri 5p, Sat 9a, Sun 6:30p	<b>Putney Selectboard Special Mtg. 12/20/23:</b> Mon 6:30p, Tues 6a, Wed 2p
<b>Couch Potatoe Productions - Orchard Aid - Vermont Tambour Feat. Amelia Struthers &amp; Mike Mrowicki:</b> Mon 10a, Tues 3:45p, Wed 9a, Thurs 1:55p, Sun 5:55p	<b>Putney Selectboard Mtg. 12/27/23:</b> Fri 8:30, Sat 6a, Sun 2:30p
<b>Ezler's Random Videos - Shirley Squires' Touch of Heaven:</b> Mon 7:55a, Tues 8:55p, Wed 4:25p, Thurs 5:55p, Fri 5:55p, Sat 11:55a, Sun 7:25p	<b>Montpelier Connection - Wendy Harrison 12/12/23:</b> Mon 11:30a, Tues 8:30a, Sat 9:30p, Sun 9p
<b>Brattleboro Literary Festival - Story of a Jewish Boy with Simi Berman and Vincent Panella:</b> Mon 8:35p, Wed 11a, Thurs 6a, Fri 7a, Sat 3p, Sun 4p	<b>Community Forum - Brattleboro Legislators' Forum 12/9/23:</b> Thurs 6:55a Sun 6p
<b>Northern Roots Traditional Music Festival 2023:</b> Mon 12:30p, Tues 9a, Thurs 9:15p, Fri 2:25p, Sat 5p, Sun 9:25p	<b>Landmark College Graduation - Fall 2023 Commencement:</b> Mon 9p, Tues 10a, Wed 12p, Fri 6a
<b>Couch Potatoe Productions - Sweetback Sisters Country Christmas Spectacular Sing-Along:</b> Mon 6a, Tues 9p, Thurs 4p, Fri 12:30p, Sat 10, Sun 7:30p	<b>Marlboro Elementary School Board Mtg. 12/14/23:</b> Mon 5:30a, Tues 2:30p
<b>Energy Week with George Harvey &amp; Tom Fennell:</b> Mon 9a, Tues 5p, Thurs 11a, Sat 7p	<b>Newfane Selectboard Mtg. 12/18/23:</b> Wed 6p, Thurs 8:30a, Fri 12p, Sun 9:30p
<b>Vermontitude - Weekly Episode:</b> Tue 11:30a & 6:30p, Wed 6a, Thu 1p, Sat 12p, Sun 5p	<b>Brattleboro Housing Partnerships Board Mtg. 12/18/23:</b> Thurs 8:30p, Sun 6a
<b>News Block: WTSA News:</b> Mon-Fri 12p & 6p <b>Reformer News Break:</b> Mon-Fri 12:05p & 6:05p <b>BUHS-TV News:</b> Mon-Fri 12:15p & 6:35p	<b>River Valleys Unified School District Board Mtg. 12/18/23:</b> Thurs 12:35p
<b>St. Michael's Episcopal Church - Weekly Service:</b> Wed 2p, Sat 7:30a, Sun 11a	<b>Vernon Selectboard Mtg. 12/19/23:</b> Thurs 11a, Sun 7:30p
<b>Trinity Lutheran Church - Weekly Service:</b> Wed 10a, Thurs 7a, Sun 3p	<b>VT Nuclear Decommissioning Citizens Advisory Panel Mtg. 12/11/23:</b> Wed 8:15p, Fri 2:25p, Sat 11a
<b>Guilford Community Church - Weekly Service:</b> Wed 6:30a, Fri 8p, Sun 8a	<b>Town Matters - Weekly Episode:</b> Mon 6p, Wed 4:45p, Thurs 11a, Fri 11:30a, Sat 5p
<b>St. Michael's Catholic Church Mass:</b> Sat 4p (LIVE), Tue 6:45a & 2p.	<b>The David Pakman Show:</b> Mon 8a, Tue 9a, Wed 5p, Fri 10:30a, Sun 5p

**Note: Schedule subject to change.**

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LETTERS FROM READERS

**We overcame homelessness — without panhandling**

First off, on panhandling: We — my disabled husband and I — lived in a canvas tent up Putney Road from 2021 to 2023. Not once in our two years of being homeless did we ever need to panhandle for anything. Neither of us work. We have very little income from SSI (Supplemental Security Income) and SSDI (Social Security Disability Insurance), and we fall below the poverty line. Since we choose not to spend our money on drugs or alcohol, we always had just enough to afford our basic tenting survival needs and hygiene needs.

No one can go hungry in this town. It's not possible with aid of Food Stamps (3SquaresVT), daily community lunches, food shelves, etc.

I've often heard the philosophy that once you give money to a panhandler, it is out of your hands — that it's up to that person to decide what to spend it on. Let me ask you folks: What exactly is needed by homeless people other than drugs and alcohol by the money from panhandling, when hygiene products are handed out by the overflow shelter through Groundworks and food is supplied daily?

Nothing that is essential to homeless survival.

If you want to help the homeless, then provide decent camping equipment, socks, blankets, first aid kits, backpacks, etc. — not money that will most likely be spent on drugs and/or alcohol and further exacerbate their troubles.

The two of us had all the challenges of not having an ID, not having a vehicle, clothing, etc. But we utilized the supports out there in this community and pursued them on our own. We overcame homelessness, and now we are housed.

We plan to continue to write more and continue to work toward trying to better the situation for the homeless. Having been there ourselves, we do know what is best needed and not just as a Band-Aid or crutch.

We have ideas on this subject matter as well as tenting survival skills we plan to write more about at a later time. We just wanted to — now that we have a chance — submit our first article related to the homeless panhandling epidemic and the homeless epidemic in general.

**Stephanie Cavanaugh Harrison and Charles Harrison Brattleboro**

**Wilmington: Act on flood measures before it's too late**

RE: "December rain, flooding hearken back to recent weather catastrophe" [News, Dec. 20]:

What will it take before the state decides that the benefits of cleaning out the rivers will outweigh the damage that flooding every 5½ months causes?

Also, how about the state/town taking the opportunity to purchase Wheeler Field (across from the bowling alley) while it's for sale to help with water levels?

With the 100-year floods turning into less-than-six-months floods, maybe it's time to act before it's too late.

**Julie Moore Wilmington**

**'This is my hope — that we live in peace with one another'**

Not everybody has the strength or capacity to hold the greater/larger picture of the Earth. Not everyone has a big enough heart to encompass the vast amount of pain that Israel is inflicting.

The people who are being killed are my brothers, sisters, and children. We are of one flesh, one being, one life.

The children who have lost their short lives or have been maimed or wounded by the bombs, shootings, and rough treatment are the saddest loss, for they represent the future gone too soon.

The people who are killing, maiming, and destroying homes, stores, water, air, earth have to have their hearts hardened. To them, we send love and hope that this love will pierce their hearts so they wake up from the trance they are in. Wake up, and stop the violence.

To those in the community who remain silent, I send an urgent note to voice their

concerns.

If we all were speaking out at once, maybe Biden would hear from this "democracy," from the people who have gotten him elected, from the very core of the idea of equal rights for humanity.

This is my hope for the present and future — that we live in peace with one another.

We have tried to awaken the community, the country, with our voices raised and our banners held high; we have wept for the people of Gaza and the West Bank; we have wept for the people of Israel who have been killed.

I weep for the human race and the loss of humanity by these violent and final choices some of us are making.

It is a sad lesson on how to resolve conflict and share the wealth of the Earth and one another.

No one is safe unless we are all safe.

**Robyn Flatley Brattleboro**

**We must not be complicit in murder, regardless of the circumstances**

I appreciate the local writings of Dan DeWalt, Tim Stevenson, and others who try to bring fact, common sense, reason, and human decency into addressing the disasters we are facing throughout our crumbling world.

It's becoming increasingly difficult to bring people together to address the problems we face because we lack common ground, hindered by increasingly locked-in religious, cultural, political, and ego-protecting beliefs. Most of us fall back on some or all those beliefs when we feel cornered and don't know what else to do. It is known as survival.

I'm challenging myself — and you, if you choose to join me — to find common ground in stopping the act of murder. A simple definition of murder: "The unlawful premeditated killing of one human being by another."

On Oct. 7, 2023, Hamas murdered thousands of innocent Israelis. In retaliation, Israel is now murdering thousands of innocent Palestinians.

Actually, this carnage started before Oct. 7, as both sides have been murdering and persecuting innocent people for many years. Some would say that collateral damage (I hate that dehumanizing phrase!) is the nature of war, always has been, and always will be. It's a very sad commentary on our humanity, and lack thereof, but that is who we are as human beings.

I offer no solutions to the conflicts raging throughout the world; that's beyond my knowledge and abilities. But I feel confident in saying that we must not be complicit in murder, regardless of the circumstances.

Please join me in demanding that U.S. Sen. Bernie Sanders, U.S. Rep. Becca Balint, U.S. Sen. Peter Welch, Congress, President Joe Biden, and all our leaders stop using tax dollars, and our military-industrial complex, to support murder.

Instead, we should use our financial and military powers as leverage to steadfastly demand that minimizing civilian casualties be a priority equal to accomplishing military objectives.

Yes, that's ransom in some ways of thinking, but I think of it as a reasonable requirement for making our financial and human investments.

As Virgil and others have said: "Love conquers all," which is unproven, but I believe to be true. The best chance we have for love to prevail is to stop patriarchy, misogyny, racism, and fascism, which will probably occur only when people who identify as women (or those having innate female qualities) assume worldwide leadership roles.

Until then, let's at least agree to stop being complicit in murder.

**Michael Szostak Guilford**

**Legislative priorities extend beyond the state mushroom**

RE: "State legislators have plenty to do in 2024" [News, Dec. 20]:

Thank you for covering the priorities of Windham County legislators.

Numerous issues were reported about my colleagues, but the only bill described for me was the Vermont State Mushroom bill. I am excited about that bill, which honors not only mushrooms as a symbol of Vermont but also

promotes youth engagement in the democratic process.

However, as I stated in a recent piece in *The Commons*: The mushroom bill is not the most important issue the Legislature will be facing this next year, and it is certainly not the most important issue I am putting forward, even though I have worked hard on it, and do hope it moves forward.

In the 2024 session I am introducing five new bills:

Two of my bills address housing:

1. Development of permanent supportive housing. (This is my most important bill, also being offered by Sen. Wendy Harrison, D-Windham County, in the Senate.)

2. Establishment of tiny house zoning (also important because it will increase housing options, especially for family members).

Two of my new bills address our justice and corrections system:

3. Making community service a more viable option than "a weekend in prison." (Currently, an individual can choose 200 hours of community service or 60 hours incarcerated for certain charges. My bill would make them equal options, requiring 60 hours for either. It is important to increase meaningful reparative options rather than time incarcerated.)

4. Asking the Department of Corrections to develop meaningful, skill-based work programs for incarcerated individuals.

The other new bill addresses Vermont State symbols:

5. I have been working with two groups of school students to encourage Vermont to pick a VT State Mushroom: Bear's Head Tooth.

I have three other bills that were submitted in 2023 which address bail reform, leg-hold traps, and peer respite housing (to provide less expensive and more supportive mental health options for individuals in crisis).

I am looking forward to serving my constituents and helping shape policy for all of Vermont in the new session.

I have received more feedback about the mushroom bill from Vermonters than about any of my other bills this fall, but I do want the people of Windham County to know that I am working on many other issues, too! I worked 24-plus hours per week with unhoused individuals as a case manager and shelter advocate this year outside of the Legislature. Housing, mental health, and justice reform are my priorities in this next session.

I was also recently contacted by a farmer concerned about frost damage to the apple crop this year. I am going to co-sponsor legislation to support farmers in this situation. I am also co-sponsoring a number of other bills regarding housing and justice reform and climate issues that I am optimistic will become law before we adjourn in May.

Along with my district-mate, Rep. Leslie Goldman (D-Rockingham), and our two Windham County senators, Wendy Harrison and Nader Hashim, I look forward to meeting constituents on the third Saturday of each month at 10:30 a.m. at the Rockingham Free Public Library. People

are welcome to contact me at [mbooslun@leg.state.vt.us](mailto:mbooslun@leg.state.vt.us) to address issues facing our communities and our state.

I am looking forward to the new session and to serving the people of Vermont in the months and years to come.

**Michelle Bos-Lun Westminster**

**Opinions decry atrocities by one side while encouraging them on the other. How helpful is that?**

At first I thought I would refrain from debate sparked by the atrocities of Oct. 7. I felt appalled that, from the safety of Vermont, warmed-over "party-line" polemics are being thrown around, which is of no benefit to Palestinians or Israelis whose survival is at risk.

But finally, driven by the increasing normalization of antisemitism and acceptance of Hamas as "freedom fighters" (even by some politically active Jews), I had to speak out.

Is anti-Zionism antisemitism? Can any informed person deny that in our current environment, "anti-Zionism," like Richard Nixon's "law and order," has become an unsavory dog whistle?

"Hey, let's you and him fight" seems to be the message of a slew of opinion pieces that decry atrocities by one side while encouraging them on the other. How helpful is that? How does it compare with the courage of those Jews and Arabs who continue, at personal risk, to affirm their friendship and continue to work for peace in the midst of conflagration?

NPR's Dec. 21, 2023 *On Point* ([tiny.cc/746-onpoint](https://www.npr.com/2023/12/21/1234567890)) presented an uncompromisingly honest conversation between an Egyptian Arab writer and an Israeli Jewish writer. They discussed being trapped by competing narratives (the Nakba vs. the War of Independence) and the near impossibility of understanding one another's viewpoint.

Yet each of them affirmed their friendship, mutual respect, and most importantly, their hope for peace.

A Dec. 14, 2023 *New York Times* article, "The Peace Activists Divided by Oct. 7" ([tiny.cc/746-nyt](https://www.nytimes.com/2023/12/14/us/politics/oct-7-activists.html)), by Susan Dominus, discusses how feelings of betrayal, hostility, and unbridled emotions after Oct. 7 nearly tore apart a friendship between Tamar Shamir, an Israeli, and Palestinian Mohamed Abu Jafar, who have tried for years to bring Jewish Israelis and Palestinians together.

There are many stories about Jews and Arabs cooperating and protecting one another, going back to 1948 and beyond. During the Second Intifada, I brought a number of these stories to the attention of the then-managing editor of the *Reformer*, who is currently organizing "peace" demonstrations. She was not interested.

Brattleboro today is blessed with two excellent papers, each of which is run by an editor who is dedicated to competent reporting and who respects the expression of diverse opinion.

**Steven K-Brooks Brattleboro**

**A time of heartbreaking conflict, two views ring true**

I am writing to stand with Nancy Braus and Samia Abbass in their respective Viewpoints [Voices, Dec. 20].

The two pieces are related in my view insofar as they express the feelings of both a Jewish woman and an Arab woman at a time of heartbreaking conflict that affects not only Jews and Arabs but all of us.

Braus's piece, "For Jews on the Left, a terrible position," speaks to the effect the Middle East catastrophe has had on those of us who are Jewish.

I am among those Jews on the Left who believe that Israel has a right to exist, but so, too, do people of Palestinian descent. That does not make us antisemitic, it makes us humanists whose hearts are breaking in this moment for all who suffer oppression, as we have throughout our history, and as long-suffering Arab people have, too.

I share in the growing fear among Jews because we know that "never again" are hollow words as we watch the triple-digit increase in antisemitic attacks and threats.

We also shudder at the assaults on free speech and other punishments that so many human rights advocates are being subjected to, as Braus enumerates. As she notes, "this is the exact trajectory of the Third Reich" that comes "at a time when we are facing the most terrifying existential crisis of our times."

I, too, wonder if I will be arrested for what I say or write. It's an awful feeling, which is why I'm grateful for her piece. I know that at least I am not alone.

Samia Abbass's piece, "Wear the keffiyeh with pride. Wear it with knowledge," was illuminating and important. It humanizes the Arab people through the lens of culture and history. I so much appreciated her explanations about the meaning and symbolism of the keffiyeh.

I will save her column for the next time I teach my class on resistance movements, because it speaks to the universal human need for dignity, freedom, security, identity, and hope, which all resistance movements do. This one has been overlooked for far too long.

**Elayne Clift Brattleboro**

**Trump-style bashing unfortunate**

RE: "Newspaper" bashes Republicans, hates America" [Letters, Dec. 20]:

I generally agree with Elayne Clift and Nancy Braus. And they have every right to express

their opinions; it's called freedom of the press as per our Constitution.

We are blessed to live in a democracy. The Trump-style bashing of journalists or anyone else we don't agree with is unfortunate, to say the least.

**Phillip L. Cutting Guilford**

**Biden does not deserve maddeningly low approval ratings**

A recent political cartoon pictures President Biden dressed as Santa Claus standing in front of a present-laden Christmas tree with a family in their living room. His presents include things such as reduced unemployment/more people employed, inflation down to pre-pandemic levels, low gas prices, etc.

The family is depicted rejecting his offers, saying something to the effect of "No, we're not buying it!"

This captures comically yet frustratingly the kind of headlines one sees these days of Biden's approval ratings being surprisingly low. To me, this is maddening!

I've lived through about eight presidential administrations, and I haven't seen a better president than Joe Biden in all my years. Barack Obama's administration came close in its ability to rescue the country from the 2008 financial crisis and the Bush and Reagan years of disastrous domestic and foreign policy.

Even if Biden's tenure as president were mediocre (it hasn't been; he's been remarkable in steering us forward in foreign policy, domestic prosperity, and a green economic future), the choice for 2024 would be obvious.

The stakes for this country could never be more severe and dramatic. Donald Trump is the biggest menace to our democracy, stability, and economic and environmental health as a nation since World War II and the threat from the fascist regimes of Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan.

If you care about this country's future as the world's premier democratic republic, you will support President Biden in 2024.

**Bill Conley Dummerston**

More letters, C4



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LETTERS FROM READERS

We need an honest hero

Watching history sadly repeat itself, I recently had the following scary thought: It wouldn't take a huge leap of my imagination to envision the Republican Party being willing to run Adolf Hitler as a presidential candidate if that would give them the power that they are so desperate to seize.

Scientific studies have apparently shown that the human brain operates on a negative bias in order to survive, so it's an easy political card to play to get the scared, angry masses stirred up: find and blame a scapegoat. Pretty obvious.

As a person without a college education who has made my living with my hands (now missing two fingers), I understand (to whatever degree I can) the need for someone to represent the common disenfranchised person in this country whose life and livelihood have been gutted by what I see as a capitalist system that lacks adult supervision.

Since the era seems to have passed when America has a John Wayne to believe in, yet still clings to the notion that we need a hero to save us, many have, out of desperation, chosen just that — a false god in Donald Trump.

History shows that people will choose a person who appears to be strong but is wrong over a person who appears weak but is right. Perhaps that comes from the same inability for an individual to choose the vulnerable path necessary to grieve and be honest about one's own internal pain.

We say to ourselves that "this hurts" and feel it instead of believing what we think of as our thoughts, when the stories our thoughts create are actually cultural programming spawned from the same negative got-to-survive thinking that leads to wars.

I wish that there were an honest hero that everyone could believe in in this country to unite us. Sadly, I can't see how they would gain traction. It

appears that there's too much corporate power that would drive them into the ground.

T. Breeze Verdant  
Williamsville

'Our support is a gigantic green light for Israel'

I want to make it clear at the outset that war and violence of any sort horrify me. For the U.S., I believe war is merely everyday business. We have a voracious and rapacious military-industrial complex (MIC) that requires constant care and feeding.

I don't think our government in Washington cares where death and destruction take place, as long as MIC lobbyists are ever-present on Capitol Hill, kicking back much of the money that pours into their coffers from Washington.

And, as Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin have said point blank, weapons manufacturing and sales equal jobs

for American workers.

So, now to Gaza and Israel: By all accounts, Gaza, for decades, has been the equivalent of an open-air concentration camp. Israel, we now know, had very ample warning of what was being planned by Hamas, and yet, when it finally happened, Israeli security forces did not respond for hours, and when they did, they fired indiscriminately, killing both Hamas militants and Israelis.

As quoted in *The Intercept*, Avner Cohen, a former Israeli religious affairs official who worked in Gaza for more than two decades asserted in a *Wall Street Journal* interview that "Hamas, to my great regret, is Israel's creation." A creation that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has supported, because it furthered his own political agenda to do so.

What is going on in Gaza right now can only be described as genocide. It is an entirely disproportionate response to the events of Oct. 7, no matter how you look at it. It is utterly sad

that to be anti-genocide right now is to be labeled antisemitic.

Our president and most of our Congress and Senate and presidential candidates support this genocide. Made-in-America weapons and bullets and bombs, as well as our tax dollars (making most Americans complicit), are being used to devastate the civilian population and infrastructure of Gaza.

No matter how many weak and half-mumbled admonishments Antony Blinken makes towards Israel with regards to the country's military response, our support is a gigantic green light for Israel to do whatever it pleases.

Additionally, it's my understanding that our current support for Israel violates U.S. law — the so-called Leahy laws. And it's the Constitutional duty of the President to "take Care that the Laws be faithfully executed."

So, to watch our Congress, which is actively supporting genocide, call to account university presidents for allowing

free speech on their campuses, no matter how ugly it may be, was beyond the pale. Our government should stop supporting this genocide — which is being committed by the Jewish state of Israel. A genocide that we are all bearing witness to, every time we turn on the news.

In 2002, when she interviewed former Israeli Knesset member Shulamit Aloni, reporter Amy Goodman asked: "Often when there is dissent expressed in the United States against policies of the Israeli government, people here are called antisemitic. What is your response to that as an Israeli Jew?"

The Israeli politician replied candidly: "Well, it's a trick, we always use it."

Jacqueline Brook Putney

The writer adds: "I'd like it to be known that in submitting this letter for publication consideration, I appended 12 references to it."

Protest in the street

FROM SECTION FRONT

I believe this blocking of Main Street was a mistake. I can understand the reasons behind it, including to gain more notoriety for the protest so that more people will give serious thought to and question what is happening in Gaza.

The choice to carry this tactic out, however, interfered with commerce in the heart of town. As we all well know, downtown Brattleboro has been having some challenges. This of all days was not a good day to interfere with the last-minute shopping that was taking place.

Some motorists were quite upset about being delayed from driving through (though some pains were taken by the organizers to very slowly allow a few vehicles to pass). Merchants on Main Street, however, had an even bigger reason to be angry.

While I know some of those doing the civil disobedience were not from Brattleboro itself, I have to assume they meant the downtown no harm, but I do think they caused it harm. In so doing, as well, I believe it detracted from the anti-Gaza-bombing/pro-Palestinian-land-rights message that was the focus of the protest.

In being one of the protest's attendees, I was complicit in this mistake. At least for myself, I apologize to downtown Brattleboro business owners. Also, next time there is a similar protest, I might decide to stay away, knowing such surprise tactics might pop up again.

The more important message, though, is for the U.S. to stop its support of the Netanyahu government and its insane level of bombing and retribution, and work toward a solution that is fair to the Palestinian people while also protecting the Israeli people in the long term.

Michael Bosworth  
Brattleboro

would feel good sending out to the world. Yes, I want the fighting to stop; I want all sides to sit together and make peace. Yes, I, too, am horrified by all the violence.

But I will not join protests under banners of anti-Zionism. Why? Because if we take the simple definition of Zionism (for example, from the Oxford Dictionary) as: "A movement for (originally) the re-establishment and (now) the development and protection of a Jewish nation in what is now Israel," that would imply that anti-Zionism is against the development and protection of a Jewish nation.

The implications of sending that message out to the world are horrifying to me.

When members of Hamas chant "From the river to the sea," they want Israel wiped out, Jews wiped out. They have adopted a different definition of Zionism. They, and other antisemitic groups, promote a definition of Zionism equated with colonization, oppression, and exclusion.

I fear that when my good peace-loving friends on the streets of Brattleboro buy into that redefinition of Zionism, what the world sees is an alliance with those who want Israel to simply not exist. This is not to say that the state of Israel has not engaged in oppressive policies and actions. Yes, let's protest injustices. But I want to send a clear message of what I hope would be our desire for Israelis and Palestinians: to live and prosper, sharing the lands of their origins.

Zionism is not opposed to co-existence. The Jews that I am most intimately acquainted with are Zionists: They support the legitimate existence of a Jewish state in Israel, and they are also actively supporting Palestinian rights, opposing settlers' violence in the West Bank, facilitating dialogue.

At this point, even though I am not Jewish, I am a Zionist, as defined by peace- and justice-loving Zionist Jews, not as defined by others bent on eliminating Jews.

Yes, I want the bloodshed to end. I urge my friends on the streets of Brattleboro to check their language. Send a good message, and I'll join you.

Charles Laurel  
East Dummerston

The world sees 'an alliance with those who want Israel to simply not exist'

As I watched, from the sidelines, the Dec. 23 protest on Main Street in Brattleboro, I saw someone holding a small cardboard sign that helped me feel a little better about what I was witnessing. The sign read, "Yes Israel, Yes Palestine."

Yes, that's a message that I

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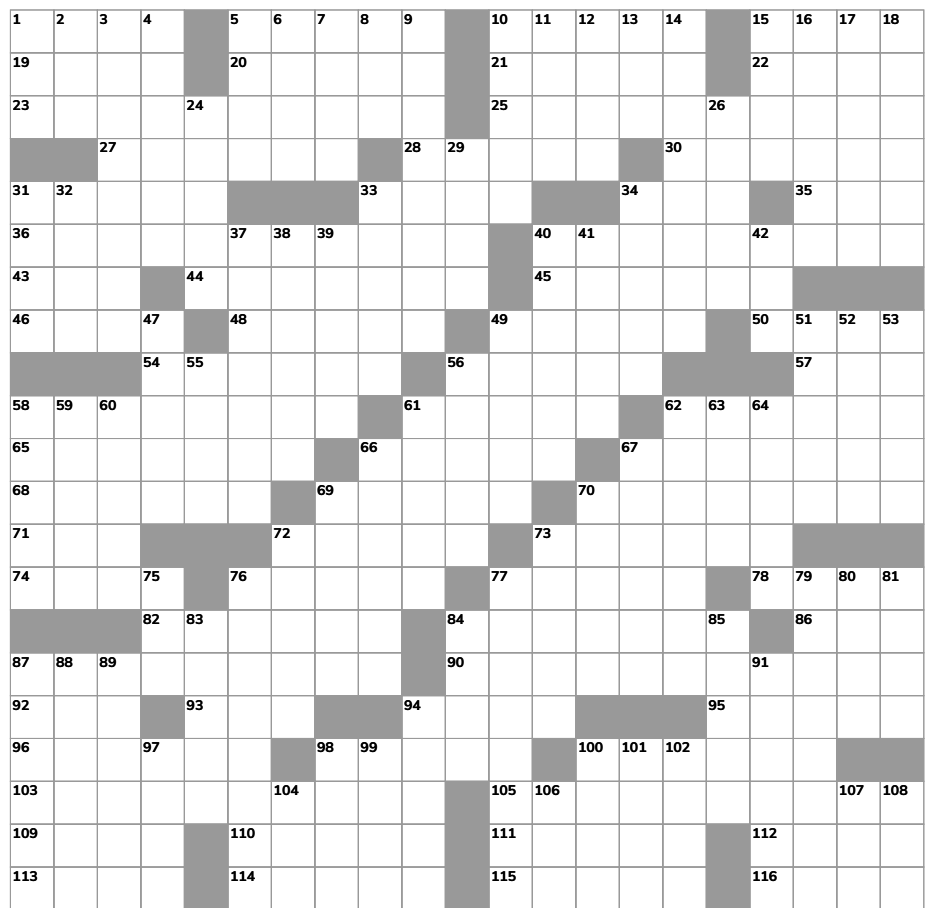
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- 1. Give everyone a hand?
5. Places for posters
10. Emergency kit
15. French friends
19. Castaway's home
20. Humiliate
21. Novelist Calvino
22. Acronymic anxiety
23. \*Just barely manage
25. \*Presage
27. "Olympia" and "Luncheon on the Grass"
28. Give 10 percent
30. Calm
31. Like some Braille readers
33. Bygone GM make that's now aptly named
34. \_\_\_ de mer (seasickness)
35. On fire
36. \*Off-leash
40. \*Little League memento
43. Youth sports org.
44. What you don't have to know how to do to wear clip-ons
45. "Uh... sure?"
46. Judy Garland's birth surname
48. Playwright Chekhov
49. Beatle Ringo
50. Maritime rescue branch, for short
54. Astronaut Collins
56. Blue-haired girl in a Netflix animated series
57. Wrath
58. \*Login requirement
61. Grows fuller
62. Fritters away
65. Greek wine
66. Fender-bender reminders
67. Stabilizing weight
68. Going off
69. Adorkable, perhaps
70. \*Flying branch
71. Be wrong on purpose
72. Long parts of bottles or giraffes
73. Soul singer Irma
74. Apt rhyme of "crude"
76. Colorado beer brand
77. Oozes
78. Owl call
82. Body of work
84. Channels
86. Grp. such as Partners In Health
87. \*Toward the audience
90. \*Persona non grata at the blackjack table
92. Hagen of acting
93. Bro's sib
94. Cautious
95. Songwriter Leonard
96. Non-fanatic, to a fanatic
98. Littoral area
100. Fictional super-spy
103. \*Unit equivalent to about 746 watts
105. Out-and-out defensive gem? (and a hint to the answers to the starred clues)
109. Away from the wind
110. Harvard and Yale
111. Word on Montreal stop signs
112. Speed contest
113. Repair
114. Bird on German euro coins
115. Figure skater Harding
116. Sign



Down

- 1. Put-down
2. Law firm abbr.
3. Soda can metal
4. Country singer Womack
5. Navigation app
6. Case the joint, say
7. Vientiane's land
8. 2023 NCAA women's basketball champs
9. Get comfortable
10. Presents
11. "Then again," in a text
12. Uncover
13. Bar order
14. Cobweb material
15. Admire from \_\_\_
16. Mexican beer brand
17. "Will do"
18. South African site of 1976 uprisings
24. Break things off
26. Is of use
29. \_\_\_ fixe (fixation)
31. Boast
32. Traditional Hawaiian party
33. "Loot" playwright Joe
34. Massachusetts Governor Healey
37. "Love Jones" star
38. Homo and Canis, taxonomically
39. Destined
40. Championships
41. "My word!"
42. Stephanie of "Everything Everywhere All at Once"
47. Inter Miami star Lionel
49. Sexagesimal base
51. Ravi Shankar's instrument
52. Louder, in mus.
53. Beau \_\_\_ (noble deed)
55. "Victory is mine!"
56. "Cast Away" star
58. Shampoo in green bottles
59. Cliffside nest
60. Scatter
61. Calendar rows
62. Grows fond of

Last issue's solution

"Games on Repeat"



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BRATTLEBORO TIRE. Locally owned for over 46 years! 802-254-5411 558 Putney Rd. TIRES & ALL UNDER CAR SERVICE. IT WILL GET COLD AND SNOW THIS WINTER... BE READY! OIL CHANGE \$74.95 FULL SYNTHETIC UP TO 5 QTS. INCLUDES 30 POINT COURTESY CHECK Fluids • Belts • Hoses • Steering • Brakes Lights & Much More Upon Request



# arts & community CALENDAR

THURSDAY	FRIDAY CONT.	SATURDAY CONT.	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY CONT.
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ 6 p.m. doors open, 7:15 p.m. show.</li> <li>▶ Tickets \$15 are available at door.</li> <li>▶ Latchis Pub &amp; Latchis Underground, 6 Flat St. Information: 802-380-1369.</li> </ul>	<p><b>BRATTLEBORO Brattleboro House Concert - Doug Bowles: Jazz Vocalist and Pianist:</b></p> <p>"Doug Bowles is a tenor, pianist, conductor, dance band leader and an acknowledged expert in the performance styles of the 1920s and '30s. Hear the music that would have been enjoyed in this house 100 years ago, sung and played the way it should be! Join us for a cozy afternoon concert, with drinks and homemade baked goods at the break."</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ 2:30 p.m. Multi-talented Bowles is a tenor, pianist, conductor, dance band leader, acknowledged expert in the performance styles of the 1920s/'30s. Whether with a baton, mic, or keyboard, Doug has appeared throughout the U.S. and around the world. Performances included concerts at the Oak Room at the famed Algonquin Hotel in NYC, Arts Club of Washington D.C., Billy Mayerl Society in Thames Ditton, U.K.</li> <li>▶ By donation: Suggested \$10 to \$25 at the door.</li> <li>▶ Brattleboro House Concerts. Information: Reservations required: Email <a href="mailto:BrattleboroHouseConcerts@gmail.com">BrattleboroHouseConcerts@gmail.com</a> to attend. Address/more details will be sent to you.</li> </ul>	9	<p>dynamic picture of this highly influential scene.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ 7 - 8:30 p.m.</li> <li>▶ \$10.</li> <li>▶ Next Stage Arts Project, 15 Kimball Hill. Information: 802-387-0102; <a href="http://nextstagearts.org">nextstagearts.org</a>.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Kids and families</b></p> <p><b>PUTNEY Preschool Storytime:</b> Join Susan Hessey for stories, songs and crafts. Preschoolers and their siblings and caretakers are welcome to attend.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ 11 a.m. on Thursdays.</li> <li>▶ Free.</li> <li>▶ Putney Public Library, 55 Main St. Information: 802-387-4407; <a href="http://putneylibrary.org/events">putneylibrary.org/events</a>.</li> </ul>	6	<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> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ 1 p.m.-1:35 p.m. on Saturdays.</li> <li>▶ Free.</li> <li>▶ Wells Fountain, south side Windham County District Courthouse, Jct. Putney Rd. &amp; Main St. (Rte 30).</li> </ul>	<p><b>Well-being</b></p> <p><b>BRATTLEBORO Brattleboro Walk-In Clinic:</b> Primary medical treatment for patients ages 18 to 64 in our community who do not have health insurance or who cannot afford their high deductibles or co-insurance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ 5 - 6:30 p.m. on Tuesdays.</li> <li>▶ Brattleboro Walk-In Clinic, 191 Clark Ave. Information: 802-251-8484; <a href="http://brattleborowalkinclinic.com">brattleborowalkinclinic.com</a>.</li> </ul>	<p><b>PUTNEY NXT Rockumentary Film Series: "Hype!" (1996):</b> Rock documentary by Dir. Doug Pray focuses on the explosion of grunge music that took place in the Pacific Northwest in the early 1990s. While the film features the most popular bands of the movement - Pearl Jam, Nirvana and Soundgarden - it also presents lesser-known acts such as the Melvins, Mudhoney, and Seaweed. Incorporating concert clips, interviews and behind-the-scenes footage, it paints a dynamic picture of this highly influential scene.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ 7 - 8:30 p.m.</li> <li>▶ \$10.</li> <li>▶ Next Stage Arts Project, 15 Kimball Hill. Information: 802-387-0102; <a href="http://nextstagearts.org">nextstagearts.org</a>.</li> </ul>
5	<p><b>Music</b></p> <p><b>PUTNEY DiTrani Brothers:Roots, ragtime, and jazz quartet - plus Jatoba's multi-instrumentalist /singer Jason Scaggs:</b> DiTrani Brothers, by way of bent melodies/driving rhythms, play perilous tunes for the hopeful, with elements of Balkan music and early American jazz/swing. Now a quartet with acoustic bassist Benjamin Richards, they just released their third album "Dust Harvest." Twang of Jason Scaggs' guitar has been tempered with effects and looping to create an indie flavor and full sound which belies it coming from one person.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ 7:30 p.m. Presented by Next Stage Arts and Twilight Music.</li> <li>▶ \$20 in advance, \$25 at door, \$10 livestream.</li> <li>▶ Next Stage Arts Project, 15 Kimball Hill. Information: Advance tickets: <a href="http://tinyurl.com/mr3ybd63">tinyurl.com/mr3ybd63</a>. Information: 802-387-0102, <a href="http://tinyurl.com/mr3ybd63">tinyurl.com/mr3ybd63</a>.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Well-being</b></p> <p><b>W. HALIFAX COVID-19 Vaccination Clinic in West Halifax:</b> CDR Health will be at the Halifax Community Hall to provide COVID vaccinations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.</li> <li>▶ Through Saturday, January 6.</li> <li>▶ Free.</li> <li>▶ Halifax Community Hall, 20 Brook Rd.</li> </ul>	10	<p><b>Film and video</b></p> <p><b>PUTNEY NXT Rockumentary Film Series: "Hype!" (1996):</b> Rock documentary by Dir. Doug Pray focuses on the explosion of grunge music that took place in the Pacific Northwest in the early 1990s. While the film features the most popular bands of the movement - Pearl Jam, Nirvana and Soundgarden - it also presents lesser-known acts such as the Melvins, Mudhoney, and Seaweed. Incorporating concert clips, interviews and behind-the-scenes footage, it paints a</p>
<p><b>Performing arts</b></p> <p><b>BRATTLEBORO "Singer's Night" with the Wild Goose Players:</b> Singer's Night is a one-night-only event where some of the best singers in the region will join together to honor the music that has come out of the American cinema. The program, called "A Night at the Movies" will feature hits you've come to know and love. Think "9 to 5", "Call Me", or "Shallow" - sung live backed by fantastic musicians. Come grab a bite, a drink, and relax to great music!</p>				<p>To submit your event: <a href="mailto:calendar@commonsnews.org">calendar@commonsnews.org</a></p> <p>Deadline: 5 p.m. Friday</p>

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COLUMN | Sports Roundup

# After tough start, Bears boys' hockey finds its footing

The Brattleboro boys' ice hockey team got off to a rough start, but they are starting to pull things together.

On Dec. 20 at Withington Rink, the Bears lost in overtime to the Amherst-Pelham (Mass.) Hurricanes, 3-2. Even though it was a loss, coach Eric Libardoni was happy with the effort.

This was a game where both coaches had a legitimate beef with the officiating. There were 17 penalties in the game — nine for the Bears and seven for the Hurricanes — but perhaps the screwiest call came with 5:03 left in the game with the Bears hanging on to a 2-1 lead.

After Bears goaltender James Fagley stopped an Amherst shot, he held on to the puck expecting play to be stopped for a face-off. Instead, Graham Arguin was able to knock in the puck and tie the game. The Hurricanes then won it with 1:01 left in overtime with a goal from Benjamin Remensnyder.

"There were two teams playing a very competitive and evenly matched game, and unfortunately the third team [the referees] interfered with that happening," Libardoni said after the game. "It's unfortunate that's how the game played out. I thought it was a great hockey game. I thought both teams played hard. I thought the goalies were both good. James (Fagley) was phenomenal. We got a lot better since our last game and if we continue to make improvements like that, we'll be a good team."

Brattleboro took a 1-0 lead on a goal from Evan Wright at 4:59 of the first period, assisted by Andy Cay and Alex Dick. The Bears pushed the lead to 2-0 when Miskovich scored on a 5-on-3 power play, with assists from Wright and Carter Mialkowski, with four seconds left in the period.

That power play continued into the start of the second period, but great goaltending by Amherst's Spencer McDonald kept the Bears from cashing in. Brattleboro managed to kill off all but one of Amherst's power plays, the lone exception coming in early in the third period when John Dyiach scored with just two seconds left on the man-advantage.

On Dec. 23 in Rutland, the Bears played another overtime game but, this time, they came away with a 2-2 draw.

After Brattleboro's Rowan Lonergan scored on the Bears' first shot of the game less than a minute into the first period, neither team was able to score until the third period, when Rutland's Greg Olson tied the game with 11:45 left in regulation. Wright later put the Bears back in front with a short-handed goal, assisted by Cay, but Rutland, still on the power play, got the equalizer from Ethan Wideawake, about a minute later. Fagley made 19 saves in goal for the Bears.

The Bears then got their first win with a 5-4 home victory over St. Johnsbury on Dec. 27, and lost a road game to Woodstock, 4-0, on Dec. 30 to enter the new year with a 1-3-2 record.

## Girls' basketball

• St. Johnsbury finished strong in a 66-50 win over

**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).

visiting Brattleboro on Dec. 27. Clinging to a 30-28 halftime lead, the Hilltoppers took advantage of a cold spell by the Bears' offense to pull away with a 15-4 run in the third quarter. Kate Pattison was the Bears' leading scorer with 13 points, with Reese Croutworst and Abby Henry each adding 12 points. Anna Ebert led the Hilltoppers with 12 points.

Against Hartford on Dec. 30 at the BUHS gym, the Bears slumped early in the fourth quarter but battled back, only to fall short in a 48-45 loss to the Hurricanes. The Bears led 11-6 at the end of the first quarter before Hartford heated up in the second quarter and took a 16-13 halftime lead.

The game stayed close in the second half, but Hartford held on to a 30-27 lead heading into the fourth quarter. Brattleboro trailed by as many as seven points, 38-31, with five minutes to play, but Charlotte Jasmin scored eight of her game-high 25 points in the final quarter and Haley Vanasse added seven more to give Hartford the win.

Croutworst scored 21 points, with four three-pointers, to lead the Bears. Pattison scored 10 points, eight of them in the second half. Henry had a pair of three-pointers during the Bears' fourth quarter rally, while Croutworst scored eight points



RANDOLPH T. HOLHUT/THE COMMONS

Brattleboro players have a heated discussion with one of the officials during the third period of their game against Amherst-Pelham (Mass.) Regional on Dec. 20 at Withington Rink.

in the final minutes.

Now 2-3, the Bears will be back in action on Jan. 6 against South Burlington.

• Leland & Gray headed into the holiday break with a 46-24 win over Twin Valley on Dec. 19. Maggie Parker led the Rebels with 24 points and Mary Sanderson added 10 points as Leland & Gray built up a 20-9 lead by halftime and went on a 13-3 run to open the third quarter to put the game away. Kate Oyer led the Wildcats with 12 points.

On Dec. 28 in Arlington, the Rebels lost to the Eagles, 27-22. Defense ruled the night in this game as Parker had nine blocked shots, but Arlington's Sydney Herrington still managed to score 18 points. Leland & Gray's Samantha Morse scored 10 points before fouling out midway through the fourth quarter. The Rebels enter the new year with a 2-5 record.

• Bellows Falls lost on the road to Windsor, 58-40 on Dec.

19, but bounced back with a pair of home wins — a 44-14 victory over Leland & Gray on Dec. 22 and a 52-43 win over Poultney on Dec. 28. Veronica Moore had 10 points and Abby Nystrom and Delaney Lockerby added nine points apiece to lead BF to the victory over Poultney that improved the Terriers' record to 4-1.

• After a 65-22 loss at home to White River Valley on Dec. 21, Twin Valley got a much-needed break in the schedule. The 0-5 Wildcats are at Arlington on Jan. 6.

## Boys' basketball

• After a 77-50 road loss to White River Valley on Dec. 27, Bellows Falls got back on track with a 58-47 win over the Woodstock Wasps on Dec. 29 at Holland Gymnasium.

This game started out close, but BF gradually pulled away in the second quarter and led 33-27 at the half. A 17-6 burst in the third quarter, keyed by

strong defense by the Terriers, put the game out of reach for the Wasps.

"We got bumped by WRV, but we put in a more consistent effort tonight," said BF coach Evan Chadwick.

Colby Dearborn scored 18 points in the first half and finished with 20 points to lead the Terriers. Jaxon Clark added 14 points and Jesse Darrell chipped in 12 points as BF improved to 4-2 on the season.

• Brattleboro was upset by Otter Valley, 64-52, on Dec. 27 at the BUHS gym. The Division II Otters got 18 points from Connor Dennis and 14 points from Logan Letourneau. The Bears were led by Keagan Systo, who scored 20 points, while John Haskins scored 11 of his 14 points in the second half.

The Bears traveled to Rutland on Dec. 29 and lost 82-54 to drop their record to 2-5. Systo scored 11 points in the loss, while John Satterfield added 10 points and Karson Elliot had nine points.

• Brayden Brown scored 24 points as Twin Valley edged Poultney, 47-45, on Dec. 23. Noah Dornbaugh added 21 points on seven three-pointers for the visiting Wildcats, while Peyton Book had 15 points for Poultney. Twin Valley improved to 4-1 and will host Bellows Falls on Jan. 4 in a rematch of the Green Mountain Holiday Tournament championship game.

• Leland & Gray closed out December with a 63-56 loss to Long Trail School on Dec. 20 and an 80-38 loss to Grace Christian School on Dec. 29 to fall to 2-4.

## Nordic skiing

• A soggy December resulted in the cancellation of the first three meets of the season for the Brattleboro Nordic team.

"All of our races to date have been cancelled due to lack of snow," coach Amanda Dixon wrote in an email last week. "Fingers crossed the new year brings some winter our way."

Weather permitting, the Bears have a skate race scheduled for Jan. 4 at Mountain Top Resort in Chittenden and classic races on Jan. 8 at Prospect Mountain in Woodford and Jan. 26 at the Brattleboro Outing Club's course at Brattleboro Country Club.

Dixon said the Brattleboro Nordic team has 23 high school skiers and 3 middle school

skiers this season.

"The boys team is made up of a strong contingent of returning skiers led by seniors Gabriele Jeppesen-Belleci, Oliver Herrick, and Eben Wagner," she said. "Names to watch this season are sophomores Nico Conathan-Leach and Willow Sharma, as well as junior Desmond Longsmith. On the girls team, the names to watch are senior Katherine Normandeau, sophomore Maeve Bald, and freshman Maayan Coleman."

## Girls' hockey

• The winless Brattleboro girls continue to struggle. On Dec. 20, they started a stretch of five consecutive road games with a 12-0 loss to Hartford.

On Dec. 23, the Bears were shut out by Stowe, 9-0, and fell to Woodstock, 8-0, on Dec. 29.

## Senior bowling roundup

• The fall/winter season of the Brattleboro Senior Bowling League at Brattleboro Bowl ended on Dec. 28 with Four Seasons and No Splits (both 53-32) sharing the league championship. Stepping Stones (51-34) was second, followed by Hairiers (48-37), Skippers and High Rollers (both 46-39), Four Pins (43-42), Dumbledor (39-46), and PEWJ (35-50).

Vicki Butynski had the women's high handicap game (235), while Mary Parlman had the high handicap series (638). Stan Kolpa had the men's high handicap game (259) and Lonnie Cantrell had the high handicap series (682). Dumbledor had the high team handicap game (865), while Hairiers had the high handicap series (2,494).

Robert Rigby had the men's high scratch series (592) featuring games of 213 and 209. Peter Deyo had a 540 series with games of 190 and 183, Warren Coriveau Sr. had a 549 series with a 216 game, Milt Sherman had a 534 series with a 194 game, Wayne Randall had a 515 series with a 182 game, and John Walker had a 513 series with a 182 game. Stan Kolpa had a 193 game, Fred Ashworth had a 189 game, and Rick Westcott had a 180 game.

Pam Greenblott had the women's high scratch series (480) and game (175). Butynski had a 165 game, while Carol Gloski had a 160 game.



RANDOLPH T. HOLHUT/THE COMMONS

Brattleboro's Kate Pattison, left, drives past Hartford defender Hailey Vanasse during the second half of their girls' basketball game on Dec. 30 at the BUHS gym.

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