



PROFILES IN COMMUNITY

SECTION A



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About this issue:

What's in a name? A sense of familiarity, goodwill and trust if you can attach a name to a face at a local company where you do business. Whether you go into a store once a week or once in a while, it is always nice to know the name of the employee who greets you at the door, or the person offering advice on a product or service, or the staffer behind the cash register.

The 36 pages in this "Profiles in Community" section will help introduce you to dozens of people so you can feel connected and comfortable doing business with those who provide important products and services in our area.

Community is at the core of what makes Vermont such an extraordinary place to live. Knowing the name or some tidbit of information about your neighbor, shopkeeper, hairdresser, banker or car mechanic, or even newspaper account representative, makes the next conversation that much easier and friendlier. And getting to know each other also makes each other more comfortable volunteering our time for worthwhile community causes.

Over the past couple of years we've all seen the importance of supporting one another in our local communities. We've seen how each individual and each business, institution and organization has a role to play that's unique and important. And through each of our efforts, we create a vibrant community.

Please take some time to page through this special supplement and put names to some of the faces you see around town. Reflect on the importance of working together to make our towns and state a great place to live and work.

For nearly four decades, the *Addison County Independent* has published this special section to help our readers know a little bit more about each other. In this year's section, we visited more than 100 area businesses to take their photos, introduce their teams and tell their unique stories. While the details of each story varies, the general theme is the same — hard-working employees and employers make our local businesses a success.

Getting to know them and patronizing their businesses makes each community stronger and more vibrant. Enjoy reading about each business, and the satisfaction of knowing a few more folks in the neighborhood!

— The Editors

MEET THE ADDY INDY TEAM



Serving Addison County Since 1946

Back row, left to right: Megan James (digital / MiniBury), John Flowers (news), Elizabeth Guilbeau (advertising), John McCright (news), Tom Van Sant (advertising), Steve James (photography), John Ebert (driver), Harris Gerner (circulation), Dennis Smith (driver), Jenna Hunsinger (advertising), Alyana Santillana (intern), Andy Kirkaldy (news / sports), Angelo Lynn (publisher)

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ADDISON COUNTY INDEPENDENT

Serving Addison County, Vt., Since 1946

From the Addison County Independent's first issue in 1946 to today our mission has been the same: to report the day-to-day events of the county and serve as a mirror that reflects life as it's being lived throughout Addison County.

We do that by covering town and school news, sports, social news, events, arts and leisure, business and professional news, letters and commentary — and almost 50

special sections that put a focus on important aspects of our communities.

As we have for the past 78 years, we invite you to join us five days a week to learn about your neighbors, schools and community.

And, yes, that's FIVE days a week. For those of you who don't receive our four newsletters (Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday), please go to addisonindependent.com and sign up for the newsletters at the top of the

screen. It not only allows us to be in regular touch with our subscribers (and those of you just browsing), but it's the source of breaking news. Plus, the newsletters are free!

We work hard to cover as much Addison County news as we possibly can all with the hope that the most complete picture of the county will yield strong, resilient, respectful and fun-loving communities. We invite you to join us by becoming a subscriber and ADDY ALL-STAR supporter!



ADDISONINDEPENDENT.COM



With the launch of the ADDY ALL-STARs this spring, our readers can now show their support for the paper through donations. Diversifying our revenue is increasingly important to build the resiliency and stability of the Addy Indy. Set up your regular donation and help sustain award-winning local journalism in our community.

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Addison County Home Health & Hospice, along with our affiliates Addison County Therapies and The Medicine Chest, work to enhance the health, dignity, and independence of Addison County residents through comprehensive, patient-centered home health and hospice care.

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Evergreen Preschool helps bring up good kids

By ALYANA SANTILLANA

VERGENNES — “Working with kids is some of the best therapy around. Their curiosity, innocence, and unconditional love is so heartwarming,” said Ashley Bessette.

She should know. A career early childhood educator, Bessette is program director at Evergreen Preschool in Vergennes. She was recently appointed by the three local public school districts as Addison County Universal Pre-K Coordinator, and will leave for that position in August.

Evergreen Preschool, located at 30 South Water St. in Vergennes, has been proudly serving the community since 1982. The establishment began as a cooperative, founded by a group of moms in the area who were seeking a preschool experience for their children at a time when a learning experience for children younger than 1st grade wasn’t always easily available.

Evergreen has since evolved into what it is now a nonprofit that is designated by the Vermont STep Ahead Recognition System as a 5-star program. Evergreen is also a Universal Prequalified establishment. This means that children who come to Evergreen are eligible to receive public funds to help pay for up to 10 hours of free preschool per week.

Quality childcare is essential to the healthy development of young children. In June 2023, the Vermont Legislature passed Act 76, which makes major investments in Vermont’s childcare system, and mandates policy changes that aim to make quality childcare more available by improving the pay and training of early childhood educators and offer more subsidies for families, and thus increasing the number of childcare spots available in the Green Mountain State.

In addition to making the next generation of workers better prepared and more capable, it is hoped that better early child education will make the current Vermont workforce more stable by giving parents solid support when raising their kids.

“Act 76 gave us funding for raises. Being able to pay teachers more is the best way to retain the work force,” Bessette said.

Evergreen Preschool is primarily funded through tuition. Act 76, a 2023 bill that allocates more resources towards Vermont childcare centers, gave Evergreen more funds to improve their operations. This was primarily used to give raises to facility staff. This is particularly significant because one of the contributors to Vermont’s childcare shortage is the overall lack of early childhood educators.

Being fully staffed is not only better for the children and their families, it is also better for the providers, like the ones at Evergreen who can really focus on their job and the children they are educating.

“There’s days where we will just be laughing the entire day about who said what and who did what, it’s so magical,” Bessette said.

Evergreen Preschool aims to foster children’s natural thirst for knowledge and meaning through play in a collaborative environment that respects,



ASHLEY BASSETTE, AN early childhood educator at Evergreen Preschool poses with some of her charges, who are quite adept at filling their cups with beverages.

values, encourages and sees the individuality of each child and family. The hope is to also inspire a deep connection with the natural environment and surrounding community.

The Evergreen staff prioritizes providing a positive learning experience for its students, one way they do this is by ensuring a low student-to-faculty ratio. The preschool serves students aged 3-5 in a two-year program, meaning those enrolled are guaranteed a spot for the following year’s instruction. They have a total of 35 spots per year and operate on a split schedule — there is a group of 17 or 18 3-year-olds come in for two days a week and a group of 17 or 18 4- and 5-year-olds in for three days a week. This split schedule has been a staple of Evergreen preschool’s pedagogy, as it allows the staff to pay more careful attention to each child in the facility. There is usually five adults on site on a given day.

“Our philosophy is: Be safe, be kind, be gentle,” Bessette said.

The preschool incorporates a lot of play and nature based learning in their daily routines, having frequent activities that seek to expose children to the world

around them. Just last week, the preschool hosted a lemonade stand in hopes of providing a treat to those in the area hoping to cope with the heat. The stand was also a fundraiser; the children had been learning about turtles and wanted to raise a little money to go toward turtle preservation.

The youngsters also recently took a field trip to visit the Watershed Center, a nature preserve and education center in Bristol. Evergreen Preschool heavily values community. Staff work to ensure that families are deeply involved in their children’s education. Evergreen has a social committee, a group of parents who collaborate to organize events to connect families outside of school hours. Families also take turns providing the class daily snacks.

Families looking to enroll should be on the lookout for an application, which typically opens in February and is for spots opening up the following August.

“Every step they take is a big deal and it brings me joy to be on the ride with them,” said Bessette.



PROFILES IN COMMUNITY

“Our philosophy is: Be safe, be kind, be gentle.”

— Ashley Bessette



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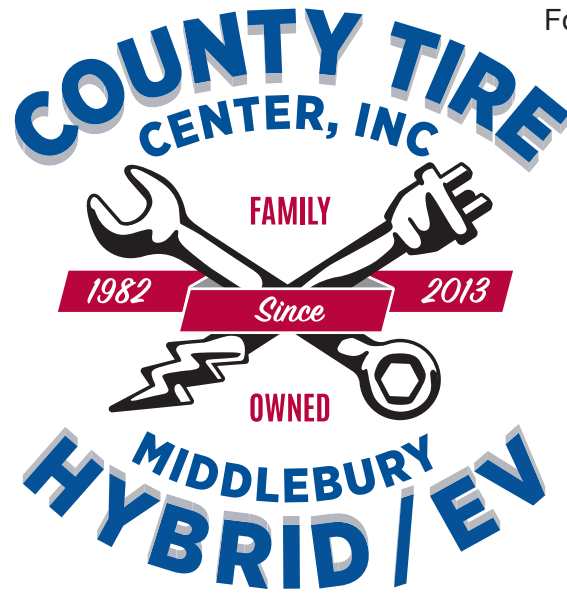
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Back row: Scott Brown, Tyler Delorme - Qualified Hybrid Tech, Ethan Delorme, Mike Danyow, Matt Paquette, Gary Delphia, Zachary Martell

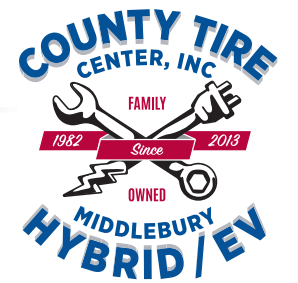


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Left to Right: Jamie Warner, Courtney DeBisschop, Sarah Peluso, Beth Stanway, Amey Ryan, Levi Doria



ADDISON COUNTY Chamber of Commerce

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Chamber Team
Top row (left to right)

Lisa Grover
Outreach & Relocation
Coordinator
Maria Benoit
Director of Operations
Phil Summers
Executive Director

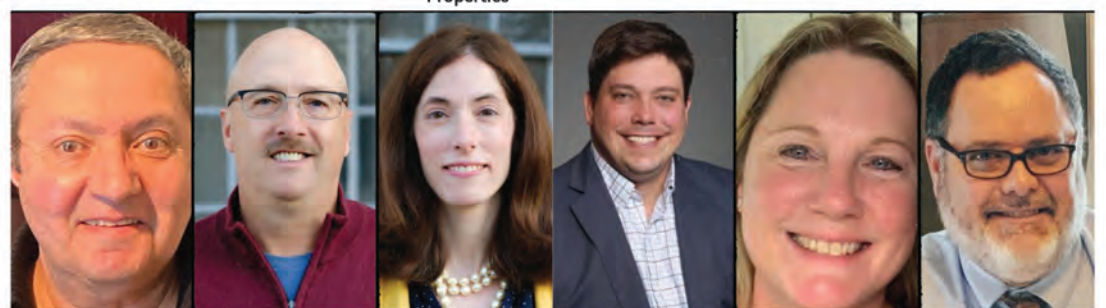
Chamber Team
Bottom row (left to right)

Maggie Wong
Intern
Middlebury College
Nyna Cole
Visitor Center Summer Staff
Wellesley College

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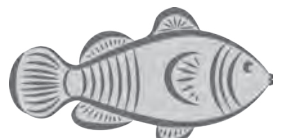
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Back row L-R: Susan Nelson, Billi-Jo Ouellette, Valerie Birchmore, Lew Castle
 (Missing from the photo – Paula Wendel & Sadie our office cat)

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From left to right: Beth Erickson, Jenna Lossman, Steve Revell, Jeremy Revell, Linda Revell.



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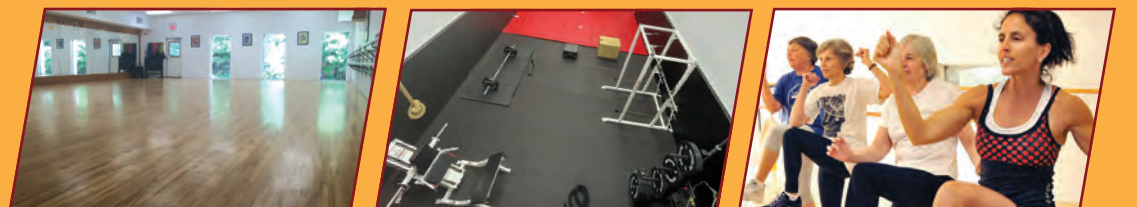


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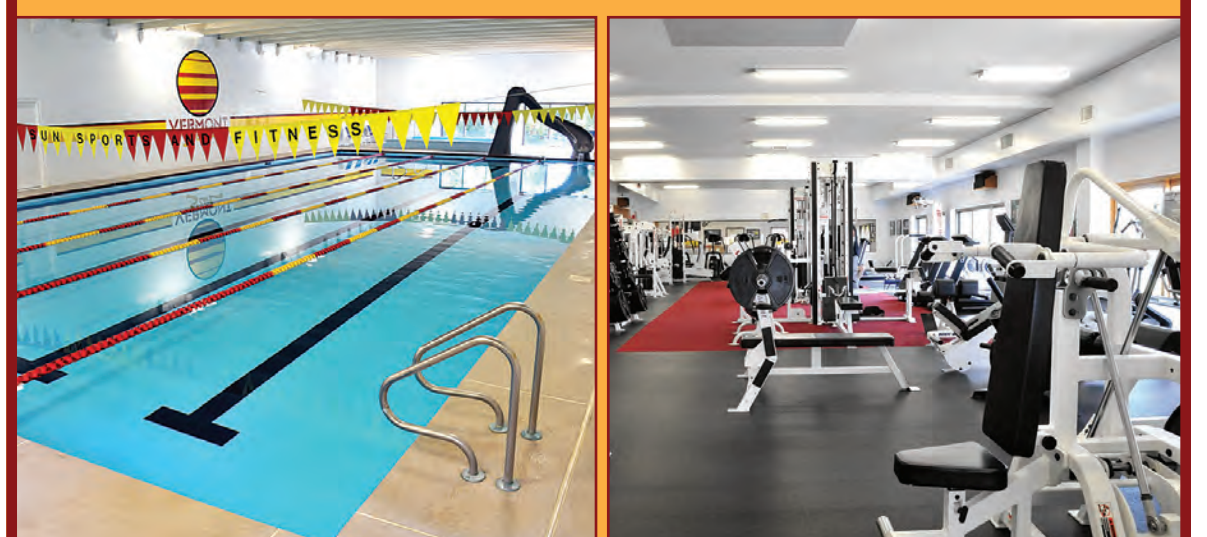
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Marc LaRoche, left, recently bought his dad's business, Gill's Place Boat Repair, though Gill is still at the shop working. Marc and Gill have kept all the same services, though Marc renamed the business, Dunmore Marine Service.

GILL'S PLACE IS NOW DUNMORE MARINE SERVICE

After 41 years, Gill's Place Boat Repair is out and Dunmore Marine Service is in. That's because Gill LaRoche is officially no longer the boss, he says, motioning to his son, Marc, as the new owner as of Nov. 2023. "I'm still working," Gill says, "but I'm no longer the guy paying the bills!"

Marc, who has worked with his father at the boat repair shop in Salisbury for the past 29 years, said taking over the business was a long time coming and that they aren't expecting any big changes. "We'll keep doing what we've always done," he said, which includes boat service and repair, selling and installing Hewitt boat lifts and docks, servicing all kinds of watercraft, as well as ATVs and snowmobiles.

Service has always been the heart of their business and will continue to be so, Marc said. With more than 50 years of experience working on boats (Gill started in 1970 at Vergennes Marine and since 1983 out of their home in Salisbury), Gill has seen it all and knows boats and engines inside and out. Marc has also been working on engines — boats, go-carts and snowmobiles — for almost 30 years and started a companion business setting up and taking down docks and boat lifts mainly on Lake Dunmore/Fern Lake, as well as doing dock work via his barge.

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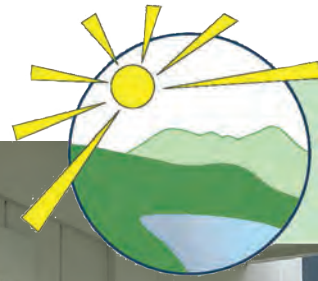
Pictured: Galina Mencil, Nancy Larrow, Cory Foote, Jan Bark, Deb Hillman, Sean Dye, Susan Burdick, Sue Walsh, Jeff Olson, Sue Mackey Others: Neil Mackey, Dick Elkins, Nikhil Plouffe

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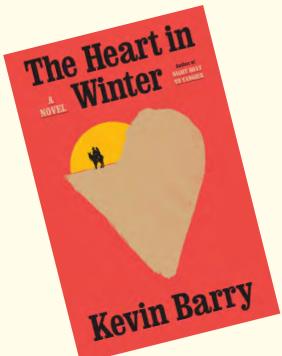
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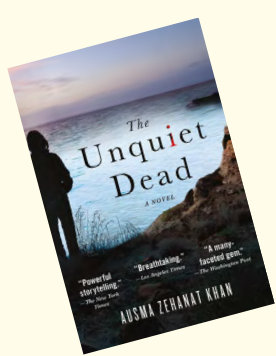


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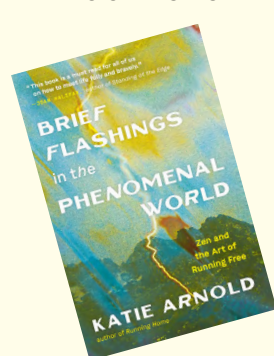


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Pictured from top right, counter clockwise: Keziah Wilde, Naomi Clark, Peyton Mader and Maggie Blake

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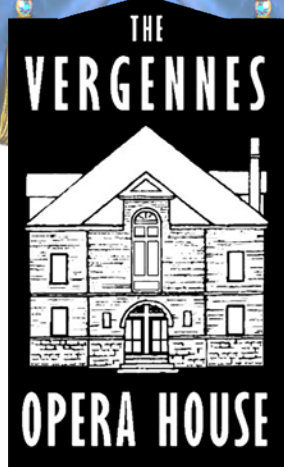


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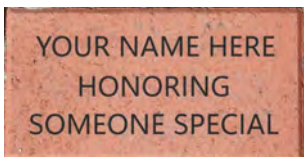
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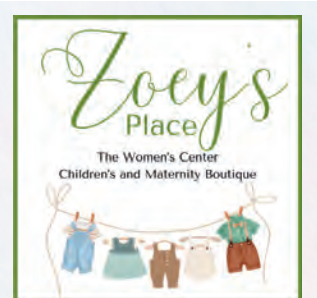
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Bristol therapist helps heal bodies through the art of listening with her hands

By CAROLINE JIAO

BRISTOL — Shoes off, body laid flat on a treatment table (or not, if you prefer not to), surrounded by warm-toned lights and light green wallpaper.

As of May 2024, patients have come to Gail Creeksong craniosacral therapy (CST) at 25 Mountain View St. in Bristol seeking various services.

What, one might ask, is craniosacral therapy? Well, “cranio” came from “cranium,” or skull, and “sacral” came from “sacrum,” which is a shield-shaped bony structure located at the base of the spine and connected to the pelvis. Craniosacral therapy, or CST, is often defined as “a type of bodywork that uses gentle touch to evaluate and improve the function of the craniosacral system. That system refers to a continuous membrane of deep tissue, called fascia, that connects the skull and spine, plus the brain and central nervous system.

There hasn’t been scientific research that can verify or quantify that CST could have consistent result with patients. And yet many of her patients have responded with positive results and a lot of gratitude.

A Creeksong client who suffered from a spine fracture noted on her website that they had felt “a sense of peace and clarity.” Other clients said the treatment had alleviated or cured jaw pain, back pain and other chronic pain and tension. Some have regular sessions as part of their wellness program. The processes of these transformation are perhaps unmeasurable or undetectable through scientific or statistical methods, it doesn’t stop clients from expressing a sense of healing and relaxation genuinely felt.

According to Creeksong, her work at Gail Creeksong CST (the name of her business) involves many facets, despite the backbone of this work (no pun intended) is craniosacral therapy. The practices include Somato-Emotional Release Therapy, Polarity Energy Therapy, and Compassionate Communication.

“There are other modalities involved which I’m trained in and have practiced,” she said. “Over the years the work has evolved into something beyond the parts. I’m not sure what that’s called, so I call it body therapy.”

Creeksong said patients who seek her therapy range from birth to death, mainly people from age 30 to 80. Referrals come mostly word of mouth, while there are also doctors and therapists who refer patients to her treatment. She currently receives around 12 clients a week.

Some confuse Creeksong’s work with massage, which she made sure to clarify. Despite initially being trained professionally as a massage therapist and having

practiced it for several years at the start of this career, what she does now is not the same thing.

“This is not just massage,” Creeksong said. “It’s not like I come to the client with a recipe, like ‘so and so has a frozen shoulder, and these are the steps you do for that.’ It’s not like that at all.”

Creeksong explains that her bodywork emphasizes deep listening to the body, a technique that is crucial for all her treatments.

“When I’m listening to a body, I’m receiving directions as to how and where to work, and all the modalities that I’ve trained as well as all the anatomy and physiology or deep dives into immunology and neurology, they all provide references for what I’m detecting and tools to draw on. But every time, I’m connecting to a body, with hands or with words, I’m doing that as a direct response to what this body is asking for in the moment.”

By “direct response,” Creeksong matches and applies the pressure or movement of her hand with the cues she had received from a body. She says she uses her hand to “listen” to the body’s energy through many venues.

“(I would) listen to the skin, the fascia, the muscles, even the nerves and the bone. I’m also listening to the fluids that go up and down the spinal cord, and that rhythm reverberates and gets echoed through the rest of our body. So that also provides clues,” she said. “What I’m drawn to is tension. It could be tension in the energy, it could be tension in the way the fluid flows, could be tension in the muscle, or something going on in the bones.”

She believes a body can be self-healing. According to Creeksong, there’s an innate knowingness to the body as to what it means to heal, and her hand follows that energy as if attracted by a magnet.

“Everybody that comes to the table is unique,” she said. “There’s this wisdom in their body that knows how their body got to be this way, and what to do about it, and that’s what I’m keying into.”

Because of this, no two sessions look the same.

“I let go of any ideas I have as to what should happen,” she said. “What I would like to have happen, what the client would like to happen. I just let it go. I’m just holding the tissue exactly as it is and allowing it to be that way. And if change wants to happen, it will.”

Creeksong believes her sessions in general provides a mediating space for people to pause and reflect.

“It’s a time when people can ... have focused time to be in their bodies and connecting with it,” Creeksong said. “We spend so much time in our heads, and we



GAIL CREEKSONG DIDN'T start out to do body work, but she was drawn to craniosacral therapy, or CST, which she does out of her office in Bristol. The practice, whose name comes from the “cranium” or skull, includes Creeksong listening to the body with her hands.

Independent photo/Caroline Jiao



PROFILES IN COMMUNITY

“Over the years the work has evolved into something beyond the parts ... I call it body therapy.”

— Gail Creeksong

spend a lot of time trying not to be in our bodies or just rushing through life in a way that doesn’t allow us to pay attention at the deep level.”

Creeksong said that sometimes people seek her not because they have a broken body, but a broken heart.

“They’re suffering from emotions, and it’s painful for them to be in their bodies,” she said.

In Creeksong’s opinion, the well-being of our bodies is deeply intertwined with that of the mind. Often, pain or discomfort in the body mirrors tensions in the mind or emotion.

“Trauma is often something that gets trapped in a body,” she said. “Eventually it’s not sustainable. It needs to come out.”

Creeksong recalls the case of a child she treated.

“He had a nervous tic of pulling his shirt around his neck,” she recalled. “He’d had it for a long time, but it was just getting really constant. He was in second or third grade. It was interfering with his ability to be comfortable at school.”

“I asked his mom about his birth. I think he was her last child, and she had a number of children before, so she said, ‘Oh it wasn’t any big deal.’ ... but then she said, ‘But the chord was wrapped around his neck three times.’

“When she said that, I felt his body go into what we call a ‘significance detector,’ which is where something significant is happening. His body directed my hand to where it needed to be, which was around his neck, and he reenacted being born. He started acting like an infant coming out of the birth canal, pushing his way through, and my hands were like the chords that were coming off. The report I got back was that the nervous ticks were 78-85% better.”

Throughout the session she repeated verbal check-ins with the boy, hearing his positive replies every time. She mentioned always having parents or guardians in the room during sessions with children.

“That’s the beauty of this work: there’s no need to go through a painful process to heal trauma. When you can listen to the body, the healing flows in a natural way,” she said.

GETTING STARTED

Creeksong admitted she had never imagined becoming a bodyworker in her younger life.

“Here’s me in my early 30s, if someone had told me ‘When you get older, you will be a massage therapist or a bodyworker,’ I would’ve been like, ‘No I’m not, and you’re standing too close,’” she joked.

She had done various things before she sat down and wondered about her life’s purpose.

“My body had gone through trauma as a young person, so I had learned to distance myself from my body. As I got older, I realized that this isn’t sustainable,” she said.

In the early 2000s, Creeksong saw an advertisement for an open house from Cyprus Health Institute in Santa Cruz, Calif., which she decided to attend, just to check it out.

“The energy those people exuded was so amazing and palpable,” she recalled. “I was like ‘Whatever you all are doing, that’s what I want to do.’”

Sure enough, she graduated in 2007 from the program, where she studied massage therapy, polarity energy therapy, and deep tissue massage. Five years later she was hired as an instructor at the integrated massage therapy course and taught for four years there.

She had started taking courses in CST in 2010 through the Upledger Institute in Florida. Moving to Vermont in 2020, Creeksong continued her practice of CST therapy. Despite already having a technical certificate, she thinks the learning is ongoing and probably will never stop.

A usual session of her treatment is an hour long and costs \$100, but there is a sliding scale.

“Our bodies are like these vast mysteries that we’ll never know everything about. I just had so much curiosity about that,” she said.

“Most of us have lived experience where we learn that our bodies are not to be trusted and might even be seen to be dangerous to inhabit,” Creeksong said. “That creates a painful gap that is really hard to heal. That’s been a lifelong endeavor for me to learn how I can feel safe in my body, and how I can help with other people feeling the same.”



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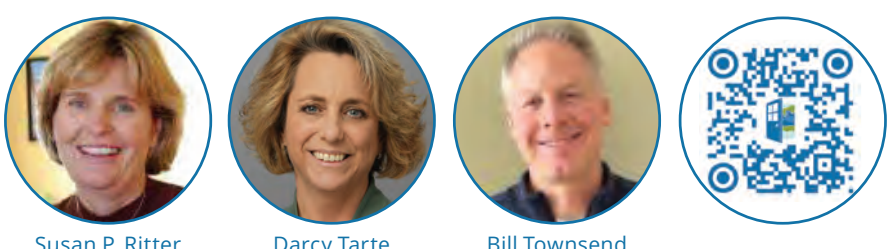
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SECTION C



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Long Trail Psychiatry treats mental health maladies by putting her patients first

By ALYANA SANTILLANA

MIDDLEBURY — Lauren Bierman spent over a decade working in geriatrics and has worked as a hospice nurse and hospice nurse practitioner. She had been working as a nurse practitioner since 2016. When she saw how huge the need was for mental health care providers, she left primary care to go back to school for earn her psychiatric-mental health certificate.

She is now a psychiatric-mental health nurse practitioner with a doctorate in nursing practice. She is double board certified in adult geriatrics and psychiatry.

"I started this business because of my own journey with mental health," Bierman said. "There were times where I had to wait a really long time to see people, my resources and supports didn't match my values, and providers didn't see me as human."

Bierman opened Long Trail Psychiatry in Vergennes in 2019, and in 2023 moved the business to Middlebury at 88 Main St.

Long Trail Psychiatry provides mental health and psychiatric services of all sorts, such as mental health evaluations, consults, medication management and psychotherapy, among other things.

Bierman also has training in yoga, ayurveda (a traditional medicine system from India), and other meditation practices, which she uses in her sessions.

The practice specializes in holistic healing. Notably, it has entered the practice of ketamine assisted

psychotherapy, or KAP. Ketamine is a dissociative anesthetic drug that is used for a variety of purposes in medicine. In this case, it is used for therapeutic purposes.

Bierman's practice uses both Spravato, an FDA-approved nasal treatment that uses a slightly altered form of ketamine, and ketamine lozenges for KAP. Unlike other mental health remedies like antidepressants, Spravato does not need to be taken every day. Bierman is present during all KAP sessions, in which the substance is used to complement the space for therapeutic practices, including meditation, talk therapy, etc.

"I took ketamine myself at first because I had seen and read all these things about it. And it was remarkable how easy it became for me to talk about things in my life that were notoriously difficult for me to talk about before," Bierman said.

Prior to being given ketamine in any capacity, people seeking treatment are screened to ensure they are a candidate for this treatment. Ketamine is most commonly used to treat depression, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, and other mental health issues.

"Having reservations is valid, I had reservations taking ketamine... at first," Bierman said. Clients "ask me any questions that they have and voice any concerns that they have. You don't have to take it every day and the side effects are usually occurring while you're here getting treatment."

"I think it's good for people to have reservations.

That's why we have such open and honest conversations about it. Ketamine is just one option, we work with all medications and different modalities," Bierman said.

Long Trail Psychiatry prides itself on its practice of holistic treatment and commitment to putting the patient first. The practice collaborates with other primary care providers, emergency rooms and psychiatrists to provide treatments for their patients. However, Bierman emphasized that the patient's own needs and desires are the priority.

"The patient comes first, always. We don't have any agendas here. It's really about keeping and building trust with someone," Bierman said. "We are very honored to come on these healing journeys with them. It's really about what works for them. There is no one size fits all with psychiatry. We have to be innovative and think about every aspect of a person's life."

Above all, Bierman hopes her practice is known as one that thoroughly nurtures and cares for its patients. They offer flexibility, with the staff being available on the evenings and weekends as patients require. Long Trail is a teaching practice, with students being trained to aid in Spravato and other treatments. Bierman is present in all KAP sessions, and sometimes a student will be accompanying her. The practice currently sees around 300 patients and takes patients through referrals, website inquiries, and various other manners.

Long Trail Psychiatric recently hired another



LAUREN BIERMAN, NURSE Practitioner, started her own practice in hopes of providing the community with holistic, compassionate care. She runs Long Trail Psychiatry in Middlebury.

psychiatric-mental health nurse practitioner, and they plan to have two more join the practice. As she looks to the future, Bierman hopes to hire more providers and expand her efforts in mental health and wellness. She will be hosting a ketamine retreat in October and an ADHD workshop later this year.

"I want to be a safe space and want the community to know that we have wonderful providers," she said.

Why I treat patients with ketamine

Lauren Bierman, a psychiatric-mental health nurse practitioner and owner of Long Trail Psychiatry, offers treatment with ketamine. The *Addison Independent* asked her about how Long Trail uses the dissociative anesthetic drug in its holistic healing practice. Here are the questions and her answers:

Q: How did you become interested in prescribing ketamine?

Bierman: I grew interested in ketamine after seeing many published studies that were showing huge reductions in people's depressive symptoms and suicidal thoughts. I had a lot of patients asking me about it, so I figured I should try it on my own so I could better educate people. I did a series of ketamine-assisted psychotherapy sessions, and I was blown away with the effects. Not only did I feel antidepressant effects rather quickly after a session, but the medicine also allowed me to access places and times from my past that had been too difficult to talk about. Finally, after over 30 years of different types of medications and therapies, I was actually able to talk about the trauma I experienced in childhood, and I was able to see it from a different lens. It became easier to find grace and compassion for myself, whereas I have generally lived my life feeling like I was at fault for everything that had happened when I was just a child. After seeing the benefits in my own life with my depression symptoms and PTSD

symptoms, I knew that I wanted to be able to offer this to my patients.

Q: How is this drug taken (oral pill, injection, daily, monthly...?)

Ketamine is taken in several different ways. It can be administered in the muscle, under the skin, directly into the vein, in the nose, and orally with a lozenge. Currently I offer Spravato (esketamine) which is administered into the nostrils, and a special oral lozenge called a "troche" for ketamine-assisted psychotherapy (KAP) sessions.

Spravato is FDA approved for treatment-resistant depression and depression with active suicidal ideation. It has been shown to be most effective when used according to a treatment protocol, so people can expect two treatments per week for one month, and then one treatment per week for one month. Maintenance doses are recommended, and they differ according to the individual.

Ketamine, when used for ketamine-assisted psychotherapy, is dosed based on the patient. I recommend that people aim to start with three sessions, because each session is going to be different, and our goal is to work through and process trauma and depression. During this therapy, people are better able to access different perspectives, and change some of their cognitive blocks.

Q: What are the benefits of ketamine?

One of the best benefits of ketamine is that it works quickly. Antidepressants can take at least 4-6 weeks before we know if they're even minimally effective, and then we often have to adjust the doses multiple times. Ketamine can show benefits after just a few sessions.

Ketamine is also a very safe medication and generally comes with minimal side effects. Other medications, such as antidepressants and antipsychotics, have a myriad of side effects that can really affect someone's quality of life. The most common side effects of ketamine are a slight elevation in blood pressure (which usually resolves very quickly), nausea (which we can premedicate for), dissociation and sedation. These side effects have resolved before someone leaves my office, whereas side effects with daily medications can last as long as someone takes the medication.

Ketamine also helps to create new neural pathways in the brain. It increases neuroplasticity, which means it actually makes new connections between neurons, which is incredible! This is, in part, what helps patients create new ways of thinking and relating. Ketamine enhances the mind's capacity for deeper thinking and change, which then provides opportunities for rapid progress.

Q: How long is the course of treatment?

I recommend that people stick with the protocol

for Spravato, because that's what's been proven to work. With KAP, it's really based on the person and if they are finding benefit from the treatment. Most people will need maintenance dosing on a long-term basis.

Q: Who should avoid ketamine?

People should disclose to their provider if they have a history (or risk factors) for hypertension, stroke, seizures, aneurysms, urinary problems, intracranial pressure issues and psychosis. This doesn't mean they aren't a candidate for the treatment, it just means we may need to do a little more digging to fully understand their risk for adverse effects, and then we would review risks versus benefits before determining to treat with ketamine or Spravato.

Q: Is ketamine therapy covered by insurance, how much can a patient expect to pay?

Spravato is covered by insurance, and there are Care Navigators who can help patients determine their cost of treatment, and whether they qualify for financial assistance... which at times can cover the entire cost of treatment.

Ketamine-assisted psychotherapy (KAP) is not covered by insurance. These sessions can be three to four hours long and can range in cost, depending on the patient's financial situation.



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A conversation with local artist, linguist Yinglei Zhang

By CAROLINE JIAO

Asian-ness has become a cultural phenomenon. *The New York Times* said so in a recent article about Asian food trends and the rise of various Asian markets. On the other side of the coin, *The Washington Post* observed that 1 in 10 Asian Americans live in poverty despite the “model minority” trope.

Asians in the U.S. face a mixed reality.

On the one hand, Asian communities seem to be making strides in spreading cultural influence through Oscar-winning films, trend-leading social media and delicious food.

On the other hand, the wave of Asian hate still looms large as a result of bigotry stoked by COVID and of sometimes difficult relations between two global superpowers.

As the “Asian” experience becomes more intersectional than ever, what is the value of identifying or answering to “being Asian” in the broader context of this country?

A conversation with Yinglei Zhang, a Middlebury artist and resident, revealed one Asian experience, out of many, that is highly intersectional — that is, her interests, personality and personal traits cross over many identities in our society.

Zhang’s life, like a prism, refracts eras of social stagnation to high mobility all condensed in a few decades in contemporary Chinese history.

A misty rain washed a recent morning in Middlebury, but the rapid raindrops escaped Zhang’s notice while she was cooking up a few homely dishes for her visitor from this newspaper, who also comes from China.

Many know Zhang for her calligraphy, ink painting and porcelain artworks displayed through the Vermont Crafts Council’s Open Studios Weekends. Some might have attended her classes on painting or pottery at the Middlebury Studio School. She has produced beautiful artwork for the annual Empty Bowl fundraiser.

“I used to sell a lot of art for what you call nonprofits. When they need, I tell them they can just take it,” Zhang said. “There used to be an old piano I painted for the art school. I don’t know where it’s gone now.”

She was often invited by the Middlebury College Art Department to host talks and workshops or teach winter term classes. She proudly showed a certificate from Middlebury College that lauded her contribution in 2019.

Art had become an anchor for Zhang in Middlebury since she moved here in 1997. Today, she has lived here longer than anywhere, even in China, which she still calls home.

Her High Street home in Middlebury is nestled in the slope of Chipman Hill, surrounded by maple trees and common ivy.

The flowers in her front yard yearn for weeding. Zhang always makes sure there grows the plain and silver mugwort, which is unwanted by many gardeners but she harvests and preserves to be used as incense for her house.

Another spot of attraction that might seem unusual to most people around here is her backyard, where a patch of water spinach, chives and watercress is grown next to a small pond. An underground stream nourished these hydrophilic plants.

From within the house, a narrow stove window facing north encloses this corner of the garden. There hangs a small piece of calligraphy that says “fish watch” in Chinese. On the windowsill sit several porcelain dumplings made with her own hands.

“When we were young there used to be famine, and food was precious,” the 70-year-old recalled. She explained her motivation for making the porcelain dumplings. “I got to make something out of clay, so I naturally picked it up and made food.”

While many find it unique and seek her private tutelage in Chinese language and arts as well as traditional food and tea practices, these to Zhang are no more than aspects of life. Denying that she has a deep well of knowledge in these areas, she says it’s her lived experience that conditioned her body to understand and do most of what she does.

Her lived experience includes one of the most tumultuous times in contemporary Chinese history.

CHILDHOOD IN CHINA

The famine Zhang referred to is likely a period of food shortages amidst the Cultural Revolution. Her father, teaching at a university in Jiangsu at the time, suffered especially. He was a success of sorts in Sichuan, but he moved his family to Jiangsu — a decision that Zhang regretted.

“My father used to work for the press when the Communist army marched to Yan’an during the



YINGLEI ZHANG

revolution. After the civil war was won, his army unit took over the factories and government in Sichuan. That’s where he met my mother.”

He was a cultured man of letters in a socially well-off place. But that small degree of affluence evaporated after they went to Jiangsu.

“You don’t know the power of social relations,” Zhang lamented.

She believed her father must have been isolated and cornered at his institution in Jiangsu during the Cultural Revolution.

From 1966 to 1968 when the Red Guard was most active, there were up to 4 million high school graduates who were unable to continue in schools or jobs. Younger students in cities and towns were encouraged to participate in what’s called the Up to Mountain Down to Village movement, to supposedly learn from the rural peasantry. Many never got to return to their homes.

Zhang probably wouldn’t say so herself, but she was lucky. Or, resilient, as she believes.

She and her younger sister Ruling Zhang were able to waive the responsibility to move to rural villages since their elder sister had already gone. And fortunately, as Yinglei believed, she inherited her father’s cultured nature. She enjoyed studying.

After China reopened its schools in 1968, Yinglei Zhang went back to secondary education when she was 14 years old.

“I just sat in the front (of the classroom), and many other kids were rowdy in the back, but I didn’t care,” she said. “The exams were easy for me, and the teacher paid special attention to me.”

It was not until 1977 that China officially resumed the nationwide college entrance exam. Students could finally go to college again.

But by that time, Zhang was 23 and had already taught at her old high school for four years. She had been trained to become a Chinese language teacher. There was a severe lack of teachers after many had been dismissed or had died during the calamity.

“We were required to go back to rural villages and do farm work,” Zhang recalled. “I was just two years older than the kids in my class.”

She lamented that she didn’t have a choice.

“I had wished it was something else,” Zhang said. “English is good, art or music are fine, but most of us had to become Chinese teachers because a school needs more of them.”

Fortunately, she liked literature enough. After a few years of teaching, she convinced her high school to send her back to a program at Nanjing University to study Chinese classics. She wanted to extend it into a master’s degree, but the odds were not in her favor in 1981 as she faced competition from the class of ’77, the first-ever class of college graduates after the Cultural Revolution.

“My professor chose two students, a male and a female, from his university, so I didn’t get it.”

TO AMERICA, EVENTUALLY

The 10-year calamity caused a pivotal shift in the government. In 1978, China entered its era of economic reform.

Riding on the waves of this gradual economic opening, Zhang acquired her passport after two rejections and got her tickets to San Francisco. It was 1985, and she was 30 years old.

Four years later, the Chinese capital of Beijing suffered from the government’s violent suppression of the student movement on June 4 opposing the country’s turn to capitalism. At the time, Zhang was far away studying and getting married in the U.S. Her son, Robbie, was born that year.

Back in China for a stint, she and her son left Hong Kong for Middlebury in the summer of 1997, where her husband at that time, Robert Smitheram, was already working at the Middlebury College Center for Educational Technology. She moved to her current house in 2000, around the time their marriage broke up.

Zhang has hopes to travel back to China with her younger sister Ruling next year.

“My younger sister was in Stanford too,” Yinglei said. “Now she’s a famous scholar in France. I always took care of her when we were so little. People say, ‘Ruling always listens to her elder sister Yinglei.’ Every time she has something written for an occasion, she’d still run it through me.”

Zhang’s study experience perhaps forms a stark contrast with the increasingly institutionalized pipelines nowadays that channel international students from around the world into elite colleges in the U.S. It is hard to say if a more globalized world has manifested more opportunities for people seeking to enrich their experience and broaden their horizons.

Yinglei is now content with her life in Middlebury, surrounded by art and the community that appreciates her culture.

“It’s about being in the right place at the right time, with the right people,” she said.

Editor’s note: The interview was mainly conducted in Mandarin Chinese; the author translated Yinglei Zhang’s words into English.



PROFILES IN COMMUNITY

“When we were young there used to be famine, and food was precious. I got to make something out of clay, so I naturally picked it up and made food.”
— Yinglei Zhang



THIS IS A view of the kitchen window that holds the view of Yinglei Zhang’s Middlebury yard, where she had planted many hydrophilic plants and had kept some koi fish in a small pond. On the windowsill sits several porcelain dumplings she made. The wooden plate on the left side of the pane says “Guan Yu,” or “fish watching.”

Independent photo/Caroline Jiao

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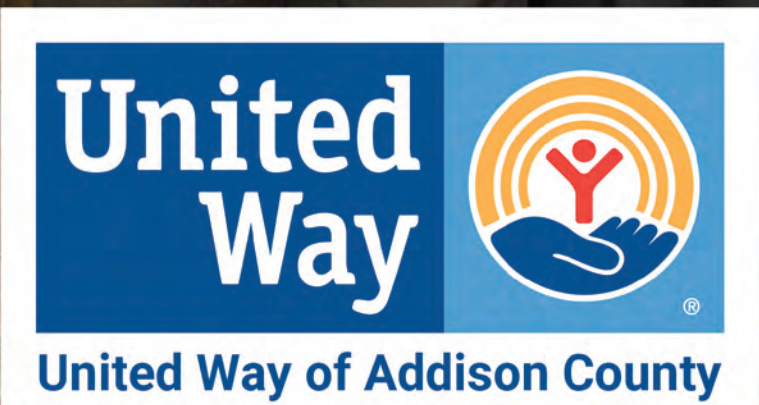
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PROFILES IN COMMUNITY

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Pictured from L to R: Steve Williams, Celia Heath, Amy Hoekstra, Helena Van Voorst, Lee Bilson, Erin Reed, Sylvie Morrison
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