

A special section of the Addison Independent

September 5, 2024



Teaching moment

GEORGE CAMMACK
DEMONSTRATES to his little brother
Corbin how to use
the water nozzle on a fire hose.
See story on page 8.

Photo courtesy of George Cammack

Saluting our

Firefighters



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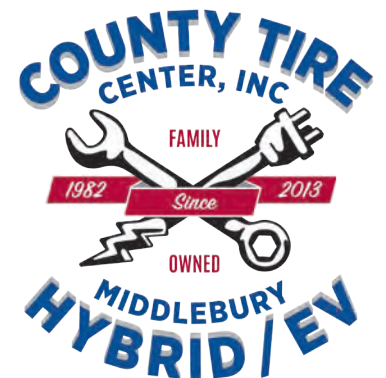
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Credit: Bob Schatz

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Life experience inspires Ripton teen to join up

By CAROLINE JIAO

RIPTON — For 14-year-old George Cammack attending the 2024 Fire Cadet Academy hosted in Pittsford by the

Vermont State Firefighter' Association was one of the few times he stepped foot outside of his Ripton home this summer.

In many aspects, Cammack is just like

any other teenager who has his heart set on making firefighting his career: He enjoys sports like cross-country and tennis, and he rides his bike to volunteer and attend training at the local fire department.

As the eldest of five children, Cammack is proud of his dream to become a firefighter.

"It's one of the few things that only I do in the family," he said.

But there's a catch. He has one more hurdle on the way to achieving his dream. It's his health.

Four children out of five in the family, including George, endure a rare form of diabetes called MODY, or Maturity Onset Diabetes of the Young, which is a monogenetic form of diabetes that only 1% of diabetics in the world experiences, according to Cammack's mother, Jaime, who has type-1 diabetes herself.

"Fortunately, there hasn't been anything noticeable from that for me," said George.

"Ever since the pandemic, we've bubbled and been a stay-at-home family, home-schooling and everything, which adds to the craziness of having five (children at home)," George explained light-heartedly.

So there are good reasons for the family to be cautious, of course, since the hope is to minimize illnesses. In 2013, the third child, Francis, who was two weeks old at the time, was seriously sick from what had seemed to be just a cold. But a quick-thinking EMT and smart doctors saved his life.

"We've been very cautious with COVID because we've had a lot of medical complications," Jaime said. "The fire department and the EMS have shown up for us a whole bunch of times, and that's been really important for our family having that resource."

George's sense of responsibility and awareness was ingrained at a young age. There had been a number of times when Jaime needed assistance, and George would take the role of caring for his

siblings. The family also trained him early to know emergency response like dialing 911. He joked about accidentally making a 911 call when he was six.

Ever since moving to Vermont from Virginia in 2018, the Cammack family were shown kindness by the local fire department, whose members helped them rewire their entire house and also saved them from a downed wire fire in snowy weather.

"We spent the rest of the day watching videos," George said. "About what to do when you see a live wire," Jaime added.

The family has become more cautious, whether it's about wearing masks to protect their health or having fire extinguishers or fire blankets around the house.

They've recognized the necessity of acquiring fire safety skills, given the small community they live in often sees a shortage in emergency response staff.

"It's kind of a big deal that there are only so many first responders in general," Jaime said. "We've been talking a lot about the proposed

changes to the safety standards that OSHA's been working on, and that's quite scary thinking about ... if there's going to be minimums of how many old trucks can (there) be, or what equipment each station is using," Jaime said.

George, feeling a strong sense of responsibility for his community, is now determined to pursue a career in the fire department since that's who has been there for his family.

"Both his dad and I are trying to step back and let him pursue what he wants to pursue," Jaime said. "It's somewhat ironic that he's going into a profession that's dangerous, but if we hadn't had that kind of support previously, we probably wouldn't be OK with the idea of him running into burning buildings."

As a kid, George was influenced by his father, Chris, who served in the military. George had also wanted to live in Europe (See Cammack, Page 21)



AT THE ACADEMY, George Cammack of Ripton becomes more familiar with his full fire gear and self-contained breathing apparatus. The 14-year-old feels proud and strong to have performed a few training missions wearing the full outfit, which can weigh up to 75 pounds.

Photo courtesy of George Cammack

“Firefighters don’t just respond to house fires and kittens in trees. They respond to almost everything that’s not a crime scene.”

— George Cammack

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Volunteers balance firefighting with careers

See service to community as essential and much-needed contribution

By ALYANA SANTILLANA

“My sisters and brothers on the Weybridge Volunteer Fire Department reminded me to write about the value of mutual aid during times of crisis,” said Jamie McCallum in the acknowledgements section of his 2022 book “Essential.”

Being a firefighter takes hours of commitment, never-ending physical training, and risking of personal safety for one’s community.

So why do people volunteer to do it?

It’s simple.

“I believe in mutual aid and neighbors

helping each other, in the absence of others to do it, communities should be there for one another,” McCallum said.

McCallum, a sociology professor at Middlebury College, joined the Weybridge Volunteer Fire Department in 2020 as he sought to play a bigger role in his community. Along with becoming a firefighter, he was elected to the school board the same year. Originally from Brooklyn, N.Y., McCallum moved to Addison County 13 years ago and has found much satisfaction from being

involved in the life of his community.

“I had never done anything similar before, nothing that involves emergency response. I’ve never had to go on a call while teaching, and I’ve never had much of an adventurous streak. I love going to the schools and doing fire safety trainings, and most of the time when I go on a call, I know the people calling,” he said.

For McCallum, serving the community came in the form of firefighting. For some, firefighting came as second nature.

Fellow Weybridge firefighter

Dylan Bougor and his wife, Lindsay Bougor, have been connected to this line of work for as long as they can remember.

Dylan’s great-grandfather Robert S. Warner was a founding member of the Weybridge Fire Department, and his stepfather, Rob Gaboriault, currently serves as chief of the department.

Lindsay’s grandfather Daniel Christian was a firefighter, and her father, John Christian, currently serves at the

(See *Volunteers*, Page 16)

“I grew up with it and was (firefighting) wherever I was. I was raised by firefighters and married a firefighter.”
— Lindsay Bougor



DYLAN AND LINDSAY Bougor dedicate a lot of their time outside work to serving their community on the Weybridge Volunteer Fire Department. Both grew up with family members involved in firefighting.

Independent photo/Alyana Santillana

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Fire departments welcome new members

By CAROLINE JIAO

ADDISON COUNTY — One of the many challenges fire departments face is member retention. The profession's demanding nature, coupled with factors such as long hours of required training, burnout, and the strain of balancing work with personal life has made it increasingly difficult for departments to recruit new members and keep the experienced ones.

Nonetheless, there were still a few who feel excited about joining local fire departments this year. For instance, volunteer fire departments in Cornwall and Starksboro each recently welcomed three new recruits. In an attempt to get to know these new members better, interviews were conducted with them to learn more about their decisions to devote to the local firefighting cause.

CORNWALL

Lauren Ringey and Bruce Koontz finished the Firefighter I Program in May through the Vermont Fire Academy and joined as firefighters. Mike Magluilo trained in Emergency Medical Services and became an EMT.

"I joined the fire department because I'm a semi-retired, stay-at-home dad, just moved to the community, maybe two years now. They had a need, and I had time, so I decided I would join, and it's been great. It's a great group of people," Koontz said.

For Magluilo, his interest is more directed to the medical aspect of emergency response, given that there is an equal need for EMS staff.

"My family and I moved to Cornwall about two years ago. (I) wanted to find a way to get involved, I like volunteering in an active way and not sitting around in meeting rooms, I like to do something active and hands-on," he said.

When asked about the challenges they face since their recent involvement

with the department, they offered various views.

"Mine is being a parent," Ringey said, who is now a mother of an 8-year-old son. "It's been very hard to have a kiddo and go do a fire call because my partner isn't always home, so then I miss a call. Sometimes that feels hard to know that I'm not able to respond."

She now works between 40 to 56 hours a week and simultaneously volunteers at the fire department.

"My challenge is just getting on scene before the veterans do. They are so fast," Koontz said.

"So fast!" Ringey added with a laugh.

"My biggest challenge is trying to fall back asleep after a midnight call," Magluilo said. "You come back pretty stimulated after the call. The call might last 20 to 30 minutes, but it might take me another hour and a half to fall asleep once I get home."

The work at the department, despite its strenuous requirements, has proved to be a worthwhile endeavor for the three.

"I do like to help people and work with people. You get that every day, multiple times a day, working as an EMT," Magluilo said.

"It was totally new to me, but it was a great program. I feel like I learned everything I needed to know to feel like I knew what I'm doing if I'm going into a dangerous situation. They trained us very well. It was a heavy time obligation, but it was definitely worth it. Very rewarding," Koontz said.

STARSBORO

The three freshly recruited firefighters at the Starksboro Fire Department include two brothers, Ian and Noah Roulat, as well as Sprague Huntington, who used to help in the department as an EMT.

For the brothers, who recently settled in Starksboro, volunteering at the local fire department is their way of honoring their family.

"I've been wanting to do this for a while. I have an uncle who was an EMT. That inspired me. This is kind of like my

way of honoring him. We were super close," Noah Roulat said. "I think it was just growing up and seeing how important that role of first responder in a small community is. That really intrigued me. And sort of like an ongoing connection we share, even if he's gone. He would be stoked to hear all the ways my brother Ian and I are helping in the community."

Huntington also traces her passion back to her childhood.

"My parents were EMTs when I was growing up, so I spent a lot of time as a kid at the training. It was near me," she said.

She had wanted to become a firefighter when she was in college in New Jersey,

(See Members Page 17)

"My biggest challenge is trying to fall back asleep after a midnight call. You come back pretty stimulated after the call. The call might last 20 to 30 minutes, but it might take me another hour and a half to fall asleep once I get home."

— Cornwall firefighter
Mike Magluilo

"You call for an extra hand, and this entire fire department shows up ... They're amazing. Those are people I know I could trust."

— Sprague Huntington,
Starksboro



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Our local volunteer firefighters are busy in so many ways. Shown, clockwise from top right: Participants in the Muster Games at Vermont State Firefighters Association annual meeting in Middlebury this past July crawl through several roadblocks carrying a dummy they have retrieved; Middlebury firefighters brave heavy smoke and sub-zero temperatures to extinguish a blaze in February 2023; a mixed team of Addison County firefighters passes buckets of water up to a ladder during the bucket brigade at the Muster Games; from high atop a ladder truck firefighters rain water down on a burning tractor-trailer unit hauling natural gas on Route 7 in Ferrisburgh on July 15; Amanda Doughty shows off her pride with a Shoreham Fire Department t-shirt; firefighters spray streams of water at a ball trying to get it over the goal line in their water polo match at the Muster Games; and a black helmet hanging on the wall of the Bridport Fire Station serves as a memorial to Bridport firefighter Luke Yustin, who died while serving in the U.S. Army.

Photos by Dylan Montagu, Holly Webber and John S. McCright



Volunteers

(Continued from Page 11)

Keeseville Fire Department in upstate New York, where he's served for 36 years.

"It's been like a second nature, I grew up with it and was in it wherever I was. I was raised by firefighters and married a firefighter. I have a lot of respect for the service and I always had," Lindsay said.

Lindsay, the treasurer for the Weybridge Fire Department, works at the registrar at Middlebury College, and Dylan works as a mechanic. Like their forebears, they have both dedicated much of their own lives to the service.

"I spend most of my time at the department, whenever Dylan's there, I am there. But I don't consider it dedicating time because I love what I do and want to do," Lindsay said.

While Lindsay can seamlessly weave her fire department duties into her daily schedule and career, it is trickier for Dylan.

"As a mechanic, I don't always have a lot of downtime, so I really don't have time for it until I have time for it," he said. "But it's something I've always done and wanted to do. It's been second nature for me as well. I've been going

out and being in the department since I was seven years old. The certification process was hard because it was 185 hours and a lot of training, but it was so worth it to know that you're part of something and helping the community."

The Bougors and McCallum share the sentiment that the Weybridge Fire Department is one that fosters a positive culture and is full of people who care deeply about their community.

"People that don't do this type of work might see it as a burden, but I see it differently. I see it as a real opportunity to be there for your neighbors because the community is there for us. I think most of the people in the department feel that way, and the community values fire service and we can certainly feel it," McCallum said.

For those that might not be able to dedicate time to being a firefighter, there is a plethora of other ways to be involved.

"There are so many ways to help, there are so many fundraisers and dinners and attending those makes a big difference," Lindsay Bougor said. "Just buying a plate of spaghetti means so much to us."

" believe in mutual aid and neighbors helping each other, in the absence of others to do it, communities should be there for one another."

– Weybridge firefighter
Jamie McCallum



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Allen M. Alger
Allen R. Alger Sr.
Bob Arnebold

Thomas Banard
Jesse Booska
Jim Booska
Max Carpenter

David Carpenter
Seth Gero
Louis Hall
Susan Hauck

Alex Kansky
Sandy Korda
Jess Krol
Scott Messer

Paul Metcalf, Chief
Jeremiah Nolan
Peter Ochs
Samuel St. Peter

A world record in firefighting gear

By ANDY KIRKALDY

MIDDLEBURY — When Emily Jones first came across one particular Guinness Book of World Record mark “on a weird day of scrolling through the internet,” she thought it was “goofy.”

But that perspective changed one Saturday in April 2023.

“Now it feels different,” an ecstatic Jones said while cooling off next to Middlebury College’s Dragone Track that Saturday. The Middlebury College senior and Middlebury Fire Department volunteer firefighter had just broken that record in front of about 120 friends, fellow firefighters and Panther water polo teammates.

What Jones accomplished was challenging indeed: She ran a mile — four laps around the oval track — wearing 60 pounds of firefighting turnout gear, all while breathing through a respirator.

She did so in 8 minutes and 25 seconds, a full 2 minutes and 35 seconds faster than the previous Guinness world record of 11:00 for a female runner.

To put that in perspective, that gear weighed more than half of Jones’s own body mass, and she lugged it with a limited air supply.

“I would love to see someone break the record so I would have an excuse to come out here and do all this again,” Jones said after the run. “It was really fun.”



MIDDLEBURY COLLEGE SENIOR and volunteer firefighter Emily Jones attempts to set a world record for running a mile in full firefighter turnout gear last year.
Independent photo/John S. McCright

Members

(Continued from Page 13)

but the department didn’t take women at the time.

“I wish I could’ve started this process (of firefighter training) 30 years ago, but I’m doing it while I can,” she said.

When asked about the reasons for their desire to join as volunteers, the unanimous answer is to help and give back to their community.

“I know that I want to stay and help out for as long as I can,” Ian Roulat said.

“I found it (the community in Starksboro) incredibly strong. It’s cool to get to know people who are deeply established here,” Noah Roulat said. “I plan on being here on the fire department for as long as possible. It’s my way of volunteering for the community and giving back.”

Huntington echoed that sentiment.

“As an EMT, you call for an extra hand, and this entire fire department shows up, and they stand there quietly and wait for you to be like ‘I need you now doing this.’ They’re amazing. Those are people I know I could trust,” Huntington said.

Work in emergency response can be emotionally demanding, and it’s important to have a substantial support

system within the department.

“We joke around, but it’s also serious. We see bad things, and we help each other get on with it. You have to really trust the people you work with,” Huntington said. “There will always be a call that sticks with you. You just need to learn to talk to people about it. And these are people I know I can talk to. There is a lot of openness about mental health. I like them. They’re good people.”

Looking forward to their volunteering career, they each had a few words to say.

“I just want to do the best job I can, while not putting anyone at risk,” Huntington said.

“I want to stay humble to the fact that this is very new for me, and I know some of the things I will interact with and see are, to put it lightly, heavy, Ian Roulat said. “So a lot of it has been just mentally preparing myself and talking to people with experience of how to cope with things.”

Noah Roulat summed up:

“It’s a special brotherhood, and I’d say of our chief, Tom Estey, he’s a legend in the town and the state, and it’s a huge honor to be in his department and get to learn from him.”



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Levi Doria
Ross Elliot
Erik Eriksen

Baxter Harrington
Jay Harrington
Jack Hoyler
John Hughes Jr.
Alison Joseph

Marty Kulczyk
Chris Lacey
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Wendy Leeds
Erica Mathis

Will Mathis
Tomas McElhaney
Laura McIntosh
Mark Nelson
Reid Peck

Chris Pike, Chief
Colvin Pike
Elias Pike
Zoe Pike
Irene Poole

Chris Roche
Gary Smith
Graeham Zieger
Jim Zieger



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Nicole Hamer
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Jason Paquette
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Chris Stearns
Tristan Stearns
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Bob Warren
Jesse Wing
Dick Treadway
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Starksboro Fire Department

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Eric Cota
Norman Cota
Will Elwell

Matt Estey
Tom Estey, Chief
Shawn Euber
Sprague Huntington

Dan Kuzio
Ryan Lathbury
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 Matt Fraley, Dep. Chief
 Liam Casey, Capt.
 Peter McDurfee, Capt.
 Steven Sickles, Capt.
 Keegan Sullivan, Capt.

KC Ambrose
 Jack Badger
 Bill Brown
 Robert Burbo
 Les Champine
 Kevin Charbonneau
 Jackson Coffey

Mike Colette
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 Chris Dion
 Caleb Dion
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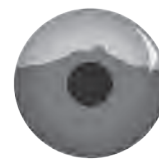
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Vergennes Fire Department

Cammack

(Continued from Page 8)

and become a LEGO designer at one point. But ever since he started volunteering with the Ripton Fire Department last year, his interest has greatly shifted and anchored in fire rescue.

“It’s something new for me,” he said.

George bikes four miles up and down the hill to go to the fire department every Tuesday. The demanding ride isn’t a barrier for him at all though. With the department, he got training in wearing protective fire gear and helped with a few traffic control jobs.

“He’s more willing to help in the fire department than at home,” Jaime teased.

LEARNING ABOUT FIRE

This year’s training at the Fire Cadet Academy taught George a lot. He especially enjoyed the course about hazardous materials, in which he learned more about sources of danger in a fire scene other than the flames themselves. The fact that burnt material and even the fire gear itself could cause cancer is new and informative to him.

“Firefighters don’t just respond to house fires and kittens in trees. They respond to almost everything that’s not a crime scene,” George said.

What he learned from the academy, he enthusiastically shared with the family. Jaime feels glad that they are now able to consider the career from a new perspective.

“I don’t think many people think about how dangerous firefighting is from a health standpoint. Usually it’s ‘Are you going to make it out of the burning building.’ Well, once you make it out of the burning building, how many cancer agents have you been exposed to, and how serious is that going to be in the long term,” she said.

In classes, George said they were trained to identify types of material in trucks by looking at their plate. They also learned the necessary skills to react to emergencies involving truck accidents and spillage.

“I never really thought about that being part of firefighting. But HazMat teams don’t really get there until 45 minutes or a couple of hours after the incident first happens, and so firefighters are the first people who get there and do the most,”



THE CAMMACK FAMILY celebrates George’s graduation from the Fire Cadet Academy in mid-July. Pictured, from left, are (front row) Corbin, Francis, Adelaide, George and Genevieve Cammack; and (back row) George’s mother Jaime, father Chris and grandmother Janetha.

Photo courtesy of George Cammack

George said.

His physical strength has also improved in the course of training, especially with wearing the turn-out gear and the self-contained breathing apparatus, which he hasn’t worn more than twice volunteering in the fire department prior to attending the academy.

“Everything is just heavy,” he said.

Having visited various professional fire departments in cities like Burlington and Rutland through the academy’s program, George is seriously considering his next steps in making firefighting his career.

“I can definitely see myself using the deluge gun,” he said proudly.

Jaime expresses her worry as a mother, watching her child grow up pursue his

dreams.

“On the one hand that’s fantastic because that means he doesn’t have to move to Europe, on the other hand that’s terrifying because he wants to be a professional firefighter,” she said.

“A professional running into a burning building person,” George added with a smile.



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Local firefighters rescue flood survivors two years running

By JOHN FLOWERS & ANDY KIRKALDY

VERMONT — Boats, dry suits and ropes are not the first things one thinks of when the topic of fire departments comes up.

But four Addison County fire departments now own boats.

Two departments, Middlebury and Vergennes, have Technical Rescue Teams trained to do both swift-water and mountain rescues — and they have put their swift-water training to use over the past two summers.

Addison and Ferrisburgh — each with extensive frontage on Lake Champlain — have the equipment and training to do water and ice rescues.

For the second year in a row, firefighters from Vergennes, Ferrisburgh and Middlebury who were specially trained in water rescues took their boats to Central Vermont and put their skills to good work.

In the wake of heavy rains and dangerous flooding, on this past July 11 emergency management officials called on Addison County crews to help out in some of the hardest-hit areas of Vermont.

Vergennes Fire Chief Dave DiBiase

said the city fire department sent the eight members of its technical rescue team, two from the Ferrisburgh Fire Department and the Vergennes's year-old technical rescue boat to help out. The team swung into action in Waterbury, Bolton and Richmond — all of which were hit by flooding from the Winooski River and other streams.

They successfully rescued 13 individuals, three dogs, a cat and two parrots, DiBiase reported.

“I can’t say enough about the level of professionalism and durability of the team in the actions that took place overnight,” he said in an email to the rest of the squad and to city officials. “As you all have seen, the devastation was immense and we were in the heart of it.”

The Vergennes and Ferrisburgh first responders stayed on the scene in the Winooski Valley until Friday morning.

DiBiase thanked city residents and department members for funding and promoting the technical rescue unit, calling out the other firefighters for keeping the Vergennes area safe from fires while the rescue folks were away doing their job.

“This was also the first time the team operated independently of Middlebury



MIDDLEBURY FIRE CHIEF David Shaw is shown in 2023 sitting in one of the town's two Technical Rescue Team boats.

Independent file photo/Steve James

at this level and exceeded any of expectations,” DiBiase wrote. “So, I thank both the team and the rest of the department for making our department so amazing.”

Meanwhile, during the same flooding emergency, Middlebury’s fire department was enlisted to provide swift-water rescue services and welfare checks in hard-hit Central Vermont, where the Winooski River jumped its banks and wreaked havoc in some residential and commercial areas.

Middlebury Fire Chief David Shaw said his department’s Water Rescue Division took to the water, primarily checking on flood-ravaged buildings in Moretown, Waterbury, Montpelier, Richmond and other area communities to make sure they were empty.

Fortunately, Shaw’s team didn’t encounter anyone in a life-threatening situation during their full day in Central Vermont.

2ND SUMMER OF RESCUES

The Middlebury and Vergennes tech teams have a history of cooperation, and floods in the summer of 2023 tested their abilities. In early July last year, Middlebury and Vergennes firefighters traveled together to Central Vermont with Middlebury’s two rescue boats to help in Berlin and Montpelier. On Aug. 3 members of the city and Stowe tech teams helped when a thunderstorm dumped up to six inches of rain that flooded Middlebury.

Vergennes Captain Liam Casey and Middlebury Chief David Shaw described what happened in Berlin and Montpelier.

Casey, a 13-year veteran, said the county firefighters traveled together with Middlebury’s boats to the Berlin fire station. Their first task was to check a trailer park with a local guide.

“The water was all in the trailer park ... It was probably just below the trailer doors,” Casey recalled. “It was moving at a fairly decent pace.”

They had heard everyone was out, but found an elderly woman and her cat. Casey said she didn’t want to leave, but firefighters convinced her to do so, using one of Middlebury’s boats.

“We work very closely with them,” Casey said. “They’re great partners.”

Next the team helped a man stranded in a car. Casey said they “had to cross some water, and ... walk almost a mile and a quarter (along the roadway) to get to him.”

The team used a boat to ferry him across two waterways to bring him back to safety, and then along with the woman to the fire station.

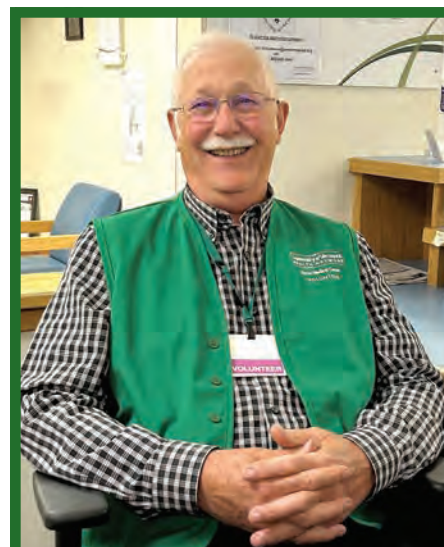
Then the team set off to try to evacuate victims in a home on State Street in downtown Montpelier. Shaw said the mission was “dicey,” and he didn’t want the team to become part of the problem rather than the solution.

“You still have to think safety for your crew,” he said.



VERGENNES FIREFIGHTERS AND Technical Rescue Team members — shown here, from left, are Steve Sickles, Liam Casey and Ben LaFlam — worked with Middlebury’s tech rescue team to make two rescues during flooding in Berlin in the summer of 2023. Vergennes Technical Rescue returned to Central Vermont in 2024.

Independent file photo/Andy Kirkaldy



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