



Artsapalooza

The year 2025 saw a cornucopia of performing and decorative arts enriching our lives. Arts +Leisure.



Tigers ice RHS

The girls' hockey team fired 63 shots on goal in a home victory on Saturday. See Sports, Page 1B.



'The Bar'

A local powerlifter opens a new, round-the-clock gym for serious pumping iron. See Page 2A.

ADDISON COUNTY INDEPENDENT

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Give me a Hallelujah

MORE THAN A HUNDRED singers and instrumentalists kicked off the week of Christmas by joining together at the Congregational Church of Middlebury on Sunday afternoon to perform the "The Messiah," a 1741 musical composition by George Frederic Handel. Jeff Rehbach, who started the 40-year-old tradition, conducted the moving work that perfectly set the tone for this joyous season. Among those taking part is Louise Whelan-Wright, below left in Santa hat, belting out the famous Hallelujah Chorus.

Independent photos/Steve James



Group pitches plan for growing Vermont

Midd. board hears vision for the future

By JOHN FLOWERS

MIDDLEBURY — Middlebury during the next few years will see an infusion of more than 200 new housing units, if the scheduled buildout of the Stonecrop Meadows subdivision off Seminary Street Extension runs its full course.

But the town, Addison County and state of Vermont will need to build more — a lot more — for the state to revitalize and grow its population at a rate that will sustain true economic growth.

That's a major takeaway from a new economic action plan offered by the Vermont Futures Project (VFP), an independent, non-partisan organization with

a mission of "providing a vision that supports and encourages long-term economic growth for Vermont, providing data and recommendations to achieve this goal," according to its website.

Middlebury College alum Kevin Chu is executive director of the VFP, and he recently presented the organization's findings and recommendations to an attentive Middlebury selectboard that has placed "workforce housing development" at — or at least near — the top of its policy priority list.

The *Independent* first reported on the VFP and its mission in September of 2024. The (See *Vermont housing*, Page 7A)

Middlebury OKs new apartment building

By JOHN FLOWERS

MIDDLEBURY — The Middlebury Development Review Board (DRB) has approved a 35-unit, four-story apartment building — that will also host a restaurant — on a 0.71-acre lot near the intersection of Middle Road and Route 7 South.

The DRB approved the project by a 4-1 margin on Dec. 8. Barring any appeals, the developer — Pennsylvania-based attorney Phil Rosenzweig — plans to take the building to construction next

fall, with an estimated 15-month timeline for completion, he told the *Independent*.

"I am very pleased by the DRB's approval of my plan for the multifamily apartment and mixed-use building at the corner of Route 7/Court St. and Middle Road," he said in an email. "I am also gratified by the speakers/residents/citizens who spoke so well in favor of the plan and by those who wrote letters of support. I am also grateful for the leaders of the wonderful town (See *Middle Road*, Page 8A)

Bristol gets new teen center head

Verner brings a diverse résumé

By MARIN HOWELL

BRISTOL — Dylan Verner is something of a jack of all trades.

The Bristol resident is a musician, an artist, a fly-fishing guide and a chef, among the other skills he's developed through the years.

Verner will bring that diverse resume into his new role as

director of the Bristol Hub Teen Center and Skatepark. He succeeds Taylor Welch-Plante, who has served as director of the Hub since 2019 and will step down from the position next month.

"I want to be involved in my kids' lives, I want to make sure that I'm participating in the community that surrounds me, and having grown up in communities that really embraced me and my friends, I can only want to offer that to our future, to

our posterity," Verner said of what interested in him the role.

Verner's journey to the teen center in some ways began in Portland, Maine, where he attended the Maine College of Art & Design.

"I had a diverse background with arts to begin with going into art school, but I ended up getting into metalsmithing and jewelry, which opened up a whole new realm of fine arts to me," he recalled. "To get really focused (See *Verner*, Page 20A)

Ferrisburgh selectboard chair to step away

By ANDY KIRKALDY

FERRISBURGH — Ferrisburgh Selectboard Chair Clark Hinsdale has announced to his fellow board members and other town officials he won't seek reelection this March.

Hinsdale told the *Independent* he wanted to get the word out publicly to give prospective candidates ample time to consider running. Petitions for elective office are due at town offices at 5 p.m. on Monday, Jan. 26, and must be signed by at least 1% of the town's checklist, a requirement that equals 25 voters.

Longtime board member Jim Benoit's term also expires on Town Meeting Day in March. Benoit confirmed in an email to the *Independent* he intends to



HINSDALE

seek reelection.

Hinsdale has served on the selectboard since 2019, the past three as its chair. He served the Ferrisburgh Zoning Board for two years before running for the selectboard. Although his family has always had strong ties with Ferrisburgh, he lived for many years in Charlotte, where he served three years on its selectboard, two years on its zoning board, and also stints on its recreation and town plan review committees.

Hinsdale has a long history of public service. He has also chaired the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission; served on the Governor's Affordable Housing, On-Site Septic, (See *Hinsdale*, Page 8A)



By the way

Middlebury Union middle and high schools in November held some of the friendliest competitions you'll ever hear about. From Nov. 10-23, students in the two schools vied on who could gather the most food for Helping Overcome Poverty's Effects (HOPE), the Middlebury nonprofit that helps folks in need of nourishment, clothing and (See *By the way*, Page 7A)

Chronology 2025 - A Year In Review

Trump, infrastructure, schools made headlines

Editor's note: No matter what the year ahead will hold, it is a comfort when we note the first baby of the year born in Addison County. And after tiny Raigan Sanborn came into this world at Porter Hospital almost a year ago, we saw a lot of change — some bad, some good. The new federal government did not always bring welcome

change, nor did the weather, which was its usual unpredictable self. While there were many difficult conversations around the schools, there was plenty of good stuff, too. And look at all the buildings going up!

Take a look at our recap of the 12 months ending, then dive into 2026!

pounds, 5 ounces.

The start of 2025 saw area homeless shelters full, with waiting lists. Service providers said that most of the former Bakery Lane encampment residents, which Middlebury officials cleared in December 2024, were able to secure some kind of housing, though several continued to survive outdoors amidst cold temperatures. Advocates said that in 2024 there (See *Chronology*, Page 9A)



January 2, 2025

THE ARRIVAL OF winter weather with several inches of fresh snow on the solstice ushered in a week of good ski weather at the Rikert Outdoor Center in Ripton. Here some Nordic skiers glide across the field off Route 125 on some well-used trails late last week. After a warm front moved in, temps are forecast to drop below freezing late this week.

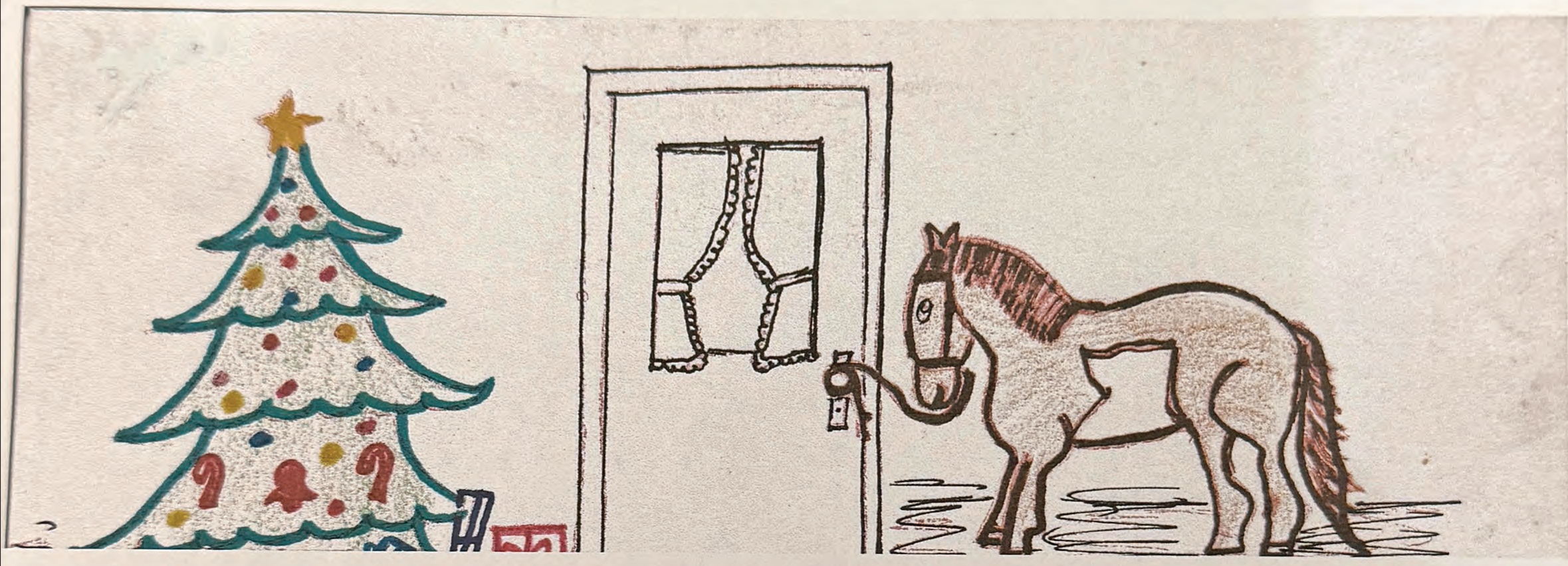
Independent file photo/Angelo Lynn

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FIFTY YEARS AFTER Marjorie Fitts Bennett and her sisters were greeted on Christmas morning by a pony in their New Haven house, she drew this picture of her recollection.

Children found a pony in the living room on Christmas morning

Editor's note: Tracy Longchamp shared this family Christmas story. It is a recollection written in the 1970s by her great-aunt Marjorie Fitts Bennett, who grew up in New Haven (where this story takes place) and was a 3rd-grade teacher at Beeman School for about 40 years.
By MARJORIE FITTS BENNETT
The Christmas season with its sparkle, glows and expectations is a delight to the young and the old, but in different ways. To the young it is an exciting time of surprises, secrets and looking forward to new things. To older

people it is more often a time of reflection and fond memories. Many memorable Christmases are vivid in my thoughts but none as much as this story I'd like to share.
The year was 1922. My parents, grandparents, two sisters and I lived on the family farm in New Haven. We girls had a very happy childhood. We lived in a home where we were loved and felt wanted — a very close family in every way.
There was always much to do in a farm home and especially so before Christmas. There was hustle and bustle in our kitchen making all kinds of goodies to

pack in boxes for our friends and neighbors. Mother was very creative and made many Christmas gifts and decorations to make our house festive for the holiday season. A few days before Christmas, Father and Grandfather had made an unusual purchase for the girls' Christmas. "The purchase" was put in a box stall in the horse barn.
After supper each night Father

put on his coat, hat, boots, and lighted a lantern. With a twinkle in his eyes he said he was going to the barn to feed the goat. Though we had never owned a goat I don't recall questioning him about it.
Christmas morning came at last! We girls hurried downstairs to the living room to see what was under the Christmas tree. Just imagine our great surprise to find Daisy — a real, live, brown and white pony

tied to the living room door knob! Each of us, in turn, was lifted onto her back, thrilled at the feel of her long hairy coat as she stood contentedly, probably sizing up her new owners.
The beams of pleasure on all faces were evidence of joy and happy hearts — parents and grandparents who had made this special gift and the children who received this pet to enjoy for many years.
"Santa delivered Daisy right down the chimney," said Father, "and just look at the dents in the stovepipe where she jammed it with her hoofs."
My sisters and I studied that

stovepipe for a long time and retold the story often to guests in our home.
Daisy became a neighborhood legend. We shared our beloved pony with all our friends. We took her to fairs, 4-H Club meetings, and she and I even made an unscheduled visit to our parlor where a group of ladies was tying a quilt. The ladies were quite aghast and the visit was short.
Many years have passed since December 25, 1922. Only my sisters and I are left of that happy gathering in our living room, but I still get a thrill as I relive that special Christmas of treasured memories!



JIM WELLS HAS launched a new, round-the-clock gym on Middlebury's Exchange Street that caters in particular to people with a penchant for pumping iron.

Independent photo/John Flowers

New Middlebury business serves up weights

By JOHN FLOWERS
MIDDLEBURY — Jimmy Wells is strong. Really strong.
In fact, Wells, the head chef at Middlebury's Mister Ups Restaurant, doesn't need help with a beer keg delivery. He carries it in on his shoulder.
No big deal for Wells, who has packed on copious amounts of muscle as a champion powerlifter, a sport he practices — and competes in — when he isn't cooking up a storm in the Mister Ups kitchen.
He's always enjoyed his culinary role but has kept — on the back burner — the dream of opening his own gym.
It's a dream that came true on Dec. 15, with the opening of The Bar, a new gym at 656 Exchange St., Middlebury, that's stuffed with free weights, an assortment of lifting and cardio machines, and even a huge tractor tire for those who prefer the Paul Bunyon approach to getting jacked.
A lot of gyms have weights, but Wells believes The Bar will stand out — mainly because members can use the facility at any time of the day, 365 days of the year. Members are given an access code.
Wells, 31, is a member of the Middlebury Union High School class of 2013. He began at Mister Ups as a dishwasher around 15 years ago, working his way up to chef.

If cooking has been the main course of his professional life, fitness has been the side dish. He was a member of the MUHS wrestling team, which led to a three-year foray into cage fighting (ouch).
"I decided I enjoyed weightlifting a lot more," he admitted with a smile.
He's worked weightlifting into his daily routine since high school. Then, around a dozen years ago, he found specific niche in that realm: powerlifting. Powerlifting is a strength sport that sees competitors in various weight classes lift the most that they can in three specific barbell exercises: the squat, bench press and deadlift.
For Wells, powerlifting hasn't been a pastime. He's been all-in. Wells last year won the silver medal in his 165-pound class as a member of Team USA in the powerlifting world championships held in Greece. That was after having won the national title (also at 165) at last year's U.S. Powerlifting championships in New York.
His personal bests: a 562-pound squat, 396.8-pound bench press and 595.2-pound deadlift.
Wells has gained muscle and friends along the way, and many of them have shared his love of lifting. He's met a lot of folks in area weight rooms and as a personal trainer. And Wells's star within the lifting and fitness communities has shone brighter since he took home the silver medal from Greece.
"Popularity kind of picked up with the recognition I received going out with Team USA. The community was really excited about it," he said. "I figured... this would be the best chance I have to draw people into the sport (of powerlifting)."
So, back in February, Wells decided to put into motion his long-held goal of running his own gym.
When it looked like a business startup might be beyond his financial reach, the Addison County Economic Development Corp. helped him secure a small loan through the Vermont Economic Development Authority.
Wells scanned the Middlebury area for a spot in which to install The Bar. He saw great promise in a spot at 656 Exchange St. that most recently hosted Fastenal. When Wells said the 5,000 square feet was a lot more than he needed, building owner Tony Neri cut it in half with a partition, thereby creating a rightsized 2,500 square feet for the new enterprise.
Wells sourced all The Bar's weights and workout machines from around the Northeast and neighboring New York state. You'll

find dumbbells ranging from 10 to 130 pounds, multiple bench and squat racks, and an assortment of lifting machines. There's a Viking overhead press, a pendulum squat machine, a hip-thrust machine and an income press machine, to mention a few.
For cardio, you'll find two treadmills, a stationary bike, an elliptical machine and a rower.
While Wells will continue his Mister Ups duties, he'll be spending copious off-hours at The Bar, at which he'll be available for pointers and personal training consults.
"Technique and injury prevention is big. That's what I'm trying to push. Introduce (clients) to all aspects of the sport, as opposed to just lifting heavy."
— Jimmy Wells
Introduce (clients) to all aspects of the sport, as opposed to just lifting heavy," he said, referring in particular to younger folks who might be tempted to bite off more than they can chew.
Ultimately, Wells believes his enthusiasm and The Bar can get more Addison County folks into fitness and powerlifting. He noted some states have powerlifting teams at the high school and collegiate levels and hopes Vermont — and Addison County — will someday
(See The Bar, Page 6A)



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Lincoln School District expects 2% rise in spending

By MARIN HOWELL

LINCOLN — A community conversation hosted by the Lincoln School District last week offered residents a chance to hear updates on the learning community’s students, facilities and proposed spending plan for the upcoming fiscal year.

During the Dec. 15 gathering, district officials presented a fiscal year 2027 draft budget that reflects \$5,285,163 in expenses, up 2.05% from the current year. According to the presentation, the district is currently expecting a slight increase in the homestead tax rate for FY’27, with that rate projected to land somewhere between \$1.09-\$1.15 per \$100 of assessed property value after the Common Level of Appraisal adjustment is applied.

Though, school officials noted the tax rate is calculated using state data that’s not yet finalized.

“We hope it’s lower, but that’s where we think it might land,” Lincoln School Board Chair Jeanne Albert said.

District officials kicked off the conversation with an update on the district’s students and facilities. The Lincoln School District educates preK-12 students in the mountain town and operates the Lincoln Community School (LCS).

The Dec. 15 presentation noted the district is anticipating a dip in total enrollment in the next few years, “with a shift to increasing enrollment at K-6 (LCS) and decreasing enrollment in grades 7-12, followed by a projected increase.” The district currently serves 173 K-12 students, according to the presentation, and enrollment for the upcoming school year is projected to total 166.

“This does not include we average somewhere between 23 and 26 preschool students a year,”

Superintendent Amy Cole said. District officials reviewed facilities projects that have been completed since the school district began operations in 2023, several of which have been funded through grants. Those projects include replacing the school’s multipurpose room floor, repairing its playground structure and adding Wi-Fi outside the school building for improved 911 calling. Other projects funded through the district’s operating budget in recent years include repairing doors and locks, replacing flooring in the school’s office and tile hallways, and repairing its greenhouse.

The presentation also highlighted some planned facilities projects, including repaving the parking lot as well as repairing/replacing the concrete steps and ramp.

“That’s one of our biggest expenses we’re going to be looking at in the next couple of years,” Cole said.

FY’27 BUDGET FIGURES

Cole noted the proposed FY’27 spending plan is a level programming budget, meaning there will be no significant changes to programming next year. The presentation pointed to several other budget priorities that helped shape the spending plan, such as a shift to LSD cooking all of its own meals and a commitment to wellness and sustainability.

The presentation noted that regular education makes up about 62% of the \$5.285 million in general budget expenses expected for FY’27. That category includes

K-6 education at LCS, 7-12 grade tuition, tech center tuition and Universal PreK tuition.

“Regular education makes up the bulk of our budget, as it always does,” Cole said.

District officials noted general expenses for the upcoming fiscal year factor in an anticipated reduction in grades 7-12 tuition due to lower enrollment projections, an increase in tech center tuition and an increase in fuel costs.

The district is anticipating \$825,544 in non-tax revenue, an increase of 11.89% over the current year. Cole noted that district officials are continuing to get a better sense of what revenues they can expect to receive each year.

“(Accounting & Budget Manager Brittany Gilman)’s advice is that really it takes five years to kind of understand what it costs to run a district and to run a school, and also to know what those revenues are that are coming in,” she explained. “We have benefitted for the last few years having more revenue than we expected, but as you can imagine you’re cautious when you’re building a budget around that.”

According to the presentation, education spending (total expenses minus revenue) is expected to rise 0.41% to \$4,459,619. District officials’ current estimate for per pupil spending in FY’27 is \$13,510, an increase of 0.41%.

District officials also pointed to a prior year surplus of \$100,000.

“We ended the year with a smaller surplus than two years ago, but the board is contemplating going to the voters and asking for permission to put \$100,000 back towards reducing taxes,” Cole said.

The Lincoln School Board will look to adopt an FY’27 budget proposal next month.

“It takes five years to kind of understand what it costs to run a district and to run a school, and also to know what those revenues are that are coming in.”
— Superintendent Amy Cole

“We have benefitted for the last few years having more revenue than we expected, but as you can imagine you’re cautious when you’re building a budget around that.”
— Superintendent Amy Cole



Shortest day

COMMUNITY MEMBERS GATHERED this past Sunday at Middlebury’s Town Hall Theater for “Solstice in the Shire,” a celebration of the winter solstice. The occasion made the most of the shortest day of the year with a variety of activities that included dancing, above, and creating popcorn garlands and edible ornaments to adorn an evergreen tree in the Maloney Plaza, below. Sunday’s event also featured holiday treats and an interactive performance of solstice stories.

Independent photos/Steve James



Lincoln, VT Homeowner Recommends Bristol Electronics



Phase I - 2014

For a long time I had been thinking of going solar, but had not pursued it until I talked with a neighbor who just had hers installed. I contracted with her installer and soon had panels on the roof that supplied all of my household electricity, with some extra capacity to supply an on-demand electric water heater I soon put in. I loved not hearing the propane boiler firing up in the summer to keep domestic water hot for the shower I'd be taking 16 hours later. Thrilled with the installation and not having an electric bill. I even splurged and bought my first ever noisy window A/C.

Phase II - 2016

While my primary heat source has been a woodstove and later a pellet stove, the propane boiler served as my backup. On a December road trip to PEI, I discovered the 25+ year old propane boiler died on me. I'm lucky to have had a monitoring system to notice this and awesome neighbors to feed pellets until I got back. Rather than buy another fossil fuel burning device, I decided to have heat pumps installed. At the time Bristol Electronics didn't install those, but they were very competitive as I shopped around for additional solar capacity. So in February 2016 they were on the roof installing panels that would provide enough electricity year round to supply my heating needs. And, since the heat pump also cools the house quietly on the hottest days, I sold the window unit. Maybe I'm just getting older, but there seems to be more and more of those hot days.

Phase III - 2019

Since I commute from So. Lincoln to Burlington, I've always felt guilty about all of the CO2 I've been emitting to get to work. I still have 7-10 years before I can even think about retiring, so I decided to make the investment and buy an electric car. And part of that investment was to buy the additional solar capacity to power it. I didn't think twice about having Bristol Electronics do it. My roof was running out of space, and since it has a low pitch, snow coverage was a issue for the last two years. This time I worked with Chris, Stephen, Dave and Trevor to have a ground mount installed that will be easy to clear the snow off of. They did amazing work, despite weather issues, and were actually able to make some long overdue landscaping improvements during the process. I couldn't be happier with my experience with this team!

~ Paul Webb, Lincoln, VT





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Editorial

Yes, Virginia...

Editor’s note: An editorial about the credibility of Santa Claus appeared more than 100 years ago in The New York Sun. It was written by Francis Pharcellus Church, an assistant to the paper’s editor. A true Christmas classic, it has outlived its writer, the recipient, and the newspaper that gave it life. Its most famous phrases are often recalled and sometimes parodied. Here we reprint the famous letter and response, partly in the hopes that parents will take the time to read it aloud to children of appropriate ages and for all to reflect on the less commercial aspects of this holiday season.

We take pleasure in answering at once and thus prominently the communication below, expressing at the same time our great gratification that its faithful author is numbered among the friends of *The Sun*:

Dear Editor:
I am 8 years old. Some of my little friends say there is no Santa Claus. Papa says, “If you see it in The Sun, it’s so.” Please tell me the truth, is there a Santa Claus?
Virginia Hanlon
115 West 95th Street

Virginia, your little friends are wrong. They have been affected by the skepticism of a skeptical age. They do not believe except what they see. They think that nothing can be which is not comprehensible by their little minds. All minds, Virginia, whether they be men’s or children’s, are little. In this great universe of ours man is a mere insect, an ant, in his intellect, as compared with the boundless world around him, as measured by the intelligence capable of grasping the whole truth and knowledge.

Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus. He exists as certainly as love and generosity and devotion exist, and you know that they abound and give to your life its highest beauty and joy. Alas! how dreary would be the world if there were no Santa Claus! It would be as dreary as if there were no Virginias. There would be no childlike faith then, no poetry, no romance to make tolerable this existence. We should have no enjoyment, except in sense and sight. The eternal light with which childhood fills the world would be extinguished.

Not believe in Santa Claus! You might as well not believe in fairies! You might get your papa to hire men to watch in all the chimneys on Christmas Eve to catch Santa Claus, but even if they did not see Santa Claus coming down, what would that prove? Nobody sees Santa Claus, but that is no sign that there is no Santa Claus. The most real things in the world are those that neither children nor men can see. Did you ever see fairies dancing on the lawn? Of course not, but that’s no proof that they are not there. Nobody can conceive or imagine all the wonders there are unseen and unseeable in the world.

You tear apart the baby’s rattle and see what makes noise inside, but there is a veil covering the unseen world which not the strongest man, not even the united strength of all the strongest men that ever lived could tear apart. Only faith, fancy, poetry, love, romance can push aside that curtain and view and picture the supernal beauty and glory beyond. Is it all real? Ah, Virginia, in all this world there is nothing else real and abiding.

No Santa Claus! Thank God he lives, and he lives forever. A thousand years from now, Virginia, nay ten times ten thousand years from now, he will continue to make glad the heart of childhood.

Merry Christmas
and Happy
Holidays
to all,
from all of us
at the
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Holiday spirit
TENLYN WETZEL OF Ripton looks pleased with the decoration she created with apples, popcorn and cranberries to hang on the Christmas tree at Middlebury’s Town Hall Theater during this past Sunday’s solstice celebration.

Independent photo/Steve James

In tough times, togetherness helps

By the time you are reading these words, we will have passed the Winter Solstice, and maybe, just maybe, we might be able to sense the days beginning to lengthen. Most likely, winter’s coldest days are still ahead, and the nights are still very, very long.

Alongside winter’s bleakness we have also been contending with dreadful events on the national and global scale. The first night of Chanukah was scarred by an antisemitic shooting that killed 15 people and wounded many others. Beloved director Rob Reiner and his wife Michele were murdered by their own son, whose decades-long struggle with addiction had brought him in and out of rehab and homelessness throughout his life. Drug overdose is the leading cause of death for Americans between 18 and 45 years old. It’s hard out here, and recent data tells us that 50 million Americans are contending with substance use disorder. That’s one in seven of us!

As a yoga teacher, my main job is to remind myself and my students that no matter how dark it gets in the world, there is a bright light inside of each of us. When we explore the practice of yoga, we learn to move our body with mindfulness, and to perceive our breath with great sensitivity. The self-awareness that we cultivate is a pathway to connect with our own inner light. What I love about yoga, at least the way my teachers shared it with me, is that yoga doesn’t ask you to accept anything on faith. There is no dogma you are asked to believe. Yoga just says, “Try this, and see if it’s true for you.”

While I am not a mental health professional, or an expert in addiction and recovery, simple math means that of the hundreds of people who take classes at our yoga studio each month, some are surely struggling with substance use. When we are in pain, when we feel lonely,

disconnected, or alienated, it’s the most natural thing in the world to want to feel better. Can we train ourselves to seek out remedies that connect us to other humans and the natural world? Can we seek to address the root causes of our pain, instead of reaching for something that will numb us out?

The day after the 2024 election, a singer who grew up here, Abigail Bengson, shared a song called “Don’t

Ways of Seeing

By Joanna Colwell

Numb to This.” It was the medicine I needed on a hard day, in a hard month, in a hard year. I shared it with my students, and we all sang it together at the end of class.

Don’t numb to this, don’t numb it out
Let it all flow in and out
You’re strong enough to feel it all

And keep your heart alive

Stay soft to this, don’t numb it out
Let yourself breathe in and out
You’re strong enough to feel it all
And keep your heart alive

We don’t know what the days ahead will bring, but as surely as the sun will rise in the east each morning, we will continue to need each other. If we practice showing up for each other every day, we can all take turns falling apart! Let’s help one another stay open, let’s be brave enough to be vulnerable and reach out for help when we need it.

Joanna Colwell is the founder of Otter Creek Yoga and the Yoga Equity Project, in Middlebury’s Marble Works district. She is a proud member of Jewish Voice for Peace and the L’Chaim Collective. Joanna lives in Ripton.

Songs can pierce the darkness

4th in a series of 4

A cherished aspect of this season for me has always been its songs. The hymnal of our family’s Baptist church included four-part harmonies for a rich compendium of Latin, Welsh, Wesleyan and Appalachian tunes. Everyone rose to belt them out, and I delighted in contributing to our own little quartet. My father had a rich bass voice and from junior high on my older brother Lyn could more than hold his own as a tenor. Though my mother Lois was less confident as a singer, in church she felt free to lift her voice into the mix. I delighted in pairing my alto lines with her sweet soprano. When December arrived our congregation turned to the classic Christmas songs with gusto. I loved them all, but “Hark, the Herald Angels Sing,” with the satisfaction of its stately harmonies, was a special favorite.

Here in Vermont, 70 years after those indelible experiences from boyhood in Louisiana and California, the drama of Advent and the Winter Solstice is deepened by the long northern nights. The sense of profound darkness is intensified by the candles on our kitchen table and the stars that feel so piercing when I stroll around the neighborhood before bed. At such

moments “the dark, too, blooms and sings.” That line from Wendell Berry’s poem “To Know the Dark” is, like all those beloved Christmas hymns, in the key of hope.

The other songs I especially loved singing as a boy were the patriotic ones. In order to prepare for the Fourth of July we learned these in school. Our teachers at Marin Elementary in Albany, Calif., passed out the mimeographed verses for songs like “America” and “America the Beautiful” and we rose to practice them together. I remember relishing this element of Mrs. Samson’s fourth-grade class, another stirring aspect of which was carving the California Mission of one’s choice out of a bar of Ivory Soap. As the oak floor became increasingly slippery from the flakes of soap covering it a hilarious sudsy smell permeated the classroom. That year we of course also learned “The Star-Spangled Banner,” though it was so vocally challenging that we didn’t sing it as often as the other songs. What eventually brought our national anthem fully into my heart was Jimi Hendrix’s astonishing rendition at Woodstock.

I’m struck now, when so many Americans of (See Elder, Page 5A)

Visions of Renewal

By John Elder

Letters to the Editor

Illuminating Falls was a bright idea

I have been meaning to write this letter for years.

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to the Better Middlebury Partnership and the leadership of Kathrine Torres and Kelly Flynn.

The gift they give the town by illuminating the Middlebury Falls through the Holiday season is the jewel in the crown. The light array is a quiet but powerful spectacle for our community. Lighting the falls is a tradition that goes back many years but over the past five or so years the dramatic effect of the lights are mesmerizing. It is best viewed after 5 p.m. until they turn off sometime around midnight. The falls are spectacular from all angles but the view from the Marble Works side is the most dramatic.

In a time of year when so much attention is pulling us in all directions and the darkness of the season can be oppressive, the impressive and intense colors of the flowing water is a testament to the light and hope of the holiday season. It is clear that this project has required vision, care and dedications and the results speak for themselves night after night.

If you have not been downtown Middlebury after dark, do yourself a favor and come downtown and witness the spectacular falls.

It takes a few minutes for the lights to go through their color cycle so plan to observe them for a while. When the falls turns blue and green together it is remarkable, then moments later they are ruby red. If you are having guests this holiday season make sure to treat them to our remarkable water falls in their full glory.

Thank you again to the Better Middlebury Partnership for continuing to invest is something that brings such shared joy. Thanks also, to all the property owners who support the Downtown Improvement District who’s collected funds make projects like this possible in our downtown.

Downtown Middlebury is looking great and feeling vibrant, an accomplishment that few downtowns in our region can boast. This is in great part due to the efforts of the Better Middlebury Partnership.

Bruce Baker
Middlebury

Schools hurt by health costs

I’m writing as a retired educator who remains concerned about the future of preK-12 education in Vermont. Our governor made a commitment to lower education costs, determined not to kick the can down the road any further. However, the can he’s neglected to stop kicking is the cost of health care, which is the driving force behind our steadily rising education costs.

Act 73 calls for dramatic restructuring of our schools with no guarantee of lower taxes. It will require busing students longer distances and renovating or repurposing many of our schools. As pointed out by a team of experts assigned to help implement Act 73, this initiative is not based on data-driven research.

On the other hand, the foundation formula defined by Act 73 makes sense. Provide a consistent number of dollars per student to every school, with the amount adjusted for special needs students and economically needy families. Allow communities to adjust that amount to a limited extent to maintain statewide equity.

Why not stop there and closely follow results? School consolidation in 2015 did not result in savings or lower property taxes. Why travel further down that controversial road with no evidence that it will bear fruit?

And while that’s unfolding, let’s address the cost of healthcare.

Alice Leeds
Bristol

Letters to the Editor

A poetic tribute to a musical tour de force

Editor's note: As they are installing a new elevator in the Vergennes Opera House, the organization had to relocate this year's "Broadway Direct" performances to the Vergennes Congregational Church, which prompted this poem.

Borrowing the Church
for the 20th anniversary of
Broadway Direct

No cross or Jesus painting
here tonight, in this borrowed
room.

Someone must have thought
to put them away
for a while.

Make this place feel

more like a stage
than a church. Although,

by the end of tonight,
listening to an eve's worth
of Broadway,

I won't be surprised,
if pew after pew,
we rise, fall

to our knees.
Rise again. Love's standing
ovation. Mouthing

the words we recognize.
Those songs inside us,
we'd sing anywhere.

As if, here in Vergennes,
the Little City,
we're part of New York's

theater crowd.
Which we are.
Writing lyrics for Lake

Champlain and Basin Harbor.
The Maritime Museum,
Olson's Ice Cream.

The stories housed
in John Graham's Shelter.
No one suggests we should

make an opera of.
Better to donate what we can.
Give away our hearts,

Be lifted. Tenor to soprano.
The phantoms in our barns,
Love struck in Pantan's stones.
— Gary Margolis
Cornwall

Ukrainian: Please pray for peace in her country

Once again, Olha Lychko-Parubocha from Lviv, Ukraine, wants to reach out to you. I know of Olha since I have been sitting with Quakers at an International Meeting for Worship for World Peace, through Zoom, since Ukraine's invasion by Russia, in February 2022. Olha works with Friends Peace Teams. She works with those who have been traumatized by war. She also wants to teach others how to do this work.

In my daily prayers, I "visit" Vladimir Putin and say, "Figure out how to soothe your fears without violence. Figure out how to show your strength without violence. Talk with loved ones, especially your daughters. Negotiate with Volodymyr Zelensky. Let go of the idea of having an empire. Allow Ukraine to be its own country. Figure out what you can give to Ukraine." I also "visit" Volodymyr Zelensky. I say, "Negotiate with Vladimir Putin. Figure out what you can give to Russia. Talk with loved ones, especially your wife and your children."

Recently, Olha wrote this article and posted it on the Friends Peace Teams website. Olha and Quakers want to share this information, because we are meant to keep our hearts and minds open to ourselves and others.

"The war continues in Ukraine, bringing destruction and death in the small town of Ternopil, people's peaceful sleep was shattered by a Russian missile that hit an apartment building. Rescuers worked day and night to clear the rubble, and it is now known that 33 people (including six children) were killed in the explosion.

The leaders of major powers are urging Ukraine to surrender and not resist the violence.

They are demanding that Ukraine stop defending itself, but they are not demanding that the aggressor stop the attack. Is this a peaceful agreement?

Ukraine has bitter experience of violations of international agreements.

The states that guaranteed the sovereignty and integrity of my country, Ukraine, in 1994

(the Budapest Memorandum on Security Assurances) are now powerless to watch as Russia destroys and seizes Ukrainian territory.

Peace will come not when Ukrainians stop defending themselves, but when Russians stop attacking. Otherwise, it looks like victim blaming.

We continue to work with the civilian population, helping them overcome psychological trauma. People need to know that they

are not alone, that they have not been forgotten.

There must be light amid the darkness."

How is it that a world leader can negotiate a peace agreement to end war and simultaneously continue to use bombs to express his power? I want all leaders to be guided by human rights for all, compassion and reconciliation.

Peace be with you.

Patricia Heather-Lea
Bristol



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Six-seven

DURING A DREAM Program mural-making event at Middlebury College this month, local youngster Nate Lussier displays that number that keeps showing up everywhere these days.

Independent photo/Steve James

Rutland man cited after two-car crash near Vergennes

VERGENNES — Vergennes police cited a Rutland City man for leaving the scene of an accident on Dec. 15. According to the department’s media log, the department responded to a report of a two-vehicle accident at the intersection of Route 7 and New Haven Road in Ferrisburgh, and one vehicle had “fled the scene.” Police said they then made contact with Benjamin Atherton, 23, and Atherton allegedly acknowledged it was his intention “to leave without stopping, and go home.” They then cited him into court for the offense. Vergennes police also between Dec. 15 and 21 conducted 24 traffic stops, six cruiser patrols and one foot patrol; processed six fingerprint requests; and: On Dec. 15:

Vergennes Police Log

- Handled a complaint of a hit-and-run fender bender in the Vergennes Union High School parking lot, but learned the driver of the offending vehicle had reached out to the complainant and worked the matter out.
- Responded to a report of an open door and loose dogs at a Thomas Circle home and learned the door had not been closed properly after a food delivery.
- Calmed an argument between siblings at a Main Street apartment.
- On Dec. 16 sent a department Drug Recognition Expert to help Vermont State Police at their New

- Haven barracks.
- On Dec. 17:
- Went to West Main Street and helped an individual experiencing a mental health crisis who was transported to a hospital to be evaluated.
 - Went to East Street to investigate alleged suspicious activity involving a possible juvenile victim, but were unable to find the involved parties.
 - On Dec 18 helped state police execute a search warrant in Starksboro.
 - On Dec. 20:
 - At the station helped Middlebury police by evaluating a suspect for being under the influence of drugs.
 - Helped a New Haven Road resident resolve a FedEx delivery to the wrong address, a situation that also involved an ongoing dispute with a neighbor the package belonged. Police notified FedEx to redeliver the package.
 - Helped state police execute a search warrant on a Route 7 property.
 - Took a report that a tire had come off a tractor-trailer unit and struck the exterior of a local business, but caused no damage. Police did not find the truck.
 - On Dec. 21:
 - Were told about \$2 in loose change and an Albuterol inhaler had been stolen from a car parked on Armory Lane.
 - Heard a complaint from a Walker Avenue resident about a verbal confrontation with a delivery driver over where the driver parked. Police said the resident was upset about the smell of the exhaust from the delivery truck getting into the resident’s apartment.
 - Took an online report from a South Water Street resident of credit card fraud after a purchase at a local business. Police provided information to the victim for their bank.
 - On Dec. 16 sent a department Drug Recognition Expert to help Vermont State Police at a New Haven traffic stop.



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ADDISON COUNTY

Obituaries

Susanann Arnebold, 88, of Orwell

ORWELL — Susanann Arnebold, age 88, passed peacefully, Dec. 8, 2025, with family by her side, at her home in Orwell.

Sue was born in North Bergen, N.J., April 11, 1937. She was the daughter of Buster and Gladys (Hoegger) Heinemann. She grew up in North Bergen, where she received her early education and graduated from Cliffside Park (N.J.) High School. She moved to Killington with her family in 1972, where she worked for the town and the State of Vermont. Sue and husband Bob owned and operated the Lothlorien Gift Shop in Killington for eighteen years, before moving to Orwell in 1995. Sue served as the Orwell Town Clerk for over 20 years, retiring in 2017. She was an avid reader and enjoyed doing puzzles and working in her gardens. Sue was an absolute



SUSANANN ARNEBOLD

history buff.

She is survived by her husband, Robert Gerhardt Arnebold Jr., whom she married in Englewood, N.J., April 6, 1957; a daughter, Linda Balestra and her husband

Geno of Poultney; and a son, Robert “Rob” Arnebold and fiancée Joyce Putnam of Killington; two grandchildren, Kaci O’Rourke and Jake Balestra; a sister, Gladys Terry; as well as several nieces, nephews and cousins. She was predeceased by a brother, Joseph Heinemann.

A private gathering in celebration of her life will take place, at a later date.

The family would like to extend special thanks to Margaret and Sandy Korda for their kindness and support in caring for Sue at home.

Memorial gifts in lieu of flowers may be made in her memory to Orwell Volunteer Fire Department, P.O. Box 124, Orwell, VT 05760, or to Addison County Home Health & Hospice, P.O. Box 754, Middlebury, VT 05753.

Arrangements by Miller & Ketcham of Brandon. ◇

Helen Kitchel, 76, former Addison County resident

ORR’S ISLAND, Maine — Helen Kitchel, devoted aunt, sister, friend, and teacher, passed away at 76 on Orr’s Island, Maine, Dec. 5, 2025. She was born in Philadelphia Nov. 17, 1949, to Catherine Brackin Kitchel and H. Sheldon Kitchel.

She graduated from Penn State in 1971 and from the University of Northern Colorado in 1974 with a master’s degree in special education. She recalled her first teaching assignment on the Navajo reservation in Arizona as one of the most fulfilling of her career.

Moving to Vermont in 1978, she served as a learning specialist at Shoreham and Bridport schools before beginning a 25-year teaching career at Mary Hogan Elementary School in Middlebury. In 2008, Helen moved to Maine, where she continued teaching in Sanford. In 2015 she retired to Orr’s Island, where she had spent most summers of her life at the family cottage.

Helen brought warmth and positivity to her many communities.



HELEN KITCHEL

She served on the All Saints Chapel Committee and the Orr’s Island Library Board, and was president of the Mingo Club, a group of island women that awards scholarships to local high school students. Her favorite pastime was reading. Helen also enjoyed combing beaches for sea glass and heart rocks, singing her heart out at Jackson Browne

concerts, and following sports — especially baseball, tennis and figure-skating.

Helen was preceded in death by her sister, Ann K. Poland, and will be fondly remembered by her brother, Ned Kitchel (Charlene Post); her nieces Katie Knightly (Conor) and Zoë Kitchel (Chris Free); her nephew Byron Poland; two great-nieces and three great-nephews; many cousins and friends; and her faithful goldendoodle, Fenway.

A celebration of Helen’s life will take place at 2 p.m., Aug. 2, 2026, at All Saints Chapel (Orr’s Island, Maine). In her honor, we encourage donations to the Orrs Island Library, the Harpswell Mingo Club, All Saints Chapel, or an organization in your community that supports children, as Helen was the first to remind us that children are our best hope for the future.

To offer condolences and share fond memories please visit www.brackettffh.com to view Helen’s online memorial. ◇

Nicki Mae Gurney Lanza, 46, of Panton

PANTON — It is with deep sadness that we announce our beloved Nicki Mae Gurney Lanza, age 46, passed away Dec. 18, 2025, at the University of Vermont Medical Center after a brief illness.

Nicki was born in Rutland May 3, 1979. She was the daughter of Paul and Cathy (Leonard) Gurney. She grew up in Brandon, where she received her early education and graduated from Otter Valley Union High School, class of 1997. Nicki began her working career as a waitress at various area restaurants. She later worked for Home Service Store, R.K. Miles, and DR Power Equipment for several years. More recently she was employed by F.W. Webb in customer service.

She loved cheering on her son, niece and nephews at their various sporting events. She was an avid baseball fan and loved the Dallas Cowboys and Taylor Swift. She enjoyed shopping, having fun with



NICKI MAE GURNEY LANZA

her friends, music and dancing, the beach, spending time with her family, and anything pink. Her heart and soul was her son, Tyson. Nicki will always be remembered for her bright, beautiful smile.

She is survived by her son, Tyson John Lanza of Sudbury; a brother,

Brian Gurney and his wife Amanda of Rutland; her mother, Cathy Louttit and her husband Eric of North Clarendon; her father, Paul Gurney of Weathersfield; a niece, Kylene and nephews, Braeden and Teigen; and great niece Briley, her companion Chauncy Barrows of Pantan and his son Alex; and former husband, Jay Lanza of Sudbury. She is also survived by her grandmothers Beverly Tiffault of Rhode Island and Jane Harding Gurney of Colorado, as well as many aunts, uncles, cousins and friends.

Nicki was predeceased by grandparents Raymond Sr. and Mildred Leonard and grandfather Gordon “Sam” Gurney.

A gathering in celebration of her life will take place, Saturday, Jan. 3, from noon until 2 p.m., at the Brandon American Legion.

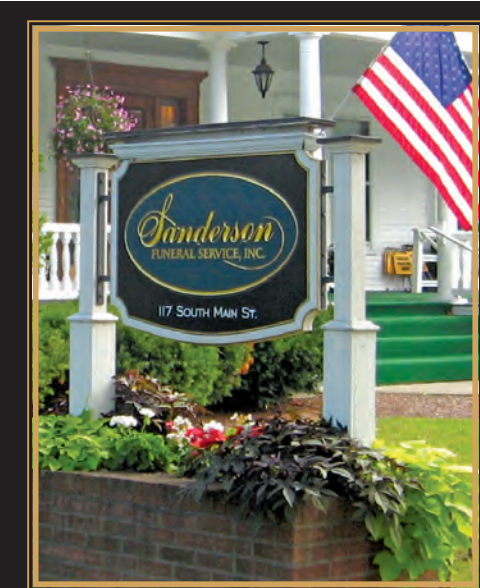
A private memorial service for her family will take place at Miller & Ketcham Funeral Home. ◇

Obituary Guidelines

The Independent will publish paid obituaries and free notices of passing. Paid obituaries cost 25 cents per word and will be published, as submitted, on the date of the family’s choosing. For those who do not wish to purchase an obituary, the Independent offers a free notice of passing up to 100 words, subject to editing by our news department. Photos (optional)

with either paid obituaries or free notices cost \$10 per photo. Obituaries may be emailed to obits@addisonindependent.com.

Submissions must be received by 11 a.m. on Wednesday for publication in the Thursday paper. Email obits@addisonindependent.com or call 802-388-4944 for more information.



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The Bar

(Continued from Page 2A)

follow suit.

“One of my biggest goals in doing this is I want to bring it to the schools,” Wells said. “If I had known about (powerlifting) in high school, it would have shaped me a lot differently as a person. I want to be able to give it to the kids who are there now and don’t know about it yet.”

For more information about The Bar, go to thebarvt.com.

John Flowers is at johnf@addisonindependent.com.

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Vermont housing

(Continued from Page 1A)
organization’s mission — now condensed in an economic action plan — includes increasing Vermont’s population to 802,000 residents by 2035, by recruiting and retaining working-age people. The state’s currently population is around 648,000.

“Vermont needs more people, and the other story we need to tell is that people need Vermont,” Chu told the selectboard.

“When we look at historical growth, up until the last two decades, we were on a trajectory to get to 802,000 homes over the next two years. If Vermont had continued growing at the same rate as the 1980s and 1990s, we’d have well over 700,000 people today,” he added.

And while the prospect of adding another 155,000 residents by 2035 might sound daunting, Chu said it isn’t a stretch if drawn up as 2% annual growth, for each of the next 10 years.

He led the Middlebury selectboard through months of VFP research detailing Vermont’s current demographic, housing and economic challenges, along with strategies for correcting course and creating more opportunities for folks to live and work in the Green Mountain State.

According to the VFP, here are some of the state’s biggest challenges (based on 2023 data):

- More than one fifth (143,421) of Vermonters are aged 65 or older, and more than 35% are older than 54 — an age at which Americans typically begin to exit the workforce.

- Ten years ago, there were almost two job seekers for every job opening in Vermont. Now there’s roughly one job seekers for every two available jobs.

- Vermont had 102,049 K-12 students in 2000. That number has now dropped to 80,292.

- Vermont has the lowest fertility rate of any state in the country; there are only about 5,300 high school seniors throughout the entire state each year. Around 83% of these students graduate, with 45% enrolling in college. Sadly, Vermont has the lowest college graduate retention rate of any state in the country, at about 43%. After factoring in average net migration, the total annual new workforce supply is about 8,200 people.

According to VFP research, the state needs to close a workforce gap of 13,500, through a combination of retaining young Vermonters and recruiting folks from out of state.

So how can Vermont bend the curve and grow its population from the current 648,000 to 802,000 within the next 10 years? The VFP has mapped out several strategies, including marketing the “Vermont brand” through a concerted relocation campaign, increasing pathways for recruiting international migrants to the state, positioning Vermont as a “premiere destination” for remote workers, recruiting military retirees, and incentivizing youth and young professionals to remain here.

VFP’s action plan includes plenty of advice for launching its recommendations, including extending tax breaks, “simplifying tax, insurance, and compliance regulations,” and doing more to support business growth.

Additional VFP strategies for amping up the state’s workforce include:

- Strengthening the alignment between education and employment. For example, the VFP wants to see more access to Career and Technical Education (CTE), as many of the job vacancies in Vermont are in the trades. The

organization is recommending a statewide CTE district to “streamline administration and operational efficiency; repurposing of under-used community spaces to expand CTE access and reduce capacity limitation; and simplification of CTE program approval processes to allow a quicker response to industry needs — particularly in healthcare and emerging technologies.

- Introducing students to career mentorship and counseling at the middle school level.
- Continuing to improve childcare resources for parents seeking to join the workforce, and reevaluating “benefits cliffs,” situations where a modest increase in a worker’s earnings can lead to a disproportionate loss in public assistance, thereby resulting in a net decrease in the household’s overall resources.

- Strengthening Vermont’s business climate, in part through simplifying regulatory and permitting processes, expanding access to capital, and focusing on growing the number of taxable industries rather than having to augment taxes on the ones currently here.

But perhaps the most critical catalyst for jumpstarting Vermont’s renaissance, according to Chu, is building more housing. Folks want to stay in, or move to, Vermont but simply can’t find an affordable way to do so.

Based on state data, job vacancies and pent-up demand, VFP estimates Vermont needs to add 36,000 primary homes during the next five years, on route to increasing its non-seasonal housing stock to 350,000 by the year 2035.

Failing to do so will hamstring the state economy and perpetuate Vermont’s status as the nation’s grayest state, VFP officials warn.

“Attracting and retaining this workforce will be impossible without addressing the housing shortage,” reads the VFP’s action plan. “Vermont’s housing market must rapidly scale up to improve affordability and provide a range of housing options for both existing residents and future Vermonters. To achieve these goals, Vermont must pursue a dual strategy of efficiency and expansion.”

Efficiency, the VFP submits, can be achieved by “removing barriers such as outdated land-use regulations and streamlining permitting processes. Expansion will require “strategically” building new homes and infrastructure, according to the organization.

“If housing is a human right, there should be a right to build housing,” Chu said. Less than 20% of Vermont’s current housing stock has been built during the past 20 years, while one fourth of it was built before 1940, according to Chu.

Among VFP’s ideas for accelerating workforce housing starts: Establishing a public “land bank,” starting with state-owned parcels; modifying existing tools like Tax Increment Financing (TIF) to install infrastructure that incentivizes housing development in areas where the market alone would not; promoting higher-density development in urban and village centers, promoting prefabricated or modular construction methods that can reduce material waste and accelerate building timelines; and bolstering apprenticeship and vocational training programs to grow the local construction workforce.

“We have to step up to this challenge,” Chu said.

Selectboard members acknowledged the challenges outlined in the VFP action plan and voiced frustrations about difficulties in moving the population and housing needles at the local level.

“The challenge is that the town doesn’t regulate the economy,” said selectman Fred Dunnington, who served as Middlebury’s town planner for 32 years. “Developers find it more profitable to build to higher-end housing.

He said the town didn’t reject a single housing development during his 32 years as planner.

“Despite our best efforts to make our zoning accommodate more housing ... you can’t make people sell their land,” Dunnington said. “There are people who are holding property that could be developed, because it’s an investment.”

“The challenge I see is that the cost of construction is so high, there’s no incentive for someone to come in and build housing,” Selectman Farhad Khan said. He and other board members noted the mixed-income Stonecrop development would not have been possible without considerable buy-in from Middlebury College and a variety of state and federal subsidies that softened some of the rents and purchase prices.

“It’s probably been subsidized so much that you’re probably not going to find another developer who’s going to be able to do that in here for years,” Selectman Dan Brown said.

The alternative to major subdivisions won’t allow towns to *(See Growth, Page 20A)*



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By the way

(Continued from Page 1A)
other critical assistance. MUMS students prevailed, collecting 598 pounds of food, while their MUHS counterparts harvested a respectable 400 pounds. In all, MUHS students collected more than 350 food items, with sophomores gathering the most, followed by the juniors, seniors and freshmen. Mary Hogan Elementary children didn’t participate in the competition, but they held a successful food drive of their own, coming through with more than 1,000 items. No trophies and certainly no losers in this magical philanthropic rivalry. Just winners — the children, for recognizing a community need, and the folks that will benefit from their generosity.

Looking to clear out your closet, refresh your winter wardrobe, and support a local nonprofit at the same time? If so, the Middlebury-based Atria Collective would like to see you at its annual Clothing Swap, scheduled for Saturday, Jan. 10, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Champlain Valley Unitarian Universalist Society at 2 Duane Court. The Atria Collective’s

mission is to end gender-based violence in Addison County and support victims of sexual violence and domestic abuse. Supporters are invited to bring clean, gently used clothing (from a non-smoking home) to IPJ Real Estate at 34 Main St. in Middlebury on Jan. 5-8, between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m.; or to CVUUS on Jan. 9 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Every dollar raised on Jan. 10 will directly support Atria Collective’s work.

Addison Community Action (ACA) in Middlebury reminds you that volunteers are needed to help the less fortunate prepare their tax returns. Whether you’re a student, a tax professional or a retiree, the Internal Revenue Service and your community need your help. No tax law experience is needed; ACA (located at 50 Industrial Ave.) will train you through the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program. Last year, ACA helped 250 Addison County individuals/families submit federal and state tax forms at no cost to them. Email emarkey@cvoeo.org, or call 802-388-2285 ext. 200 for more details. Shifts are four hours; volunteers typically

select one or two shifts per week. Available shifts are 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Monday and Saturday, or noon to 4 p.m. on Thursday. Assistance will begin the first week in February and end in early April.

Leaders of the Brendon P. Cousino Med47 Foundation in Bristol have had another fun and successful year, raising \$52,000 for a variety of area rescue squads, fire departments, heating assistance programs, food shelves, shelters and veterans’ programs. And that total doesn’t include the customary \$1,000 scholarships to help students attend four Vermont tech schools, plus other general assistance for community support. The foundation raised its total from several sources during 2025, including an impressive \$10,500 from its Garden-Shoppe & Auction, \$10,000 from its Pop-up yard sale, \$5,700 from its annual indoor yard sale, and \$5,500 from the Snake Mountain Car Show. More information about the Med47 Foundation can be found at Facebook.com/med47foundation, by emailing med47foundation@gmail.com, or calling Cindy at 802-233-8334.



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Best wishes for a very joyous holiday season.

Hinsdale

(Continued from Page 1A)
and Conservation Easement task forces; and co-chaired the Vermont Recreation Task Force.

He has served two terms totaling 18 years as president of the Vermont Farm Bureau and another five years as a member of its board. He has also served on the boards of the Champlain Valley Greenbelt Alliance, the Charlotte Land Trust, and the Vermont Natural Resources Council. He is currently a member of the Rokeby Museum board.

Hinsdale said he made the decision to step away from the selectboard in part because he has turned 70 and is “kind of retired.”

“I want to travel and not feel guilty about missing meetings. It’s basically I don’t want to commit to the meeting schedule,” he said.

Hinsdale also originally planned to step down a year ago, but decided to stay on because both longtime Town Clerk Pam Cousino and longtime Highway Department Superintendent John Bull — both also childhood acquaintances of Hinsdale — announced their retirements earlier this year. Cousino stepped down earlier this fall, and Bull’s last day was Dec. 18.

“Rather than have Pam and John break in a new selectboard chair for a year, I decided I would hang in there and be part of the transition from those two leaders with 55 or 60 years of combined town experience,” he said. “That’s a lot of institutional memory going out the door in the same year.”

Hinsdale said the board has done good work during his seven-year tenure.

He listed obtaining the grant for the crosswalk at the intersection of Little Chicago Road and Route 7 near the school, successfully lobbying the state to install a traffic light at the dangerous intersection of Route 7 with Stage and Old Hollow roads, creating a Trails Committee that established a town-wide trails plan that makes Ferrisburgh eligible for further

grants, and helping the Vergennes Area Rescue Squad move toward financial stability and full staffing.

He also credited the town’s planning commission and zoning administrator Katie Hill for their work creating the new town plan the selectboard recently adopted.

Looking ahead, Hinsdale hopes the town can work with the town’s fire department to help it “potentially becoming a branch of town government,” consider whether Ferrisburgh needs to regulate proliferating moorings through a “harbormaster ordinance,” and seek public input on how the proceeds from the \$100,000 sale of the former church next to the town hall to the owner of Gilfeather’s should be used for “a special thing or things for our community.”

He does not think Ferrisburgh needs to turn to a town manager after this year’s hire of Jessica James, the former selectboard chair, to replace Cousino as the town clerk.

“I had thought we might be in a town-manager type discussion, but I think what Jess brings to the table in terms of leadership skills, we’ve probably postponed that discussion for at least a decade,” he said.

“I want to travel and not feel guilty about missing meetings. It’s basically I don’t want to commit to the meeting schedule.”

— Clark Hinsdale



THE MIDDLEBURY DEVELOPMENT Review board has approved this 35-unit apartment building to be sited on a 0.71-acre parcel at the intersection of Middle Road and Route 7. Developer Phil Rosenzweig and his team got the OK after making changes they believed would make the four-story structure more palatable to the community.

Middle Road

(Continued from Page 1A)
of Middlebury who chose its bright future over the unsubstantiated fears of the few.”

Rosenzweig and his development team had made changes to the plan that they hoped would win over critics who had voiced concern over the original proposal’s scale, parking and proximity to Route 7, aka Court Street.

The revised plans call for, among other things:

- A 12,800-square-foot building footprint, instead of the original 14,075. Total gross square footage of the building: 53,247.
- A 25-foot setback from Route 7, instead of the original 10-foot request.

- 8,170 square feet of internal sidewalk for those residing at the property, instead of the original 3,700 square feet.
- 48 parking spots, instead of the original 45, with Rosenzweig announcing he’d secured an additional 10 “overflow” spots from the adjacent One Dollar Market store property.

“The main access to the site will be via an existing curb cut from Middle Road,” reads the latest Middlebury Road Housing project narrative. “The project as planned is expected to improve circulation among the neighboring properties and reduce congestion at the Middle Road/Route 7 intersection by allowing for an additional access to the Dollar Market and Stewart’s properties.”

- 35 units, instead of the original ask for 32. But the new mix calls for a wider range of apartment sizes. The latest plan calls for one one-bedroom unit, 10 two-bedroom units, 11 three-bedrooms and 13 four-bedroom apartments. The original plan called for one one-bedroom unit, five two-bedroom

units, zero three-bedrooms and 26 four-bedroom apartments.

“This has improved the diversity of the mix of housing,” Rosenzweig told the DRB at the Dec. 8 hearing.

There is no set aside of affordable or “workforce” housing to the latest version of Middle Road project.

Rosenzweig and his team said they reworked the building design to soften its four-story massing.

“While the structure is one building with shared amenities and systems, it has been re-designed to present as two smaller structures connected with a bridge,” reads the project narrative.

“This allows for an exterior pedestrian passage at the street level and also helps to reduce the scale of the overall building. In addition, the building’s facades are articulated to resemble a downtown street front, or a collection of connected buildings. This also helps to reduce the scale of the building and to provide an attractive and interesting façade intended to engage pedestrians, bicyclists, and vehicular travelers.”

Those touting the development said it will be comparable in height

to — or shorter than — similar adjacent buildings at Middlebury’s southern gateway, including the Courtyard by Marriott hotel and the South Village development.

What about the restaurant?

“The working concept is upscale (but not fancy) Greek and Italian food. Dine-in tables, takeout options available. Negotiation of the lease is happening now,” Rosenzweig said.

While the revised Middle Road Housing plan earned support, the Dec. 8 hearing featured testimony from several nearby residents who still weren’t satisfied with the result. Some voiced continued concern over the building’s size and potential impacts on traffic.

“My objection is related to (the building’s) size and scale, not that it will house people; we all know more (housing) is needed,” said resident Sandy Bemis.

“They have a changed plan for this building, but I think it’s a town-changing plan.”

Resident Hudson Tilford summed up his opinion of the structure’s scale: “I simply think this project is trying to put five pounds in a one-pound bag.”

But Rosenzweig is confident the project will be a winner.

“We believe it will be a real amenity and asset to the Middlebury community on a long-term basis,” he said.

John Flowers is at johnf@addisonindependent.com.

“The working concept (for the restaurant) is upscale (but not fancy) Greek and Italian food. Dine-in tables, takeout options available.”

— developer Phil Rosenzweig

“My objection is related to (the building’s) size and scale, not that it will house people; we all know more (housing) is needed.”

— resident Sandy Bemis

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Pick up is **EARLY** Saturday, January 10. We recommend putting trees out the night prior to pick up.

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The **Vergennes Lions Club** will pick up trees on Saturday, January 10th.

Middlebury

The **Middlebury Rotary Club** will pick up trees on Saturday, January 10th.

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Chronology 2025

(Continued from Page 1A)

were approximately 156 houseless persons in Addison County, including 41 children, and that many others remained at risk of losing their housing.

Middlebury's Ilsley Library spent the month preparing for a \$17 million expansion and renovation project at its 75 Main St. location. At a special budget meeting, the Middlebury selectboard decided to dip into the community's local option tax reserve fund to pay for the project and plug a \$1.8 million revenue shortfall.

Addison County legislators decamped to Montpelier for the new biennium, where several area representatives were appointed to leadership positions. Rep. Robin Scheu of Middlebury was chosen to lead the powerful Appropriations Committee, Rep. Peter Conlon of Cornwall continued to helm the Education Committee, Rep. Amy Sheldon of Middlebury continued to chair the Environment Committee, and Rep. Matthew Birong of Vergennes became the new chair of the Government Operations & Military Affairs Committee.

While President Donald Trump took his oath of office in the U.S. Capitol Rotunda, a crowd of more than 100 Addison County residents gathered amid freezing temperatures in Middlebury's Court Square to publicly oppose many of the environmental, immigration and economic policies Trump pledged to implement during the next four years. The warmly dressed participants — many of them holding signs bearing messages like "only love can drive out hate" — voiced concerns about the Trump administration's potential to erode the nation's democratic principles while removing protections for its most vulnerable people.

Middlebury College announced that Ian Baucomb would serve as the institution's 18th president. Baucomb, at the time executive vice president, provost and Robert C. Taylor Professor of English at the University of Virginia, was chosen to succeed Laurie Patton, who stepped down from Middlebury at the end of 2024 to become president of the American Academy of Arts & Sciences. The college said that Baucom would take office on July 1, 2025.

On Jan. 7 the Addison Northwest School District fell victim to a ransomware cyberattack that compromised district data, locked employees out of servers, and shut down internet and email service at Vergennes-area schools for several days. Addison Central School District also discovered a cybersecurity breach that allowed an unauthorized party to access ACSD student and employee demographic data from the 2023-24 school year. That breach did not affect district operations.

Vergennes added a non-binding referendum to its Town Meeting Day ballot advising the city council to declare Vergennes an "apartheid-free community" that is committed to "freedom, justice, and equality for the Palestinian people and all people" and is opposed to "all forms of racism, bigotry, discrimination, and oppression." The measure



January 23, 2025

U.S. SEN. BERNIE SANDERS gives a hand to five-year-old Parker Sosa as she participates in a basketball shooting contest at Vergennes Union Elementary School on Saturday. The Vermont Independent sponsored "Free Throws With Bernie" and handed out free basketballs to all participants.

Independent file photo/Steve James



January 9, 2025

DONALD SANBORN OF Pittsford is clearly enthralled with his newborn daughter, Raigan, during a new child visit to Porter Hospital on Monday. Raigan, who arrived on Jan. 2, was the first baby of the year born in Addison County, and the sixth child born to her mother, Brittanie Loso Sanborn.

Independent file photo/Steve James

was proposed by a citizen petition and adopted by the council, 5-2, after debate at the Jan. 14 meeting. Ferrisburgh opted not to include a similar referendum on its ballot.

In sports, Lincoln runner and high school senior Estella Laird, who previously crossed the finish line as Vermont's Division I state champion cross country runner, was named the 2024-25 Gatorade Vermont Girls Cross Country Player of the Year. VUHS wrestlers took

top local honors at the Commodore Invitational Tournament on Jan. 18.

January saw several nail-bitingly close high school basketball games. On Jan. 14, the Middlebury Union High School boys' basketball team appeared poised to upset the host Otters. But the Otters then outscored the Tigers in the fourth quarter to win, 63-52. On Jan. 21, the Mount Abraham girls' basketball team ratcheted up the intensity of its defense to finally

pull away from host Vergennes in the final few minutes and claim a 45-39 victory.

In almost ideal conditions at Rikert Outdoor Center on Jan. 11, with gently falling snow adding to the atmosphere, the Division II Middlebury Union High School boys' Nordic ski team finished third in an eight-team, 5-kilometer classic-style race against mostly D-I competition. The Tiger girls took fourth in a six-team race that included four D-I schools. MUHS senior Beth McIntosh won the girls' race, with junior teammate Mary Harrington close behind in third place in a 52-skier field. The two-day state meet would wrap up a couple days into February.

And finally, U.S. Sen Bernie Sanders visited Vergennes Union Elementary School for a basketball clinic promoted as "Free Throws with Bernie"; it was one of several he has held around Vermont. Dozens of kids from grade school to high school turned up to shoot baskets under the watchful eye of Vermont's senior senator. They all went home with a new basketball.

February

On Feb. 1, the Middlebury College Class of 2024.5 (popularly called "Febs") headed to the Snow Bowl for their iconic graduation ceremony — going up the chairlift in their academic regalia and skiing down with their diplomas. The next day, hundreds convened at Middlebury's Town Hall Theater to celebrate the Lunar New Year.

And those were just the start of February's celebrations.

Scores of Town Hall Theater's supporters and patrons attended performances marking the opening of the Doug and Debby Anderson Studio — the first room to open in THT's \$8.5 million addition. Meanwhile, officials including U.S. Sen. Peter Welch, Gov. Phil Scott and Middlebury selectboard Chair Brian Carpenter broke ground on the Stonecrop Meadows subdivision in Middlebury, launching construction on a new neighborhood of 254 new homes off Seminary Street Extension.

The Addison Central School District board endorsed, by an 8-4 margin, a minimum class-size policy of 10 students. The board acknowledged that the policy presented a hurdle for the tiny Ripton Elementary School. The move was part of an ongoing trend toward consolidation and closure of small elementary schools statewide.

Residents of Vergennes and Panton on Wednesday, Feb. 12, voted in favor of bonds and/or loans of up to \$3.52 million to fund replacing almost a mile of the Vergennes/Panton Water District's most troubled water mains, both in Vergennes and Ferrisburgh.

Executive orders by President Trump cast a shadow over millions of dollars in federal research money (See February, Page 10A)

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February 2, 2025

AFTER MORE THAN A hundred members of the Middlebury College Class of 2024.5 (popularly called "Febs") received their diplomas Saturday morning, most bused up to the Middlebury Snowbowl to ski the slopes in their academic regalia. This group seems to find the trip down the mountain a little windy.

Independent file photo/Steve James






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Chronology 2025

(Continued from Page 9A)

received by Middlebury College. Scientists at the college said the orders could result in less money for salaries and stipends for college staff and students, less spending at local businesses and poorer education in the sciences that would ripple through the community.

On President’s Day several hundred people turned out at rallies in Bristol and Middlebury to protest President Donald Trump, Elon Musk and Musk’s self-created agency, the “Department of Government Efficiency,” or DOGE. One observer in Middlebury reported that 120-150 people braved windchill temperatures down to 0 degrees Fahrenheit to ring Court Square with posters, songs, chants and waving, in protest of many actions of the presidential administration.

Addison County Economic Development Corporation named its new executive director: Alexander Armani-Munn, a 33-year-old Plattsburgh, N.Y., native who previously worked as a project manager at AES Northeast, an architecture and engineering firm in Plattsburgh. Armani-Munn succeeds retiring ACEDC Executive Director Fred Kenney, who spent an incredibly challenging and productive seven years facilitating the growth and sustainability of area businesses.

Middlebury College hosted a controversial talk, “What is the Right Approach on Public Policy and Transgender Medicine?” featuring speakers Leor Sapir of the Manhattan Institute and Brianna Wu, the executive director of Rebellion PAC. The event came as President Trump signed multiple executive orders targeting transgender people and raised concerns and criticism among members of Middlebury College and the broader Addison County community, some of whom described the talk as “anti-trans” and voiced concern that it would spread harmful misinformation. In response, students held a “Big Trans Dance Party” and organized a counter-presentation, “Trans Healthcare and Politics.” One of the panelists was Lia Smith, a trans student and athlete who, sadly, died by suicide in October.

“All You Need Is Love” was the theme for this year’s Middlebury College Winter Carnival Ice Show. Scores of skaters in the Middlebury Figure Skating Club from very young to college age took part. In other Carnival sports news, the Middlebury College ski teams placed second to Dartmouth, 898-877.5.

Two longtime Bristol residents were among this year’s Vermont Sports Hall of Fame inductees: highly accomplished former high school girls’ basketball



February 27, 2025

THREE-YEAR-OLD ETHAN YOUNT waves a flag during the Big Trans Dance Party held outside Middlebury College’s McCullough Student Center Thursday.

Independent file photo/Steve James

coach Connie LaRose and world championship horseshoe pitcher Debra Brown. Three local high school senior football standouts were selected to play in the 2025 Shrine Maple Sugar Bowl against their counterparts from New Hampshire. From Middlebury Union High School, lineman Angus Blackwell and receiver/defensive back/ kicker Tucker Morter made the Shrine team. From Otter Valley, running back/linebacker Isaac Whitney was named to the squad.

Jeff Brown, the most successful men’s basketball coach in Middlebury College’s history, announced he would step down at the end of the academic year. Brown recently concluded his 28th season leading the Panther program, and his 43rd overall as a college head or assistant coach. On Feb. 11, the Middlebury and Vergennes high school boys’ basketball teams faced off in a defensive battle, with both teams struggling to put points on the board against hardworking man-to-man defenses. Ultimately, the Tigers, who led most of the way, repelled a VUHS third-quarter surge to earn a 37-25 victory.

The MUHS dance squad, which had reinforcements this season from Mount Abraham Union High School, improved dramatically over the course of the winter, observers agreed. But the local dancers came up just short of claiming Vermont championships at VUHS. The Tiger team finished second in both the Hip Hop and Pom divisions, and their overall efforts fell short of matching only defending champion Mount Mansfield. The Tiger girls’



February 27, 2025

MOUNT ABE STUDENTS dropped to the hardwood and mimed like they were rowing a boat every time the Eagle boys’ basketball team sank a three-pointer during this past Friday’s game at Vergennes. The little skit re-enforced the idea that the Eagles were working together, but ultimately the imaginary boat ran aground as the Commodores triumphed.

Independent file photo/Steve James

and boys’ Nordic ski teams capped another successful winter with second- and third-place finishes, respectively, in the two-day Division II state championship.

March

March means town meeting, and Addison County residents dutifully went to the polls and their annual meetings to elect local leaders and pass a variety of municipal and public education budgets.

It was indeed a departure from March of 2024, when only two school district budgets earned voter approval: Addison Central and Lincoln school districts. This time, every school spending plan earned a resounding OK — thanks to a major, extra, one-time infusion of state funding — except for that of Orwell, which was tied to the defeated Slate Valley Unified Union

School District budget. Middlebury residents not only adopted their local school and town budgets, they endorsed, by a 1,021-134 tally, a \$49.5 million upgrade of their community’s 24-year-old wastewater treatment plant at 243 Industrial Ave. It was one of three successful public works-related bond proposals in the shire town. Also approved by wide margins were \$2 million in proposed improvements to a major municipal water pump station off Rogers Road, and a \$1 million plan to install a stormwater treatment system for the Adams Acres subdivision.

Addison Central School District voters decided a five-person race for three of Middlebury’s seven seats on the ACSD board, choosing Jess Venable-Novak, Ron Makleff and incumbent Steve Orzech to fill those three-year spots.

Bristol voters thought they had decided a nine-person race for six
(See March, Page 11A)



March 13, 2025

FIVE-YEAR-OLD Harper Baxter and her two-year-old sister, Blaire, scoop up some maple syrup on shaved ice at Starksboro’s sugar-on-snow party and chili fest. The girls have more syrup and homemade doughnuts in reserve.

Independent file photo/Steve James



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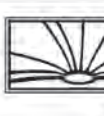


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March 6, 2025

HE’S FOLLOWING ALONG in the town report while she keeps her hands busy with knitting during Monday evening’s New Haven town meeting. They both seemed to be actively following what was going on.

Independent file photo/John S. McCright



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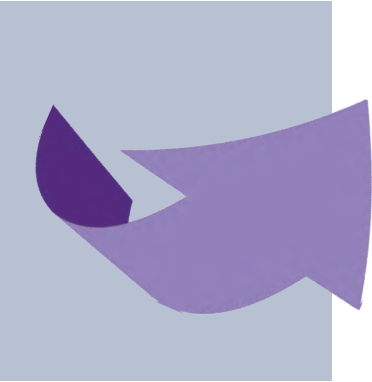
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Chronology 2025

(Continued from Page 10A)

seats on the Lawrence Memorial Library Board of Trustees. Burt a contested race for two, two-year terms on the board ended in a tie for second place on Town Meeting Day; Audrey Beckwith and write-in candidate Peter Hewitt both received 253 votes for one of the seats. A special runoff election was averted when Beckwith withdrew from the race.

Sadly, an 11th-hour effort to boost tiny Ripton Elementary School's population through an invitation to out-of-town ACSD kids failed. Barring an infusion of new students in K-5, it appeared as though Ripton Elementary days would be numbered.

March was also a month during which local businesses and individuals were trying to sort out the impact the Trump Administration's tariffs could have on their respective bottom lines. The presidential administration early in the month issued steep 25% tariffs on imports from Canada and Mexico, and an additional 10% tariff on Chinese imports. But the tariff amounts appeared to change daily, based on the president's moods or whims.

Town Meeting Day voting this past March added to a disconcerting narrative: election ballots in the vast majority of communities featured zero contested elections. In fact, many ballots displayed various posts — ranging from delinquent tax collector to selectboard — with no takers. This forced communities to recruit for vacancies after the election.

An incumbent who certainly could not have been faulted for not running for re-election: Mike Audet was honored at Orwell town meeting upon completion of 47 years as town moderator. He received a standing ovation.

March also saw major advances for projects serving the elderly.

Seven years after Dan and Rebecca Hassan first thought of expanding the 38-bed Vergennes Residential Care elderly living home in the city's downtown into the 88-bed Vergennes Grand Senior Living complex, the first residents moved into the new facility on March 20.

At the same time, workers were putting the finishing touches on \$3.25 million in renovations to Elderly Services Inc.'s headquarters off Middlebury's Exchange Street. The project featured several energy-saving updates that quickly netted big financial savings for the nonprofit, which hosts one of the most successful and admired adult daycare programs in the Northeast.

The Trump Administration's new policies hit home in March with an announcement that the U.S. Department of Agriculture had canceled two programs supporting the purchase and distribution of local food, including an initiative that provided funding for Vermont school districts to buy and serve food from area farms and food producers. The hit to those Vermont producers, some of them based in Addison County: \$1.7 million.

If that wasn't enough extreme weather continued to wreak havoc on the farming community. Addison County state Sens. Ruth Hardy, D-Middlebury, and Steven



March 20, 2025

MIDDLEBURY UNION HIGH School Senior Jacques Snell becomes Willy Wonka on the MUHS stage this weekend in the school's senior play, "Willy Wonka Jr." You'll see Silas Quinn as Charlie (pointing right) and all of your favorites from the movie — including, of course, a stage full of Oompa-Loompas.

Photo by Jason Duquette-Hoffman

Heffernan, R-Bristol, introduced a bill to try help those who had suffered losses. Bill S.60 would establish a "Farm Security Special Fund" to provide grants for farm losses caused by weather conditions during the prior two summers.

A major land and timber-rights transaction acknowledged by selectboards in Weybridge and Addison paved the way for the transfer of hundreds of acres of land and timber rights on Snake Mountain in both of those communities to the Vermont Department of Fish & Wildlife. Snake Mountain is the site of a state Wildlife Management Area.

With signs of spring appearing, boosters of the Bristol Skatepark announced progress renovating the popular facility next to the Bristol Hub Teen Center on Airport Drive. Plans called for deconstruction of the current skatepark while seeking grants and donations for an estimated \$800,000 makeover, with an eye toward accessibility and inclusivity.

April

April brought sad news for the town of Ripton: Its elementary school, decimated by declining enrollment, would be closing at the end of the academic year. The Addison Central School District board voted unanimously to take that step, while directing Superintendent Wendy Baker to transfer Ripton's roughly 22 grades 2-5 children to the neighboring Salisbury Community School in the fall. It had already been decided that Ripton's anticipated three kindergarten and first-grade students would attend the Salisbury school due to tiny numbers in that demographic.

ACSD appointed a committee of Ripton residents and district officials who would, with the aid of a consultant, look for ways to repurpose the town's beloved school building.

At the same time, ACSD officials began discussing how Bridport and Shoreham elementary schools



April 10, 2025

VERMONTERS ACROSS THE state took to the streets on Saturday, April 5, undeterred by the cold and rain, as part of the "Hands Off" protests organized throughout the country. Local crowds ranged between 500 in Vergennes and almost 800 in Brandon, while many more Addison County residents made the trip to Montpelier, where the crowd was estimated at over 10,000.

might collaborate — by possibly merging portions of their student populations — to allow children in both communities to have single-grade instruction. Barring a collaboration, stakeholders were told that declining enrollment and a new ACSD policy on minimum class size would force both schools to offer multi-grade classrooms *only* beginning the fall. District leaders said they believed single-grade instruction could help bring up standardized test scores that had been lagging recently among students in both Bridport and Shoreham.

Speaking of youth programming,

the Boys & Girls Club of Greater Vergennes — citing a financial crisis — sadly announced it would suspend operations. "Our hope was we could stay open through the end of the school year. It's absolutely devastating that we couldn't," board Co-Chair Sadie Jones told the *Independent*. Club boosters and Vergennes officials quickly began exploring ways to continue programming in some other format.

Middlebury College, the county's largest employer, announced several new steps it would take to balance its budget — including limiting employee benefits, offering early retirement incentives and growing undergraduate enrollment in the coming years — due to stock-price declines and increased financial uncertainties for the economy at large. In a letter to the college community, college brass predicted a \$14.1 million deficit for the fiscal year, up from a projection of \$8.9 million in October of 2023.

The Trump administration also announced belt tightening, with libraries among public services asked to share the weight of cuts in an economic strategy that also called for tax breaks for the nation's highest earners. Addison County libraries braced for some bad news.

Some of Vermont's top leaders discussed their fight against the Trump administration's stated positions on voting rights, human services program cuts, tariffs and other issues at an April 19 forum that packed Middlebury's Town Hall Theater. Among those present were Secretary of State Sarah Copeland Hanzas, Attorney General Charity Clark, Treasurer Mike Pieciak along with state Sen. Ruth Hardy, who organized the forum.


The Trump administration's battle against higher education (See April, Page 12A)



April 24, 2025

VERMONT SECRETARY OF State Sarah Copeland Hanzas, left, Attorney General Charity Clark, center, and Treasurer Mike Pieciak spoke at Middlebury's Town Hall Theater on Saturday during a forum on state officials' approach to protecting Vermonters from the Trump Administration's seemingly capricious actions.

Independent file photo/Steve James



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Chronology 2025

(Continued from Page 12A)

and non-citizens came directly to Addison County in April, during which federal immigration officials took action aimed at revoking visas for at least one foreign student at Middlebury College and three recent graduates from the Middlebury Institute of International Studies in California. College officials said they'd pursue whatever legal means necessary to protect the students in question.

Pennsylvania attorney and developer Phil Rosenzweig filed an application with the town of Middlebury to build a 32-unit, four-story apartment building — that would also host a restaurant — on a 0.71-acre lot near the intersection of Middle Road and Route 7, at Middlebury's southern gateway. Rosenzweig announced plans to make 20% of Middle Road Housing's units "affordable," based on Addison County's median income. Some of the neighbors of the proposed project expressed concerns about the project's scale and mass, which led Rosenzweig to make some revisions.

Orwell voters in April joined other Slate Valley Unified Union School District residents in approving a revised fiscal year 2026 public education budget of \$31,623,010. Residents of the Slate Valley member towns of Orwell, Benson, Castleton, Fair Haven, Hubbardton and West Haven endorsed the PreK-grade 12 spending plan — which was \$463,256 less than the one voters rejected on March 4 — by an 824-631 margin.

A coalition of Bristol residents and local organizations announced they were in the early stages of a multi-year project aimed at creating a multi-use recreational area on Hogback Mountain. The recreational area would be located on a 2,000-acre lot on Hogback owned by the A. Johnson Company, which for generations has allowed the community to use the property for recreation. The parcel is situated on the east side of Bristol village.

April provided a time for grateful reflection for members of the LGBTQ+ community amid the backdrop of an increasingly intolerant federal government. April marked the 25th anniversary of passage of Vermont's Civil Union Law, which eventually led to same-sex marriage rights. The *Independent* interviewed two of the plaintiffs — Holly Puterbaugh and Lois Farnham of Middlebury — in the Baker v. State lawsuit that built key momentum for what was in 2000 a landmark law that sparked a national marriage-rights movement.

Local sugarmakers closed out a season that generally got off to a late start, with average- to above-average yields of maple syrup that, according to some producers, had a lower sugar content than usual.

Addison County's most needy animals got a new caregiver and spokesperson. Karin Page was named the new executive director of Homeward Bound, Addison County's Humane Society, in Middlebury.

Porter Medical Center in April was preparing to mark its 100th birthday, a June 14 celebration that would feature a party, a fundraising campaign, a time capsule, and a photo exhibit.

April brought bonus good



April 24, 2025

VISIONS OF COLORED Easter eggs dance in the eyes of kids racing into a field at the Eddy Farm in Middlebury on Sunday at the start of its annual Easter Egg Hunt. Children were invited to find some of the thousands of eggs that staff hid throughout one field, and then see horses in the open barns.

Independent file photo/Steve James



May 1, 2025

ADDISON RESIDENT ELIZA Spencer seems to know that the blood she is donating on Tuesday will help ensure that hospitals are fully stocked with lifesaving blood. She donated her pint at the Red Cross blood drive at Victory Baptist Church in Waltham.

Independent file photo/Steve James

news from your local paper: The *Independent* and its sister publication *Vermont Ski + Ride Magazine* took home 43 awards for excellence in journalism at the annual Better Newspaper Competition held in Portland, Maine.

Lincoln resident Wayne Johnson, chef and co-owner of the former Smoke & Lola's restaurant in Bristol, announced a new project: "Don't Panic Catering." It's a self-sufficient mobile catering business that would travel around the country providing high-quality catering services while using the surplus revenue to offer free meals.

May

At the beginning of May it looked like Bridport's and Shoreham's elementary schools would both remain open for the next school year, serving their own local children with multi-age classrooms. The ACSD was trying to figure out if some Shoreham kids would attend school in Bridport

and some Bridport kids would go to Shoreham so that no one would need to be in a multi-age classroom. The plan was off for now, but a summer study committee would discuss future collaborations — including potentially having the students from both towns attending Bridport Central School beginning in 2026.

Middlebury was taking steps to make the town more attractive to business. The town, the Addison County Economic Development Corp. and Middlebury College announced they would join forces to make 200 acres at the northern edge of the town's industrial park more attractive to entrepreneurs.

The property is close to the municipal wastewater treatment plant, Exchange Street and Route 7. Those are already attractive inducements for prospective developers, but the economic development corp. proposed making the lots more interesting through a \$130,000 investment in pre-development services, like mapping and conceptual design work.

Speaking of entrepreneurs,

Christian Bloom opened up a new store at the former Video King movie rental space on Washington Street in Middlebury. The new business, called Retro Realm, featured a ton of old style standalone video games that one might have seen in a video game parlor of the 1980s or 1990s. On offer were Miss Pac-man, Mario Brothers and Fast and Furious Drift, along with live action games like foosball, air hockey and skeet ball.

The Trump administration's cost-cutting ways hit Addison County again, when the end of the AmeriCorps program seriously derailed some young adults' dreams of public service while cutting the labor supply to local nonprofits like Middlebury Area Land Trust, Willowell Foundation, Champlain Valley Office of Economic Activity and half a dozen other agencies and programs.

The Vergennes City Council wrestled with what do about the loss of Boys and Girls Club. They signed two agreements regarding the Boys and Girls clubhouse on Armory Lane — municipal officials took control of the property for the time being and continued an after school program for youth that would be called the Commodore Club. City Rec Director Martha DeGraaf would run the program.

Another transition was taking place in Bristol, where the folks who had recently taken ownership of Main Street's Dunshee Block said they would tune up the building's exiting Bristol Suites hotel and Vermont Marketplace retail outlet. The 154-year-old, three-story building had hosted businesses like Peggy's Beauty Shop, Bristol Cliffs Music Center, several clothing stores and a general store.

Gabe Hamilton took over as interim principal of Ferrisburgh Central School, after Rae Donovan resigned her position in April.

Alice Perine touched thousands of other lives — as an educator, union leader, community volunteer, and as a mom. In May the Middlebury resident celebrated her 100th birthday.

A different sport made our front pages in May when the Unified Basketball teams from Vergennes and Middlebury union high schools faced off in the VUHS gym. Students were released early to attend that afternoon, and many said they enjoyed the sense of community that the game engendered.

Starksboro voters in May OK'd a \$1.1 million bond to create the Jerusalem Community Center and renovate the decrepit fire station in South Starksboro.

Vergennes Boy and Cub Scout Troop 539 saw a boom in Eagles as the school year wound down. The troop recorded its sixth member attaining the level of Eagle Scout this month — a remarkable number that likely wasn't matched elsewhere in Vermont for the year.

Many of the roughly two-dozen Ripton children who would be attending Salisbury Community School this fall found out in May that they would see a familiar face in the principal's office. Former Ripton Elementary School principal (and current Ripton resident) Tracey Harrington was picked as Salisbury's new top administrator. (See May, Page 13A)



May 8, 2025

THE FANS WERE cheering and the action was hot when the Vergennes Union High School Unified Basketball team hosted its counterpart from Middlebury for a game on May 1. Here, Commodore Thomas Mentzer connects with the crowd as he advances the ball up the court.

Independent file photo/Steve James



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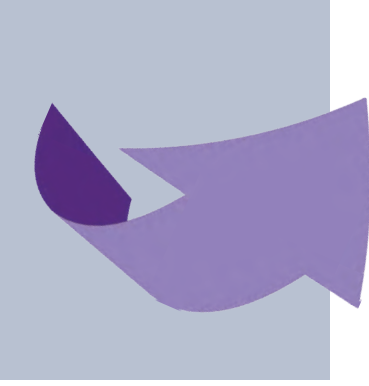
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Chronology 2025

(Continued from Page 12A)

She succeeded Principal Bjarki Sears, who was stepping down to resume his career as a Social Studies teacher at Middlebury Union Middle School.

Addison resident Sophia Parker in May was named Miss Vermont 2025. Parker holds a BSN in Nursing and works as a Registered Nurse in the Emergency Department at the University of Vermont Medical Center. She is also a sergeant/medic in the Vermont Army National Guard and rehabilitates injured wildlife.

Middlebury College faculty in the spring urged administrators to divest from the institution's graduate school in Monterey, Calif., in the wake of recently-announced compensation cuts and other steps aimed at filling a projected \$14.1 million deficit for this fiscal year. More than 200 people — many faculty and staff members — gathered on campus in mid-May to protest the compensation cuts and similar measures.

Coincidentally the Mount Abraham Unified School District and its teachers' union in May settled on a new contract for professional staff that includes salary increases of 9%, 6.25% and 5.50% over the next three years. The contract will take effect July 1.

In a three-way race for two Pantton selectboard seats, residents on May 15 strongly endorsed a family farm owner and a town business owner to fill the two newly created seats on the board. BJ's Farm Supply co-owner Robert DeGraaf outpooled Debbie Brace, 81-13, for a one-year term on what will now be a five-member selectboard. Farm owner Kirsten De La Cruz defeated Brace, 80-14, for a two-year term. Brace had filed for both seats.

In other civic leadership news, former Ferrisburgh Selectboard Chair Jessica James was tapped by the selectboard to serve as Ferrisburgh's new town clerk.

The Middlebury Area Land Trust in May announced it had selected Kevin Fox as its new executive director. Fox brings more than 25 years of proven leadership in conservation and sustainable development on a global scale. At the time he was serving as a U.S. Foreign Service Officer with USAID and was directing a \$250 million climate and biodiversity portfolio across the Amazon rainforest and Eastern Tropical Pacific Ocean from his post in Lima, Peru. Fox would officially join MALT in early July.

June

Readers of the *Addison Independent* Summer Guide in June got some ideas about what would make a good "staycation" in the Green Mountain State and read about how outdoor musical performances could be paired with picnics to make a fun seasonal activity.

Folks in Vergennes got a scare in early June when a Trump Administration plan to halt youth training programs at 100 facilities nationwide spelled closure of the Northland Job Corps program by the end of the month. Northlands employed 110 people and educated more than 150. It would have been more than 150, but the President's



May 22, 2025

JAKE WILEY LOVES his dogs! He must — the Middlebury resident takes these four pooches on daily walks, which turn into trots and sometimes full-out jogs that end up as long as five miles. They are shown here on Monday as they ramble through the Marble Works. Wiley said when he gets this quartet home he planned to take out his Bernese mountain dog for a warm-down.

Independent file photo/John S. McCright

people had stopped OKing new students earlier in the year. While the feds said the Job Corps programs weren't achieving their aims, Northlands Director Michael Dooley told the *Independent*, "We placed 80% of our graduates (in jobs) prior to them leaving the center this year." There was some hope, since the National Job Corps Association had filed a lawsuit asking a court to temporarily stop the closure of all Job Corps programs. Like many Trump edicts, this one was ending up in court.

In the meantime, Middlebury College officials in June continued to keep a close eye on federal action that could affect the institution's international community, after U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio said that the U.S. would "aggressively revoke" visas for Chinese students.

The Turning Point Center of Addison County on June 3 launched a public health vending machine at its 79 Court St. headquarters in Middlebury. A second machine was planned for Bristol in the fall. Both outdoor vending machines would be filled with what was described as "life-saving items, including naloxone (Narcan), fentanyl test strips, personal hygiene products and wound care supplies." Free and available 24/7 "without stigma or barriers, access to the vending machines is vital for a safe and supported community," read a press release about the machines. Turning Point Center is one of 12 peer recovery centers in Vermont that offer support for individuals and their families seeking recovery from substance use disorder and other addictions.

Saying she's been targeted by a growing number of personal attacks and threats from those opposed to her political views, and citing difficulty in securing enough shifts as a Registered Nurse at the University of Vermont Medical Center, Rep. Mari Cordes resigned from her Addison-4 district seat in June. The Bristol Democrat was moving to take a nursing job in Nova Scotia, Canada.

Middlebury lost a public servant of much distinction when former



May 29, 2025

MONDAY WAS BUSY with Memorial Day parades. Tractors parade down Green Street in the Little City.

Independent file photo/Steve James

longtime Middlebury selectboard member John Tenny died at age 77. He was credited with, among other things, catalyzing a closer relationship between the town and Middlebury College. Dozens of prominent buildings and infrastructure projects in Addison County bear his fingerprints. Tenny's contributions to the shire town will last for many generations, according to those who knew and worked with him.

In early June, crews from six local departments responded to a house fire on Salisbury's Shard Villa Road. Two residents escaped with minor injuries, but a dog was killed in the blaze. Salisbury firefighters were assisted by departments from Middlebury, Brandon, Whiting, Weybridge and Cornwall. First responders from Middlebury Regional EMS also lent a hand.

While the work to tear down all but the original 1924 structure of Middlebury's Ilsley Library had started in the spring, in June ground was formally broken on the new two-story addition, which will add 8,000 square feet of space to the Main Street structure.

Bristol's Devin Wendel in June was named the Northern Vermont

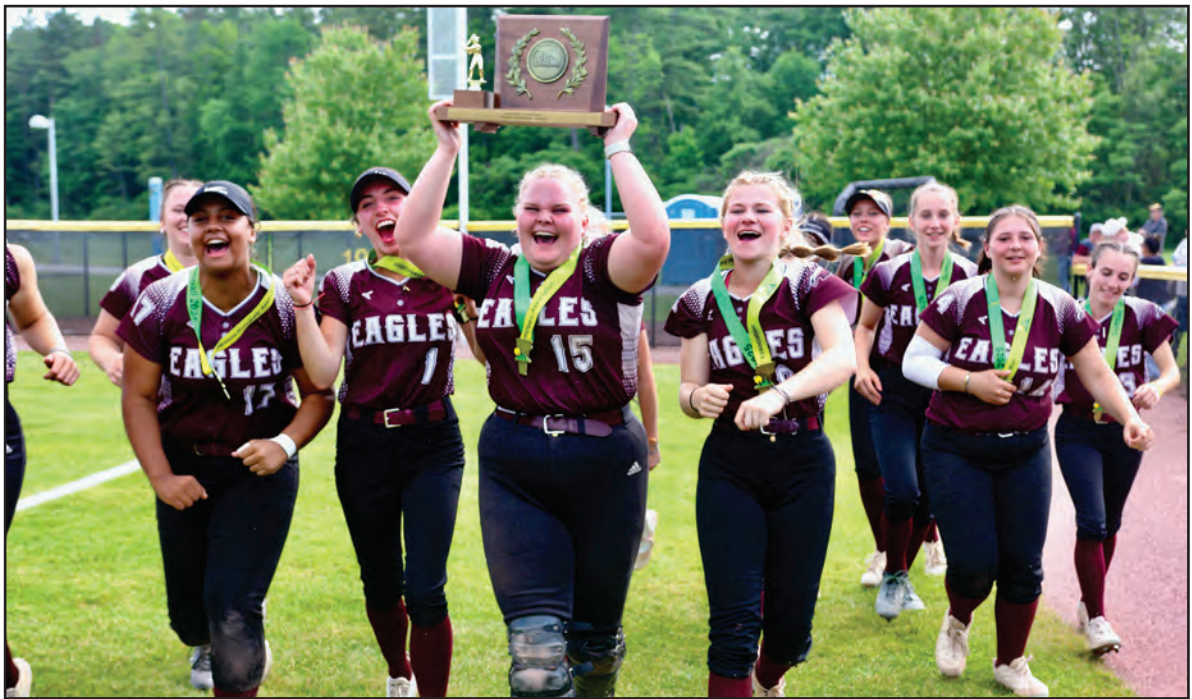
Athletic Director of the Year by the Vermont State Athletic Directors Association. The annual award recognizes recipients whose contributions have "significantly impacted school communities and interscholastic athletics in Vermont." Wendel serves as Athletic Director & Activities Coordinator at Mount Abraham Union Middle/High School and as president of the Vermont State Athletic Directors Association.

In June, there were few if any groups of homeless people to be seen in downtown Middlebury. But advocates for the unhoused said there were still people living outside in the woods or other less-conspicuous spots, choosing a more solitary existence, away from construction and in deference to a new Middlebury encampment ordinance.

In mid-June Vergennes officials were hearing more — and less — about the state's plan to site in Vergennes a 14-bed locked detention and counseling center for teens with law enforcement involvement. A state official on June 12 wrote to Vergennes Zoning Administrator David Austin and City Manager Ron Redmond that the Department of Buildings and Grounds is no longer interested in pursuing a zoning change needed to build such a facility on a state-owned 8-acre site on Comfort Hill in northern Vergennes.

In Middlebury, folks were seeing the largest subdivision in the town's history quickly moving from two-dimensional drawings to vertical construction on a 30-acre site off Seminary Street Extension. Stonecrop Meadows is a new neighborhood that is projected to feature around 250 units of affordable, workforce and market-rate homes, both for sale and rent. As Phase One went up, modular structures were being constructed off-site and assembled in Middlebury. The first six-unit building had been sold through the Vermont Housing Finance Agency's (VHFA) Middle-Income Homeownership Program and were expected to be occupied by late summer.

Near month's end, farmers around Addison County said cooler weather meant a slower start to
(See June, Page 14A)



June 19, 2025

SENIOR CO-CAPTAIN ELISE Parker, with the D-II trophy, leads the Eagles in a charge out of their post-game meeting after winning the title on Saturday.

Independent file photo/Steve James



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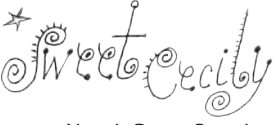
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Chronology 2025

(Continued from Page 13A)

this year's growing season, but they were still optimistic for a decent year. But many would find that the cold start gave way to a parched summer as crops and cows struggled with dry conditions.

After more than a year of construction, Town Hall Theater officials finally unfurled the facility's new 7,000-square-foot, three-story addition fronting Merchants Row. On June 27-28, the curtain officially rose on the \$8.5 million transformation of THT, improvements that will further solidify the facility as the community's hub for visual and performing arts. The celebration included a variety of entertainment, food, magic shows, stunt performers and a modicum of pomp and circumstance one would expect in saluting an achievement that required many months of planning, fundraising and the artful use of a tricky expansion site above Otter Creek.

Were local residents angry at President Trump in June? It would seem so. More than 2,500 people participated in No Kings Day rallies organized at several Addison County locations on June 14. Attendees brought their signs, voices and energy to what was a nationwide protest of Trump Administration policies that they believe demonstrate an increasingly authoritarian presidency. We saw nice-size crowds in Leicester and Salisbury. More than 700 people flooded Middlebury's Court Square and its downtown. Still more protesters gathered in clusters along Route 7 from Salisbury to North Ferrisburgh — as well as an estimated 525 in the Vergennes City Park. It was an energizing experience for many.

July

As the dog days of summer unfolded in Addison County, a group of community members had their sights set on the upcoming school year and the fate of the Ripton Elementary School building. The school had shuttered its doors to K-5 instruction the prior month due to declining student enrollment,



June 5, 2025

FLYING TIGERS DRONE Club members Eben Smith, Raphael Mitchell and Alden Sherry each keep their eyes on their unmanned aerial vehicles during a recent gathering at Middlebury's Patricia Hannaford Career Center.

Independent file photo/Steve James

and a panel made up of Ripton residents and Addison Central School District officials planned to spend the summer brainstorming potential future uses for the school building.

An injunction by a federal judge in early July saved Northlands Job Corps, the federal job training site in Vergennes — for now. The Trump Administration had said it would close 100 Job Corps training programs, including Northlands, which gave job skills to hundreds of young adults over the years and currently employed more than 100 Vermonters. The judge's decision allows Job Corps centers across the country to remain open while the legal battle to determine their fate continues.

Meanwhile in the 5-town area, Democratic leaders in Bristol, Lincoln, Monkton and Starksboro had supplied Gov. Phil Scott with two names to consider as he prepared to appoint someone to serve the remainder of a two-year term vacated in June by former Addison-4 House Rep. Mari Cordes, a Bristol Democrat. Those names were: former Addison-4 Rep. Dave Sharpe of Bristol, and

Lincoln School District Board Chair Jeanne Albert.

Local residents in July expressed mixed feelings about the landmark education reform bill signed into law at the beginning of the month. The bill, then known as H.454 and now called Act 73, set up a process for potentially making significant changes to how Vermont's schools are funded and run in the coming years. Some residents were worried the legislation would shutter smaller rural schools, while others felt the bill had moved too quickly through the legislature.

In Middlebury, the Patricia A. Hannaford Career Center was gearing up for a new course offering set to kick off in the fall — a two-year track that would allow students to earn credentials ranging from First Aid/CPR to Emergency Medical Technician and Certified Phlebotomy Technician. The new Emergency Medical Responder curriculum would be led by Stefanie E. Wilbur, MSN, RN.

Community members were also bracing for food assistance cuts after President Donald Trump signed into law a massive tax-and-spending bill that included funding cuts and other changes to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, a food assistance program that serves more than 40 million people around the country.

The county's two homeless shelters were seeing an uptick in demand following the July 1 sunset of the state's motel voucher program. The end of that program sent over 300 Vermont households into uncertain housing situations.

Federal funding cuts were also casting uncertainty over the future of disaster relief programs that had previously helped Vermont. State and local officials were worried reductions in staff and funding at the Federal Emergency Management Agency could hinder the state's ability to respond to and recover from future disasters, like floods experienced the prior two summers.

One such weather event blew through the county that month, when severe thunderstorms, high winds and deluges on July 10 resulted in severe damage to homes and other



June 12, 2025

STANDING FOR THE national anthem at the beginning of the VUHS graduation ceremonies on Friday is Kendra Jackson.

Independent file photo/Steve James

buildings across the county. Roads were closed, trees and powerlines were brought down, and winds peeled back a 4,000-square-foot section of the Middlebury Union High School roof.

In other school news, local districts were wary of how the Trump Administration's decision to withhold anticipated federal funding from Vermont school districts might affect the services those learning communities provide. The Vermont Agency of Education had been alerted that \$26 million of congressionally approved funding would not be made available to the state's public schools on July 1, and some school leaders were uncertain if districts would ultimately receive those funds.

In Vergennes, Catharine Hays was preparing to step down from the role she'd served in for five years as the director of the Bixby Free Memorial Library. Also in the Little City, officials from Vergennes and Panton unveiled a few options for pinning down the uncertain boundaries between the two municipalities, which had been debated for at least three decades.

In July Bristol got a new town administrator. The selectboard hired Gregory W. Faust to serve in the role, with an anticipated start date of July 28. He would succeed former Bristol town administrator Valerie Capels, who retired from the post in December 2024. He would bring more than two decades of leadership experience in military service, housing development and public sector innovation. More recently, Faust served as project manager for the City of Phoenix Housing Development Division in Arizona.

Over in the county's shire town, new Middlebury College President Ian Baucom was settling into his role and homing in on priorities for the months ahead. Those focuses included the future of Middlebury College's graduate school in Monterey, Calif., and efforts to balance the institution's budget, which had been a contentious issue with faculty and staff earlier in the year.

Officials at Porter Medical Center were working to ramp up safety protocols in the wake of a new state law requiring hospitals to establish and implement "workplace violence security plans."

(See July, Page 15A)



June 26, 2025

U.S. REP. BECCA Balint speaks passionately at the Charity and Sylvia Historic Marker Dedication in Weybridge Saturday.

Independent file photo/Steve James



July 10, 2025

APPRECIATIVE SPECTATORS LINED the 1.6-mile route through the Bristol streets Friday morning for the annual Fourth of July parade, which was as big and fantastic as ever. Sprinkled in among the horses, acrobats, Scouts, bikes, bands and floats, one could see Arlo the Peace Dove (above) created for the parade and carried by the group Indivisible Northeast Addison County.

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Chronology 2025

(Continued from Page 14A)

And to cap off the month, the popular Addison County Fair and Field Days returned to the New Haven fairgrounds — a week earlier than usual.

August

August in Addison County started out on a dry note, and local residents continued to battle drought throughout the month. Jon Lucas of Lucas Dairy in Orwell reported hauling 5,000 gallons of water each day for his cows, noting the dry conditions were affecting farmers across the region. Local municipalities and state officials looked to help keep residents cool and prevent human-caused fires.

County officials were also exploring ways to contend with extreme heat and support residents during hotter stretches, particularly as warmer days are becoming increasingly hotter and more frequent as a result of climate change. Towns pointed to some of the challenges they faced in those efforts, such as when it came to staffing cooling stations.

In Middlebury, Porter Medical Center was feeling the impact of layoffs of 77 employees network-wide announced by the University of Vermont Health Network. The medical center in Middlebury expected to see four jobs cut as a result of the layoffs, and improvements to the emergency room at Porter were also anticipated to be postponed as part of the network's effort to reduce spending through deferring capital projects.

At another Middlebury institution, Rachel Lee was getting ready to step down from her role as executive director of the Counseling Service of Addison County. Her future plans called for building and administering a new foundation that would offer grants to entities looking to make a difference in the fields of health care, children and families, education and the environment.

Also in Middlebury, the Turning Point Center of Addison County was gearing up for an expansion and renovation of its new headquarters at 79 Court St. That project included a 750-square-foot addition that would allow the team to better host group meetings, as well as renovations to the main building and former garage space.

Construction — albeit further down the road — was also on the minds of other community members. Addison County Regional Planning Commission officials in August were working with local residents and town leaders to update the housing and land-use sections of the county's regional plan. That process was being informed by two new state laws aimed at tackling Vermont's housing crisis and boost its housing stock.

In Addison, Michelle Bishop was bringing her 27 years' worth of experience serving in various early education roles to a new endeavor — opening a childcare and preschool program in the Addison Community Center, which

July 3, 2025

DOWNTOWN MIDDLEBURY WAS teeming with arts enthusiasts Friday and Saturday for a grand opening celebration of the expanded Town Hall Theater. Master trumpeter Rodney Marsalis does his thing with some backup brass as part of the festivities.

Independent file photo/Steve James

was once Addison Central School. The Growing Tree opened its doors on Aug. 4 and planned to offer full-day, center-based childcare to children ages 32 months to five years.

Vermont artists weighed in on U.S. Sen. Peter Welch's Transparency and Responsibility for Artificial Intelligence Networks (TRAIN) Act. The legislation would require that artificial intelligence developers document copyrighted material used in training and develop transparency standards intended to protect artists without stifling innovation, among other things. Artists pointed to the various questions and issues that arise with the use of AI in the arts, such as when it comes to transparency.

Back in Middlebury, a Manchester-based company announced plans to build a 4.125-megawatt solar project on 22 acres of land off Middle Road South, and the town's planning commission held a public meeting on the proposal.

Middlebury selectboard members in August overwhelmingly endorsed a citizen-initiated resolution that asked the board to show "unwavering" support for the principles of due process and to "unequivocally condemn" any governmental attempts to target individuals based on race, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, social class and citizenship status.

Addison County business owners were trying to navigate shifting tariffs created by President Donald Trump. Anthony Gerakos, co-owner of Little Seed Coffee Roasters in Middlebury, noted his business had made changes to cope with tariffs imposed on coffee, though the unpredictability of the trade policies made it challenging for businesses to plan.

Volunteer fire departments around the county were also facing some challenges, particularly in recruiting and retaining firefighters. Local fire chiefs pointed to some of the factors hindering those efforts, such as declining volunteerism and a high cost of living prompting

July 31, 2025

SHEARER SIRI SWANSON positions a Finnish Landrace sheep to get him ready for a fresh shave on Tuesday at Field Days. The sheep's owner, Bailee Layn-Gordon, stands behind to snap a photo of the beloved Finn pre-haircut.

Independent file photo/Steve James

young Vermonters to leave the state.

And as another school year kicked off in Addison County, the Mount Abraham Unified School District Board identified several options for educational delivery in the district that it wanted to explore further. The action marked a step forward in the district's effort to contemplate options for the future of the school district amid ongoing challenges to offer the educational experience it seeks to at a cost that's suitable to taxpayers.

A local fifth-grader had his ultimate wish granted in August. Eleven-year-old Will Gillespie of Middlebury, who has a rare seizure disorder and nonverbal autism, spent the afternoon exploring the new sensory garden constructed in his backyard by the non-profit Make-a-Wish Vermont and Northern New York. The garden, constructed in Will's backyard, incorporates natural elements and considers Will's sensory needs to create a unique space for him and his family.

After the successful run of another Middlebury New Filmmakers Festival, a camera crew set up shop in Town Hall Theater. The theater was filled not with actors on stage, but with 86 ordinary Middlebury residents and students trying their hand at movie magic. Emmy Award-winning filmmakers Matt Valdez and Collin Davis needed people to sit in the theater's seats and applaud on command while the directors filmed the scene for a movie they had all but completed. Valdez and Davis had shot a film about a musician, but they needed

a scene in which an enthusiastic audience in an old theater reacted to the culminating performance. Said one unpaid extra: "I think it was a really great experience."

September

September opened with the community talking about the recently concluded 11th annual Middlebury New Filmmakers Festival, which featured films from across the state and the world. The five-day extravaganza broke its attendance record this year, selling 5,568 tickets to see 108 films, including its sold-out screening of "La Liga," a documentary about a soccer league formed by immigrant dairy farmworkers, including many from Addison County.

The start of the month, and the new school year, brought changes to Middlebury College. Officials announced that the institution would end its residential graduate programs and certain online degree programs at its graduate school in Monterrey, Calif. Middlebury College faculty and students had urged administrators to close the facility, including last spring when administrators announced compensation cuts to balance the budget. The Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterrey, known as MIIS, saw enrollments steadily decline following the pandemic. Faculty stated that MIIS accounted for more than \$25 million a year of the college's operating losses.

(See September, Page 15A)

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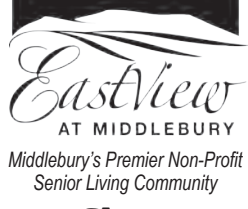
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Chronology 2025

(Continued from Page 15A)

The creation of a new radio station serving the 5-town area came closer to fruition as local community members worked to set up a radio tower and raise funds for other equipment. Jonathan Corcoran of Monkton said he hoped a community radio station called WVVT would uplift local voices and bring Addison County residents together through conversation and shared experience.

Also in Bristol, six monks from the historic Gaden Shartse Monastic College in India visited the town as part of a two-year tour around the U.S. The “Sacred Earth and Healing Arts of Tibet Tour” helps raise funds for the monastery and is also aimed at sharing the Tibetan Buddhist monks’ culture and practices.

In Middlebury’s Wright Park, Tracy and Bruce Wilhelm created a Wind Phone in memory of their eldest son Luke, who had been killed in a climbing accident. The idea of a Wind Phone originated 15 years ago in Japan, when some grieving relatives wanted to talk to family member killed in an earthquake and tsunami. Similar to such devices in Japan, the Wind Phone in Wright Park is an unconnected rotary phone housed in a cedar structure. Visitors are invited to lift the receiver and “call” loved ones who have died, speaking to them through the wind.

The town of Cornwall weighed options for a new town garage, which is around 50 years old and struggling to accommodate a growing fleet of vehicles and equipment. The selectboard commissioned a very preliminary estimate on the cost of renovating and expanding the current structure, which came back in at between \$1 million and \$1.25 million. The town has also considered other locations that could house the town garage but noted they’re still exploring options.

Meanwhile, Porter Medical Center saw its 2026 operating budget approved by the Green Mountain Care Board (GMCB) following slight downsizing trimmed proposed salary increases



September 25, 2025

A HERON is stymied by the muck in a local marsh, which has seen its water levels dwindle due to the drought. Extremely dry conditions have resulted in farmers dealing with the lack of rain's impact on pastures and crops.

Photo by Dottie Nelson



September 11, 2025

SIX MONKS FROM the historic Gaden Shartse Monastic College in India visited Bristol as part of a two-year tour around the U.S. The “Sacred Earth and Healing Arts of Tibet Tour” helps raise funds for the monastery and is also aimed at sharing the Tibetan Buddhist monks’ culture and practices. Geshe Lundup Phuntshok works on the sand mandala this past Friday.

Independent file photo/Steve James



August 14, 2025

CROWDS OF PEOPLE at Saturday’s Morgan Horse Farm Vermont Day eagerly reach out to touch one of the resident steeds at the farm in Weybridge. The Morgan horse, which was first bred in the Green Mountain State in the late 1700s, is the Vermont State Animal.

Independent file photo/Steve James

of three-quarters of a million dollars to top administrators at the University of Vermont Health Network. The GMCB has repeatedly expressed concern about UVMHN’s administrative costs and financial decision-making, though GMCB board member Jessica Holmes said Porter was on the right track.

Also in Middlebury, bike riders cycled through Addison County in pouring rain as part of the 20th annual Kelly Brush Ride, which raised a whopping \$1.25 million to help people with spinal injuries access adaptive sports equipment.

In Vergennes, State Rep. Matt Birong drew anger from constituents following a visit to Israel alongside four other Vermont House members and 245 of their legislative counterparts in other states. The trip, known as the Fifty States–One Israel Conference, was held in Jerusalem and sponsored by the Israeli government. Some of Birong’s constituents expressed their disappointment in his presence at the conference following Israel’s war on Gaza, which at the time had killed over 65,000 Palestinians, including 18,430 children. In August, the United Nations declared a human-made famine in Gaza, and in mid-September announced that Israel had committed genocide in Gaza. Birong said he spent his time in Israel speaking with individuals about the conflict and sought to draw a distinction between the people in the conflict and their governments, though he acknowledged he did not visit Gaza nor did he comment on the number of Palestinians who have lost their lives.

Throughout Addison County, farms and residents continued to mitigate the impacts of an intense drought that saw the driest August on record in Vermont. Local farmers have had to take alternative steps to take care of their crops and animals, such as trucking in large amounts of water. Farmers were also concerned that the drought would leave them short on feed for their animals and place even more financial stress on their operations.

Downtown Middlebury saw a prominent change as the popular



September 18, 2025

TWO GIRAFFE PUPPETS bring their heads together for a private conference during their performance at Middlebury Union Middle School. They were among four 26-foot-tall giraffes operated by a dozen members of the French performance troupe Compagnie OFF to shouts of amazement.

Independent file photo/Steve James

nonprofit thrift boutique Buy Again Alley ended its six-year run at 60 Main St. in Middlebury, and planned to move into a space on Washington Street. A new shop called “Cobweb Antiques” took up residence in the Main Street space.

A Bristol resident was among the founders of a new group called RATS, which stands for Rural Adult Twenty Somethings. It seeks to organize social gatherings that help connect local residents in their 20s.

Nearly 300 people of all ages participated in September’s 22nd Annual TAM Trek. The day included a footrace around the entire 19-mile Trail Around Middlebury (popularly known as the TAM), and 5K runs for adults and kids in Middlebury’s Wright Park. The race is a major fundraiser for the Middlebury Area Land Trust, which in 1989 began building the TAM — a scenic trail spanning conserved lands in the communities of Middlebury.

October

Trump’s battle against immigrants came to Addison County in October when Panton’s Juan De La Cruz, a native of Mexico who has lived in the United States for two decades — reported to the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) office in St. Albans in October for a check-in with no assurance that he would not be held and deported, as many other immigrants around the country have been. A crowd of around 100 of his supporters

accompanied him to the building and erupted in cheers when he exited the building. Married to a local woman, the father of two U.S. citizen children and employed as a stone mason and meat cutter with no criminal record, ICE said they’d allow De La Cruz to remain in Panton for at least another six months, when another mandated check-in will occur.

After years of discussion, Addison Northwest School District in the fall of 2024 moved its 6th-graders from Vergennes Union Elementary and Ferrisburgh Central School and began educating them with 7th- and 8th-graders at Vergennes Union Middle School, which shares a Monkton Road building with the high school. A year after taking the momentous step, school officials in the fall of 2025 were calling the move a success. The key, they said, was getting buy-in from teachers, administrators and students.

Addison Central School District restarted a discussion it had put on hold. An architectural firm working with the district to map out improvements to the ACSD’s nine school buildings this month suggested \$20.8 million in upgrades to Middlebury’s Mary Hogan Elementary. It would address deferred maintenance and create more appropriate K-5 learning spaces. Price tags for fixes as the other school buildings would be coming this year.

Students at Bristol Elementary School welcomed a special guest to the learning community in October — Whiskey the cow. The cow, which belongs to the family of MAUSD Superintendent Patrick Reen, was (See October, Page 17A)



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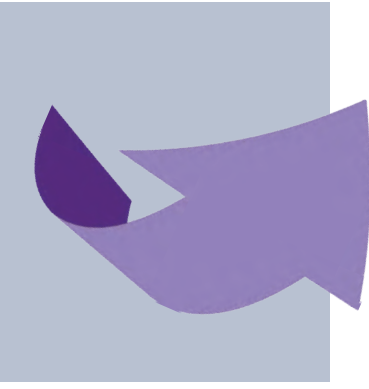
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Chronology 2025

(Continued from Page 16A)

there to take part in a “Kiss the Cow” Principal’s Challenge at the elementary school. Such events are intended to celebrate good student behavior and consist of the school’s administration team completing an activity that’s silly, slightly embarrassing or challenging in some way. Students and staff at the school gathered outside and cheers as, one by one, Principal Aaron Boynton and Assistant Principals Bill Huggett and Anne McKinney took turns planting a kiss on the cow. From photos of the event, it appeared that Whiskey was unimpressed.

In October, Vermont Health officials reported mosquitoes in Vergennes had tested positive for the Eastern equine encephalitis (EEE) virus. They urged Vermonters to protect themselves from mosquito bites, warning the virus — while rare — can be serious and deadly to humans.

This month we reported that Bristol American Legion Post 19 members Ron LaRose and Jeremy Revell had been elected to serve in national positions. LaRose will serve as American Legion National Vice Commander for the Northeast Region, and Revell was elected to serve in the same role for the Sons of the American Legion.

After the Boys & Girls Club of Greater Vergennes closed in March and the Vergennes Rec Department took it over, city Rec Coordinator Martha DeGraaf told the Vergennes City Council this month that more youths are coming to 20 Armory Lane to what is now the Commodore Club than did this past spring — an average of 15. And over the summer, the club partnered with the school district to offer lunch and breakfast.

Among the private groups that support veterans is one that has spent the past 22 years stitching together fantastic fabric creations designed to metaphorically and literally impart warmth to the nation’s veterans. The group called “Quilts of Valor” is an organization of avid craftspeople who each year make hundreds of quilts that are then given to those who served (or who continue to do so). Representatives

of Quilts of Valor and Ferrisburgh’s Patriotic Spirits turned out at the Middlebury Quilt Show in October to drape seven area veterans (and one from Maine) in fabric finery featuring stars, stripes, red, white, blue, deer, soldier silhouettes and other “wow” factors.

Addison County residents joined the millions nationwide who took part in No Kings Day protests in all 50 states on Oct. 18. Marchers of all ages voiced their support for the country, with more than 1,000 gathered in the county’s shire town. Vergennes City Green hosted a lively protest that saw more than 750 participants waving signs and accepting positive honks of support. Nearly 500 showed up in downtown Brandon. The message to our elected president was simple: Be nice, follow the law, tell the truth, stop treating your detractors as enemies, and it takes all kinds of people to make a great nation.

The stage was set for the long-awaited major renovation of the Salisbury Free Public Library and the Town Hall that hosts the institution when the library in October began a move into the basement of Salisbury Congregational Church, just 350 feet away.

As the month wound down, the community was getting anxious looking for Lia Smith, a Middlebury College senior who was missing. Teams of people were looking for her, and trying not to expect the worst possible outcome. But two weeks after she went missing, authorities found her body near the college garden and confirmed she died by suicide.

New Haven residents gathered to share ideas to better the community’s future. The town is working with the Vermont Council on Rural Development on a Community Visit process, through which neighbors work together to identify priorities for the town and steps to move toward those priorities.

Vermont Attorney General Charity Clark stopped in Addison County to give an update. She said she had filed 32 lawsuits against the Trump administration since the president’s inauguration in January, and they shared a common theme:



October 23, 2025

COWS AT ORWELL’S Lazy Dog Farm greet U.S. Sen. Peter Welch, right, and Vermont Secretary of Agriculture Anson Tebbetts during their visit to the farm Friday. Lazy Dog Farm owner Jesse Wilbur led visitors on a tour of the farm, highlighting how drought conditions have impacted the organic dairy farm’s pastures.

Independent file photo/Steve James



October 9, 2025

SIGN-HOLDING SUPPORTERS of Panton’s Juan De La Cruz showed up in force at the St. Albans ICE headquarters on Tuesday to urge federal authorities to allow the Mexican national to remain in the U.S. De La Cruz is employed, has lived in the U.S. for 20 years, and is married to a local woman with whom he has two children.

Photo courtesy of Helena Van Voorst

“Almost every case, if not every single case, really relates to the rule of law,” she told the *Independent*. Litigation has been a defining factor of the second Trump administration, as it is in his business career.

On Vermont’s behalf, Clark has filed many lawsuits to block some of Trump’s actions — more than half as many lawsuits in the just 10 months as the state filed during Trump’s entire first term. Most of the actions were taken alongside attorneys general from anywhere from 11 to 24 other states. Clark said Trump’s rule-by-decree approach to enacting policy, often through executive orders, has pushed the boundaries of what’s legal in a system that divides power among the executive, judicial and legislative branches of government.

November

The Middlebury College community kicked off the month of November by officially welcoming President Ian B. Baucom to his post. Baucom’s installation ceremony culminated a weekend of events that gathered the college community together and considered the question, “What is Middlebury for?”

The college community and others around the region and state were also mourning the loss of Middlebury College senior Lia Smith, who had died by suicide in October. Local residents and members of the trans community reflected on Smith’s life, opportunities to support trans youth and the hardships they face, particularly amidst recent state laws and executive orders targeting trans people.

After Hurricane Melissa

devastated the Caribbean, Addison County residents joined others in rallying around the hundreds of Jamaican farmworkers who come to Vermont each year to work at orchards and farms around the state. Shoreham’s Champlain Orchards and Sunrise Orchards in Cornwall were among the Vermont farms behind a fundraising campaign aimed at supporting farmworkers returning home after the hurricane.

Community members in November were also working to support their neighbors amid a lapse in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits during the federal government shutdown. Helping Overcome Poverty’s Effects (HOPE) in Middlebury welcomed more individuals seeking groceries through the organization’s food shelf and the Addison Central School District announced it would offer “take home food boxes” for ACSD families that requested one.

A couple of local municipalities were trending toward Town Meeting Day votes on whether to implement a local option tax in their communities. In Vergennes, members of the Parks & Recreation Committee highlighted several projects the additional revenue could support, such as completion of the pavilion in Veterans Park and a rec center. Over in Bristol, town officials noted money generated through the tax could be put toward capital infrastructure projects, economic development and other priorities.

In Middlebury, the Counseling Service of Addison County Board selected Taylor Morley to succeed Rachel Lee as executive director of the organization.

Members of the Otter Valley Unified Union school board were exploring the potential reconfiguration and closure of elementary schools in the district, including Otter Creek Academy schools in Leicester and Whiting. School district officials were working toward a December board decision on the matter, with a potential new configuration to be in place for the start of the 2026-2027 academic year.

In nearby Orwell, a large grant gave a boost to the citizen-led effort to obtain, renovate and return the former Buxton’s Store building to its prior use as a commercial hub. The town was selected as one of five beneficiaries of the 2025 Village Trust Initiative, which offers financial and technical assistance to support such projects.

Some of the county’s youngest residents and their families gathered in Middlebury for a ribbon cutting at the Otter Creek Child Center, an event celebrating the completion of a three-story, 12,000-square-foot addition to the building. The around \$12 million project enabled the child center to increase staffing and add 77 childcare slots.

November in Vermont means the (See November, Page 17A)

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October 23, 2025

ADDISON COUNTY RESIDENTS joined the millions nationwide who took part in No Kings Day protests in all 50 states on Saturday. Marchers of all ages voiced their support for the country, including in this group near Middlebury’s town green. More than 1,000 gathered in the county’s shire town.

Independent file photo/Steve James





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Chronology 2025

(Continued from Page 17A)

start of rifle season, which got off to a slow start for hunters in Addison County. A total of 131 hunters had bucks weighed at the region’s reporting stations on opening weekend, the lowest total for the weekend in at least the past decade. Some farmers in the county had shifted to another option for feeding their livestock — sorghum sudangrass. The annual grass crop is drought-resistant and can provide a resilient option for farmers’ forage systems, something local farmers gathered to learn more about after the severe drought that hit the state during the growing season. Community members unveiled a new vending machine in Bristol — one that dispensed lifesaving products like Narcan, first aid kits and hygiene items for free. The public health vending machine, located next to the Bristol Police Department, is one of two in Addison County that can be accessed by anyone at any time.

And as the month came to a close, the Addison Central School District Board decided to move forward with the consolidation and closure of a few schools in the district. The board voted in favor of a plan that will blend Shoreham’s kindergarten through 5th-grade students into Bridport Central School beginning in the 2026-2027 school year. School district officials also agreed to begin the formal closing of Ripton Elementary School starting next fall, a move that still needs an affirmative vote by school district voters on Town Meeting Day.

December

While residents in the seven Addison Central School District towns are thinking about how they can keep their elementary schools open with declining enrolment, they found out in December that there’s one outlier among the nine school buildings ACSD is sizing up for potential upgrades — Middlebury Union Middle School. Architects told the school board that MUMS could use more space to accommodate a student body that has swelled since it began receiving the district’s sixth-graders three years ago. District officials reviewed a report that suggests a range of \$41.9 million to \$45.4 million in repairs and additions to the district’s middle school, which was built in 1996. Citing mounting professional and family responsibilities — and his conviction that volunteer boards need regular turnover — longtime Middlebury selectboard Chairman Brian Carpenter made it official that he won’t seek reelection in March. He said he was very busy dealing with an expansion into New York of his business, Champlain Valley Equipment. “The town needs



November 6, 2025

SURROUNDED BY HAPPY teammates, Tiger junior captain Ida Blackwell hoists the MUHS volleyball team’s championship trophy after Sunday’s Division II volleyball final at St. Michael’s College.

Independent file photo/Steve James

focus, and my focus is going to be elsewhere for a couple of years,” he said.

While one prominent local food purveyor was getting ready to sell his business, another was ramping up. After 43 years as owner of Middlebury’s Green Peppers Restaurant, Mark Perrin can make pizza pies in his sleep. This month, he and his spouse Donna said they’re selling their 10 Washington St. business to Christian Bloom, who owns and operates The Retro Realm, an old-school arcade located in the same building as Green Peppers.

At the same time, Bristol’s Farmhouse Chocolates, a business that makes dark chocolate hand-rolled truffles, salted caramels and chocolate bars, among other treats, said it has partnered with Eat Vermont — a collaboration that will net their company resources and support to modernize its operations, expand its reach, and plan strategically for the future. Through the partnership, Eat Vermont has invested in the business and acquired a minority stake in Farmhouse Chocolates.

Over in Vergennes, local promoters thought they’d try something a little different to get the Little City into the holiday mood. Santa got help from the local farming community in spreading good cheer to folks when he showed up in Vergennes’s first-ever Holiday Roll Tractor Parade. The parade, which drew an estimated 1,200 spectators, included a festive lineup of tractors, riding mowers and side-by-sides — all decked out in holiday lights.

Sports fans read about how Vermont is in the midst of an alarming referee shortage — a problem unfolding nationwide, but one that has hit hard in a state with a small and aging workforce. In



November 6, 2025

THE COMMODORE FANS turned out in force to support the Vergennes Union High School girls at Saturday’s D-III soccer final at Rutland High School.

Independent file photo/Steve James

the Green Mountain State, officials are spread thin covering games across 23 sports at over 70 high schools in the Vermont Principals’ Association. Trainees aren’t offsetting the number of retiring veteran officials, and the resulting gap in personnel is forcing games to be postponed or canceled. “What was just affecting a couple sports out of the wide pool of varsity sports in the state — now it’s virtually

every sport,” said Devin Wendel, president of the Vermont State Athletic Directors Association and athletic director at Mount Abraham Union High School.

Vergennes got some million-dollar news on the housing front. A big grant and a property transfer moves forward the effort to develop 74 units of workforce housing on a 14.4-acre parcel off North Main Street that mostly lies behind the Vergennes police station. The project is called “Vergennes North.” First, the Northern Borders Regional Commission that it would grant \$1 million to Vergennes to put toward the cost of building a road and related infrastructure for that project. Then the developer, Peter Kahn, a principal in Vergennes Housing Partners LLC, told the *Independent* the partnership had completed purchase of the property.

The Holiday Shop has been a seasonal HOPE fixture in Middlebury for years. This year’s edition opened on Dec. 6 and will serve eligible families through noon on Christmas Eve. The shop — thanks to the enormous generosity of Addison County residents and businesses — ensures that no children in our area will go without gifts during this special time of year. Early in the month, a trip through the shop saw shelves stacked with books, toy trucks and cars, Barbies, craft kits, puzzles, magic markers, coloring books and so much more.




December 11, 2025

SANTA GOT HELP from the local farming community in spreading good cheer to folks in the Little City Saturday, Dec. 6. It was Vergennes’s first-ever Holiday Roll Tractor Parade. The parade, which drew an estimated 1,200 spectators, included a festive lineup of tractors, riding mowers and side-by-sides — all decked out in holiday lights. Here, Cooper Corcoran drives his Cub Cadet 1811 pulling a 2006 Craftsman LT2000 Mud Mower

Photo courtesy of Vergennes Partnership



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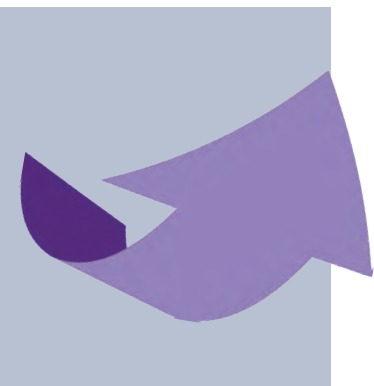
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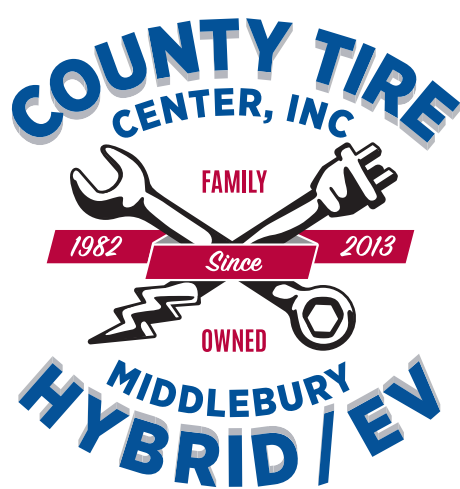
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Verner

(Continued from Page 1A)
in on something that I loved, it gave me the ability to learn how to learn.”
That experience led to a lifelong journey for Verner of acquiring other skills and hobbies. He’s toured with bands around the East Coast and can play a range of instruments, including the guitar, bass and drums. Along with jewelry and metalsmithing, his work in the fine arts includes painting, sculpture and photography.
Verner, 43, and his family have lived in Bristol for eight years, and he’s spent the past five years cooking in town at the Bobcat Café. During that time, Verner has looked to get to know his community and



local institutions like the Hub.
Located on Airport Drive within short walking distance of Mount Abraham Union Middle/High School, the Hub offers local youth ages 12-19 a safe, supervised space to hang out after school, along with other programming. The teen center is owned and operated by the Bristol Recreation Department.
Verner’s daughter, a sophomore in high school, is among the Hub’s attendees.
“She loves it. It was a spot for her to feel safe, to meet up with friends,” he said.
Verner grew up in Dorset and said the Hub offers a space for youth that his home community lacked.
“We didn’t really have anything that was quite like this, and the opportunities this offers the kids is just so mind-blowing,” he said. “To have a neutral town space that’s not directly associated with the school creates for a great social island for everybody to coexist and have some quiet, safe moments.”
When the teen center’s director position opened up, Verner said it felt like a good fit.
“This is the first time I looked at a job and was like, ‘Wow, you know what, I’m built for this job,’” he said. “Everything I’ve learned

has added up to this moment.”
Bristol Recreation Department staff agreed.
“Dylan has an extensive and diverse background that crosses (disciplines) and fields of interest, and he intrinsically understands the role the Hub plays in the lives our teens and the impacts third spaces have on the larger community,” Welch-Plante told the *Independent*.
“His varied interests and skills mean he can serve as a mentor and demonstrator for many hobbies and disciplines for the teens and larger community.”
— Taylor Welch-Plante

teens that cross our threshold made us feel confident that he would be the right person to continue to foster the Hub community and help it grow and adapt to the new youth coming in,” she continued.
Recreation Director Meridith McFarland echoed that sentiment, noting the additional perspective Verner brings to the role as a parent.
“Dylan had clearly taken the time to learn about the Hub, understood the importance of it being a true ‘third space’ for youth, and brought genuine enthusiasm to the role,” McFarland said. “As a parent with

a teen who attends the Hub, he also offered a personal connection that showed his care for the program and the community.”
LOOKING AHEAD
Verner’s personal connection to the organization has also included visits to the Hub’s skatepark with his son. The Hub has been working with community members to make the recreation area more accessible and inclusive for all users with the construction of a new, concrete skatepark.
Verner has previously worked on skatepark projects in Vermont and Maine, and he’s looking to bring that experience into his role at the Hub.
“My previous connections with people in the action sports industry I think will also embolden the chances of getting that funding done as quickly as possible because it’s a lot to get done, but that’s also a mainstay at the Hub,” he said. “There’s a lot of kids that use it; it’s great for exercise.”
Encouraging a balance between digital activities and physical activity is one of Verner’s goals for his time at the Hub.
“Obviously, most of our world exists online, so we can’t disregard that, but if we don’t learn to stop, slow down and breathe, take in a good life, what’s it for?” he said.
As a fly-fishing guide for Orvis, Verner is hoping to offer fishing clubs and lessons in fly tying throughout the winter and spring months.



DYLAN VERNER HAS acquired a wide range of skills and hobbies over the years, playing in bands, creating artwork in various mediums and most recently working as a chef at Bristol's Bobcat Café. He'll bring those diverse experiences into his new role as director of the Bristol Hub Teen Center and Skatepark, succeeding current director Taylor Welch-Plante next month.

Photo courtesy of Dylan Verner

“I’d love to bring in some of the nonprofit groups that work with our rivers,” he added.
Verner has other ideas for helping youth connect with the surrounding landscape. He and his wife previously ran a farm camp for youth in Wiscasset, Maine.
“It was really an amazing program that inspired me greatly to be, one, attached to community and two, to understand that we have a

responsibility to their future by teaching them a good foundational set of knowledge,” he said.
He’d like to bring elements of that offering to the Hub.
“I think it would be such a gift to build some gardens, youth community gardens, around the facility and to be able to do a light farm-to-table aspect to teach them how to grow their own food, to clip their own food,” Verner said.
Other ideas for building on the Hub’s current offerings include culinary programs, new media projects, outdoor excursions and opportunities for local youth to connect with mentors in the Bristol community.

“One of my brothers became a master woodworker because a local mentor decided to pick him up from a school program,” Verner said. “That always inspired me, it always made me feel good that no matter what path you’re destined for, you’re going to find your way with support and help from your community.”
Verner will step into his new position on Jan. 5, working with Welch-Plante for the first few weeks. Verner said he’s looking forward to taking on his new role.
“I’m happy to offer all that I’ve learned through these years to these kids and hopefully just be there for them,” he said. “I want to be a good support; I want to be a safe spot for them regardless of where they come from in life.”
Verner said community members can keep an eye out for future skatepark fundraisers and programming lists.
“As we move into the new year you will see me each day down at The Hub, please, stop in and say hello,” he wrote in a recent Front Porch Forum post. “I want to hear about your interests, what the Hub means to you and how we can create a rocking space for everyone.”

Growth

(Continued from Page 7A)
make enough progress, he noted.
“It’s ludicrous to think that by building one home at a time that we’re going to be able to meet (the VFP’s) goals,” Brown said.
He urged state officials to soften Vermont’s tax codes to help achieve population growth. Brown has two sons approaching military retirement age. One of them is Iraq War veteran and Navy SEAL Aaron Brown. Brown said both his sons love Vermont but aren’t considering settling here in large part because of the overall tax levy.
“We’re the second highest-taxed state. How can you attract people to this state by saying, ‘come to the second-most expensive state to live in when it comes to taxes?’” he said.
Selectman Andy Hooper asked Chu if the board would be most effective “evangelizing and suggesting the community is stronger if it has more people,” or promoting growth through Middlebury’s policies and zoning rules.
“I believe it’s a mix of that,” Chu said. “I am a firm believer that policies and process emerge from the underlying attitudes, beliefs and behaviors of a community. You get to help set the example.”
Reporter John Flowers is at johnf@addisonindependent.com.



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Boys’ hoop teams come up short

By ANDY KIRKALDY
ADDISON COUNTY — Addison County’s high school boys’ basketball teams hit a rough patch late last week, when Vergennes lost two home games, and Middlebury and Mount Abraham dropped their only outings.

Due to an early holiday deadline, games played this week could not be reported for this edition. Scores and details will be included in next week’s *Independent*.

COMMODORES

On Thursday, Dec. 18, visiting Champlain Valley pulled away in the second half to defeat VUHS, 58-46. The Commodores were clinging to a 28-26 halftime lead before the Division I Redhawks outscored them in the second half by 32-18. Owen Scott sparked CVU with 25 points.

Cohen Howell (12 points) and **Ryker Mosehauer** (10 points) scored in double figures for the Commodores.

On Saturday afternoon visiting Harwood got a combined 50 points from Steel Nelson (27) and Alex Sands (23) as the Highlanders rolled to a 77-44 victory at VUHS.

Howell (15 points) and **Theo Elzinga** (13 points) led the Commodores, who dropped to 1-2 with the pair of setbacks.

TIGERS

On Thursday, Dec. 18, visiting St. Albans defeated the Tigers, 67-45. Tripp Rabtoy (19 points) and Mac Alberico (16 points) led four Bobwhites in double figures.

Colin Chicoine led MUHS with 14 points, and **Taylor Altemose** added 10.

The Tigers (0-2 in the early going) were scheduled to visit South Burlington on Monday.

(See Boys’ hoop, Page 3B)

Score BOARD

HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS

Girls’ Basketball

12/17 Rutland vs MUHS.....	56-45
12/18 Burr & Burton vs Mt. Abe.....	45-28
12/19 St. Albans at MUHS	Postponed
12/22 Mt. Abe at Fair Haven	Late
12/23 Enosburg at MUHS	Late
12/23 VUHS at Williamstown	Late

Boys’ Basketball

12/18 St. Albans vs MUHS.....	67-45
12/18 CVU vs VUHS	58-46
12/18 U-32 vs Mt. Abe.....	83-61
12/20 Harwood vs VUHS	77-44
12/22 MUHS at S Burlington	Late
12/23 Mt. Abe at Harwood.....	Late

Boys’ Hockey

12/17 MUHS at Woodstock.....	2-0
12/20 MUHS vs Hartford.....	2-1
12/22 MUHS at S Burlington	Late

Girls’ Hockey

12/20 MUHS vs Rutland.....	3-1
12/22 MUHS at Sealakers	Late

Schedule

HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS

Girls’ Basketball

1/2 VUHS at Blue Mtn.....	7 PM
1/2 OV at MUHS	7 PM

Boys’ Basketball

12/27 Rice at MUHS	12:30 PM
12/27 OV at Mt. Abe	12:30 PM
12/27 VUHS at Spaulding	12:30 PM
12/29 Hazen at VUHS.....	7 PM
12/30 Randolph at Mt. Abe	7 PM
1/2 Fair Haven at Mt. Abe	7 PM

Boys’ Hockey

12/29 N. Country at MUHS	7 PM
12/30 Woodstock at MUHS.....	7 PM
1/3 MUHS at St J	4:45 PM

Girls’ Hockey

12/29 U-32 at MUHS.....	5 PM
12/30 Burr & Burton at MUHS.....	5 PM
1/3 MUHS at Rutland	6 PM

Wrestling

12/27	Mt. Abe at Fair Haven Duals
12/29&30	MUHS Tournament
12/29&30	VUHS at Noble Tournament
1/3 ... Mt. Abe/MUHS at MAU Tournament	
1/3	VUHS at Keene Tournament

Indoor Track & Field

12/27 VUHS/Mt. Abe at UVM.....	8 AM
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(See Schedule, Page 3B)



MUHS JUNIOR FORWARD Julia Morrissey opened the scoring for the Tiger girls’ hockey team on Saturday, tucking home this rebound of a senior Quinn Doria shot in the first period.

Independent photo/Steve James

MUHS girls’ hockey cruises past Rutland

By ANDY KIRKALDY

MIDDLEBURY — The early returns look promising for the Middlebury Union High Schools girls’ hockey team, as on this past Saturday the Tigers put together their second straight dominant effort to open the season, this time defeating visiting Rutland, 3-1.

The score is misleading, as the Tigers outshot RHS, 63-7, and only a 60-save effort by Rutland goalie Nahla Hollinger kept the final tally respectable.

MUHS Coach PJ Lalonde’s team, a Division II finalist this past winter, improved to 2-0, with the other victory being by 6-0 over visiting Stowe back on Dec. 10. The Tigers were also set to visit Colchester/Burlington on Monday after the early holiday deadline for this edition.

One thing that Lalonde has been pleased with is his team’s willingness to share the puck. The Tigers picked up 13 assists on their nine goals through their first two games.

Lalonde said he expects the Tigers’ passing accuracy to improve through the course of the season and the team to become even more efficient offensively.

“They’ve displayed some really great chemistry so far. It’s really awesome to see,” he said. “We’ve really stressed the importance of that puck movement, and it obviously creates some great opportunities. So the fact they’ve committed to that and bought in so early is a bright spot, and we’ll continue to build on it.”

At the other end of the ice, one goal against in two games speaks to solid goaltending and defense. Junior Heaven Ross in net made seven saves on Saturday after her 16-save shutout vs. Stowe. Seniors Quinn Doria and Ireland Hanley return to anchor the defensive crew, and sophomores Becka Seeley and Maggie Collins and freshman Reece Muzzi all held their own on Saturday.

Lalonde said the group made a few minor mistakes on Saturday, such as occasionally not making simple, safer plays. But he is confident in his blue liners.

“They are all strong skaters. They can all handle the puck,” he said. “They’ve got a solid season ahead of them, for sure.”

Offensively against Rutland, the Tigers asserted themselves quickly, with defenders stepping into the attack. Hanley hit a post from between the circles in the second minute, and Doria assisted junior forward Julia Morrissey’s goal with 3:41 gone.

Doria fired a low, hard shot from the left point ticketed for just inside the right post, Hollinger kicked it aside with her left skate, but Morrissey was on the doorstep to knock home the rebound.

The Tigers peppered Hollinger for the rest of the period, with

senior forward Lia Calzini on a breakaway and sophomore Nova Bojanowski on a point-blank rebound among those having chances as Hollinger made 18 saves in the first 12 minutes. Ross made

one routine stop, but Rutland’s best chance was a potential breakaway in the final minute that Seeley broke up from behind before a shot was launched.

The Tigers came out firing in

the second period, and Hollinger denied freshman Violet Lenihan from the edge of the right circle at 1:17. A Calzini shot trickled in off Hollinger in the second minute, but

(See Tigers cruise, Page 3B)



MUHS SENIOR DEFENDER Ireland Hanley carries the puck out of the MUHS end during the Tiger girls’ hockey team’s 3-1 win over Rutland.

Independent photo/Steve James



TIGER SENIOR FORWARD Lia Calzini celebrates her second-period goal as junior teammate Kate Kozak, who assisted, looks on during the MUHS hockey team’s home win on Saturday.

Independent photo/Steve James

Local girls’ hoop teams fall on road

By ANDY KIRKALDY

ADDISON COUNTY — In recent high school girls’ basketball action, both Middlebury and Mount Abraham came up short on the road late last week.

Due to an early holiday deadline, results from the games played earlier this week could not be included in this edition. Details will be included in next week’s issue. Those games included one for Vergennes; the 1-1 Commodores were scheduled to visit Williamstown on Tuesday.

TIGERS

On Wednesday, Dec. 17, host Rutland outlasted the Tigers, 56-45. Rutland’s Brinley Gandin sparked her team with seven three-pointers and 29 points, while the Tigers’ **Louisa Orten** tossed in eight three-pointers in a 26-point evening.

Rutland took a 27-17 into halftime, but the Tigers cut the lead to 31-26 in the third quarter before RHS pulled away again with an 8-0 run. The Tigers dropped to 1-1, and RHS improved to 3-0, a record that includes a win over Champlain Valley.

The Tigers’ Friday home game vs. St. Albans was postponed. The Tigers were scheduled to host Enosburg on Tuesday.

EAGLES

On Thursday, Dec. 18, Burr and Burton defeated Mount Abe in the first round of Fair Haven’s annual tournament, 45-28.

The Bulldogs led at the half by just 16-9 and took a 12-point lead into the fourth quarter.

Maeven Virgilio led BBA with 16 points, 12 in the second half.

Olivia Sawyer led the Eagles with eight points as they dropped to 0-3 in the early going.

They were set to take on host Fair Haven on Tuesday at 7 p.m. as the tourney wraps up.

Tiger boys’ hockey wins a pair

By ANDY KIRKALDY

MIDDLEBURY — The Middlebury Union High School boys’ hockey team claimed two victories last week and improved to 2-1 in the early going.

On Dec. 17 the Tigers blanked host Woodstock, 2-0. MUHS goalie TJ Baron made 18 saves to earn the shutout.

Case Pitner gave the Tigers the lead with a goal early in the second period that was assisted by Gabriel Quesnel and Tyler Munson.

Quesnel added an empty-netter in the game’s final minute to nail down the road win.

The Tigers outshot the Wasps, 37-18, and Coach Jordan Stearns was pleased with the effort.

“The team played well and composed, with a lot of speed,” he said in an email to the *Independent*.

On Saturday the Tigers scored twice in the first period and held off visiting Hartford for a 2-1 lead. The Tigers controlled most of the action and outshot the Hurricanes, 31-17.

Evan Northrup put the Tigers on the scoreboard at 4:32 of the first period, and Quesnel made it 2-0 at 10:35. Logan McNulty assisted both goals.

Hartford’s Kaiden Allen pulled his team within one goal with four minutes to go in the third period.

Baron made 16 saves for the Tigers, and Hartford goalie Nunu Mayer blocked 29 shots.

Due to an early holiday deadline, games played this week could not be reported for this issue, including the Tigers’ Monday game at South Burlington. Scores and details will be included in next week’s *Independent*.

Old man still plays with his baseball cards

I'm old now, but I still enjoy playing with my baseball cards. Not the Topps baseball cards I bought in nickel packs on my way to school in the 1950s. No, those I sold to my Middlebury College professor-friend Rudi Haerle, a serious collector, a long time ago. There's a story, of course. When I first came back to Middlebury to work in the Dean of Students Office in 1976, I taped some colorful images to the door of my office in Old Chapel, one of which was a 1956 Topps Card of Jackie Robinson. Professor Haerle came into the office one day, saw this display and was horrified. "What are you doing!" he exclaimed. "That's a valuable card, worth a lot of money. You've ruined it." On the contrary, I thought. I liked it right where it was. I saw it every day, and others did too. It was well placed, not hidden away out of sight, in a box, increasing in value. Rudi was right though. A recent

quick search of eBay revealed that that Robinson card, in really good condition, could fetch as much as \$1,500. I collected cards, one pack at a time for a few years, on my way to school. I ended up with every Topps card in grades 5 and 6 for those two years (and lots of duplicates) — and my mother did not throw away the shoebox of cards in the attic of my home in Lewiston, Maine. I tried to give them to Rudi, but he would have none of that, fearing that there would be later recriminations on my part, despite my assurances. He rated every single card and paid me fair value. He did note that there were 25-30 cards missing from my collection. These were cards I had given away when I was in college to the boy who lived next door in Lewiston who was showing an interest in

baseball. Those cards were worth well more than all the other cards, hundreds of them, combined. They were cards of the great stars of the day: Mays, Koufax, Mantle, Williams, Dimaggio, Aaron, and so on. I hope the kid who I gave them to saved them and later bought a nice car (or sent his child to college!) with the money. No, the baseball cards I play with now are quite different. The era of nickel pack of Topps cards with stale bubble gum was over long ago, though you can still buy "factory sealed" full sets (700 cards) for 60 bucks. No gum. I have three collections of cards that entertain me now. One is a 276-card set from the Charles Conlon collection; another is 184 cards of Black players, Negro Leaguers,



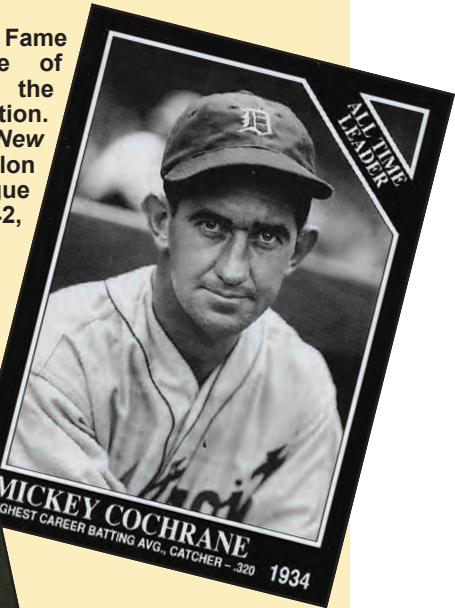
Sports (Mostly) **KARL LINDHOLM**



THIS 1956 TOPPS Jackie Robinson card was taped onto the office door of the columnist in 1976, and it raised the ire of a friend who accused him of ruining a valuable item (he was right!)

from the collection by artist Graig Kreindler; and the third is a set of 124 Cuban players from the early 1990s, a collection of cards produced in Cuba and printed by a Canadian company. For nearly four decades (1904-1942), Charles Martin Conlon, a photographer for the *New York Telegram* newspaper, assiduously photographed baseball players of the era. In all, he created over 30,000 images using the equipment of the day. Any student or fan of baseball history should own the book "Baseball's Golden Age: the Photographs of Charles M. Conlon" (New York: Henry N. Abrams, 1994). The photographs are stunning and the accompanying text informative indeed, bringing the first half of 20th-century baseball alive in striking images. I don't have a complete set of the cards made from the Conlon Collection (770 in all), but I have a wonderful selection. Each photo is an image of a batter taking a swing, or a pitcher at some stage in his throwing motion, or a full-face portrait. On the backside of the cards are stats and stories. They are fun just to look through and perhaps categorize in the mind. All of the great ones are there: Babe Ruth and Ty Cobb, Honus Wagner, Christy Mathewson, Walter Johnson (the original five members of the Hall of Fame in Cooperstown), and many other Hall of Famers and stalwarts — Lou Gehrig, Jimmy Foxx, Hank Greenberg, Vermont's own Larry Gardner, and dozens of others I was familiar with only faintly or not at all. Some have such evocative names: Bubbles Hargrave, Urban Shocker, Johnny Gooch, Ivey Wingo, Jimmy Ripple, Ski Melillo. Every one of Conlon's players has one characteristic in common: their white skin. In the nearly 40 years Conlon took his photographs, Major League Baseball was racially segregated. In serendipitous compensation, the legendary Black players of the Negro leagues and before are represented in their own beautiful collection of images on a set of cards. To celebrate the centennial of the Negro Leagues in 2020, Jay Caldwell of Dreams Fulfilled (NegroLeaguesHistory.com) commissioned artist Graig Kreindler to paint portraits of 230 legendary Black players. These portraits, each about 5-by-7 inches, were collected in an exhibit called "Black Baseball (See Lindholm, Page 3B)

THIS IS HALL of Fame catcher Mickey Cochrane of the Philadelphia A's from the Charles Conlon Collection. A photographer for the *New York World Telegram*, Conlon photographed Major League ballplayers from 1905-1942, making 8,000 images in all.



WILLIAM CLARENCE MATTHEWS was a great player for Harvard College in the early 1900s. He is depicted here by artist Graig Kreindler and is part of the Negro Leagues Centennial Legends card set.

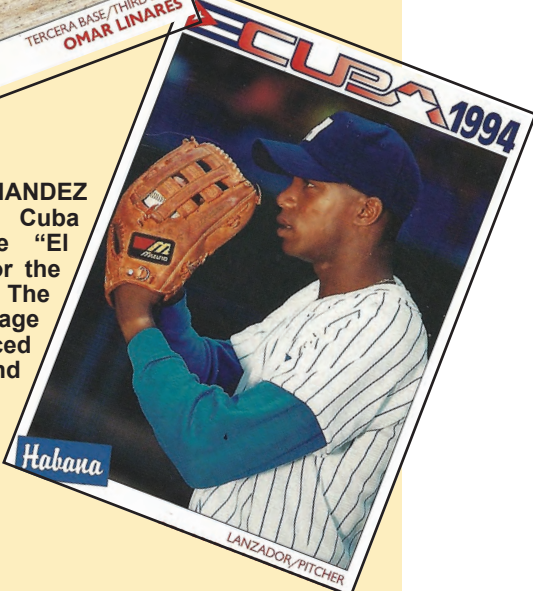


HALL OF FAMER Cool Papa Bell was the fastest man in baseball during his Negro League career. He is depicted here by artist Graig Kreindler and is part of the Negro Leagues Centennial Legends card set.



OMAR LINARES WAS considered to be among the greatest players in the world while playing for the Cuban National Team. This image is from a card set produced by Cubadeportes and printed in Canada

ORLANDO HERNANDEZ DEFECTED from Cuba in 1997 and became "El Duque," star pitcher for the New York Yankees. The columnist got this image from a card set produced by Cubadeportes and printed in Canada.



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TEAMMATES MOB JUNIOR Tiger forward Julia Morrissey (No. 5) after she scored the first goal during Saturday's game at Memorial Sports Center.

Independent photo/Steve James



MUHS JUNIOR FORWARD Kate Kozak crashes the slot looking for a loose puck during the Tiger girls' hockey team's home win on Saturday evening.

Independent photo/Steve James

Tigers cruise

(Continued from Page 1B)
the officials had already whistled the play dead. Hollinger made two more saves (of her 24 in the period), one on Calzini and one on Doria before Calzini made it 2-0 on a sweet feed from senior linemate Sawyer Witscher.

Junior Kate Kozak worked the puck to Witscher to the right of the goal, and Witscher slid the puck across the slot to Calzini for the tap-in at 8:22 that made it 2-0.

At 10:45, it was 3-0. Kozak cashed in on the rebound of a Bojanowski shot from the right side, with Hanley getting the second assist.

Rutland broke through at 13:19. Senior Piper Newman found open ice between the circles and challenged Ross with a hard shot ticketed for the upper left corner. Ross blocked it away high into the netting for a faceoff in the Tiger end. Rutland won the faceoff, and Peyton Rider scored from a scramble out front, with assists going to Madison Bedard and Lucy Levins.

The third period brought more of the same: three saves for Ross for a total of seven, and 18 more for Hollinger, including again denying a Calzini breakaway. If RHS had any chances of a comeback, they

were dashed by three penalties in the final 5:23.

Lalonde credited the Rutland goalie for keeping the score respectable, while adding the Tigers could have used some puck luck, and been more strategic in their shooting. More low shots like Doria's that produced Morrissey's rebound goal might have been more effective at times, for example.

"I told the girls it wasn't for a lack of opportunities or a lack of effort. We were creating those opportunities," Lalonde said, adding, "We did talk about having a shooter's mentality, being a little more conscious about where we're placing our shots. Sometimes it's easy to focus on getting a shot on goal and forgetting about placement. That's something we can work on. But the fact we're generating those shots — that's a really great thing for us."

His and assistant coaches' Raven Payne's and Timm Hanley's overall outlook is certainly positive.

"There's a lot of really positive things to build on. We like what we see so far," Lalonde said. "If we can continue with this trajectory, work on some of the minor details, fine-tune some things, I really like our chances of having a winning season."

Schedule

(Continued from Page 1B)
1/4 VUHS/Mt. Abe at UVM.....8 AM
Nordic Skiing
12/30 MUHS at Sleepy Hollow..... TBA
Gymnastics
12/27 MUHS at Brattleboro.....2 PM
COLLEGE SPORTS
Men's Hockey
1/3 Hobart at Midd.....2 PM
1/4 Midd at NEC.....4 PM
Women's Hockey
1/3 Endicott at Midd..... 5 PM
Women's Basketball
12/29 Midd at Puget Sound.....5PM
12/30 Midd at Pacific Lutheran..... 5 PM
1/3 St Lawrence at Midd..... 1 PM
Men's Basketball
Tourney in Brooklyn*
12/28 Midd vs Wheaton.....3 PM*
12/29 Midd vs TBD..... Noon/2 PM*
1/2 Lasell at Midd..... 5 PM

Boy's hoop

(Continued from Page 1B)
EAGLES

On Thursday, Dec. 18, the Eagles led after one period, but couldn't prevent host U-32 from rolling to an 83-61 victory.

Jackson Lamere tossed in 27 points for the Raider, and Carson DeForge added 20.

Charlie Germon tossed in 20 points for Mount Abe, and Jaran Griffin and Noah Germon chipped in 12 points and 10 points, respectively, but it wasn't enough as the Eagles dropped to 0-3.

The 0-3 Eagles were set to visit Harwood on Tuesday.



Sophia Keshmiri Matthew Dickerson Karl Lindholm

SPORTS
WE'VE GOT
IT COVERED!

Lindholm

(Continued from Page 2B)
in Living Color" first shown at the Negro Leagues Museum in Kansas City.

I was able to view the entire collection in 2023 at the Detroit Historical Society when I attended the Negro Leagues Conference there. Just wonderful.

I was exhilarated to learn that 180 of these 230 images had been collected into a set of baseball cards. When I write here in the *Independent* about Black baseball, the Negro Leagues, as I do now and then, I am able to get permission to use the beautiful Kreindler portraits to illustrate my words, lucky me.

Baseball in Cuba, this small island only 90 miles from Florida, has a long and fascinating history, its origins going almost as far back as the beginnings of the game in the United States. I have been to Cuba twice, in 2001 and 2014.

During the 70 years of (1887-1947) baseball's segregation at the highest levels, about 240 Afro-Cubans played in the Negro Leagues and 41 Cubans of European descent played in MLB. Black players from the Negro Leagues and white counterparts from MLB played in Cuba in the off season (winter) against and with one another in a vigorous professional league. Integrated baseball.

After the revolution in 1959, Fidel Castro rejected professional play and established a series of competitions based on regions on the island. The Cuban national team, year after year, decade after decade, was the best team in the world in international amateur competitions.

On my first trip to Cuba, I found a few actual baseball cards of Cuban stars at an outdoor market. I skillfully haggled the vendor down to \$75 American for the cards of Omar Linares, Victor Mesa, and Orlando Hernandez (who defected and became El Duque, star pitcher for the New York Yankees).

Sometime later, I discovered I could buy a whole set of cards, 124 in all, for less than I paid for those three. In 1994, a Cuban baseball card

set was produced by Cubadeportes and printed in Canada. I keep those cards in a cigar box I picked on one of my visits.

Taken together, these card collections are a graphic history of baseball in the 20th century and are among my most prized possessions.

Karl Lindholm Ph.D is the emeritus dean of advising at Middlebury College and assistant professor of American studies (retired). He can be contacted at lindholm@middlebury.edu.



Upcoming Events

Sunday December 28:
12:45 - 2:15 PM - Public Skating

Tuesday, December 30:
9:00 - 11:00 AM Public Skating

Wednesday, December 31:
7:00 - 8:30 PM
New Year's Eve Public Skating!
Beginning immediately following the town's fireworks display.
Concessions open
Bring your own skates — rentals sell out quickly

Thursday, January 1:
12:00 - 2:00 PM - Public Skating

Tuesday, January 6:
9:00 - 11:00 AM Public Skating

Thursday, January 8:
9:00 - 11:00 AM Public Skating

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WREATHS REST ON the graves of John and Rebecca Rockwell in Central Cemetery in Cornwall. John and Rebecca were married barely a month when they and their respective fathers joined forces at the Battle of Bennington on Aug. 16, 1777. All four survived, and Rebecca Rockwell tended the wounded.

Veterans honored with wreaths in Cornwall

CORNWALL — Volunteers gathered at the DAR Samson Memorial on Saturday, Dec. 13, to prepare for a day of service to veterans. Past DAR Regent Barbara Foote-Hennessy and her husband, Michael, launched the event with a generous inaugural donation of 75 wreaths. In total, 130 wreaths were placed in four Cornwall cemeteries to honor American veterans, 78 of whom served in the Revolutionary War.

The DAR was recently designated a national site for Wreaths Across America, whose mission is to remember the fallen, honor those who serve, and teach the next generations the value of freedom. The event was a collaboration between the Cornwall Cemetery Commission, which oversees South and West cemeteries, and Fair and Central cemetery associations.

The celebration began with fortifying treats including slices of pie warm from the ovens of Anne Collins, DAR member and author of “Vintage Pies,” a treasure trove of

recipes popular in the 18th and 19th centuries that have withstood the test of time. DAR Regent Paula Sargent and Chaplain Janet Franklin conducted a commemorative service to honor veterans and thank the many who made the event possible, including Tim and Lorraine Hescock of Vermont Trade Winds Farm just up the road in Shoreham. The Hescocks donated the first holiday tree to grace the chapter house in decades.

It is said that a person is not forgotten as long as their name is remembered. Volunteers, including family and friends of the soldiers honored, braved the snow and cold to lovingly place the handcrafted wreaths on the head stones while saying each veteran’s name and giving special thanks for their service.

In Vermont alone, 10,000 wreaths were placed to remember and honor our state’s freedom fighters in what has become an annual tradition.

Editor’s note: This story was submitted by Carolyn Bausch



dec 25

THURSDAY
Free Christmas meal in Bristol. Thursday, Dec. 25, 1 p.m., Minifactory, 16 Main St. A free afternoon meal for all on Christmas Day. Menu includes macaroni and cheese, roast chicken, yams, Downhill Bread, salad, coffee and dessert. All are welcome. Free.
Community Supper Christmas Day Dinner in Middlebury. Thursday, Dec. 25, 4-5 p.m., Congregational Church of Middlebury, 2 Main St. (enter at Seymour Street across from the firehouse). Enjoy warm fellowship and a traditional Christmas Day dinner. Free. All are welcome. Meet in the fellowship hall on the church’s lower level.

dec 26

FRIDAY
Holiday Trains in Middlebury. Ongoing through Saturday, Jan. 3, Henry Sheldon Museum, 1 Park St. The elaborate Lionel train layout at the Henry Sheldon Museum is an annual holiday tradition, delighting visitors of all ages. Trains run Wednesdays from 2-4:30 p.m., Thursdays from 10:30 a.m.-1 p.m. and Fridays and Saturdays from 11 a.m.-3 p.m. More info at henrysheldonmuseum.org.
Henry Sheldon Museum Makerspace in Middlebury. Ongoing during museum hours, Henry Sheldon Museum, 1 Park St. Makerspace activities are available when the museum is open, with hands-on crafting, play for kids and ornament making throughout the holiday season. Closed Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, New Year’s Eve and New Year’s Day. Museum admission applies. More info at henrysheldonmuseum.org.
Community Supper in Middlebury. Friday, Dec. 26, 5-6 p.m., Congregational Church of Middlebury, 2 Main St. Regular Friday night community supper. Menu varies, meat and vegetarian offerings available.

dec 27

SATURDAY
Fiber Arts Circle in Vergennes. Saturday, Dec. 27, 12-2 p.m., Bixby Memorial Library, 258 Main St. Bixby’s Fiber Arts Circle every other Saturday. Bring a work-in-progress or use yarn and knit/crochet kits from the Library of Things. All experience levels and ages welcome. More info at bixbylibrary.org.

dec 28

SUNDAY
Bingo in Vergennes. Sunday, Dec. 28, 12:30-3:30 p.m., Vergennes American Legion Post 14, 100 Armory Lane, downstairs. Community bingo open to the public. Doors open at 12:30 p.m.; bingo begins at 1 p.m. Game packets \$15; special “winner take all” games \$1 per sheet. 50/50 raffle. Cash payouts based on attendance. Food available for purchase.
Lessons and Carols service in Vergennes. Sunday, Dec. 28, 3 p.m., St. Peter’s Church, 85 South Maple St. The traditional service of lessons and carols accompanied by organ, choir and brass ensemble. Cookies and Christmas cheer follow in the parish hall. Free, all are welcome.

dec 29

MONDAY
Family Game Night in Shoreham. Monday, Dec. 29, 5-7:30 p.m., Platt Memorial Library, 279 Main St. Bring the whole family to play from the library’s growing board game collection or bring your own games to play or share. Arrive by 5 p.m. for pizza.

dec 30

TUESDAY
American Red Cross blood drive in Middlebury. Tuesday, Dec. 30, 10 a.m.-2:30 p.m., Vermont Cider Company, 1321 Exchange St. Community blood drive hosted by the American Red Cross. Appointments at RedCrossBlood.org or 1-800-RED CROSS.
American Red Cross blood drive in Waltham. Tuesday, Dec. 30, 10 a.m.-3 p.m., Victory Baptist Church, 862 Route 7. Community blood drive hosted by the American Red Cross. Appointments at RedCrossBlood.org or 1-800-RED CROSS.
Crown Chakra drum Circle in Middlebury. Tuesday, Dec. 30, 6:30 p.m., 54 Main St., Unit B. Brought to you by Breanna Elaine music and Love Play Grow Wellness. \$10 suggested donation.

dec 31

WEDNESDAY
Fireworks and ice skating in Middlebury. Wednesday, Dec. 31, 6:30-8:30 p.m., Middlebury Rec Park, Mary Hogan Dr. Fireworks begin at 6:30 p.m., followed by free ice skating at Memorial Sports Center.
New Year’s Eve contra dance in Bristol. Wednesday, Dec. 31, 7:30-10 p.m., Holley Hall, 1 South St. Ring in the new year with a community contra dance featuring live music by Red Dog Riley and calling by Don Stratton. Easy dances for all experience levels. Co-sponsored by the Bristol Recreation Department.

jan 1

THURSDAY
First Day Walk in Ferrisburgh. Thursday, Jan. 1, 9-11 a.m., Button Bay State Park, 5 Button Bay State



A Christmas feast
THERE’S NOTHING LIKE a hearty Christmas dinner, and this holiday week presents several opportunities to break bread with neighbors. On Thursday, Dec. 25, Minifactory in Bristol is hosting a free Christmas Day lunch at 1 p.m., and the Congregational Church of Middlebury is holding a free traditional Christmas dinner at 4 p.m. The church will also host its regular free Friday night supper on Friday, Dec. 26, at 5 p.m.

Park Rd. Start the new year with a birding walk with Otter Creek Audubon and see overwintering birds.

jan 2

FRIDAY
Community Supper in Middlebury. Friday, Jan. 2, 5-6 p.m., Congregational Church of Middlebury, 2 Main St. Regular Friday night community supper. Menu varies, meat and vegetarian offerings available.

jan 3

SATURDAY
Henry Sheldon Museum Community Day in Middlebury. Saturday, Jan. 3, 10 a.m.-4 p.m., Henry Sheldon Museum, 1 Park St. See a hand-crank printing demonstration and make your own museum-inspired print with local artist and printer John Vincent. Enjoy the final day of holiday trains and seasonal museum exhibitions. All ages are welcome. More info at henrysheldonmuseum.org.

jan 7

WEDNESDAY
“Facing a Flooded World: Why Relationship is the Sweetest Way” in Brandon. Wednesday, Jan. 7, 4 p.m., Otter Valley Union High School library, 2997 Franklin St. Otter Valley Union Middle & High School’s Community Engagement Lab invites community members to read the Vermont Humanities Community Read selection, “The Light Pirate” by Lily Brooks-Dalton, and attend this talk by Shawna Trader of Barre Up!, who will discuss community building and climate resiliency efforts. Free and open to the public. Request a free copy of the book by contacting Nicole Vachon-Hanlon at nvachon-hanlon@resu.org.
Stretch and neuromuscular therapy with Bean Camara in Brandon. Wednesday, Jan. 7, 5:30-6 p.m., Brandon Free Public Library, 4 Franklin St. Join Bean Camara of Brandon Stretch and Neuromuscular Therapy for a series of self-care talks followed by strengthening, stretching and self-care techniques you can do at home to help you feel and move better.

jan 8

THURSDAY
Creative Approaches to Social Change panel in Middlebury. Thursday, Jan. 8, 5-7 p.m., Mahaney Arts Center 125, Middlebury College, 72 Porter Field Road. The Middlebury College Conflict Transformation Collaborative presents a panel discussion featuring theatre-maker and University of Montana Co-Lab for Civic Imagination founder Michael Rohd. Part of the 2025-26 Conflict and Social Change series. Registration requested at middlebury.edu/events.

“Home Organizing for Effective Cleaning” in Vergennes. Thursday, Jan. 8, 5:30 p.m., Bixby Memorial Library, 258 Main St. Rachel Rose, a professional cleaner and life coach, will share practical strategies for organizing and designing your living space so tidying takes less time and feels more manageable.
True Crime Podcast Club in Middlebury. Thursday, Jan. 8, 6 p.m., Ilsley Public Library, NBM Meeting Room, 30 Main St. Join fellow sleuths to discuss this month’s true crime podcast, “Noble Podcast.” For participants 18 and older. Listen to the podcast wherever you get your podcasts. Free.

jan 9

FRIDAY
Community Supper in Middlebury. Friday, Jan. 9, 5-6 p.m., Congregational Church of Middlebury, 2 Main St. Regular Friday night community supper. Menu varies, meat and vegetarian offerings available.

jan 10

SATURDAY
Monthly Wildlife Walk in Middlebury. Saturday, Jan. 10, 8-10 a.m., Otter View Park parking area, intersection of Weybridge St. and Pulp Mill Bridge Road. Otter Creek Audubon and the Middlebury Area Land Trust invite community members to help survey birds and other wildlife at Otter View Park and the Hurd Grassland. Birders of all ages and abilities welcome. For more information, call 802-388-6019.

jan 11

SUNDAY
Charity fundraising breakfast in Bristol. Sunday, Jan. 11, 7:30-10 a.m., Libanus Lodge #47, corner of North and Elm streets. The Masonic Lodge hosts its monthly charity breakfast, with all proceeds donated to a person or group in need in the Five Town Area. Menu includes homemade corned beef hash, eggs to order, bacon, sausage patties and links, home fries, pancakes and blueberry pancakes, French toast, Vermont maple syrup and Cabot butter, assorted juices, homemade apple bread pudding and coffee from Vermont Coffee Company. \$9 adults, \$5 children under 12.
Breakfast buffet in Vergennes. Sunday, Jan. 11, 8-10 a.m., St. Peter’s Parish Hall, 85 South Maple St. Menu includes omelets, scrambled eggs, French toast, plain and blueberry pancakes with maple syrup, sausage gravy on biscuits, cornbread, home fries and mini muffins. Juice, tea and coffee available. \$13 adults, \$8 children 8-12; under 8 free. Sponsored by Vergennes Council of the Knights of Columbus.

jan 13

TUESDAY
Fossils of the Champlain Valley in Middlebury. Tuesday, Jan. 13, 6 p.m., Ilsley Public Library, NBM meeting room, 30 Main St. Middlebury College student Alexis Hartz presents a program on the Ordovician Period and the ancient environments of the Champlain Valley, exploring how paleontologists use rocks and fossils from Vermont and New York to understand past climates. Free.

jan 16

FRIDAY
Community Supper in Middlebury. Friday, Jan. 16, 5-6 p.m., Congregational Church of Middlebury, 2 Main St. Regular Friday night community supper. Menu varies, meat and vegetarian offerings available.

jan 20

TUESDAY
Rokeby Museum virtual book group. Tuesday, Jan. 20, 6-7 p.m., online. The 2026 Rokeby Museum Virtual Book Group discusses “Flee North: A Forgotten Hero and the Fight for Freedom in Slavery’s Borderland” by Scott Shane, which follows Thomas Smallwood, who bought his own freedom and helped lead others out of slavery. Free. More info at rokebymuseum.org.

jan 21

WEDNESDAY
Stretch and neuromuscular therapy with Bean Camara in Brandon. Wednesday, Jan. 21, 5:30-6 p.m., Brandon Free Public Library, 4 Franklin St. See Jan. 7 listing.

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ADDISON COUNTY INDEPENDENT



Hair today, gone...

A Bridge School Language Arts Class writes and performs an annual play, which this year was staged at the Middlebury elementary school on Dec. 18. Titled "Crime, Hair and Punishment," the students' work deals with the chaos that ensues when bandits steal the king's hair, and the town and its detectives try to solve the crime. Students pictured include Scout Ferritto, Mari Voorhees, Gus & Theo Halter, Ethan Claflin, Liam Steward, Calvin Quackenbush, Hayden Bowdish, Ava Marcotte, Charlotte & Poppy Hanson, Sam Gardner, Miles McQuade and Ely Marcotte.

Photos by Jen Grilly



STUDENTS OF THE WEEK FROM AREA HIGH SCHOOLS

Otter Valley Union High School

Mount Abraham Union High School

Drake Felkl

Otter Valley Union High School's latest Student of the Week is Drake Felkl. Drake lives in Sudbury with his parents.

Drake loves to learn new things. His favorite classes are science and history, and he names Mr. Hall as a favorite teacher because he engages the class with fun conversations and is just a "good history teacher."

Drake is a member of the National Honor Society, has been on the Principal's List, received the Otter Valley Empathy Award, and has served as team captain on both the football and wrestling teams. He has made a particular mark on the Otter Valley Wrestling team. Drake earned career win number 100 in his varsity wrestling career as a junior! At the Feb. 1 Mount Mansfield Tournament Drake got his 100th career win along with winning the 215 pound tournament championship! In this past football season, he was Division-III, second-team running back.

He notes that the most important lesson he has learned at Otter Valley is to "Never give up and whatever you do, do it at 100%."

In his free time, Drake loves to be outside. As such, he aims to major in Environmental Science at either Castleton State University, Paul Smith's College, or Western New England University.

Everyone in the Otter Valley community wishes Drake all the best!



Drake Felkl
OVUHS

Lila Brightman

Mt. Abraham proudly recognizes Lila Brightman as our Student of the Week. Lila resides in Lincoln with her parents Sadie and Nick, sister Carina, and pets Nellie and Leo.

Throughout her high school career, Lila has consistently achieved highest honors and received awards from the Music, French and Social Studies departments. Her favorite classes include AP English Literature, AP European History, and American Studies. She is also currently taking AP Music Theory through Virtual High School. Lila values combining viewpoints from both teachers and peers to create a complex understanding of the academic content. Her favorite teachers include Ms. Grzyb and Mr. Beckwith. Lila says, "Ms. Grzyb is amazing at connecting with students of all backgrounds and engaging them in a large variety of curricula. Mr. Beckwith is incredibly knowledgeable about his subjects and inspires students to dive into class more because of his passion and encouragement."

Beyond academics, Lila is deeply involved in the Mt. Abe community. She was a captain of the varsity soccer team this fall, serves as a mentor in the DREAM program and is a member of the Eagle Leadership Society. In addition, she is a prominent member of the music and theatre programs. She is president of the music department, has participated in District Chorus, All-State A Cappella Ensemble, and All-State Modern Band. Her theatrical roles include Cady Heron in "Mean Girls" and Anastasia in "Anastasia." She was a member of the A Cappella group, Sweet Transition, and served as Pitch her junior year. Lila is currently in the Modern Band Airport Drive.

Outside of school, Lila works as a camp counselor at the Middlebury Community Music Center during the summer and at Miso Toh Kome at Sugarbush in the winter. In her free time, she likes to sing, write songs, and play piano & guitar. She also enjoys reading, skiing and doing New York Times games.

Reflecting on her school experience, Lila shares, "High school is what you make of it. Your mindset has a huge impact on how much you enjoy school and extracurricular activities. If you choose to look at school through a positive lens, you will see how much opportunity there is to engage in incredible learning, meet amazing people through sports and activities, and develop who you are as a person. You have the choice to make these four years great, so go for it!"

Lila plans to attend a four-year college or university in the Northeast to pursue a degree in English. We wish her all the best in her future endeavors!



Lila Brightman
MAUHS

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To celebrate your achievements, Full Circle Building & Remodeling is providing each Student of the Week \$25 in local currency (Bristol Bucks, Middlebury Money, Vergennes Green, or Brandon Bucks). Just check in with your school's Student of the Week coordinator to claim your prize!

Students of the Week are chosen by school teachers and administration.

Congratuatiions, Drake and Lila!



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Drake
and Lila

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Want to help celebrate these students and support this page?



Cheers to the Students of the Week!



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Substance treatment center Valley Vista returns to Vergennes

VERGENNES — In partnership with the Vermont Department of Health, Valley Vista has opened 27 new residential treatment beds at its Vergennes facility, marking a significant expansion of the state’s system of care for individuals seeking treatment for substance use disorder.

“Vermonters seeking support for substance use recovery too often face housing instability, unsafe

environments and limited support. Investing in the spectrum of resources available for treatment can make all the difference,” Health Commissioner Rick Hildebrand, MD, said in a press release late last week. “The new beds in Vergennes will strengthen the system and help our state respond more effectively to the real substance-related challenges communities are facing.”

The center was closed at the end of this past March and Valley Vista’s services and patients were consolidate at its Bradford location. The rehabilitation center’s chief operating officer told the media that the decision comes amid state concern about the company’s financial sustainability.

Apparently, the company has put those concerns behind it.

The new expansion of Valley Vista/Department of Health significantly increases the availability of low-level substance use treatment in residential settings, such as group homes. These facilities offer 24-hour care, structured programming and a safe, stable environment for people who need ongoing recovery support.

The new beds now offered by

Valley Vista expand statewide capacity for this level of care from the current 28 beds — provided across two facilities in Rutland by Recovery House Inc. — to 55, bringing the total number of current beds for all levels of residential substance use treatment to 164 in Vermont.

The expanded bed capacity will support substance use (See Center, Page 7B)



PANTON RESIDENTS TODD and Lisa Presson stop for a photo in Killington recently where they were honored by Vermont Adaptive Ski and Sports as two of the organization’s Volunteers of the Year.

Panton couple honored as adaptive sports volunteers

KILLINGTON — A Panton couple were among four individuals named by Vermont Adaptive Ski and Sports as its 2025 Volunteers of the Year. The honor recognizes their year-round commitment to the organization’s mission of empowering individuals with disabilities through sports and recreation.

Honored this year are Lisa and Todd Presson of Panton, Katie

Ahern of East Thetford and Stew Stryker of Windsor. The annual award is given in honor of the late Jim Hutchinson, a long-time volunteer whose leadership helped shape the organization for more than a decade.

“These individuals represent what it means to be deeply committed to our programs and participants—not only at their home mountains or summer

locations, but across the state, throughout the year,” said Erin Fernandez, executive director of Vermont Adaptive. “We’re proud to honor them with this award in Jim’s memory.”

Lisa and Todd Presson, who began volunteering in 2021, participated in more training sessions this past winter than any other Vermont Adaptive volunteers. They supported lessons in both tethering and snowboarding instruction. Lisa volunteered regularly with the Special Olympics Vermont team at Sugarbush, while Todd stepped in to cover lessons on both weekdays and weekends when needed. In the summer, the Pressons helped with the organization’s Veteran Ventures pickleball program and were active representatives at community outreach events.

Katie Ahern also began volunteering in 2021, balancing her time as a volunteer with her

professional work as a special educator and school administrator, as well as being a parent to a participant. She supported programs and events statewide, from ski days at Pico Mountain to paddling outings, outreach events and bike rides. Ahern is active with Vermont Adaptive’s school group programs, the Special Olympics Vermont team, and vacation-week lessons, often coaching and teaching students of all abilities. She is also known among volunteers and staff for bringing cookies—especially the espresso ones.

Stew Stryker, a volunteer at Vermont Adaptive since 1987, has been involved in nearly every facet of the organization. He instructs in skiing, cycling and paddling programs, and supports numerous fundraising events including the Vermont 100, the Vermont 50, and the former Charity Challenge. Over nearly four decades, Stryker has

trained many of the organization’s instructors and played key roles in both instruction and event operations. He is also a longtime Scout leader and supporter of community-based initiatives.

The Volunteer of the Year Award honors the legacy of Jim Hutchinson, who began volunteering with Vermont Adaptive in 1994 and helped expand the organization’s reach and impact before his passing in 2008. Each year, the award recognizes individuals who demonstrate leadership, dedication and an ongoing commitment to inclusion and adaptive sports.

Vermont Adaptive Ski and Sports is a nationally recognized organization that empowers people of all abilities through inclusive sports and recreational programming regardless of ability to pay. In addition to sports, year-round programming options integrate environmental, holistic wellness, and competitive training philosophies for people of all ages with cognitive, developmental, physical, and emotional/behavioral disabilities.

For more information or to become a volunteer, visit vermontadaptive.org.

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Commodore senior is going to D.C.

VERGENNES — The Vermont Principals’ Association last week announced Vermont’s 2026 United States Senate Youth Program (USSYP) delegates, and one of them is from Vergennes.

Annually, two students from each state are selected for a \$10,000 cash scholarship and an all-expenses paid weeklong trip to Washington, D.C. While at the capitol, students learn about the inner workings of the federal government. They meet with members of Congress, the Supreme Court, and the Presidential Administration.

All high-achieving juniors and seniors in Vermont high schools with interest in leadership, politics, law, and government are encouraged to apply. The scholarship and program are funded by the Hearst Foundation.

This year’s selected student delegates to represent Vermont are Daniel Mann and Quincy Sabick. Mann is a senior at Thetford Academy. Sabick is a senior at Vergennes Union High School. Both Sabick and Mann are very impressive Vermont high school students. They submitted incredible application packets, had lots of evidence of great school and community leadership, and had very impressive interviews with the VPA USSYP committee that made the final selections.

The USSYP committee is comprised of retired principals Dan Ryan and Meredith Voutras; current school leaders Greg Schillinger, Principal Rutland High School; Alicia Lyford, Principal East Montpelier Elementary School, Diane Reilly, Principal Hyde Park Elementary



VERGENNES UNION HIGH School senior Quincy Sabick, shown receiving a history award this past spring, recently won a \$10,000 scholarship from the U.S. Senate.

School; Kelly Dias, Principal Academy School; Mari Miller, Principal Brighton Elementary School and, Jay Nichols, Senior Executive Director of the VPA.

The VPA, the United States Senate Youth Program, and the USSYP Committee all encourage Vermont students who will be

in their junior or senior years, and hold an elected or appointed school or community position, to apply for this distinguished scholarship and opportunity next year. Completed applications for next year will be due in October. For more information, visit VPAonline.org.

Local teen preps for protest

A poem by Abigail Balon, 14, of Panton was published by the Young Writers Project last month. It describes the night before October’s No Kings Day protests.

Young Writers Project is a creative, online community of teen writers and visual artists that started in Burlington in 2006.

Sign-making

I go to the woodshop,
grab some cardboard,
walk over to the weeping willows.
Find a large stick and
break off the uneven twigs.
Open the door,
plug in the “Mamma Mia”
soundtrack,
take a pencil
and write, “Save Freedom of
Speech.”
I hold my breath as I draw two
outlines.
I Sharpie everything and
add some color.
At 5:50 p.m., I’m done with
everything:
two signs taped to a stick,
one handheld.
I’m excited for the following day,
when I can rise up —
and I won’t be alone.

— By Abigail Balon

Young Vermonters, ages 13-19, may post their work on youngwritersproject.org, a free, interactive website for youth. To find out more, please go to youngwritersproject.org or contact Executive Director Susan Reid at sreid@youngwritersproject.org; 802-324-9538.

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Lower rates available for some logging equipment

MONTPELIER — The Vermont Economic Development Authority (VEDA) and Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation (FPR) recently unveiled a new initiative designed to save Vermont loggers money by allowing them to obtain a loan with an interest rate of 2.5-3% when they buy qualifying low-impact logging equipment, which officials note is better for the watershed, the forest, and the state.

VEDA is partnering with FPR to help loggers get low-cost financing to buy this modern equipment that will help them increase productivity, increase

profits and protect Vermont lands, according to VEDA CEO Joan Goldstein.

“It takes significant capital to modernize and use the best logging technology,” she said. “These new rates will help ease that financial burden.”

Loggers can apply *now* for this low interest rate, which is the result of a \$500,000 investment from the Clean Water Fund overseen by the FPR.

“This initiative will help loggers purchase equipment that is better for water quality, but currently too expensive because of high interest rates. By using the Clean Water Fund to buy down interest rates, more loggers

can switch to equipment that reduces soil compaction, erosion, and sediment runoff, leading to cleaner rivers and streams,” said Oliver Pierson, director of the forests division.

Loggers wanting to take advantage of these savings are subjected to a two-step review: FPR determines if the equipment qualifies for the low rate, then VEDA analyzes the application and makes a final loan decision.

This new offering is in addition to other discounted VEDA loans available to all Vermont businesses in the forest economy.

To learn more, visit VEDA’s Forestry Loan page.

Center

(Continued from Page 6B)
treatment for adults aged 18 and older, enabling access to services including:

- Recovery-focused individual and group counseling
- Life-skills development and case management
- Peer support services
- Medications for substance use disorders

- Discharge and aftercare planning
- Linkages to housing, employment, and community resources

“This new facility furthers Valley Vista’s goal to offer responsive, high-quality and compassionate addiction treatment services to Vermonters in need of substance use care,” said Valley Vista Vice

President Medical and Clinical Services Kevin Hamel in a press release. “Valley Vista is proud to partner with the Health Department to ensure access to these important services.”

For information on substance use services and referrals to care, contact VT Helplink by calling or texting “LINK” to 802-565-5465, or visit VTHelplink.com.

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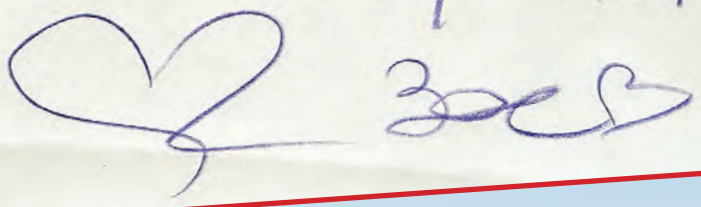
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Thank you
Luke

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR:

Scores of youngsters took the time to write letters and wish lists for Santa during the Better Middlebury Partnership's First Saturday of December holiday kickoff at Town Hall Theater. The Addy Indy was lucky enough to get a peek at those letters, and a few more that were dropped off at our Middlebury offices before one of Santa's elves swung by to bring them to the North Pole. Here are some of the things on local kids' minds this time of year.
Ho Ho Ho!

LETTERS TO SANTA

DEAR SANTA,
I WANT A GLOW IN THE DARK SPARKLE KITTY

SINCERELY, JOJO

DEAR SANTA,
MY NAME IS ELEANOR AND I'VE BEEN A GREAT GIRL THIS YEAR. I
WOULD LIKE EARMUFFS AND A ROBOT FOR CHRISTMAS

LOVE, ELEANOR

DEAR SANTA,
I WOULD LIKE A SKATEBOARD PLEASE

NATALIA

DEAR SANTA
MAY I PLEASE HAVE LEGOS, ROBLOX AND A PUZZLE. AND MORE!


KASHTAN

DEAR SANTA
CAN YOU GET ME A PAW PATROL SET? CAN I ALSO HELP YOU WITH
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I LOVE YOU SANTA, ELOWYNN


Dear Santa,

I wish a
toothless robot
a lego monster truck

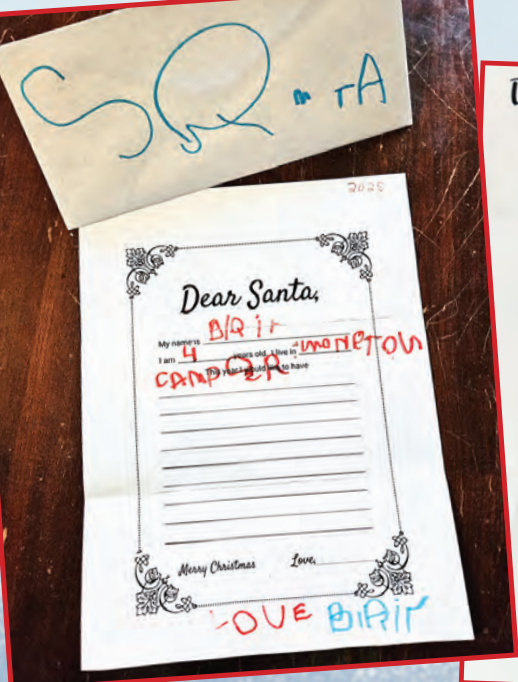


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I WANT A GLOW IN THE DARK SPARKLE KITTY
SINCERELY, JOJO

DEAR SANTA,
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WOULD LIKE EARMUFFS AND A ROBOT FOR CHRISTMAS
LOVE, ELEANOR

DEAR SANTA,
I WOULD LIKE A SKATEBOARD PLEASE
NATALIA

DEAR SANTA
MAY I PLEASE HAVE LEGOS, ROBLOX AND A PUZZLE. AND MORE!
KASHTAN

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CLASSIFIEDS

Public Meetings

AL-ANON OFFERS HELP and hope to anyone who has been affected by a loved one's drinking. Middlebury hosts an online meeting Sunday night 7:15pm and a face to face one Wednesday at 1:30pm at CVUUS (2 Duane Court Middlebury near the high school) that you can also access by Zoom. Visit vermontalano-nalateen.org for links and list of other meetings in the region. If you'd like to speak to an Al-Anon member, call our answering service (866-972-5266) and an Al-Anon member will call you back.

Public Meetings

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS in person meetings are available. For a list of local virtual meetings visit <http://bit.ly/district9aa>. For more information visit <https://aavt.org/> or call the 24 hour hotline at 802-802-AAVT (2288).

Public Meetings

OVEREATERS ANONYMOUS is a 12 step program offering recovery from compulsive eating and food behaviors. For meeting times and general information please visit www.oavermont.org or call (802)863.2655.

Public Meetings

THE TURNING POINT CENTER of Addison County is open for in-person services, Monday through Friday, 10am-4pm. 79 Court St, Middlebury. We are available by phone 24/7 at 802-388-4249.

Public Meetings

VERGENNES FREE THINKERS Founded in 1935 on the principle of one alcoholic helping another to achieve sobriety, A.A. is an effective and enduring program of recovery that has changed countless lives. A.A. has always been committed to making its program of recovery available to anyone, anywhere, who reaches out for help with an alcohol

Public Meetings

problem. The Vergennes Free Thinkers meeting was created in January of this year to maintain a tradition of free expression, conduct a meeting where alcoholics may feel free to express any beliefs, doubts or disbelief they may have, to share their own personal form of spiritual experience, their search for it, and/or their rejection of it, without having to accept anyone else's beliefs or having to deny their own. Meetings

Public Meetings

are held with a high regard for compassion and inclusion without judgment or exception. If you think we can help, please join us on Thursdays at 6pm by contacting Vergennes-freethinkers@gmail.com for Zoom and in-person meeting information.

Public Meetings

VERMONT SUPPORT LINE Are you struggling with a challenging situation? Do you have feelings of sadness, loneliness, isolation, anger, or depression? You don't have to face it alone. Talk with a

Public Meetings

caring person who understands what you're going through today by calling or texting the free and confidential Pathways Vermont Support Line available 24/7 at (833) VT - TALKS.

Help Wanted ads can be found on Pages 12B and 13B

Help Wanted

Help Wanted

Help Wanted

Help Wanted



Vermont Afghan Alliances Seeks an Executive Director

 Burlington, Vermont

DESIRED EXPERIENCE:


- ◆ Fundraising
- ◆ Program Management
- ◆ Organizational Development
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MAKE A DIFFERENCE WITH US!

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APPLICATION DEADLINE:
JANUARY 15, 2026





FACILITIES POSITIONS

Addison Central School District is seeking two full-time Custodians, Monday through Friday to work second shift and a Grounds Technician.

The Grounds Technician would be located at Middlebury Union High School. Requirements of the position are being able to work outside in all weather conditions, must be able to operate a variety of manual and power equipment/tools, climb ladders and lift 80 lbs unassisted. These positions are full-year positions. Addison Central School District offers competitive wages.

EMPLOYEE BENEFITS INCLUDE


- Health, Dental, Life AD&D, Long Term Disability coverage
- Contribution to up to a family health insurance plan contribution to a Health Savings Account or a Health Reimbursement Arrangement
- Access to a flexible spending account
- Single dental insurance plan funded by the school district with the option to purchase dependent coverage
- Long term disability plan with a 90-day elimination period, benefit pays 66 2/3% of salary, funded by the school district
- Life insurance valued at \$30,000, funded by the school district

OTHER BENEFITS

- Paid time off
- Retirement through the Vermont Municipal Employees Retirement System
- Employee Assistance Program

Apply by submitting a letter of interest, resume, and three current reference letters via School Spring or by sending a hard copy to:
Bruce MacIntire, Director of Facilities
Addison Central School District
49 Charles Avenue
Middlebury, VT 05753

Applications will be accepted until positions are filled.
E.O.E.



NOW HIRING

We're looking for a dependable, hard-working person to take on a hybrid role in our ready-mix concrete plant. This job includes batching concrete, doing basic quality control testing, helping dispatch trucks, and supporting daily plant and yard operations. If you like staying busy and working with both equipment and people, this is a great fit.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES:

Batching & Plant Work

- Operate the batch plant to produce concrete accurately and on schedule
- Adjust moisture readings and admixtures for consistent loads
- Maintain batch tickets, mix records, and daily production logs
- Communicate load details and instructions to drivers

Maintenance & Yard Work

- Monitor plant equipment, conveyors, and controls
- Help with routine cleanup and preventative maintenance
- Track cement, aggregate, admixture, and fuel inventory levels

Requirements:

- Experience in ready-mix, trucking, or construction is preferred
- Preferred 1-2+ years of prior plant experience
- Basic knowledge of concrete testing (training provided if needed)
- Valid driver's license required, CDL Class B license is preferred
- Understanding concrete mix designs, quality control, maintenance/safety procedures, inventory management, and strong communication/math skills.
- A high school diploma/GED required.

This is a full-time position offering a competitive benefits package, including Health Insurance, Dental, Vision, Paid Vacation, 401(k) and Profit-Sharing Retirement Plan, Short-Term Disability, and Life Insurance. Relocation assistance is available.

Please submit resume: Lynn Eugair/ HR Manager at lynn@jpcarrara.com or download an application from our website at www.jpcarrara.com and fax to (802) 775-1048.

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Opportunities

Opportunities

Opportunities

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Opportunities


Opportunities

New Year's Resolution: Become an RSVP Volunteer!

RSVP of Addison County connects volunteers age 55 and up with organizations that need their support. RSVP provides a wide range of opportunities from delivering healthy meals to neighbors, helping community members with transportation, to reading to a companion, or providing support to children of all ages. RSVP will help you find an opportunity to fit with your causes, interests and schedule.

Learn how you can make a difference!

To learn more, please visit www.volunteersinvt.org or contact us at 802-468-7056





Leading construction company is seeking Carpenters and Lead Carpenters in the Addison & Chittenden County area.

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Or, submit your classified ad on our website: addisonindependent.com

DEADLINE: Monday at 5 p.m.

- 25¢ per word • minimum \$2.50 per ad
- 50¢ internet listing per issue • minimum 2 insertions

• Special 4 for 3 rates not valid for the following categories: Services, Opportunities, Real Estate, Wood heat, Attn. Farmers, For Rent & Help Wanted

<input type="checkbox"/> Notices	<input type="checkbox"/> Work Wanted	<input type="checkbox"/> Att. Farmers
<input type="checkbox"/> Card of Thanks	<input type="checkbox"/> Help Wanted	<input type="checkbox"/> Motorcycles
<input type="checkbox"/> Personals	<input type="checkbox"/> For Sale	<input type="checkbox"/> Cars
<input type="checkbox"/> Services	<input type="checkbox"/> Public Meetings**	<input type="checkbox"/> Trucks
<input type="checkbox"/> Free**	<input type="checkbox"/> For Rent	<input type="checkbox"/> SUVs
<input type="checkbox"/> Lost 'N Found**	<input type="checkbox"/> Want to Rent	<input type="checkbox"/> Snowmobiles
<input type="checkbox"/> Garage Sales	<input type="checkbox"/> Wood Heat	<input type="checkbox"/> Boats
<input type="checkbox"/> Lawn & Garden	<input type="checkbox"/> Real Estate	<input type="checkbox"/> Wanted
<input type="checkbox"/> Opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/> Animals	<input type="checkbox"/> Real Estate Wanted
<input type="checkbox"/> Adoption		<input type="checkbox"/> Vacation Rentals

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Addison Independent CLASSIFIEDS

Services

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DIGITAL ACCESS View obituaries, calendar listings and classifieds online at addisonindependent.com. Don't miss out on events, garage sales, or opportunities- check out our free digital listings. Looking to read more? Become a subscriber!

Help
Wanted ads
can be found
on Pages
12B and
13B

Help Wanted

Help Wanted

EVENING FRONT DESK/CONCIERGE. Swift House Inn – Middlebury, Vermont. We're hiring a front desk professional to anchor our evening shift. This position plays a pivotal role: greeting arriving guests, fielding questions, supporting restaurant reservations, and ensuring the property is secure and guest-ready for the next day. If you thrive on creating memorable experiences and want to grow in the hospitality industry, this is for you. Swift House Inn has 20 guest rooms across three historic buildings, and is home to Jessica's at Swift House Inn, one of Vermont's most celebrated fine dining restaurants. Responsibilities: Welcome and check in arriving guests with warmth and professionalism. Answer phones, manage room and restaurant reservations. Provide local recommendations and concierge-style service. Troubleshoot guest concerns and offer proactive solutions. Liaise with Jessica's restaurant team for smooth communication. Keep common areas tidy, cozy, and well-presented. Follow nightly checklists and procedures. Lock up buildings and hand off to the overnight security team. You Are... Deeply interested in the hotel and lodging industry. A natural host who loves creating great guest experiences in Addison County. Communicative, warm, and gracious under pressure. Obsessed with details and good systems. Reliable, punctual, and self-directed. Shift & Compensation. Hours: 3:00 p.m. – 11:00 p.m. Schedule: Part-time, includes some weekends and holidays. Pay: \$20-\$22 Hourly, com-

Help Wanted

Help Wanted

mensurate with experience, bonuses and tips. Apply Today. Email your resume and a short note to owner@swifthouseinn.com. Learn more about us at swifthouseinn.com

PERSONAL CARE ASSISTANT Wanted to help 77 year old man in Addison on Saturdays and Sundays for 3-4 hours a day. Help with cooking, housework, and chores. \$25 an hour. Contact ellenresnik@gmail.com

For Rent

2-BEDROOM; East Middlebury. No Pets, No Smoking. \$1300 plus utilities. Semi-furnished. First & last security deposit. 802-771-4686.

✓
ALL REAL ESTATE advertising in this newspaper is subject to the Federal Fair Housing Act of 1968 as amended which makes it illegal to advertise any preference, limitation or discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, handicap, familial status, national origin, sexual orientation, or persons receiving public assistance or an intention to make any such preference, limitation or discrimination. This newspaper will not knowingly accept any advertisement for real estate which is in violation of the law. Our readers are hereby informed that all dwellings advertised in this newspaper are available on an equal opportunity basis. To complain of discrimination, call HUD Toll-free at 1-800-424-8590. For the Washington, DC area please call HUD at 426-3500.

BRANDON ESTATE 5 Bedrooms 3 bath \$4800 Furnished See Craigslist at <https://vermont.craigslist.org/apa/d/forest-dale-bedroom-updated-stone-home/7889936398.htm> or call 802 377 9394

COMMERCIAL/OFFICE SPACE - 2000 sq ft to 7000 sq ft – Tall ceilings, loading docks, plenty of parking. Middlebury – 802-558-6092

Help Wanted

For Rent

COMPANY COMING? 2-bedroom rustic lakefront winterized cottage available for short-term rental on Lake Dunmore, 10-15 minutes to Middlebury and Brandon. Sleeps 4, comfortably furnished, heated, fully equipped kitchens, bathrooms with showers. TV, WiFi. krnorthcove@gmail.com; 802 352-4236

MIDDLEBURY BRIARWOOD APARTMENTS is currently taking wait-list applications for 2- br apartments. No smoking/ No pets. Income limits apply- rent based on income- 2 person minimum occupancy. Equal Housing Opportunity. Handicapped accessible. 802-247-0165 TTY: 800-253-0191 www. SummitPMG.com.

For Rent

For Rent

MIDDLEBURY ONE BEDROOM Small, ground floor. Very nice, very convenient in-town location, perfect for person who does not drive. \$795 plus heat and electric. Non-smoker, no pets. 802-388-5474.

MIDDLEBURY, OFF CAMPUS HOUSING available. 802-388-4831, AJ Neri Property Rentals.

PAINTING STUDIO FOR RENT Serene, bright, and spacious painting studio available January 1, 2026. 20'x30' open floor plan with 11-foot ceilings and plenty of ventilation. Located in Orwell, Vermont, less than 30 minutes from Middlebury. \$930 per month, heat and electric included, 12-month lease. Contact John@Hubglass.com to schedule a viewing.

For Rent

For Rent

VERGENNES VALLEY VIEW APARTMENTS is currently taking wait list applications. Occupants must be 62+ years of age. No smoking/ No pets. Income limits apply - Rent based on income. Equal Housing Opportunity. 802-247-0165 TTY: 800-253-0191 www. SummitPMG.com.

Wood Heat

DRY OR GREEN firewood for sale. Delivery available. 802-349-4212.

Att. Farmers

1ST CUT, SMALL square, \$3.25. 2nd cut small square, \$4.25. 802-377-5455.

CORN SILAGE for sale. Excellent quality and large quantity available. 518-307-3941

TOWN OF BRISTOL PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

The Bristol Development Review Board will hold the following hearings on January 13th, 2026, beginning at 7:00 P.M. The hearings will be held in person at the Town Office, located at 1 South Street. The hearings will also be available via Zoom and login information is below.

Permit #25-062: Kenneth Johnson and Anne Majusiak of South 116 Road (Parcel #090107.02) are requesting Conditional Use approval for the addition to a non-conforming accessory garage as required by SECTION 411(1) and subject to the Bristol Unified Development Regulations Article III, SECTIONS 350-358.

Copies of the zoning permit applications and decisions are available for review at the Bristol Zoning Office during regular business hours.

Remote Access: via Zoom <https://zoom.us/>

• **Meeting ID:** 857 8676 1083

• **Passcode:** 805823

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87551027651?pwd=mJnqMmaORm2lufotvEE-BidXObjJLJl.1>

Phone In: +1 646 931 3860

ACT 250 NOTICE MINOR APPLICATION #9A0321-8 10 V.S.A. §§ 6000 - 6111

Vermont Toy Storage, LLC, has filed application #9A0321-8, deemed complete on December 15, 2025, for a project generally described as a 3-lot commercial subdivision of an existing ±71-acre parcel as follows:

- Lot 1-±59.0 acres (remaining lands);
- Lot 2 - ±5.31 acres; and
- Lot 3-±6.76 acres.

Lot 2 will be improved with two new commercial buildings and Lot 3 will be improved with three new commercial buildings, totaling ±44,400 square feet. All buildings will be served by a shared mound wastewater disposal system and a shared drilled well. The Project is located at 236, 250, 270, 286, and 300 Legacy Lane in Ferrisburgh, Vermont. The application may be viewed on the Land Use Review Board's Ac 250 Database (<https://anrweb.vt.gov/ANR/Act250/default.aspx>) by entering the project number "9A0321-8."

No hearing will be held, and a permit may be issued unless, on or before January 14, 2026, a party notifies the District 9 Commission in writing of an issue requiring a hearing, or the Commission sets the matter for a hearing on its own motion. Any person as defined in 10 V.S.A. § 6085(c)(1) may request a hearing. Any hearing request must be in writing, must state the criteria or sub-criteria at issue, why a hearing is required, and what additional evidence will be presented at the hearing. Any hearing request by an adjoining property owner or other person eligible for party status under 10 V.S.A. § 6085(c)(1)(E) must include a petition for party status under the Act 250 Rules. To request party status and a hearing, fill out the Party Status Petition Form on the Board's website: <https://act250.vermont.gov/documents/party-status-petition-form>, and email it to the District 9 Office at: Act250.Essex@vermont.gov. Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law may not be prepared unless the Commission holds a public hearing.

For more information contact the District Coordinator listed below.

Josh Donabedian
District 9 Coordinator
111 West Street
Essex Junction, VT 05452
Joshua.Donabedian@vermont.gov

PROPOSED STATE RULES

By law, public notice of proposed rules must be given by publication in newspapers of record. The purpose of these notices is to give the public a chance to respond to the proposals. The public notices for administrative rules are now also available online at <https://secure.vermont.gov/SOS/rules/>. The law requires an agency to hold a public hearing on a proposed rule, if requested to do so in writing by 25 persons or an association having at least 25 members.

To make special arrangements for individuals with disabilities or special needs please call or write the contact person listed below as soon as possible.

To obtain further information concerning any scheduled hearing(s), obtain copies of proposed rule(s) or submit comments regarding proposed rule(s), please call or write the contact person listed below. You may also submit comments in writing to the Legislative Committee on Administrative Rules, State House, Montpelier, Vermont 05602 (802-828-2231).

Green Mountain Care Board: Rule 3.000: Hospital Budget Review.

Vermont Proposed Rule: 25P044

AGENCY: Green Mountain Care Board

CONCISE SUMMARY: This proposed hospital budget review rule amends the existing rule to conform to statutory amendments made with the passage of Act 49 (2025), Act 62 (2025), and Act 68 (2025). These Acts set forth revised standards and processes by which hospital budgets are reviewed, established, and monitored by the Green Mountain Care Board (GMCB). The proposed rule also streamlines and simplifies certain parts of the hospital budget review process. The proposed rule clarifies hospital budget submission obligations, the process for requesting that information be exempt from public inspection and copying, and the Board's ability to disclose this information. The proposed rule revises the Board's process for exempting hospitals from public hearings, the process for reviewing mid-year budget performance, the process for reviewing significant deviations from established budgets, and the process for reviewing hospital applications for budget adjustment.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, CONTACT: Angela Pellegrino-Wood, Green Mountain Care Board, 112 State St. 5th floor Montpelier, VT 05602 Tel: 802-461-5740 E-Mail: Angela.Pellegrino-Wood@vermont.gov URL: <https://gmcbboard.vermont.gov/hospital-budget-review>.

FOR COPIES: Mark Hengstler, Green Mountain Care Board, 112 State St. 5th floor Montpelier, VT 05602 Tel: 802-249-0519 E-Mail: Mark.Hengstler@vermont.gov.

Public Notices Index

Public Notices for the following can be found in this ***ADDISON INDEPENDENT*** on Pages 13B and 14B

116 Self Storage (1)

Act 250 (1)

Addison County Courthouse (1)

Bristol (1)

Ethan Allen Highway Storage (1)

Middlebury (1)

State of Vermont (1)

TOWN OF MIDDLEBURY PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

The Middlebury Development Review Board will hold a public hearing on Monday, January 12th, 2026 at 7:00 p.m. in the Large Conference Room at the Town Offices, 77 Main Street, to consider the following application(s).

1. Application (file #2026-007050.000-SD) is a request by Jeffery and Lise Fifield for a final plan/plat approval for a 3-lot subdivision of the 67.3+ acre parcel located at 528 South Main Street, pursuant to the Middlebury Zoning and Subdivision Regulations (MZR). The applicant proposes subdividing the property into three (3) parcels. Proposed Lot-1 will be 62.3+ acres and contain all the existing residential and agricultural structures. Proposed Lot-2 will be 2.4+ acres and contain a 3-bedroom single-family residence. Proposed Lot-3 will be 2.6+ acres and contain a 3-bedroom single-family residence and 1-bedroom accessory dwelling unit (ADU). The property is identified as parcel number #007050.000 in the agricultural rural zoning district.

The hearing will also be available to participants via the Zoom video link below. Plans and additional information regarding these applications may be viewed at the Planning and Zoning Office in the Town Offices or by calling 388-8100, Ext 226. Participation in this public hearing is a prerequisite to the right to take any subsequent appeal.

J.R. Christ
Zoning Administrator

STATE OF VERMONT SUPERIOR COURT CALEDONIA UNIT CIVIL DIVISION DOCKET NO. 25-CV-01071

FARM CREDIT EAST, ACA
Plaintiff,

v.

COREY T. CAYIA and
MARCEL P. LECLAIR
Defendants.

NOTICE OF SALE

By virtue of and in execution of the Judgment and Decree of Foreclosure by Judicial Sale dated September, 26, 2025, for a breach of a Mortgage dated October 28, 2024, and recorded in Book 65, Page 188 in the of the Town of Sheffield Land Records (the "Mortgaged Property"); and for the purpose of foreclosing the same, the Mortgaged Property will be sold at public auction on **Thursday, January 29, 2026, at 11:00 a.m.** at the Mortgaged Property, located at 1636 Blake Pond Road in Sheffield, Vermont, more particularly described as follows:

"... a parcel consisting of 213.00 acres, more or less, together with any other improvements thereon or appurtenances thereto, located at 1636 Blake Pond Road in the Town of Sheffield and being all and the same lands and premise conveyed to Corey Cayia and Marcel LeClair by warranty deed from Karl R. Johnson and Lisa T. Johnson dated June 24, 2022 and recorded in Book 65 at Page 188 of the Sheffield land records ..."

Please note that this is a Class 4 Road and if the road is impassable, the auction will be held at the intersection of Drake Place Road and Blake Pond Road.

TERMS OF SALE: The Mortgaged Property will be sold "AS IS WHERE IS" to the highest bidder for cash or wire funds only. The sale of the Mortgaged Property is subject to confirmation by the Vermont Superior Court, Caledonia Unit, Civil Division. The Mortgaged Property will be sold subject to unpaid taxes, municipal assessments, and superior liens, if any.

The commercial equipment at the Mortgage Property will be sold separately in an online sale from January 29, 2026 at 11:00 a.m. until Monday February 2. Additional information regarding the auction for the commercial equipment can be found at <https://www.thcauction.com/02022026-secured-creditor-sugaring-sheffield-vt-1725>.

The public sale may be adjourned one or more times for a total time not exceeding 30 days, without further court order, and without publication or service of a new notice of sale, by announcement of the new sale date to those present at each adjournment or by posting notice of the adjournment in a conspicuous place at the location of the sale. Notice of the new sale date shall also be sent by first class mail, postage prepaid, to the mortgagors at the mortgagors' last known address at least five days before the new sale date.

Defendants Corey Cayia and Marcel LeClair are entitled to redeem the Mortgaged Property at any time prior to the sale by paying the full amount due under the Mortgage referenced above, including the costs and expenses of the sale.

MORTGAGED PROPERTY DEPOSIT: A non-refundable deposit for the Mortgaged Property in the amount of \$10,000.00 shall be paid by the high bidder by cash, certified check or bank draft to Thomas Hirchak Co., which shall hold the deposit until the closing. The balance of the purchase price for the Mortgaged Property shall be due and payable within the latter of 10 days from the date of confirmation of said sale by the Vermont Superior Court, Caledonia Unit, Civil Division or 45 days from the date of public auction. If the balance of the purchase price for the Mortgaged Property is not paid within the period set forth herein, the deposit shall be forfeited and shall be retained by Plaintiff herein as agreed liquidation damages and the Mortgaged Property may be offered to the next highest bidder still interested in the Mortgaged Property.

PURCHASE AND SALE CONTRACT: The high bidder for the Mortgaged Property shall be required to sign a no contingency contract of Purchase and Sale at the public auction, agreeing to purchase the Mortgaged Property in its "AS IS WHERE IS" condition, as a result of being the successful and high bidder at the sale.

OTHER TERMS TO BE ANNOUNCED AT SALE: Inquiries can be made to Thomas Hirchak Co., 1878 Cadys Falls Road, Morrisville, VT 05661; (802) 242-2245. Additional information regarding this auction can also be found at <https://www.thcauction.com/01292026-farm-credit-east-cayia-sheffield-vt>.

Dated: December 12, 2025.

FARM CREDIT EAST, ACA

By: Ryan M. Long
Ryan M. Long, Esq.
Primmer Piper Eggleston & Cramer PC
30 Main Street, Suite 500
P.O. Box 1489
Burlington, VT 05602-1489
(802) 864-0880
rlong@primmer.com



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the Addy Indy.

addisonindependent.com/help-wanted

ADDISON COUNTY
INDEPENDENT

Native hollies offer holiday cheer & more

By COLBY GALLIHER

Few plants evoke winter holidays in the north more dependably than the Christmas holly (*Ilex aquifolium*). The plant's handsome evergreen leaves and red berries have enjoyed a sacred place in European cultures, from the British Isles to the Mediterranean, since classical antiquity. Today, it remains the member of the holly family (*Aquifoliaceae*) most likely to festoon mantels and doorways in celebration of the season. But while Christmas holly originates across the Atlantic, our region has two native holly species of which to boast — and they do much more on the landscape than brighten homes and spirits at yuletide.

You can find northern New England's hollies in their preferred habitat in bogs, swamps, and other waterlogged areas. The two shrubs — mountain holly (*Ilex mucronata*, formerly *Nemopanthus mucronatus* before genetic testing prompted a reclassification) and common winterberry (*I. verticillata*) — are common in wetland complexes or their edges, where they can reach 15 feet tall. The species tend to

intermingle in these settings, which can make distinguishing them a challenge.

Luckily, there are several differences between the two that can help aspiring holly honchos tell them apart, even in the cold months.

One is the specific locations in which they grow. Though both are wetland plants, mountain holly can tolerate drier conditions than its counterpart; in wetlands hosting both species, you might find mountain holly along the periphery, rather than in standing water like winterberry. You may also come across mountain holly, as its name suggests, growing at higher elevations than winterberry.

Another key distinction lies in the fruit of the two species. Both plants are dioecious, meaning that every individual is either male or female. When fertilized by the pollen of a nearby male, females of both species produce the attractive red berries — technically drupes, or fruits consisting of skin and flesh that surround a pit containing the seeds — for which the holly family is widely known. But mountain holly berries are about 1/3-inch wide, hang from thin stalks like cherries, and according to the



University of Maine Cooperative Extension, are usually snapped up by wildlife before winter rolls around. Winterberries, meanwhile, grow in clusters tight to the shrub's branches and rarely exceed 1/4-inch in width. They almost always persist far beyond fall, firing winter's drab palette with spellbinding pageants of red.

That is, until non-human eyes discover them. It is a delightful annual ritual to behold the bedlam of a hungry flock of robins dropping out of the sky into the humble grove of winterberries in a swampy area of my yard. Males and females dangle from the waist-high shrubs like top-heavy ornaments, their wings flapping for balance, and gobble up the berries in their immediate vicinity before contorting themselves to pluck those on neighboring branches. Berries go down the robins' speckled gullets in one gulp — first pinched in their beaks, and then, with a toss of their heads, sliding into their bellies.

What remains after these raiding

parties will feed a suite of wildlife. In addition to robins, 47 species of birds eat winterberries, among them northern mockingbirds, cedar and bohemian waxwings, and eastern bluebirds, according to the Natural Resources Conservation Service. The little morsels are comparatively spartan pickings compared to seeds and insects, but when winter deepens and those calorie-dense foods diminish, winterberries offer a critical nutritional backup. (Hungry hikers tromping through a snow-covered bog should look but not eat; winterberries are mildly poisonous to humans.) Sated winged and four-legged diners, which include mammals from bears to squirrels, propagate the species by spreading the seeds over the landscape in their droppings. Twigs of both shrubs are also fodder for deer and rabbits.

Alas, this impressive wildlife value cannot neutralize our two native hollies' aesthetic Achilles heel. Christmas holly's leaves persist through the winter

alongside the berries, creating the eye-pleasing combination associated with year-end holidays. Mountain holly and winterberry, on the other hand, are deciduous; they drop their leaves in the fall. Though leaf-drop accentuates the spectacular display of berries, it puts our native *Ilex* species at a disadvantage when competing for decorating prominence with the red-and-green allure of Christmas holly.

Still, winterberry and mountain holly crack on, outside, as stalwarts of northern New England's winter ecology. More native berries for the birds!

Colby Galliher writes about conservation, ecology, and environmental policy. To learn more about his work, visit colbygalliher.com. Illustration by Adelaide Murphy Tyrol. The Outside Story is assigned and edited by Northern Woodlands magazine and sponsored by the Wellborn Ecology Fund of New Hampshire Charitable Foundation: nhcf.org.

Brandon man cited for DUI

MIDDLEBURY — Middlebury police cited Alan C. Reynolds, 51, of Brandon for driving under the influence of drugs, an action following a stop on East Main Street on Dec. 19.

In other action last week, Middlebury police:

- Conducted a death investigation at a Case Street home on Dec. 15. Police identified the deceased as 61-year-old Robert F. Robidoux, and reported no foul play involved.
- Helped a stranded local person get back to their residence during the evening of Dec. 15.
- Investigated a report of a juvenile in possession of tobacco at Middlebury Union High School on Dec. 15.
- Responded to a report about a suspicious person in the North Pleasant Street area on Dec. 16.
- Received a report of people smelling gasoline in the Maple Street area on Dec. 16.
- Responded to a juvenile issue on MUHS campus on Dec. 16.
- Assisted Vermont State Police at Porter Hospital with a sexual assault investigation on Dec. 17.
- Assisted the Rutland County Sheriff's Department with an arrest off Grove Street in Brandon on Dec. 18.
- Investigated a reported theft at Hannaford's Supermarket on Dec. 18.
- Assisted state police at the scene of a vehicle crash, with injuries, on Route 125 in Ripton on Dec. 18.

• Fielded a phone call from a person having a mental health crisis on Dec. 18.

• Joined Middlebury firefighters at a Case Street home on Dec. 18 to investigate reports of smoke inside the abode.

• Gave a ride home to a Middlebury patient who had been discharged from Porter Hospital and had no transportation at 12:35 a.m. on Dec. 18.

• Assisted state police with an investigation of a domestic dispute off Route 7 in New Haven on Dec. 19.

• Provided traffic control at the scene of downed power lines on Seymour Street Extension during inclement weather on Dec. 19.

• Dealt with a juvenile issue on MUHS campus on Dec. 19.

• Assisted Vermont State Police at a drunken-driving related stop at the intersection of Route 7 and Maple Street in Salisbury on Dec. 20.

• Cited a juvenile for suspicion of driving under the influence of drugs near the intersection of Route 7 and Dog Team Road on Dec. 20. Police processed the driver and turned him over to a parent.

• Were informed of a theft from a Court Street business on Dec. 20.

• Broke up a verbal dispute between strangers on Court Street during the afternoon of Dec. 20.

• Assisted a local person who complained about being harassed by another person on Dec. 20.

• Deployed Middlebury police K-9 Guinness on Dec. 20 to sniff a vehicle on East Main Street that police believed might contain illegal drugs. Police said they found and seized illegal drugs as a result of Guinness's work.

• Searched in vain for a dog on the loose on East Main Street on Dec. 21.

• Helped a person with car problems in Court Square on Dec. 21.

• Assisted state police at the scene of a vehicle crash on Middle Road in Salisbury on Dec. 21.

• Responded to 260 Court St. on a suspicious activity complaint on Dec. 21.

Public Notices

can be found in this
ADDISON INDEPENDENT
on Pages 13B and 14B

AUCTIONS

NOTICE OF SELF-STORAGE LIEN SALE

116 SELF STORAGE, BRISTOL, VT

Notice is hereby given that the contents of the self-storage unit listed below will be sold at public auction by sealed bid at the 116 Self Storage facility. This sale is being held to collect unpaid storage unit occupancy fees, charges and expenses of the sale.

The entire contents of the self-storage unit listed below will be sold, with the proceeds to be distributed to 116 Self Storage for all accrued occupancy fees (rent charges), attorney's fees, sale expenses in relation to the unit and its sale. Any proceeds beyond the foregoing shall be returned to the unit holder.

Contents of the unit may be viewed on 1/16/2026 commencing at 10 a.m. Sealed bids are to be submitted on the entire contents of the self-storage unit. Bids will be opened one-quarter of an hour after the unit has been viewed on 1/16/2026. The highest bidder on the storage unit must remove the entire contents within 48 hours after notification of their successful bid. Purchase must be made in cash and paid in advance of the removal of the contents of the unit. A \$50.00 cash deposit shall be made and will be refunded if the unit is broom cleaned. 116 Self Storage reserves the right to accept or reject bids.

Units #14 & #67 - R. Wedge
Unit #53 - Z. Grace-Wedge
Unit #83 - B. Lattrell

MARKET REPORT

ADDISON COUNTY COMMISSION SALES

RT. 125 • EAST MIDDLEBURY, VT

Happy Holidays check back next week for the Market Report!	
BEEF	\$
Iroquois	8.80
Nop E	9.60
Blue S	1.50
J. Alle	2.50
Sunde	4.00
Vorse	4.00
P. Liv	2.00
CALV	\$
Barne	0.00
Elysia	0.50
White	4.00
J. Will	5.00
Sunde	7.60
Wilco	9.00
Total Beef - 155 Total Calves - 212	
We value our faithful customers.	
Sales at 3 pm - Mon. & Thurs.	
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Three cited for domestic assault

Vt. State Police Log

ADDISON COUNTY — Vermont State Police dealt with a trio of domestic assault incidents in recent activity.

In the first case, on Dec. 13 at a quarter to 6 p.m., police received a report of suspicious activity on West Street in Cornwall. Troopers looked into it and determined that Scott Hirschberg, 48, of Cornwall had placed another household member in fear of imminent serious bodily injury in the presence of a child. They cited Hirschberg for domestic assault, interference with access to emergency services, and committing a crime in the presence of a child.

Authorities jailed Hirschberg at the Marble Valley Regional Correctional Facility on \$600 bail.

In a second incident, troopers on Dec. 14 at 9:25 p.m. received a report of a physical altercation

at a home on Maple Street in Salisbury. Police investigated and came away saying that Argenis S. Cordova, 32, of Salisbury had caused bodily injury to a household member. Officers took Cordova to the New Haven barracks, cited him for domestic assault and jailed him at the Marble Valley Regional Correctional Facility with bail set at \$500.

Finally, on Dec. 19 at around a quarter to 6 p.m. state police logged a report of a family fight in New Haven. Officers report that Amy Quenneville, 48, of New Haven had caused bodily injury to a family member and had attempted

by physical menace to put another in fear of imminent serious bodily injury. Police cited Quenneville for domestic assault and simple assault.

In other recent activity, troopers:

• On Dec. 13 at approximately 12:40 p.m. were dispatched to a two-vehicle crash on Route 7 near Leicester Whiting Road in Leicester. Police report that Dennis Beattie, 83, of Rochester was driving a 2006 Toyota RAV4 and halted at a stop sign on Leicester Whiting Road and then continued on to Route 7 without yielding to a 2022 Volkswagen Taos driven southbound on Route 7 by a juvenile.

The juvenile driver and all passengers were transported to Porter Medical Center for minor injuries.

The Vermont State Police was assisted on scene by Middlebury EMS, Brandon EMS, and the Brandon Fire Department.

• On Dec. 16 about 10 minutes before 8 a.m. got a report of a road rage incident on Route 125 in Bridport. Police investigated and as a result report that Mercedes Terrier, 25, of Middlebury had recklessly endangered the life of Samuel Leno. Police cited Terrier for reckless endangerment.

• Later on Dec. 16, at around 10 minutes after 3 p.m. a trooper stopped a car on Route 7 near Campground Road in New Haven, noticed that the driver — identified as 59-year-old Brenda Rice of Pittsford — showed signs of impairment and screened her. Ultimately, police cited Rice for driving under the influence and recklessly endangering two passengers in her car.

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Union Street Grocery
Walgreen's

BRIDPORT:

Broughton's Big Country Hardware
Pratt's Store

BRISTOL:

Bristol Country Store
Bristol Discount Beverage
Champlain Farms
Maplefields

Shaw's

Walgreen's

EAST MIDDLEBURY:

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Jiffy Mart
Maplefields
Otter East Bakery & Deli

FERRISBURGH:

Jiffy Mart

LEICESTER:

Leicester General Store

LINCOLN:

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Addison Independent Office
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Costello's Market
Greg's Market
Hannaford
Hare and the Dog
Kinney Drugs
Maplefields

Middlebury Discount Beverage

Middlebury Natural Foods
Co-op
Otter Creek Bakery
Rosie's
Shaw's
Stewart's Shop
Stone Mill Public Market
Vermont Book Shop
Vermont's Own
Village Depot
Walgreen's

NEW HAVEN:

Village Green Market

N. FERRISBURGH:

Stewart's Shop
Russell Memorial Library

ORWELL:

Orwell Free Library

RIPTON:

Ripton Country Store

SALISBURY:

Kampersville Store (seasonal)

SHOREHAM:

Shoreham Service Center

STARKSBORO:

Jerusalem 4-Corners Store

VERGENNES:

BJ's Farm Supply
Champlain Farms
Hare and the Dog
Kinney Drugs
Shaw's
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Whiting General Store

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ADDISON COUNTY INDEPENDENT

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YEAR IN

REVIEW

ARTS+LEISURE

The Addison Independent
December 25, 2025



2025
IN REVIEW

Looking back at a year's worth of Arts & Leisure

This is the year to turn 10, apparently. The Arts+Leisure section of The Addy Indy celebrates the decade mark in 2025 along with Foodaroo and Middlebury Community Music Center. Double-digits baby!

For another incredible 52 issues and over 832 pages, this tabloid section has featured the work of more than 223 local artists, actors, musicians, filmmakers, adventurers, authors, photographers, craftspeople and more; saw more than 48 exhibits and

29 film events; suggested about 420 don't-miss events happening right here in Addison County; learned 39 garden lessons from the University of Vermont Extension's Master Gardeners. We launched the new monthly column "Look Up" that offers astronomy lessons with Ken Corey; and took a trip with Steve Harris through his travelog "Ruminations on the Run," which just started up again with a more rooted angle this time around. Oh, and we followed the real estate market with a look at 33 featured properties listed this year.

52 weeks and say to myself, "I wonder what stories are going to come out this year?" With a little luck and a whole community to thank, we've been able to keep an arts section strong in *The Addison Independent* for 10 years! That's no small thang.

So, flip through this section and look back at 24 features, several favorite exhibits, adorable pets and more from 2025, and feel all the warm and fuzzies that come from knowing that you — our loyal readers and supporters — make *all* this possible. Thank you!

Regular annual events like the Middlebury New Filmmakers Festival, various music series, spring and fall open studio weekends, and local theater performances were punctuated by a few, shall we say, "edgy" events. Did you catch the experimental music of Allison Loggins Hulland and Roomful of Teeth? How about the photography exhibit "Rania Matar: SHE" that was held at the Middlebury College Museum of Art in February? Or most recently were you a part of the collaborative "LOOP" experience with Moira Smiley and Laurel Jenkins that was held in the Anderson Studio at Town Hall Theater? It's incredible to have events like these that push the envelope just a little... it shows us that art has a safe space here in our community, and that is something special.

If you haven't already, consider adding a monthly donation to your subscription and become an Addy All-Star. If you're interested in making a tax-deductible donation, you can do that too, by donating to The Addison Independent Trust, a qualified public charity we established this spring. Through subscriptions, donations and local advertising support we will continue publishing The Addy Indy's Arts + Leisure section, so we can all enjoy this engaging, reliable and fun companion every Thursday.

See ya in the New Year!

— Elsie Lynn Parini,
Arts + Leisure editor & co-publisher

Ask me how you can donate to
The Addy Indy to keep local reporting
strong in our community.
elsie@addisonindependent.com



Oliver, Ida (7), Massimo (5), and Elsie of Weybridge, took a stroll this fall through the golden fields with their golden Gemma. This bouncy bundle of love gets to come to The Addy Indy to work every week.

PHOTO / CALEB KENNA

Every year, I start with a blank grid of



Hey Rob, what's for
Sunday Supper?

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HAPPY
NEW YEAR



May 2026 be full of
peace, joy and...

ARTS+LEISURE

6 Art Exhibits To Remember

HERE'S A LOOK BACK AT SIX EXHIBITS FROM AROUND ADDISON COUNTY IN 2025.

This was a tough year to narrow it down to six... Worth a mention is "Vermont Female Farmers" on view through Jan. 3, 2026, at the Henry Sheldon Museum in Middlebury.



Art on Main

"Portals: From Here to There" featured the work of Anne Majusiak and Kendra Schpok in early fall. This two-artist exhibition invites viewers to explore portals as spaces of transition; between light and shadow, inner and outer, the known and the unknown. Step beyond the threshold and discover what lies just out of reach.



Jackson Gallery

"Above Vermont" featured Caleb Kenna's bird's-eye view drone photographs this summer, capturing views of Vermont in all its glorious seasons. With his exceptional eye for composition, Kenna zooms in to create artful pictures like a kayaker surrounded by the reflections of clouds on the water, or a meandering river snaking its way through the trees.



Middlebury College Museum of Art

"Rania Matar: SHE." The photographs of Lebanese Palestinian American artist, Rania Matar tell the stories of young women through portraits taken throughout Lebanon, France, Egypt, and the U.S. These large-scale color photographs portrayed individuality intimately tied to place. A discussion was held in mid-February.



PhotoPlace Gallery

"The Coastal Landscape," was one of many juried photography exhibitions at PhotoPlace Gallery. Jurors Alissa and Jacob Hessler selected images that capture the beauty, mood, and power of coastal environments — from dramatic waves to tranquil shores. An opening reception was held to celebrate the finalists in September.



Edgewater Gallery

"Pastoral Impressions" exhibited local artist Joe Bolger's landscapes that capture the quiet beauty of rural life in Vermont. This exhibit at Edgewater Gallery at the Falls, opened June 7. Bolger shared insights into his inspiration, artistic process, and painterly techniques during a public reception.



Sparrow Art Supply

"Zarabeth Duell." Sparrow Art Supply highlighted monthly artists. In August, Zarabeth of MTN GRL Studio was featured. She blends layered paper watercolor, relief prints, and delicate craftwork to celebrate the natural world. Her newest collection is a love letter to the garden in high summer — when blooms burst, vegetables ripen, and color and texture abound.

2025
IN REVIEW

January



Local poets reflect

Leader David Weinstock and a few local poets reflected on the Otter Creek Poetry Workshop that has met for the past 27 years. With the library under construction this year, the group met at the Sarah Partridge Library in East Middlebury or via Zoom. "David inspires poets to keep writing," said writer Christopher Ross.



Music center turns 10

Middlebury Community Music Center celebrated its 10th anniversary this year with an open house, faculty and student concerts, and Anniversary Galla. "Together, we've built more than a music program," said Sadie Brightman, MCMCs' founder and executive director. "We've created a space where creativity flourishes, voices are heard, and lives are transformed."

February



New music

Don Sheldon started up the What About Wednesdays? music series at his home in Weybridge. These intimate salons hosted by Valley Stage Productions were held periodically throughout the year with emerging folk musicians. Coming up in February, 2026 hear Lily Talmers and the Heather Pierson Duo perform at Sheldon's.



Extreme adventure

No Man's Land Film Festival came to Middlebury for the first time on Feb. 13, which featured six films of extreme adventure. Founded in 2015, NMLFF is the premier adventure film festival for women and gender non-conforming athletes and filmmakers. Thanks to Middlebury Outdoor Programs for bringing the inspo!

March



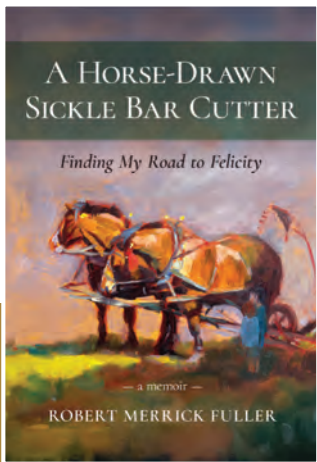
25th book in 2025

Weybridge author Chris Bohjalian released his 25th book, "The Jackal's Mistress" in March. "I view it as a 'Civil War Romeo & Juliet,' a novel about the North and South that's as relevant in 2025 as it was in 1864," he said. Get ready for his 26th book "The Amateur" coming in the summer of 2026.



Allred for the arts

5-Town Friends of the Arts recognized Bristol resident Jennifer Allred for her "significant contribution to the arts," at their annual meeting. Many turned up to celebrate Allred and her "remarkable devotion of time and talent, combining her love of music and theater with her love of working with young people."



“Narrated in a straightforward manner and sprinkled with personal photographs, Fuller sweeps readers into a story of both people and places...”
— Publishers Weekly

Available now at Vermont Bookshop in Middlebury, Recycled Reading in Bristol, Phoenix Books in Burlington, bookshop.org, and other online stores.

2025 IN REVIEW

April



Corruption vs. cupcakes

Ripton's North Branch School put up "Big City Dreams" for their school play this year. Like every year, students conceived and wrote the entire play over three months. "It's corruption versus cupcakes," said Tal Birdsey director and founder of the independent school for grades 7-9. "The powerful versus the weak. The play asks us: Can cupcakes become powerful?"



Art Club

There's an art club that meets monthly usually at the Middlebury College Museum of Art. The club is free and open to all. "I hope to provide a comfortable environment for people to share their thoughts," explained Don Burns, a retired geologist who leads the meetings. Interested? Email Don: ddbstx1@gmail.com.

May



Grief into grit

Lincoln native Emily Halnon released her debut memoir "To the Gorge," which chronicles Halon's experience breaking records on the 460-mile Oregon section of the Pacific Crest Trail. This extraordinary accomplishment came just eight months after the loss of her mom in January 2020 to a rare and aggressive uterine cancer.



'La Bohème' is back!

Back in 2008, Opera Company of Middlebury unveiled its first fully staged production, Puccini's "La Bohème." It told the tale of six young men and women, literally starving artists, risking all to make their way to fame and fortune in Paris of the 1860s. Now in its 22nd season, OCM has returned to "La Bohème." This time the action was set in modern New York City.

June



Four friends

Peek inside the patterns of four friends — Amy Panitz, William Sessions, Louise Cadwell and John Freidin — who gather regularly to make art. "What we find is because there's a group, we've gotten back into painting more," Sessions said. "If you're on your own there isn't that kind of social pressure."



Summer sounds

Town Hall Theater began its free Summer Sounds Concert Series at the new Maloney Performing Arts Plaza. "It's a natural fit for our live music series," said THT Executive & Artistic Director Lisa Mitchell. The first performance starred Mihali — an East Middlebury-based singer, songwriter, guitarist, and co-founder of rock outfit Twiddle.

2025
IN REVIEW

July



Circus Smirkus

This year's show marked 38 years for the only traveling "tent-ed" youth circus in the United States. The 2025 Big Top Tour took to the road June 28 and traveled through mid-August with a tour caravan stopped in Middlebury for four shows July 5 and 6. The last time Circus Smirkus performed on the green next to Mary Hogan Elementary School was 1999.



Foodaroo turns 10

Middlebury's Foodaroo festival celebrated 10 years at the Marble Works River Front Park in Middlebury this summer. Foodaroo-goers enjoyed a world of cuisines, Zach Nugent's Dead Set (in honor of the 60-year anniversary of the Grateful Dead), adult beverage garden and street performers plus two King Arthur Flour baking competitions starring birthday cupcakes.

August



OMG it's Shaw

Middlebury Community Players presented three one-act plays by George Bernard Shaw at the ART Black Box Theater at the Hannaford Career Center in Middlebury. "If he were alive today, he'd be hosting a late-night comedy show, taking aim at politicians, frauds, blowhards and hypocrites," read the show's description. It was hilarious.



Yazz Fest

The Vermont Yazz Fest made its Addison County debut this summer at the Historic Ferrisburgh Town Offices and Community Center. "There's very few things that actually tie all the artists on the bill together except for the fact that they play creative music that's a little bit outside of the mainstream," explained founder Jabe Ledoux.

September



Fanning for 50 years

Middlebury pianist Diana Fanning celebrated 50 years of teaching at Middlebury College with an anniversary concert on Saturday, Oct. 4, at the Mahaney Arts Center. "It's a big responsibility to get up in front of an audience and perform a piece of music — it's scary," she said. "It takes courage. But it's not about you."



Parent on Board

"Parent on Board," a sketch comedy show, poked fun at the beautiful chaos of parenting. The production was held at Town Hall Theater and starred Andrew Ritter, Julia DiFerdinando, Vanessa Dunleavy, Alex Hudson, Jory Raphael, Amy Halpin Riley, Eric Reid-St. John and MacArthur Stine. Kai Fukuda was the music director.

2025 IN REVIEW

October



Half Country Heart

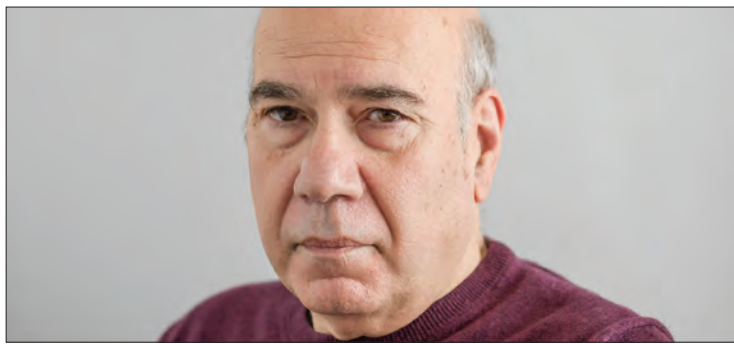
Father-son team Gary and Sam Margolis released their newest album, "Half Country Heart." The album brings together the songwriting and production talents of Sam with the celebrated poetic voice of his father, Gary. It's Americana meets beat-poetry... and it's unexpected and fabulous.



Everything Alive

A decade after a horrifying car accident, Addison teacher, author and mom Molly Johnsen published "Everything Alive," a collection of poetry that takes the reader through trauma, disability and resilience. "I've heard from people that this book reads as a triumph or a resilience," she said. "That's been such a gift... We're all in it together."

November



Exit interview

Jay Parini sat down with Arts & Culture editors Christy Liang, Anthony Cinquina and Ellie Trinkle from the Middlebury College newspaper, The Campus, to share his insights after a 50-year career as a professor of English. "It's all storytelling," Parini said. "And storytelling is an effort to get at the truth."



Anastasia

Mount Abe students presented "Anastasia" for this year's fall musical. What was new this year, is that all 90+ members of the 7th- to 12th-grade cast spent hours of rehearsal time with MAUHS English teacher Addie Thompson, who led a dramaturgy class that explored the world of the play.

December



Artistic legacy

Bristol artist Brenda Myrick teamed up with Bristol Suites on a new exhibition that features Myrick's artwork alongside that of her late mother, Barbara Lane, who was also a local artist. Lane's and Myrick's paintings fill the inn's lobby and adorn its suites. "It was a time really to bring my mother's artwork forward," Myrick said.



Solstice & reflection

Solstice parties happened all over Addison County a fun way to play in the dark! And a time to reflect. THT's Center for Learning and Engagement had some impressive stats to share from its first year of programming. "We held 40 classes, involving over 530 individuals," CLE Director Lindsay Pontius said. Bravo!



Pets of 2025

Homeward Bound, Addison County's Humane Society shared some stats of the amazing assistance they provided our communities this year.

ADOPTIONS: 705 (588 cats, 78 dogs, 9 guinea pigs, 9 rabbits, 2 geckos)

ANIMALS SURRENDERED to the shelter by their guardians: 441 (344 cats, 12 guinea pigs, 10 rabbits, 2 geckos, 1 hamster)

STRAYS TAKEN IN: 145 (95 cats, 48 dogs, 1 ferret, 1 rabbit)

STRAYS RETURNED to their owners: 35 animals (10 cats, 24 dogs, 1 rabbit)

Animals enrolled in the **PETCORE PROGRAM** (assisting low-income pet owners): 113 PetCORE members with 144 cats and 76 dogs

PETS IN CRISIS: 5 Pets clients (4 dogs and 6 cats)

SPAY THE MOM PROGRAM: 13 moms spayed

TRANSFERS FROM OTHER SHELTERS: 171 (166 cats, 5 dogs)

SPAYS/NEUTERS conducted in our surgery suite: 1,117

Thank you!



Pets In Need

HOMeward BOUND

Addison County's Humane Society

Charleston

Charleston is already making people swoon in his short time at the shelter. He has a quiet confidence about him that is very endearing. He has been affectionate with volunteers and staff and we look forward to meeting his lucky future family to be. We are still learning his likes and dislikes and will update his bio as he shows us more of who he is.



Mischievous



Mischievous is a super hunk of a cat that we have yet to see live up to his name. He has a very gentle demeanor and quietly observes everything around him. He has lived with other cats before arriving at the shelter and is very much looking forward to returning to a settled home life.

Paws

Paws is a very friendly girl who has lived well with cat friends in the past. She greets volunteers and staff with a chirp and a nudge and is ready to go back to the life of a happy house cat!



Piper



Piper is a shy but friendly girl who came to us after her owner passed away. She needs someone who can appreciate her quiet and gentle nature, while also helping her live her healthiest life. Piper needs some weight loss (not shaming, just informing!) to make sure she is feeling her best. She has been terrified of dogs in the past and we don't have any information yet about how she does with other cats. We will update her bio as we learn more about her!

Shorty

Meet **Shorty**! This handsome boy arrived to us with two other cats, he would love to be adopted with one of them or have another cat friend in his new home. He is a bit shy as he is settling in to shelter life, but is receiving affection for volunteers and staff. If your home is needing a handsome hunk o' cat, Shorty is your guy!



Homeward Bound
Addison County's Humane Society



Want to learn more?

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In Memory

LEXI 2018-2025

I loved you for your whole life

And I'll miss you for the rest of mine



PUZZLES

SPONSORED BY SPARROW ART SUPPLY

ACROSS

1. Light cavalry

5. Coconut palms

10. Rounded knob

14. Central Japan city

15. Sandwiches

16. Shape produced by a curve

17. Ancient region in modern-day Syria

18. French modernist painter

19. Grandmother

20. Mammary gland of cattle

22. Rocky peak

23. Secret plan

24. Songs to one's lover

27. More (Spanish)

30. Father

31. Chinese principle underlying the universe

32. Ballplayer's accessory
35. Together

37. A person's brother or sister

38. Evil spirit

39. Monetary units

40. Partner to cheese

41. About Sun

42. Group of like-minded people

43. After B

44. Seaside room

45. Recipe measurement

46. Partly digested food

47. Flat-faced dog

48. People of southern Africa

49. Salts

52. Beard lichens

55. Sanders is one

56. Fencing sword

60. Ethnic group of Albania

61. Metric weight unit

63. Italian seaport

64. Longtime late night host

65. Extremely angry

66. Miami mascot

67. Mid-month day

68. Marked for omission

69. Body part

DOWN

1. Two-toed sloth

2. Fat from a pig's abdomen

3. Romanian city

4. Specifies

5. Rounded, glaciated valley

6. Spoke

7. Collection of sacred books

8. Extravagantly theatrical

9. Very fast airplane

10. Forearm bones

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64					65						66			
67					68						69			

11. Ancient kingdom

12. Legitimate: __ fide

13. Semitransparent gemstone

21. Counsels

23. Head honcho

25. Cool!

26. Touch lightly

27. Extract money via taxation

28. Dyes

29. Cloying sweetness

32. Sodas

33. Coastal village in Guam

34. Chemical ring
36. The bill in a restaurant

37. Car mechanics group

38. One-time presidential candidate

40. Health care for the aged

41. Wise persons

43. Passage with access at one end

44. Make a wound

46. America's spies

47. Roof of the mouth

49. Plants of the lily
- family

50. Pinkish-red color

51. Vaccine developer

52. Mottled citrus fruit

53. A place to store garden tools

54. Rare goose native to Hawaii

57. Popular Hollywood pig

58. Musician Clapton

59. A move exposing one to danger

61. Historic Spanish soldier

62. CNN's founder

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Sudoku

Each Sudoku puzzle consists of a 9x9 grid that has been subdivided into nine smaller grids of 3x3 squares. To solve the puzzle each row, column and box must contain each of the numbers 1 to 9. Puzzles come in three grades: easy, medium and difficult.

Level: Medium

This week's puzzle solutions can be found on Page 15.



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ART ON EXHIBIT

BRANDON ARTISTS GUILD

7 Center St, Brandon. For more info visit brandonartistsguild.org or call 802-247-4956.

"Merry & Bright" a Holiday Art Market of original artworks by more than 35 Vermont artists and artisans. Free and open to all. On view through December.

EDGEWATER AT THE FALLS

1 Mill Street, Middlebury
For more info visit edgewatergallery.com, call 802-458-0098 or email info@edgewatergallery-vt.com.

"Impressions" brings together three local printmakers — Matt Brown, Daryl Storrs and William Hays — whose work demonstrates how this process of image-making can yield distinct languages. On view through Dec. 31.

JACKSON GALLERY

68 S Pleasant Street, Middlebury
Visit townhalltheater.org/jackson-gallery or call 802-382-9222 for more info.

"Shadow, Light, and In Between." Thomas Munschauer will display 18 oil paintings and two watercolors, most of them new works in this new exhibit. He will also include a collection of his popular small format framed pieces. On view Nov. 7-Jan. 17, 2026.

PHOTOPLACE GALLERY

3 Park Street, Middlebury
For more info visit photoplacegallery.com.

"FROZEN: Cold, Quiet, Pure." This photography captures the distilled essence of winter — its clean lines, soft textures, and silent spaces. Think snow-covered hills at dawn, delicate frost crystals, breath turning to mist, frozen rivers, or the quiet geometry of ice. This exhibit was selected by juror Paula Tognarelli. On view Dec. 5-27.

SHELDON MUSEUM

1 Park Street, Middlebury
For more info visit henrysheldonmuseum.org

"Material Narratives: Ornament & Identity." Organized by students of Professor Erin Sassini's course at Middlebury College, this exhibition is the result of meticulous research and thoughtful curation. Students assembled a diverse collection of objects that show how adornment across centuries and cultures both shapes and reflects the human experience. On view through Jan. 3.

"Vermont Female Farmers." This striking portrait series by JuanCarlos González offers a powerful and intimate look into the lives of farmers shaping the landscape and future of Vermont agriculture. Complementing the photography are agricultural-related artifacts and ephemera from the Museum's collection. These additions create meaningful dialogues between past and present, offering reflections on our Addison County landscape and farming heritage. On view through Jan. 3.



ARIES: March 21/April 20. Strange things are happening, Aries. It may be better to go with the flow right now. You might like the change that ensues, and the change in pace could be a positive.

TAURUS: April 21/May 21. Better days are ahead, Taurus. It's just a matter of having a little patience and waiting a little longer for things to settle down. Start a new project to take your mind off things.

GEMINI: May 22/June 21. Make the most of time spent with friends and family this week, Gemini. You may need to step away for a little while, so cherish this time you get to spend with those you love.

CANCER: June 22/July 22. Cancer, someone special is able to take a peek into your inner thoughts this week. Their ability to see you so personally could reinforce your outlook.

LEO: July 23/Aug. 23. You might feel a bit melancholic as the holiday season nears its end, Leo. It's understandable based on how much has been going on. Maintain a strong social calendar.

VIRGO: Aug. 24/Sept. 22. Virgo, generosity is an admirable trait, and now is a good time to indulge your love of helping others. Make a concerted effort to pitch in where your assistance is necessary.

LIBRA: Sept. 23/Oct. 23. When one door closes, another door opens, Libra. Look at all of the positive things in your life and embrace the great changes that are coming your way. This is an exciting time for you.

SCORPIO: Oct. 24/Nov. 22. Scorpio, there are so many things going on right now but you can still function effectively. The pace might be hectic right now, but things will calm down soon enough.

SAGITTARIUS: Nov. 23/Dec. 21. A relationship is blooming, Sagittarius, and you're not sure how you feel about it just yet. Take a few more weeks to work through all of your feelings.

CAPRICORN: Dec. 22/Jan. 20. You have an eye for deals, Capricorn. Even though you have been spending a lot this past month, you can't resist a discount on some post-holiday sales.

AQUARIUS: Jan. 21/Feb. 18. Take a firm hold of your finances for the next few weeks, Aquarius. Overspending could complicate an important relationship if you're not careful. Curb any purchases for a few days.

PISCES: Feb. 19/March 20. You are not sure how to harness your artistic energy this week, Pisces. You might take a class or engage in a hobby that interests you. Redesigning a room in a home also might be an idea.

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FAMOUS BIRTHDAYS

DEC. 26 — Thomas Gray, poet and literary critic (d)
DEC. 27 — Louis Pasteur, microbiologist (d)

DEC. 28 — Earl Hines, Jazz musician (d)
DEC. 29 — Mary Tyler Moore, actor (d)
DEC. 30 — Tracy Ullman, comedian (66)
DEC. 31 — Jacques Cartier, explorer (d)
JAN. 1 — J.D. Salinger, writer (d)

CALENDAR

Dec. 25-Jan. 10

2025-2026

FRIDAY, DEC. 26
HOLIDAY TRAINS IN MIDDLEBURY. Ongoing through Saturday, Jan. 3, Henry Sheldon Museum, 1 Park St. The elaborate Lionel train layout at the Henry Sheldon Museum is an annual holiday tradition, delighting visitors of all ages. Trains run Wednesdays from 2-4:30 p.m., Thursdays from 10:30 a.m.-1 p.m. and Fridays and Saturdays from 11 a.m.-3 p.m. More info at henrysheldonmuseum.org.

SATURDAY, DEC. 27
SPENCER LEWIS IN MIDDLEBURY. Saturday, Dec. 27, 5-8 p.m., Rosie's Restaurant, 887 Route 7. Live music from Spencer Lewis as part of Rosie's December live music series.

WEDNESDAY, DEC. 31
FIREWORKS AND ICE SKATING IN MIDDLEBURY. Wednesday, Dec. 31, 6:30-8:30 p.m., Middlebury Rec Park, Mary Hogan Dr. Fireworks begin at 6:30 p.m., followed by free ice skating at Memorial Sports Center.

NEW YEAR'S EVE WITH SOULE MONDE IN MIDDLEBURY. Wednesday, Dec. 31, 7-10 p.m., Town Hall Theater, Rothrock Main Stage, 72-76 Merchants Row. An early New Year's Eve concert with avant-funk duo Soule Monde, featuring

dynamic melodies and bold improvisation. Family-friendly. Tickets \$15-\$35 at addisonarts.org/event/soule-monde-new-years-eve.

NEW YEAR'S EVE CONTRA DANCE IN BRISTOL. Wednesday, Dec. 31, 7:30-10 p.m., Holley Hall, 1 South St. Ring in the new year with a community contra dance featuring live music by Red Dog Riley and calling by Don Stratton. Easy dances for all experience levels. Co-sponsored by the Bristol Recreation Department.

THURSDAY, JAN. 1
FIRST DAY HIKE IN CROWN POINT, N.Y. Thursday, Jan. 1, 11 a.m., Crown Point State Historic Park Museum, 21 Grandview Dr. A two-mile guided hike exploring the grounds of the site and the area's rich history. Appropriate footwear, warm clothing and water recommended. Free. More info at facebook.com/CrownPointSHS, 518-597-3666, Thomas.Meyering@Parks.NY.Gov.

FRIDAY, JAN. 2
GREEN MOUNTAIN CLUB HIKE IN SALISBURY. Friday, Jan. 2, time upon registration, Salisbury Town Forest, Plains Road. Take a leisurely walk of about 2 miles through a local town forest containing an uncommon tree species, the pitch pine, on an easy trail with minimal elevation

gain and a scenic wetland view. Contact leader David Andrews at 802-388-4894 or vtrevda@yahoo.com for meeting time.

"FILLING THE FRAME" OPENING RECEPTION IN MIDDLEBURY. Friday, Jan. 2, 4-7 p.m., PhotoPlace Gallery, 3 Park St. Celebrate the opening of a fine art photography exhibition selected by juror Dallas Crow, showcasing layered compositions and richly textured scenes that embrace visual abundance. Exhibition runs Jan. 2-31.

SATURDAY, JAN. 3
HENRY SHELDON MUSEUM COMMUNITY DAY IN MIDDLEBURY. Saturday, Jan. 3, 10 a.m.-4 p.m., Henry Sheldon Museum, 1 Park St. See a hand-crank printing demonstration and make your own museum-inspired print with local artist and printer John Vincent. Enjoy the final day of holiday trains and seasonal museum exhibitions. All ages are welcome.

TUESDAY, JAN. 6
IRISH MUSIC NIGHT WITH RAMBLETREE IN MIDDLEBURY. Tuesday, Jan. 6, 7-9 p.m., Two Brothers Tavern, 86 Main St. A high-energy mix of classic Irish tunes, sea shanties, world music, rock, funk, reggae and original material. Free.

WEDNESDAY, JAN. 7
MOVEMENT MATTERS WITH DANIEL MIRAMONTES AND COMPANY IN MIDDLEBURY. Wednesday, Jan. 7, 4:30 p.m., Mahaney Arts Center Dance Theatre, Middlebury College, 72 Porter Field Road. A creative workshop where participants push toward expansive, sweaty movement. Open to all levels of experience. Free and open to the public. More info at middlebury.edu/events.

THURSDAY, JAN. 8
WINTER TERM POP-UP PERFORMANCE: TIMOTHY CUMMINGS ON PIPES IN MIDDLEBURY. Thursday, Jan. 8, noon, Mahaney Arts Center Upper Lobby, Middlebury College, 72 Porter Field Road. Take a break with cookies and hot cocoa, and enjoy a pop-up performance by Timothy Cummings, featuring traditional repertoire on Scottish smallpipes and whistles. Free. Open to all.

CREATIVE APPROACHES TO SOCIAL CHANGE PANEL IN MIDDLEBURY. Thursday, Jan. 8, 5-7 p.m., Mahaney Arts Center 125, Middlebury College, 72 Porter Field Road. The Middlebury College Conflict Transformation Collaborative presents a panel discussion featuring theatre-maker and University of Montana Co-Lab for Civic Imagination founder Michael

Rohd. Part of the 2025-26 Conflict and Social Change series. Registration requested at middlebury.edu/events.

SATURDAY, JAN. 10
THE MET LIVE IN HD: "PURITANI" IN MIDDLEBURY. Saturday, Jan. 10, 1 p.m., Town Hall Theater, 72-76 Merchants Row. The Met Opera's live broadcast of Bellini's final masterpiece, featuring soaring melodies, virtuosic coloratura, and a love story set against the English Civil War. \$24 adults, \$10 students. Tickets at addisonarts.org.

TINA FRIML'S BIG APPLE COMEDY IN MIDDLEBURY. Saturday, Jan. 10, 8 p.m., Town Hall Theater, 72-76 Merchants Row. Hometown comedian Tina Friml headlines a night of New York City-style laughs in the Anderson Studio. Bar opens at 6 p.m. Adults \$20, students \$10. Tickets at addisonarts.org.

"A SPELL FOR REMEMBERING" IN MIDDLEBURY. Saturday, Jan. 10, 7:30 p.m., Mahaney Arts Center Dance Theatre, Middlebury College, 72 Porter Field Rd. An evening of dance works led by artist-in-residence Daniel Miramontes, exploring collaborative experimentation, embodiment and co-creation. Free. Open to the public. More info at middlebury.edu/events.

MCTV SCHEDULE Channels 1071 & 1091		MIDDLEBURY COMMUNITY TELEVISION: P.O. Box 785, Middlebury, Vt. 05753		Please see the MCTV website, www.middleburycommunitytv.org , for changes in the schedule; MCTV events, classes and news; and to view many programs online. Submit listings to the above address, or call 802-388-3062.					
Channel 1071 Through the Night: VT Media Exchange, Bulletin Board Friday, December 26 4 a.m. Democracy Now 5 a.m. Press Conferences 6:30 a.m. Montpelier Happy Hour 7:30 a.m. Congregational Service 11 a.m. Female Founders 12:30 p.m. Selectboard 4 p.m. Memorial Baptist Service 5:30 p.m. Job Talk 6:45 p.m. Burlington Progressives 11 p.m. Democracy Now Saturday, December 27 7 a.m. All Things LGBTQ 8:30 a.m. Press Conferences 10 a.m. Selectboard 2:30 p.m. Montpelier Happy Hour 4 p.m. Memorial Baptist Service 5:30 p.m. Eckankar 6 p.m. The News Project 7 p.m. Catholic Mass 7:30 p.m. Addiction Recovery Channel 9 p.m. US Com for Refugees and Immigrants 11 p.m. On Being Brave Sunday, December 28		5:30 a.m. Selectboard 9 a.m. Catholic Mass 9:30 a.m. Press Conferences 11 a.m. Memorial Baptist Service 4 p.m. Congregational Service 6 p.m. All Things LGBTQ 6:30 p.m. Eckankar 7 p.m. Catholic Mass 8:30 p.m. Refugees and Immigrants 11 p.m. Democracy Now Monday, December 29 4 a.m. Democracy Now 5:30 a.m. Eckankar 6 p.m. Straight Talk - Food Bank 7 a.m. On Being Brave 10 a.m. Selectboard 3:30 p.m. On Being Brave 4:30 p.m. Press Conferences 10 p.m. Montpelier Happy Hour 11 p.m. All Things LGBTQ Tuesday, December 30 4 a.m. Democracy Now 5 a.m. All Things LGBTQ 6 a.m. The News Project 9:30 a.m. Eckankar 10 a.m. Montpelier Happy Hour 3:30 p.m. The News Project		4 p.m. Congregational Service 6:30 p.m. Straight Talk - Food Bank 7 p.m. Selectboard 10 p.m. Democracy Now 11 p.m. Energy Week Wednesday, December 31 4 a.m. Democracy Now 5 a.m. Press Conferences 7:30 a.m. Memorial Baptist Service 9:30 a.m. Catholic Mass 10 a.m. Selectboard 11 a.m. Stopping Scams 1 p.m. Press Conferences 7 p.m. Selectboard 10 p.m. Democracy Now 11 p.m. Refugees and Immigrants Thursday, January 1 4 a.m. Democracy Now 5 a.m. Resilient Communities 8 a.m. Congregational Service 12 p.m. Selectboard 3 p.m. On Being Brave 9:30 p.m. Eckankar 10 p.m. Democracy Now Channel 1091 Friday, December 26		5 a.m. Tai Chi 5:30 a.m. Chair Yoga 6:30 a.m. Yoga for Kids 7:30 a.m. Kingdom Dulcimers 8:30 a.m. State Board of Education 11 a.m. School Board Meetings 5 p.m. A Child's Christmas in Wales 6 p.m. Elder Artist Oral History Project Saturday, December 27 5:30 a.m. Tai Chi 6 a.m. Chair Yoga 7:30 a.m. Yoga for Kids 11 a.m. School Boards/Sports 7:30 p.m. Kingdom Dulcimers 8:30 p.m. "A Christmas Memory" Sunday, December 28 5:30 a.m. Tai Chi 6 a.m. Chair Yoga 7 a.m. Yoga for Kids 7:30 a.m. State Board of Education 11 a.m. Sports 5 p.m. VT Young Playwrights 7 p.m. Kingdom Dulcimers 8 p.m. The Frontiersmen Monday, December 29 5:30 a.m. Tai Chi 6 a.m. Chair Yoga		7:30 a.m. School Board Meetings 10 p.m. VT Humanities 11 p.m. A Child's Christmas in Wales Tuesday, December 30 5:30 a.m. Tai Chi 6 a.m. Yoga 7 a.m. School Boards/Sports 6 p.m. VT Young Playwrights 8 p.m. Memories of Salisbury 9:45 p.m. Festival On the Green Wednesday, December 31 5 a.m. Tai Chi 5:30 a.m. Chair Yoga 7 a.m. School Boards 4 p.m. A Child's Christmas in Wales 5 p.m. VT Humanities 7:45 p.m. A Child's Christmas in Wales Thursday, January 1 6 a.m. Tai Chi 6:30 a.m. Yoga 10 a.m. Authors and Poets 12 p.m. VT Humanities 1:15 p.m. Sports 9 p.m. "A Christmas Memory"	



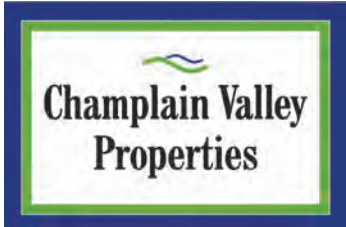
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\$525,000
BRANDON

THE HOME

A LOOK AT LOCAL PROPERTIES FOR SALE

Lots to love in this fabulous location

This beautifully maintained 3 bedroom, 3 bath ranch is both spacious and warm and cozy. The natural sunlight in the living spaces is excellent. Many recent updates include solar panels, newer roof, newer custom kitchen and appliances, and paved driveway. The large primary bedroom has a fabulous bathroom with double sinks, both a jetted tub and oversized walk-in shower, and great storage. The .64 acre lot features established garden areas, a raspberry patch, and lovely mountain views from the large deck. the lower level has a large family room, work-out space, a large workshop, and excellent storage. This is a wonderful house in a fabulous location.



*This week's property is managed by Champlain Valley Properties.
More info at champlainvalleyproperty.net.*



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The local real estate market is shifting. We're grateful to our 2025 clients and customers for placing their trust in us to help guide them through the changing scenery. Wishing all our colleagues, clients, customers and friends the very best for 2026! ~ **Amey Ryan**



In 2025, I had the pleasure of connecting with wonderful new members of our community and playing a role in helping others navigate their transitions to new chapters in their lives. As I look forward to 2026, I embrace the new challenges it will bring while eagerly anticipating the joy of supporting my clients in achieving their goals. ~ **Sarah Peluso**



This year my husband and I moved from our home of 23 years to a new one. While we didn't move very far (up and around the corner) it did provide me with a lot more insight into how difficult moving can be on many levels. This year I will use what I learned during that process to better understand what my clients might be going through. ~ **Beth Stanway**



This year marked a significant professional transition as I moved into a full-time agent role. I sincerely appreciate the support of all customers and colleagues who contributed to making this change seamless. Wishing you all a joyful holiday season and continued success throughout 2026. ~ **Levi Doria**



Time really does fly when you're having fun! In such a fast-moving industry, we're grateful to pause and say thank you. Your support and enthusiasm mean everything. Here's to an exciting 2026 ahead! ~ **Jamie Warner**



This year, I was welcomed back to Vermont by new and old friends, wonderful colleagues, and my family. It has been a year of meaningful change and growth. I look forward to meeting new faces and reconnecting with familiar ones in the year ahead. Wishing everyone a happy and healthy New Year! ~ **Katrina James**

Soule Monde celebrates the New Year with a family-friendly funk concert

Town Hall Theater invites music lovers of all ages to celebrate an early New Year's Eve with the electrifying duo Soule Monde. Featuring the incomparable talents of Ray Paczkowski and Russ Lawton of the Trey Anastasio Band, Soule Monde brings its signature avant-funk sound to Middlebury for a night of dynamic melodies, bold improvisation, and irresistible groove.

This early-evening celebration offers the perfect way to welcome 2026. The festivities include a special countdown between 9:30-10 p.m. — affectionately known as "Ripton midnight." Revelers will be in good company: the people of Greenland and Brazil will also be celebrating right around that time.

Soule Monde's music is the product of deep artistic synergy. Lawton and Paczkowski's years of collaboration have forged an indestructible musical connection — bold improvisational leaps are executed with near-telepathic precision. Paczkowski's mastery of the Hammond B3 and clavinet fills the duo's sound with rich, adventurous melody, while Lawton's powerfully syncopated drumming anchors each performance with undeniable energy.

Both musicians bring storied careers to the stage. Lawton has performed with Vermont favorites including Mike Gordon, Strangefolk, and The Grippio Funk Band. Paczkowski first gained acclaim in the 1990s with the innovative groups Viperhouse and Vorcza, and spent three years touring with Dave Matthews and Friends in the early 2000s. Together, the pair has spent more than two decades as core members of the Trey Anastasio Band, appearing at renowned festivals and on major television stages including Bonnaroo, Austin City Limits, Saturday Night Live, The Late Show with David Letterman, The Tonight Show with Jay Leno, Late Night with Conan O'Brien, and The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon.

Join Town Hall Theater for an unforgettable evening of world-class musicianship and a joyful start to the new year. Doors open at 6 p.m., with music beginning at 7 p.m. Adult tickets are \$35 and include a complimentary champagne toast; children 12 and under may attend for \$15. Tickets available for purchase at townhalltheater.org or by calling 802-382-9222 or at the box office Monday-Friday 12-5 p.m. For more information about Soule Monde, visit soulemonde.com.



Soule Monde will take the stage on Wednesday, Dec. 31, for an early New Year's celebration (7-10 p.m.) at Town Hall Theater in Middlebury.

COURTESY PHOTO

PUZZLE SOLUTIONS

Dec. 25, 2025

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the REAL ESTATE COMPANY of VERMONT



144 Fields Road, Middlebury

This 4-bed, 3 bath home offers the option of comfortable single level living, with a nicely finished lower level for additional space. Located on the outer ring of Fields Road, this home is nicely situated to enjoy western exposure, privacy and wetland views in the back in a convenient in-town neighborhood.

MLS No. 5070346 | \$625,000



220 West River Road, Lincoln

Opportunity awaits - bring your vision to life with this one of a kind mixed-use studio/residential space in the heart of Lincoln. With a large studio/workshop space, two office spaces and 1/2 bath on the ground level and prep work completed for a comfortable 2-bedroom apartment on the 2nd floor; this property has lots of potential.

MLS No. 5059162 | \$ 295,000



204 West River Road, Lincoln

Tastefully restored, this 3 bedroom, 2 Bath Lincoln village cape has just undergone a full renovation, enhancing the homes historic character through the seamless integration of modern design elements including new kitchen, baths and limestone veneer plaster walls! Come see it in person.

MLS No. 5055620 | \$ 495,000

for more information, contact:



Tammy Petersen
Agent/Realtor®

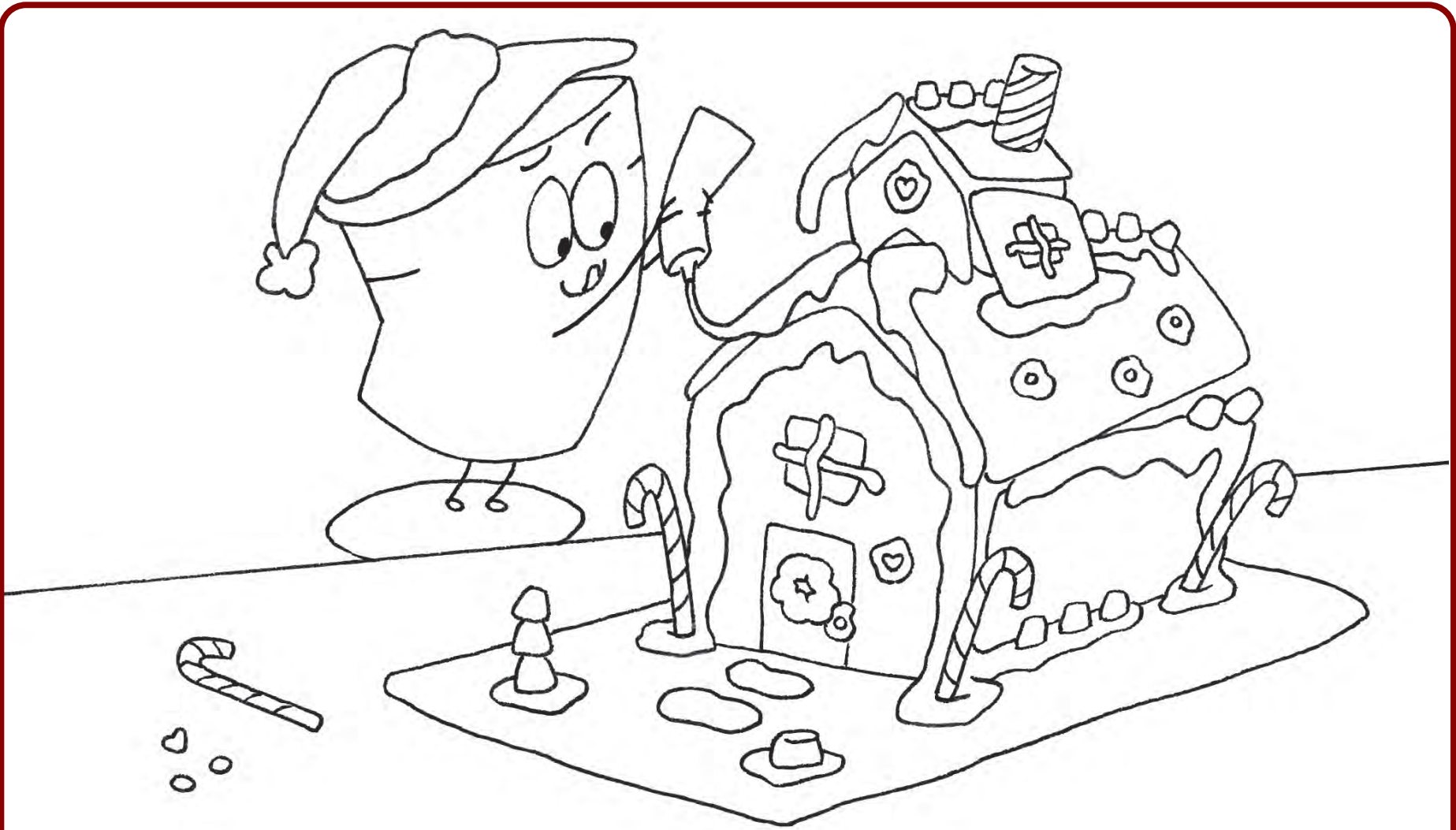


Jill Fraga
Broker/Owner/Realtor®



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HOLLY JOLLY COLORING & DECORATING CONTEST

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Name: _____ Age: _____

Parent/Guardian's name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Email: _____

Age Group: Under 5 ☐ 5-6 ☐ 7-8 ☐ 9-11 ☐ 12-15 ☐ 16-Adult ☐

This sweet Sappy Bucket drawing was provided by:

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Feel free to tear out this coloring page or go to addisonindependent.com/contests for a printable version.

Winners will be announced in the January 22nd edition of the Addison Independent.

Two winners from each age group will win a prize from one of our sponsors that can be picked up at the Addy Indy office through February.

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