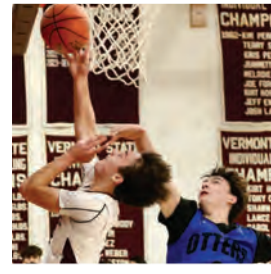




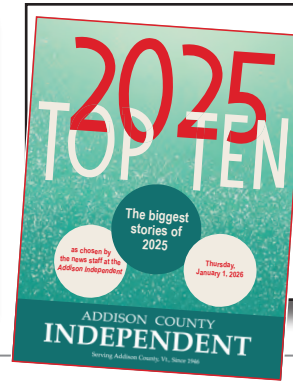
## 1984 redux?

THT will serve up a series of documentaries, starting with "Orwell 2+2=5." Arts+Leisure



## Eagles fly

The Eagle boys' hoop team rolled to a big victory at the expense of visiting OV. See Page 1B



## Top 10 Stories

Look inside to see what the Independent staff thought made for the biggest news of 2025.

# ADDISON COUNTY INDEPENDENT

Vol. 80 No. 1

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## 2025 a solid year for deer hunters locally

By ANDY KIRKALDY

ADDISON COUNTY—With the addition of 136 deer shot in the December muzzleloader season and three more taken down with crossbows or longbows and then brought to

one of the seven Addison County wildlife reporting stations, the total number of deer weighed in Addison County in 2025 stands at 886.

That makes 2025 busier (See *Deer hunters*, Page 11A)

## Former mayor lobbies for new housing

### 'Let's Build Homes' strategy unveiled

By JOHN FLOWERS

MIDDLEBURY — Miro Weinberger is perhaps best remembered for his 12 years as the chief executive of Vermont's largest city.

But before being elected mayor of Burlington in 2012, Weinberger

spent 30 years as an affordable housing developer.

After stepping down as mayor last year, Weinberger decided to marry his knowledge of municipal government with his entrepreneurial experience to catalyze development of more

housing in Vermont.

He's doing that as executive chair of Let's Build Homes (LBH), a nonprofit that is seeing Weinberger network with lawmakers, developers, municipal leaders, foundations, state regulators — any individuals or groups who can make a dent in a Vermont housing deficit that's foiling the state's

plans to attract a new generation of residents.

Some of the solutions are complex, but the problem remains basic, according to Weinberger.

"The public absolutely, overwhelmingly thinks that housing in Vermont is too expensive. And it's so expensive because we don't (See *Vermont housing*, Page 9A)

## Fixed costs take toll on career center budget ask

By JOHN FLOWERS

MIDDLEBURY — Most Addison County voters on Town Meeting Day will field a proposed fiscal year 2027 Patricia Hannaford Career Center (PHCC) budget of \$6,271,915, representing a 9.95% increase compared to the current spending plan. It will pay for Career and Technical Education to students in 17 Addison County towns.

The proposed budget increase, Hannaford Superintendent Nicole MacTavish explained, is influenced by four factors that are largely beyond the career center's control:

- Negotiated salary increases under existing collective bargaining agreements. Wages account for \$3,247,959 (51.79%) of the proposed FY27 budget.
- An anticipated 7.3% increase in health insurance premiums. Factoring in compounded interest, Career Center employee healthcare premiums will have skyrocketed by 48.2% during the past four years. The Family Gold CDHP premium alone increased from \$17,394

(See *Career center*, Page 9A)



### Solstice sing

DON STRATTON LEADS a group in song during the annual Winter Solstice celebration at the Waterworks property in Bristol. This long-running celebration, co-sponsored by The Watershed Center and Vermont Family Forests, was held on Dec. 21 at the Norton Brook Reservoir. Festivities included a bonfire, potluck, music by Rick Ceballos and friends, community singing, and a bit of solstice pageantry.

Photo courtesy of Jonathan Blake

## \$1.4 million in drought losses at local farms

### Survey tallies area's agricultural shortfall

By MARIN HOWELL

ADDISON COUNTY — Farmers around Addison County have reported an estimated \$1.4 million in losses resulting from the severe drought that spread across the region this year.

That number comes from the results of an Agriculture Drought Impact Survey conducted by the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets. The survey was aimed at learning more about how this year's drought affected the state's agricultural sector.

The survey gathered 198 responses, with respondents reporting an estimated \$17,387,289 in total losses across Vermont. The 29 Addison County producers that responded to the survey reported the highest total of estimated losses at \$1,385,800, followed by \$1.1 in estimated losses reported in Washington County.

"It's the worst thing I've ever seen," Loren Wood of Woodnotch (See *Drought*, Page 9A)



## By the way

Sawyer Garthaffner of Addison was recently one of 23 young Vermonters to be nominated by Vermont's Congressional delegation to attend United States military service academies for the class of 2030. Garthaffner, a Vergennes Union High School senior, is hoping to attend the U.S. Military Academy, U.S. Naval Academy, or U.S. Air Force Academy. He was specifically nominated by U.S. Sens. Bernie Sanders and Peter Welch. Garthaffner — who was also a member of the Mount Abraham/Vergennes cooperative football team — received his nomination certificate following a Dec. 20 roundtable discussion in the (See *By the way*, Page 12A)

## ACSD board zeroing in on budget request

By JOHN FLOWERS

MIDDLEBURY — Barring any major, 11th-hour subtractions or additions, Addison Central School District (ACSD) voters on March 3 will be asked to approve \$53 million in spending to educate Middlebury-area PreK-12 students during the 2026-2027 academic year.

The draft budget reflects \$42,531,832 in education spending — a 2.8% increase compared to this year — and a 3.44% bump in per-pupil spending to \$15,098 per child.

It's a spending level that would keep the ACSD comfortably short of the state's so-called "excess spending threshold" of \$16,331. Districts that run afoul of that mandate — specified in Act 183 of 2024 — are assessed a premium tax on spending that exceeds the threshold.

ACSD board members on Dec. 22 got their penultimate stab at a fiscal year 2027 PreK-12 budget for children in the district-member towns of Bridport, Cornwall, Middlebury, Ripton, Salisbury, Shoreham and Weybridge. Voters in those communities will decide the spending request via Australian ballot on Town Meeting Day.

(See *ACSD budget*, Page 13A)

## Vt. students advocate for racial justice, equity

By MARIN HOWELL

VERMONT — Around five years ago, a group Vermont high school students began meeting on Zoom to discuss how they could enact change in their state.

Today those efforts have grown into the Vermont Student Anti-Racism Network, or VSARN, a statewide nonprofit that advocates for racial equity and justice in Vermont schools. The organization is run by students, with Middlebury College junior Addie Lentzner serving as founder and co-executive director.

Students involved in the network said the experience has allowed them to connect with and learn from peers around the state, as well as collaborate with organizations and lawmakers to work toward anti-racist education and communities in Vermont.

"It wasn't something that I had ever really thought I could do before joining VSARN because sometimes as a young person I didn't feel very powerful in spaces that were run by adults," said Annika Gruber, a VSARN board member and graduate of Champlain Valley Union High School (CVU). "But seeing VSARN being run by students was really impactful for me and very cool to mobilize together and use our voices as students."

The organization started out with three high school students gathering remotely during the



ADDIE LENTZNER VISITS a Vermont classroom to read and discuss children's books focused on topics related to anti-racism. Lentzner is a junior at Middlebury College and is the founder and co-executive director of Vermont Student Anti-Racism Network, a statewide organization that advocates for racial equity and justice in Vermont schools.

Photo courtesy of Addie Lentzner

pandemic. Lentzner, a part of that early group, was a 10th-grader at Arlington Memorial High School when the students began meeting.

"We started talking about how we might be able to make more statewide change in terms of anti-racism, in terms of curriculum and school policies and also statewide policies because we were feeling that there was kind of a lack of

awareness and a lack of action on that in the local level," she recalled.

The group later received a grant for The Book Project, an initiative through which students visited classrooms around the state to read and discuss children's books focused on topics related to anti-racism. Those books included "The Youngest Marcher"

by Cynthia Levinson, which tells the story of Audrey Faye Hendricks, who at nine years old was the youngest known child to be arrested for a civil rights demonstration in 1963.

"(The project) was really empowering for, I think, both the younger students and also us, as students who were teaching that, (See *Vt. Students*, Page 12A)

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# RambleTree offers Celtic art and music

By MARIN HOWELL

BRISTOL — Whether he's got a pencil or a musical instrument in hand, Reagh Greenleaf Jr. likes to blend the old with the new through the art that he creates.

Greenleaf is the artist behind RambleTree, a Celtic art and apparel business based in Bristol. The brand shares a name with the Irish-Americana jam band Greenleaf co-founded in 2014, which also draws from Celtic material along with other inspirations.

The two ventures are distinct but connected, and both allow Greenleaf to blend his work as an artist and musician with his interests in his Irish heritage and Celtic art and music.

Through both endeavors, he looks to bring something new to the musical and artistic traditions he's been inspired by.

"Honoring the forms, the

traditional forms, but doing something different with them," Greenleaf said of his artwork. "That's my approach to the music as well. I try to honor the roots of it but then take it in a direction that is either meaningful to me or is accessible to my audience, and then they might get interested in, 'Oh, that stuff is really cool.'"

Greenleaf grew up in Merrimack, N.H. and studied Environmental Studies at the University of New Hampshire.

"That's when I first really fell in love with Irish music," he recalled.

He pointed to Tommy Makem, an Irish folk musician who was a member of the Clancy Brothers. Makem had settled in Dover, N.H., and Greenleaf happened to attend one of his concerts while in college.

"I saw this Irish music, and they were playing this drum called the Bodhrán," he said. "I just said,

"That's for me."

Greenleaf dove into Irish folk and traditional music, learning more and attending traditional sessions in New Hampshire's Seacoast Region. He noted such sessions have emerged in parts of the U.S., home to a large population of Irish immigrants, such as the Boston area.

"You would have a lot of Irish communities, and they developed these traditional sessions in the pubs, just like back in Ireland," he explained. "You can go, sit in, play if you know the tunes. It's kind of like this really unique form of transmission of culture."

In 2000, Greenleaf attended the Tommy Makem International School of Song in Ireland. The ten-day program offered him the opportunity to further explore Irish history, folklore and song, along with related topics.

Back in the U.S., Greenleaf began traveling as a merchant with the renaissance festival circuit, an experience that allowed him to connect with other musicians over Irish pub songs. He later played with Irish bands in New England, including as a member of the Tom Lanigan Band in and around Rhode Island.

Greenleaf was a part of that band for several years, even after moving to Vermont in 2012. Once in the Green Mountain State, he connected with Gypsy Reel, a Celt band based in the Ludlow area.

He started meeting other musicians as well, including Proctor resident Dan Brown. The pair in 2014 formed The County Down, both singing in the band, with Greenleaf largely playing percussion and Brown playing strings.

The duo is often joined by other musicians at their shows, which feature a mix of original music along with Irish pub songs, ballads and tunes from well-known artists



REAGH GREENLEAF JR. plays the Bodhrán, a traditional Irish frame drum, in his studio at 6 South St. in Bristol. The location serves as both a studio and retail space for RambleTree, Greenleaf's Celtic art and apparel business that shares a name with the Irish-Americana jam band he co-founded in 2014.

Independent photo/Marin Howell



BRISTOL ARTIST REAGH Greenleaf Jr. specializes in blending interlace patterns with different natural and cultural icons, such as in the "Morgan's Apple" block print pictured here. His Celtic art and apparel business is on Bristol's South Street and offers a variety of designs printed on clothing items and made into other products.

Independent photo/Marin Howell

like Johnny Cash and Noah Kahan.

"It's your classic Vermont, après-ski, bar-type music, and we combine it with the Irish music," Greenleaf explained. "We joke around and we call it 'Celtidelic' music because we're doing jam band and Grateful Dead type stuff."

The pair plays regularly at O'Dwyer's Public House at Summit Lodge in Killington, at Two Brothers Tavern on the first and third Tuesday of each month, and at least once each year at Ri Rá Irish

Pub in Burlington. The band plays at other venues around Brandon and in Bristol, and more on the band's music and shows can be found at <https://rambletree.band/home>.

### ART AND APPAREL

About a year ago, the pair decided to rename the band "RambleTree" to match the art and apparel brand Greenleaf had started several years prior. The name started out as "Rambling Tree Arts," inspired by Greenleaf's time traveling around the country on the renaissance faire

circuit.

"I just love that word 'ramble.' It's a cool word; it's all over the place in folk music," he explained, noting that the name RambleTree also strikes a balance between ideas of movement and stillness.

Greenleaf is a self-taught artist and said some of his early artistic inspirations included art from fantasy literature, Dungeons & Dragons and renaissance faires.

"Growing up I always had a (See Rambletree, Page 3A)

# Bristol budget draft has 11% increase

By MARIN HOWELL

BRISTOL — Bristol officials are continuing to work on a fiscal year 2027 budget to present to voters in March.

The Bristol selectboard at its Dec. 22 meeting reviewed a FY'27 budget draft that reflects around \$4,196,394 in expenditures, an increase of 11.16%.

The amount supported by taxes is currently expected to rise by 12.8% to \$3,749,914.

Selectboard members last week discussed some of the drivers behind the increase and explored options for mitigating it.

"Budgets always increase, like every single year, it's a law, and this is just the way it happens," Selectboard member Jessica Teets said. "I guess what I'm saying is, are there creative ways that we can think through the services that we're providing at what cost?"

Selectboard members noted that a substantial portion of the town's costs are related to personnel. During a Dec. 8 budget review, Town Administrator Gregory Faust said employee salaries are for the most part increasing by 5%, with a couple rising by more due to an increase in hours for those positions. Faust noted those positions (in grant administration and planning and zoning) were originally negotiated at 32 hours per week and are being brought up to 40 hours.

"These are good staff, and we need them to do more than what we currently are doing at 32 hours," he said.

At the Dec. 22 meeting, selectboard member Ian Albinston highlighted a couple of other budget drivers — \$100,000 for the town's Capital Building Fund (up from \$30,000 budgeted for the current year) and \$50,000 for building maintenance at Holley Hall (up from \$12,000 for FY'26). Town officials have noted the increases in those line items are intended to support projects planned for next

year and needed maintenance work at Holley Hall.

Throughout the conversation, selectboard members asked questions and posed suggestions for ways to potentially reduce costs. Though, they also acknowledged the limitations they face in making substantial changes to the budget request.

"We don't have a tremendous amount of wiggle room," Albinston said. "Everything that Greg (Faust) has gone through with department heads is actual costs for things that are needed ... Our biggest wiggle room in terms of changing or making any big impact with that number is capital reserves, if we wanted to change any of those."

Other selectboard members shared similar sentiments, underscoring how department heads have done what they can to keep their budgets in line.

Teets suggested exploring creative ways to lower costs.

"I understand that the price of certain things is going up, and I think that the discussion that we're going to have to have is, 'We can either keep doing everything at the same level of service and just keep raising our taxes, or we might need to have a conversation about what kind of services do we provide,'" she said.

(See Bristol, Page 3A)

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# New Ferrisburgh plan boosts housing

By ANDY KIRKALDY

FERRISBURGH — The Ferrisburgh selectboard made it official on Dec. 16 by adopting an updated town plan that is the product of two years of effort and outreach by the nine members of the Ferrisburgh Planning Commission.

There are significant changes in the plan that are expected to be reflected in changes in the town's zoning regulations. Town plans provide the underpinnings for zoning laws, and those laws could become more friendly to housing under the new plan.

One of the most significant changes in the plan is the blending of the town's Industrial and Highway Commercial zoning districts, which mostly run along or near Route 7, into one Mixed Use district. Under new zoning laws that would be allowed by the plan residential accessory dwelling units would for the first time be permitted in those areas.

The new plan will also allow more housing flexibility in the North Ferrisburgh Village and Town Center zones that include, respectively, the village along Old Hollow Road, and the central cluster of development along and near Route 7 that includes Ferrisburgh Central School, town offices, homes and businesses.

Another new piece in the plan is a section on Flood Resilience; a change made in part due to Old Hollow Road village residents' concern about possible Lewis Creek flooding.

Overall, the plan divides the town into six "planning areas," with policies and recommended actions tailored for each area.

The Rural Use planning area, the town's largest, currently includes the Rural Residential and Agricultural zones, with 2- and 5-acre minimum lot sizes, respectively. Again, the plan looks to those areas for more flexible rules for housing.

The plan recommends for the Rural Urse planning area that the town "Consider revising regulations to allow development based on density instead of minimum lot size to allow flexibility of building placement ... to protect Prime and Statewide soils," and "Encourage shared driveways and utilities to minimize impacts to surrounding landscape."

*Overall, the plan divides the town into six "planning areas," with policies and recommended actions tailored for each area.*

districts (2-acre minimums), Rural Agricultural and Conservation (25-acre minimum).

The plan's recommendations include reviewing "Regulations ... to ensure that watersheds are protected," and creating "design and siting standards for this area within Ferrisburgh zoning "that at a minimum, meet any requirements associated with shoreland protection."

Recommendations for the Conservation Planning Area (the Conservation zoning district) include working with regional planners on "needed flood mitigation measures," and asking the conservation commission to "determine what additional lands should be considered for the conservation planning area."

Recommendations for the North Ferrisburgh Village Planning Area (the North Ferrisburgh Village Zoning District) include "develop a master plan for the Village which includes both Flood Resilience planning and management, (and) creates a

walkable village and provides public parking and access to the Creek."

Recommendations for The Ferrisburgh Town Center Planning Area (the Town Center zone) include creating zoning for Route 7 businesses that "restricts scale and massing, and encourages safe access for vehicular and pedestrian circulation," improve safety at the intersection of Little Chicago Road and Route 7, work with VTrans "to reduce traffic speeds on Route 7," and research regulations that could "allow accommodation of higher development densities."

Recommendations for the Mixed Use Planning Area, which now includes all the current Highway and Industrial zoning districts include "consider (zoning) changes that would increase flexibility to meet changing housing and market demands, and "Allow development based on density instead of minimum lot size."

These changes were not created in a vacuum. Planners sought residents' feedback in a kickoff meeting in November 2023, followed by three more community meetings strategically spread around town that each drew three-dozen or more attendees, a community survey, two public hearings, and input solicited from other town committees.

*Planners sought residents' feedback in a kickoff meeting in November 2023, followed by three more community meetings strategically spread around town that each drew three-dozen or more attendees, a community survey, two public hearings, and input solicited from other town committees.*

All that occurred before an 81-page draft of the new town plan reached the Ferrisburgh selectboard for the first of two required selectboard public hearings on Nov. 4.

It went well, according to Selectboard Chair Clark Hinsdale and the selectboard scheduled a second public hearing for its Dec. 16 meeting, at which the plan was approved.

# Rambletree

(Continued from Page 2A)  
sketchbook with me everywhere I went," he said.

His passion for drawing led into making artwork, starting out with drawings made with graphite and inspired by fantasy and mystical elements. Those art prints made up the majority of Greenleaf's stock when he first moved into his studio at 6 South St. in Bristol.

Greenleaf would create pieces in his studio to sell at craft fairs and festivals like Bristol's Harvest Festival, Pocock Rocks and events with Vermont Gatherings. Over the years, he's also worked to build up the apparel side of his business.

Today, he specializes in blending interlace patterns with different cultural and natural icons. His designs are printed on clothing items, as well as made into stickers and block prints. He noted that well-known examples of Celtic knotwork and interlace artwork include those found in the Book of Kells, an illuminated manuscript created by Celtic monks.

"For my designs, instead of filling in spaces in a manuscript, I'm trying

to build forms with the knotwork or interlace," Greenleaf said.

He noted his most popular design is "Spirit Turtle," of a Loggerhead Sea Turtle, though others include a sugar maple leaf and a snowflake.

"I have a deep love of natural beauty and the natural world," Greenleaf said of his inspiration, adding that he tries to stay true to natural icons' visual appearance when creating his designs.

Through his work both in his studio and on stage, Greenleaf said he's looking to encourage people to connect with nature, the arts and one another.

"One of my biggest motivations in doing art and music is to inspire people to connect with the beauty of the natural world," he said.

He noted he also looks to encourage those proud of their Irish heritage to "remember that they're descended from immigrants and, just like most Irish people today in Ireland, to show solidarity with communities that are going through that right now."

All of Greenleaf's designs start out hand-drawn, after which he'll

either turn them into a block print or use Adobe Photoshop and Illustrator to prepare the designs to be printed on apparel. Each clothing item is printed at Greenleaf's Bristol studio using laser toner transfer printing, and some options for customization are available.

That space, called Hogback Studio, currently serves as both a studio and retail space for Greenleaf's business. Greenleaf opened up the shop portion of the space more recently for the holiday season. He said he's had a good response from the community and plans to keep the space open for the time being. He's also looking to start wholesaling with other businesses.

Looking ahead, Greenleaf said he's hoping to have Hogback Studio serve as an umbrella for a variety of brands, including RambleTree and others focused on rural and agriculture designs, Celtic states and other themes.

Community members can stop by the shop Monday-Friday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., as well as learn more at <https://rambletree.net>.

# Bristol

(Continued from Page 2A)  
Albinson noted Bristol is not the only town facing double-digit budget increases for the upcoming fiscal year.

"Around the state towns are in double digits this year higher than

this, and any meaningful change has to come with large dollar figures," he said. "So, I think it's up to us to sort of look at all departments to see where things are at. Going line by line and taking out small things is not going to make any major

changes unfortunately." The Bristol selectboard will continue discussion of the town's FY'27 budget at a future meeting. The board's next meeting is scheduled for Jan. 12 at 6 p.m. at Holley Hall and on Zoom.

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# Editorial

## A resolution worth making

As 2026 beckons, the sense of renewal and rejuvenation, of starting with a fresh slate, has a strong cultural pull. In Vermont, that yearning to improve the common good is likely to be focused on familiar themes: creating more affordable housing, working to create a cost-effective educational system that preserves Vermont's rural character, and figuring out a health care system that doesn't bankrupt the state and each other.

The hope going into the upcoming legislative session is Gov. Phil Scott will work with the legislature to reach a better place.

On housing, there are signs of progress. On education, there's movement but also partisan finger pointing that hinders progress. Don't hold your breath on lowering the cost of health care and health care insurance — a political issue that will sizzle throughout 2026 and the mid-term elections.

Of the three issues, housing may set a template for progress. After eight years of handwringing, last year Gov. Scott got behind a legislative initiative, promoted in part by the nonprofit Let's Build Housing, to back H.479 and its Senate counterpart, S.127.

The bill was a comprehensive effort to tackle Vermont's housing crisis with a mix of regulatory reforms, financial incentives, tenant protections, and an effort to include rural development as well as urban. One of the key developments in the bill is the Community and Housing Infrastructure Program (CHIP), which allows communities to create tax increment financing districts for housing projects, retaining up to 80% of education property tax incremental revenue and 100% of municipal tax incremental revenue for up to 20 years. This creates the seed capital to make high-density housing affordable.

The bill also imposed several measures to curtail costly regulations (including streamlining the appeals process) and addressed aspects of rental housing, manufactured homes, tenant protections and barriers to development. It also created revolving funds to ensure the programs were sustainable and emphasizes data collection to analyze outcomes to craft future housing policies.

The bill's housing initiatives offer concrete items towns can implement and then attract developers to build. Importantly, it's a two-step process. It will be up to town leaders (selectboards and planning commissions) to first adopt applicable incentives (CHIP projects, for example) and to streamline regulations where possible. The second step is to solicit developers to take advantage of new opportunities. Particularly in smaller towns, it's important to realize developers are busy with existing projects. Enticing them to pursue projects in smaller towns won't just happen; it will take determined efforts by local leaders.

Interestingly, the catalyst behind at least some of the legislative push on housing has come from Let's Build Homes, a nonprofit headed by Miro Weinberger. (See the story on the front page of today's *Addison Independent*.) Weinberger, the former mayor of Burlington and a former builder, not only had the experience to help craft housing policy but as a builder knew some of the problems the legislation needed to address. He's spent the past year-plus building a network of supporters and working through viable ideas that became part of the housing legislation.

Weinberger's effort dovetails well with the Vermont Futures Project, led these past few years by Kevin Chu, which has been advocating to boost the state's population to 802,000 by 2035 — a goal that would require building over 60,000 housing units over the next decade. Both groups point to steady growth as the most realistic way to solve some of Vermont's toughest issues: a labor shortage that drives almost all costs higher (particularly in education and health care), high housing costs due to tight supply, and a lack of opportunity caused by both.

It is an interesting question to ask what legislative impact these two outside groups have had in advancing their respective goals, and then ask if something similar might work with health care. That is, to what extent does legislative action — when addressing tough political issues — require a consistent effort by knowledgeable interest groups to keep the issue on the front burner?

Consider that in 2022, the Vermont legislature passed Act 167, which funded investigations into how to improve the state's health care system. From that came a 156-page report by the consultant OliverWyman. While it's unfair to suggest nothing has happened since, it is also obvious no active public discourse has continued even as the problem has worsened.

The report also advocated for continued public involvement. Health care, because its funding has a large federal component, is certainly a different beast than housing, but it's also clear that public interaction may prove helpful to bring pressure on those parts of the system Vermonters can influence. Unfortunately, the public's heightened awareness of the issue back in 2024 has taken a back seat to today's focus on housing and education reform.

Education is the issue Vermonters are most familiar with because it has been inherently local. It's fair to ask, under Act 73's consolidation mandates if enacted as envisioned by the Scott administration, would that continue? As a counterpoint to the administration's proposal, the education task force's report advocates for voluntary consolidation, as well as much more. That sets in motion what should be an opportunity this session to reconsider the next best steps.

No special public focus groups are needed here — as there is already an abundance of local school boards, organizations and lobbying groups — though a nonpartisan clearing house of the best "proven" ideas in education is something to put on your wish list.

Whichever path Vermonters choose when addressing these issues, let us all resolve to move forward with the least amount of political shaming possible. Let's remind ourselves how lucky we are to live in a state where politics, for the most part, isn't determined by whether we're Republican or Democrat but by good ideas that advance the public good. And let's be open enough to recognize most perspectives are made with that good intent. If we can do that and stay focused on moving forward, that's a resolution worth making.

Angelo Lynn



### Winter wonderland

EARLY WINTER SNOWS in Ripton has allowed most trails at Rikert Outdoor Center to be open through much of December, including gorgeous weather Christmas Day through this past Sunday, when this photo was taken of the Burgin Lodge off the upper Frost trail. While freezing rain made a mess of roads in the Champlain Valley on Monday, trail reports at Rikert showed most trails open on Monday with promises of excellent skiing through the rest of this week.

Independent photo/Angelo Lynn

## Letters to the Editor

### Social Security is earned by all

Social Security isn't a handout — it's a promise that millions of us older Americans who have paid it into with every paycheck. This administration is dismantling an essential program, closing offices, cutting hotlines and spreading misinformation to justify these attacks.

As an elder we deserve dignity, not broken promises. We must all raise our voices and tell Donald Trump and the Republicans to keep their hands off our Social Security benefits!

Josie Masterson-Glen  
New Haven

### Fall's lighting a Baker concept

I so agree with Bruce Baker's thoughtful and "right on" letter to the editor in the Dec. 25 edition about thanking the Better Middlebury Partnership for illuminating the falls (again) this year. He is also right in pointing out that it has been a long tradition that many of us look forward to each year.

What he failed to mention is that he (Bruce) was the brains and force behind lighting the falls the first year — I believe it was around 1992.

Thank you, Bruce, and thank you Better Middlebury Partnership for embracing this treasured experience. And if you haven't yet seen it make sure you don't miss it.

Nancy Malcolm  
Middlebury

### THT 'Night Fires' a thrilling show

When it comes to theater criticism, neither Kate nor I are likely to gush, but we aren't blasé either. We've both loved theater all of our lives and seen a great deal of it — as well as participating backstage and on stage in our younger years.

Last Saturday, Dec. 20, we went off to Middlebury's Town Hall Theater to see Marianne Lust and Deborah Lubar's annual winter solstice production, "Night Fires." This year it was introduced as "a celebration and honoring of the darkness itself as well as the light, this year's *Night Fires*, in music, dance and words is about heroes: those who feed life — all kinds, all ages, public ones and private ones ..."

We are still, days later, in the thrall of what we later agreed was one of the finest pieces of theater either of us has ever seen in our respective 80 years. Driving home to Hinesburg we could talk of nothing else. That aesthetic hangover lasted well into the evening and was our first topic of discussion on waking.

But this was not the intellectual-critical analysis we often bat around after seeing a new theater work. It became clear, as we did a sort of verbal waltz, that we were both still deeply immersed in the experience, one which gave voice to a vast range of human experience, both happy and sad, kind and cruel, beautiful and agonizing, but always in their own way brave, we came to realize. The varieties of bravery stay with us and, in these times, have had the effect of cutting through the fear and anxiety and the sense of helplessness abroad in the land.

We can't do the production justice simply by describing its many performance components. Let's call it a rich tapestry of the human experience. Though drawn from a diverse international selection of poetic, musical and theatrical resources, the classical pantheon of artists is largely absent. Instead, we're drawn back to the many singers and poets who have emerged from indigenous and popular cultures: Leadbelly, Woody Guthrie, Leonard Cohen, Johnny Cash, and more recent voices like Iris DeMent, Robert Bly, Mary Oliver, Sinead O'Connor, Sharon Olds, Brandi Carlisle, Tom Waits, Galway Kinnell and Jane (See Schubart letter, Page 5A)

## Our memories vary, and it's OK

My husband and I often disagree about travel memories. He'll say we planned on going to Maine the second week in April. I'll remember we were going the first week in May. He'll say we ate at a certain Italian restaurant in Albany on our way to New Jersey, while I swear it was on our way to Denver. Usually neither one of us can prove our point, but more often than not, he's probably right. I just don't remember those kinds of details.

I claim it's because I've traveled way more places than Rick, which is true. In young adulthood, while he was pruning trees and farming with horses in Maine, I was traipsing from one country to the next. I have more travel memories to recall than he does.

We flew to Ireland together the year we got married (or was it the year after?) and he still remembers the name of every town we visited along with the places we ate and slept in most of them. I, on the other hand, recall a blur of lush green hillsides covered with sheep and a handful of Irish pubs. But I've lost most of the details. Of course, Rick is an Irish wannabe who researched and planned our itinerary and I was excited to share a new adventure with him.

My sense of direction is also seriously deficient, which may go hand in hand with my memory of places. Rick can drive to a new location once and he has the route registered in his internal compass. There are places I've been a dozen times over a stretch of

history, and I still need a GPS to get me back. Once I drove to a friend's party and pranced into the living room of two kind strangers, offering a cheery greeting as they stood puzzled. Hmm... I must be at the wrong place, I deduced, noticing it was just the two of them and me, then backing out with a lame apology.

On the other hand, my memory for conversations is uncanny. I can pull up snippets of conversations throughout my life and replay them like video clips. I recall my mom calling eight-year-old me to the window to see the sunset, my Aunt Esther scrubbing dinner dishes while telling 14-year-old me how "the world wants to see a smiling face," my high school friend Lisa creating an impromptu skit using her bare hand as a puppet over 50 years ago. "Harold and I like to go for long walks along the beach," she said in one of her out-there accents. "It's the only thing we really like to do." I still find that little monologue hysterical.

When Rick & I debate the content of previous conversations, I feel victorious. He remembers the gist of the conversation, the way it felt to him, though he often misquotes what was actually said. I recall exact words. Yet if I play back the conversation and reflect on it, I get a sense of why Rick may recall it differently. There was something in its tone that moved him, that acknowledged or disregarded him, that praised or denied something important to him. His emotional (See *Ways of Seeing*, Page 5A)

### Ways of Seeing

By Alice Leeds



## Hope lives even in darkness

December culminates the season of hope. In Addison County, candles glow in windows, menorahs are lit, churches fill with music, and families gather against the long, cold Vermont nights. It is a time when many of us pause, reflect, and — perhaps most importantly, look for stories of optimism.

With troubling news seeming to swirl all around us, keeping the faith can feel like no small task. Still, in this season of reflection, I want to share a story from a place where many of our holiday traditions were born; a region which routinely challenges even the most sanguine observer: the Middle East.

The events of the past few years in Gaza and Israel have been shocking even for those of us who lived and worked in the region. I spent almost four years there as a U.S. Foreign Service Officer with USAID, working in Israel and the Palestinian territories. As a diplomat, I was a participant in the U.S. government's 2013-2014 attempts to broker peace through then Secretary of State John Kerry's "shuttle diplomacy." Unfortunately, like many efforts before and after, that push for peace ultimately failed. The violence that followed, and continues today, has been devastating.

One thing I learned from hundreds of meetings and conversations in places like Ramallah, Haifa, Jenin and Netanya, often over food and coffee, is this: Israelis and Palestinians may disagree profoundly on

history and politics, but they share close similarities on family, food and culture. I often said that if you could strip away the conflict and the weight of history, the two sides have much more in common than not. That may sound like the dream of an idealist, but it is also an observation grounded in liters of coffee and gallons of hummus.

It is often overlooked and rarely published, but Palestinian and Israelis do see eye to eye in one main arena: business. Both societies are deeply entrepreneurial and commercial partnerships across the green line are not at all uncommon even in the worst of times. During my time in Tel Aviv, much of my job involved convening business meetings to make connections between Israeli and Palestinian companies, while also trying to level a playing field which was heavily tilted toward Israeli firms due to the economic hardships of occupation. I won't dwell on the technical details here. What matters is the idea behind the work: peace-building through economic partnership, and conflict mitigation through fostering meaningful people-to-people connection.

At the time, USAID was tasked with supporting the Kerry peace effort by implementing the economic components behind the negotiations. That meant stitching together potential partnerships in sectors like technology, tourism and agriculture.

(See Kevin Fox, Page 5A)



From the Amazon to Addison: Conservation stories that connect us  
By Kevin Fox

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## Letters to the Editor

### Vermont bill would offer health rights for all in state

Sarah's headaches had been getting worse and more frequent. But as a single mom with two teenagers, she just didn't have the extra cash to see a doctor. Her deductible was \$4,000, almost 10% of her annual income. When her daughter finally drove her to the emergency room, the cancer from her brain tumor had metastasized. She died eight months later.

Sarah is a fictional person, but her story isn't. Vermont has too many Sarah's with untreated high blood pressure, bad cholesterol, pre-diabetes conditions, and other undiagnosed chronic problems. According to the Vermont Department of Health, 29% of Vermonters (187,800 people) are underinsured, meaning their health coverage does not provide affordable access, often due to high deductibles or out-of-pocket costs.

Vermonters value the dignity and worth of every person. It's part of the Vermont character. We have always understood that a person's worth isn't measured by her bank account.

When my neighbor's child runs a fever, she shouldn't have to calculate whether she can afford the doctor visit. When the farmer down the road feels chest pain, he shouldn't delay seeking care because of his deductible. When anyone in our community gets sick, they should see a doctor — period. That's what equal dignity looks like.

We don't tell our neighbors they're on their own when the barn burns down or the road washes out. We show up. We help. Because that's who we are.

H.433 — Vermont's Universal Primary Care bill — will put our values into practice. Every

Vermonters will have access to primary care based on medical need, not wallet size. No premiums, no deductibles, no choosing between medicine and groceries. Just neighbors ensuring neighbors can see a doctor when they're sick.

Vermont can lead the nation by showing that equal dignity means equal access to care.

You can help by volunteering to circulate a petition in your town, calling on the selectboard to warn a resolution supporting H.433 at the Town Meeting in March.

To learn how you can help out, go to this website: Pass433.Now.

Thanks to Dr. Dynasaur, Tiny Tim has full primary care in Vermont until he's 18. But Mr. and Mrs. Cratchit don't. Let's change that.

Mike Palmer  
Cornwall

### 'Snowbird' suggests more taxes on second homes

I own a home in New Haven, Vt., and a home in Pine Ridge, Florida. Both homes' real estate taxes are nearly identical. I am a permanent resident in Florida, thus eligible for a \$50,000 reduction in real estate assessment. Florida has no personal income tax. I pay Vermont income tax on current use cropland rental income.

I enjoy the amenities of both states but contribute little to those state-funded amenities, except for sales tax. And, perversely, current use and homestead exemptions force a higher tax rate to achieve budget revenue.

I propose fairer support (more revenue into Vermont) from a snowbird.

Nonresident homeowners and corporate seasonal home rental homeowners should pay for state-funded amenities that attracted their ownership. Housing rental profits are Vermont income-taxed as a percentage of the homeowner's federal income. Vermont attracts high-income nonresidents. So, how to pay the state to support more resident housing? Let's ask the nonresidents.

What are those amenities worth to a nonresident's household? (Roads, parks,

health services, security.) These state-funded amenities are nontaxed income to nonresidents. So let's put a surcharge on the house assessed value at the 100 common level set by the state. AND — make the surcharge low enough to not be a consideration to prospective snowbirds. This is not a tax, more like an HOA (Home Owners' Association). To make it easy for we who pay some Vermont tax, add a section for the surcharge to the nonresident tax form.

David Spencer  
New Haven

## Kevin Fox

(Continued from Page 4A)

In tech, Israel faced a major labor shortage. USAID helped create a politically safe model for Israeli companies to source highly skilled Arab computer scientists from the West Bank and from Arab-majority cities inside Israel, such as Nazareth. In tourism, we supported the Christmas festival in Manger Square in Bethlehem, while also encouraging partnerships between Jewish Israeli and Arab tour operators — giving each side a more equal share of tourism revenue and giving visitors a fuller understanding of the people who live on both sides of the checkpoints.

And then there was Ben & Jerry's ice cream.

Yes, this famous Vermont-based company played an unexpected role in this effort. Ben & Jerry's had a franchise in Israel, which was one of the few factories globally with corporate authority to develop unique flavors. The head of the Israeli franchise reached out to us after hearing about these emerging business partnerships and the peace plan. He remembered a time before the separation wall, when Israeli

families shopped in Nablus and Jericho, and Palestinians worked more freely in places like Tel Aviv-Yafo. That heady era was far from perfect, but he believed things had grown much worse as security restrictions increased. Too often, the few Israelis that Palestinians encountered now were soldiers and the wall resulted in fewer opportunities for genuine people-to-people interaction between the two sides. He wanted to do his small part to change that.

We connected him with Palestinian almond farmers in the Jordan Valley, and a partnership was born. Ben & Jerry's began sourcing almonds from Palestinian farmers for a halva-inspired flavor called "Middle Eastern Peace," which was sold in the Israeli market, for a brief time.

Here is where I wish the story had a true happy ending ... and sadly we all know that it doesn't. Instead I will try to leave you with a feeling, a memory of this palpable spirit of hope and human connection which has carried me forward. One of the greatest memories of my career was sitting in that Ben & Jerry's factory in Be'er Tuvia, around

a long conference table, with Israelis, Palestinians, and company staff. We were all eating ice cream together, laughing, talking about families and food and the bright future. For a moment — just a moment — the conflict completely receded, and what remained was a shared sense of possibility.

That is the spirit I want to offer this holiday season and into the new year: the spirit of hope. Even in the darkest of times, peace does not always come through grand agreements or sweeping gestures. Mostly it builds through small, everyday social interaction — through work, shared meals, and even ice cream. Indeed, these moments of human connection are the quiet glue that binds us all together.

So, as we gather for the Holidays and in 2026, may we remember that, against all odds, hope often survives in unexpected places. And may we continue to seek it, nurture it, and carry it forward.

Happy New Year.  
Kevin Fox is executive director of the Middlebury Area Land Trust.

## Living in Ripton, Vermont

Richard lived with a goat before his house was torn down. We're told a ghost roamed

the rooms of the Dragon's Den, William Upson, the writer, owned, before he was dead. Dragon,

one of two names, before the rest of us moved in. Including Victor Reichert,

the rabbi from Cincinnati, Frost's friend, who spoke once a year in the Methodist Church,

two buildings away from the Inn, the general store, with an ice bin on its porch. Famous,

you can see, for its bags, its misspelled word, for keeping an army of agents away from this place.

The story of Frost, telling a reporter who asked where he got his best

lines. From a dragon in Ripton, he said. Meaning Stafford Dragon, the man hired to mow the fields

at his farm (Homer Noble's once), set stones to keep the wrong neighbors out. The ones wearing masks, carrying

guns, not meant for the pointed deer. The family, its rumored, who stayed overnight in the anonymous cellar,

saved for anyone escaping, riding the underground railroad, in the loft of the Blacksmith Shop.

Even with no tracks in sight. Rails on a sleigh for the ride up to Bread Loaf. Its rising mountain.

Its writers, porch-rocking, revising their novels and poems, refusing to correct a frozen typo.

Gary Margolis  
Cornwall

## Lying emperor wannabe is not above criticism

To criticize an exalted Supreme Leader/Commander in chief is considered by many readers to be unpatriotic, if not contemptible.

Decades ago, my fellow combatants, like rodents, went down a hole in the ground where the indigenous stashed their

cache...a risky business at eleven cents an hour. Concurrently, the future POTUS lied to his draft board.

He excluded himself, unwilling to serve with the "suckers and losers," to be inconvenienced or suffer

misfortune. Lies and deceptions are the expected and acceptable manner in which he conducts his transactional life.

We should get over it. Be disabused patriots.

Alec Lyall,  
Middlebury

## Ways of Seeing

(Continued from Page 4A) response to any exchange is at the center. The felt memory endures beyond the concrete one.

Brain science tells us that memories are revised and even

created every time we call upon them, in our waking hours as well as in our dreams.

But I could have told you that. Debating memories is silly, really. Our memories are personal

and unique. We each cull them according to our own nature. We just have to accept that there's more than one version of what happened.

May you all create good memories in the coming year.

## Schubart letter

(Continued from Page 4A)

Kenyon. Their work becomes source material for a celebration of darkness and light. Along with the voices of poets and writers of note there are others like that of Alexei Navalny — voiced by actor and minister Co'Relous C. Bryant — that speak of the commitment to standing up for human rights even if the penalty is, as it was in his case, death. In another segment, we hear the words of Dr. Melba Pattillo Beals, from an interview on the radio program "On Being" with Krista Tippett, as she tells of growing up living with fear every day. And there is the poet Naomi Shihab Nye, whose poem "Cross That Line" commemorates Paul Robeson's singing on the American side of the Canadian border to an audience of both nations because the U.S. and Canadian authorities had collaborated to deny him entry. The poem ends with these lines:

Remind us again,

brave friend.  
What countries may we sing into?

What lines should we all be crossing?

What songs travel toward us from far away to deepen our days?

We agreed that one of the great mysteries of a transformative work on stage is the impossibility of conveying it fully, whether in person or in a written review, to those who haven't seen it, and so we can't help but wish the work could have been filmed while it was being performed, even if that could only capture a small part of the impact that being present makes possible. But this year's "Night Fires" was in essence a reminder of the power of being present both for actors and audience. There's an intimacy and an immediacy that cannot be experienced secondhand. We can only hope for more performances as time goes on. And we thank the local actors and Marianne Lust

and Deborah Lubar, the creators, for so wonderfully altering our perceptions of the light and dark in our world. And reminding us that light prevails.

With good reason, all shows sold out quickly. We'd bought tickets early and got there early, only to then find a handful of seats left.

The depth and reach of this extraordinary theatrical event will remain with us in perpetuity, seducing us back into future conversations, something we can't say about very many of the theater performances we've attended. Sincere condolences if you missed it. Get your tickets early next year and let's hope for more performances.

Heartfelt thanks to Marianne Lust and Deborah Lubar for so wonderfully altering our perceptions of the light and dark of winter in our world.

Bill and Kate Schubart  
Hinesburg

## Christmas Tree Recycling

Turn your Christmas Tree into mulch through Addison County Solid Waste Management District's free Tree Recycling Program!

### Curbside Tree Pickup

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

**Vergennes** 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.

### Tree Drop-Off

Christmas tree disposal at the District Transfer Station is free for the month of January. Please only bring these trees to the District Transfer Station in Middlebury during regular hours, Mon.-Fri., 7 AM to 3 PM and Sat., 8 AM to 1 PM.

! Just the tree! No wreaths, ornaments, garlands, tinsel, wire, or other decorations.

Addison County  
Solid Waste Management District

Transfer Station: 1223 Rte 7 South Middlebury, VT, 05753  
(802) 388-2333 · AddisonCountyRecycles.org · acswmd@acswmd.org

## Elderly Services Inc. ESI College

### New Year's Resolutions:

- ✓ Keep my brain active
- ✓ Make new friends
- ✓ Learn something new
- ✓ Take up a new hobby
- ✓ Sign up for ESI College!!



To learn more, reach out to Kira Winslow, ESI College Coordinator at 802-388-3983, kira@elderlyservices.org



OPINION?

Email it to: news@addisonindependent.com

ADDISON COUNTY

# Obituaries

## Caris A. Carr, 90, of Middlebury

MIDDLEBURY — Caris Anne Carr died Dec. 19, 2025, at Porter Hospital in Middlebury, Vt. Caris was born in Palmerton, Pa., June 29, 1935. She was the daughter of Louis and Carmella (Veneroso) Andreuzzi.

A graduate of the University of Pennsylvania, Caris lived most of her adult life in Simsbury, Conn., with her husband, William Carr. She was involved in many community activities including Cub Scout den mother, the Central and Belden School PTAs, the Simsbury Republican Town Committee, and the League of Women Voters.

Later, Caris embarked on a career in marketing communications, including positions as a publications editor, publicity writer and managing editor of the Farmington Valley Herald. She went on to develop targeted financial reporting and marketing communications for CIGNA Investments and the



CARIS A. CARR

former Advest, Inc.

After her retirement from CIGNA, Caris became involved with Literacy Volunteers of Greater Hartford, teaching reading and writing. In 2009 she was recognized as the Basic Literacy Volunteer of the Year.

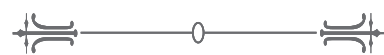
In her spare time, she was

passionate about gardening, loved a good book and enjoyed a solid game of tennis. She was an avid fan of UCONN men's and women's basketball.

In 2015, Caris moved to Eastview in Middlebury, Vt., where she enjoyed attending concerts, and amassed a large collection of socks won in bingo games.

Caris is pre-deceased by her parents and husband. She is survived by her son, Gregory L. Carr and his wife Sarah W. Dillard of Waitsfield, Vt., her brother, Ronald J. Andreuzzi and his wife Lynne of Lake Orion, Mich., their two children and three grandchildren; her cousin, Laraine Stuart of Los Angeles, Calif.; and her daughter and grandson.

A private burial will be held in Simsbury, Conn. in the spring. Contributions in Caris's name can be made to Eastview of Middlebury, and Porter Hospital, where she received kind and compassionate care. ♦

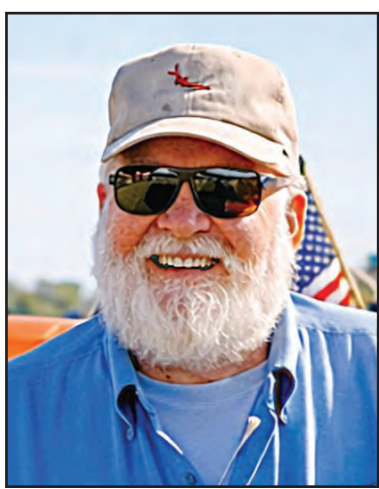


## Leighton Wilcox, 81, of Orwell

ORWELL — Leighton Wilcox, 81, of Orwell, Vt., passed away Sunday, Dec. 21, 2025, peacefully after a brief illness. He was the husband of Jeanette Wilcox, with whom he shared over 50 years of marriage.

Leighton is survived by his wife, Jeanette; his daughter, Shandell Wilcox; his son, Jarod (Eliza) Wilcox; his sister, Carol Davis; and grandsons, Lincoln and Landon Wilcox, who brought him many years of pride and joy.

Leighton grew up in Shoreham and spent many years working on the family farm, cultivating a passion and love for dairy farming and agriculture. He also hauled milk for many years, building relationships and memories along



LEIGHTON WILCOX

the way. Leighton treasured his home in Orwell, collecting tractors



and spending time with his family and local friends, whose visits and shared stories meant a lot to him. He was also a long-time member of both the Shoreham and Orwell Volunteer Fire Departments.

Leighton was preceded by his mother, Patricia Wilcox and father, Leo Wilcox.

A private graveside committal service and burial will take place, at a later date, in East Shoreham Cemetery.

Memorial gifts in lieu of flowers may be made in his memory to Orwell First Response Squad or the Orwell Volunteer Fire Department, 604 Main St., Orwell, VT 05760.

Arrangements by Miller & Ketcham of Brandon. ♦

## Robert Francis Robidoux, 61, of Bristol

BRISTOL — Robert Francis Robidoux, 61, of Bristol, Vt., passed away unexpectedly Dec. 16, 2025. He was born. Jan. 4, 1964, at Porter Hospital in Middlebury, Vt.

In his free time, Bob loved hunting, riding his motorcycle, and camping, especially at his camp behind Bristol Pond, a place he cherished and returned to each hunting season. Above all else, he treasured time spent with family and loved ones, creating memories that will be held close by those who knew him best.

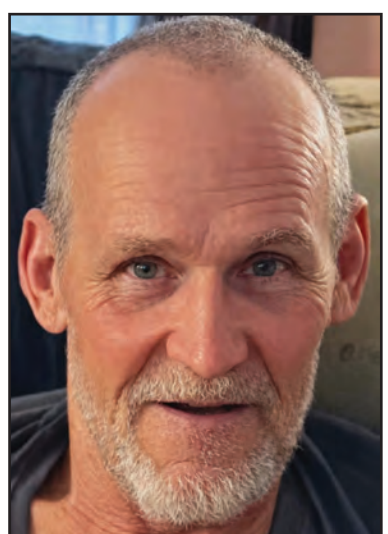
Bob is survived by his mother, Teresa (Brown) Robidoux; his sisters Bernadine Butler and her husband Jerry, and Christine Novak; his beloved children April Robidoux and Robert L. Robidoux

Jr.; his beloved granddaughters Angel Robidoux, and Chloe and Katie O'Brien; his partner Michelle Jewell; her children Lyndon, Logan, and Megan Swinton; and his beloved dog, Taz; as well as many grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

He was predeceased by his father, Joseph Robidoux; his younger sister June Curavoo and her husband Steve; and his brother Raymond Robidoux.

A celebration of life will be held Saturday, Jan. 3, from 1 to 4 p.m. at the Bristol Legion Post #19.

Bob will be remembered for the love he shared so freely with his family and friends. His presence will be deeply missed, but his spirit will live on in the many lives he touched. ♦



ROBERT FRANCIS ROBIDOUX

### 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](mailto:obits@addisonindependent.com).

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

## Margaret Bojanowski, 45, of Middlebury

MIDDLEBURY — Margaret Susan (Allard) Bojanowski, age 45, passed away tragically of natural causes at her home Sunday, Dec. 14, 2025, in Middlebury, Vt. Margaret's life was defined by compassion, strength and her fierce commitment as a mother, wife, sister, niece, friend and lifelong horsewoman.

Her love for family and horses were the cornerstones of her life and career. Margaret was an enduring champion of all things equestrian and a tireless educator and cheerleader for riders of all ages. She brought wisdom, patience and grace to every interaction — whether mentoring a young rider, tending to a horse in need, or quietly supporting others behind the scenes.

Margaret grew up in South Burlington and went on to graduate from Alfred University. Her early career started at horse farms in Virginia followed by teaching and training in horse barns at Cornell University where she met her husband, Andy. Together they moved to southern Oregon where they managed a horse farm before moving back to Vermont, where their daughter, Nova was born in 2010.

As a family they found great pleasure in building their life at Eddy Farm. Andy and Margaret were married in the South Meadow and hosted countless celebrations and community events throughout the years. Margaret was a devoted mother and found true joy watching Nova in the saddle and on the ice. Nova was the light of her life and carries her spirit.

To all who knew her, Margaret was made for Eddy Farm, seemingly hand-picked by Doris Eddy herself. Margaret immediately became the



MARGARET BOJANOWSKI

farm's heart and soul, the thread that connected all members of the community. She cared very deeply for the farm horses and loved and knew each one as if it were her own. She always put the horses' comfort and care first and went to great lengths to ensure an exceptional quality of life for all of them. She was an outstanding teacher and mentor, bringing together people of all ages, capabilities and backgrounds on the farm.

Margaret could meet people where they were and especially found great joy in teaching therapeutic lessons to members of the Counseling Service of Addison County. She also delighted in watching her "lesson kids" compete at local events, whether it was lead line or 3-foot fences. The impact she had on so many people is awe-inspiring and a testament to the kind, brilliant teacher that she was.

One of her earliest students, Alicia Odell, became her dearest friend and assistant Farm Manager. Together, Margaret and Alicia worked tirelessly to make

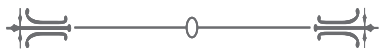
improvements to the farm facilities and lesson programs. The legacy of their partnership is apparent in the high-quality instruction and topnotch horse care that are hallmarks of Eddy Farm. Margaret would be so proud to know Alicia will carry on the torch as Farm Manager.

Margaret is survived by husband, Andrew D. Bojanowski, and daughter, Nova Rose Bojanowski of Middlebury, Vt.; brother, Gregory Allard and partner Kathleen Stutzman of Waterbury, Vt.; aunts Susan (Towne) Schaefer of Vergennes, Vt., Sandra Towne of Randolph, Va., and Abigail (Towne) Vietze and Robert of Warren, Vt.; uncles Makey Towne and Ellen of Breckenridge, Colo., Mike Allard of Bennington, Vt.; aunts Linda Allard of Bennington, Vt., and Anita and husband Jim Frechette of Bennington, Vt.; in-laws David and Sandy Bojanowski of Ithaca, N.Y.; sisters-in-law Julie Bojanowski of Ithaca, N.Y., and Stephanie Bojanowski of Buffalo, N.Y.; and many cousins.

Margaret was pre-deceased by her mother, Libby Towne in 2011, her father, Mark Allard in 2023, her dog, Jon-Jon, and her horse, Caruso.

A memorial celebration of her life is being planned for Jan. 10, at noon, at the American Legion in Middlebury. Interment will be arranged privately.

Donations in memory of Margaret may be made to the Eddy Farm School for Horse and Rider, 1815 South St Extension, Middlebury, VT 05753, <https://givebutter.com/eddyfarm>; or Counseling Service of Addison County, Inc., 89 Main Street, Middlebury, VT 05753, <https://www.csac-vt.org/donate.html>. ♦



## Shirley Elaine Morrill, 89, of Bristol

BRISTOL — Shirley Elaine Morrill, 89, of Bristol, Vt., passed away peacefully at Woodridge Rehabilitation and Nursing in Berlin, Vt., on Wednesday, Dec. 17, 2025, surrounded by her loving family.

She was born Feb. 8, 1936, in Starksboro, Vt., where she spent her childhood before making her home in Bristol. Shirley had fond memories of her time living on the Kilbourn Farm and lived independently at Pleasant Hills Apartments in Bristol until June 2025.

Shirley selflessly stepped in to help raise her niece, Roberta (Blair) Booska, forming a lifelong, loving bond with Roberta and her family. To all who knew her, Shirley was more than an aunt — she was like a grandmother.

Her career involved many years at Drake Smith and Company, where she assembled furniture. Later, she enjoyed her work as a custodian at Bristol Elementary, where she was known for her strong work ethic and reliability.



SHIRLEY ELAINE MORRILL

Shirley will be remembered for her deep love of animals and family. She was affectionately nicknamed a "spitfire" while living at Woodridge for her quick wit and honesty, often making staff laugh. Her coffee table was always filled with candy, and she never missed a chance to enjoy sweets, ice cream, or desserts. She delighted in simple pleasures,

like a McKenzie hotdog, and was rarely seen without her trusty pocketknife.

She is survived by her great niece, Kelly (Booska) Bishop (Peter); great niece Karry Booska (TG); great-great-nephew Zoriath Booska (Hannah); great-great-nieces Brooke Blossom (Cam) and Kayla Thompson (Antonio); and great-great-great-niece Miley Thompson and great-great-great-nephew Summit Aldrighetti.

She was predeceased by her parents, Nathan and Jennie Morrill (Brown); her siblings, Alvin Morrill, Edna Murray, Arlene Morrill, and Helen LaRue; and her niece, Roberta (Blair) Booska, who was like a daughter to her.

She will forever be loved and deeply missed by her family.

Arrangements are under the direction of Brown McClay Funeral Home in Bristol, Vermont. A memorial service and burial will be held in late spring or early summer, with details to be announced in the *Addison Independent*. ♦

## A New Year's Resolution: Finding Ways to Reconnect.

By KRISTIN BOLTON, Exec. Director Elderly Services

Too often as we get older, we lose connections. Treasured friends, family members and even acquaintances develop debilitating illnesses, move away or pass away. Social isolation and loneliness can set in, leaving us vulnerable to depression and ill health.

Former participant Marion Werner said in her mid-90's, "You know why I need to come to Project? All my old friends have died. I need some new friends!" And indeed, she developed many

close and beautiful friendships before she too passed on earlier this year.

Joining a community in our 70s, 80s or 90s takes courage, but has some wonderful rewards. Not only are new friends made, but old reconnections are rekindled in surprising ways. Joyce, an active Elderly Services Project participant, and John, a student summer worker, reconnected this summer. When she saw his name, she took a second look and realized this tall 20-year-old was someone she babysat when he was

a preschooler.

Another connection sparked when Marjorie and Jacqui discovered they were related. Knowing how rare it is to find family, they hugged each other.

In the new and old friendships, we reconnect with parts of ourselves. "I haven't done this in years," we hear people say as they get up and join hands to dance, a smile lighting their face as they move in the familiar ways of their younger days.

It takes courage to face the losses of growing older but in reconnecting with the wholeness of who we are, we can reclaim the best parts of our past as we step into a more joyful future.

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THIS SHOWS THE landscape before and soon after the removal of Newport's Sleeper Pond Dam in Oct. 2025.

Courtesy of the Missisquoi River Basin Association

## Nine Vt. dams removed in 2025; many more to go

By ERIN PETENKO  
VTDigger.org

NEWPORT — There are at least 140 dams in the Winooski River watershed, according to Michele Braun, executive director of the Friends of the Winooski River. Three of those dams help with flood control. Fifteen provide hydropower. A “handful” contribute to local recreation.

But the rest? They “aren’t doing anything but causing trouble,” Braun said.

“The great majority of those dams serve no purpose and are a public safety hazard, as well as bad for the river health and fish,” she said.

Braun helped lead an effort to remove two dams in Barre City and Barre Town this year, part of a decades-long effort to get rid of derelict or harmful dams along Vermont’s waterways. According to the Vermont Natural Resources Council, local and regional organizations removed nine dams this year, the most in a single year, reconnecting 125 miles of river.

More than 80 dams have been removed since the 1980s, some of which were more than a century old, said Karina Dailey, science and restoration director for the council, who also chairs the Vermont Dam Task Force.

There are plenty more to go. Vermont’s dam safety program and local watershed partners have identified 47 dams that would be good candidates for removal, along with 27 active projects at different stages of preparation for removal and 12 projects that have stalled, according to a task force report.

Dam removals have gained urgency in recent years as Vermont communities have been battered by repeat floods. An increasing body of research shows that some dams can worsen flooding. Five dams failed during flooding in 2023, sustaining heavy damage, according to state investigators.

Removing dams can also benefit the local ecosystem, improve water quality and improve recreational opportunities for swimmers and boaters, according to the task force’s website.

But dam removals can be a long and arduous process. The first

challenge, Dailey said, is getting the dam owners on board. Many of the dams pegged for potential removal are privately owned, and the landowners have no obligation to participate in the process.

Braun said that one of the dams her organization removed this year was owned by Trow and Holden Co. Initially, the owners expressed an emotional attachment to the dam, which was built in the 1800s and powered a factory that manufactured tools for the granite industry. Braun won them over by showing how getting rid of the dam would lower the flood elevation behind their building and make the river more predictable in the future.

Dailey said the “silver lining” of the 2023 flood is that landowners are now “connecting the dots between the flood hazard in their yard of owning this dam, and not wanting to be liable for impacting downstream infrastructure or communities.”

She gave the example of a dam failure in Williamstown that caused “quite a lot of damage.”

“The landowner had to do an emergency breach to stabilize the project because we couldn’t remove it fast enough to get all the funding and the permits,” she said. The task force is hoping to get the dam removed sometime next summer.

Dam removals tend to be more complex than other infrastructure projects, requiring specialized construction companies and a variety of permits, Braun said. The state also sets a hard stop: All river projects have to be finished by October.

Although removal projects can benefit the local flora and fauna, they can also cause short-term upheaval to animal habitats and vegetation. Lindsey Wight, executive director of the Missisquoi River Basin Association, said that the crew removing the Sleeper Pond Dam in Newport had to carefully relocate snapping turtles.

“We got to dive into the muck and get a couple of turtles and bring them up Mud Creek a little bit farther to just sort of keep them out of the way,” she said.

Greg Russ, restoration director of the White River Partnership, said

the organization had to plan their use of heavy equipment around the local bat roosting season when they removed the Farnham Bros. dam in Tunbridge. The crew also had an archeologist on site throughout the project documenting any details uncovered about the roughly 100-year-old dam for future researchers.

Dailey said she was glad to see so many projects move forward this year despite the chaotic situation at the federal level. The federal government froze funding specifically for dam removal that had already been committed in February, and for a while the task force thought those projects might not happen at all.

Although the funding has since been restored, lining up grants and loans for new projects is an ongoing challenge, Dailey said. At the Army Corps of Engineers, one of the most important Vermont staffers took a federal buyout and hasn’t been replaced, she said. Cuts to the Federal Emergency Management Agency have left it short-staffed, slowing down approval for a dam removal in Northfield.

“The money supposedly is still there and hasn’t gone away, and the project will still move forward,” Dailey said. “But there’s just not enough staff to review it to keep it moving along.”

She said she expects the Trump administration’s actions will affect funding for years down the line, impacting the possibility of future projects.

In the meantime, the waterways that had dams removed this year will slowly change as they adapt to the new shape of the landscape.

“Really the first five years is where the river is sort of just creating its natural channel, and it meanders a lot,” Dailey said.

“You watch a rain event, and the river just starts moving and meandering more and more,” she said. “And that’s really exciting, because that’s what rivers do, how rivers function.”

Braun noted one immediate benefit of the Trow & Holden dam removal. At the kickoff meeting for the removal, her team spotted a dozen trout swimming right up behind the dam.

## Police cite Bristol driver for DUI

MIDDLEBURY — Middlebury police cited Rachael Dos Anjos, 36, of Bristol for driving under the influence. The citation was issued after police responded to a single-vehicle crash on Washington Street Extension on Dec. 28.

In other action last week, Middlebury police:

- Responded to a report of a suspicious vehicle parked outside a Route 7 south business on Dec. 22.
- Took information about a potential stalking case on Dec. 22.
- Assisted Vermont State Police in finding and apprehending a suspect in a stolen vehicle case in the John Graham Court neighborhood on Dec. 23.
- Helped a local woman who reported a possible fraud case on Dec. 23.
- Responded to a juvenile issue at Middlebury Union Middle School on Dec. 23.
- Responded to an assault complaint at a Court Street address on Dec. 23. Police said the case remains under investigation.
- Responded to an assault complaint at the TJ Maxx store off Court Street Extension on Dec. 23.
- Investigated a possible stalking case in the Washington

## Middlebury Police Log

- Street area on Dec. 23.
- Arrested Siera Miller, 39, of Middlebury, on an outstanding arrest warrant on Dec. 23.
- Responded to a report of a broken-down tractor-trailer truck on Seymour Street on Dec. 23.
- Collected illicit drugs from a vehicle following a consent search on Route 7 south on Dec. 24.
- Responded to a domestic dispute at a Jackson Lane residence on Dec. 24.
- Cited Francis Fielder, 45, of Goshen, for driving with a criminally suspended license on Court Street on Dec. 24.
- Enforced the town’s overnight winter parking ban in the downtown area on Dec. 24.
- Responded to a reported argument between a man and woman on Court Street on Dec. 25.
- Conducted a death investigation at a Court Street residence on Dec. 25. Police said the deceased — 81-year-old Archie Slater — had died from natural causes.
- Assisted Middlebury Regional EMS on a medical call to a North

Pleasant Street residence on Dec. 26.

- Helped Vermont State Police evaluate a potentially impaired driver on Route 7 on Dec. 27.
- Deployed Middlebury PD K-9 Guinness to help state police determine if a car and its passengers might be concealing illegal drugs during a stop near the intersection of Route 7 and River Road in New Haven on Dec. 27. Police said Guinness alerted on the vehicle, which resulted in the car and a passenger being seized pending search warrant applications. The driver was also arrested for an outstanding arrest warrant and suspicion of driving under the influence of drugs, according to Middlebury police.
- Cited Douglas Campbell, 28, of Middlebury, following a trespassing complaint at a Main Street address on Dec. 27.
- Enforced the town’s overnight winter parking ban in the downtown area on Dec. 27.
- Received a complaint from a Forest Ridge Drive resident who alleged his neighbors were cutting down trees on his property on Dec. 28.
- Responded to an assault complaint in the Court Street area on Dec. 28.
- Checked on a driver whose vehicle had a flat tire on Case Street on Dec. 28

## Police check streets during storm

VERGENNES — Vergennes police went out at night during the snowstorm two days before Christmas to make sure the streets were ready for the city’s Public Works Department to clean them.

Fortunately, they found no violators of the city’s overnight ban on parking. Last year the city adopted a system of cellphone warnings to alert vehicle owners when they needed to move their vehicles from the streets.

In other action between Dec. 22 and 28, city police conducted 15 traffic stops, one foot and four cruiser patrols, and a VIN inspection; processed three fingerprint requests; responded to a false alarm, and also:

- On Dec. 22:
  - Heard from a local resident about an online dispute with an out-of-state resident. Police advised the complainant to break contact and block the other party.
  - Talked to a driver whose neighbors allegedly had been operating a vehicle erratically in

## Vergennes Police Log

- their neighborhood. The driver denied that was so, but agreed to be more mindful moving forward.
- Mediated a dispute over a cat that had been climbing a neighbor’s outdoor Christmas tree and knocking lights off. The cat owner agreed to make sure it was better supervised.
- On Dec. 23:
  - On behalf of Vermont State Police tried to find a man with an outstanding arrest warrant.
  - Helped a motorist stranded on Route 7 until help arrived.
  - Helped a motorist with a disabled vehicle on Main Street.
- On Dec. 24:
  - Were told about possible drug paraphernalia at a city address.

- Assisted the operator of a tractor-trailer unit that was disabled on the side of the road. Police oversaw the unit being moved to the side of the road to keep traffic moving.
- Conducted a highway safety radio interview.
- On Dec. 26 issued a no-trespass order on behalf of Champlain Farms management to an individual suspected of drug use in the store.
- On Dec. 27 responded to a report of a possible vehicle vs. dog collision on Macdonough Drive. The dog was found to be uninjured, and the vehicle was not damaged.
- On Dec. 28:
  - On Main Street helped a juvenile contact a parent for a ride home.
  - Helped a resident with concerns about an upstairs neighbor. Police said this is an ongoing matter, and they referred the complainant to resources to help with the concerns.
  - Took a report of a lost wallet.



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Kristin Bolton  
Executive Director, Elderly Services  
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**Behold the star!**

AREA CHILDREN were a prominent part of last Sunday's Christmas Family Eucharist service at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church in Middlebury. Featured clockwise, from top right photo: Sylvia Parini, 5, holds aloft the symbolic star for the Magi to follow to Bethlehem for the birth of Christ; Yana Dempewolf, as Joseph, with her own son Martin, who played the baby Jesus at Sunday's service; shepherds watching their flocks at night; Liz Smid gets her daughters Ettason, 3, and Josie, 1, dressed for the festivities; and Liz Smid gets assorted angels and sheep ready before the Eucharist celebration.

Independent photos/Steve James



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**Thank you,  
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Over the past few months, as government assistance programs for our most vulnerable community members have been reduced, even terminated, you have come through for them with food, funds, and goodwill. All of us at HOPE are incredibly grateful.

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*Thanks to every one of you for caring, and for sharing.*



*Sending good wishes to all for a happy, healthy 2026.*

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# Vermont Housing

*(Continued from Page 1A)*  
 have enough of it ... The only comprehensive solution to that is building more homes," he said during a recent interview at the *Independent* offices.

Weinberger's housing advocacy is not only being driven by his years as public servant and builder. It's also been shaped, ironically, by a state 2,900 miles away. He referenced Oregon's adoption of "urban growth boundaries" a half century ago.

"(Oregon planners) asked all their municipalities to draw a line representing 20 years of growth out from your city center, and that line will go on a map. Inside the line it will be easier to build, and outside (the line) we're going to make it hard to build," he said.

It was around this same time that Vermont was also having a debate about how to regulate growth. And Vermont chose Act 250 in 1970. The law — which Weinberger likened to a "wet blanket" — created nine District Environmental Commissions to review large-scale development projects using 10 criteria designed to safeguard the environment, the character of neighborhoods, and the state's aesthetics. Act 250 permitting decisions can be appealed to the Vermont Environmental Court.

The difference between the two states' land use rules have resulted in divergent demographic trends, according to Weinberger.

"(Oregon has) basically added 2 million people in the time Vermont

has added 200,000 people," he said in comparing the two states' demographic trends that he believes were consequences of two divergent land use policies.

"I think Oregon's has been a much more successful policy direction than the one we've taken," he said.

Weinberger is now working with LBH to change Vermont's housing narrative. He's been visiting businesses, community leaders and the Vermont Statehouse to hear — and promote — a pro-housing message that's starting to resonate.

He believes Let's Build Homes to be a unique housing coalition for Vermont, when one considers its funders and supporters. Its stakeholders include Middlebury College, major utilities like Green Mountain Power, businesses, developers, individuals and hospitals. All are bound by a common goal of seeing the state build more homes to accommodate new neighbors and workers amid a rapidly aging Vermont workforce.

It's a coalition Weinberger believes got good news in 2025 with the state's adoption of the Community and Housing Infrastructure Program (CHIP), a statewide tax increment financing tool "designed to help Vermont communities unlock housing opportunities by investing in critical public infrastructure," according to the CHIP website.

The program does this by allowing municipalities to finance essential infrastructure (like water,

sewer, roads and stormwater systems) that support new housing development. Specifically, CHIP allows communities to access long-term financing without raising local property taxes, capture a portion of new property tax revenues from future development, and invest in public improvements that directly support the creation of homes.

"We made (CHIP) our top priority last year, and it passed," Weinberger said with a smile.

"The only upside I can think of with Vermont having high property taxes is it makes this CHIP tool quite powerful," he continued. "If you can take 85% of the new taxes that are being generated by a project for the next 20 years and borrow that to pay for the upfront infrastructure (for a housing development), it can pay for quite a bit."

### CHIP TAXES IN MIDD

Weinberger believes CHIP could work particularly well in a community like Middlebury, which has municipal water and sewer service and a need for more housing. More than 200 units are expected to come online during the next few years as part of the Stonecrop Meadows neighborhood off Seminary Street Extension.

Zeke Davisson, COO of Summit



WEINBERGER

Properties — the developer of Stonecrop — estimates CHIP could become a major tool for leveraging infrastructure financing for the Stonecrop buildout, to the tune of \$75,000 per unit for 45 townhouses and 35 apartments, and \$24,000 per unit for a future phase of townhomes, condos, rentals and triplexes. Check out the details at [tinyurl.com/23wfwzhz6](http://tinyurl.com/23wfwzhz6).

"We're definitely modeling CHIP as an opportunity for the next infrastructure phases at Stonecrop," Davisson said through an email exchange. "We have not yet discussed with the town but would expect to start that conversation in the new year if we

can get the numbers (and scope) to work."

Stonecrop has earned not only financial buy-in through Middlebury College and grantors; it's also won acceptance from the town of Middlebury and neighbors, who've acknowledged the community's dearth of available housing. Weinberger called it a "yes in my backyard" philosophy that needs to replace NIMBY if the state is to make headway solving its housing shortage.

"We have spent 50 years layering rules on top of each other that add to the cost, competition and time

(it takes to build housing); there's a lot that needs to be reformed," he said. "The task ahead is not to rip (all the regulations) out, it's to fix them — to get the rules right. The place we're going to start is with the permitting and appeals system."

He said LBH will specifically urge reforms to Act 250, local zoning and the permit appeal process. Weinberger believes the reform effort got off to a good start in 2024 with passage of Act 181, aimed at boosting housing in part by streamlining its development in designated "smart growth" areas, and revising Act 250.

"That was a breakthrough," he said of Act 181. "We are now on a path, for the first time in 50 years, to have some of what Oregon has."

By that, he means designated areas where communities have deemed housing appropriate and worthy of a streamline permitting process.

Also high on the LBH wish list: A departure from Vermont's de novo appeals process, which requires challenged housing proposals to be reevaluated, from the beginning, at the appellate level. Weinberger believes having de novo proceedings is unnecessary and adds more time and cost to housing permitting and construction.

"The other part of our problem in Vermont is subjective and ambiguous (permitting) standards. There's a national trend to go to clear and objective standards," Weinberger said.

Having more objective

permitting standards could result in some subdivision proposals being OK'd by administrative review, as opposed to appealable decisions following a lengthier review by a local development review board, he said.

Here are other avenues LBH will be pursuing in this year to catalyze more housing development, according to its 2026 legislative platform:

- Creation of a Housing Accelerator Fund. It would be an equity-like revolving fund with new state investment, providing capital for housing development projects at returns of 5-10% — significantly lower than the 15-20% required by traditional equity investors.

- Support an increase in base funding for programs that improve and expand housing stock, such as projects funded through the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board and Vermont Housing Improvement Program

- Support expansion of construction workforce training programs and apprenticeships to address the shortage of skilled workers needed for housing development.

- Consider a waiver of the state's 6% sales and use tax for building materials used in affordable housing development.

- Expand down payment assistance for first-time homebuyers through the Vermont Housing Finance Agency's state tax credit program.

Reporter John Flowers is at [johnf@addisonindependent.com](mailto:johnf@addisonindependent.com).

# Career center

*(Continued from Page 1A)*  
 in FY18 to \$40,909 in FY26, "reflecting a long-term statewide trend impacting all school budgets," MacTavish revealed during a Dec. 22 budget presentation to the Addison Central School District board.

Benefits account for 21.73% of the total budget request.

- The need to replace the roof and upgrade the HVAC system at the career center's North Campus building.

"These investments protect buildings, improve air quality, and reduce the risk of costly emergency repairs," she explained.

- \$783,102 in debt service, largely associated with an \$8.1 million bond that voters OK'd back in 2022 to finance significant renovations to the PHCC's Charles Avenue and North Campus buildings in Middlebury. Debt service amounts to 12.49% of the FY27 budget request.

MacTavish is tentatively projecting an FY27 career center tuition rate of \$38,894, which would represent an 11% (\$3,974) increase compared to this year. The state of Vermont would cover \$11,507 of the tuition rate. Sending school districts' taxpayers would pay the balance.

PHCC serves high school and adult students in Addison County, with most of its enrollees coming from Middlebury, Vergennes and Mount Abraham high schools. The center also accepts homeschooled students, as well as those enrolled in private schools and other high schools in our region — such as Otter Valley.

MacTavish said the career center is currently serving round 350 students, a number she and the Career Center board are looking to grow — significantly. MacTavish said PHCC could accommodate an additional 200-plus students "tomorrow. I would just need to order more supplies."

So where would the new students come from?

MacTavish pointed to other Career and Technical Education (CTE) service areas in Vermont that have no vacancies at their respective career centers, thus forcing some students to go without vocational-technical programming. Altering CTE service areas would require legislative approval, and MacTavish promised to lobby for a change this year that could pave the way for out-of-county students (who have no CTE options in their own regions) to be bused to PHCC.

This would make PHCC stronger, more affordable (due to new economies of scale) and give Vermont students a new CTE option, according to MacTavish.

"We are geographically positioned for growth," she said.

In a future edition, the *Independent* will have more details on PHCC's effort to expand its service area.

Around one in three Addison County high schoolers currently partakes in PHCC programming, according to MacTavish. The career center serves around 350 students annually. PHCC offers 24 programs, including Intro to STEM, Intro to Agricultural Sciences, Engineering & Architecture Design, Power Equipment, Automotive Technology, Culinary Arts, Medical Professions and Diesel Power Technology. PHCC is the only CTE center in the state that offers training for film and stage vocations, which it does through Addison Repertory Theater.

MacTavish is confident that a growing number of high school students and adults will seek out CTE training in the near future.

"CTE is having a moment," she said. "Young people are starting to look at the cost of a four-year college



*"CTE is having a moment. Young people are starting to look at the cost of a four-year college degree, or a master's degree, or a doctorate, weighing that against the time it takes and the outcome of salary on the back end."*

— Superintendent Nicole MacTavish

degree, or a master's degree, or a doctorate, weighing that against the time it takes and the outcome of salary on the back end."

Students can instead find a shorter, rigorous and less costly education process at PHCC, said MacTavish, emphasizing the school's 98% graduation rate and plentiful job prospects.

She pointed to trouble ahead if CTE programming isn't used to maximum advantage.

"Within four years, one in four Vermonters is going to be over 60. Many Vermonters are retiring out of the trades, and we are not producing enough students to rebuild those critical positions," MacTavish said. "We are trying to ensure students and adult learners are able to access high-wage, high-demand, high skill jobs."

John Flowers is at [johnf@addisonindependent.com](mailto:johnf@addisonindependent.com).

# Drought

*(Continued from Page 1A)*  
 Farms in Shoreham said of the drought. "I hope we never have to live through it again."

Wood's family has farmed in Vermont for 53 years. He operates farms with his wife and four grown sons — a home farm in Shoreham, as well as farms in Orwell and Addison. The team milks a little over 2,700 cows between the three farms.

Wood said he's experienced dryer conditions in the past but nothing quite like what farmers had to navigate in 2025.

"It's one of those things you can't do anything about, but you hope it rains tomorrow," he said.

For many local farmers, that rain seldom arrived. By late September most of Vermont was in a severe or extreme drought, with this past August marking the driest in at least 130 years, according to the National Integrated Drought Information System. Around 58% of producers responding to the survey echoed Wood in saying this year's drought was the worst they'd ever seen.

As a result, farmers this summer reported having to haul water to their animals and saw their crops stunted, including those like corn and hay that are used to feed livestock.

Nearly 18% of respondents said the most detrimental impact of the drought was lower crop yields for market, with the same percentage

of producers reporting the most damaging impact was lower crop yields for feed.

Such was the case for Wood, who said the drought's greatest impact to his family's operation was to the crops grown at their farms.

"We grow, usually, this year 2,600 acres of corn for forage, and quite honestly we were never going to make it through the winter," he explained.

Wood said the farms purchased \$245,000 worth of corn and should be alright with haylage but "can't stand another year like this." He acknowledged other farms found themselves in similar positions.

"Everyone's corn was way down, and grass as well," he said.


Thirty percent of Addison County producers responding to the survey reported a "moderate" concern over livestock feed shortage and feed quality impacts from the drought. Around 27% identified the most detrimental impact to their operation as having to purchase more feed.

Wood noted dairy farms have had to contend with a "double whammy" of being short feed and seeing conventional milk prices lower. Thirty-eight percent of survey respondents said they had a "moderate" perspective on the financial health of their operation over the next year, followed by 17% with a "good" outlook, 15% "poor"

and 14% "severe." The Agency of Agriculture acknowledged the survey captures estimated losses and "additional impacts may not be realized until spring 2026 or the next growing season." The agency said it will reevaluate the need in the agriculture industry and consider additional data collection tools later on.

More information on available drought response and recovery resources can be found at [agriculture.vermont.gov/drought](http://agriculture.vermont.gov/drought) and questions can be directed to [AGR.Drought@vermont.gov](mailto:AGR.Drought@vermont.gov) or 802-828-2430.







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# Residents opposed to Trump's National Guard deployments plan local actions

By AUDITI GUHA, VtDigger

As new legal battles challenge President Donald Trump's National Guard troop deployments in U.S. cities, Vermonters have been amping up efforts to express their public opposition.

From handing out flyers at the Vermont National Guard headquarters in Colchester to meeting monthly to discuss local efforts, a small group of residents said they're finding growing interest and solidarity to the cause of fighting what they call fascism.

On a recent Sunday afternoon, about 25 people showed up at the Fletcher Free Library in downtown Burlington to learn about a "Do Not Turn On Us" effort to connect with military personnel about their right to disobey illegal orders.

Rachel Siegel, one of the eight

or so organizers, said the event sprouted from a national community effort involving a handful of people from different states earlier this year, including one from Vermont.

Before they knew it, they'd set up a mailing list, organized emails and began to help coordinate groups across the county.

"It was just a tremendous amount of stuff for a group of people that are not an organization and have no infrastructure. We had no staff. We didn't have a comms person," she said.

Siegel said she also distributed flyers on Labor Day at the Air National Guard's open house in Colchester, reminding the Guard of its duty to "protect and assist Vermont communities" during emergencies. That spurred enough public interest for the local activists

to host monthly meetings to discuss different kinds of local actions, she said.

A former city councilor in Burlington and former director of the Peace and Justice Center, Siegel has participated in many civil actions opposing apartheid, F-35 fighter jets and policies of the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency.

She and her daughter were among 13 protesters who were arrested in 2018 as they blocked traffic while opposing family separations outside the ICE facility in Williston.

The events outside the National Guard went very well this year, she said, with passing cars and members of the Guard willing to take flyers.

Joseph Brooks, a spokesman for the Vermont National Guard, said in an email that the residents handing

out flyers exercised their First Amendment right "in an organized and respectful way."

"We have had no incidents or altercations with anyone, and as a result it fosters a productive dialogue. The fact that we can have such a dialogue is a testament to the strong relationship we have with the community and that our fellow Vermonters reflect back to us," Brooks wrote.

Colchester resident Sherri Wormser said she heard about the event and joined because she thinks Vermonters need to present an organized front to prevent illegal military deployments in America or abroad.

"It's still very important for all of us to speak up against the injustices that are occurring here and in bigger cities as well. But I'm also concerned that if it's not stopped, that smaller and smaller towns are going to have the presence of the National Guard," she said.

She said they plan to meet over the weekend "for ongoing resistance and flyering."

Residents were dismayed last week when the Vermont Air National Guard was deployed to the Caribbean, reportedly in support of Trump's military escalation against Venezuela.

Siegel said she found the deployment "abhorrent" and was

concerned about young adults heading into a potentially violent situation during the holiday season.

"I hope that they know their legal rights. We will continue to do what we can to connect with families and friends so that they can share our message to follow their oath and not obey illegal orders," she said.

Wormser said it's "horrifying" for young troops to have to risk their lives abroad for a mission not authorized by Congress.

"We cannot forget the human aspect of all this. Our neighbors may be asked to kill somebody's neighbors 2,000 miles away," she said.

While he wasn't one of the original organizers, Gordon Clark of Burlington said he's glad to be part of the local activism effort.

"We're currently a small group of Vermont citizens who are shocked and appalled by what is going on in our country these days on many different fronts, but on one in particular: the use of our National Guard ... being sent to other American cities and unconstitutional orders and whatnot. So we started an effort," he said.

He learned of the group by word of mouth and hopes more people learn about the opposition effort and join them.

"I would ask [Gov. Phil] Scott what he is doing about the

deployment of the Vermont Air Guard to an apparent forward area of an unsanctioned war in the Caribbean," he said.

The activists' latest effort — a petition — went live on Dec. 1. It calls on Scott to oppose the deployment of the Vermont National Guard to American cities, against American citizens, and in unauthorized military actions abroad. It has 123 signatures as of Wednesday with several comments from Vermont residents who have signed it.

The organizers plan to send the petition to Scott when they have a substantial number of names, said Clark, who's also collected more than 60 signatures on a paper petition he's circulating.

Siegel said the local group has yet to come up with a name, but keeping people engaged in small actions feels motivating "because we know that fascism is, in part, fueled by people giving up hope.

"If we, the people, can do a small thing. If they can create a petition. If they can sign a petition. If they can show up at an open house and hand out flyers. If they can make a flyer," she continued. "Any of these small things that keep people engaged and active will help people continue to do more things like that and help us resist and stop all authoritarianism."

## Man arrested for domestic assault

BRISTOL — Bristol police on Dec. 3 responded to a family fight on West Street and, after investigating, arrested Christopher Prim, 54, of Bristol. They cited Prim for domestic assault.

Between Nov. 23 and Dec. 13, Bristol police completed 51 foot patrols, conducted 28 traffic stops and checked security at Mount Abraham Union High School 20 times, at Bristol Elementary School 21 times and at local businesses 14 times.

Police also processed 21 fingerprint requests, conducted two welfare checks and facilitated the return of one set of keys.

In other recent activity as reported by Chief of Police Bruce Nason last week, Bristol police:

- On Nov. 25 attempted a traffic stop, but the vehicle fled.
- On Nov. 25 received a report of a vehicle crash on Stoney Hill Road.
- On Nov. 26 assisted New York State Police in locating someone who police said left the scene of a minor traffic crash before stopping and exchanging information.
- On Nov. 28 received a report of a theft from an unlocked motor vehicle on Taylor Avenue. An investigation is ongoing.
- On Nov. 29 located a disabled vehicle in Sycamore Park.
- On Nov. 29 took a report of a crash on Upper Notch Road.
- On Nov. 30 responded to a motor vehicle complaint of vehicles

### Bristol

#### Police Log

parked in the road on Lower Notch Road.

- On Dec. 1 received a report of check fraud. An investigation is ongoing.
- On Dec. 1 received a report of a theft on Elm Street, and an investigation is underway.
- On Dec. 2 assisted Vermont State Police on Monkton Road.
- On Dec. 3 checked on a potentially disabled vehicle on Prince Lane. Police determined no assistance was required, as the individual was waiting for someone to arrive with gas and would contact police if they didn't.
- On Dec. 3 assisted a member of the community on Taylor Avenue.
- On Dec. 3 assisted state police on Route 17.
- On Dec. 4 investigated a possible violation of a court order on Main Street.
- On Dec. 4 assisted Bristol Rescue on Monkton Road.
- On Dec. 5 assisted a motorist with a disabled vehicle on Bristol Road.
- On Dec. 5 patrolled the Main Street area during the annual Chocolate Walk event.
- On Dec. 6 attended community

events in Bristol.

• On Dec. 6 received a dog at large that was brought to the Bristol police station. The animal's family was located, and a warning was issued for the dog running at large.

• On Dec. 8 received a report of a threat and found that nothing rose to the level of an offense.

• On Dec. 9 received a dog at large. The owner was located and a citation was issued.

• On Dec. 10 assisted the Bristol Public Works Department with locating the owner of a vehicle on Mountain Terrace that was interfering with snow plowing.

• On Dec. 12 assisted with taking a report of a motor vehicle collision.

• On Dec. 12 helped someone gain entry to their vehicle when access was blocked by another parked car.

• On Dec. 12 received a complaint of a dog barking and creating a nuisance on Munsill Avenue. When police arrived, the dog was no longer causing a nuisance.

• On Dec. 13 attempted to stop a vehicle that was traveling 62 mph on Hewitt Road, which is posted at 35 mph. The officer attempted to stop the vehicle using sirens and lights, but the vehicle increased its speed. The officer ceased the attempt to stop the vehicle, and neither the vehicle nor its operator were identified.

## Vermont State Police Log

ADDISON COUNTY — Vermont State Police followed up on a report of a stolen car last week and ended up jailing a man on Christmas Eve on suspicion he had committed 11 crimes.

On Dec. 23 at around 5:30 p.m.,

troopers logged a report of the theft of a motor vehicle in New Haven. Through investigation they determined that a person of interest was 29-year-old Scott Tower, whom they said had no permanent residence. Troopers recognized that Tower also had an outstanding warrant for his arrest.

Late that night, they found Tower at a residence on John Graham Court in Middlebury, took him to the New Haven barracks and started booking him for numerous charges stemming from the outstanding arrest warrant, as well as the Nov. 25 and Dec. 23 incidents. They cited him for first-degree aggravated domestic assault with a weapon, burglary, assault and robbery, criminal threatening, possession of stolen property, grand larceny for stealing a motor vehicle, negligent driving, driving without the owner's consent (two counts), leaving the scene of an accident and unlawful trespass.

Police lodged Tower at the Marble Valley Regional Correctional Facility with bail set at \$25,000.

In other recent activity, state police:

• On Dec. 20 at 11:42 p.m. stopped a car on Route 7 near Maple Street in Salisbury and ended up citing Alexandra Parks, 37, of Bristol for driving under the influence, second offense.

• On Dec. 21 at around 6:49 p.m. responded to a motor vehicle crash on Middle Road near Columbus Smith Road in Salisbury. Police report that Cameron C. Castelli,

22, of Westport, N.Y., and Mark A. Currier, 38, of Rutland were driving cars in opposite directions on Middle Road when they collided, and Currier sustained suspected minor injuries. Police cited Castelli for driving under the influence and negligent driving.

• On Dec. 24 at 11 minutes after 8 p.m. responded to a one-car crash, with entrapment, on Lovers Lane in Bristol. State police say that 33-year-old Brandon Kulak was driving too fast, was not able to maintain control of his vehicle in a curve and crashed into a tree. The 2004 Hyundai sustained contact damage, and Kulak was transported to UVM Medical Center for treatment for serious injuries. A trooper said criminal charges are pending.

• On Dec. 25 at a little past 6:30 p.m. were notified of a simple assault in Ripton. Troopers determined that Timothy Edwards, 38, described as a transient, had intentionally caused fear and attempted to cause pain to a 67-year-old Ripton man. Police found Edwards still on scene and they took him into custody and cited him for simple assault.

• On Dec. 26 at a little after 10:30 p.m. logged a report of a potential domestic dispute at a Carterville Road home in Bristol. Police say Andrew J. Sumner, 37, of Bristol had caused a household member to fear imminent serious bodily injury. They cited him for domestic assault and violation of conditions of release. He was jailed in Rutland with bail set at \$2,000.

# Deer hunters

(Continued from Page 1A)

for the reporting stations and more successful for hunters than 2024, when only 776 deer were weighed locally combined in the November rifle season, the Youth/Novice weekend, and the October, November and December bow and muzzleloader seasons.

Strictly going by deer weighed in the county, however, it remains below par. Total deer taken from 2016 to 2023 as tracked by the *Independent* range from a low of 1,064 in 2016 to a high of 1,745 in 2020, a year when many hunters were happy to cure pandemic cabin fever by hitting the woods and fields in search of deer.

More and more, however, according to Department of Fish and Wildlife Deer Project Leader Nick Fortin, it's not accurate to measure the deer harvest by weigh station results alone.

During the pandemic year, the department offered deer hunters, except during the bucks-only rifle season, the option of reporting their kills online, using estimated weights for their deer. The option was made permanent in 2021.

Now, Fortin estimated, more than half of archery hunters, maybe 60%, many of whom bring down smaller does, take advantage of that option. And, he said, maybe 40% of muzzleloader hunters also rely on the internet to report their successful hunts.

Basically, another roughly 300 deer could have been reported online after being taken in the county or by county hunters. Fortin did not disagree with the estimate, but said final numbers are not yet available. A total of close to 1,200 deer taken in Addison County would put Addison County close to the average in the past decade:

- In 2025, 1,186 deer estimated

(527 rifle, 63 youth/novice, 142 archery, 154 muzzleloader weighed, plus about 300 online).

- In 2024, 776 deer (484 rifle, 63 youth/novice, 131 archery, 98 muzzleloader).

- In 2023, 1,074 deer (676 rifle, 93 youth/novice, 145 archery, 160 muzzleloader).

- In 2022, 1,141 deer (636 rifle, 89 youth/novice, 234 archery, 182 muzzleloader).

- In 2021, 1,133 deer (590 rifle, 121 youth/novice, 214 archery, 208 muzzleloader).

- In 2020, 1,745 deer (647 rifle, 105 youth/novice, 528 archery, 464 muzzleloader).

- In 2019, 1,324 deer (594 rifle, 142 youth, 258 archery, 330 muzzleloader).

- In 2018, 1,345 deer (571 rifle, 110 youth, 274 archery, 390 muzzleloader).

- In 2017, 1,189 deer (554 rifle, 110 youth, 161 archery, 264 muzzleloader).

- In 2016, 1,064 deer (573 rifle, 94 youth, 206 archery, 191 muzzleloader).

Fortin said the numbers locally are in line with what he is seeing so far around Vermont.

"That tracks with the rest of the state," Fortin said of the *Independent* reports. "It was a pretty average year."

Fish & Wildlife will not have final Vermont harvest counts until after the holidays, but Fortin said a couple trends are clear within the overall numbers.

For one thing, the highest percentage of happy hunters can probably be found in Vermont's northeastern quadrant, according to Fortin.

"The Northeast Kingdom is looking at its best harvest since the 1990s, maybe ever," Fortin said.

But results coming in from a few

areas in southern Vermont showed a decline, he added, noting that even within the average there were local swings from productive to frustrating for hunters.

Also within the average range were the *Independent's* tracking of buck weights from rifle season. This year the average came out to 144.8 pounds.

That compares 145.9 pounds in 2024, and that's 2.3 pounds more than the 2023 number of 143.6 pounds.

During the past decade the rifle-season average hovered around 147 or 148 pounds, but this decade has seen lower averages, including 144.9 pounds in 2022 and 43.7 pounds in 2021.

## SUCCESSFUL HUNTERS

The following hunters took their successes to be weighed at one of the county's seven wildlife reporting stations: Rack 'N Reel in New Haven, Green Mountain Trails End in Bristol, C&S Hunting Supplies in East Middlebury, Jerusalem Corner Country Store in South Starksboro, Lincoln General Store, West Addison General Store, and Backwoods Gun & Tackle in Bridport.

They are listed by towns of kill and deer details: pounds if does, and pounds and points if bucks.

Congratulations to the following:

### BACKWOODS GUNS & TACKLE

Muzzleloader: Taylor Patterson, Shoreham, buck 166 pounds-8 points; Wyatt Stearns, Cornwall, buck 158-5; Bruce Cram, Ripton, buck 156-8, Robert Jennings, Monkton, doe 142; Jake Ambrozaitis, Cornwall, buck 138-6; Jeremy Markwell, Bridport, doe 135; Justin Seguin, Cornwall, doe 133; Steven Bourgeois, Shoreham, doe 132, and Devin Russell, Shoreham, doe 131.

Also, Tyler Tatro, Whiting, doe 129; Steve Myrick Shoreham, doe 127; Derek Raymond, Brandon, buck 126-7; Adam Broughton, Bridport, doe 125; Rayce Burnham, Shoreham, doe 122 and doe 130; Philip Cyr, Bridport, doe 119; Brent Warren, Cornwall, doe 118; Shawn Gero, Cornwall, doe 115; and Eric Manning, Shoreham, doe 115.

Also, Mark Deering, Bridport, doe 114; Mark Seguin, Cornwall, doe 113; Kohlton Flemings, Addison, doe 112; Stephen Myrick, Shoreham, doe 100; Karl Kaufman, Cornwall, doe 100; Stephen Rheume, Cornwall, doe 94; Robert Deyette, Bridport, doe 94; Kenneth Bell, Addison, doe 73; and Lee Terrier, Cornell, doe 68.

### W. ADDISON GENERAL STORE

Muzzleloader: Joey Gould, Addison, doe 100; Adam Thomann, Addison, doe 110; Dakota Parker, Ripton, buck 122-2; and Steven Whitney, Addison, doe 120.

### LINCOLN GENERAL STORE

Muzzleloader: Dennis Filion, Salisbury, buck 107-9; Justin Bolduc, Lincoln, buck 99-1; Roy Catella, Waitsfield, doe 115; Carter Antos-Ketcham, doe 111; Roland Haskins, Huntington, doe 110; Larry Ducharme, Huntington, buck 135-4; Robert Jimmo, Lincoln, 155-5; Herbert Glidden, Addison, buck 117-4; Christopher Jerome, Lincoln, buck 115-3; and Peter Moyer,



DYLAN DISORDA OF Salisbury got this nice 142-pound, 6-point buck early in the season.

Photo by Chris Carhart

Lincoln, 89-0.

### JERUSALEM COUNTRY STORE

Muzzleloader: Larry Ducharme, Huntington, doe 141; Robert Wener, Ripton, doe 127; Larry Haskins, Huntington, doe 124 and doe 118; Philip Baron, Starksboro, doe 120; Wesley Allen, Starksboro, doe 118; Michael Arruza, Huntington, doe 115; Victor Atkins, Lincoln, buck 106-5; Bruce Rublee, Richmond, doe 104; William Fontaine, Lincoln, doe 104; Patrick Barrett, Duxbury, doe 102; and Cody Corse, Starksboro, female 60.

### C & S HUNTING SUPPLIES

Muzzleloader: Joseph Whitley, Middlebury, buck 127-6; Scott Jarvis, New Haven, doe 152; Justin Stone, New Haven, doe 123; and Cody Warner, Middlebury, doe 127.

### GREEN MT. TRAILS END

Archery: David Patterson, Lincoln, doe 114.

Muzzleloader: Kaiden Pelland, Bristol, buck 120-7, and Travis Guillemette, Monkton, doe 104.

### RACK 'N REEL

Archery: Richard Lattrell, New Haven, doe 107; and Kyle Burroughs, Starksboro, doe 105.

Muzzleloader: Miles Shorey, Ferrisburgh, buck 176-6 and doe 142; Kevin Kayhart, Waltham, buck 168-8; Matthew Filion, Salisbury, buck 162-8; Daniel Bromley, Starksboro, buck 161-8; George Devoid, Salisbury, buck 160-8; Wendy Garrow,

Starksboro, buck 150-8; Ben Cayer, Starksboro, 149-7.

Also, Sterling Pelsue, Hinesburg, 149-7; Charles Peet, Huntington, 48-5; Drake Felkl, Cornwall, 142-10; Rheel Gevry, Hinesburg, doe 141; Theodore Palmer, Huntington, buck 138-4; Rheel Gevry, Addison, buck 138-7; Miles Shorey, Ferrisburgh, doe 136; Matt Leonard, Ferrisburgh, doe 134; Elwood Martin, Sandgate, buck 133-7; Devin Dwire, Salisbury, doe 133; and Justin Maheu, Cornwall, buck 132-6.

Also, Dwayne Roberts, Bridport, doe 132; Brady Larocque, Salisbury, doe 130; Jody Conant, Weybridge, doe 129; Robert Rougier, Weybridge, doe 127; Jon Boise, Monkton, doe 127; Caleb Stearns, Ferrisburgh, doe 126; Richard Packard, Monkton, doe 126; Michael Holler, Addison, doe 126; David Gagnon, New Haven, doe 123; Mark Torrey, Addison, doe 123; Calvin Kennett, Dorset, doe 122; and Timothy Comes, Leicester, doe 122.

Also, Sonda Alexander, Cornwall, doe 121; Kyle Clark, Ferrisburgh, doe 120; Randy Butler, Middlebury, doe 120; Darcy Spear, Ferrisburgh, doe 120; Mark Mashia, Hinesburg, doe 119; Leon Demers, New Haven, doe 119; George Tucker, Bridport, doe 118; Paul Jerome, Lincoln, Doe 118; Kean McCullough, New Haven, doe 116; Jacob Lafrance, Ferrisburgh, doe 115; Jillian Nop,

Ripton, doe 115; and Roland Stetson, New Haven, doe 114.

Also, Dwayne Roberts, Waltham, doe 113; Tucker Davis, New Haven, doe 111; Richard Weston, Huntington, doe 110; Randy Butler, New Haven, doe 110; Michael Jerome, Lincoln, doe 110; Dwayne Roberts, Addison, doe 110; Dennis Smith, Middlebury, buck 110-6; Adam Crary, Monkton, doe 110; Michael Hurlburt, Monkton, buck 109-4; Colin Jennings, New Haven, buck 108-4; and Joshua Fitzgerald, Bristol, doe 108.

Also, Dean Ouellette, Weybridge, doe 108; John Pickering, New Haven, buck 108-6; Thomas Lathrop, Starksboro, doe 107; Kyle Giroux, Bristol, doe 106; David Gagnon, New Haven, doe 105; Silas Ranney, Weybridge, doe 104; Donald Lathrop, Bristol, doe 103; Eamon Smith, Weybridge, buck 102-3; Hayden Berard, Hinesburg, doe 101; Stephen Davis, New Haven, doe 101; and Joshua Hurlburt Monkton, doe 100.

Also, Dustin Tierney, Addison, doe 100; Robert Armstrong, Starksboro, doe 99; Klancy Dunbar, Bridport, doe 99; Philip Hardway, Addison, doe 98; Dylan Stearns, Ferrisburgh, doe 96; Cassidy Roorda, New Haven, doe 91; Brian Landry, Starksboro, doe 86; David Gagnon, New Haven, male 83; John Vaudrien, Weybridge, does 82 and 64; and David Parker, Monkton, doe 59.



AUSTIN LAFAYETTE, A Lincoln resident, had this 201-pound, 9-point buck weighed at the Lincoln General Store after shooting it in Huntington. It was one of the largest deer weighed in Addison County in any season in 2025.

Photo courtesy of Lincoln General Store

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# Vt. students

(Continued from Page 1A) to have those conversations and community,” Lentzner said.

## GROWING INITIATIVES

The network visited over 30 classrooms through The Book Project. In the years since then, students’ efforts have included writing pieces of legislation focused on anti-racism in education, testifying on legislation and hosting events with hundreds of students. In 2023, the network surveyed students on their experiences with racism in school, which led to the “Let Me Be Great Campaign,” through which the network visited schools to offer workshops and spoke with school boards about race and the results of the 2023 survey.

“VSARN (has) created a following from word of mouth and continuing to speak as youth and speak up as youth, and I think that’s really special,” said Lydia Beaulieu, a Milton High School

graduate and board president for VSARN.

Around 40-50 students are currently connected to the organization, with several high school and college students from Vermont serving in board, staff and student representative positions. Participants have come together for a variety of in-person activities over the years, including tabling at events and caucuses that offer a space to discuss policy, organizing opportunities and other topics.

The network also hosted an in-person meeting this past summer at The Teen Center in Middlebury to discuss past work and goals for the future.

“It was a really nice chance to be together,” Lentzner said.

Gruber said the organization looks to bring members together for more in-person events like the meeting in Middlebury.

“Generally we try to meet once a year in person at least if we’re

going to be starting new projects moving forward because it’s a nice way to really see who’s in the group and talk more amongst each other,” Gruber said.

VSARN members said such in-person events have been among their favorite parts of working with the organization.

“They’re really fun, but also at the same time they’re important,” said Bithania, a junior at CVU. “We learn stuff, we get stuff done, and we reach people in a way that’s not boring, and it’s

not just sitting down and talking because I feel like that doesn’t get to people.”

Other successes for VSARN members have included the organizing work behind various events and initiatives, as well as the building of relationships with students and community members.

“I also think another part that’s important to me is the education part,” said Nicole, a VSARN board member and student at CVU and the Community College of Vermont. “I’ve learned a lot through VSARN, (and) ... while we’re with the community.”

## WORK AHEAD

VSARN members said some of the changes they’re hoping to see include more ethnic studies in Vermont schools.

“In my school we’ve been trying to get a class for that, but also not as just a class,” Bithania said. “It’s better to teach that in the normal curriculum... That’s one thing that I know my Racial Alliance Committee (at CVU) has been trying to work on.”

Nicole said she’d like to find a way to encourage more students to come together.

“I feel like with high schoolers it’s kind of hard because... they might not want to do it because it’s not cool or whatever, just scared to do it in a way,” she explained.

Lentzner noted several ongoing initiatives centered around ethnic studies in curriculum and related policy, though such efforts face resistance.

“How can we overcome that fear by coming together and showing that we’re stronger if we’re learning history together,

our true history, if we’re having these dialogues and building those connections with each other,” she said of the task at hand. “One of the powers of having young people

*“One of the powers of having young people do this work is that it’s coming directly from the people who are in the school system.”*

— Addie Lentzner



HIGH SCHOOL AND college students from around Vermont gather for an in-person event organized by the Vermont Student Anti-Racism Network. The student-run organization is working toward anti-racist education and communities in Vermont through a variety of initiatives.

Photo courtesy of Addie Lentzner

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## By the way

(Continued from Page 1A) Vermont Statehouse featuring Sanders, Welch, and U.S. Rep. Becca Balint.

The nonprofit organization Age Well is seeking volunteers to visit with and help seniors in their homes throughout Addison County. You can support older Vermonters by giving your time in your community for any of the following: friendly visits, grocery shopping, running errands, helping with medical appointments, organizing, bill paying, giving respite to caregivers, delivering Meals on Wheels, doing minor home repairs, and more. How often you help is based on your availability — it can vary from two to three hours one day a week, or two days a month (any day Monday through Friday, between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m.). Many volunteers tell us they get far more out of helping than they give. Please contact the Age Well Volunteer Department at 802-662-5249 or at [volunteer@agewellvt.org](mailto:volunteer@agewellvt.org) to learn more or sign up.

Temperatures have dropped and heating bills have started to rise. Please help make sure that our low-income neighbors know about available assistance. The Vermont Department for Children & Families and the state’s Seasonal Fuel Assistance program can help pay some of heat and energy bills, whether the family in question is a renter or homeowner. If you are having trouble paying your winter energy bills — and believe you might also qualify for food

subsidies — check out [tinyurl.com/yxxjbfw6](http://tinyurl.com/yxxjbfw6).

The nonprofit literacy program Everybody Wins Vermont is looking to grow its mentoring program at Bridport Central School for this year and next year. The school currently has 15 mentoring pairs, but a handful of students are still waiting for a mentor. The addition to BCS of Shoreham Elementary School students will continue to increase the need for willing mentors to make a positive impact on children’s lives. Committing just one hour each week can make a difference in a young child’s life. Learn more about Everybody Wins Vermont at [everybodywinsvermont.org](http://everybodywinsvermont.org). To learn more about the program at BCS contact Chris Allen at [bridport@everybodywinsvermont.org](mailto:bridport@everybodywinsvermont.org), or at 802-999-6874.

Average gasoline prices in Vermont have fallen 1.3 cents per gallon during the past week to \$3.05 per gallon, according to GasBuddy’s survey of 626 stations. Prices are 8 cents per gallon lower than a month ago and 3.8 cents lower than a year ago. According to GasBuddy, the cheapest station in Vermont sold at \$2.59 per gallon earlier this week and the most expensive at \$3.29. Meanwhile, the national average price has fallen 4 cents per gallon during the past week to \$2.75. The national average is down 22.6 cents from a month ago and stands 22.4 cents lower than a year ago.

**email us:** You can reach us at [news@addisonindependent.com](mailto:news@addisonindependent.com)

## Highlights of the 37<sup>th</sup> Annual Middlebury Christmas Bird Count

By JIM ANDREWS

This year 49 field birders and 18 observers at 13 feeders identified 12,627 birds of 67 species during our Middlebury Christmas Bird Count on Sunday, Dec. 14. Our total of 67 species is our average over the last 37 years of our count. Our highest total number of species found since 1989 was 80 species found in 2001. The 12,627 individual birds seen, however, was the lowest total since 1993. The average number of birds seen during a count is 17,045.

We survey a 15-mile-diameter count circle centered on the Lemon Fair in eastern Bridport and covering from the A & W Root Beer stand on the east to New York State on the west and from Snake Mt. on the north to Richville Dam on the south. The Middlebury count is one of over 2,400 held throughout North and Central America.

Once again this year, Rosie's Restaurant in Middlebury graciously let us in one hour before their official opening time for our organizational breakfast at 6 AM. Owl-ers started the day in the predawn blackness, and field birders headed out at first light for a full day of birding. Eighteen others who lived within our count circle watched their feeders off and on during the day and reported what they saw.

We held our post-count compilation potluck at the home of Kris and Jim Andrews in Salisbury. Those who did not attend emailed in their results. Additional report forms from feeder-watchers came in over the next few days by mail. The complete results of our count have been entered online and made available for casual browsing or scientific study at the National Audubon Christmas Bird Count website. Those results are available at ([www.audubon.org/conservation/science/christmas-bird-count](http://www.audubon.org/conservation/science/christmas-bird-count)).

One reason for our only average species count this year was that still water within the count circle was

almost entirely frozen. All small bodies of water, the southern end of Lake Champlain, and even most of Otter Creek were iced over. When that happens, many of the ducks and other water-related birds either move south to the Atlantic coast or move just a few miles north into the main body of Lake Champlain. As a result, we located only 8 of the 44 water-related species found during our count over its history. This is four below our average of 12 water-related species.

Despite the lack of open water, our teams managed to find three Great Blue Herons, four Hooded Mergansers, eight Common Mergansers, and two Belted Kingfishers in or near the small pockets of remaining open water. There are also some waterfowl that like to graze in open fields. Consequently, even with very little open water, the teams reported 1,544 Canada Geese, 11 Mallards, and two Black Ducks still feeding in fields or flying over our valley. Sadly, none of our observers were able to find any lingering Snow Geese.

The low number of northern songbird migrants was the second major factor keeping our species count low. Many northern migrants do not come south into our valley



**SOME SPECIES WERE not found in abundance during the Christmas Bird Count, like this singular Peregrine Falcon sighted by a team on Dec. 14.**

Photo by Amy Earl

if they can find food further north, and that appeared to be the case this year. Still, our teams managed to find four of the twelve northern visitors. They reported 466 Snow Buntings (count average is 329), four Lapland Longspurs, and 523 Horned Larks (count average is 343). In addition, one of our field teams found a tree with fruit that had attracted 40 Evening Grosbeaks. Four other Evening Grosbeaks were found by other field teams, bringing our total for this species to 44. This is the greatest number of Evening Grosbeaks seen on our count since 1989. Back in the 1960's, this was a common feeder bird in the east. Other northern visitors, such as redpolls, crossbills, siskins, Bohemian Waxwings, and Pine Grosbeaks, were not found at all.

Field teams found three of the seven northern predators that occasionally visit our valley in winter. These were a single Northern Shrike, a single Short-eared Owl, and a single Saw-whet Owl. Although the Saw-whet Owl could have been a local resident, these three species are the northern predators that visit our valley most often in the winter. Less common winter predators, such as Snowy Owls, were not found at all.

Looking at our past data to figure out which species accounted for the declines in total numbers of birds, the complete lack of Snow Geese (400 below average), the exceptionally low numbers of European Starlings (1,600 below average), American Crows (800 below average), Rock Pigeons (700 below average), House Sparrows (500 below average),



**A TEAM DOING the Christmas Bird Count in Addison County spotted this tree with fruit that had attracted 40 Evening Grosbeaks.**

Photo by Amy Earl

American Robins (500 below average), Mourning Doves (200 below average), and American Tree Sparrows (200 below average) explain most of the low total.

Numbers of Red-tailed Hawks (55, average 80), Rough-legged Hawks (seven, average 25), and Northern Harriers (two, average 15) were all low. Perhaps the early snows drove them further south to open ground.

On the other hand, our total of 1,142 Dark-eyed Juncos is almost three times our count average of 337 and the most we have ever tallied on our Middlebury count. Our total count of 284 Northern Cardinals was also well above our count average of 158.

Although seven Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers may not sound exceptional, they were not found at all during the first twenty years of our count, and these seven set a new count record. Most of our sapsuckers migrate south in the winter, but an increasing number now stay. It appears that more of our sparrows are also overwintering here. For only the second time in our count, a Fox Sparrow was found. The team of Erin Talmage & Kris and Birch Andrews spotted the Fox Sparrow in a bush along Lapham Bay Road in Shoreham. Two overwintering Swamp Sparrows seen by the same team tied the all-time high for that species, and the team of Carol Ramsayer, Jori & Josephine Jacobeit, & Criag Zondag spotted

a single Chipping Sparrow. This species was first seen during our count in 2017, and since then, it has been sighted during four counts.

A Yellow-throated Warbler was sighted for the first time ever during our count. This species breeds in the southeastern US and usually spends the winter in Florida, Mexico, and the Caribbean. Back in 2018, one had been seen in our circle during count week (count week includes the three days before and after our count), but it was not found on our count day. This year, Mary Garofono sent us photos of one visiting her feeder in Bridport on count day.

In addition to the species mentioned above, species found by only one team were the pair of Black Ducks found by the team of Anna & Jen Megyesi, and Ethan Fenn; the single Short-eared and Saw-whet Owls found by the owling team of Kira and Mike Winslow; a Peregrine Falcon sighted by the team of Ellyn Montgomery and Amy Earl; two Belted Kingfishers and a Merlin found by Kris Andrews and Erin Talmage; two Winter Wrens, a Golden-crowned Kinglet, four Hooded Mergansers and six Common Mergansers found by the team of Chris & Preston Turner, Lyn DuMoulin, & Francesca, Joe, and Sara Nocito; the single Northern Shrike mentioned above found by Mike & Kira Winslow, and Ben Cowie-Haskell; four Brown Headed Cowbirds seen by

Jori and Josephine Jacobeit, Carol Ramsayer, and Craig Zondag; and two Purple Finches seen at the feeder of Sue and Scott Douglas.

At our preliminary compilation dinner the evening of the count, the field teams decide which bird was the best find of the day by any of the field team members. It has become a tradition to award the team that found the winning bird with a fanciful cowbird carved by Gary Starr. This year, the field teams decided that the team of Kris and Birch Andrews, and Erin Talmage should get the 2025 Cowbird Award for finding the Fox Sparrow.

A Christmas Bird Count is a team effort between daytime and nighttime field teams and feeder watchers. Although the number of individuals on our field teams is adequate for our count circle, the number of people watching their feeders should be increased. We need additional people who live within the count circle, can identify the birds they are seeing, and are interested in reporting what they see at their feeders. We would also love to have more young birders join our field teams. Anyone under 40 looks young to most of us. If you are interested in reporting your feeder birds or participating on a field team next year, contact Jim or Kris Andrews at 802-352-4734 or [jandrews@vtherpatlas.org](mailto:jandrews@vtherpatlas.org). Thanks again to all the volunteers and landowners.

## ACSD budget

(Continued from Page 1A)

The ACSD board will finalize the budget proposal on Jan. 12 and will have a lot of data to consider — including preliminary numbers on how the proposal will affect property tax rates in each of the seven towns (see below).

Major budget adjustments seem unlikely, based on the ACSD board's two-hour review of the latest draft on Dec. 22. Board members had set a goal of holding the education spending increase at 3% or less, and the Dec. 22 draft of the budget does that.

But a majority of board members served notice they'll push to add roughly \$35,000 to the plan when they reconvene on Jan. 12. That sum would restore a 0.3 full-time-equivalent school nurse position that was among a list of 18 position reductions (adding up to 12.1 FTEs) reflected in the FY27 spending plan.

District administrators believe the nursing coverage could be safely removed given Ripton and Shoreham elementary schools won't be offering K-5 programming next year. As previously reported by the *Independent*, the ACSD board closed Ripton Elementary last June due to declining enrollment and elected to merge the Shoreham/Bridport K-5 student body at Bridport Central School beginning this fall. Shoreham Elementary will host a new district PreK program.

Though tiny in comparison to the overall \$53 million budget, the true cost of shedding 0.3 FTE in school nurse time would be far greater than the \$35,000 number, according to three ACSD RNs who addressed the board on Dec. 22. The nurses countered that Ripton and Shoreham students are simply being redistributed to other ACSD schools and still need access to

medical services. Some ACSD nurses must deliver services to multiple schools on different days.

"The needs of our school communities are vast and complicated and school nurses are essential to supporting the overall wellness of our students, families and staff," said Kelly McGovern, ACSD nurse leader and school nurse at Middlebury Union High School.

"All of our schools have students with chronic health conditions requiring nursing interventions on a daily basis," McGovern added. "School nurses also manage and administer daily medications to students for conditions that can affect learning such as ADHD, anxiety and depression. The school nurse is often the first line of recognizing when a student may be struggling with an emotional or mental health condition as they may present to the nurse with somatic complaints such as a headache or stomach ache."

Dani Girard is ACSD's designated nurse for the Shoreham, Bridport and Weybridge schools. Her duties include documenting a confidential electronic health record for every student health office visit, medication administration, health screenings and for case management. During the 2024-2025 academic year, Girard logged 975 health record entries for Weybridge, 1,413 for Bridport and 1,460 for Shoreham. She has also responded to 16 health emergencies at the schools during the past five years.

What if a school nurse isn't onsite and a student needs care?

Girard told the board the State Board of Nursing mandates that delegation of care to a "health designee" can only occur if a nurse is accessible and provides

supervision.

"If a nurse is only working three or four days a week, when there is no nurse supervision on the days the nurse is not working, a health designee cannot provide care to students," she said.

Haysal Jones is nurse for Salisbury, Ripton, and Cornwall schools, as well as president of the Vermont State School Nurses' Association.

She noted the National Association of School Nurses considers having at least one fulltime school nurse in each building as "best practice." For the current school year, ACSD supplies fulltime school nurses at three of its nine campuses, and splits the six rural elementary schools between two school nurses — which caps overall on-campus nursing service to 0.5 FTE or less.

As such, Jones said ACSD is already not meeting "best practice."

"To cut nursing care even further is regressive, not progressive, and moves away from best practice," Jones told the board. "Emergency situations occur in all school buildings, regardless of student enrollment numbers. Without access to a school nurse on campus or, at a minimum, available for verbal consultation, equity does not exist, and students suffer."

**REDUCING & ADDING JOBS**

The 0.3 FTE in nursing is among 12.1 FTEs that ACSD budget planners are proposing to

reduce for FY27. Many of those jobs are currently either vacant, or soon will be, due to departures or retirements. Those full- and part-time positions are in the categories of administrative assistant; art, music, PE and classroom educator; nursing; alternative education; math and literacy instruction; custodial; and school nutrition.

At the same time, the district is proposing to redirect roughly \$500,000 of those savings into academic supports. In all, budget planners are pitching nine new FTE positions, including a PreK administrator, PreK teacher, two PreK paraeducators, a Middlebury Union High School literacy interventionist, K-5 interventionist (Salisbury), a "Universal Design instructional specialist," a driving instructor, and two "specialized services" administrative assistants.

Several board members were clearly swayed by the nurses' call to preserve current staffing levels. "I think there are some things that are important not to think of as ratios," board member Steve Cash said. Fellow board member Ellen Whelan-Wuest concurred. "I'd say student services is an area of education that is meant to allow for more resources based on what individual kids need, and nursing feels like it falls into that category," she said. "I feel we should not be cutting any nursing from this budget."

Board member Steve Orzech

*"The school nurse is often the first line of recognizing when a student may be struggling with an emotional or mental health condition as they may present to the nurse with somatic complaints such as a headache or stomach ache."*

— Kelly McGovern

said he was inclined to go with the central office's recommendation.

"I do support nursing, but I think we are treading on dangerous ground when we come in and try to micromanage the budget," he said.

Members acknowledged not being able to offer district voters much in tangible FY27 cost savings out of operating five — instead of seven — K-5 schools next year.

"Is there a long-term gameplan where we continue to provide good education for students without closing buildings?" board member Ron Makleff asked.

"If you close buildings and only see so much savings, where does that leave us?" Cash said.

Board member Mary Heather Noble noted that since the majority of the budget is steeped in salaries and benefits, major savings aren't likely to come without workforce reductions. And the board — for now — has chosen to reinvest, rather than cut. She said she believes the district will eventually realize substantial savings as it achieves greater economies of scale in fewer buildings, and as its current economic investments in raising academic performance among all students becomes more successful.

"We are seeing some reductions, but not to the degree that one might expect. We've made a conscious decision as a board to reinvest in equity efforts ... but also target support to students that really need it," Noble said.

**TAX IMPACT**

The current FY27 budget draft calls for a 2.15% bump (3 cents) in the district's current education property tax rate of \$1.62. But the actual tax rates in the seven ACSD-member towns will vary, because their different common levels of appraisal (CLA). CLAs — as determined by town-by-town

analyses of their real estate sales by the Vermont Department of Taxes — compare towns' property tax assessments to fair market value. Ratios created with that study are then used to adjust school tax rates upwards or downwards to equalize tax collection among all Vermont municipalities.

Recent real estate trends have created CLA imbalances in all ACSD towns, and the more a community's CLA is less than 100%, the higher their education property tax rates are pushed upward at budget time.

Here are the latest FY27 education property tax estimates (per \$100 in property value) for each of the seven ACSD towns, based on the \$53 million budget proposal:

- Bridport: \$1.17, which would be up 8 cents (8%) compared to this year's rate of \$1.09.

- Cornwall: \$1.06, which would be down 95 cents (47%) compared to this year's rate of \$2.02.

- Middlebury: \$1.67, which would be up 2 cents (1%) compared to this year's rate of \$1.65.

- Ripton: \$1.15, which would be down 76 cents (40%) compared to this year's rate of \$1.91.

- Salisbury: \$1.30, which would be up 10 cents (9%) compared to this year's rate of \$1.20.

- Shoreham: \$1.11, which would be up 9 cents (9%) compared to this year's rate of \$1.10.

- Weybridge: \$1.11, which would be down by a rounded amount of 65 cents (9%) compared to this year's rate of \$1.77.

It should be noted the above figures don't reflect municipal taxes, and that two-thirds of Vermonters pay their school taxes based on household income.

John Flowers is at [johnf@addisonindependent.com](mailto:johnf@addisonindependent.com).



# THANK YOU!

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As we embrace the joy and optimism inspired by the holiday season, we're reminded of the importance of giving back and supporting what matters most. At *The Addison Independent*, our mission to provide high-quality local news continues. We rely on support from readers through **subscriptions** and newsstand sales; **advertising** and marketing revenue; and **donations** through our ADDY ALL-STAR program and new nonprofit The Addison Independent Trust. All three legs are critical for the support and stability of our operation.

Since launching the ADDY ALL-STAR program in 2024, we have received more than 700 generous donations from nearly 300 individuals, totaling more than \$65,000 in support of *The Addison Independent* — your weekly newspaper serving the 23 vibrant communities in Addison County.

Our next goal is to reach **500 ADDY ALL-STARS**. These grassroots donations prove how much The Addy Indy means to readers and individuals that value our high quality local journalism and understand the role it plays in shaping our community and lives. This season of giving, please consider becoming a sustaining member yourself — or make it a thoughtful gift for your loved ones.

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# SPORTS

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## Sports BRIEFS

### Girls' hockey takes first loss

COLCHESTER — Division 1 Burlington/Colchester on Dec. 22 dealt the Middlebury Union High School girls' hockey team its first loss of the season, 8-0.

After a scoreless first period, the SeaLakers scored four goals in each of the next two periods. Taylor Davidson led the home team with three goals, and Addi Fernandez scored twice and assisted a goal. SeaLaker goalie Logan Jewett made eight saves.

Tiger goalie Heaven Ross was busier, making 43 saves as MUHS dropped to 2-1.

The Tigers were set to host U-32 on Monday after the early holiday deadline for this issue.

### Tiger boys fall to SBHS

SOUTH BURLINGTON — Host South Burlington dealt the Middlebury Union High School boys' hockey team a 4-0 setback on Dec. 22.

Christian Butler led the Wolves with a pair of goals, and SBHS goalie Quincy Cover made 11 saves.

Tiger goalie TJ Baron made 35 saves as MUHS dropped to 2-2.

The Tigers were set to host North Country on Monday and Woodstock on Tuesday after the early holiday deadline for this issue.



## Score BOARD

### HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS

#### Girls' basketball

12/22 Fair Haven vs Mt Abe.....30-22  
12/23 Enosburg at MUHS.....Postponed  
12/23 VUHS vs Williamstown.....74-40

#### Boys' basketball

12/22 S Burlington vs MUHS.....50-39  
12/23 Mt Abe at Harwood.....Postponed  
12/27 Rice vs MUHS.....87-56  
12/27 Mt Abe vs OV.....67-37  
12/27 VUHS vs Spaulding.....66-44  
12/29 Hazen at VUHS.....Postponed  
12/30 Randolph at Mt Abe.....Late

#### Boys' Hockey

12/22 S Burlington vs MUHS.....4-0  
12/29 N. Country at MUHS.....Late  
12/30 Woodstock at MUHS.....Late

#### Girls' Hockey

12/22 BHS/Colchester vs MUHS.....8-0  
12/29 U3-2 at MUHS.....Late

### COLLEGE SPORTS

#### Women's Basketball

12/29 Midd at Puget Sound.....Late  
**Men's Basketball**  
Tourney in Brooklyn\*

12/28 Wheaton vs Midd.....82-78  
12/29 Midd vs TBD.....Late\*

## Schedule

### HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS

#### Girls' basketball

1/2 VUHS at Blue Mt..... 7 PM  
1/2 OV at MUHS..... 7 PM  
1/5 Harwood at MUHS..... 7 PM  
1/5 Mt Abe at VUHS..... 7 PM  
1/7 Milton at Mt Abe..... 7 PM  
1/7 MUHS at Missisquoi..... 7 PM  
1/7 Stowe at VUHS..... 7 PM  
1/10 Mt Abe at MUHS..... 12:30 PM

#### Boys' basketball

1/2 Fair Haven at Mt Abe..... 7 PM  
1/5 Harwood at MUHS..... 7 PM  
1/5 Mt Abe at VUHS..... 7 PM

(See Schedule, Page 2B)



MOUNT ABE SOPHOMORE guard Noah Germon drives the lane during the Eagle boys' basketball team's Saturday home game vs. Otter Valley.

Independent photo/Steve James



MOUNT ABE JUNIOR guard Jaran Griffin goes up for a layup while Otter Valley senior Brody Lathrop defends. during the boys' basketball game in Bristol on Saturday.

Independent photo/Steve James

## Eagle boys' basketball team soars past the Otters

BRISTOL — The Mount Abraham Union High School boys' basketball team came into Saturday's home game vs. Otter Valley probably needing a win after an 0-3 start.

And they earned one by pulling away for a convincing 67-37 decision over an OV team that had played well in splitting its first two games.

The Eagles, who improved to 1-3, fell behind by 5-0 in the first 3:10, a stretch in which they turned the ball over several times. But then they righted the ship, played strong man-to-man defense, more than held their own on the boards, and started to hit their shots.

Mount Abe Coach Martin Clark said his team gelled after its rocky first few minutes.

"We're young, and we've been working through a lot of young-player mistakes," Clark said. "We've shown spurts of being able to play together. And we came out today and threw the ball away I think six times in a hurry. And then we settled down and played basketball the rest of the game."

Clark pointed to the Eagles' defense and rebounding, critical areas for a team not blessed with size.

"That's really a big key, defensively, to continue to get better. We're not a big team. We're small, and we matched up pretty well with Otter Valley," Clark said. "We've been working hard in practice on position on rebounding, and we're hoping that it just continues."

OV Coach Mike Stark said he believed his Otters didn't handle holiday scheduling well. The Otters came to Bristol with a 1-1 record consisting of a five-point loss at a strong Fair Haven team and a big win at Proctor, and they probably didn't expect a 30-point loss.

"I chalk this up to vacation, loss of routine, loss of structure, and too much time off," Stark said. "We just didn't execute the way I know we're capable of. It's as simple as that. We just didn't show up. I don't like breaks because kids are up too late."

He also credited the Eagles. "Hats off to Mount Abe. They outworked us in every single aspect. They had more boards than us. They beat us to 50-50 balls. They just wanted it," Stark said. "I think we were looking at past successes, and thinking last year

we beat them easy. Well, it's a new year, guys."

Despite Mount Abe's slow start, the score was knotted at 7-7 after one period as four Eagles scored in the quarter and their man defense began to frustrate the Otters.

(See Eagles vs Otters, Page 3B)



MOUNT ABE SOPHOMORE Waydon Cherington draws a blocking foul as he attacks the basket for two points during the Eagle basketball team's Saturday home game vs. the Otters.

Independent photo/Steve James

## Boys' hoop: VUHS wins, Tigers bested in two games

By ANDY KIRKALDY  
ADDISON COUNTY — Vergennes won on the road, while Middlebury lost at home in recent local high school boys' basketball action.

Also, Mount Abraham entertained Otter Valley on Saturday; see story on Page 1B.

**COMMODORES**  
On this past Saturday VUHS rolled past host Spaulding, 66-44. Balanced scoring boosted the Commodores, who were led by **Cohen Howell** with 11 points and **Ryker Mosehauer** with 10 points.

The Commodores improved to 2-2 heading into a Tuesday home game vs. Hazen. That game was postponed.

#### TIGERS

On Dec. 22 the Tigers lost at

D-1 South Burlington, 50-39. Oli Avdibegovic and Connor Perrin led a balanced Wolf attack with 12 points apiece. **Cooke Riney** scored a game-high 16 for Middlebury.

On Saturday visiting Rice entertained Otter Valley with an 87-56 victory at MUHS. Pascal Munezero (29 points) and Moses Pial (19 points) led the Green Knights.

**Riney** tossed in 25 points, and **Colin Chicoine** added 11 points as the Tigers dropped to 0-4.

#### EAGLES

The Eagles' Dec. 23 game at Harwood was postponed.

The Eagles were scheduled to play Randolph on Tuesday after the early holiday deadline for this issue.

## Girls' hoop: VUHS wins, Eagles fall

By ANDY KIRKALDY  
ADDISON COUNTY — In limited recent local high school girls' basketball play, Vergennes won big on the road, while Mount Abraham came up short for a second time against Fair Haven, but with a better effort.

Middlebury's Dec. 23 home game vs. Enosburg was postponed due to poor weather. No make-up date was immediately announced.

**COMMODORES**  
The Commodores rolled to a 74-40 victory at Williamstown on Dec. 23. VUHS led by 16-14 at the end of the first quarter, 31-20 at the half, and pulled away as the third and fourth quarters wore on.

**Ava Francis** led the Commodores' balanced scoring effort with 18 points, and **Ashtin Stearns** (15 points) and **Ayla Kittredge** (10 points) also reached double figures. **Faith McCallister**, **Amelia Giroux**,

**Summer Gosluga** and **Georgia Krause** chipped in key baskets while the game was still close as the Commodores improved to 2-1.

Julia French and Hannah Spencer each put up 11 points for Williamstown.

#### EAGLES

On Dec. 22 the Eagles played a stronger game in a rematch with Fair Haven than they had in a home loss; this time they came up short in the Slaters' gym, 30-22, after losing by 32 points at home.

The Eagles used a deliberate offense and strong defense to slow down the Slaters, and cut their 17-5 halftime lead to eight points entering the fourth quarter, but could come no closer. The win gave the Slaters the championship of their annual holiday tournament; they also

defeated Otter Valley in the opening round.

The first game of the evening saw Burr and Burton Academy hold back Otter Valley 42-35.

Fair Haven's **Audrey Perry** was named to the tournament MVP, and Eagle **Genevieve Forand** was named to the All-Tournament Team.



# Enjoy both reading and the outdoors by being attentive

In at least one important way, reading is like outdoor sports. Both of these depend on, reward, and help to foster attentiveness.

I speak particularly of my own favorite ways to spend time outdoors, which include fishing, canoeing, biking, hiking, camping, Nordic skiing and birding — though I'm sure the comment applies to other outdoor activities. Consider hiking, canoeing, biking and Nordic skiing — all of which involve moving through the landscape under your own power. Simply getting someplace generally isn't the point. If it was, you'd likely be driving.

Although exercise is certainly one possible benefit, the fact that

you go outside rather than just burning calories on a treadmill suggests that a significant motivation for all of these is the place itself. As you move through that landscape, the world about you is continually changing, constantly bringing into focus new views and new creatures. Even a single step in the woods can reveal new scenes. Every tree is different. Not just locust from oak from beech from hemlock, but every individual maple from every other maple. Every patch of grass and flowers is a new scene. Every hill, mountain and valley a new vista. Even if you repeatedly canoe the same river, or hike or ski the same Vermont trail, it will change from

season to season, from day to day, and even from morning to evening.

Now I'll admit that — with exceptions such as skiing down a steep and narrow trail, biking in traffic, or canoeing challenging whitewater—it's possible to do these things with only minimal attention, and to otherwise tune out the world about you, numbly walking the woods with blinders and earbuds. Yet even then, the world about you will continue to invite your attention, and the more you attend to it, the more it will reward you with delight, beauty, awe, wonder and insight.

If we turn to birding or wildlife viewing, we note that the whole activity is centered on attentiveness. We look and we listen. We attune our eyes and ears to the sights and sounds, and we attend to them. The more one practices, the better one gets at it: the more one observes and learns.

This is also true of pursuit sports like fishing and hunting. My favorite means of fishing is wading a river with a fly rod. If one considers catching fish as the measure of success, then in order to succeed one must learn to observe their surroundings carefully. What insects are coming off the water, landing on the shore, or moving through the trees along the shore? What is the weather doing? What is the water temperature like and how is the stream flowing? What is growing along the shore? Where are the fish likely to be feeding, and on what? Answering questions like these is the first step toward getting a fish to take a fly. Some would even argue that the delight that comes from such attentiveness is itself the "success" of fishing.

Reading does something similar — and requires something similar — of us.

To be clear, I'm not speaking of "reading" a post on social media. In many ways, most of how I see people interact with social

media seems like the opposite of attentiveness. It trains us to jump from one thing to another as fast as we can click a mouse or slide our fingers across a touch pad. Yes, our eyes may take in words, but it often feels more like a mockery of real reading. Rather than inviting us to think deeply, or observe closely, or even just to thoughtfully wonder and ponder, social media gives memes and sound bites that purport profundity while offering shallowness. And with the prevalence of content generated by

artificial intelligence and foreign trolls, content on social media is increasing untrustworthy — and the fact that many people consider social media as their source of "news" is increasingly alarming. "Doom scrolling" is indeed a good name for it.

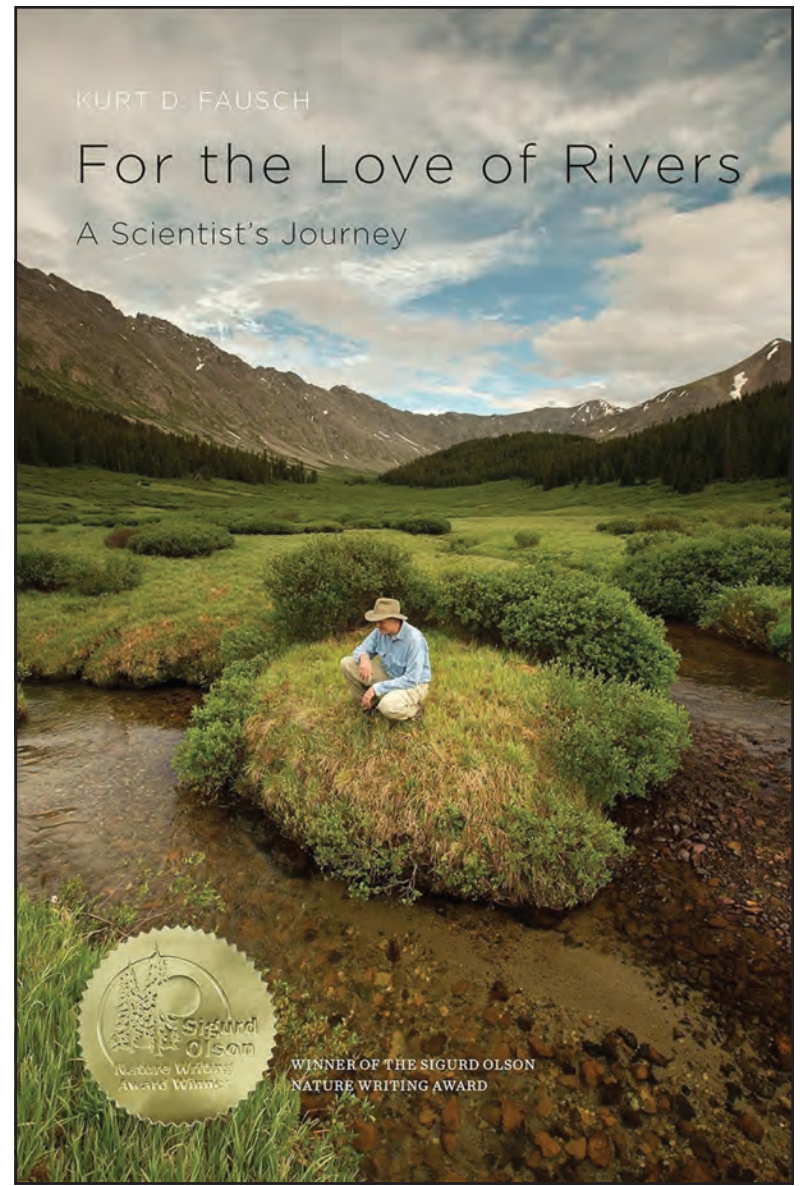
When I speak of the similarity between reading and being outdoors, I am speaking about the sort of reading we do with a newspaper or a book.

Consider the newspaper story. Your local newspaper is actually offering you thoughtful and trustworthy stories written by real people engaged in the local community. (Note that I am not speaking primarily of myself, a freelance writer who gives you one or two outdoor stories a month, but of the full-time professional journalists on the regular staff of a paper.) One of the things I mean by "trustworthy" is that the names of the real human writers are attached to the stories. They are not Russian trolls or AI bots. They are the folks you meet "on the streets," attending the town meetings and high school sporting events, and interviewing the folks involved. The stories are real and true, and they inform you. (That's one reason our community will miss Andy Kirkaldy's stories.)

To read such a story requires you to be attentive for more than a few seconds, to follow a story and a sequence of related ideas, and very likely to connect several related ideas and perhaps thoughts from several different characters.



**MATTHEW DICKERSON**  
Outdoor Columnist



It then further invites you to be attentive to the community around you. And in doing so, it also invites — perhaps challenges — you to consider something in a new way, or with a different viewpoint, and not simply from an echo chamber. To be attentive (whether to a river, or a bee, or a newspaper story) is to become informed.

A good book — whether fiction or non-fiction — does the same. Except often engaging your attention not merely for several minutes at a time, but for hours spread across days and weeks. At the very core of reading a novel is the imaginative exercise of seeing the world through the perspective of somebody else, which is at the very core of sympathy, compassion and understanding. Reading a work of biology, or history, or biography, or nature writing, when done with real attentiveness, similarly allows us to be informed by somebody else's wisdom and knowledge, or to see through another's eyes. To follow a story or a series of connected essays through several pages and chapters is like looking out at a river and beginning to make connections between the canopy of alders over the water, a red eft resting on the rock, the dragonfly patrolling the eddy, and spider on a web stretched between the hemlock branches just upstream.

Reading, like time outdoors — or time outdoors, like reading — helps to form us as more thoughtful, better-informed persons and communities.

In part because of one course I sat in on in the spring, and another I taught in the fall, 2025 was a good year for me to read and learn more about rivers — including about river ecology, native fish, how water moves through and shapes our landscapes, and how rivers and waters are important in our lives and imaginations. Here are a few recommendations from my recent readings.

A few years ago, fisheries biologist, river ecologist and retired Colorado State University Prof. Kurt Fausch published a beautiful book about river ecology and native fish titled "For the Love of Rivers: A Scientist's Journey." He has just published a new book titled "A Reverence for River: Imagining an Ethic for Running Waters." I highly recommend his writing. I reread the first of these in 2025 and have now begun the second.

Fausch did his Ph.D. under one of the world's most famous trout and salmon experts: the late Robert J. Behnke, who wrote the beautifully and colorfully illustrated masterpiece volume "Trout and Salmon of North America," which I got to read parts of again this year when my wife found a used hardcover copy.

Kathleen Dean Moore is a philosophy professor at Oregon State University and also a well-

known nature writer who has for years directed the Spring Creek Project environmental writing residencies. One of her beautifully written essay collections that was also on my 2025 list is "Riverwalking: Reflections on Moving Water." Each essay in the collection was inspired by time on a particular river in Oregon, but the essays cover a wide range of thoughts and reflections. My students loved this book as much as I did.

I will continue to reread and recommend Wendell Berry's essay "A Native Hill," which I first found in the collection "The Art of the Common Place: the Agrarian Essays of Wendell Berry." And for fiction, there is no work of American fiction that I have found more moving or more beautiful than Norman MacLean's "A River Runs Through It."

*Editor's note: Matthew Dickerson is the Outdoor Columnist for the Independent and author of a new book about attentiveness to rivers and fish, "Birds in the Sky, Fish in the Sea: Attending to Creation with Delight and Wonder."*



## INDEPENDENT DIGITAL marketing

by the Addison County Independent

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### Upcoming Events

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

**Tuesday, January 6:**  
9:00 - 11:00 AM Public Skating  
3:00 - 4:45 PM Stick & Puck

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

**Sunday, January 11:**  
1:45 - 3:45 PM Public Skating

**Tuesday, January 13:**  
9:00 - 11:00 AM Public Skating  
3:00 - 4:45 PM Stick & Puck

**Thursday, January 15:**  
9:00 - 11:00 AM Public Skating

**Sunday, January 18:**  
1:45 - 3:45 PM Public Skating

Memorial Sports Center  
296 Buttolph Drive • Middlebury, VT  
info@memorialsportscenter.org  
[MemorialSportsCenter.org](http://MemorialSportsCenter.org)

## Schedule

(Continued from Page 1B)

1/7 Milton at Mt Abe	7 PM
1/7 MUHS at Missisquoi	7 PM
1/7 Stowe at VUHS	7 PM
1/10 Mt Abe at MUHS	12:30 PM
<b>Boys' Hockey</b>	
1/3 MUHS at St J	4:45 PM
1/10 MUHS at Saranac	1 PM
<b>Girls' Hockey</b>	
12/30 Burr & Burton at MUHS	5 PM
1/3 MUHS at Rutland	6 PM
1/7 MUHS at Stowe	7:15 PM
<b>Wrestling</b>	
1/3 ..... Mt Abe/MUHS at MAU Tournament	
1/3 ..... VUHS at Keene Tournament	
1/7 MUHS at Fair Haven	6 PM
1/7 Mt Abe at Mill River	10 AM
1/8 MAU & OV at VUHS	6 PM
1/10 ..... VUHS/Mt Abe at Mill River Tour	
<b>Indoor Track &amp; Field</b>	
1/4 VUHS/Mt. Abe at UVM	8 AM
1/10 ..... Championship Meet at UVM	
<b>Nordic Skiing</b>	
12/30 MUHS at Sleepy Hollow	TBA
<b>Gymnastics</b>	
1/5 Montpelier at MUHS	6 PM
<b>COLLEGE SPORTS</b>	
<b>Men's Hockey</b>	
1/3 Hobart at Midd	2 PM
1/4 Midd at NEC	4 PM
1/9 Midd at Trinity	7 PM
1/10 Midd at Wesleyan	3 PM
<b>Women's Hockey</b>	
1/3 Endicott at Midd	5 PM
1/6 Suffolk at Midd	7 PM
1/9 Conn College at Midd	7 PM
1/10 Conn College at Midd	3 PM
<b>Women's Basketball</b>	
12/30 Midd at Pacific Lutheran	5 PM
1/3 St Lawrence at Midd	1 PM
1/6 Emerson at Midd	5:30 PM
1/9 Midd at Trinity	7 PM
1/10 Midd at Wesleyan	3 PM
<b>Men's Basketball</b>	
Tourney in Brooklyn*	
1/2 Lasell at Midd	5 PM
1/6 Midd at WPI	6 PM
1/9 Trinity at Midd	7 PM
1/10 Wesleyan at Midd	2 PM

SPREAD THE WORD

calendar@addisonindependent.com



**OTTER VALLEY SENIOR** Logan Denis takes advantage of senior teammate Jacob Warrell's pick to drive into the paint during the Otters' visit to Mount Abraham on Saturday. Denis led the Otters with 18 points.

Independent photo/Steve James



**MOUNT ABE SOPHOMORE** Waydon Cherington watches his acrobatic shot drop for a bucket during the Eagle boys' basketball team's Saturday home game vs. Otter Valley.

Independent photo/Steve James



**EAGLE SENIOR GUARD** Charlie Germon takes to the air to get a shot off during the Mount Abe boys' basketball team's Saturday home game vs. Otter Valley.

Independent photo/Steve James

## Eagles vs Otters

(Continued from Page 1B)

Then Mount Abe blitzed the Otters with a 23-9 second quarter in which four Eagles combined for 21 points: senior guard Charlie Germon (seven points) and three sophomore guards, Noah Germon (six points) and Dustin Abbott and Waydon Cherington (four apiece). They did most of the damage by attacking the basket, although the Germon brothers also each hit a three-pointer.

OV senior Logan Denis kept his team within striking distance with four of his 18 points and a slick assist inside to classmate Jacob Warrell that cut the lead to 26-16 late in the period. But then in the final minute Abbott scored in the lane and the older Germon brother hit two free throws to create the halftime score.

The Otters cut the lead to 12 at 4:42 of the third period on a Zachary Dragon three-pointer and

then four straight Denis points on offensive rebounds to make it 34-22.

But the Eagles responded with a 10-0 run capped with five points from Noah Germon to just about settle matters at 44-22 with 2:51 left in the third period. Coach Stark called for time after that Eagle outburst.

The timeout didn't slow the Eagles. In the final 2:51 Noah Germon sank a baseline jumper and converted a drive to the hoop, and Charlie Germon hit a three as the Eagles closed out the period with a 51-28 lead. At the other end Denis scored twice inside, and Brody Lathrop sank two free throws.

Denis did his best to rally OV in the fourth period with five early points, and Lathrop hit a three to make it 55-25. But senior forward Cooper Cook had come alive for the Eagles with six points inside in that span, and with three minutes

gone the lead was still 22 points at 57-35. The Eagles then outscored the Otters, 10-2 the rest of the way, with Charlie Germon capping his day with seven of those points. A drive by senior Jackson Howe was the only answer OV mustered down the stretch.

Denis finished with 18 points to lead OV in a strong effort, and Dragon scored nine.

Stark said the Otters would be looking forward to a rematch in Brandon.

"We get to see them on Jan. 9 at our place," Stark said. "I hope we

use this as a learning opportunity early in the season and work harder to get better."

Charlie Germon led the Eagles with 22 points, followed by Abbott (13), Noah Germon (11), Cherington (eight), Cook (six) and Jaran Griffin (five).

Coach Clark noted many of the Eagles' turnovers came when they tried to share the ball, and should decrease as the team gains experience and learns to better read passing lanes. At times they also passed up good shots in the paint in order to try to set up a teammate.

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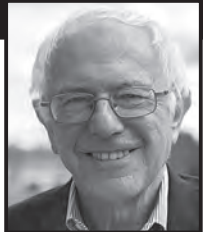
Margaret Eagan at [middskibum@gmail.com](mailto:middskibum@gmail.com)

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SRC-2 United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510  
[www.sanders.senate.gov](http://www.sanders.senate.gov)

**Sen. Peter Welch**  
1-800-642-3193  
124 Russell Senate Office Bldg.  
Washington, D.C. 20510  
<https://www.welch.senate.gov/email-peter/>



### Contact Governor Phil Scott

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109 State Street, Pavillion, Montpelier, Vermont 05609-0101 • [www.vermont.gov/governor](http://www.vermont.gov/governor)

# Happy Holidays

from

The **WAKE UP CREW** with *Amanda Lee*

weekday mornings from 5 to 10



[921wvttk.com](http://921wvttk.com)

# There are book clubs, cards and more in Ferrisburgh this month

FERRISBURGH — The Ferrisburgh Grange “King Pede” card parties are scheduled for the Saturdays of Jan. 3, 17, and 31. These get-togethers are held at the Ferrisburgh Town Hall and Community Center and will begin at 6:30 p.m. with a sandwich supper and then on to an evening of fun and games. King Pede requires tactics and skill so come prepared to use your strategic thinking in this longstanding Ferrisburgh tradition.

We are fortunate that Rokeby Museum is again offering its series of Winter Book Discussions. These events will be held monthly, January through March, at no charge and will use a virtual format. Registration in advance is required and the participants will receive the virtual link at that time. Attendance at all three discussions is not required to register.

The first of these discussions will be on Tuesday, Jan. 20, at 6 p.m. The book will be “Flee North: A Forgotten Hero and the Fight for Freedom in Slavery’s Borderland” by Scott Shane. The story follows Thomas Smallwood, a slave who bought his own freedom and then organized an “underground railroad” to lead many others out of slavery.

The book to be reviewed on Feb. 17, “The Message” by Tanehi Coates, explores the need to untangle ourselves from the destructive myths that shape our

## Ferrisburgh

Have a news tip?  
Email Sally Kerschner at [smwkersch@comcast.net](mailto:smwkersch@comcast.net)

### NEWS

world and the liberating power of confronting difficult truths. March 17th’s book discussion will be “The Zorg: A Tale of Greed and Murder that Inspired the Abolition of Slavery,” by Siddharth Kara. This book covers the series of events that doomed the 1781 journey of the ship Zorg, and created the first undeniable argument against slavery. Visit [www.rokeby.com](http://www.rokeby.com) for more information on all these book discussions.

*We are fortunate that Rokeby Museum is again offering its series of Winter Book Discussions. These events will be held monthly, January through March...*

The Lake Champlain Maritime Museum is organizing a Winter Traveling Book Club. Between January and April, the museum will discuss a book relevant to the Addison County historical institution that is hosting the book event. Dive into American history with a book selected by Lake Champlain Maritime Museum, cozy up to

a welcoming novel at the Bixby Library in Vergennes, contemplate social justice at the Rokeby, and learn about new Vermonters at the Sheldon Museum of Vermont History in Middlebury. Each discussion will take place from 1 to 2 p.m. on the last Saturday of each

(See Ferrisburgh, Page 5B)

# community calendar

## THURSDAY

**1 First Day Walk in Ferrisburgh.** Thursday, Jan. 1, 9-11 a.m., Button Bay State Park, 5 Button Bay State Park Rd. Start the new year with a birding walk with Otter Creek Audubon and see overwintering birds.

## FRIDAY

**2 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.

## SATURDAY

**3 A Revolutionary Press Community Printing 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](http://henrysheldonmuseum.org).

**King Pede card party in Ferrisburgh.** Saturday, Jan. 3, 6:30 p.m., Ferrisburgh Town Hall and Community Center, 3279 Route 7. The Ferrisburgh Grange hosts King Pede beginning with a sandwich supper, followed by an evening of cards and games. King Pede is a longstanding Ferrisburgh tradition that requires tactics and strategic thinking.

## WEDNESDAY

**7 “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@rnesu.org](mailto:nvachon-hanlon@rnesu.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.

## THURSDAY

**8 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 theatermaker 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](http://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., Ilesley 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.

## FRIDAY

**9 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.

## SATURDAY

**10 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.

## SUNDAY

**11 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,



## King Pede: A Ferrisburgh tradition

ONE OF THE best ways to stay entertained in deep winter is playing games. The Ferrisburgh Grange has got you covered with its King Pede card parties on Jan. 3, Jan. 17 and Jan. 31 at the Ferrisburgh Town Hall and Community Center. Be prepared to put your thinking cap on; this longstanding Ferrisburgh tradition requires strategy and skill.

assorted juices, homemade apple bread pudding and coffee from Vermont Coffee Company. \$9 adults, \$5 children under 12.

**Mt. Norris Scout Reservation Summer Camp Job Fair in Vergennes.** Sunday, Jan. 11, 6 p.m., St. Peter Hall, 85 South Maple St. The Mt. Norris Scout Reservation in Eden is recruiting staff for its 2026 summer camp season. Meet camp director Randy Gates and learn about positions for counselors-in-training (ages 15-16) and camp staff (ages 16-21). Job description sheets available. Hosted by Troop 539.

**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.

by a live band. Families welcome. Please park at MUHS.

## MONDAY

**19 Martin Luther King Jr. Day community gathering in Monkton.** Monday, Jan. 19, 7 p.m., Monkton Town Hall Community Room, 92 Monkton Ridge Rd. The Monkton Museum and Historical Society hosts a community gathering honoring Martin Luther King Jr.’s birthday. Share memories of MLK’s impact, watch a short video, and discuss how to put his call to service to work in our community. Light refreshments available. Free.

## TUESDAY

**20 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](http://rokebymuseum.org).

## WEDNESDAY

**21 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.

## FRIDAY

**23 Community Supper in Middlebury.** Friday, Jan. 23, 5-6 p.m., Congregational Church of Middlebury, 2 Main St. Regular Friday night community supper. Menu varies, meat and vegetarian offerings available.

## SATURDAY

**24 Third annual puzzle challenge in Middlebury.** Saturday, Jan. 24, 11 a.m., Champlain Valley Unitarian Universalist Church, 2 Duane Ct. Teams of 1-4 compete in the annual puzzle challenge. Registration required; register your team at [ilesleypubliclibrary.org](http://ilesleypubliclibrary.org).

**Book page snowflake stars in Vergennes.** Saturday, Jan. 24, noon, Bixby Free Library, 258 Main St. Transform old books into snowflake stars to decorate your home. All materials provided; bring your own book if you wish. RSVP required, email [miranda.degreenia@bixbylibrary.org](mailto:miranda.degreenia@bixbylibrary.org).

## MONDAY

**26 Cribbage Night in Bristol.** Monday, Jan. 26, 7-8:15 p.m., Libanus Lodge #47, corner of Elm and North streets. Semi-monthly cribbage games hosted by the Masons. Players of all skill levels are welcome.

## FRIDAY

**30 Community Supper in Middlebury.** Friday, Jan. 30, 5-6 p.m., Congregational Church of Middlebury, 2 Main St. Regular Friday night community supper. Menu varies, meat and vegetarian offerings available.

## MONDAY

**12 Cribbage Night in Bristol.** Monday, Jan. 12, 7-8:15 p.m., Libanus Lodge #47, corner of Elm and North streets. Semi-monthly cribbage games hosted by the Masons. Players of all skill levels are welcome.

## TUESDAY

**13 Fossils of the Champlain Valley in Middlebury.** Tuesday, Jan. 13, 6 p.m., Ilesley 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.

## WEDNESDAY

**14 Friends of the Union Meeting Hall programming committee meeting in Ferrisburgh.** Wednesday, Jan. 14, 7-8 p.m., Ferrisburgh Town Hall, 3279 Route 7. Monthly meeting of the Friends of the Union Meeting Hall Programming Committee to discuss and plan upcoming events. Open to all; participants do not need to be Ferrisburgh residents. More info at [unionmeetinghall@gmail.com](mailto:unionmeetinghall@gmail.com).

## FRIDAY

**16 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.

## SATURDAY

**17 King Pede card party in Ferrisburgh.** Saturday, Jan. 17, 6:30 p.m., Ferrisburgh Town Hall and Community Center, 3279 Route 7. The Ferrisburgh Grange hosts a King Pede beginning with a sandwich supper, followed by an evening of cards and games.

## SUNDAY

**18 Contra dance in Middlebury.** Sunday, Jan. 18, 3-5 p.m., Champlain Valley Unitarian Universalist Society, 2 Duane Court. Free, all-ages contra dance. No experience or partner needed. Richard Hopkins will call and teach non-gendered dances, with music

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## HAVING AN EVENT?

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388-3171

- Community Playgroups
- Parent Education Classes
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*Helping Young Families Get The Right Start*

## Reader Comments

Here’s what one reader has to say about us!

A subscriber from Cornwall, Vt. writes:

*“I am impressed by the breadth and depth of your newspaper. I count on it for information about area happenings and opinions – including many locals as well as from your reporters.”*

Quotes are taken from reader comments submitted with subscription renewals.

**ADDISON COUNTY INDEPENDENT**



THE LIONS CLUB of Vergennes gathered 20 bikes and numerous toys of all sorts from people and businesses in the Vergennes-area to give to area children this holiday season.

## Lions' 'Toys for Christmas' provides holiday joy

VERGENNES — The Vergennes Lions Club is committed to serving the local community in many ways. One program enjoying its ninth season is the Toys for Christmas Program that annually provides new toys, gifts and even bicycles for hundreds of children.

Vergennes Lion Club member Susan Hayes heads up the project and said this labor of love is the result of incredible generosity and partnerships within the community. "This would be impossible without the help, time and sponsorship of so many people," Hayes said, "and first we have to thank Addison County Therapies for hosting the event and an incredible amount of toys donated by WowToyz. To Mary Kate, Mary, Jamison and Michael at Addison County Therapies and to the leaders and staff of WowToyz, we are so grateful."

In addition, collection barrels are placed around the community and generous patrons load up the bins with new toys. This year Shear Cuts, Ferrisburgh Bake Shop, One Credit Union, Kinney Drugs, and Gaines Insurance, The Dollar Store and Addison County Therapies served as collection points. Another huge component of the project is the fleet of new and refurbished bikes donated each year by Green Mountain Foster Bikes, owned and operated by Tim and Paula Mathewson. This year 20 lucky



winners of the bike raffle went home with wheels and a safety helmet to enjoy for years to come.

An army of Vergennes Lions donate hours of service time to collect, sort, shop, set up and help bring the event to life. The club offered special thanks to the following Lions: Gary Russell, Harry Curth, Lorraine Goddette, Amy Stagg, Jennifer Krause, Peter and Janet Halpin, Joyce Jewell, Kathy Dorman and LEOS Kaiya and Kelsey. They offered extra special thanks to two Lion Karen Taylor and Cristy Fortune whose year-round crafting of hats, scarves, blankets and mittens allow

hundreds of children to be outfitted for the winter and wearing a gift made with love.

"There is magic in this season of the year where giving is and seeing joy and smiles on children's faces is front and center," Hayes said. "This year 452 children received Christmas toys and gifts from this program and no family member was turned away."

In fact, during the same days that Toys for Christmas was open, at the Commodore Club, Vergennes Lions and Vergennes Rotary also offered a selection of gifts where children could shop for their parents and then wrap them

up with the help of Vergennes LEO elves. Thirty-five children came and shopped free of charge for a gift to give their parents, guardians or grandparents. Led by Lion Debbie Brace and Lion Lise Denton, the program brings smiles and holiday joy.

The Vergennes Lions Club has been serving the community since 1954 and wishes to each and every member of the community its sincere best wishes for the holidays. For more information about being a Lion, email vergenneslionsclub8@gmail.com or check out the website at e-clubhouse.org/sites/vergenesvt.

## Ferrisburgh

(Continued from Page 4B) month as a hybrid meeting — come in person for tea and snacks or stay involved online via Zoom. Readers can join all of the meetings or just one.

More information and a Zoom link are available with free registration: [lcmm.org/event/traveling-book-club-013125](http://lcmm.org/event/traveling-book-club-013125). The itinerary is as follows: Jan. 31—Lake Champlain Maritime Museum "Benedict Arnold's Navy" by James Nelson; Feb. 28—Rokeby Museum "Heaven and Earth Grocery Store" by James McBride; March 28—Bixby Memorial Free Library "What You are Looking for is in the Library" by Michiko Aoyama; April 25—Henry Sheldon Museum "Deep North: Stories of Somali Resettlement in Vermont" edited by Brad Kessler.

*The Toddler Rave, a fun sensory dance party with dancing and glow sticks, will be held at Bixby on Saturday, Jan. 17, 11 a.m.–1 p.m.*

Ernie Hudson and Michael J. Fox. He'll share the rich satisfactions and substantial challenges that come from a deep immersion into place-based narrative filmmaking. For more information, visit [unionmeetinghall.org/programming-and-events](http://unionmeetinghall.org/programming-and-events).

Bixby Library is hosting a batch of activities to start out the New Year. Visit [www.bixbylibrary.org](http://www.bixbylibrary.org) for more information on all these events planned by the Bixby staff. There will be several sessions on cell phone literacy that will review the basics of cell phones, taking and managing photos, understanding cell phone plans, and avoiding viruses and identify theft. These sessions will be held on Wednesdays, 5:30–6:30 p.m. with a different topic each Wednesday: Jan. 7, 14, 21 and 28.

Join the Friends of the Meeting Hall for the monthly Programming Committee Meeting. The Committee meets the second Wednesday of every month, 7–8 p.m., to discuss and plan upcoming and future programming and events. All are welcome to participate in this Committee, and you don't have to be a Ferrisburgh resident to join. The Jan. 14 meeting will be in person at the Ferrisburgh Town Hall.

Among the upcoming January events, the Friends of the Union Meeting Hall will host an evening featuring Vermont filmmaker Jay Craven, who will present on "Vermont Cinema: How and Why" at 7 p.m., Thursday, Jan. 15, at the Ferrisburgh Town Hall. Craven will tell a story of his adventures and experiences in developing a sustained filmmaking career in the unlikely setting of Vermont. In his talk, Craven will describe working with a wide range of actors, including Rip Torn, Tantoo Cardinal, Kris Kristofferson, Martin Sheen,

sessions are held every other Wednesday, 4–5 p.m. Jan. 7: Make your own lava lamp. Jan. 21: Make your own planetarium. Feb. 4: experiment with blubber.

The Toddler Rave, a fun sensory dance party with dancing and glow sticks, will be held at Bixby on Saturday, Jan. 17, 11 a.m.–1 p.m.

Bixby's author talk with Vermont author Helen Whybrow will be held on Thursday, Jan. 15, 5:30-6:30 p.m. Whybrow will discuss her newest memoir, "The Salt Stones," and her experiences of raising her family and tending to her sheep that led to her realizations on how to truly inhabit the land.

Note: We are always interested in including a variety of Ferrisburgh-related event announcements in this column, so if you have news that would be of interest, contact Sally Kerschner at [smwksersch@comcast.net](mailto:smwksersch@comcast.net). You are also able to access these columns and other information about Ferrisburgh news and events by viewing the Ferrisburgh Town Website at [www.ferrisburghvt.org](http://www.ferrisburghvt.org).

# STUDENTS OF THE WEEK FROM AREA HIGH SCHOOLS

## Vergennes Union High School

### Kyan Barcomb

Vergennes Union High School's Student of the Week is Kyan Barcomb. Kyan lives in Pantton with her mom, dad, and older brother on 24 acres of land filled with woods, animals, and plenty of activity. Her family has two dogs, two cats, chickens and roosters, and even a turtle that belongs to her brother. Life at home is busy and adventurous, with everything from raising meat birds to riding dirt bikes and minibikes around the property.

At VUHS, Kyan values the school's small class sizes, which she says make learning more engaging and allow students to be surrounded by others who are equally invested. One of her favorite teachers is Ms. Thompson, her AP Biology teacher in 11th grade, whom she admires for her deep knowledge, respect for students, and willingness to answer questions. Academically, Kyan has been on the High Honor Roll since 9th grade, received the Sage Award in 11th grade, and earned an award of recognition from Ms. Kayhart during Pre-Calculus.

Kyan is highly involved in school life. She has served as vice president of her class for all four years of high school and is a member of the Math Team, Green Team, Leo Club, and National Honor Society. One of her proudest moments came this year when her class raised more than \$3,000 for cancer research in just one week through a walk-a-thon, exceeding their goal and bringing the community together for a cause, complete with some laughs along the way.

Outside the classroom, Kyan volunteers with the Humane Society, helping to socialize stray cats. Through the Leo Club, she enjoys reading to younger students, especially preschoolers, and through the National Honor Society, she took part in sponsoring a student during the holidays by picking out gifts.

In her free time, Kyan loves spending time with friends and family. Each evening, her family makes a point to sit together and talk about their day. She especially enjoys time with her dogs and summers spent on the lake, where she appreciates the history and stories of Arnold's Bay. With her family, every outing is an adventure.

One of the most meaningful experiences for Kyan at VUHS has been the school's annual "Ag Day," which celebrates agriculture and the hardworking people who sustain the community. She says the tradition reminds her of who she is and her family's legacy, and of the importance of honoring Vermont's agricultural roots. Kyan states, "I think that everyone in this school can relate to the experience of working hard, because we all have to, and days like 'Ag Day' have shaped my experience and insights. I hope that future students continue to keep this tradition in our schools as our way of honoring the people who keep our milk, dairy, and meat shelves stocked. It is a reminder of where we come from and a promise never to let the true Vermont way of life be forgotten."

After high school, Kyan is considering several colleges and plans to major in Biology or Marine Biology, depending on where she decides to go. She says she is keeping her options open as she thoughtfully considers her next steps.



Kyan Barcomb  
VUHS

## Middlebury Union High School

### Esra Anzali

Middlebury Union High School is proud to recognize Esra Anzali as its Student of the Week. Esra, the daughter of Ata and Fahimeh, lives in Weybridge. She has one sister, Narges, who is a sophomore at Princeton University, and two cats.

When reflecting on her time at Middlebury Union High School, Esra shared, "I love the community here. I like the smaller size and the mix of different types of people. I have friends from many different groups. I also feel like the teachers are incredible — there is lots of support and a high level of learning."

Esra expressed special gratitude for her advisor, Mr. Bartlett, who supported her during her transition back to Middlebury and helped her with future planning and building self-confidence. She also credits Mr. Krahn and Ms. Carroll as being instrumental in her learning, noting that their classes feel less like work and more like genuine learning experiences. "You can tell they are passionate about their students," she said. Esra shared that Theory of Knowledge, or TOK, has been her favorite class.

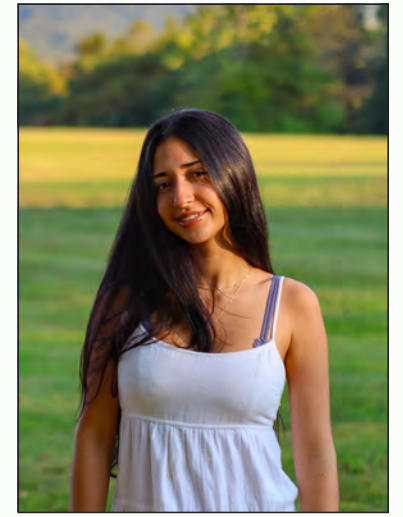
Throughout her high school career, Esra has earned honor roll recognition each year and was selected to attend Girls State. Esra is highly involved in the school community. She serves as the co-president of the Model United Nations, an activity she has participated in all four years. She is also a member of the BIPOC Affinity Group and a Peer Leader.

Outside of school, Esra works at Project Independence at Elderly Services, a day program for senior citizens, where she leads activities and works in the kitchen. "I love my job — I have built a community there," she shared. In her free time, Esra enjoys reading, spending time with friends, being in nature, hiking, and going to the gym.

Reflecting on her experience in the IB Diploma Program, Esra said she initially felt out of place and questioned whether she belonged, which had an impact on her confidence. However, seeing her results helped her realize that she was exactly where she needed to be. She expressed gratitude for the people who believed in her and encouraged her to stay in the program.

Her advice to other students is to take advantage of all the opportunities the school offers. "It's amazing how much support students receive here. It's good to get out of your comfort zone and challenge yourself," she said.

Next fall, Esra plans to attend Rice University in Texas, where she intends to study Public Policy Analysis. Middlebury Union High School congratulates Esra on her many accomplishments and wishes her continued success throughout her senior year and beyond.



Esra Anzali  
MUHS

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**Public Meetings**

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**Public Meetings**

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**Public Meetings**

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**Public Meetings**

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**Public Meetings**

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Cash in on our 4-for-3 rates! Pay for 3 issues, get 4th issue free! An ad placed for consecutive issues runs the 4th time for free!

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Or, submit your classified ad on our website: [addisonindependent.com](http://addisonindependent.com)

**RATES**

**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   |

\*\* no charge for these ads Spotlight with large ✓ \$1

**PLEASE PRINT YOUR AD...**

Number of words: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Cost: \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 # of runs: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Spotlight Charge: \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 Internet Listing: \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 TOTAL: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

The Independent assumes no financial responsibility for errors in ads, but will rerun classified ad in which the error occurred. No refunds will be possible. Advertiser will please notify us of any errors which may occur after first publication.

# Addison Independent CLASSIFIEDS

## Services

**MELISSA'S QUALITY CLEANING** Services. Residential and commercial. Fully insured. Great rates. Reliable and thorough cleaning. 802-345-6257.

## Free

**DIGITAL ACCESS** View obituaries, calendar listings and classifieds online at [addisonindependent.com](http://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!

**FREE SCHWINN ELLIPTICAL** Good working condition. 802-989-5773, text or leave a message

## Help Wanted

**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](mailto:ellenresnik@gmail.com)

**YOUNG FOREST HOMES** is looking for an office administrator to join our family focused team. The work is basic bookkeeping, estimating, and billing; mostly on Quickbooks and spreadsheets. Part time and flexible with wages starting at \$24/hr with benefits. Contact at [youngforsthomesllc@gmail.com](mailto:youngforsthomesllc@gmail.com)

## 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.

## Help Wanted

## Help Wanted

– 11:00 p.m. Schedule: Part-time, includes some weekends and holidays. Pay: \$20-\$22 Hourly, commensurate with experience, bonuses and tips. Apply Today. Email your resume and a short note to [owner@swifthouseinn.com](mailto:owner@swifthouseinn.com). Learn more about us at [swift-houseinn.com](http://swift-houseinn.com)

**MANUFACTURING TECHNICIAN (FILLING)** Join the Tata Harper Filling Department as a Manufacturing Technician! This hands-on position is responsible for setting up and operating filling equipment, ensuring products are filled into primary components accurately and efficiently, and maintaining compliance with all Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP). Pay Rate: \$19/hour. Key Responsibilities: Operate and maintain filling machinery, monitor product flow, weights, and quality, and complete documentation accurately. Follow safety procedures, perform equipment cleaning and sanitization, and maintain a clean, organized work area. Support team members and communicate any production or quality issues promptly. Qualifications: Manufacturing experience preferred, but not required; Strong attention to detail and ability to follow directions; Team-oriented and adaptable in a fast paced environment; No sensitivities to fragrances or aromas; Able to lift up to 50 lbs and stand for extended periods. We offer a supportive, collaborative environment with opportunities to learn and grow. Apply today! Send your resume to [tna\\_hr@ap.tataharper.co](mailto:tna_hr@ap.tataharper.co)

**MANUFACTURING TECHNICIAN (PACKAGING)** Join the Tata Harper Packaging Department as a Manufacturing Technician! This hands-on role is responsible for setting up and operating packaging equipment, assembling products, and ensuring all work meets quality, safety, and Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP) standards. Pay Rate: \$19/hour. Key Responsibilities: Operate and maintain packaging machinery, complete required documentation, inspect lot codes and components, and keep a clean, organized work area. Support production flow and assist team members as needed. Qualifications: Prior manufacturing experience preferred, but not required; Strong attention to detail and ability to follow directions; Team-oriented with good communication skills; Able to stand, bend, and lift throughout the shift; No sensitivities to fragrances or aromas. We offer a supportive, safety-focused environment with opportunities to learn and grow. Apply today! Send your resume to [tna\\_hr@ap.tataharper.co](mailto:tna_hr@ap.tataharper.co)

## For Rent

**LAKE DUNMORE** 2-bedroom lakefront winterized cottages available for short-term rental. 10-15 minutes to Middlebury and Brandon. Sleeps 4, comfortably furnished, heated, fully equipped kitchens, bathrooms with showers. TV, WiFi. [krnorthcove@gmail.com](mailto:krnorthcove@gmail.com); 802 352-4236.



**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.

## For Rent

**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

**LAKE DUNMORE** 2-bedroom lakefront winterized cottages available for short-term rental. 10-15 minutes to Middlebury and Brandon. Sleeps 4, comfortably furnished, heated, fully equipped kitchens, bathrooms with showers. TV, WiFi. [krnorthcove@gmail.com](mailto:krnorthcove@gmail.com); 802 352-4236

**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.

## For Rent

**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](mailto:John@Hubglass.com) to schedule a viewing.

**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](http://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

**HAY** First and second cut 4x4 round bales, stored. \$25 and up. 518-321-2886

Help Wanted ads can be found on Pages 9B and 10B.

## CITY OF VERGENNES NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

Notice is hereby given that the Development Review Board will hold a Public Hearing on January 20, 2026, at 7 pm as the first order of new business, for the following purpose:

To consider Site Plan Review, Conditional Use Review, and Variance Review for Application #2025-41 by the City of Vergennes for a comprehensive upgrade of the Wastewater Treatment Facility located at 36 Canal St., to include a new Influent Building, two new Sequencing Batch Reactors, modifications to the existing Control Building, Blower Building, and Chlorine Contact Tanks, Repurposing Lagoon 1 into High-Flow Storage, Decommissioning of Lagoon 2, and other work involving Piping, Fencing, and Landscaping. Reviews will consider Article III Section 311, Article VI Section 605, Article VII, Article VIII, Article XI, and Article XVI Section 1611.

Please note that the hearing will be held as a "hybrid meeting", with participation either in person, by Zoom, or by phone. The in-person meeting will be held in the One Credit Union Conference Room located at 48 Green Street, Vergennes, Vermont.

Meetings are accessible via Zoom;  
Meeting ID: 828 0065 2431  
Meeting password: 5CKESb

Join by phone: Dial 1 (929) 205-6099; For participants joining by phone:

To raise your hand during the meeting, press \*9.

To mute/unmute during the meeting, press \*6

If you experience any difficulty in accessing this meeting, contact the City of Vergennes Zoning Administrator at 802-989-6315.

Persons seeking eligibility to Appeal must establish status as an Interested Person as defined in Article VI Section 603 of the City of Vergennes Zoning and Subdivision Regulations AND participate in the Public Hearing either in person or in writing in order to take any subsequent Appeal. The City of Vergennes is an "on the record" Appeal municipality with regard to Appeals to the Environmental Court from Development Review Board Decisions. This means that the Environmental Court shall only consider Testimony and Evidence provided during Public Hearings on the Application. Interested Persons should therefore ensure that their participation in the Public Hearing is complete and represents the totality of their Testimony and Evidence.

A copy of the application is available for public review at City Hall or by contacting David Austin at [zoning@vergennes.org](mailto:zoning@vergennes.org).

December 22, 2025  
David Austin  
Zoning Administrator

## WARNING

### COUNTY OF ADDISON ANNUAL BUDGET MEETING

Pursuant to 24 V.S.A. Section 133(3)(a), the taxpayers of the County of Addison are hereby given notice that the annual meeting to discuss the final budget for 2026-2027 will be held at 9:00 am on Monday, January 12, 2026. The meeting will be held in the County Clerk's office at the Frank Mahady Courthouse in Middlebury.

More information and extra copies of the budget may be obtained by contacting the Addison County Clerk at 802-388-1966 or [addisoncountyclerk@gmail.com](mailto:addisoncountyclerk@gmail.com).

Patricia Ross, Assistant Judge & Nicole Wilkerson, Assistant Judge

REVENUE:	2026-2027
County Tax 0.00581614 estimated	\$437,668.00
Interest Earned	\$2,400.00
Miscellaneous Income	\$15.00
Passports	\$13,500.00
Wills for Safekeeping	\$11,000.00
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$464,583.00</b>

EXPENSES	
<b>Court</b>	
Contingency	\$300.00
Contracted Services	\$7,550.00
Dues & Membership	\$1,500.00
Insurance	\$2,950.00
Passport/Budget Advertising	\$2,100.00
Office Expense	\$2,950.00
Court Personnel	
Benefits	\$7,056.00
Salaries	\$73,652.00
Audit	\$16,000.00
<b>Court Subtotal</b>	<b>\$114,058.00</b>

<b>Probate Court</b>	
Contingency	\$470.00
Dues	\$235.00
Supplies/Equipment	\$25.00
Training & Education	\$420.00
<b>Probate Court Subtotal</b>	<b>\$1,150.00</b>

### EXPENSES CONTINUED

<b>Sheriff's Building</b>	
Building & Grounds	\$9,500.00
Capital Improvements	\$50,000.00
Custodial	\$2,850.00
Inspections	\$2,500.00
Insurance	\$7,000.00
Utilities	\$20,000.00
<b>Sheriff's Building Subtotal</b>	<b>\$91,850.00</b>

<b>Sheriff's Department</b>	
Insurance/Bonds	\$29,000.00
Office Supplies	\$1,000.00
Telephone	\$4,000.00
Training	\$40,000.00
Valcour/Spillman Personnel	\$3,500.00
Total Benefits	\$15,768.00
Total Salaries	\$94,257.00
<b>Sheriff's Dept. Subtotal</b>	<b>\$187,525.00</b>

Sheriff Capital Reserve \$ 70,000.00

**Total Expenses \$464,583.00**

## Auctions

### MARKET REPORT

### ADDISON COUNTY COMMISSION SALES

RT. 125 • EAST MIDDLEBURY, VT

Sales for 12/22/25 & 12/26/25

		COST	
BEEF	LBS.	/LB	\$
Westminster	1080	1.65	\$1782.00
Conants	1600	1.55	\$2480.00
Rowell Farm	1690	1.47	\$2484.30
Four Hills	1590	1.46	\$2321.40
Gosliga	1510	1.40	\$2114.00

CALVES		\$
Sunderland		\$1380.00
Fifield		\$1315.80
Barnes		\$1287.50
Savello		\$1249.50
Forbes		\$1244.40

**Total Beef - 87 Total Calves - 156**  
We value our faithful customers.  
**Sales at 3 pm - Mon. & Thurs.**  
call 1-802-388-2661

### ANWSD BOARD

#### MEETING NOTICES FOR JANUARY 2026

Monday, Jan 12	4:50 PM	Finance Committee Mtg.	VUMHS Library
	6:00 PM	ANWSD Board Mtg.	VUMHS Library
Wednesday, Jan 21	6:00 PM	ANWSD Board Mtg.	VUMHS Library
Monday, Jan 26	6:00 PM	ANWSD Board Mtg.**	VUMHS Library

\*\*if needed for budget purposes

### 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).

### Vermont Use of Public Waters Rules.

#### Vermont Proposed Rule: 25P045

**AGENCY:** Agency of Natural Resources  
**CONCISE SUMMARY:** The proposed amendments to the Use of Public Waters Rules clarify the petition submission and review process and clarifies the procedures for municipal delegation under 10 V.S.A. § 1424 by authorizing full or partial delegation with State oversight, auditing, and revocation authority. Further, the amendments establish a process for emergency temporary use restrictions and clarifies enforcement of aquatic invasive species transport and decontamination requirements. The wakesports provisions are substantially modified by eliminating the "Home Lake" rule and proof of decontamination requirements, prohibiting wakesports within 500 feet of loon nesting sites and from other users, and requiring wakesports zones to meet new acreage, length, and configuration standards. The Department of Environmental Conservation will maintain an online list of eligible lakes, reducing the number of wakesports-eligible waters from 30 to 18.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, CONTACT:** Laura Dlugolecki, Agency of Natural Resources, One National Life Dr, Davis 2, Montpelier, VT 05620 Tel: 802-490-6133 E-Mail: [laura.dlugolecki@vermont.gov](mailto:laura.dlugolecki@vermont.gov) URL: <https://dec.vermont.gov/watershed/lakes-ponds/vermont-use-public-waters-rules>.

**FOR COPIES:** Saige Culbertson, Agency of Natural Resources, One National Life Dr, Davis 2, Montpelier, VT 05620 Tel: 802-480-1940 E-Mail: [saige.culbertson@vermont.gov](mailto:saige.culbertson@vermont.gov)

### Vermont Workers' Compensation and Occupational Disease Rules 1-27.

#### Vermont Proposed Rule: 25P046

**AGENCY:** Department of Labor  
**CONCISE SUMMARY:** These proposed rules implement the statutory amendments adopted by the Legislature effective 7/1/25, including (1) a process for injured workers to request medical case management services; and (2) increased penalties for late payment of weekly benefits. The proposed rules also include page limits for reply briefs filed in formal workers' compensation proceedings with the Vt. Dept of Labor.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, CONTACT:** Dirk Anderson, Director of Workers' Compensation, Vermont Department of Labor, P.O. Box 488, Montpelier, VT 05601, Tel: 802-828-4231 Fax: 802-828-4281 E-mail: [Dirk.Anderson@vermont.gov](mailto:Dirk.Anderson@vermont.gov) URL: <https://labor.vermont.gov/workers-compensation>.

**FOR COPIES:** Beth DeBernardi, Vermont Department of Labor, P.O. Box 488, Montpelier, VT 05601, Tel: 802-661-8136 Fax: 802-828-4281 E-mail: [Beth.A.Debernardi@vermont.gov](mailto:Beth.A.Debernardi@vermont.gov)

### 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



## BOOKKEEPER

The Otter Creek Watershed Insect Control District is seeking a bookkeeper with experience and QuickBooks knowledge.

Flexible hours. Pay based on experience.  
Email [OCWICD@gmail.com](mailto:OCWICD@gmail.com) for details.



### 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.

Public Notices can be found on Pages 9B and 10B

**TOWN OF ADDISON  
PUBLIC NOTICE**

The Addison Planning Commission will hold a regular monthly meeting on Monday, January 19, 2026 at the Addison Community Center at 6:30 PM.

**AGENDA**

- Open the meeting
- Roll call
- Public comments
- Continue to work with Katie Raycroft-Meyer from the RPC on the Town Plan revision, finalizing details and progressing with the next steps for the Town Plan. Katie will discuss the final steps for the plan, and we will also assess whether an extension to our grant is necessary.
- Review the rough draft of the Town Plan as presented
- Approve the meeting minutes for December 15, 2025
- Appoint a Vice Chair for the open position on the board
- Discuss any remaining miscellaneous Planning Commission business or concerns
- If needed, allow additional public comment time before adjourning.

Michael Hollis, Chair  
Starr Phillips, Secretary  
Addison Planning Commission

**UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION**

Green Mountain Power Corporation Project Nos. 2731-045  
2737-028

**NOTICE OF APPLICATION ACCEPTED FOR FILING, SOLICITING  
COMMENTS, MOTIONS TO INTERVENE, AND PROTESTS**  
(December 18, 2025)

Take notice that the following hydroelectric application has been filed with the Commission and is available for public inspection:

- Application Type: Extension of License Terms and Non-capacity Amendment of License
- Project Nos: 2731-045 and 2737-028
- Date Filed: July 1, 2025
- Applicant: Green Mountain Power Corporation
- Name of Project: Weybridge and Middlebury Lower Hydroelectric Projects
- Location: The Weybridge Project is located on the Otter Creek in the towns of Weybridge and New Heaven, Addison County, Vermont, and the Middlebury Lower Project is located on the Otter Creek in the towns of Middlebury and Weybridge, Addison County, Vermont. The projects do not occupy federal lands.
- Filed Pursuant to: Federal Power Act, 16 USC 791a - 825r
- Applicant Contact: John Tedesco, Green Mountain Power, 163 Acorn Lane Colchester, VT 05446, (802) 655-8753, John.Tedesco@greenmountainpower.com
- FERC Contact: Aneela Mousam, (202) 502-8357, aneela.mousam@ferc.gov
- Cooperating agencies: With this notice, the Commission is inviting federal, state, local, and Tribal agencies with jurisdiction and/or special expertise with respect to environmental issues affected by the proposal, that wish to cooperate in the preparation of any environmental document, if applicable, to follow the instructions for filing such requests described in item k below. Cooperating agencies should note the Commission's policy that agencies that cooperate in the preparation of any environmental document cannot also intervene. See 94 FERC ¶ 61,076 (2001).

- Deadline for filing comments, motions to intervene, and protests: **January 20, 2026 5:00 pm Eastern Time.**

The Commission strongly encourages electronic filing. Please file comments, motions to intervene, and protests using the Commission's eFiling system at <http://www.ferc.gov/docs-filing/efiling.asp>. Commenters can submit brief comments up to 6,000 characters, without prior registration, using the eComment system at <http://www.ferc.gov/docs-filing/ecomment.asp>. For assistance, please contact FERC Online Support at [FERCOnlineSupport@ferc.gov](mailto:FERCOnlineSupport@ferc.gov), (866) 208-3676 (toll free), or (202) 502-8659 (TTY). In lieu of electronic filing, you may submit a paper copy. Submissions sent via the U.S. Postal Service must be addressed to: Debbie-Anne A. Reese, Secretary, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, 888 First Street NE, Room 1A, Washington, DC 20426. Submissions sent via any other carrier must be addressed to: Debbie-Anne A. Reese, Secretary, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, 12225 Wilkins Avenue, Rockville, MD 20852. The first page of any filing should include the docket numbers P-2731-045 and P-2737-028. Comments emailed to Commission staff are not considered part of the Commission record.

The Commission's Rules of Practice and Procedure require all intervenors filing documents with the Commission to serve a copy of that document on each person whose name appears on the official service list for the project. Further, if an intervenor files comments or documents with the Commission relating to the merits of an issue that may affect the responsibilities of a particular resource agency, they must also serve a copy of the document on that resource agency.

l. Description of Request: On August 1, 2001, the Commission issued 30-year licenses for the Weybridge (Project No. 2731) and Middlebury Lower (Project No. 2737) hydroelectric projects that expire on July 31, 2031. The licensee requests the Commission extend the term of both licenses to July 31, 2041. The extension would allow the licensee to recoup rehabilitation costs associated with planned turbine runner replacement programs at each project.

The licensee also proposes to replace the turbine runner at the Weybridge Project. The proposed upgrade would maintain the project's authorized installed capacity of 3.0 megawatts and decrease the maximum hydraulic capacity of the powerhouse from 1,600 cubic feet per second (cfs) to 1,590 cfs. The licensee states all construction activities associated with the proposed amendment would occur within the Weybridge powerhouse and would be isolated from the river. Access to the powerhouse area during the mobilization and demobilization phases would be via the existing access road, and would not require any ground disturbance. The licensee does not propose any changes to the licensed project operations during or after turbine runner replacement.

m. Locations of the Application: This filing may be viewed on the Commission's website at <http://www.ferc.gov> using the "eLibrary" link. Enter the docket number excluding the last three digits in the docket number field to access the document. You may also register online at <http://www.ferc.gov/docs-filing/esubscription.asp> to be notified via email of new filings and issuances related to this or other pending projects. For assistance, call 1-866-208-3676 or e-mail [FERCOnlineSupport@ferc.gov](mailto:FERCOnlineSupport@ferc.gov), for TTY, call (202) 502-8659. Agencies may obtain copies of the application directly from the applicant.

n. Individuals desiring to be included on the Commission's mailing list should so indicate by writing to the Secretary of the Commission.

o. Comments, Protests, or Motions to Intervene: Anyone may submit comments, a protest, or a motion to intervene in accordance with the requirements of Rules of Practice and Procedure, 18 CFR 385.210, .211, .214, respectively. In determining the appropriate action to take, the Commission will consider all protests or other comments filed, but only those who file a motion to intervene in accordance with the Commission's Rules may become a party to the proceeding. Any comments, protests, or motions to intervene must be received on or before the specified comment date for the particular application.

p. Filing and Service of Documents: Any filing must (1) bear in all capital letters the title "COMMENTS", "PROTEST", or "MOTION TO INTERVENE" as applicable; (2) set forth in the heading the name of the applicant and the project number of the application to which the filing responds; (3) furnish the name, address, and telephone number of the person commenting, protesting or intervening; and (4) otherwise comply with the requirements of 18 CFR 385.2001 through 385.2005. All comments, motions to intervene, or protests must set forth their evidentiary basis. Any filing made by an intervenor must be accompanied by proof of service on all persons listed in the service list prepared by the Commission in this proceeding, in accordance with 18 CFR 385.2010.

q. For public inquiries and assistance with making filings such as interventions, comments, or requests for rehearing, contact the Office of Public Participation at (202) 502-6595 or [OPP@ferc.gov](mailto:OPP@ferc.gov).

**(Authority: 18 CFR 2.1)**

Debbie-Anne A. Reese,  
Secretary

**Sheriff's log***(Continued from Page 9B)*

Union Middle School on the 19th.

In other recent activity, Elmore and his deputies also:

- On Dec. 15 unlocked a vehicle for a person that had locked their keys in the car.
- On Dec. 15 assisted a Middlebury landlord with an eviction.
- On Dec. 15 provided security for

a private event in Middlebury.

- On Dec. 16 helped Vermont State Police locate a vehicle they were looking for following a "road-rage" incident in Bridport.
- On Dec. 16 checked the welfare check of a Shoreham resident. They were discovered to be in need of care and were transported to the hospital for evaluation. Animals in the

home were removed to also receive proper care while their owner was hospitalized.

- On Dec. 17 deputies attended firearms training at the Police Academy in Pittsford.
- On Dec. 17 assisted with a medical call in Orwell.
- On Dec. 17 a deputy gave a presentation about substance abuse to the Boy Scouts in Monkton.
- On Dec. 18 assisted the Solid Waste Transfer Station with locating a person who had driven off without

paying for the disposal of an item.

- On Dec. 18 arrested David Ouellette, 59, of Waltham and cited him for driving with a criminally suspended license in Ferrisburgh. The sheriff said Ouellette had a restriction to have an ignition interlock in the vehicle when driving, which was not present at the time of the traffic stop.
- On Dec. 18 checked the welfare of an Orwell resident. They were connected with a family member that had called for the welfare check.

**WARNING****ANNUAL MEETING, FIRE DISTRICT #1 OF MIDDLEBURY  
EAST MIDDLEBURY, VERMONT**

The legal voters of Fire District #1 in the Town of Middlebury are hereby warned and notified to meet at the Sarah Partridge Community House, 431 East Main Street, East Middlebury on Monday, January 12, 2026, at 7:00 PM to transact the following business, to wit:

**FIRST:** To hear, discuss and act upon the reports from the Prudential Committee, the Treasurer/Collector of Water Rents, and the Auditor.

**SECOND:** To hear reports from the Fire Department, the Historical Society, the Sarah Partridge Library, and the Town of Middlebury.

**THIRD:** To elect Officers of the District as follows:

- A Moderator
- A Clerk
- A Treasurer/Collector of Water Rents
- An Auditor
- A Member of the Prudential Committee to serve for three years
- A Member of the Prudential Committee to serve for two years

**FOURTH:** To vote a tax on the taxable property within the District sufficient to defray maintenance and other expenses of the Sarah Partridge Community House, the Sarah Partridge Library, the Curtiss Recreation Area, and the Harry Goodro Recreation Area.

**FIFTH:** To see if the voters of the Fire District will give the Prudential Committee authority to borrow money on the credit of the District to make emergency repairs on the water system.

**SIXTH:** To see if the voters of the Fire District will give the Prudential Committee authority to pursue a by-law change to increase the number of Prudential Committee Members from three (3) to five (5).

**SEVENTH:** To transact any other business that may properly come before the meeting.

Dated at East Middlebury, Vermont  
December 19, 2025

Jason Larocque, Chairperson

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

FARM CREDIT EAST, ACA  
Plaintiff,

v.

COREY T. CAYIA and  
MARCEL P. LECLAIR  
Defendants.

**NOTICE OF SALE**

By virtue 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-farm-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 Hirschak 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 Hirschak 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](mailto:rlong@primmer.com)

**STATE OF VERMONT****SUPERIOR COURT  
ADDISON UNIT**

7 Mahady Court  
Middlebury VT 05753  
802-388-7741  
[www.vermontjudiciary.org](http://www.vermontjudiciary.org)

**CIVIL DIVISION  
CASE NO. 25-CV-05563**

Date: December 18, 2025

**NOTICE OF HEARING****Addison County Community Trust, Inc. v. Kimberly Coleman**

This is to notify you to appear at the Court named above in connection with the above-named case on:

DATE:	TIME:	DURATION:
January 12, 2026	1:00 PM	30 Minutes

HEARING RE: Motion Hearing  
Civil Complaint

Civil Division Clerk

Any individual with a disability requiring assistance accessing the services, programs, and/or activities at the Courthouse should contact the Clerk's office at the above address for further assistance

\*For instructions to participate in the remote hearing, please contact the Court at 802-388-7741 or Attorney Lesley Deppman at 802-388-6337.

**STATE OF VERMONT****SUPERIOR COURT  
ADDISON UNIT**

In re: Abandoned Mobile Home of Kimberly Coleman  
143 Hillside Drive, Starksboro, Vermont

**CIVIL DIVISION  
DOCKET NO. 25-CV-05563****VERIFIED COMPLAINT**

NOW COMES ADDISON COUNTY COMMUNITY TRUST, INC., Plaintiff, by and through its attorneys, Deppman Law PLC, and, pursuant to 10 V.S.A. § 6249, hereby files this action for sale of abandoned mobile home, and hereby complains of and alleges against Defendant as follows:

1. Addison County Community Trust, Inc., a Vermont non-profit corporation with a principal place of business in Addison County, Vermont, is the owner of the mobile home park located at 143 Hillside Drive, Starksboro, Vermont.

2. The name and last known address of the owner of the mobile home which is the subject of this action is believed to be:

Kimberly Coleman  
143 Hillside Drive  
Starksboro, VT 05487

3. The name and last known mailing address of the last resident of the mobile home is:

Kimberly Coleman  
143 Hillside Drive  
Starksboro, VT 05487

4. The mobile home is, on information and belief, a 2016 Commodore Blazer mobile home, serial number CO53457A. Plaintiff credits Defendant with a security deposit of \$271.00. See Exhibit 1, a true and correct copy of the Lease Agreement related to the subject mobile home.

5. Green Mountain Credit Union has a security interest in the subject mobile home; Addison County Community Trust, Inc., is a guarantor of Defendant's debt. See Exhibit 2, a true and correct copy of the Loan and Security Agreements and Disclosure Statement. The address for the credit union is: Green Mountain Credit Union  
4 Laurel Hill Drive, Suite 3  
South Burlington, VT 05403

6. The facts supporting the claim that the subject mobile home has been abandoned are as follows: Defendant has been evicted and failed to remove the subject mobile home from the lot within three months pursuant to 10 V.S.A. § 6248(a)(2).

7. A disinterested party such as Thomas Hirschak Company, located at 1878 Cady Falls Road, Morrisville, VT 05661, is able to sell the subject mobile home at public auction.

8. The amount of rent due through the date of this action is \$2,835.00. Rent continues to accrue at the rate of \$405 per month. Unpaid property taxes currently total \$5,224.41. Plaintiff has also incurred (and will continue to incur) attorneys' fees and court costs, and will incur costs in connection with the sale of the mobile home.

9. Plaintiff requests that the Court issue an order approving the transfer of the mobile home as unfit for human habitation without a public sale. The mobile home is unfit for human habitation, as verified by Sheriff Michael Elmore in correspondence and photos attached hereto as Exhibit 3, and the attestation of Plaintiff's representative, Tori Marukelli, of the same.

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff prays this Honorable Court grant the relief requested herein and all such other and further relief as to this Court may appear just and equitable.

Dated at Middlebury, Vermont this 12th day of December, 2025.

Plaintiff, ADDISON COUNTY COMMUNITY TRUST, INC.,  
by DEPPMAN LAW PLC, its attorneys  
By: /s/ Lesley B. Deppman  
Lesley B. Deppman, Esq.  
56 Court Street  
Middlebury, Vermont, 05753  
Email: [ldpeppman@midlaw.com](mailto:ldpeppman@midlaw.com)  
Telephone: (802) 388-6337  
Telefacsimile: (802) 382-8840

\*FOR EXHIBITS 1, 2 AND 3, PLEASE CONTACT ATTORNEY LESLEY DEPPMAN AT [ldpeppman@midlaw.com](mailto:ldpeppman@midlaw.com).

**VERIFICATION**

Tori Marukelli, duly authorized representative of Addison County Community Trust, Inc., Plaintiff herein, states the contents of the foregoing Complaint are true to the best of her knowledge, information and belief and the extent based upon information and belief she believes such information to be true.

Dated at Vergennes, Vermont, this 11th day of December, 2025.

/s/ Tori Marukelli

Tori Marukelli

STATE OF VERMONT  
COUNTY OF ADDISON, SS.

Subscribed and sworn to before me this 11th day of December, 2025.

/s/ Sasha Bradford

Notary Public  
My Commission Expires: 1/31/27  
Commission No. 157.0015527  
State of Vermont

# ARTS + LEISURE

The Addison Independent

January 1, 2026



**ORWELL**  
2 + 2 = 5

## PROVOCATIVE DOCUMENTARY FILM SERIES TO SCREEN AT MARQUIS

The Middlebury New Filmmakers Festival Selects monthly screening series will kick off on Jan. 14 by showing the new, thought-provoking documentary "Orwell: 2+2=5." The series will run through May. All films will be screened at the Middlebury Marquis Theater on Wednesday evenings at 7 p.m., with a discussion to follow.

COURTESY PHOTO

**H**appy New Year! Uh, and happy ice? This recent ice storm sure put a damper on a bunch of outdoor rec activities, but fear not, films will keep us going through these long, cold weeks. Get tickets... mark your calendars... and start looking forward to the annual Middlebury New Filmmakers Festival Selects monthly film screenings. Jan. 14 kicks off this year's series with a screening of the relevant and thought-provoking new documentary "Orwell: 2+2=5," and will continue with four additional documentaries through May.

By **ELSIE LYNN PARINI**

First programmed in the winter of 2016, MNFF Selects has been bringing a diverse mix of engaging and distinctive films to local audiences for a decade. The latest edition of the series will focus on ground-breaking documentaries and be screened in partnership with Middlebury's Marquis Theatre. All the Selects screenings will be on Wednesday

evenings at 7 p.m., in the Marquis and each one will include a facilitated post-screening conversation.

Here's the 2026 MNFF Selects line up:

**"Orwell: 2+2=5,"** directed by Raoul Peck, Wednesday, Jan. 14, 7 p.m.

**"Ask E. Jean,"** directed by Ivy Meeropol, Wednesday, Feb. 11, 7 p.m.

**"Bob Mackie: Naked Illusion,"** directed by Matthew Miele, Wednesday, March 11, 7 p.m.

**"Marlee Matlin: Not Alone Anymore,"** directed by Shoshannah Stern, Wednesday, April 15, 7 p.m.

**"Secret Mall Apartment,"** directed by Jeremy Workman, Wednesday, May 13, 7 p.m.

In reviewing the selected films, MNFF Artistic Director Jay Craven noted, "Documentaries are at the forefront of American independent cinema. This series is smart, timely, engaging and provocative. Viewers will have plenty to consider — and an opportunity to expand

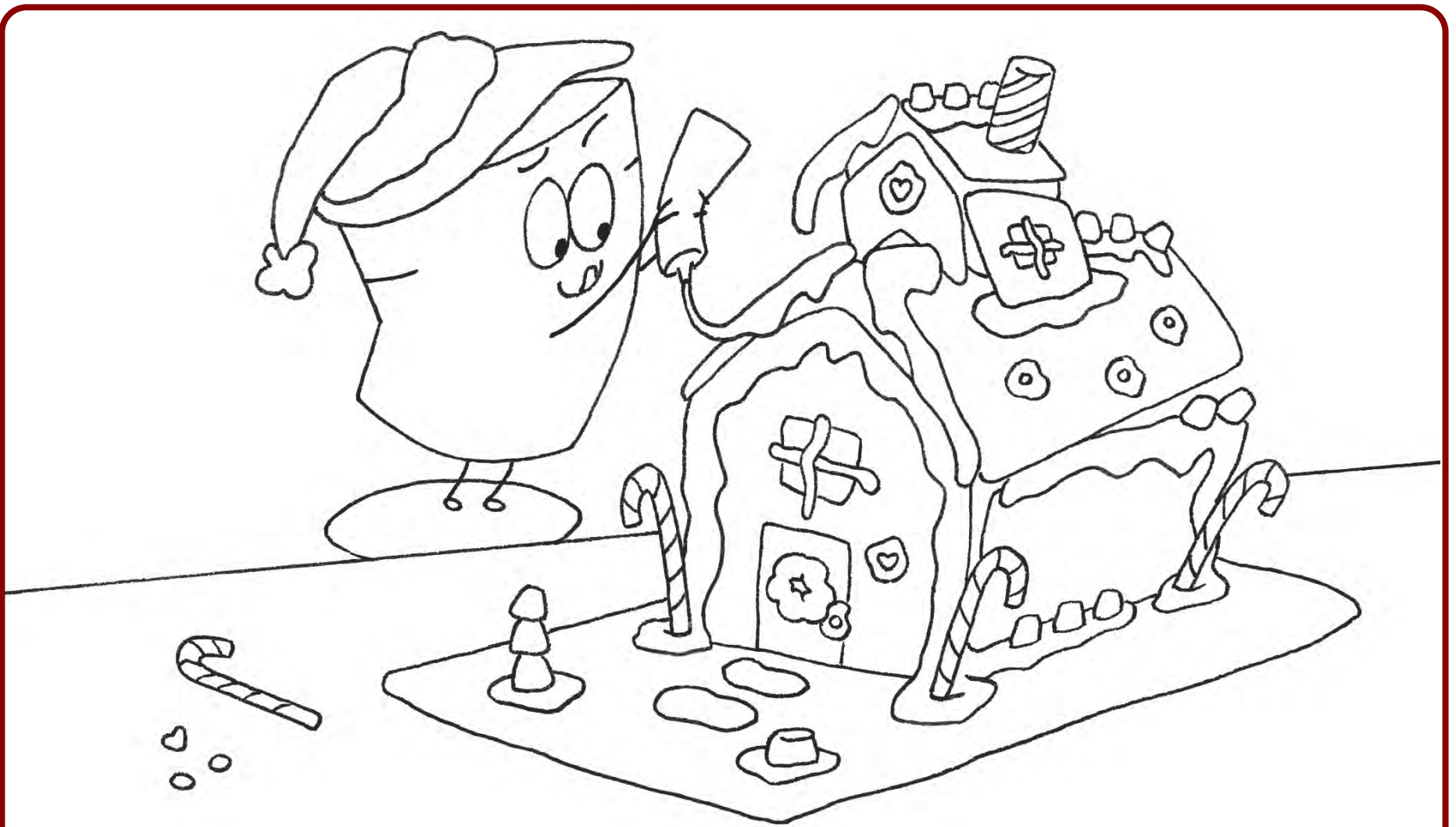
their thinking."

"The MNFF Selects series has presented some incredible films over the past 10 years," added Lloyd Komesar, who has stepped back into the leading role as MNFF's interim producer since MNFF executive director Caitlin Boyle stepped down on Dec. 31, 2025. Some of those "incredible films" Komesar remembers from the fest include "The Eagle Huntress," "Three Identical Strangers," "David Crosby: Remember My Name," "Hallelujah: Leonard Cohen, a Journey, a Song," and "Navalny."

"The journey of exploration continues with our latest slate of fully original documentaries," said Komesar looking forward. "We are thrilled to be working with Ben Wells and his outstanding team at the Marquis to bring these films to our discerning local audiences."

The feeling is mutual.

See FILMS on page 4



# HOLLY JOLLY COLORING & DECORATING CONTEST

Grab your festive art supplies and bring this tasty scene to life!

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

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MIDDLEBURY, VT

**Submit your entries by Friday, January 16th:**


**Email:** [contests@addisonindependent.com](mailto:contests@addisonindependent.com)

**Mail/In Person:** Addison Independent, 58 Maple Street, Middlebury, VT 05753

Feel free to tear out this coloring page or go to [addisonindependent.com/contests](http://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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# BOOK REVIEW: 'Breaking Bread and Drinking Martinis'

**P**eter Langrock likes a good martini. Gin. Beefeaters preferred. A hint of Vermouth. Drier the better.

He likes cigars too. An idyllic meal starts with a martini, good food and conversation, and is capped sipping brandy and leisurely puffing a fine cigar.

By **ANGELO LYNN** But don't pigeon-hole him.

He loves oysters, most fish, fowl and red meat — preferably freshly killed. A fisherman and a hunter, he's been fishing since he was 5 on the shores of Lake Dunmore, a hobby that 82 years later has taken him all over the world seeking elusive marlin off Hawaii, salmon in Alaska, Arctic char in Newfoundland and flyfishing in Wales.

His love of hunting — grouse, duck, turkeys, deer, moose and other game meat — has similarly taken him on many fond travels where he's "broken bread and shared libations" with close friends and hundreds of other acquaintances he's met along the way.

The relationships he's made through those travels and the joys he has gained through the sharing of food and drink spark the stories that are the essence of his 180-page memoir, "Breaking Bread and Drinking Martinis, Tales of Sharing and Sharing of Tales."

Even the book's genesis is a fortuitous tale. In late December 2019, Langrock's grandson, Peter Camardo, graduated from Northeastern University. He had a job offer in Boston that started July 1, 2020, so he and a buddy opted to use that six-month gap time to travel in Asia. No sooner had they arrived when Covid hit. Camardo caught the last flight home before travel shut down and shortly later, visited his grandparents, Peter and Joann, at their small Salisbury farm.

In the thick of Covid, they hunkered down for five months, ate meals at home and told stories. At one point, the grandson asked the elder how he



*Peter Langrock poses with a partridge he shot in Addison County, left, and a string of fish he caught in Lake Dunmore when he was a young boy. COURTESY PHOTOS*

could remember so many meals with so many friends, and Langrock said he could probably recall 1,000 memorable meals. His grandson good-heartedly challenged the assertion and the bet was on.

While the author doesn't come close to reciting that many short snippets of tales around the table or bar or campsite, the reader is nonetheless amazed he remembers so many and with such sharp de-tail. That's possible because what's evident is that Langrock has lived the saying, carpe diem. He treats good times with friends over food and drink as if they are the most important moments in life and he makes the most of every trip, chance meeting and opportunity he can.

Life's not all fun and games, and Langrock mixes in stories of the founding of his legal practice — first as the State's Attorney of Addison County in 1960, a half-time job earning \$2,000 annually plus \$400 in expenses, then a private practice, later joining with Mark Sperry and Fred Parker to form the largest law practice in Middlebury. He would join with Michael Wool to open a law office in Burlington in 1982 under brand the firm as Langrock Sperry & Wool. Tales of the firm around daily group lunches, historic cases, a first for a law firm in Vermont that led to a friendship with Hillary Clinton, and another opportunity — serving as a Commissioner of Uniform State Laws for Vermont — that created a friendship with the late Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader

Ginsburg, are among many snippets involving the firm sprinkled liberally through the book.

He's not shy about dropping names of friends and acquaintances of note, or of a particularly good bottle of wine or a fine cigar, but it's the time spent with friends in interesting places that's the heart of this book.

Not surprisingly, there are plenty of "favorite" places to which the reader is introduced.

An example is the Cajun restaurant in New Orleans, K Paul's Louisiana Kitchen, discovered during an annual meeting of the Uniform Law Commission. The chef, Paul Prudhomme, who would later establish himself as a celebrity chef, served Langrock and a friend a Cajun martini. Peter re-calls the moment in detail: "The martinis came to us served in a ball jar loaded with ice and clear white liquor. The first taste told us all. One of the joys of drinking a martini is the first sip with its clean clear taste that lingers for a moment after the liquid is swallowed. The surprising thing about the Cajun martini was this first clean taste lingered and lingered and lingered. The sharpness of a jalapeno pepper added to the lingering flavor... It was magnificent."

And so it goes, tale after tale, from fresh salmon and Arctic char cooked fresh by a stream in New-foundland to meeting his future wife while



*Peter and his wife Joann, at right, and his grandson, Peter Camardo, to whom the book is dedicated, and his partner, Sahana Rao-Chakravorti, at the Oyster Bar in New York City.*

*See MARTINIS on page 11*

# FILMS

*continued from page 1*

"MNFF Selects is such a terrific way to bring more, and different, films to the community," said Wells, who's owned and operated the

Middlebury Marquis since 2014.

Did you know, that was the inaugural year of the MNFF, too!?! Kismet.

"This is also a great way for a larger audience to experience all that The Marquis offers," Wells added. "From our new, state-of-the-art laser projectors, to our amazing margaritas and home-cooked Southwest fare, we are excited to share the best movie-going experience with as many folks as possible."

Margaritas... Southwest fare... provocative films and discussions... Now that sounds like a good way to spend the winter. Advance tickets to the films are \$14 and are available at middleburymarquis.com. Or night-of-show tickets cost \$16. For additional information about the MNFF Select series and all the films, visit middfilmfest.org.

## ABOUT THE FILMS

### **Orwell: 2+2=5**

A fascinating new film from Academy Award-nominated director Raoul Peck, about the much revered, visionary writer George Orwell. Peck provides not only a definitive portrait of the writer himself, but an entirely fresh take on how prophetic his work has become, be it "Animal Farm," "1984" or his many essays and critiques. A discussion with MNFF Artistic Director Jay Craven and Middlebury College Professor Emeritus Shalom Goldman will follow the screening. Showing: Jan. 14. Advance tickets on sale Jan. 1.

### **Ask E. Jean**

A brand new film from director Ivy Meeropol about the life of E. Jean Carroll, from her early days as Miss Cheerleader USA to her rise as a trailblazing journalist, author and beloved advice columnist. Carroll broke barriers as the first female editor at Esquire, Playboy and Outside, helping to redefine women's roles in media with her sharp wit and fearless voice. More recently, she became the only woman to beat Donald Trump twice in court, sparking a national conversation about truth, accountability and resilience. A Zoom Q&A with Sundance award-winning writer, cinematographer and

editor Ferne Pearlstein is planned. Showing: Feb. 11. Advance tickets on sale Feb. 2.

### **Bob Mackie: Naked Illusion**

A delightful and richly visual portrait of Bob Mackie, one of the greatest and most prolific celebrity

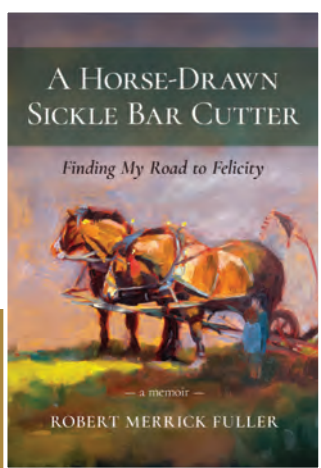
costume designers in show business. Still active and productive at age 87, Mackie designed and crafted costumes and outfits that were singular and striking for clients like Carol Burnett, Cher and Elton John, who appear often in the film along with many others. A Zoom Q&A with director Matthew Miele is planned. Showing: March 11. Advance tickets on sale March 2.

### **Marlee Matlin: Not Alone Anymore**

A vital and affecting story about the career of deaf actor Marlee Matlin, who broke through with her astonishing work in the 1986 feature film "Children of a Lesser God," winning the Academy Award for Best Actress in a Leading Role at age 21. Directed by Shoshannah Stern, who is also deaf, the film displays the genuine chemistry between the two women as they explore the ups and downs of Ms. Matlin's life. Q&A will be announced. Showing: April 15. Advance tickets on sale April 6.

### **Secret Mall Apartment**

In the category of "truth is stranger than fiction," this hugely entertaining film depicts the story of eight Rhode Island artists, who in 2003, created a secret apartment inside the busy Providence Place Mall and lived there for four years, filming everything along the way. They snuck in furniture, tapped into the mall's electricity, and even constructed a wall, smuggling in more than two tons of cinderblock. Far more than just a wild prank, the secret apartment became a deeply meaningful place for its inhabitants. A Zoom Q&A with director Jeremy Workman and producer Matthew Spain is planned. Showing: May 13. Advance tickets on sale May 4.



"Fuller has indeed led a fascinating life, and his passion is palpable and contagious. The willingness to make mistakes, the inevitability of failure, and unending perseverance are relatable and inspiring themes... as the author proudly asserts that, with passion and tenacity, everyone can find their "felicity." "

— Kirkus Reviews

Available now at Vermont Bookshop in Middlebury, Recycled Reading in Bristol, Phoenix Books in Burlington, bookshop.org, and other online stores.



"Orwell: 2+2=5" will screen on Jan. 14 in Middlebury

**JESSICA'S**  
AT  
SWIFT HOUSE INN

## WINE WEDNESDAYS ARE BACK!

Join Sommelier Ella Donnelly-Wright for themed wine tastings every Wednesday through May. Drop by between 5:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. Complimentary nibbles included. Deep discounts on featured wines.

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January 21: Sip Your Way Through Spain  
January 28: Chardonnay, Anything but Basic

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# ART ON EXHIBIT

## BRANDON ARTISTS GUILD

7 Center St, Brandon. For more info visit [brandonartistsguild.org](http://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](http://edgewatergallery.com), call 802-458-0098 or email [info@edgewatergallery-vt.com](mailto: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](http://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](http://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](http://henrysheldonmuseum.org)

**"Material Narratives: Ornament & Identity."** Organized by students of Professor Erin Sassin'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.

# Cosmic Forecast

**ARIES:** March 21/April 20. Aries, look for ways to boost your income this week. Be open to dealing with people who may otherwise not come on your radar. Some extra earnings will be useful.

**TAURUS:** April 21/May 21. Taurus, you may be happy to socialize this week, especially with new people who are friendly and congenial. Enjoy some time out on the town and the chance to meet new people.

**GEMINI:** May 22/June 21. Right now you are anxious to work and be productive, Gemini. However, obstacles seem to get in your way left and right. You might need to devise a plan to overcome the challenges.

**CANCER:** June 22/July 22. Your involvement in sports, groups and clubs will be a positive experience for you this week, Cancer. Not only will you enjoy the interaction, you will feel a sense of optimism.

**LEO:** July 23/Aug. 23. Leo, there's no better time to identify financial commitments and make changes to how you move your money than right now. The doors of financial institutions will open for you.

**VIRGO:** Aug. 24/Sept. 22. Virgo, you might make an excellent impression on others today, especially a boss that has had their eyes on you for some time. Fear not; you are only projecting good things.

**LIBRA:** Sept. 23/Oct. 23. This is the perfect time to travel or try a new activity, Libra. Go someplace you have never been before. That may involve exploring your own neighborhood or city.

**SCORPIO:** Oct. 24/Nov. 22. Enjoy the company of others this week, Scorpio. People will be warm, friendly, inclusive and generally happy to share ideas and experiences with you.

**SAGITTARIUS:** Nov. 23/Dec. 21. Work-related travel may be on the itinerary this week, Sagittarius. You also might find yourself more involved with foreign affairs or people from other cultures.

**CAPRICORN:** Dec. 22/Jan. 20. Capricorn, accept invitations to socialize with others this week. This is a great opportunity to have fun. It's a good time to enjoy movies, the arts or the entertainment world in general.

**AQUARIUS:** Jan. 21/Feb. 18. Think about inviting someone over for coffee or pizza. You might be motivated to have an impromptu social gathering, Aquarius. Others will be happy to take you up on the offer.

**PISCES:** Feb. 19/March 20. Convincing others to embrace your way of thinking may require a little more effort than you are able to put forth right now, Pisces. Be patient and things will change for the better.

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## FAMOUS BIRTHDAYS

JAN. 2 — Isaac Asimov, writer (d)

JAN. 3 — J.R.R. Tolkien, writer (d)

JAN. 4 — Isaac Newton, physicist (d)

JAN. 5 — Alvin Ailey, choreographer (d)

JAN. 6 — Joan of Arc, military leader, martyr (d)

JAN. 7 — Zora Neale Hurston, folklorist and anthropologist (d)

JAN. 8 — Cynthia Erivo, actor (39)

# CALENDAR

## January 1-31

# 2026

### 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.

**PIANIST ARIELLE LEVIOFF IN MIDDLEBURY.** Friday, Jan. 2, noon, Champlain Valley Unitarian Universalist Society, 2 Duane Ct. Arielle Levioff, music director of Point Counterpoint on Lake Dunmore, performs "The Goldberg Variations" by J.S.

Bach. Adults \$10 minimum donation; students free. Parking available at MUHS, with limited on-site parking for those needing easier access.

**"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

**A REVOLUTIONARY PRESS COMMUNITY PRINTING 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 midday music 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 the public.

**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.

### "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.

### 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.

### SUNDAY, JAN. 11

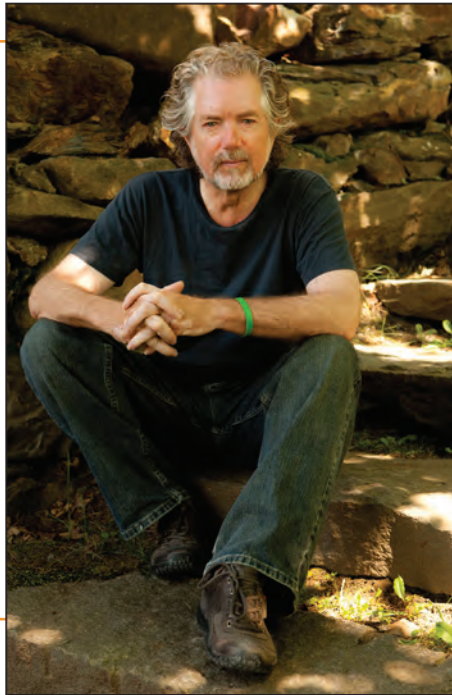
**GREEN MOUNTAIN CLUB HIKE/SNOWSHOE IN KEENE VALLEY, N.Y.** Sunday, Jan. 11. Enjoy a 4.6-mile round trip hike up Snow Mountain. Easy and moderate terrain with an elevation gain of about 1400 feet. Snowshoes and/or micro-spikes may be required depending on conditions. Group size limited to 8. Plan to meet at the parking area across from the entrance to Crown Point State Historic Site, followed by a 45-minute drive to the trailhead. Contact Barry Francis at barryfrancis@gmavt.net for further details. More info at gmcbreadloaf.org.

*Continued on next page*

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.	
<b>Channel 1071</b> Through the Night: VT Media Exchange, Bulletin Board <b>Thursday, January 1</b> 4 a.m. Democracy Now 5 a.m. NRC: 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 <b>Friday, January 2</b> 4 a.m. Democracy Now 5 a.m. Press Conferences 6:30 a.m. Montpelier Happy Hour 7:30 a.m. Congregational Service 12 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 <b>Saturday, January 3</b> 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. US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants 9 p.m. On Being Brave <b>Sunday, January 4</b> 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 7:30 p.m. Energy Week 8:30 p.m. Straight Talk - Food Bank 11 p.m. Democracy Now <b>Monday, January 5</b> 4 a.m. Democracy Now 5 a.m. Straight Talk - Food Bank 5:30 a.m. Eckankar 6 a.m. Addiction Recovery Channel 9:30 a.m. Press Conferences 10 a.m. Selectboard 1 p.m. Montpelier Happy Hour 1 p.m. Press Conferences 10 p.m. Democracy Now	11 p.m. All Things LGBTQ <b>Tuesday, January 6</b> 4 a.m. Democracy Now 5 a.m. All Things LGBTQ 6 a.m. Press Conferences 9:30 a.m. Eckankar 10 a.m. Selectboard 1 p.m. Montpelier Happy Hour 4 p.m. Congregational Service 7 p.m. Selectboard 10 p.m. Democracy Now 11 p.m. Energy Week <b>Wednesday, January 7</b> 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 1 p.m. Press Conferences 7 p.m. Selectboard 10 p.m. Democracy Now 11 p.m. Stopping Scams <b>Channel 1091</b> <b>Thursday, January 1</b> 6 a.m. Tai Chi 6:30 a.m. Yoga	10 a.m. Authors and Poets 12 p.m. VT Humanities 2 p.m. Sports 9 p.m. "A Christmas Memory" 10 p.m. Holiday Concerts <b>Friday, January 2</b> 5 a.m. Tai Chi 5:30 a.m. Chair Yoga 6:30 a.m. Yoga for Kids 7 a.m. School Board Meetings 2 p.m. ABA Basketball 4:30 p.m. High School Sports 7 p.m. State Board of Education <b>Saturday, January 3</b> 5:30 a.m. Tai Chi 6 a.m. Chair Yoga 7:30 a.m. Yoga for Kids 10 a.m. VT Humanities 11 a.m. State Board of Education 3 p.m. High School Sports 7 p.m. Holiday Concerts <b>Sunday, January 4</b> 5:30 a.m. Tai Chi 6 a.m. Chair Yoga 7 a.m. Yoga for Kids 7:30 a.m. Holiday Concerts 10 a.m. VT Humanities	11:30 a.m. High School Sports 5 p.m. A Child's Christmas in Wales 8 p.m. State Board of Education <b>Monday, January 5</b> 5:30 a.m. Tai Chi 6 a.m. Chair Yoga 7:30 a.m. School Board Meetings 3:30 p.m. High School Sports 6:30 p.m. ACSD Board 10:30 p.m. Authors and Poets <b>Tuesday, January 6</b> 5:30 a.m. Tai Chi 6 a.m. Yoga 7 a.m. School Board Meetings 6 p.m. Authors and Poets 8 p.m. Pecha Kucha Night 9:30 p.m. Memories of Salisbury <b>Wednesday, January 7</b> 5 a.m. Tai Chi 5:30 a.m. Chair Yoga 7 a.m. Science and Nature Programs 12 p.m. School Board Meetings 8 p.m. Pecha Kucha Night	

## Top Pick

Vermont filmmaker Jay Craven will present **"Vermont Cinema: How and Why" at 7 p.m., Thursday, Jan. 15, at the Ferrisburgh Town Hall.** Craven will tell a story of his adventures and experiences in developing a sustained filmmaking career in the unlikely setting of Vermont. In his talk, Craven will describe working with a wide range of actors, including Rip Torn, Tantoo Cardinal, Kris Kristofferson, Martin Sheen, Ernie Hudson and Michael J. Fox. He'll share the rich satisfactions and substantial challenges that come from a deep immersion into place-based, narrative filmmaking. For more information, visit [unionmeetinghall.org/programming-and-events](http://unionmeetinghall.org/programming-and-events).



be turned away due to lack of funds.

### TUESDAY, JAN. 20

**IRISH MUSIC NIGHT WITH RAMBLETREE IN MIDDLEBURY.** Tuesday, Jan. 20, 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. 21

**HELEN WHYBROW AND ETHAN TAPPER TALK IN MIDDLEBURY.** Wednesday, Jan. 21, 6:30 p.m., Town Hall Theater, 72-76 Merchants Row. Vermont Book Shop and Town Hall Theater present a conversation with award-winning Vermont writers Helen Whybrow and Ethan Tapper about how their lives on the land inspired their recent books, "The Salt Stones" and "How to Love a Forest." The authors will discuss writing, land stewardship and relationships to place. Books available for purchase. Free with registration. More info and registration at [addisonarts.org](http://addisonarts.org).

### THURSDAY, JAN. 22

**GREEN MOUNTAIN CLUB HOGBACK MOUNTAIN SNOWSHOE IN GOSHEN.** RESCHEDULED FROM JAN 10. Thursday, Jan. 22, Blueberry Hill Inn, 1245 Goshen-Ripton Road. Snowshoe for about 3 miles around Hogback Mountain

at Blueberry Hill Inn. Great views! Dogs welcome on leash only. Contact Morris Earle at [morrisearle@gmail.com](mailto:morrisearle@gmail.com) or 802-734-0984. More info at [gmcbreadloaf.org](http://gmcbreadloaf.org).

### FRIDAY, JAN. 23

**VIVALDI'S FOUR SEASONS IN CORNWALL.** Friday, Jan. 23, 5 p.m., Cornwall Congregational Church, 2598 Route 30. Middlebury Community Music Center String Ensembles, directed by Emily Sunderman, present Vivaldi's "Winter" from The Four Seasons. Free. More info at [mcmc-vt.org](http://mcmc-vt.org).

### MIDDLEBURY COLLEGE J-TERM MUSICAL: "URINETOWN" IN

**MIDDLEBURY.** Friday, Jan. 23, 7:30 p.m., Town Hall Theater, Rothrock Main Stage, 72-76 Merchants Row. The culminating production of Middlebury College's J-Term course "Making a Musical: Process and Performance." "Urinetown" is a satirical musical lampooning corporate greed, social irresponsibility and musical theater itself, while also telling an unexpected love story. Tickets go on sale Monday, Jan. 5, at noon. Tickets at [addisonarts.org](http://addisonarts.org).

### SATURDAY, JAN. 24

**MIDDLEBURY COLLEGE J-TERM MUSICAL: "URINETOWN" IN MIDDLEBURY.** Saturday, Jan. 24, 7:30 p.m., Town Hall Theater, Rothrock Main Stage, 72-76 Merchants Row. See Jan. 23 listing.

### SUNDAY, JAN. 25

**GREEN MOUNTAIN CLUB HIKE/SNOWSHOE IN LINCOLN.** Sunday, Jan. 25. Difficult hike/snowshoe up the Battell Trail to the lean-to and possible ascent of Mt. Abraham. Plan for full winter conditions, snowshoes required. At least 3-6 miles with more than 1,000 feet of elevation gain. Contact Ellen Cronan at 908-595-2926 for more information. More info at [gmcbreadloaf.org](http://gmcbreadloaf.org).

### MIDDLEBURY COLLEGE J-TERM MUSICAL: "URINETOWN" IN

**MIDDLEBURY.** Sunday, Jan. 25, 2 p.m., Town Hall Theater, Rothrock Main Stage, 72-76 Merchants Row. See Jan. 23 listing.

**GREEN MOUNTAIN CLUB BREAD LOAF SECTION ANNUAL MEETING IN MIDDLEBURY.** Sunday, Jan. 25, 6:30 p.m., Champlain Valley Unitarian Universalist Society, 2 Duane Ct. Business meeting followed by a talk from Keegan Tierney, GMC's Director of Field Programs. Doors open at 6:15 p.m., meeting starts at 6:30. All are welcome. More info at [gmcbreadloaf.org](http://gmcbreadloaf.org).

### TUESDAY, JAN. 27

**THE LOOP WITH CRAIG MARAVITCH: THE ELEMENTS OF FOLLY IN MIDDLEBURY.** Tuesday, Jan. 27, 5 p.m., Town Hall Theater, 72-76 Merchants Row. Explore folly, laughter and power with director Craig Maravitch, Town Hall Theater's Lindsay Pontius, the company of "Urinetown" and Beyond the Page actors. Bar opens at 4:30 p.m. Suggested donation \$5-\$20; no one turned away for lack of funds. More info at [addisonarts.org](http://addisonarts.org).

### MIDDLEBURY COLLEGE J-TERM MUSICAL: "URINETOWN" IN

**MIDDLEBURY.** Tuesday, Jan. 27, 7:30 p.m., Town Hall Theater, Rothrock Main Stage, 72-76 Merchants Row. See Jan. 23 listing.

### WEDNESDAY, JAN. 28

**MIDDLEBURY COLLEGE J-TERM MUSICAL: "URINETOWN" IN MIDDLEBURY.** Wednesday, Jan. 28, 7:30 p.m., Town Hall Theater, Rothrock Main Stage, 72-76 Merchants Row. See Jan. 23 listing.

### SATURDAY, JAN. 31

**GREEN MOUNTAIN CLUB SKI/SNOWSHOE IN GOSHEN.** Saturday, Jan. 31. Cross-country ski to the Sugar Hill Reservoir from Chatfield parking. Round trip will be about 6 miles. Dogs welcome on leash only. Contact Morris Earle at [morrisearle@gmail.com](mailto:morrisearle@gmail.com) or 802-734-0984. More info at [gmcbreadloaf.org](http://gmcbreadloaf.org).

See more

**CALENDAR LISTINGS**

Online!

[ADDISONINDEPENDENT.COM](http://ADDISONINDEPENDENT.COM)

### THURSDAY, JAN. 15

**HELEN WHYBROW AUTHOR TALK: "THE SALT STONES" IN VERGENNES.** Thursday, Jan. 15, 5:30 p.m., Bixby Memorial Library, 258 Main St. Vermont author Helen Whybrow will discuss her newest memoir and reflect on raising a family, tending a herd of sheep and fully inhabiting a piece of land. The book was recently longlisted for the National Book Award and featured on NPR.

**"VERMONT CINEMA: HOW AND WHY?"** in Ferrisburgh. Thursday, Jan. 15, 7 p.m., Ferrisburgh Town Hall, 3279 Route 7. Filmmaker Jay Craven presents a free talk exploring his five-decade career creating place-based films rooted in Vermont and New England. This Vermont Humanities event is hosted by the Friends of the Union Meeting Hall. ADA access currently limited due to elevator maintenance. Concessions available for purchase. Free. More info at [unionmeetinghall@gmail.com](mailto:unionmeetinghall@gmail.com).

### FRIDAY, JAN. 16

**GREEN MOUNTAIN CLUB HIKE/SNOWSHOE IN CHARLOTTE.** Friday, Jan. 16, Charlotte Wildlife Refuge, 1489 Greenbush Road. Chill out and experience some of the many jewels of the Charlotte Wildlife Refuge, a biodiverse park with beautiful views of Lake Champlain and the Adirondacks. Easy three miles. Contact Ken Corey at 802-349-3733 or [kencorey53@gmail.com](mailto:kencorey53@gmail.com) to register. More info at [gmcbreadloaf.org](http://gmcbreadloaf.org).

### NAHRE SOL ON PIANO IN MIDDLEBURY.

Friday, Jan. 16, 7:30 p.m., Mahaney Arts Center, Olin C. Robison Concert Hall, Middlebury College, 72 Porter Field Road. Middlebury College's Performing Arts Series presents the Vermont debut of classically trained pianist and composer Nahre Sol, whose work spans chamber music, ambient soundscapes, improvisation and more. \$30 general admission, \$20 Middlebury ID holders/PASS members, \$10 youth under 21, \$5 Middlebury students. Open to the public. Tickets at [go.middlebury.edu/tickets](http://go.middlebury.edu/tickets).

### SATURDAY, JAN. 17

**LIVE MUSIC BY DETOUR IN VERGENNES.** Saturday, Jan. 17, 6-10 p.m., Vergennes American Legion Post 14, 100 Armory Ln. Live music by Detour featuring hits from the 1950s and 1960s and classic rock and roll. Come dance the night away and enjoy friends, music and community spirit. Admission by donation. Open to the public.

### BIANCA STONE BOOK RELEASE PARTY IN

**MIDDLEBURY.** Saturday, Jan. 17, 7-8:30 p.m., Town Hall Theater, Anderson Studio, 72-76 Merchants Row. Town Hall Theater presents Vermont Poet Laureate Bianca Stone celebrating the release of her new book, "The Near and Distant World." The evening includes a cocktail hour from 6-7 p.m., followed by a talk, reading, and Q&A. Tickets \$5-\$20 at [addisonarts.org](http://addisonarts.org). No one will



California Nebula in Perseus.

IMAGE COURTESY OF MICHELLE HERNANDEZ WHO IMAGED THE EMISSION NEBULA USING STELLARVUE SVX140T-R AND TAKAHASHI TOA-130NFB TELESCOPES AND A MORAVIAN INSTRUMENTS CAMERA C3-6100 PRO.

## Wonders of the winter sky during the season of light

The winter solstice back on Dec. 21, 2025, marked the point of the longest night of the year in the northern hemisphere and with that event came the promise of increasing daylength and higher sun angle, though very slowly through January. People of many religions, traditions and world views connect with stories, symbols and metaphors related to calling this the season of light. Many celebrate the season of long nights with adding designs of colored lights shining into the darkness. For others, it is a time to shine the lights of joy and hope with song and worship. Astronomers have more time to collect and analyze ancient light.

The winter solstice is an astronomical holiday indifferent to the extremes of human difference. It is based upon beautiful physical laws and geometry, with a dose of cosmic rareness. Solstices mark the minimum and maximum for daylength, while the equinoxes mark inflection points where everyone on Earth experiences equal day and night. Perhaps all the solstices and equinoxes could be declared global holidays with ceasefires and where acceptance, love and peace reign. May you have a little extra peace and have it become infectious throughout the season of light and beyond!

### WONDERS OF WINTER

Clear, cold nights of winter in Vermont are studded with eye-popping bright stars, asterisms, star clusters, nebulae and galaxies. In this season of light, try to collect some of it from vast distances with a lens or mirror larger than the lenses of your eyes. Even the most basic of optics, including your phone camera, will enable you to see beyond your own vision to discover many wonders in the heavens. You will be seeing light in the apparent darkness of the background Universe, which is actually brimming with ancient light.

To navigate around the winter sky and locate deep sky objects, it is first helpful to learn some of the more conspicuous bright stars and asterisms. Use your planisphere and phone app (e.g. Stellarium) to help locate and confirm what you are looking at as you star

hop to different constellations. First, check out the table containing many of the brightest stars in the sky. They form a hexagonal shape in the sky. The winter hexagon consists of the brightest star Sirius and others in the very bright category (top 20). Once you identify one star such as Sirius in Canis Major or Rigel in the familiar Orion, just go around the hexagon and check out the other bright stars and their adjacent constellations. You can then use them to star hop to deep sky objects. Select a target object from the Messier catalog, such as M 31, the Andromeda galaxy. Estimate the region where it is located by star hopping from the W of Cassiopea into the constellation Andromeda. With a pair of binoculars, slowly and methodically scan that region while looking slightly to the side where there are more light sensitive rod cells (averted vision). Voila! There it is, a faint, fuzzy patch of 2.5-million-year old light.

Stars of the winter hexagon, their color, and apparent magnitudes listed in order of brightness. <sup>a,b</sup>

Stars	Color	Constellation
Sirius (- 1.46 )	white/blue	Canis Major
Capella (+ .08)	yellow	Auriga
Rigel (+ 0.12)	blue-white	Orion
Procyon (+ 0.38)	yellow-white	Canis Minor
Aldebaran (+ 0.85)	orange	Taurus
Pollux (+ 1.14)	yellow-orange	Gemini
Castor near Pollux (+ 1.6)	blue-white	Gemini

<sup>a</sup> Apparent magnitude is a reverse logarithmic scale where a difference in magnitude of 1 is about a 2.5-fold difference in brightness. The lower the number of magnitude, the brighter the object. For example, a magnitude 1 star is 2.5 times brighter than a magnitude 2 star, a mag 1 star is 2.5 squared, or 6.25 times as bright as a mag 3 star and so on.

<sup>b</sup> Comparison magnitudes: Currently, Jupiter is about - 2.8 and Saturn + 0.9. A full moon is -12.6 to -12.9 and the Sun ~ 26.7.

### OTHER ASTERISMS TO IDENTIFY

Look for the "W" of Cassiopea.

**Winter Triangle** – equilateral triangle formed by the bright stars Sirius, Betelgeuse, and Procyon.

**Orion's Belt** – a line of 3 stars similar in brightness.

**Square of Pegasus** – relatively bright stars (2.1 to 2.8)

**Sickle of Leo** – shaped like a backwards question mark and containing the bright stars Regulus (1.35) and Denebola (2.1)

Locate the belt of Orion and then look within the sword hanging below it to observe the Great Nebula in Orion (M42.) a photogenic emission nebula giving birth to new stars. Within the nebula is a trapezoidal-shaped configuration of young stars burning hot and bright. A pair of binoculars or a small telescope will provide a rich view of stars and nebulae in this region, such as the Horsehead Nebula (a dark nebula).

Our neighbor spiral galaxy in Andromeda, M 31, is visible as a faint, fuzzy patch of light not far from the right side of the W in Cassiopeia which points east past a couple stars in Andromeda to the faint smudge that is M31. Time exposures will show the full extent of M 31, an angular diameter of about 6 widths of the full moon. This galaxy of an estimated trillion stars is located about 2.5 million light years away and is heading toward the Milky Way, but don't hold your breath for a merger.

Another galaxy accessible with modest size optics is Bode's galaxy (M 81), 12 million light years distant and located about a fist's width from the Big Dipper's bowl in Ursa Major. Bode's galaxy is a grand design spiral galaxy. About 10% of observed galaxies have the classic well developed features such as the continuous spiral arms winding out from a bright central region. Astronomers have collected data and imaged the surroundings of a supermassive black hole at the center of M 81.

In addition to the familiar Pleiades and  
See LOOK UP on page 15

UPCOMING

# MUSIC

## The Basics

**What:** "Duo Dulce" violin and cello duet

**Where:** 10 Green Street Wine Bar, Vergennes

**When:** Saturday, Jan. 10, 6-8 p.m.

**Admission:** Free

## Violin and cello duet performs 'off stage' in Vergennes

The Vergennes Opera House "Off Stage" performance series continues with an intimate evening of chamber music featuring "Duo Dulce," a violin and cello duet at 10 Green Street Wine Bar in downtown Vergennes. Set in the warm, welcoming atmosphere of one of the little city's newest gathering spaces, the performance invites the audience to experience classical music up close and off the traditional concert stage while the Vergennes Opera House is under construction.

The program showcases the expressive range of Laura Markowitz on violin and John Dunlop on cello. Admission is free. Drinks and hors d'oeuvres will be available for purchase.

**John Dunlop** has been teaching and performing in the Northeast for over 30 years. He studied at Oberlin and the San Francisco Conservatory of Music and currently serves as principal cello with the VSO. Further, he plays with many of the most talented performers in the area, performing new works with the TURN Music Ensemble, the Skylark Quartet, the VSO sponsored Jukebox Quartet and others. Dunlop has trained several generations of young musicians, many of which have gone on to major conservatories to pursue careers in performance, education and academia. He has taught at Dartmouth College, University of Vermont, and the Monteverdi School in Montpelier, but focuses now on his private studio in Richmond.

**Laura Markowitz**, a Pennsylvania native, has been a violinist with the VSO since 1991. She



Cellist John Dunlop and violinist Laura Markowitz will perform an intimate concert at 10 Green Street Wine Bar in Vergennes on Saturday, Jan. 10, from 6-8 p.m. COURTESY PHOTOS

received her bachelor's in music from Indiana University and studied post-graduate at Akron University. Markowitz currently maintains a private teaching studio in Richmond, where she teaches violin and fiddle to beginners and advanced players. She also coaches students in the Vermont Youth Orchestra.

### About the Vergennes Opera House

The Vergennes Opera House is managed 100% by volunteers who reinvest all proceeds into the 129-years-young historic

theater. The 2025-2026 season is unusual in that most of the performances are taking place "Off Stage," so that the opera house can complete its All Access Project. This includes the installation of a new elevator, accessible walkway and interior ADA improvements. "On Stage" productions will begin at the end of March this year.

For more information visit [vergennesoperahouse.org](http://vergennesoperahouse.org) or contact [info@vergennesoperahouse.org](mailto:info@vergennesoperahouse.org) or 802-877-6737.



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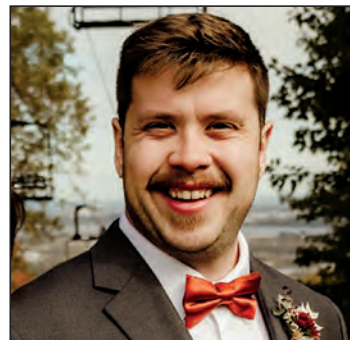
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# ASK A MASTER GARDENER

IT'S SHARP TO KEEP YOUR GARDEN TOOLS MAINTAINED



*Benjamin Block is a UVM Extension Master Gardener intern from Montpelier.*

**H**ome gardeners use a variety of hand tools to achieve their desired results for gardening and landscape maintenance. A quick search at any garden center or online retailer uncovers a vast diversity of equipment, implements and gear. These include, but are certainly not limited to, shovels and hoes, loppers and pruners, and trowels and soil knives.

By **BENJAMIN BLOCK**

When new, these tools help with garden tasks flawlessly. However, like most things in our world, they need a bit of maintenance to perform well over the long term. High-quality tools can last over 30 years with regular care. To ensure the investment you

make in these tools lasts for a long while, let's discuss how to maintain the most common garden tools.

The first step is to keep tools clean. Dirty tools can be washed with soapy water, but do not leave them to soak. Always dry your tools thoroughly to prevent rust. Tools used to prune diseased plants should be sanitized. A quick wipe with rubbing alcohol after (and even during) pruning should do the trick. Rust and residues from metal components can be removed with a wire brush or steel wool. A nylon brush is best for more sensitive pieces, such as wooden handles.

The second step is to keep tool edges

sharp. Sharp tools equal less work. Shovels, trowels, hoes and soil knives all do similar tasks of penetrating soil. It's reasonable to assume that these tools are blunt instruments, yet they benefit from a sharp edge. A dull edge can be sharpened with a mill file.

Similarly, pruners, loppers, and shears can benefit from frequent sharpening to improve how well they cut. A sharp blade not only makes efficient cuts but also decreases the surface areas of branch cuts, helping reduce the incidence of disease.

Hand file or whetstone, even medium-grade sandpaper, can be used to sharpen single- and double-bevel blades. When sharpening tools yourself, be sure to wear eye protection and gloves in case of any errant metal slivers. Sharpen by moving the file or whetstone in the same direction across the blade, following the tool's original bevel. Avoid using a scrubbing or back-and-forth action, as that can dull the blade. Typically, you want to start at the inside (closest to you) of the blade and use long, one-directional strokes outward. If your tool allows, disassembling it and removing the blade can help make this task easier. It also gives you a chance to remove rust and debris hidden in the joints and screws.

Now that the "action-end" of the tool has been addressed, the third step is to consider the other parts of the tool. Many tools are made of wood and should be regularly sealed and finished. Linseed oil works well here. If wooden handles have splintered, sand them and then seal.

Any tool with a movement would benefit from the application of penetrating oil. Some oils also contain a dissolving component that helps remove built-up residues, such as sap or other sticky substances.

Ultimately, the more frequently tools are maintained, the longer they will last. There are plenty of tutorials online, should you need help with technique, or visit a local knife sharpener to do the job for you. Remember that high-quality tools can last a lifetime, but their longevity can be severely reduced if neglected.



*Steel wool can be used to clean debris and remove rust from your favorite garden hand tools.*

# MARTINIS

continued from page 3

bartending at the Waybury Inn, to eating a mustard-soaked hot dog watching the Phillies on home field in

black tie attire (the result of changed plans at the last moment), to experiences in Jamaica while representing the Shoreham Coop's apple pickers, the author weaves autobiographical stories from the time he was a kid causing mischief at the Lake Dunmore Hotel to outings in the past few years.

Area residents will find the local history interesting and the stories amusing, but the larger point is to replicate Langrock's example to live life to its fullest. "In a time when so much social contact is conveyed



Peter Langrock with Kim Sparks.

COURTESY PHOTO

over cell phones or other electronic media," he writes, "I hope this book can remind you of the importance of real in-person contact and how food and drink help bring people together."

Don't wait, he urges through these tales, seize the day, make memories.

# Pet of the WEEK



## What is Pet of the Week?

Here at the Addy Indy we LOVE our pets. We also love publishing here at the local newspaper. So... put them together and you get PET OF THE WEEK, where we publish the news of how fabulous your pets are for FREE!

All you have to do, dear reader with opposable thumb, is send a picture to our news team with a short description of your best buds.

Send us a picture of your pet!

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**AGWAY** Think of Agway when you think of your pets!

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# Pets In Need

## HOMeward BOUND

### Addison County's Humane Society

#### Hoodoo



The handsome **Hoodoo** is hoping to find an understanding person who will let him warm up on his own timeline. He was in a foster home before arriving to us and his foster mom said that once he realized he had nothing to be afraid of, he opened right up and was an affectionate and friendly cat. The shelter environment can be a bit scary for our shy cats, so please don't let his quiet demeanor chase away your interest!

#### Luminaire



Don't let his grumpy face fool you, **Luminaire** is a very friendly and chonky senior gentleman. He is an expert biscuit maker and will sometimes start purring just because you look at him. He was a friendly stray cat that was taken in by a Good Samaritan with the hopes that he could have a chance at a happy and safe family cat life.

#### Virginia



This little lady was found as a stray and pregnant, wandering the streets and fields of Vermont. A few weeks after being brought to Homeward Bound, **Virginia** delivered 9 puppies! Virginia is a love bug once she gets to know you - a staff favorite for sure. She is looking for a home with an active family where she can get her exercise then cuddle up to take a nap. She should be the only pet in an adult-only home. Virginia has a lot of love to give!

#### Winston



**Winston** is a 6-year-old Pomeranian, looking for a loving home where he can go for little walks around the neighborhood and curl up on a couch. Winston loves children and is good with both cats and dogs. He walks great on a leash, knows to sit on cue but is not fully housetrained. He would prefer a household with other pets.

#### Thackery Earwicket



Some rabbits arrive quietly and watch the world from a distance. **Thackery Earwicket** stepped into it with curiosity, kindness, and an open heart, more than ready for a second chance. Thackery doesn't take long to decide he trusts you. Within minutes, he's ready to share affection, curiosity, and companionship. He greets new friends with ease, happily leaning into head massages and placing his paws in your lap as if he's always belonged there. He's the kind of rabbit who makes a room feel warmer simply by being in it...steady, sweet, and full of quiet charm.

**Homeward Bound**  
Addison County's Humane Society



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# PUZZLES

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SPARROW  
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## Across

- 1. Paddles
- 5. Sunscreen rating
- 8. Very fast airplane
- 11. Immune responses
- 13. "Partner" to feather
- 14. New England river
- 15. Longest river in New Guinea
- 16. Midway between east and southeast
- 17. Israeli politician
- 18. Back bones
- 20. Consumed
- 21. One you can rely on
- 22. Dressed up gaudily
- 25. Representatives
- 30. Dog breed
- 31. Pitching statistic

- 32. Manpower
- 33. S. Korean entertainer
- 38. Outsourcing firm
- 41. Viceroy of Egypt under Turkish rule
- 43. One who removes antlers from a flower
- 45. Potluck dish
- 48. Discount
- 49. Airborne (abbr.)
- 50. Cavalry sword
- 55. Basics
- 56. Hollywood director Howard
- 57. Afflicted in mind or body
- 59. Horsley and Majors are two
- 60. Midway between northeast and east

- 61. Spiritual leader of a Jewish congregation
- 62. Malaysian isthmus
- 63. Fall back
- 64. Cheek

## Down

- 1. Former CIA
- 2. Baseball's best pitchers
- 3. \_\_ Nui, Easter Island
- 4. Invests in little enterprises
- 5. Constant
- 6. Hobby
- 7. A place to store food
- 8. Short-tail marten
- 9. Burn with a hot liquid

1	2	3	4				5	6	7			8	9	10		
11				12			13					14				
15							16					17				
	18					19	20					21				
						22	23					24				
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30									31							
32												33	34	35	36	37
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	45	46	47													
48							49				50	51	52	53	54	
55							56					57				58
59							60					61				
62							63						64			

	3				2		7	
			3		4	6	5	
			9	8			4	
7				4			6	
		3					8	
					5	2		1
				2	7	8		
5		1		9				7
	6					9		

## 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.

- 10. Left his heart in San Francisco
- 12. Swedish krona
- 14. Legendary actor Connery
- 19. French cleric
- 23. Former measure of length for textiles
- 24. Opaque glassy substance
- 25. Residue of burned item
- 26. A place to unwind
- 27. Japanese honorific
- 28. Terminus
- 29. Fails to make a shot
- 34. Journalist Tarbell
- 35. College hoops tournament
- 36. Monetary unit of Macao
- 37. Of she
- 39. Spoke ill of
- 40. Elements
- 41. Kilocalorie (abbr.)
- 42. Shades
- 44. Poem of fourteen lines
- 45. Pole used in Scottish sport
- 46. Hollyhocks genus
- 47. Street name for marijuana
- 48. Polio vaccine developer
- 51. Swiss river
- 52. Prejudice
- 53. Actor Idris
- 54. Confederate soldiers
- 58. Criticize



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A LOOK AT LOCAL PROPERTIES FOR SALE

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**BERKSHIRE HATHAWAY** | VERMONT REALTY GROUP  
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*This week's property is managed by Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices. More info at vtregroup.com.*

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## LOOK UP

*continued from page 8*

V-shaped Hyades star clusters in Taurus, there are thousands of star clusters, nebulae, and galaxies

in the Messier (110 M numbers) and other catalogs (NGC and IC) that can be viewed with binoculars or a small telescope. A must-see object is the double cluster in Perseus. It is gorgeous to observe with just a pair of binoculars. Check it out! The double cluster and the California nebula, both in Perseus, were recently photographed by local astrophotographer, Michele Hernandez (see images). Enjoy more of her beautiful images by logging in to astrobin.com.

Reflecting on the year since this column began, I extend gratitude to Angelo Lynn, owner and publisher of The Addison County Independent for giving me this opportunity. A special thank you goes to Elsie Lynn Parini, my editor, for her great formatting, direction, feedback, and willingness to include exciting color images from local residents to space observatories. It has been a pleasure to share my love for astronomy with others. Thank you to all who read this column and blessings in the New Year.

## SKY WATCH EVENTS

**JAN 1** – The Moon is at perigee, its closest approach to Earth.

**JAN 3** – Super Full Moon (Wolf or Cold Moon); Quadrantids meteor shower at peak but viewing difficult with full moon; and Earth is at perihelion, its closest approach to the Sun (91.4 million miles); see Jupiter a few degrees to the right of the full moon and the bright star Castor on the left.

**JAN 6** – Venus in superior conjunction when it is on the opposite side of the Sun and not visible as it transitions from morning to evening star, an event that occurs about every 584 days.

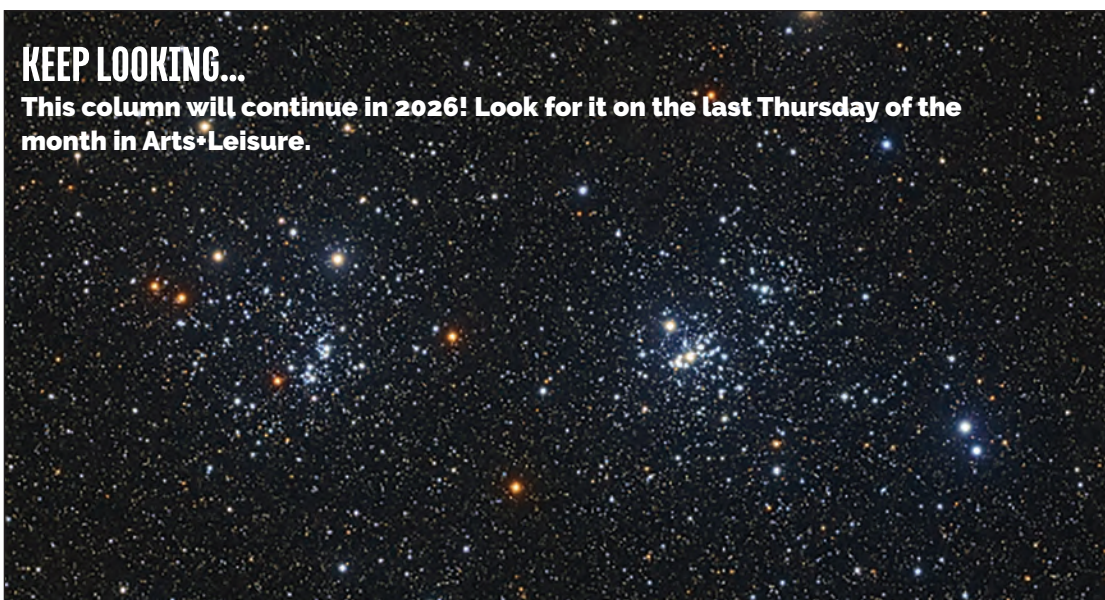
**JAN 10** – Definitely get a good gander at Jupiter in opposition, when it is closest, largest, and brightest at a whopping magnitude – 2.8, about 3.5 times brighter than the brightest star Sirius. Look for it near the bright star Pollux in Gemini.

**JAN 18** – New Moon; bundle up, get out, and look up. Search for deep sky objects.

**JAN 29** – Waxing gibbous moon at perigee and near Jupiter.

## KEEP LOOKING...

This column will continue in 2026! Look for it on the last Thursday of the month in Arts+Leisure.



Captured under dark Vermont skies, *The Jewels of the North* — the famed Double Cluster in Perseus (NGC 869 & NGC 884). These twin open clusters, only a few hundred light-years apart, are home to thousands of hot, young blue stars contrasting with the older orange giants scattered throughout the field.

IMAGE COURTESY OF ASTROPHOTOGRAPHER MICHELE HERNANDEZ

## PUZZLE

## SOLUTIONS

Jan. 1, 2026

O	A	R	S	S	P	F	S	S	T					
S	C	A	B	S	T	A	R	S	A	C	O			
S	E	P	I	K	E	S	E	E	B	A	N			
S	A	C	R	A	A	T	E	A	L	L	Y			
				B	E	D	I	Z	E	N	E			
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S	P	A	N	I	E	L	E	R	A					
H	A	N	D	S				M	I	N	A	H		
				S	S	C	K	H	E	D	I	V	E	
				E	M	A	S	C	U	L	A	T	O	R
				C	A	S	S	E	R	O	L	E		
S	A	L	E	A	B	N	S	A	B	E	R			
A	B	C	S	R	O	N	A	I	L	E	D			
L	E	E	S	E	N	E	R	A	B	B	I			
K	R	A		D	S	T	S	A	S	S				

9	3	4	6	5	2	1	7	8
2	1	8	3	7	4	6	5	9
6	7	5	9	8	1	3	4	2
7	9	2	1	4	8	5	6	3
1	5	3	2	6	9	7	8	4
4	8	6	7	3	5	2	9	1
3	4	9	5	2	7	8	1	6
5	2	1	8	9	6	4	3	7
8	6	7	4	1	3	9	2	5

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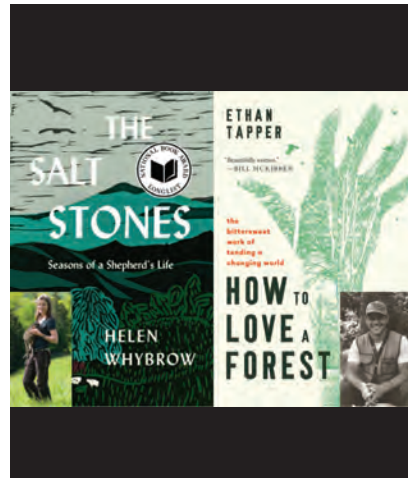


# Come in from the cold at Town Hall Theater this January



THT Presents  
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THT Presents  
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I Puritani**

Sat, Jan 10 1pm  
\$10-\$24



Middlebury College  
J-Term Musical

## Urinetown

Jan 23, 24, 27, & 28  
7:30pm  
Jan 25 2pm  
Tickets go on sale  
Monday, Jan. 5th at noon



THT Presents  
**Poet Laureate  
Bianca Stone**

Book Release Party  
Sat, Jan 17 7-8:30pm  
Cocktail Hour 6-7pm  
Suggested \$5-\$20



THT Presents  
**The Loop with  
Craig Maravitch**

The Elements of Folly  
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Bar opens 4:30pm  
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THT would like to thank The Vermont Arts Council and those who have donated to Membership. We couldn't do this without you!

# 2025 TOP TEN

The biggest  
stories of  
2025

as chosen by  
the news staff at the  
*Addison Independent*

Thursday,  
January 1, 2026

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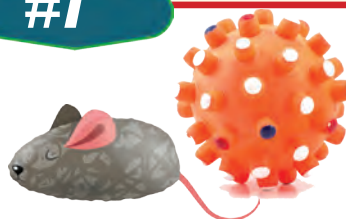
**40% Off**

carhartt



Coats, Vests, Lined Bibs and Lined Button-Up Shirts.

**#7**



**20% Off**

Leashes, Collars and all other Pet Toys

**#6**



**Buy 2 – Get the 3rd FREE!**

**Dog Wash Tokens**

**#5**



**Half Price**

**Pet Tags**

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**#4**

**Generic**

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**\$24.99** 40lb



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MIDDLEBURY AGWAY COUPON

**#2**

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purchase of \$100 or more



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SKU: CLOTHING COUPON

**#1**

CUSTOMER APPRECIATION COUPON

**\$5 OFF**



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# Trump Administration actions felt in Addison County

## TOP STORY OF THE YEAR



Residents of the United States have long drawn the spotlight with the national press corps following them around reporting on their policy proposals and the give and take of the political process. But, while their moves to shape and enforce laws starts at the national level, we in the local media covering the everyday lives of ordinary people in this small corner of this brave little state traditionally are touched by the nation's chief executive only occasionally.

Not anymore. We shied away from picking something national for this local publication's No. 1 story of 2025. But the pervasiveness of President Trump's policy changes over the first 11 months back in office and the way that his oval office dictates have quickly and onerously affected Addison County, meant that we could see no other single story that was more important to our neighbors, as it is to the country as a whole.

Trump, his policies and how they are hitting home here made it on the front page of *Independent* at least half of the editions in 2025. They made it into the opinion section more often.

While there were protests around his Jan. 20 inauguration that weren't so far out of the ordinary, the real local impact started almost immediately. At the beginning of February, Middlebury College science departments found themselves scrambling when Trump threw a huge monkey wrench into the process of scientific discovery — a process that has led to generations of life-saving advancements that are the envy of the world. The next month, local businesses were trying to get their minds around the president's unilateral imposition of tariffs. Also in March, local schools were told they would lose federal funds for local foods — a double whammy that hurt kids and farms. In April, Trump attacked funding for libraries and museums. Plus, Middlebury College, already reeling from science funding cuts, also found itself countering Trump's effort to make life difficult for international students to

live and study here.

Federal support for local disaster preparedness also took a hit.

In the crosshairs during May were AmeriCorps job programs that provide educated workers to many Addison County non-profits. By the beginning of June, it was Northlands Job Corps that was told by Trump's minions that it would be closing.

But locals were finding their footing when pushing back against the president's dictatorial edicts. On April 5, hundreds of people gathered in Vergennes, Middlebury and elsewhere in a series of "Hands Off" rallies, that were coordinated across the nation. At the end of April, around 60 community members gathered in Bristol's Holley Hall to brainstorm responses

to his actions. "The goal tonight is to move from discussion to action," one organizer told the crowd.

The first "No Kings Day" rally on Jun 14 brought out an estimated 2,500 protesters in Addison County alone,

But the onslaught of federal takeaways from local folks was not over.

In early July, human services providers were contending with threatened cuts to federal food assistance programs, as well as rental subsidies for low-income Vermonters. If the loss of those funds for poor people wasn't enough, local schools found themselves asking the Trump administration to please send the money that Congress had appropriated to them but federal education officials were not inclined to send.

With food assistance cuts and tariffs causing real pain locally, more people lined Route 7 in Addison County on Oct. 18 for a

second No Kings rally.

Vermont Attorney General Charity Clark stopped in Middlebury to explain the 32 lawsuits she had filed on the state's behalf aiming to get Trump to simply follow the law. At least one of the suits took on Trump for not funding programs, such as food assistance, that was money appropriated by Congress. "Denying SNAP funding for millions of Americans, when Congress created a contingency plan to ensure no American goes hungry is illegal and it is cruel," Clark told the *Independent*.

"The goal tonight is to move from discussion to action."

- Holley Hall Protest Organizer



## Top Ten ways to reduce waste in 2026

- Avoid impulse shopping. Buy only what you need.
- Say no to freebies from events, work, and other gatherings.
- Use reusable containers and bags at stores.
- Repair broken items instead of discarding them.
- Shop secondhand instead of new to extend an item's life.
- Buy items made from recycled content, not raw materials.
- Make your own non-hazardous cleaners.
- Donate usable items instead of throwing them away.
- Before grocery shopping, shop your fridge first.
- Consider online subscriptions and bills; avoid junkmail.

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 HazWaste Center Hours: Mon-Fri 8 AM - 2 PM & Sat 8 AM - 1 PM  
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# Local school districts merge, close facilities



Addison County's kindergarten-through-12th grade enrollment has been declining for more than two decades, and 2025 was no different. Area residents — like most Vermonters — once again signaled that while they were growing weary of education tax hikes, they weren't keen on seeing their respective local schools closed or consolidated.

The state Legislature and Gov. Phil Scott allocated an additional \$100 million in state aid for education to blunt the property tax impacts of fiscal year 2026 school budgets. But the state also enacted a new law, Act 73, that set out a process for paring the state's school districts from the current 119. It also devised a “weighted” student funding formula, and created a statewide education tax rate.

It's a law that also called for statewide graduation requirements and a statewide calendar, class-size minimums, the potential resumption of state aid for school construction, and revised criteria for independent schools to receive public dollars.

A Vermont School Redistricting Task Force was charged with drafting up to three maps that could catalyze a major shakeup in the way schools are grouped, operated and financed in the state. But the 11-member group, after holding a series of meetings and public input sessions over the summer and early autumn, instead endorsed a proposal that would incentivize voluntary mergers, largely following the state's larger Career and Technical Education districts.

All eyes are now on state lawmakers as they reconvene in Montpelier for a 2026 session that will bring greater scrutiny of Act 73 and how to implement it — if at all.

But 2025 did bring some tangible school reductions and partnerships in Addison County — particularly in the Addison Central School District.

The ACSD board made the painful decision to close Ripton Elementary School, when enrollment forecasts for the fall of 2025 called for fewer than 30 total students. There was no way — barring a massive, unexpected infusion of children — that the incoming Ripton Elementary class could conform to a revised district class-size policy requiring classrooms to have “a minimum of 10 students in not more than two grades.”

Most Ripton residents were understandably crestfallen by the closure decision, which would end a two-centuries tradition of local schools in the mountain town. Plans called for Ripton's K-5 students to be bused to the Salisbury Community School, which had the capacity to receive them.

Ripton residents turned their attention to possible repurposing of the Ripton Elementary building, for such uses as town offices, community center or a fitness area. The ACSD board is poised to return the building to Ripton, but first, residents in all seven of the district's towns this coming March will have to approve formal closure of the school.

ACSD this year also voted to blend Shoreham's K-5 students into Bridport Central School beginning next fall,

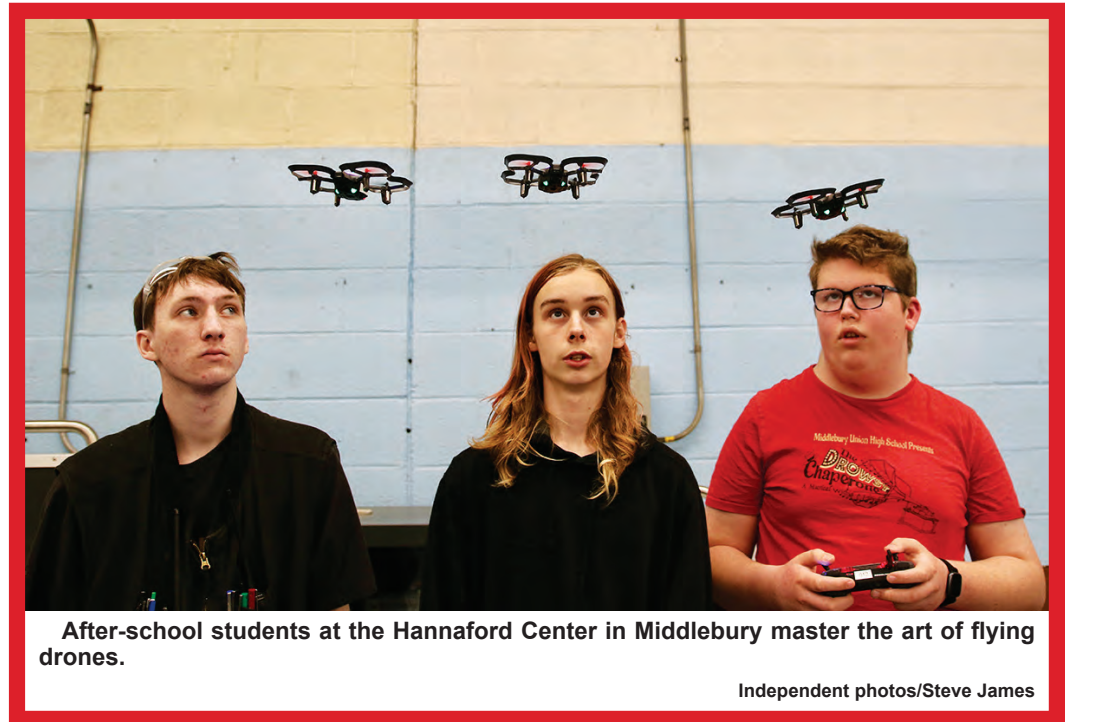
and at the same time convert Shoreham Elementary School into a district PreK hub. District officials OK'd the move based on declining enrollment at both schools and lagging standardized test scores among K-5 students in both communities. Having the combined student body at Bridport will allow all students to learn in single-grade classrooms; without the merger, both schools would have had, for the first time, all multi-grade classrooms.

The announced conversion of Shoreham Elementary into a PreK center didn't sit well with some Shoreham residents, who — like their Ripton counterparts — faced the loss of a community gathering spot and historical touchstone.

Meanwhile, in the Rutland Northeast Supervisory Union, officials are moving toward consolidating more elementary-age students into Neshobe Elementary School in Brandon. That would mean that kids in K-5 at Leicester Central School would be bused to Neshobe, the Leicester school would become home to the district's PreK program now in the Whiting School building, and Whiting would be closed. That decision is not yet final.



The ACSD board made the painful decision to close Ripton Elementary School, when enrollment forecasts for the fall of 2025 called for fewer than 30 total students.



After-school students at the Hannaford Center in Middlebury master the art of flying drones.

Independent photos/Steve James

# Extreme weather strikes hard locally, statewide



After two years marked by destructive flooding, the summer of 2025 brought a different kind of beast — severe drought. This past August was the driest in at least 130 years, and those dry conditions created challenges for local farmers and other members of the Addison County community.

Middlebury residents in August were asked to conserve water after a long stretch without significant rain, and Bristol Fire Chief Brett LaRose posted a “no-burn” advisory as a result of heat and dry conditions. Later that month, state officials asked Vermont residents to take steps to prevent human-caused fires.

By September, the U.S. Drought Monitor had classified nearly 96% of Addison County as in “severe drought” and those conditions were taking a toll on farmers around the region. Morgen Brown, a dairy nutritionist for Poulin Grain, pointed to a common challenge among small and larger-scale operations — a shortage of feed and feed quality.

The following month, local farmers gathered at Orwell’s Lazy Dog Farm to talk with U.S. Sen. Peter Welch about those and other impacts they’d seen from the drought. Lazy Dog Farm owners Jesse and Stefanie Wilbur noted that dry conditions had left them with about half as much feed as they’d usually produce for their herd of dairy cows. As a result, Jesse said the farm had spent around \$50,000 on supplemental feed.

Other farmers shared similar experiences and pointed to other

impacts, such as having to haul loads of water from a nearby creek each day for their animals.

County farmers joined other producers around the state in reporting an estimated \$17,387,289 in total losses across Vermont resulting from the drought. That number was tallied through an Agriculture Drought Impact Survey conducted by the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets that closed in December. Farmers in Addison County reported an estimated \$1.4 million in losses, the highest total from any county.

Loren Wood of Woodnotch Farms in Shoreham said the drought was the worst he’d seen, a sentiment echoed by 58% of the producers who responded to the survey.

Unfortunately, the drought wasn’t the only extreme weather event Addison County residents dealt with this year. Parts of the county sustained damage from severe thunderstorms that brought heavy rains, hail and flash flooding to the region on July 10 — the anniversary of the deluges that hit the state in 2024 and 2023.

This time around the storms brought down trees and powerlines, led to lightning strikes on two homes, and peeled back a 4,000-square-foot section of the Middlebury Union High School roof. Such extreme weather events are becoming more frequent due to climate change, and municipalities around the county have worked to address the damage caused by those events and prepare for future ones. However, they face some challenges

in those efforts, such as the costs of making repairs and preparations and navigating shifts between different weather conditions.

Around the same time that the July 10 storm hit Addison County, state and local officials expressed concern over how staff and funding cuts at the Federal Emergency Management Agency could affect Vermonters’ ability to respond to and recover from disasters. Michael Leyden, Bristol’s Emergency Management Director, noted Vermont has a history of using a decent amount of federal funds related to disaster preparedness, response and recovery.

“Every change that comes down in that lane of funding, potentially has an oversized impact on a place like Vermont,” he said.

By September, the U.S. Drought Monitor had classified nearly 96% of Addison County as in “severe drought.”



## VERMONT Sun FITNESS CENTERS

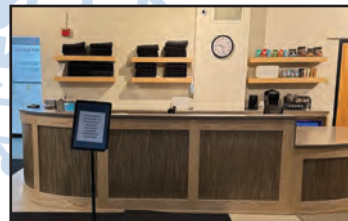
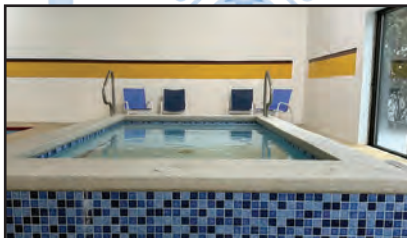
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# Housing shortage remains, but some progress made

# 4

The tight housing market continued to lock out many families seeking to settle in Addison County in 2025. But there were some glimmers of hope and a growing resolve in individual communities to build more workforce and affordable housing.

retaining working-age people, while adding 36,000 primary homes during the next five years to boost Vermont's non-seasonal housing stock to 350,000 by the year 2035.

Some communities in our area began tweaking their zoning rules to boost housing startups within their borders — particularly in, or close to, town centers. Bridport took this assignment very seriously. It partnered with the Vermont Council on Rural Development on a program titled “Bridport Comes Together,” through which townspeople identified the need for more housing as a top local priority. This led to creation of a Bridport Housing Task Force that spent several months collecting more public feedback and expertise from organizations like the Addison County Regional Planning Commission to help inform the Bridport selectboard on ways to promote more housing development.

After many months of planning, permitting and financing, the new Stonecrop Meadows neighborhood off Middlebury's Seminary Street Extension began to go vertical in a big way last spring. Phase one involved installation of 45 homes built in three segments thanks to modular structures constructed off-site by Huntington Homes in East Montpelier.

Plans call for Stonecrop to grow to more than 200 units by the time it's fully built out, within the next two to three years.

It was a year of rejoicing for seniors looking for right-sized accommodations with services in northern Addison County. Seven years after Dan and Rebecca Hassan had 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.

The Middlebury Development Review Board in December 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. Barring any appeals, the developer — Pennsylvania attorney Phil Rosenzweig —

plans to take the building to construction this fall, with an estimated 15-month timeline for completion.

About the same time, 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 announced that its \$37.2 million of federally funded grants to communities in northern Vermont, Maine, New Hampshire and New York included \$1 million to Vergennes to put toward the cost of building a road and related infrastructure for that project. Then, Peter Kahn, a principal in Vergennes Housing Partners LLC, which is proposing to build those 74 units, told the *Independent* the partnership had that day completed the purchase of the 14.4-acre property. He was happy to talk about the \$1 million grant for a project he has described in the past as creating “74 units of housing affordable to people of middle income, in multi-family dwellings, duplex and single-family homes.”

Essentially, Kahn said, the new funding can be put toward Vergennes North's complete “road and related infrastructure” needs. The grant specifies “a city road.”

“We had applied for it a year ago and didn't get it, so this was a really pleasant surprise this came through. It's great,” Kahn said. “We are delighted.”

The grant will go to and be managed by the city of Vergennes. City Manager Ron Redmond credited Addison County Economic Development Corporation Executive Director Alex Armani-Munn for working with Vergennes Housing Partners on the successful application.

And the city was exploring the possibility of creating a project-based Tax Increment Financing District. The central idea behind Tax Increment Financing, or TIF, is that a municipality can bond to provide infrastructure that allows the private sector to create more valuable real estate. Then, higher property-tax revenue generated from the improved property not only pays back the bond, but also leaves the municipality with property assessed at a higher rate than previously, thus generating more tax revenue. TIFs have been profitable for at least a half-dozen Vermont communities.



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# Leadership positions see turnover

It's typical to see some turnover in leadership positions around the county each year, and this year saw several familiar faces step down from the positions they'd long held to make way for new leaders.

As the year kicked off, longtime selectboard members in two towns announced they would not seek re-election. In Middlebury, Heather Seeley said she would step down after nine years in office, and over in Monkton three spots on the five-member selectboard were set to open up after former Selectboard Chair Stephen Pilcher, John McNerney and Marikate Kelley said they'd be vacating their seats.

Also in January, Middlebury College tapped Ian Baucom to lead the institution as its 18th president. Baucom stepped into the role in July and was officially installed to the post in November, succeeding former

president Laurie Patton, whose tenure ended at the close of 2024.

The Addison County Economic Development Corporation announced in February that Alexander Armani-Munn would serve as the organization's next executive director, stepping into the shoes of Fred Kenney who had served in the role for seven years.

Town Meeting Day in March saw several new faces elected to serve on school boards and selectboards around the county, with the Addison Central School District Board and Monkton selectboard both welcoming multiple new members.

The Middlebury Area Land Trust in May announced that Kevin Fox would take the reins as its new executive director in July, bringing over 25 years of leadership in conservation and sustainable development to the role.

Former State Rep. Mari Cordes, D-Bristol, resigned from her post in

June, citing both challenges to secure enough shifts as a Registered Nurse at the University of Vermont Medical Center and an increasing number of verbal personal attacks from individuals opposed to her political views. Democratic leaders in Bristol, Lincoln, Monkton and Starksboro supplied Gov. Phil Scott with a few names to consider as he prepared to appoint someone to serve the remainder of Cordes's two-year term. After many months, the governor ultimately selected Lincoln Democrat Karen Lueders to serve the final year of the term.

In Bristol, town officials chose Gregory W. Faust as the municipality's next town

(See Leadership, Page 10)

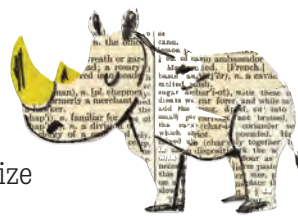
Town Meeting Day in March saw several new faces elected to serve on school boards and selectboards around the county.



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- ★ We printed approximately 380 football fields worth of pages last year (not including special sections)!
- ★ Our small digital team worked on 16 website projects for local businesses last year. Will your website be next in 2026?
- ★ We estimate around 15,000 readers pour through each printed edition and receive more than 13,000 unique visitors each month to our website.
- ★ The June 5th edition, which included our annual Summer Guide, was 126 pages and our heaviest edition of the year, clocking in at .8 pounds per copy for a total of 4,468 pounds of Addy Indy. That's roughly the average size of a white rhino!
- ★ We currently estimate we reach about 45% of residents in Addison County with our local news, but our goal is to increase that number to 75%. Can you help us inspire more people to read the Addy Indy? **Visit [addisonindependent.com/subscribe/](http://addisonindependent.com/subscribe/)**
- ★ There are now almost 300 ADDY ALL-STAR grassroots contributors who donate directly to the Addison Independent to sustain our operations. Our goal is to bring that number to 500 in 2026. Will you be one of them? **Visit [addisonindependent.com/all-stars](http://addisonindependent.com/all-stars) to learn more.**



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# PHOTOS

*Independent* photographer Steve James takes photos all over the county, all year round. He says he doesn't have one favorite photo for 2025, but here are 10 that he took a shine to — and why.



WEYBRIDGE NOVELIST CHRIS Bohjalian enjoys Jesse's approval. James notes he "took at least 20 photos before getting this money shot" of the pup licking Bohjalian's face.



A SOMALI STUDENT snowshoes at Middlebury College's Feb graduation. Incongruous images often command attention, James said, noting while there's no snow in Somalia, "the student embraced the Vermont winter with a broad smile."



VERMONT GOV. PHIL Scott, Sen. Peter Welch and other dignitaries shovel dirt at a housing project in Middlebury. "Ground-breakings can be dull events," James writes, "but these guys couldn't resist my suggestion they aim their dirt at the photographers."



THIS CIRQUE DEL Fuego performer was breathing fire at Middlebury's Town Hall Theater opening of its new wing in 2025. James notes this photo was technically challenging, taking several attempts, "to capture the texture of the flame that wasn't over-exposed."



HOT DAYS OF summer 2025 kicked off mid-June at the Middlebury town pool as captured by this young girl showing how to keep cool for the photographer.

# PHOTOS



**TINA FRIML**, a MUHS graduate, performs her standup routine at a comedy workshop during the Middlebury New Filmmakers Festival in August. James writes: “Tina’s expressions are irresistible — the camera loves her!”



**AT THE NO Kings** protest in Middlebury this June, this man dressed in colonial garb and surrounded by flags, James notes, “was a perfect symbol of the displeasure with President Trump felt by many patriotic Americans.”



**THIS SWIMMER GETS** a flying start in a backstroke race at a Vergennes Champs meet in July. “Swimming isn’t easy to photograph,” James writes, “but I went for the backstroke start because it combines energy, grace and power.”



**DURING A VISIT** to Vergennes, Sen. Bernie Sanders hosted a hoops clinic. As a photographer, James writes, it’s fun to show “a lesser-known side of Vermont’s senior senator, an accomplished athlete in high school. And you can’t miss with kids!”



**MIDDLEBURY COLLEGE PRESIDENT Ian Baucom** took a turn serving hot chocolate during a cold winter night during Middlebury’s Holiday Stroll this December, an example of the close embrace the president has with the community.

# Middlebury College sees big changes

# 6

2025 proved to be a big year for Middlebury College, and not only because the institution celebrated the 225th anniversary of its founding in November. That same fall weekend, the college community gathered for the inauguration of Middlebury College President Ian B. Baucom, who succeeds Interim President Steve Snyder and former

college was expecting a \$14.1 million deficit for the fiscal year. The new steps announced were aimed at helping bring expenses in line with revenues and were expected to achieve more than \$10 million in savings

Faculty, staff and students pushed back against the measures. A “Walkout to Defend Middlebury” in May saw over 200 people gather outside the college’s Old Chapel — home of the president’s office — to protest the compensation cuts and other actions. In remarks to the crowd, members of the college community urged administrators to change course and expressed frustration over college employees taking the brunt of cuts aimed at addressing a financial

dilemma they didn’t cause. The protest followed other efforts from members of the college community to push back against the changes in employee benefits, which also included a petition started by 12 senior members of the Middlebury College Economics Department. The college’s Faculty Council and Middlebury’s chapter of the American Association of University Professors in April cosponsored a Sense of the Faculty Motion demanding college officials reverse the compensation cuts and enrollment increase.

Later in May, college faculty took another step — urging administrators to divest from the institution’s graduate school in in Monterey, Calif. Faculty passed a Sense of the Faculty Motion asking college officials to begin a comprehensive restructuring of the Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey (MIIS) and close the campus within three years. Three months later, Middlebury College officials announced the institution would indeed conclude residential graduate programs and certain online degree programs at MIIS. In a message to the college community, Baucom said those programs and operations would be wrapped up over the next two years. Baucom in the message acknowledged losses the institution has



Ian B. Baucom

experienced since it acquired MIIS over a decade ago — losses college students and faculty had pointed to when urging administrators to close the Monterey campus.

Baucom also outlined next steps for the process, which included meetings with MIIS faculty, staff and students.

As the year came to a close, there were other efforts underway to consider the institution’s future. During his inauguration address in November, Baucom noted the college community would launch a new strategic planning process centered around the question, “What is Middlebury for?”



former President Laurie Patton. Baucom is the college’s 18th president. Baucom had stepped into the role in July and identified several areas of focus for his first months as college president. Those included working with members of the college community to build a stronger financial future for the institution.

College administrators in April had announced multiple steps the institution would take to balance its budget, such as limiting employee benefits, offering a financial incentive for Vermont employees to retire early and growing undergraduate enrollment in the coming years. In the announcement, administrators noted the

## Leadership

(Continued from Page 7)

administrator. Faust began his role in July, succeeding former Bristol town administrator Valerie Capels, who retired from the post in 2024.

A few local libraries welcomed new directors this year. Kate McGowan took the helm of the Lincoln Library in July, and the following month, Catherine Goldsmith took the helm at Russell Memorial Library in Monkton.

Meanwhile, citing mounting professional and family responsibilities — and his conviction that volunteer boards need regular turnover—longtime Middlebury selectboard Chairman Brian Carpenter in November made it

official that he won’t seek reelection in March.

“I’ve always been one to believe that it’s important for organizations to renew and have fresh leadership when they are serving the public good,” Carpenter told the Independent at the Middlebury home of his business, Champlain Valley Equipment.

“The town needs focus, and my focus is going to be elsewhere for a couple of years,” Carpenter added. “It’s getting to the point where there are a few too many tasks.” Among those tasks is dealing with his company’s 2024 acquisition of Empire Tractor Inc.

As the year came to a close, we learned that Ferrisburgh Selectboard Chair Clark Hinsdale 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 25 Ferrisburgh voters.

Fellow longtime Ferrisburgh selectboard member Jim Benoit’s term also expires on Town Meeting Day in March. Benoit confirmed in an email to the *Independent* he intends to seek reelection.

# Addison County buildings get major makeovers



Our human-built landscape is changing as 2025 gave rise to several significant construction projects. Town Hall Theater, Ilsley Public Library and the Vergennes Opera House each upgraded their buildings. THT's renovation wrapped up this past year; construction at Ilsley and the Vergennes Opera House got underway.

## TOWN HALL THEATER

In February 2025, Town Hall Theater raised the curtain on the 1,430-square-foot Doug & Debbie Anderson Rehearsal Studio — the first completed space in its \$8.5 million transformation designed to solidify the theater as a regional hub for visual and performing arts. Over the next several months, the theater unveiled access to other completed spaces in its three-story, 7,000-square-foot Merchants Row addition, officially celebrating its reopening in late June. Festivities included a party with musician Mihali, a ribbon cutting and open house, family-friendly performances and a show by the Rodney Marsalis Brass Band.

Town Hall Theater Executive Director Lisa Mitcell told *the Addison Independent* in June that the expanded space allows for more extensive programming. "We've already tested the limits of having things

going on in every single room and space at the same time ... and it's all working," she said. "The building has this beautiful buzz right now and we're looking forward to more of that."

## ILSLEY PUBLIC LIBRARY

Construction at Middlebury's Ilsley Public Library kicked off in March: the library relocated down the street, operating out of the National Bank of Middlebury's Duclos building, while construction firm ReArch took possession of the library's 75 Main Street site. Local taxpayers are picking up \$4.5 million of the \$17 million price tag through a bond issue, with the balance covered through a very successful fund drive, local option tax reserves and federal rebates.

By late August, the renovation was about 30% complete — but not without a few hurdles. Workers found a concrete structure buried at the front of the library stairs that was time-consuming to remove. They also realized that the building's original 1924 slate roof would need to be replaced. Those repairs were projected to gobble up the majority of a project contingency fund, until two anonymous donors stepped forward with a combined \$105K to apply toward the extra expenses. Construction at Ilsley continues.

According to a recent email newsletter update from Director Dana Hart, the library's new windows were on tap to be installed in mid-December.

"Plumbing and roof work is progressing steadily," Hart wrote. "Interior framing is well underway, with progress on first-floor walls. Site and concrete work is complete for the season, including stormwater connections and rebuilt front stairs. Painting continues on exposed wood, steel and electrical elements."

The renovation is slated to be completed in summer 2026.

## VERGENNES OPERA HOUSE

The \$2.2 million All Access Project is bringing accessibility upgrades to the Opera House's 1897 building, which also houses Vergennes City Hall.

(See *Makeovers*, Page 12)



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# New childcare slots open in Middlebury, Addison

# 8

Accessing affordable childcare isn't easy. There just aren't enough spots, and that's proved a major impediment to Addison County's efforts to attract young families to populate schools and fill jobs. But 2025 brought good news for families. The Otter Creek Child Center in Middlebury completed its major renovation project in November, and now has the capacity to serve

77 additional children. A new childcare center, The Growing Tree, opened in Addison in August, and can serve up to 20 children.

And the growing availability of high-quality childcare programs is the direct result of Vermont's Historic Childcare Law Act 76, which became law in 2023 and continued to make changes in the industry in 2025.

That doesn't mean the childcare crisis is solved. But these additional slots, coupled with the state's income-based

childcare subsidy program, make it a little easier for families to find care for young kids.

## OTTER CREEK CHILD CENTER

In November, the Otter Creek Child Center (OCCC) cut the ceremonial ribbon on its newly completed renovations and a three-story, 12,000-square-foot addition at 150 Weybridge Street in Middlebury. The roughly \$12-million project has allowed OCCC to ramp up staffing and add 77 much-needed childcare slots, for a new total of 139. Plans call for the addition of

two new preschool classrooms during the fall of 2026, if enrollment allows. And that shouldn't be a problem for OCCC, which has 240 kids on its waiting list.

The OCCC expansion project began seven years ago, spurred by the dearth of childcare slots in Addison County. The shortage was hampering the recruitment efforts of several local employers, including Middlebury College. The college would eventually make a \$4 million commitment to the child center expansion, including the donation of a 2.5-acre lot that made the building addition possible. When project costs proved higher than expected, an anonymous Middlebury College donor stepped forward with a \$5 million gift. Former U.S. Sen. Patrick Leahy secured a \$3.1 million earmark for the project, while Vermont Community Recovery & Revitalization (\$500,000), the Northern Borders Regional Commission (\$350,000), Let's Grow Kids (\$200,000), and the Hoehl Family Foundation (\$100,000) also came through with key dollars.

The November ribbon cutting ceremony was visibly moving for OCCC Executive Director Linda January.

"Today represents more than the opening of a building; it is a celebration of what our community can accomplish when we work together with a shared purpose, ensuring that every child has access to a safe, developmentally rich place to learn and grow," she told a crowd of around 100 spectators of all ages. "This project has taken commitment, creativity and collaboration from so many people."

## THE GROWING TREE

On Aug. 4, The Growing Tree opened its doors inside the Addison Community

Center — the former elementary school building on Route 17 near Addison Four Corners. The program, launched by longtime early educator Michelle Bishop, offers full-day, center-based childcare to children ages 32 months to five years. The Growing Tree's programming runs from 7:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m., and the center will operate year-round with some school breaks. The Giving Tree's Facebook page notes that it is a universal Pre-K partner program, which means children can receive specialized services like speech language services via their local school district. The childcare program currently has a team of three individuals, including Bishop, who serves as director.

Bishop has spent the majority of her career working in early education. She most recently worked for Vermont Head Start, first serving in the classroom and later as a home visitor. She wanted to develop a program that would accommodate parents' schedules and that could help meet the needs of families in the Vergennes area. When Bishop heard that the Addison Community Center space was open, she decided to take the leap. She spent 18 months working with town officials on a lease, checking off licensing requirements and securing funding to support the effort. She also worked to install new playground equipment at the site, an effort supported by Middlebury Fence staff.

In August, Bishop told *The Addison Independent* that the program was off to a solid start. And she wants it to grow.

"I would love to consider the idea of opening a toddler room," she said. "It's a thought to have maybe next year; to get settled first and then see what the process is to open a second classroom."



## Makeovers

(Continued from Page 11)

Renovations include a new elevator tower at the end of the alley between the Opera House and St. Paul's Episcopal Church. The elevator will provide access to City Hall and the theater, and the alleyway will be resurfaced to become ADA-compliant. Accessibility improvements are underway inside the Opera House as well. A motorized lift will provide ADA-complaint access from the dressing room to the stage and theater levels. Plans also call for an access ramp from the driveway to the dressing room and an ADA-compliant restroom.

Sweeping federal budget cuts in

late February had the Friends of the Vergennes Opera House, the volunteer group that operates the venue, worried about the status of \$500,000 in federal funding from the National Park Service. But those worries were abated in early March, when the National Park Service confirmed that the money would come through.

Although the theater has been closed while construction is underway, performances haven't stopped. This past fall the Opera House launched its "Off Stage" series, holding performances at other Vergennes-area venues including restaurants, churches, Bixby Library and Vergennes Grand Senior Living. Four more "Off Stage" performances are

scheduled for early next year. The All Access Project is projected to wrap up in March of 2026, and three performances are scheduled for the revamped facility this coming spring.

But some of the big changes to infrastructure will not be so visible as these three big buildings. Middlebury residents on Town Meeting Day voted overwhelmingly in favor of three public works-related bond proposals, the biggest of which was a \$49.5 million upgrade of the town's 24-year-old wastewater treatment plant. If all proceeds according to plan, the sewer plant upgrade project will be completed in 2030 and according to City Manager Ron Redmond the original plan of a vote on Town Meeting Day

of 2025 had been scuttled.

In an email, Redmond reported that recently appointed BGS Commissioner Wanda Minoli and Winters met with the committee on Dec. 3, after which the committee requested more specifics on the buildings' safety measures, staffing protocols and levels, contract details between the state and a potential operator, more details on the nature of the juveniles the facility would serve, and an "assessment of potential changes in community risk levels."

Redmond called the meeting cordial and concluded his email: "The Committee and State will continue their work. There will be a ballot measure at some point in the future."

# The homeless crisis has not gone away, despite a few more homes



The beginning of 2025 saw frigid temperatures and the recent removal of Middlebury's largest encampment behind Ilsley Library temporarily make homelessness more of an unseen problem in the county's shire town.

So where did the folks go?

Sadly, homes seemed as out of reach as ever for folks at the lowest end of the economic spectrum. A federally mandated 2025 Vermont "Point-in-Time Count" of sheltered and unsheltered homeless Vermonters on Jan. 22 revealed 3,386 unhoused Vermonters, including 633 children and 215 Vermonters 65 years old or older.

A subsequent, June 2025 "Coordinated Entry Data," or CED, count done by the state of Vermont identified "at least" 4,588 unhoused Vermonters, including 1,041 children and 269 Vermonters 65 years old or older. That same CED process flagged 117 homeless persons in Addison County, including 84 adults and 33 children. Of the 117 persons, 53 were dealing with mental health issues, three with alcoholism, nine with substance use disorder, 10 with developmental disabilities, 26 with chronic health issues, and 26 living with physical

disabilities, according to the report.

And to make matters worse, both of the county's emergency shelters were consistently full year round, and at a time when the Trump Administration has been pushing for cuts and the repurposing of federal housing subsidies that have historically been earmarked for long-term housing. Also, on July 1 the state ended its pandemic-era program of housing some homeless people in motels.

Homeless advocates said that many people are simply settled into the woods or other less-conspicuous spots, choosing a more solitary existence, away from construction and in deference to a new Middlebury encampment ordinance.

There was some "good" news at mid-year as Charter House Coalition's shelter was full but the waiting list was just four, down from 23 names last year. There was also creation of an Addison County Homeless Outreach Team, which includes representatives of the Charter House, Counseling Service of Addison County, Helping Overcome Poverty's Effects, John Graham Housing & Services, Porter Hospital and the Open Door Clinic. Members of

that group meet weekly with folks living outdoors, checking on their welfare and offering assistance.

But, Vermont's Public Housing Authority is facing an unprecedented crisis due to FY'25 federal budget shortfalls. As a result of these shortfalls, 1,194 households might lose their Section 8 Housing Choice vouchers and 293 vouchers were lost in first half of 2025, according to a new state report.

The homelessness crisis is being exacerbated by Vermont's growing eviction crisis, according to Vermont Legal Aid, a nonprofit law firm that provides civil legal services to Vermonters who are elderly, disabled, discriminated against, or otherwise cannot afford legal help. VLA released a report that showed evictions made up

(See Homeless, Page 14)



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# 10 County, college athletes brought home gold in 2025

**ADDISON COUNTY** — As is often the case, Addison County individual athletes and teams captured a number of championships.

In 2025, the individual list includes two runners, a tennis player, a Nordic skier and multiple wrestlers.

Softball, women's lacrosse, girls' soccer, volleyball and football teams joined the title parade.

The first of the year to claim a crown was Middlebury Union High School senior Jazmyn Hurley, who in January at UVM's indoor track and field facility won the Division II 55- and 300-meter races, adding to an already impressive trophy case. She was not done for

the tournament's outstanding wrestler after defeating higher seeds on the way to his victory.

Coach and Middlebury native Kate Livesay's Middlebury College women's lacrosse team earned the first spring title. The Panthers rallied from four goals down to defeat Tufts in the NCAA D-III final, 10-9. They finished 21-1 and won the program's fourth straight national title.

Next came senior MUHS tennis player Jackson Murray. Murray, the Tigers' No. 1 player since he was a freshman, broke through for his first state title, losing only one set in four tournament matches.

There were some high hopes dashed for local teams in the spring, as only one team won its final game — Mount Abraham softball. The No. 2 seed Eagles earned the program's sixth title in seven seasons in dramatic fashion, defeating No. 1 Lyndon, 6-5 in 10 innings. Gretchen Toy, who had already driven in three runs in the final, singled to lead off the top of the 10th, and her courtesy runner scored the winning run. Then Toy, the complete-game winning pitcher, shut down the Vikings in the bottom of the inning.

Fall brought more drama. Two titles came in one weekend. On a Saturday the No. 2 VUHS girls' soccer team took on No. 8 Peoples for the D-III title and prevailed, 2-0, to finish 17-1. Published prognosticators did not believe in the Commodores, nor did the Stowe player who told her coach as she was being subbed out in the semifinal, "We are not losing to this team." Well, check the scoreboard.

No one doubted the winner of the

next day's D-II girls' volleyball title match. No. 1 MUHS had defeated its opponent in the final, No. 3 Enosburg, in the regular season. The 16-1 Tigers also were undefeated against D-II competition this fall. Enosburg battled, but the Tigers made the plays when it mattered as the program won a title in just its second year at the varsity level, three close sets to none. Like the VUHS soccer team, the Tigers talked about team unity afterward.

Another Panther claimed a title this fall — junior cross-country runner Audrey MacLean. Her time of 20:16.8 over 6 kilometers was 48 seconds faster than the runner-up in the NCAA D-III championship race.

Two teams that didn't win a title deserves mention. Coach

Katharine DeLorenzo's Panther field hockey team saw an incredible record eight-season string of NCAA D-III titles snapped with a loss in the quarterfinal round. Congratulations to DeLorenzo and her athletes for all they have accomplished. Honorable mention also to the top-seeded Eagle boys' soccer team, upset in overtime in the D-II final after proving itself the best team in the division all season.

Last, but not least, the Tiger football team capped the 2025 high school season by defeating St. Johnsbury, 13-7, in a bruising D-I final played in South Burlington.

The Tigers ran for 268 yards on 51 attempts, held the Hilltoppers to four yards rushing and a net 144 yards passing, and staved off a late St. Johnsbury rally with a Jason Sperry interception followed by a game-clinching Sperry 4th-down run for a first down as time wound down.

The Tigers finished 10-1, earned the program's 15th championship, and completed the program's 17th straight winning season.

What MUHS senior Cooke Riney said after that game probably sums up how all the championship athletes felt as they celebrated afterward with their friends, families and fans.

"Seeing the community here from Middlebury supporting football, it's amazing," Riney said "There's so much love here."



Fall brought more drama. Two titles came in one weekend.

## Homeless

(Continued from Page 13)

43% of all calls they received about housing matters in 2024, up from 28% in 2019.

What can be done to move toward ending homelessness? Advocates point to several steps, all of which will demand more resources and policy shifts. They include:

- Making a major investment in new affordable housing.
- Expanding homeless shelters.
- Ending the criminalization of poverty.
- Ending the criminalization of people who use drugs.
- Doing more to prevent folks from becoming homeless, including beefing up support services and rental subsidies.

"Vermont stands at a moral crossroads: it is long past time to abandon the failed status quo and commit to the bold, sustained investments needed to end homelessness once and for all," the 2025 State of Homelessness in Vermont Report asserts.

# OTHER STORIES THAT CAUGHT OUR EYE

When the reporters and editors sit around the office and weigh the top 10 stories of the preceding year, we always produce a longer list than just 10. We will mention a couple of important stories that could have made the list, but didn't fit.

- One issue that's missing that surely holds a prominent place locally is the saga Addison County State's Attorney Eva Vekos, who all year was facing a state drunken driving charge. But not only that, as the *Independent* reported this past winter, there were some crime victims who were not happy with the way she was handling sensitive cases — sometimes not alerting them when their abusers were being offered a plea deal rather than facing more serious prosecution.

In December, Vekos pleaded no contest to a charge of drunken driving and received a six-month deferred sentence, allowing the conviction to be cleared from her record provided she does not commit any violations during that period. The misdemeanor charge stemmed from an incident nearly two years ago where she was accused by troopers of showing up to a suspicious death scene in Bridport impaired. The head of the state Democratic Party, which backed Vekos when she ran for the post three years ago, said the party would not support her re-election next year and would find someone to run against her if necessary. The county's entire Legislative delegation called for Vekos to step down.

- Vekos wasn't the only elected leader to be in hot water in 2025. 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. He was offered an opportunity to explain himself in the *Independent*, and that still might happen.

- Looking back over 2025 we found a fair number of stories centered around how to keep Vermont traditions/services going despite an aging population and changing times. In March there were efforts to boost attendance and participation at annual town meetings. We wrote about a new course at the Hannaford Career Center that trains the next generation of emergency responders. In 2025 you may have read the story about a partnership that is bringing more youth to civic roles in Bristol. And a story that we have written before popped up again, as firefighters around county were exploring options to improve recruitment of new first responders.

Here are things we saw in 2025 that will come to pass in 2026:

- 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 such a tax could be put toward capital infrastructure projects, economic development and other priorities.

- A story that stayed in our heart came out of Vergennes last winter when Police Sergeant Adam O'Neill knew quickly on New Year's Eve that the woman calling the station was upset. City homeowner Tracy Tembreull was reporting the theft of an item from her family's front porch that in one way could be replaced for just \$30 or \$40 — but actually it was irreplaceable.

Someone had stolen an American flag that she had flown to honor the memory of her brother, Derek Klobuchar, a Purple Heart veteran who had taken his own life in 2018. Police officers learned of the flag's importance and immediately saw that this injustice needed to be repaired. With the help of the American Legion, they replaced the flag and presented it in an emotional ceremony.

- In this newspaper you read about how Bristol and Middlebury got new vending

machines that don't peddle candy bars and soda, but offer potentially lifesaving products to folks battling substance use, who are homelessness and/or have limited resources. And the products the machine offers are free.

- In one edition this year we had two locals earning national recognition. Longtime Salisbury Community School teacher Amy Clapp was named the winner of a Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching, the nation's highest distinction for STEM instructors.

- That same week we reported that Lincoln 17-year-old Estella Laird, who had won a state cross country championship and placed well at New England and national XC meets, had been named the Gatorade Vermont Girls' Cross Country Player of the Year.

- We were happy this year to tell the story of Holly Puterbaugh, 78, and Lois Farnham, 80, who were among three-same sex couples who in 2000 became the face of Vermont's groundbreaking civil unions law. It was the first domino to fall in a national movement that led to same-sex marriage in Massachusetts in 2004, Vermont in 2009, and culminating in federal recognition in 2015.

There are more than 744,000 same-sex married couples in the United States, and each one owes a debt of gratitude to these two endearing, persistent and empathetic women now living their best lives at the Eastview at Middlebury retirement community.

- How about the Lincoln woman who raises monarch butterflies and began cultivating rare all-white monarchs? Or the Emergency Room doctor who had a heart attack in his place of employment, and the quick work of his colleagues was probably what saved his life. We also gave voice to some apple growers who raised money and supplies for their Jamaican pickers whose home island was devastated by a hurricane this fall.

- Another story featured a new club that was creating quite a buzz at the Patricia Hannaford Career Center. It was the Flying Tigers Drone Club, which was attracting a growing number of middle and high school students who enjoy programming and piloting unmanned aerial vehicles. A trio of members had their drones zipping around the room, evading desks, computers, machinery and other potential collision points.



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