



On exhibit

A couple Diploma Program art students and their MUHS peers unveil a show. See Arts + Leisure.



Playoff hopes

Both MUHS hockey teams, and VUHS boys' basketball hit semifinals. See Page 1B.



Weddings

From catering to budgeting — it's time to plan your special day. Read our special section.

ADDISON COUNTY INDEPENDENT

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\$2.00

Hooper and Cash take up leadership positions

By JOHN FLOWERS

MIDDLEBURY — Boards governing the county's shire town and Middlebury-area schools both elected new leaders this week without competition or controversy.

On Monday, the Addison Central School District board overwhelmingly endorsed Ripton's Steve Cash to serve as its new chair. He succeeds Shoreham's Barb Wilson, who declined a nomination to continue as chair, in large part because she and her spouse will be relocating to France later this year.

Middlebury's Jason Chance also received a chairmanship nomination, which he, too, declined.

While Cash was only elected to the ACSD board last March, he's been deeply invested in Ripton public education issues since June of 2021. That's when his community elected him as one of

(See ACSD, Page 15A)



High school musical

IN A REHEARSAL this week of Vergennes Union High School's production of "Mean Girls: The Musical," Aaron Samuels (played by Carter McGuire) has a serious discussion with Cady Heron (played by Phoebe Raphael) during math class. See how it turns out and have a lot of fun along the way in performances at VUHS this Thursday, Friday and Saturday. More photos on Page 10A.

Photo by Jason Duquette-Hoffman

Shoreham Democrat running for House

Hescock to take on Rep. Casey

By JOHN FLOWERS

SHOREHAM — Jonathan Hescock during his adult life has served Shoreham as a planner, library trustee and historical society member.

Last week he began a one-year term as town moderator.

And if things go his way at the polls this November, Hescock next year will begin a two-year term in the state Legislature, representing the Addison-Rutland House district towns of Shoreham, Orwell, Whiting, Sudbury and Hubbardton.

(See Hescock, Page 18A)

College moves Jordan program amid war in Iran

By MARIN HOWELL

MIDDLEBURY — The ongoing U.S.-Israeli war with Iran has prompted Middlebury College officials to relocate students attending the institution's study abroad program in Jordan.

The college's website states that due to "the spill-over of the conflict with Iran, Middlebury has decided to relocate the students in Jordan to the Middlebury School in Morocco for the remainder of the spring semester." Assistant

(See Jordan program, Page 18A)

Salisbury won't dispute career center vote

By JOHN FLOWERS

MIDDLEBURY — The Salisbury selectboard won't request a revote on the fiscal year 2027 Patricia Hannaford Career Center (PHCC) budget following a "missing ballots" mystery that prevented Salisbury residents from weighing in on the \$6,271,915 spending plan on March 3.

As previously reported by the *Independent*, Salisbury residents didn't receive the Career Center budget ballot to fill out on Tuesday, and thus their input wasn't reflected in the 3,901 to 1,732 result that election officials

(See Salisbury, Page 18A)



By the way

The Vermont Department of Motor Vehicles once again is warning the public of more scam text messages that falsely claim the recipient has an unpaid traffic ticket and is at risk of driver's license suspension and other penalties. The DMV didn't send these messages and doesn't send any text or email messages demanding immediate payment. The DMV communicates with customers via the mail and

(See By the way, Page 17A)

Gov. Douglas prioritizes health care reform

VHC911 group releases new report

By JOHN FLOWERS

MIDDLEBURY — Middlebury's James Douglas spent eight years (2003-2011) managing the general health of the Green Mountain State as its 80th governor.

He's now leading a group advocating for the physical health

of Vermonters.

Douglas, 74, is co-chair of Vermont Healthcare 911 (VHC911), a self-described "broad coalition of Vermonters insisting on a sustainable, long-term health care system that supports quality, reduces costs and ensures access to care in all regions of the state."

The coalition includes medical professionals, business leaders, school officials and rank-and-file Vermonters concerned about the rising costs of healthcare and its impacts on the wellbeing, quality of life and success of residents and the economic vitality of the state.

Douglas, during a recent interview at the *Independent*, discussed his involvement with

VHC911 and its just-released report titled, "Affordability in Vermont Healthcare: 2025 Snapshot and Path Forward."

"Having the most expensive health premiums in the nation impacts the state's affordability, hurts businesses and strains family budgets," reads the report's introduction. "Getting health costs

(See Douglas, Page 16A)

Starksboro explores steps to withdraw from the MAUSD

By MARIN HOWELL

STARKSBORO — Rumbings are getting louder that Starksboro might disengage from the four-town Mount Abraham Unified School District after the district last year began discussing a potential elementary school closing.

Starksboro voters at their Feb. 28 annual town meeting unanimously passed Article 11 on the warning, which "authorize(d) the community to determine and then inform voters of the steps required (which would include a future vote by the Town's voters) to withdraw from MAUSD."

That article was approved from

the floor by voice vote. MAUSD officials have been evaluating different educational delivery options as part of an effort to reduce costs while continuing to offer quality programming. Two of the options being considered could lead to closing a couple of the district's elementary schools, potentially including Robinson Elementary.

"Community members of Starksboro petitioned to include its inclusion, to understand how Starksboro residents value maintaining our town school, Robinson

"It is fair to say that Starksboro residents care deeply about having a say in what happens, if anything, to the town elementary school."

— Carin McCarthy and Koran Cousino

(See Starksboro, Page 15A)



Last ski?

TO CAP OFF the cross country ski season, Blueberry Hill Inn in Goshen on Sunday sponsored its "Pig Race," an annual opportunity to get silly on skis as the snow quickly turns to slush. Here Ellisa Bradley of Norwich appears to be taunting Olympic phenom Johannes Klæbo as they ski the course on a beautiful day. See more photos on Page 14A.

Independent photo/Steve James

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Grazing pastures offer bird conservation opportunities

By MARIN HOWELL

FERRISBURGH — As America's native grasslands have diminished over the years, so too have the birds that rely on those habitats.

Grassland birds like the bobolink and Eastern meadowlark have seen their populations decline by more than 50% since 1970.

"Grassland birds as a whole have faced the greatest proportional population declines when compared to birds in any other ecotype across the U.S. and Canada over the last

50 years," Hyla Howe, a grassland bird biologist and coordinator of The Bobolink Project, said at a recent event in Ferrisburgh.

In the face of that population loss, Addison County's agricultural landscape presents an opportunity, as pastures and hayfields provide key habitat for grassland birds. The Feb. 27 event at the Ferrisburgh Town Hall offered recommendations for managing farmland in ways that support grassland birds and gave local farmers a chance to discuss their experiences doing so.

"(Grassland birds) exist primarily on

privately-owned lands, around 84% of their total population breeds on privately-owned lands," Howe said. "So, they're just really threatened by the decisions that we make on our land and how we're managing it."

Howe was one of two presenters at the Ferrisburgh event on "Hayland and Pasture Management for Conservation & Birds." The gathering was hosted by the Champlain Valley Farmer Coalition, Vermont Grass Farmers Association and The Bobolink Project, which offers financial assistance to "participating farmers who modify their

mowing schedules so that grassland nesting birds can successfully raise their young."

Howe pointed to three grassland birds found in Vermont: the Savannah sparrow, bobolink and Eastern meadowlark.

"These three are all grassland obligate songbirds, which means that they breed exclusively in open, grass-dominated habitats," she said.

Those habitats aren't as common as they used to be.

"We've had a lot of changing land (See Grasslands, Page 17A)

Otter Valley, Slate Valley set school budget revotes

By JOHN FLOWERS

ORWELL/BRANDON — Otter Valley Unified Union (OVUU) and Slate Valley Unified School District (SVUSD) leaders will spend the next three weeks crunching numbers in hopes of getting fiscal year 2027 spending plans approved by their respective residents, who on March 3 defeated both districts' original budget asks.

As previously reported by the Independent:

- Leicester, Whiting, Goshen, Sudbury, Brandon and Pittsford residents on Town Meeting Day shot down the proposed OVUU FY27 budget of \$28,841,999 by an 868 to 700 tally. The spending plan reflected an increase of \$818,286, or 2.92%.

- Orwell, Benson, Castleton, Fair Haven, Hubbardton and West Haven residents on March 3 defeated, by a vote of 1,125 to 952, a proposed FY27 SVUSD budget of \$32,509,789. The proposed spending plan was up 2.8% (\$886,800) compared to this year.

Otter Valley officials have tentatively set an Australian ballot

revote for Tuesday, April 7. In the meantime, the OV board has set two meetings at which they will invite public input and consider budget revisions.

On March 10, the school administration was due to ask the OV board for budget direction and guidance. The agenda and budget re-vote considerations presentation for this meeting can be found at mesu.org/ovuu.

Then, on March 17, the administration will present a revised budget proposal.

Both OV board meetings will begin at 6 p.m. in the Otter Valley Union High School library; community members are welcome and encouraged to attend.

Meanwhile, SVUSD officials have tentatively scheduled a budget revote for Tuesday, March 31. That vote will be preceded by a series of meetings at which district residents can provide feedback. Meetings of the district's finance committee were scheduled for March 9 and March 11 in the Fair Haven Union Middle/High (See Budgets, Page 7A)

College raises tuition 4% Midd sees progress in tackling deficit

MIDDLEBURY — The Middlebury Board of Trustees last month approved a 4% increase in the comprehensive fee for the undergraduate college, which brings the total undergraduate cost of attendance for the upcoming academic year to \$94,386.

Trustees made the move at their Feb. 6-7 virtual winter meeting. Factoring in the increase, college tuition now totals \$72,924, room and board is \$20,920, and the Student Government Association fee is \$542.

At the meeting, Executive Vice President for Finance and Administration David Provost stated Middlebury College's cost of attendance remains in the "middle of its peer institutions." A summary of the meeting noted the board of trustees "reaffirmed its commitment to robust student financial aid, with President Ian Baucom sharing his ambition to raise the family income threshold at which students qualify for free tuition."

The institution's website states that Middlebury College is one of a few colleges in the country "that are both need-blind in their admissions process and also meet all accepted students' full demonstrated financial need." According to the website, 42% of students get aid, with an average grant of \$62,860.

FINANCIAL UPDATE

Trustees last month also received an update on the institution's finances. College officials last April announced steps the institution would take to address a projected \$14.1 million deficit for that fiscal year. Those measures included limiting employee benefits, offering a financial incentive for Vermont employees to retire early and growing undergraduate enrollment in the coming years.

At the February meeting, Provost and Vice President for Finance and Administration Alberto Citarella shared updates on a budget proposal presented in October that previously showed a deficit of \$8.61 million. That projected deficit had been reduced to \$4.49 million as of Dec. 31.

"Provost attributed the reductions to positive net tuition revenue, increased revenue from auxiliary (See Tuition, Page 7A)



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Top picks for economic development in 2026

By JOHN FLOWERS

MIDDLEBURY — A proposed 74-unit middle-income housing development in Vergennes, a major broadband expansion effort, and a keenly anticipated skatepark project in Middlebury are among 10 initiatives that have earned a place on the Addison County Economic Development Corporation's (ACEDC) 2026 Regional Priority Project list.

And making the top 10 list is far from symbolic; it can help make or break a project's funding prospects.

From January through October of each year, the ACEDC solicits project submittals from municipalities, developers and nonprofits. Then, each December, the organization convenes a scoring committee — made up of Addison County business and community leaders — to score submittals and compile the final ranking of the top 10 projects. The final list is then shared with state and federal agencies to use in making funding decisions throughout the following year.

Phyllis Stinson, vice president of the Middlebury Skatepark Project board, was ecstatic to learn that it had scored ninth on the ACEDC's top 10 list.

"We have been working closely

with the town to bring this vital community asset to life," she said through an email exchange. "Making it to the top 10... is great news for Addison County."

The proposed concrete skatepark — now in the design phase — is being planned near Middlebury's Mary Hogan Elementary School. It's been a four-year volunteer effort that's included private fundraising, grants and many hours of planning aimed at producing a \$562,000 facility that would be open to skateboarders, scooter and BMX riders, roller skaters and bladers of all ages — including children who fall through the cracks of team sports.

Stinson believes the skatepark could become part of a growing tapestry of amenities that make Addison County a great place to live.

"In our outreach for support, we always focus on what makes a thriving community: housing, education, childcare, art, and recreation. We are in good company, considering so many projects focused on the above have made it to the ACEDC's priority list," she said.

It is indeed an eclectic list, both in scope and geography. Here's the list, from 10 to one:

- A grassroots effort to acquire and rehab the former Buxton's Store building at 499 Main St. to restore as a year-round general store and café.

- The Middlebury skatepark project.

- An effort to establish a general store, café and rental apartment at the former Monkton Store property off Route 116 in Monkton.

- The All-Access Project at the

Vergennes Opera House. This project, which is nearing completion will equip the historic opera house (in City Hall) with a new elevator tower affixed to the southwest side of the building; a new, easier walkway from the street; and inside the theater, a discreet lift from the auditorium level to both the stage and dressing room.

- Water system redundancy upgrades in Middlebury's industrial park.

- Development of a new municipal water supply for the town of Middlebury to meet growing demands. The project calls for siting, engineering and constructing the additional water source.

- Upgrades to Middlebury's wastewater treatment plant and main sewage pumps station, to modernize obsolete infrastructure, reduce environmental impacts and increase energy efficiency.

- Replacement of Bristol's entire municipal water system, including mains, service lines and supporting infrastructure, to eliminate system failures and enhance reliability.

- Support of Maple Broadband's buildout to ensure every on-grid address within that communications union district has access to high-speed service.

- Support for Vergennes North, a new 74-unit housing development in the Little City that could specifically

target middle-income residents.

Alex Armani-Munn, executive director of the ACEDC, said the regional priority project list has during the past five years proven itself to be "a critical tool for securing public funding for major projects throughout Addison County. ACEDC is privileged to have the responsibility of stewarding this process..."

He thanked members of the

2026 projects list scoring committee, which included Phil Summers of the Addison County Chamber of Commerce, Adam Lougee of the Addison County Regional Planning Commission, Sarah Morris of the Basin Harbor Club, Courtney Radford of Bristol CORE, and Dave Castle of Mechanical Advantage.

"We will continue to leverage the (projects) list to secure funding for projects that improve quality of life and that help to attract and retain businesses in Addison County," he said. "Moving forward, we hope to increase the geographic distribution of projects included on the list to ensure it is representative of the entire county."

Stinson hopes the Middlebury skatepark's placement on the ACEDC list will pay dividends for a project that transcends ollies, kickturns, heelflips and fakies.

"Addison County's youth need third places to practice life skills — even more than skate tricks," she said. "Free play at neighborhood parks, skateparks and fields is essential for young people to use their imaginations and bodies to build resilience, confidence, independence, and community. We are grateful to ACEDC for believing in the power of this, too."

John Flowers is at johnf@addisonindependent.com.



Fine dining in Lincoln

WITH THE RECENT thaw in temperatures has come new wildlife to the Green Mountains. In the first couple days of this week, a Lincoln resident told us that he has seen fox, beaver, stoat, the first mallards, and this otter enjoying horned pout, also known as bullhead, on ice.

Photo by Dale Cockrell

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THIS PHOTO SHOWS Gilman Pond surrounded by forestland on a 135-acre parcel in Orwell that Salisbury's Pat Stevenson is donating to Northeast Wilderness Trust.

Photo courtesy of NEWT

Orwell land to remain forever wild

By JOHN FLOWERS

ORWELL — Pat Stevenson has always been fond of nature — in its purest form. Originally hailing from urban Connecticut, she knew that pastureland, once paved, is gone forever.

The now-Salisbury resident in 2020 decided to capture her own piece of paradise in the form of a 135-acre, wooded parcel near Lake Champlain in Orwell. Along ridges running north to south over the property are forests where oak and hickory predominate, boasting ecosystems that produce a bounty of food for wildlife in the form of nuts, or mast.

Dotting the forest floor are vernal pools and wetlands, including Gilman Pond, a six-acre body of water that Stevenson playfully named after her pet cat.

"I wanted the land to go there and hike; the pond was so beautiful," Stevenson said during a recent phone interview.

She and her friends enjoyed the land — particularly its magnificent stand of trees. They even named a handful of the giants — "Thor" and "Alice" became their familiar leafy friends — during their walks. Their majesty summoned a sense of wonder and fondness for the natural world that Stevenson has held since

her youth.

Sadly, Stevenson hasn't been able to make many trips to her beloved sanctuary in recent years.

The recent passing of her partner, with whom she owned and ran Middlebury Frame Shop & Gallery, led to her selling the business. That was a major change in her life, and, at age 71, hiking in wilderness areas can take a greater toll on the body.

These and other factors expedited Stevenson's resolve to ensure her beloved Orwell land would remain as unspoiled as it was the day she purchased it six years ago.

She decided to donate the property to Northeast Wilderness Trust (known as NEWT), a Montpelier-based regional land trust that focuses on wilderness conservation.

"I knew I was going to donate it to the trust; it was just a matter of when," Stevenson said. "I've always wanted to protect land."

As a designated NEWT sanctuary, the Orwell land will be open to folks for passive recreation, such as hiking, snowshoeing, photography and cross-country skiing. No motorized vehicles/equipment will be allowed; and hunting, fishing and trapping will be prohibited on the property.

The combination of ownership by

NEWT and a conservation easement to be held by another organization will ensure the future Wolf Tree Wilderness Sanctuary "is always a place where natural processes reign — giving a small-but-mighty boost to the just 3.7% of Vermont that qualifies as 'wildlands,'" according to a NEWT press release about the Stevenson land gift.

The Orwell project pushes Vermont closer to its stated target of 9% of forests managed for old-growth conditions, according to NEWT officials.

The Stevenson property was (See Orwell, Page 7A)

New coalition touts single-payer health care

By JOHN FLOWERS

MIDDLEBURY — Less than two weeks after residents in seven Addison County towns urged the Legislature to support universal access to primary care, a new statewide coalition has formed to lobby for a new publicly financed health care system for the state of Vermont.

The group of like-minded organizations has formed the "802 Vermont Universal Health Care Coalition." Members include the American Civil Liberties Union of Vermont; the American Federation of Teachers of Vermont; the Public Assets Institute; Rights and Democracy, Vermont; Rural Vermont; Service Employees International Union, Committee of Interns and Residents; Vermont Health Care for All; Vermont Public Interest Research Group; the Vermont Racial Justice Alliance; and the Vermont Workers' Center.

"The coalition believes there is an impending crisis in health care that can only be averted by treating health care as a public good, and financing it accordingly," coalition members stated in a joint press release issued Monday. "Everyone knows that health care in Vermont is dangerously close to collapse. Hospitals teeter on the brink of closure, practicing doctors struggle to stay afloat, more and more Vermonters can't afford to get health care even if they already pay exorbitant premiums for insurance."

Problems plaguing Vermont's health care system, according to coalition leaders, include reduced

subsidies for Obamacare that are projected to result in dramatic insurance premium increases for 30,000-42,000 Vermonters; new Medicaid eligibility standards expected to shave around 45,000 Vermonters off coverage rolls during the next several years; and what the coalition sees as a potential privatization of Medicare that could see private insurers reduce access.

In addition, Vermont has one of the smallest and grayest populations in the union, with a declining number of folks paying into the private insurance pool.

"As these current and impending disasters threaten every segment of our health care, our leaders avoid any realistic effort to prevent collapse," reads a statement from the coalition. "Vermont's many unsuccessful efforts at reform have not addressed the underlying causes that divert resources to administrative waste instead of health care — a fragmented system with multiple

plans and obstacles to care. All of the approaches so far have made administrative complexity worse and have not ensured health care for all."

Coalition leaders said they believe the only way to save the state's health care system would be to publicly finance the system based on ability to pay, while at the same time bypassing "insurance company middlemen."

The group is advancing the following health care principles:

- Covering all Vermont residents.
 - Replacing private insurance with public financing, and no patient cost-sharing.
 - Barring waivers, a system that wraps around existing federal programs.
 - A system that can be phased.
 - High quality, with an emphasis on community-based primary care.
 - Cost control achieved by administrative efficiency,
- (See Coalition, Page 11A)



REMINDER

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Editorials

GOP targets Vermont in bogus search for fraud

Vermont is one of 10 states recently targeted by the GOP-controlled U.S. House Committee on Energy and Commerce. The effort is allegedly to eradicate fraud in the state's Medicaid program. It's mostly bogus. "Mostly" because it's well-known Trump is seeking retribution against "blue states," defined as any state that voted against him in the 2024 election, and is looking for any excuse to cut federal funding to those states. Cuts in FEMA funding to blue states, like Vermont, has already happened. Meanwhile, the only red state to face a similar review of its Medicaid program, at this juncture, is Nebraska.

Does Vermont have anything to worry about? Certainly. In any program serving 25% of the state's population and spending \$2.3 billion annually, there's bound to be a few bad apples trying to get more than they deserve. States have internal systems in place for that reason. Recent examples, as noted by the Republican leaders of the House committee, include a \$200,000 settlement a Burlington mental health care provider had to pay for allegedly submitting more than 150 false records on 50 Medicaid claims. Another example cited felony Medicaid fraud charges against a Lamoille County couple for submitting false time sheets for caretaking by an unauthorized provider. (See story on Page 11A.)

Importantly, those claims and others were caught and prosecuted by Vermont agents. Does the GOP really think it's going to find a significant amount of Medicaid fraud in Vermont beyond that — with a total of \$1.45 billion in federal funds spent in 2024 serving 156,900 people — or is it snarky payback of behalf of Trump?

We'll let readers ponder that question, while taking the opportunity (since the GOP brought it up) to point out real waste. In that realm, the Trump administration is reaching historic levels.

Watchdog groups and the Government Accountability Office (GAO) have identified several areas of scandalous spending, including:

- A March 2026 report from Open the Books alleging the Department of Defense spent \$93.4 billion on contracts in September 2025 to avoid losing money that would expire if not spent by Sept. 30. Spending included \$22 million on luxury food items like lobster tail, Alaskan king crab, and ribeye steak. Other details cited a \$98,329 Steinway & Sons grand piano the Pentagon bought for the Air Force Chief of Staff's home; \$5.3 million for Apple devices such as the new iPad; and an astronomical amount of shellfish, including \$2 million for Alaskan king crab and \$6.9 million worth of lobster tail — all in September.

Lobster tail is apparently a favorite of Hegseth's Pentagon, the report said, adding the department spent more than \$7.4 million on the luxury item in March, May, June and October.

- A GAO report from February 2026 found the Trump administration wasted up to \$38 million by keeping nearly half of the Department of Education's civil rights staff on paid administrative leave for nine months instead of allowing them to work.

- Former HHS Secretary Tom Price resigned after spending over \$400,000 on trips on private jets. More recently, in February 2026, FBI Director Kash Patel faced scrutiny for his alleged personal use of a \$60 million government jet for "date nights" and golfing trips. And former Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem was ousted for, among other egregious wrongs, wasting \$200 million for personal ad contracts and spending \$172 million for the use of private jets.

- Trump is also spending about a billion dollars a day bombing Iran, even though he spent the first six months of his second term slashing government programs that provided needed services, allegedly because of his concern for the national debt, which has ballooned under his watch. DOGE did such a poor job, it not only disrupted needed government services, but increased spending — a lose-lose for American taxpayers.

Not mentioned under "wasted funds" is the obscene amount of graft and corruption attributed to Trump, his family, and this administration. The New Yorker reported the Trump family has potentially reaped \$4 billion in profits by Jan. 2026 through his association as president. While much of it is not illegal, it is unprecedented and erodes citizen trust in government.

It remains to be seen how much, if any, Medicaid fraud House Republicans will find in Vermont, but three things are certain: Vermont's Medicaid budget is peanuts compared to national Medicaid spending, so any finding is more about politics than fiscal prudence; unless the GOP committee directs the same reviews for "red states," Americans should view this as a partisan act seeking retribution; and the waste going on under their committee's noses within this administration is shocking in its scope and audacity.

No revelation there, just a reminder of the state of America's politics under Trump.

Angelo Lynn

Might does not make right

Note: Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) released the following statement this Tuesday on Donald Trump and Benjamin Netanyahu's efforts to unravel international law.

"The attacks on Iran by the United States and Israel are unraveling international law, the Geneva Conventions and the legitimacy of the United Nations. This is extremely dangerous for the future of the planet and humanity.

"If the United States and Israel have the right to launch a unilateral attack against Iran, what is the moral or legal argument against China invading Taiwan, Russia attacking Poland or North Korea launching missiles into South Korea? There is none. In Trump's world, any nation has the "right" to go to war against any other nation for any reason.

"After the horrors of World War II, the international community came together to establish international law — a system of rules designed to prevent aggressive wars and hold nations accountable for violating basic human rights. Trump and Netanyahu are destroying that effort and are pushing the global community back into international anarchy — a world that produced 10 million dead in World War I and 50 million dead in World War II.

"We cannot go back to a world where might makes right — where any nation can invade, bomb or destabilize another country for any reason they choose. That mentality leaves all of us, and future generations, increasingly unsafe."

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Cool kids

HIGH SCHOOL CAN be a lot of fun, but peer pressure and bullying take their toll. The student actors and dancers at Vergennes Union High School take on both sides of the experience in their production of "Mean Girls: The Musical." Go see Maddie Stroup and Tatum Raphael, shown here in rehearsal this week, and the rest of the gang in performances on Thursday, Friday and Saturday afternoon.

Photo by Jason Duquette-Hoffman

Musical chairs informs scarcity

A student came to yoga class fresh from a kids' birthday party.

"Musical chairs is not a good game for kids," she said. I was rocketed back through time to a birthday party long ago, to the terrible anxious feeling of looking for a chair, trying to sit on one at the same time as someone else, and the kind of ferocious and sometimes violent energy that seemed to arise during what was supposed to be fun for children. Musical chairs is not fun!

"I suppose they teach these games to kids to indoctrinate them into capitalism," I said to my student, as we were laying out our yoga mats to begin practicing.

The more I think about it, the more true it seems. The economic system we live under is one of ruthless competition. Everything is monetized, even the most basic necessities of life.

At our Town Meeting, the fire chief spoke about our town's one fire truck being 30 years old and in need of replacement, and how it was going to be a significant challenge to raise enough funds. All I could think about was the days-old military attack on Iran, with bombing now spreading throughout the region. There's always money for war planes and weaponry, but a rural town in need of a new fire truck? You better start having bake sales.

So many of the issues Vermont faces, from a lack of affordable housing and childcare, to food insecurity and substance use disorder, these are all problems of abundant resources being funneled upwards to the already obscenely rich. We are all feeling the pinch, as groceries get more expensive, housing gets scarcer, and our immigrant neighbors live in fear.

There is another way! Mutual Aid networks are springing up everywhere, as neighbors work to help

keep each other safe and survive these terrifying conditions. A pastor on the street in Minneapolis described feeling utterly traumatized by witnessing violent ICE abductions, repeatedly, while also feeling a bottomless and powerful well of love for her neighbors, and for her entire city under siege.

A tool for community organizing that has been an essential ingredient in freedom struggles through the ages is Resistance Singing. Mutual Aid groups in Minneapolis use simple songs with rich harmonies to

unify a crowd, spread a message of nonviolence, keep people warm and in harmony, and let neighbors in hiding know they are not alone. Resistance Singing is spreading through the nation. On the first Sunday of this month there were at least 70 demonstrations outside ICE facilities, including one of over 200 people singing on the street outside the Williston ICE Center.

One of our resistance songs, "In This House," by Ma Muse and Maggie Wheeler, is the exact opposite of a musical chairs scarcity mindset. Some of the words say, "Come on over, come on in! Come on over, let's be friends. Come on over, there is enough! This is the world we've been dreaming of."

There really is enough for everyone to have what they need. So many of the things that make life wonderful, like libraries, public schools, and social security, come about through pooling our resources and sharing with each other. Let's scale it up, refuse to tolerate greed, and set another place at the table.

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

Ways of Seeing

By Joanna Colwell



Sanders message still rings true

The story of Bernie Sanders's rise from couch-surfing, penniless single dad to mayor of Burlington, the U.S. Senate and presidential politics is both familiar and astonishing.

It's astonishing for what it says about the capacity of the political system to make room for a singular, dedicated figure who makes a name for himself on the fringe, and who then brings the fringe to the center. To Vermonters who know the story of his origins in Brooklyn and the poverty that was a crucible of his radical politics, it is a familiar story, but no less astonishing.

The rise of Bernie Sanders is the subject of an insightful and entertaining new book by Burlington native Dan Chiasson, who places Sanders within a larger story that shines a light on a larger question: How does history happen?

Chiasson's book, "Bernie for Burlington: The Rise of the People's Politician," explores the circumstances of Sanders's life, but within the context of a larger picture — the changing worlds of Burlington and Vermont in the late 20th century. His book is about more than Bernie. It is about the world where Chiasson grew up, part of a large French-Canadian family comprising numerous aunts, uncles, cousins, great-aunts, great-uncles and his

Delorme grandparents, with whom he and his mother lived on Colchester Avenue.

Chiasson was a shy Catholic boy of nine when Sanders became mayor, and he tells of the day Sanders and an aide came to the door during his first mayoral campaign, and Chiasson's grandfather hollered, "Don't answer the door!" Young people and so-called liberals were the bane of Milford Delorme.

Chiasson was well-suited to the task of writing this book. He is a nationally recognized poet and professor at Wellesley College, and he has written something other than a historian's history book or a traditional biography. The book is, in part, a memoir, with much detail about what it was like to be a boy in Bernie's Burlington.

In Chiasson's telling, history is a wide canvas. When Sanders arrived in Vermont, and before Chiasson was born, the city had suffered the devastation of what was called "urban renewal" — poor neighborhoods on Battery Street and the Old North End were cleared away with the idea that something new would be built.

That meant that whole populations of working-class people, some who had already suffered through

Letters to the Editor

Urge the GOP to dump Trump

Donald Trump persists in power only through the support of his party base. I have sent the following communication to the head of the Vermont GOP urging him, and the GOP, to separate themselves from Trump and start to build a rational law-abiding Republican Party that could deserve our support. His email address is paul@vtgop.org. I hope others do the same.

To Paul Dame, Vt. GOP Chair: We are deeply aggrieved and concerned about the unauthorized war against Iran instigated by Donald Trump. His actions as President have clearly demonstrated his disrespect for the rule of law and the value of honesty. He is a convicted criminal acting without any of the intended controls provided by our frame of government. He can continue in power only through the support of his party and I beg you as a representative of that party to join the majority of Americans who oppose Donald Trump and his band of thugs to voice your objection and support the lawful curtailment of his power. Thank you.

Steve and Kathy Reynolds Cornwall

Senator missing at meetings?

So far the tally for Sen. Heffernan's attendance at town meeting this year is 17 towns reporting he was a No Show (Bristol, New Haven, Lincoln, Starksboro, Middlebury, Ripton, Monkton, Ferrisburgh, Salisbury, Huntington, Vergennes, Panton, Orwell, Shoreham, Bridport, Cornwall, Whiting) and zero towns reporting that he made an appearance.

By comparison Sen. Ruth Hardy stated in her recent Legislative Review in the Addy Indy, "I try to attend as many town meetings as possible each year, but can't make it to all 25 of them." She then outlined her plans to attend 12 meetings over three days.

Sen. Heffernan did leave a two-page Town Meeting Update for us, which expressed no regret or explanation for why he was not in attendance.

At a time when towns are trying to find ways to engage as many people as possible in the democratic process, Town Meeting is revered as a distinctly Vermont way of hearing from our neighbors and discussing town matters with civility. It is a time honored tradition to hear from our legislators in person at Town Meeting. To have that tradition disregarded by one of our Senators I find very disappointing. As a constituent I would like to hear from Sen. Heffernan his reasons for not attending Town Meetings in his district during his aptly named Town Meeting Legislative Break.

Carol Price Bristol

Military actions are power play

Our war with Iran is not about preventing the production of nuclear weapons, destroying its ballistic missile capabilities, or regime change. The capture and arrest of Venezuela's President Maduro is not about regime change or seizing the country's oil. The bombings of Somalia, Yemen, Iraq, Syria and Nigeria were not about preventing counterterrorism. Nor are boat strikes in the Caribbean aimed at stopping drug trafficking. The war against Americans that Trump is waging in California, Washington, D.C., Illinois, Minnesota, Colorado, North Carolina, Louisiana, and Mississippi is not about deporting the worst of the worst immigrants from the U.S. or preventing crime. These actions are about thirsting for power and dominance!

The underlying motivation for these undertakings is the longstanding, racist efforts aimed at furthering white supremacy and Christian Nationalism. Trump's

(See Rubin letter, Page 5A)

(See Community Forum, Page 5A)

Letters to the Editor

Current commander in chief avoided combat

Wars from our perspective are relatively popular. Justification can be found or fabricated. The expendable, held in high regard and denied a voice, fight the wars, and non-combatants assume the work satisfies. The current Commander in chief deceived his Draft Board and lied to his country. To serve would have been inconvenient and beneath his station. The bankruptcies, lawsuits, deceptions, fabrications, corruption and vulgarity were, in turn, predictable. The most brilliant of his brilliant decisions: A Biblical War in the Middle East. Haven't heard a word

about Jeffrey since it began. The strike inspires a new Ayatollah to finish demolishing the White House, which will relocate to Florida. 160 dead at an elementary school. Collateral damage. I have seen the perverted "effectiveness" of killing people in order to save them.

Soon a directive from DHS will require *the Addison Independent* to change its name to *The Trumpet*. Failure to comply will be met with penalties or retribution, which should sound familiar. Editorials will be screened. South American prisons will house the non-

compliant. In addition, since he likes French Fries, France will be acquired or invaded, as necessary, and cholesterol sold on the open market. If this sounds totally insane, at least it's consistent. RFK recommends heroin.

"I wish her well," The Leader repeated. The evidence-tampering Supreme Authority wished the convicted sex trafficker "well." Very generous, or another overlooked obscenity. Rumor says he may have given up golf. Cheating became too challenging.

Alec Lyall
Middlebury

Abolish ICE and restore the rule of law in the U.S.

There have been many cries of alarm about the tactics of ICE (U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement) and demands for reining it in or even abolishing it. It is important to understand just what this agency of the Department of Homeland Security is doing to raise these alarms.

Videos and news reports from places of heightened ICE activity, such as Minneapolis, have made us acutely aware of the violence with which ICE carries out its mission — breaking car windows, forcibly dragging people out of their homes or vehicles, wrestling them to the ground, using non-lethal and *lethal* crowd control tactics on peaceable demonstrators, and more. All this being carried out by masked ICE officers who often have no badges or other forms of identification. The claim that they were needed to combat crime in major cities such as Portland, Chicago and Minneapolis-

St. Paul rings hollow when, in fact, violent crime in all of these cities has been declining for years.

Less visible are the violations of normal legal and humanitarian standards committed by ICE in its immigration crackdown campaign. As of Feb. 7, 2026, ICE had detained 68,289 people. Of those over 73% had no criminal conviction. Detainees are being housed in military bases, maximum security prisons, warehouses and tent cities. There is little or no available medical care, facilities are often unbearably hot or cold, and many facilities are intolerably overcrowded.

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the parent agency of ICE, has systematically violated the civil and constitutional rights of citizens and noncitizens alike. They have policies of targeting people based on their appearance or how well they speak English. Violent

home invasions are conducted without judicial warrants. Once people are apprehended they are regularly deprived of access to legal counsel, often by suddenly moving them from one state to another without notifying courts or legal counsel. Defiance of court orders is commonplace — missing deadlines, detaining people who have been ordered released, even deporting people when ordered not to. DHS has actually taken personnel off the kind of complex cases that do really endanger us (smuggling rings, cybercrime, etc.) and put them onto harassing people with no criminal history, some of whom are citizens.

This is only a partial list of the reasons we should all be prepared to take up the cause of abolishing ICE and restoring the rule of law in our country.

Spencer Putnam
Weybridge

Community Forum

(Continued from Page 4A)

the closing of the woolen mills in Burlington and Winooski, were forced out of their homes, sometimes into shoddy housing projects. The mills had employed thousands of workers, many of them immigrants, going back to the 19th century. Now, change seemed to be in the hands of real estate developers and their cronies in city hall. In Chiasson's telling, the cronies were a complacent clique of Democrats, led in the 1970s by Mayor Gordon Paquette, who wanted to raze additional neighborhoods for so-called development and hand over the Burlington waterfront to wealthy commercial interests.

Sanders's broad appeal in Vermont is instructive, and Democrats today should pay attention. Early on, he won the support of poor rural voters in the Northeast Kingdom, who would later vote for Donald Trump. When he went into the trailer parks or housing projects, people could tell he knew what poverty was

and that he shared their anger at so-called elites. Chiasson describes the libertarian streak in Sanders's politics — he, too, was wary of big government because he had seen how government often aligns itself with corporations and millionaires. It had been happening in Burlington.

People often say that Sanders is saying the same thing today that he was saying 50 years ago — about big business and billionaires, about health care and the poor. And that may be the secret of his success. Chiasson quotes author Fintan O'Toole, who wrote that Sanders's "primary mode is repetition, not variation."

Chiasson cites the Greek philosopher Heraclitus, who famously said, "You can never step into the same river twice." Heraclitus also said, "All things flow."

In Vermont politics, things have flowed from Republican dominance among rural conservatives to the present moment. But even if the

river has continued to flow, Sanders has plunged the same foot in, again and again. He was recently campaigning in California, urging voters there to pass a tax on the rich. It's not a new idea. And yet as the river has flowed, Sanders's dire prophecies in the 1970s and 1980s, warning about economic inequality and corporate dominance, are ever more germane.

If Chiasson finds himself inside the story, so too might all of us. And the story continues. As Sanders recently told an audience in Los Angeles, the top 1% of wealthy Americans possess more wealth than the bottom 93%; Elon Musk, he said, possesses more wealth than 53% of Americans. It is not an accident, and it can change.

Bernie came to Dan Chiasson's house when Chiasson was a 9-year-old boy, and Milford Delorme wouldn't open the door. Sanders is still knocking. His story is the same. But the times have changed, and so have we.

cultural norms, themes common in white supremacist discourse.

Stephen Miller, Senior White House Advisor, during Trump's first term was the architect of the Muslim travel ban and family separation at the U.S.-Mexico border. He now plays a key role in setting immigration policy and implementing mass deportation. Miller repeatedly refers to unauthorized immigration as an "invasion" that can "unravel" a society and damage national cohesion. He is a major proponent of aggressive immigration enforcement advocating for the deployment of the military to help ICE and Border Patrol achieve the goal of 3,000 arrests per day including immigrants without criminal convictions.

Russell Vought, principal author of "Project 2025," Trump's blueprint for embedding Christian values in government structures, self-identifies as a Christian Nationalist and favors recognizing the U.S. as a Christian nation. As director of the Office of Management and Budget, Vought has led efforts to limit "critical race theory" and anti-racism training in federal agencies.

Trump's pick for Speaker of the House, Mike Johnson, previously worked as an attorney for Alliance Defending Freedom, a Christian legal organization involved in religious-rights litigation and culture-war issues. He has repeatedly stated the U.S. was

founded as a Christian nation and should reflect biblical principles based on our "Judeo-Christian roots." Johnson has also said that "separation of church and state" is not in the Constitution.

Secretary of War Pete Hegseth also believes the United States is a Christian nation, American institutions should reflect biblical values, our country should be governed according to Christianity, and the concept of separation of church and state is a fallacy. In his book "American Crusade: Our Fight to Stay Free" (2020), Hegseth frames American politics as a struggle to preserve Christian culture and identity.

There are other Trump appointees as well as influencers outside our government who have been quick to support white supremacy and Christian Nationalist ideology. Director of the FBI Kash Patel, Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard, former Secretary of Homeland Security Kristi Noem, former Chief of Staff to Noem Corey Lewandowski, far-right strategist Steve Bannon, neo-Nazi Nick Fuentes, and white Evangelical leaders Robert Jeffries, Wayne Grudem and Doug Wilson, to name a few.

I think many of those who thirst for power and dominance seek to rob us of our greatest strength, the honoring of our diversity. They will not succeed!

Ron Rubin
Middlebury

Vt.'s economic moment is now

As Vermont lawmakers return to Montpelier following Town Meeting break, the legislative session enters the phase where ideas must become decisions. For Vermont's economy, those decisions carry real consequences.

The first half of the session is often defined by hearings, proposals, and policy exploration. The second half is where priorities are tested, and choices become outcomes.

Over the past several years, Vermonters have done something important. We have invested significant time and energy into planning for the state's economic future. The Vermont Futures Project's Economic Action Plan brought together the perspectives of more than 5,000 Vermonters and established measurable goals for workforce growth, housing development, and long-term economic opportunity.

That effort produced something Vermont has historically lacked: a shared economic roadmap grounded in data.

But a roadmap alone does not move the state forward. Vermont has long excelled at identifying challenges, but progress requires moving beyond episodic decision making toward sustained economic strategy.

The question now is whether Vermont will translate that planning into policies capable of addressing the economic pressures businesses and families are experiencing today.

Those pressures are real. Nationally, the economic outlook entering March reflects cautious resilience paired with continued uncertainty. Inflation remains above the Federal Reserve's long-term target;

interest rates remain elevated, and many industries report difficulty finding workers while managing rising costs.

For Vermont, these national dynamics are amplified by structural challenges closer to home.

Recent economic competitiveness data place Vermont near the bottom nationally on measures including economic momentum, long term outlook, and workforce demographics. These rankings underscore the structural challenges the state must address to strengthen affordability and economic opportunity.

Demographics alone present a stark reality. Over 17,000 Vermonters are projected to retire annually this decade, while far fewer young workers are entering the labor force. To maintain economic stability, Vermont must add roughly 13,500 workers each year through population growth and workforce expansion.

At the same time, housing shortages continue to constrain that growth. The state will need tens of thousands of additional housing units to support the workforce Vermont's economy requires.

When businesses cannot find workers, expansion stalls. When housing is unavailable or unaffordable, recruitment becomes nearly impossible. When regulatory timelines stretch into years instead of months, investment flows elsewhere.

Employers across Vermont are experiencing these pressures simultaneously.

There have been encouraging signs of progress. Conversations about health care affordability, housing infrastructure, and workforce recruitment reflect

a growing recognition that Vermont's affordability challenges are interconnected.

Vermonters are confronting rising property taxes and education costs that are intensifying the broader affordability conversation across communities. Recognizing the challenge, however, is not the same as solving it. If Vermont is serious about improving affordability and strengthening economic opportunity, several principles should guide the decisions ahead.

First, Vermont must strengthen fiscal predictability. State spending has grown significantly in recent years, placing pressure on the tax base that supports essential services. Businesses and families alike need stability and transparency in fiscal policy to make long term decisions about investment, hiring, and where to build their future.

Second, Vermont must modernize the regulatory systems that shape housing and economic development. Employers consistently report that permitting timelines and regulatory complexity increase costs and slow projects that communities need.

Third, Vermont must confront the reality of demographic change. A shrinking working age population is not a temporary challenge, but a structural shift that will shape Vermont's economic capacity for decades. Addressing it requires coordinated strategies to recruit new residents, retain graduates, and expand housing and opportunity for the next generation of Vermonters....

The weeks ahead will determine whether Vermont translates that planning into policy and whether those policies lead to the action necessary to strengthen affordability, competitiveness, and opportunity across the state.

Elderly Services, Inc. Spring 2026 Community Education Series

April 22: Advanced Care Planning

Find out more about how the Vermont Advance Directive process works, get free forms and informational brochures and ask your questions about how to get started with your advance directive including: Having advance care planning conversations with your loved ones and clinicians. Available tools to plan for your healthcare (advance directives, DNR/COLST, disease-specific addendums). How to use advance directives to make a plan for serious illness or end-of-life circumstances.

Presented by: Taylor Murray, Vermont Ethics Network Advance Care Planning Program Manager
Wednesday, April 22, 4:00-5:30 PM
Elderly Services, 112 Exchange Street, Middlebury

April 29: Combating Fraud in the Digital Age

Learn how to protect yourself from the growing threats of fraud targeting older adults. This session will cover current computer, telephone, and mail scams, including impersonation fraud, check fraud, phishing and more. Learn how to recognize common fraud tactics and discover practical steps to safeguard your personal information, bank accounts, and businesses. We'll provide easy to understand tips on protecting yourself from identity theft, securing your digital banking, and avoiding falling victim to fraudsters.

Presented by: Erin Small, M&T Bank
Wednesday, April 29, 4:00-5:30 PM
Elderly Services, 112 Exchange Street, Middlebury

May 6: "You Are Not Alone"

Caring for an aging loved one with memory loss: signs, symptoms and strategies

Presented by: Eileen Lawson, Geriatric Social Worker, Elderly Services, Center for Positive Aging
Wednesday, May 6, 4:00-5:30 PM
Elderly Services, 112 Exchange Street, Middlebury

May 13: Alzheimer's and Dementia: Signs and Symptoms

Memory loss that disrupts daily life may be a symptom of Alzheimer's or other dementia. Alzheimer's is a brain disease that causes a slow decline in memory, thinking and reasoning skills. There are 10 warning signs and symptoms. Come to this program to learn more about how to identify and respond to these warning signs.

Presented by: Jordan Cotton, Vermont Chapter/ Alzheimer's Association
Wednesday, May 13, 4:00-5:30 PM
Elderly Services, 112 Exchange Street, Middlebury

May 20: Driving and Aging - Challenges and Strategies

What happens if you or a loved one can no longer drive? Join us for an informative session on the challenges older drivers face in Vermont. Learn about the Yellow Dot Program, a statewide initiative that gives first responders quick access to important medical information during a crash or emergency. Discover helpful tips on staying independent, safe, and mobile behind the wheel. We'll also cover how to approach the difficult conversation about driving retirement and start planning for the future.

Presented by: Julia Sarrasin and Emily Fredette, Vermont Department of Health
Wednesday, May 20, 4:00-5:30 PM
Elderly Services, 112 Exchange Street, Middlebury

**ALL PROGRAMS ARE
FREE AND OPEN
TO THE PUBLIC**



To RSVP or learn more, call Susan Bruce at Elderly Services:
802-388-3983 • www.elderlyservices.org

ADDISON
COUNTY

Obituaries

Stuart Perry Murphy, 90, of Waterbury

WATERBURY — Stuart Perry Murphy passed away Nov. 4, 2025, at 90 years old, in the home he built in Waterbury, Vt. For decades, Stuart, forever an artist and mountain man, divided his time between building and writing in Waterbury, writing in Santa Monica Canyon, Calif., and teaching skiing in Taos, N.M. Depending on the season, he would pack up his coffee French-press, lap-top, ski equipment, and his electric keyboard — somehow fitting them all into his high mileage cars — and migrate across our country so no matter where home was, he could write, journal, stay connected to his family and friends, develop his musical, “Bloomers,” practice piano, and live his mantra, “Be Here Now.”

Born in Troy, N.Y., May 21, 1935, son of Mabel (Perry) Murphy and Roger Nicholas Murphy, both educators and musicians, Stuart grew up in Utica, N.Y., with sister, Rosemary (1932-2012) and, for a short time, his maternal grandmother, Rose Holden Perry.

His love of skiing started when he was very young at a park in Utica. In his teens, unsupervised week-long canoe trips and camping adventures in the Adirondacks with best friend, Billy Amrhein, became the foundation for his love of outdoor adventures, rope climbing, hiking, ski trips and downhill races in the Northeast.

Stuart, having been awarded a vocal/opera scholarship, graduated in 1957 from the Jacobs School of Music Opera and Ballet at Indiana University, with a B.A. in Music Education. While designing sets at a theatre/dance camp in Colorado, he met his future wife, Melissa Converse, a student from Stephens College in Missouri, where Stuart had been assigned to be a resident set designer. Once married in 1959, they moved to Los Angeles, where Stuart attended USC, from where he graduated with a M.A. in Cinema/Theatre (1961). While earning this degree he coached opera singers and had his only child, Stacey Lee (Murphy) Dobek before moving to Manhattan in 1962. There he worked as a freelance filmmaker, producer, editor, cameraman, production manager and writer.

In 1968, while both of them were working and living in New York City, Stuart and Melissa bought 17 acres of rough land in Waterbury, Vt., whereupon Stuart hand-built his three-story house on a very challenging site, demonstrating his building skills, architectural prowess, ingenuity and unconventional approach to design. Leaving New York City, the family lived in this home for a brief spell in 1972 before moving to California in 1973, where the



STUART PERRY MURPHY

family separated and eventually divorced.

Stuart lived in Santa Monica Canyon, Calif., (1973-2014) where he developed his musical “Bloomers,” wrote several screenplays and manuscripts, studied acting with David Proval, and eventually taught acting classes both privately and at Santa Monica College while enjoying the beach, running to the pier, playing frisbee, and making trips to the mountains to ski and hike.

Stuart developed the concept of “Bloomers,” a musical extravaganza that touched upon subjects pertinent to 1851-1852. He wrote the original script and libretto and collaborated with Fred Myrow, (American composer 1939-1999), who wrote the score. For fifty years he revised this piece of work, repeatedly. The last rendition of libretto, script, and score was completed, with the orchestration reformatted and finalized, by Erik Neilson, on the day of his passing.

When surveying properties for a real estate company in 1973, Stuart met Ernie Blake, the founder of Taos Ski Valley. In 1986, at 51 years old and looking for a change of life, he accepted Ernie's invitation to teach at Taos Ski Valley. For over 35 years, he took great pride as a ski instructor at Taos Ski Valley, (1986-2023); for several years he won the award for most requested instructor or most hours taught. Stuart taught countless students of all ages and levels of experience, touching people's lives and refining their skiing abilities. He was especially keen to observe where one's avoidance of the fall line may be impacting their skiing, extending this counter-intuitive relationship with gravity, to life: “Nothing real moves in straight line.” Deb Armstrong, Olympic gold medalist in alpine skiing, has a wonderful interview with Stuart on YouTube called “Aging While Skiing.”

As fate would have it, his house in Waterbury, Vt., burned down in December of 1990 while he was

teaching at TSV. Stuart chose to keep the original foundation that he had poured in the sixties and hired a company to raise a three-story timber frame that he designed. He then put up the siding, installed the wood floors, and rebuilt his home, on his own. His love of labor and capable hands provided him with the ability to wire, plumb, and execute the finish work, including two spiral staircases, interior and exterior, decks, and other unique choices that have to be seen to be fully appreciated! This house, situated between two streams down a demanding hill with a view of Camels' Hump, sings of his visions and his love of an unconventional lifestyle.

He managed to live fully and at the edge, all at the same time. Stuart touched people from all walks of life. He loved being able to live in three places at once. His community at Taos Ski Valley; the love of his daughter, son-in-law, three grandchildren and their spouses; three great grandsons; and his good friends and family, all over this country, brought Stuart great joy. Stuart is forever loved and will be missed by all who knew him.

Stuart is survived by his daughter, Stacey Lee Dobek; her husband, Jack Dobek (Lincoln, Vt.); his three grandchildren, Cassidy Tucker Dobek (Portland, Ore.), Mesa Leila Kewish (Los Angeles, Calif.), and Kai Jackson Dobek, (their respective partners, Paul Fletcher, Blake Kewish, and Grace Wideltz); his three great-grandsons, Truro Dobek Fletcher, Ronin Murphy Fletcher, and Jack Dean Kewish; and his nephew, Stephen Cook, and Stephen's two sons, Danny and Brendan Cook. He is pre-deceased by his sister, Rosemary Cook.

Stuart Murphys' remains will be taken to the family cemetery in Clarksville, N.H., across the Connecticut River from the Perry Homestead in Cannan, Vt.

Two Celebrations of Life will be held for Stuart Perry Murphy: Tuesday, March 17, at Taos Ski Valley, Taos, N.M. at 4:45 p.m. (4 p.m. ski-down followed by tribute at 4:45 p.m. in the Lake Fork Room); and Sunday, June 28, from 2-6 p.m. in Waterbury Center, Vt., at the Waterbury Center Grange Hall.

Donations in his name may be made to the Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired at vabvi.org or the American Macular Degeneration Fund at macular.org.

There will be an opportunity to contribute to a tribute book in-person or should you feel inspired to create an entry we welcome photos, stories, or sacred words to send to Stacey Dobek: 484 Mill Rd., Lincoln, Vt 05443 or staceydobek@gmail.com.

continually support them, Peggy found herself administering youth bowling at Rutland Bowlerama and youth baseball in Mount Holly in the 90s and 2000s. Peggy supported Nathan and Allen through all their endeavors.

She will be missed by her husband, Allen; son, Nathan; mother, Alice Husk; sisters, Jean Bushey and Mary Lou Harton; brothers, George and Tom Husk; daughter-in-law, Melissa Bailey; grandson, Sebastian Lennon; stepson, Tom Adams; father-in-law Carroll Adams; and many more.

A service/celebration of life will be held at Shaper Services (174 Innovation Drive, N. Clarendon) March 21 from 2 to 4 p.m. Burial will be at Gage Cemetery in Ferrisburgh later in the spring, date and time will be announced later. ◊



PEGGY SUE ADAMS

2019-2020 due to Alzheimer's.

She was a dedicated mother and was passionately devoted to her loved ones. In her pursuit to

William 'Bill' Arthur Mraz, 89, of Middlebury

MIDDLEBURY — William “Bill” Arthur Mraz passed away peacefully in the early morning hours of Wednesday, Feb. 25, 2026, just a few weeks shy of his 90th birthday. He was born in Middlebury March 17, 1936 — St. Patrick's Day. Despite not having a speck of Irish in him, he was pleased there was always a lively time to be had on his birthday. A lifelong Vermonter, Bill was well known to many for his ingenuity, independence, storytelling and dry wit.

Bill grew up on South Munger Street in Middlebury, and spent summers on Lake Dunmore with his parents Charles and Letitia (Malpezzi) Mraz, and big brother Charles Jr. He refused to attend kindergarten because it required a daily nap. He graduated from Middlebury High School (1954), earned a Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering from Norwich University (1958) and pursued further studies at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). He was a Lieutenant in the United States Army Reserves.

Bill met the love of his life, Patricia Beers, on a blind date at Basin Harbor Resort, and they married in 1960. They raised their four children on a 1792 homestead on three hundred acres in Georgia, Vt., and kept ducks, dogs, cats, a pony, a horse, a pig and a rescued owl. In 1977, Bill and Pat moved the family to Middlebury, where he succeeded his father as owner/operator of Champlain Valley Apiaries and lived on Seminary Street.

Bill greeted the world as a simple country man with a dog, but under the surface he was more of a Renaissance man. He loved cities, international travel and ethnic restaurants of all kinds. On many a Sunday, he and Pat drove their kids from Georgia to Montreal for French fondue or Chinese buffet and big city culture. His sensibilities proved contagious, and his children all adopted similar passions for life. A voracious reader and close observer of nature, he accumulated a professorial array of knowledge and could expound thoroughly and accurately on the flora, fauna and history of Vermont. Sometimes you couldn't stop him talking, yet he was also a man of few words. He wanted nothing to do with cell phones or computers. He judged young people by a simple code: If you had good aim and understood physics, you were at least passable in his book.

Bill built a long and respected

WILLIAM “BILL”
ARTHUR MRZ

career in design development and manufacturing engineering. He worked at General Electric in Burlington, Vt.; Sturm, Ruger & Co. in Newport, N.H.; and Space Research Corporation and Phoenix Engineering, both in Newport, Vt. He traveled to Barbados, Jordan, Korea, France and Belgium and worked on countless weaponry projects including the design of the GE M134 Minigun, critical for U.S. Air Cavalry forces in Vietnam, and the Sturm Ruger Mini-14 lightweight rifle. A gifted problem solver and true engineer at heart, Bill approached every challenge with curiosity and determination.

At Champlain Valley Apiaries he followed in his father's footsteps as a leader and pioneer in beekeeping. He invented a wax separator machine, to efficiently remove the beeswax from the liquid honey, that is used today across the beekeeping industry. He made advancements in the technology used to collect bee venom for pharmaceutical purposes. He was a skilled crafter in the woodshop where he designed hundreds of jigs to mass produce the wooden parts for bee hives. The honey business is now owned and operated by the third and fourth generations of the Mraz family—something that gave Bill immense pride.

An avid fisherman, woodsman, and hunter, Bill cherished chilly mornings on Mount Moosalamoo with his sons and hunting buddies, especially his mentor, the late Ed Buttolph of Middlebury. He passed on his love of the outdoors to his children, grandchildren, nieces and nephews, teaching them to fish, boat and sail on Lake Champlain and to hunt, camp and ski in the Green Mountains. Bill was a devoted conservationist who deeply respected the natural world that gave him so much joy.

He and Pat spent endless hours on the road transporting kids — then grandkids — to ice hockey rinks across New England and Quebec. In retirement, they enjoyed escaping the winter to Culebra, Puerto Rico with their dear friends Martha Winant and Roger Wales. They spent twenty-five summers hosting friends and family at their lakefront camp in West Addison, Vt. Bill kept the first car he ever bought, a 1933 Dodge Coupe. In the early 2000s he restored it and became a committed member of Vermont Automobile Enthusiasts, proudly driving his “33” in town parades and events, the highlight of which was the annual Vermont Antique and Classic Car Meet in Waterbury. Bill was especially fond of his beloved Vizsla hunting dogs, Ikar and Edi, who held a singular place in his heart. They were truly his best friends and companions.

Bill was predeceased by his wife Patricia and his brother Charles Jr., both in 2022, and his firstborn son and namesake, William B., in 2006. He is survived by his daughters, Katherine Mraz of Oakland, Calif., and Sarah Mraz (John MacKenna) of Sarasota, Fla.; his daughter-in-law Judie Mraz (Stephen Dion) of Newington, N.H.; his son, Charles E. Mraz (Isabel Mraz) of Middlebury; his sisters, Marna Ebrech of Winooksi, Vt, Laurie Zwaan (Anthony Zwaan) of Exeter, N.H. and Michelle Mraz (Rob Backus) of Burlington, Vt.; his grandchildren, Benjamin, Derek, Tyler, Curtis, Stefan, Georgina and Charles Paul; his two sisters-in-law Sarah Beers and Celia Mraz; and many nieces, nephews and cousins from both the Czech and Italian sides of his family.

In his final months, Bill resided at The Residence at Otter Creek, where he was cared for with compassion by the staff and his favorite private caregiver, Evie Geehan. Our favorite curmudgeon — a brilliant engineer, steadfast teacher, devoted outdoorsman, and lover of dogs — will be long remembered.

Visiting hours will be held Friday, March 20, at 11 a.m., followed by a funeral service at noon at Sanderson Funeral Services, 117 South Main Street, Middlebury, Vt. Bill will be laid to rest beside his wife, Pat, in St. Mary's Cemetery in Middlebury, in the Spring.

In lieu of flowers, donations in Bill's memory may be made to the Rokeby Museum (rokeby.org) or the Vermont Automobile Enthusiasts scholarship fund (vtauto.org). Or take a walk in nature with your dog! ◊

James Walton McBride, 89, of Pantton

PANTON — James Walton McBride returned to the Earth March 4, 2026, surrounded by loved ones. He was born in St. Johnsbury, Vt., to Carroll Raymond McBride and Doris Craig McBride Nov. 3, 1936. He was raised in Peacham, Vt., a boy with a mischievous glint in his eyes that belied his outer stoicism. He encouraged his children to succeed, reminding them frequently that he had been valedictorian of his class at Peacham Academy, his mantra being that you should learn at least one new thing each day.

In 1957, his family moved to a farm in Pantton, Vt. His mischievous nature continued during his tenure in the Vermont National Guard, drag racing tanks with his fellow soldiers during their free time. He graduated from the University of Vermont, receiving accolades as the highest ranked Agricultural student, and proud to have studied genetics before the discovery of the double helix.

He returned to Pantton to work on the family farm. There he met his wife, who was student teaching at the schoolhouse next



JAMES WALTON MCBRIDE

door. Jim married Theresa Huestis June 15, 1968. For 57 years, they demonstrated kindness and love that few are blessed to experience. Their six children, James McBride (Kim), Amy Bourne (Jim), Terrance McBride, Carole McBride (Dirk Smits), Katherine McBride, and Amanda McBride were Jim's greatest joy until his 10 grandchildren (Alyssa, Nicholas, Christopher, Noah, Adrienne, Brooklynn, Annika, Korbin, Margaret, and Ambrose), great-grandson (Jackson), and multiple grand-dogs arrived and took over that honor.

He described himself as a sports lover, nature lover, farmer, agriculturist and cook. After his

first retirement from dairy farming, Jim transitioned to work for the Vermont Dairy Herd Improvement Association for 20 years, allowing him to remain connected to the agricultural community he loved. His second retirement allowed him to embrace his love of the outdoors as he puttered around the farm, collecting fossils, quarrying stones to build stone walls, flowerbeds and extensive gardens around their home, and walking miles upon miles of Pantton's scenic roads. When not gardening, he spent his summers floating in the lake and his winters testing and inventing new recipes with his newfound love for cooking. He instilled a competitive drive that surfaces during every family gathering in the form of cutthroat card games. Jim was never without a book or two, or three. By our estimates, he must have read at least 20,000 over his lifetime.

Jim was predeceased by his mother, father, and three siblings: Carroll Raymond McBride Jr., Barbara McBride Martin, and Keith Malcolm McBride.

He will be missed greatly by his wife, children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and extended family, who will carry on his work ethic, curiosity, love of nature and animals, and sarcastic sense of humor. We will especially miss his encyclopedic knowledge and inherent sense of direction as we navigate this world without him. At his request, there will be no service, but a request to perhaps share a cup of coffee and piece of pie with a neighbor in his memory.

In lieu of flowers, please make donations in Jim's memory to the Bixby Memorial Library in Vergennes, Vt. ◊

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Donald Nelson Lattrell Sr. 85, of Bristol

BRISTOL — Donald Nelson Lattrell Sr., 85, passed away March 5, 2026, with family by his side. Born on Sept. 7, 1940, in Bristol, Vt., he was the son of the late Archie and Alberta (Dushaney) Lattrell.

He graduated from Bristol High School and attended UVM for two years. He met the love of his life, Lorayne Starling and married her July 28, 1962. They were happily married for nearly 60 years. They started their family soon after marrying and had three children, Donald Jr., Jeffrey, and Kristen; and eight grandchildren, Elizabeth, Chelsey, Donald III, Jeremy, Nathan, Kyle, Brandon and Jesse.

He worked for many years at Grand Union in Bristol, Two Brother's, and Burlington Food Service. He was a devoted husband, father, grandfather, great-grandfather, brother, and friend to all. He owned the Green Camp in Goshen for many decades, where friends and family gathered and he adopted the nickname of Chef, always cooking for others. He



DONALD NELSON LATTRELL SR.

loved the great outdoors — fishing and hunting, especially in Goshen and on trips to Illinois with his son Jeff.

He took great pride in tending to his gardens and showing off his prized tomatoes to anyone who stopped by. He enjoyed watching the Boston Red Socks, New

England Patriots, NASCAR, and was a Jeopardy buff.

His family lovingly remembers him as their rock, with the kindest, most giving heart. He was special to many and will forever be missed by all he leaves behind. His family finds some peace in knowing he is reunited with the love of his life, Lori.

He is predeceased by his parents, Archie and Alberta; his beloved wife, Lori; sisters Delna and Alice; and son-in-law Matt.

He is survived by his children, Donald Jr., Jeffrey (Pam), and Kristen White; his eight grandchildren and their partners; five great-grandchildren; siblings Rita (Larry) Davis, Bette (Larry) Abare, and Dan (Brenda) Lattrell, and many family members and friends.

His calling hours will be held Sunday, March 15, at Brown McClay Funeral home in Bristol, with family visit from 1-1:30 p.m. and public hours from 1:30-4 p.m. ♦

Susan Ann (Wolfreys) Manning, 73, of East Middlebury

EAST MIDDLEBURY — Susan Ann (Wolfreys) Manning, 73, of East Middlebury, Vt., passed away peacefully at home March 4, 2026, after a long illness. She was born Sept. 2, 1952, in Middlebury, Vt., and raised in Dorchester, Mass.

Susan grew up in the city but always dreamed of moving to Vermont, a dream she accomplished in 1992. Susan was a woman of quiet strength and unwavering dedication to her family.

She found immense joy in the simple pleasures of life, particularly in reading and collecting books. Her love for literature was matched only by her appreciation for nature and her keen interest in politics. Her



SUSAN ANN (WOLFREYS) MANNING

memory will live on in the hearts of those who knew her and were touched by her kindness and

wisdom.

She is survived by her two children, Brian Manning and Janelle Manning of Panton, Vt.; her brothers, William Wolfreys and his wife Barbara of Massachusetts, Robert Wolfreys of Vermont, and James Wolfreys of California; as well as many cousins, friends, and extended family members. Susan was pre-deceased by her beloved husband, Leo J. Manning; her mother, Luella (Foster) Wolfreys; and her father William Wolfreys.

A celebration of life will be announced at a later date in the late spring or early summer.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to the Vermont Kidney Assn. or the American Heart Assn. ♦

Michael Herring, 77, former Addison County resident

CAMBRIDGE, N.Y. — Michael Herring, 77, passed away peacefully March 5, 2026, after several years of courageously living with dementia.

Michael was born Jan. 10, 1949, in Troy, N.Y., to the late Kenneth J. Herring and Mary C. Herring. He grew up in Hoosick Falls, N.Y., where he graduated from Hoosick Falls Central School in 1966. He later attended Hudson Valley Community College before beginning a long and dedicated career in public service.

Michael proudly served with the Vermont State Police from 1970 to 1979 and was a member of the State Trooper Dive Team. From 1980 to 1983, he worked with the Addison County Sheriff's Department as an officer before later serving as an investigator for the Governor of Vermont. After many years in law enforcement, Michael chose a quieter path and worked for the United States Postal Service from 1990 until his retirement in 2010. Following retirement, he remained active in his community and worked part-time as a security guard at Northlands Job Corps in Vergennes, Vermont.

Growing up, Michael cherished the time spent at his family's camp on Hedges Lake, built by his father. Summers there were filled with water skiing, boating, laughter,



MICHAEL HERRING

and gatherings with family and friends where lifelong memories were made. He enjoyed boating, long walks, travel, golfing, and cheering on the Minnesota Vikings. Michael was also known as an avid storyteller, always ready to share a story or memory that brought laughter to those around him.

The center of Michael's world was his wife, Susan Herring. Together for nearly sixteen years, Michael adored Susan and was deeply proud of the life they shared. He frequently spoke about her beauty and remarkable presence and how fortunate he felt to have her by his side.

Michael is survived by his loving

wife, Susan Herring of Cambridge, N.Y.; his son, Eric Herring (Brenda) of Fruita, Colo.; his daughter, Kristin Smith of Arizona; and his stepdaughter, Casey Pike (Derick). He also leaves behind his cherished grandchildren, Evan Herring and Brandon Herring; and Quinn Lane, Chase Lane, Gardner Pike, and Casper Pike. He is also survived by his brother, Winton "Butch" Herring.

In addition to his parents, Michael was predeceased by his sisters Nancy Herring and his twin sister Mary "Michele" Herring, as well as his lifelong friend Richard "Dicky" Calhoun.

Calling hours will be held Thursday, March 19, from 4 to 6 p.m. at Mahar Funeral Home in Hoosick Falls, N.Y. A burial service will be held Friday, March 20 at Maple Grove Cemetery in Hoosick Falls, N.Y.

Michael will be remembered for his years of public service, his love for his family, his stories, and the many memories he created with those who knew and loved him. The family would like to especially thank Heather Blair and his care team for all their love and support.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests donations be made to Homeward Bound, 236 Boardman, Middlebury, Vt. 05753. ♦

Tuition

(Continued from Page 2A) enterprises like the Middlebury Snowbowl, and savings from the staff retirement incentive," the meeting summary states.

Caitlin Goss, vice president for human resources and chief people officer at the college, shared that 53 staff members had accepted

the retirement incentive, which represents 30% of those eligible.

Citarella presented five-year budget projections that showed a \$4.45 million deficit for fiscal year 2026, "followed by a fiscal year 2027 deficit of \$915,000, with the potential to reach a balanced budget," according to the meeting

summary. Estimates expect the institution to see surpluses starting in FY28 and continuing through FY31.

"I see a definite path to a structurally balanced budget and am immensely grateful to everyone who has worked on this effort," Baucum said in the meeting summary.

Budgets

(Continued from Page 2A) School (FHUMHS) library. On tap is an Executive Committee meeting on March 16 at 6 p.m. in the FHUMHS library, at which the community can discuss the revised FY27 budget; an SVUSD meeting in the FHUMHS band room at

6:30 p.m. on March 23 to approve a warning for the budget vote; and a budget informational meeting at 6:30 p.m. on March 30, also in the FHUMHS band room.

"The district understands that the budget process is an important opportunity for community input and engagement. We encourage

residents to stay informed and participate in these meetings as the board works to develop a revised proposal that supports students while remaining mindful of taxpayers," reads a post on the slatevalleyunified.org website. Slate Union budget info can be found at tinyurl.com/bdy7w7f.

Orwell

(Continued from Page 3A) mostly pastureland — as recently as the early 20th century. Old field trees, which today dwarf the younger trees that surround them, likely seeded the property's forests, according to NEWT officials, who thanked Stevenson for her donation.

"It is always a privilege to work with individuals like Pat who care so deeply for their land and its wild future," said NEWT CEO and President Jon Leibowitz. "Willing landowners like her are an indispensable part of private land conservation, and land trusts are particularly well positioned to help them fulfill their aspirations. We are honored to help Pat permanently protect this special place as forever-

wild for the plants and animals she loves so dearly."

This will be NEWT's first conserved property in Addison County. The nonprofit currently conserves more than 19,210 acres in Vermont and more than 104,000 throughout New England and northern New York, according to NEWT Editorial Communications Specialist Colby Galliher.

Stevenson hopes future generations will be able to experience the sanctuary with the same wonder she displayed as a child while canvassing the natural world.

Her late father guided her through some of her earliest adventures.

During stays at a family lakeside

cabin, Stevenson spent days on end studying everything from amphibians to birds.

"Everything I saw I'd say, 'Look at that!' and want to interact with it. But my father would say, 'Don't touch it. It's just trying to live its own life,'" she recalled. "Since then, I've always wanted to donate land for the animals and birds and all the life that lives on it."

For Stevenson, this conservation outcome is something she's dreamed about.

"It's something I have to do in my life. To just give the land a chance," she said.

John Flowers is at johnf@addisonindependent.com.

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Atria COLLECTIVE

Atria Collective Is Seeking Board Members

If you have time and talent to spare, please consider applying to join Atria Collective's board. We are an organization that works to eliminate domestic and sexual violence in Addison County. We are committed to a shared leadership model and are looking for folks energized by community work.

If you're interested, please submit a letter of interest to Crystal at crystalj@middlebury.edu.

If you have a resume, you are welcome to submit it with your letter.

The deadline to submit is April 10th.

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Take this chance to help guide land conservation

Addison County residents will have several opportunities this month to help shape Vermont's future of land conservation, outdoor recreation, working landscapes, and community resilience. A series of public Listening Sessions to be held around the county will kick off on March 16 and continue through late March.

The series is organized by the Middlebury Area Land Trust, the Addison County Regional Planning Commission, and the Otter Creek Natural Resource Conservation District. The sessions are part of a statewide effort to gather local perspectives on Vermont's Draft Conservation Plan, developed in response to Act 59, also known as the Community Resilience and Biodiversity Protection Act.

Kevin Fox, executive director of MALT, notes that "Balancing the urgent need for more housing with the long-term protection of our farms, forests and natural resources requires thoughtful, strategic land conservation now more than ever. That work is strongest when it's locally driven — grounded in the knowledge, priorities, and values of the communities that live on and care for these landscapes."

Act 59 sets ambitious goals for the coming decades: conserving 30 percent of Vermont's land by 2030 and 50 percent by 2050. The legislation calls for a comprehensive planning effort that protects ecological health, supports working farms and forests, maintains landscape connectivity, strengthens watershed resilience, and enhances public access to outdoor spaces. As outlined in the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board's Draft Expanded Framework, the long-term vision is "to maintain an ecologically functional landscape that sustains biodiversity, supports watershed health, promotes climate resilience, supports working lands, and provides opportunities for recreation and appreciation of the natural world."

The planning process has been

underway for more than two years. Phase 1, completed in 2024, involved a full inventory of Vermont's conserved lands. That inventory determined that approximately 27 percent of the state's land — about 1.57 million acres — is already conserved, leaving roughly 190,000 acres needed to meet the 2030 benchmark.

An online map of Vermont's conserved lands, including ecological reserve areas, working lands, biodiversity conservation areas, and other protected parcels, can be viewed online at tinyurl.com/VTConservedLand. The map provides residents with a visual overview of existing conserved areas.

The Draft Expanded Framework now entering public review represents Phase 2, which outlines objectives, strategic pathways, and proposed actions to guide conservation across the state. VHCBC notes that the scale of the work reflects the magnitude of the challenges Vermont faces, including climate driven flooding and drought, forest and farmland loss, and pressures from development.

Organizers of the Addison County Listening Sessions say the conversations will be critical in helping fine-tune the Draft Conservation Plan before the state finalizes it later this year.

The first session will take place Monday, March 16, from 4 to 5:30 p.m. at the Middlebury Town Offices. Co led by MALT and ACRPC, this introductory meeting will provide an overview of the draft plan, including its key objectives and the scientific and planning tools behind it. One of these tools is Vermont Conservation Design, a statewide, science-based framework that identifies lands and waters most essential for maintaining ecological health and habitat connectivity. Vermont Conservation Design underpins much of the plan, helping identify priority forests, rivers, wetlands, and wildlife corridors.



LAND LIKE THIS in Weybridge, with Snake Mountain and Buck Mountain in the background, is emblematic of the Vermont landscape. Organizations guiding conservation of such spaces will hold listening sessions this month.

Photo by Andrew L'Roe

Following the introductory meeting, three additional sessions will focus on components of Objective 2 of the Draft Plan: Conservation for Communities. This section of the statewide framework explores how conservation can support public access, working lands, climate resilience, recreation, and education.

Session 2, led by the Otter Creek NRCD, will be held on Monday, March 23, 5:30 p.m. at the Middlebury NRCD office (68 Catamount Park, Middlebury). This session will focus on two pathways: increasing equitable access to conserved lands and supporting sustainable working lands. Organizers say this discussion will be especially relevant to farmers, forestland owners, and rural residents, as Act 59 underscores the need to "continue conserving and protecting Vermont's agricultural land, working forests, and surface waters" while enhancing investments in rural landowners and land based enterprises.

Session 3, led by ACRPC, is scheduled for Wednesday, March 25, from 7 to 8:30 p.m. at the Monkton Town Office Conference Room. This meeting will center on Pathway 3: Strengthening Climate Resilience. From recent flood disasters to prolonged droughts, Vermont has experienced a suite of climate driven impacts in the last five years.

The plan emphasizes that climate change is already reshaping

communities and landscapes, making this pathway a priority for early action. Residents are encouraged to share their experiences and ideas on how conservation strategies can bolster community resilience in Addison County through actions including floodplain and wetland conservation, and integrating restoration into conservation projects.

"Protecting our floodplains, river corridors, and wetlands is one of the most effective ways we can safeguard our communities, our farms, and our infrastructure from the increasing risks of extreme weather," according to ACRPC's Emergency Management Planner Andrew L'Roe.

The fourth session will be hosted by MALT in Salisbury, with the specific date to be announced. This meeting will explore Pathways 4 and 5: promoting outdoor recreation and expanding place-based education and outreach. The discussion will focus on how trails, conserved lands, and educational programs can support both community engagement and long-term ecological stewardship.

MALT is also exploring the possibility of hosting a fifth session focused on conservation capacity. Those interested in attending or learning more are encouraged to check www.maltvt.org for updates as details are finalized.

While the Draft Expanded Framework is broad in scope, VHCBC stresses that not all of its

recommendations can be undertaken at once. Limited financial and organizational resources mean Vermont will need to prioritize the most impactful and feasible actions, even as it works to position the state for long term success.

Public input gathered this spring will help identify which strategies communities consider most urgent.

To support residents in participating fully, organizers recommend reviewing the background materials available on the Vermont Conservation Plan website at <https://vermontconservationplan.com/vcp/framework-jan26/>. These materials include surveys linked to each major objective, allowing Vermonters to share more detailed feedback on specific proposals. Those who cannot attend a session can also email comments directly to vcadmin@vhcb.org.

Organizers emphasize that Addison County residents bring essential perspectives to the statewide process. The Draft Framework acknowledges that Vermont's conservation network depends on partnerships among farmers, forestland owners, nonprofit organizations, state agencies, and volunteers. It also highlights the region's importance to regional biodiversity and food security, noting that Vermont's farms play a meaningful role in supplying food to all of New England.

"Your participation is a critical part of shaping the Vermont

Higher ed. is fighting climate change; is it doing enough?

MIDDLEBURY — Alex Barron, associate professor of Environmental Science and Policy from Smith College, will speak at Middlebury College on Tuesday about what colleges and universities can do, and are doing, about climate change.

The talk titled, "Beyond Buzz Words: Higher Ed Climate Action Lessons," will take place Tuesday, March 17, 7 p.m., at Franklin Environmental Center at Hillcrest, Room 103. Barron will talk about his research, which focuses on the design of climate policies to reduce greenhouse gas pollution and avoid catastrophic climate change.

In addition to research on federal-level climate policy, the use and limits of modeling for climate policy design, and the public health benefits of climate action, he is one of the few scholars studying climate action in higher education. His higher education research has covered carbon neutrality and decarbonization, carbon offsets and contributions, internal carbon pricing, and reform of tenure to promote engaged scholarship.

Barron has also been a key faculty member in Smith College's climate action planning, including the scoping and development of a geothermal heating network, which aims to reduce emissions by roughly 80%. Tuesday's talk is free and open to the public.

Conservation Plan," VHCBC notes, calling on Vermonters to help refine, prioritize, and strengthen the proposed actions.

With a planning deadline just months away, Addison County's March Listening Sessions offer residents a meaningful opportunity to help influence the future of Vermont's landscapes, communities, and conservation commitments.

Editor's note: This story was provided by the Addison County Regional Planning Commission.



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LOCATION: MIDDLEBURY, VERMONT

About MNFF

The Middlebury New Filmmakers Festival (MNFF), a highly successful and selective regional film festival, is a nonprofit arts organization dedicated to celebrating emerging filmmakers and fostering a vibrant creative community through an annual world-class festival and year-round engagement. MNFF, buttressed by robust community support, is known for its intimate, filmmaker-centered experience and strong local and national partnerships.

Position Overview

MNFF is seeking a highly motivated, mission-aligned professional to join the organization in a growth-based succession-track role beginning in Spring of 2026 as Managing Producer.

This is a rare opportunity for a producing professional interested in evolving into nonprofit executive leadership. Advancement is expected but dependent on strong performance, mutual fit, and organizational readiness.

Managing Producer Responsibilities

The Managing Producer will work closely with MNFF's Interim Producer and Artistic Director to learn all major operational, financial, and cultural systems that support the festival. The key responsibility is to facilitate the planning and delivery of the annual Middlebury New Filmmakers Festival, including but not limited to:

- Participating in all major festival planning and execution activities
- Supporting staff coordination, hiring, and volunteer leadership
- Learning all operational systems for launching, running, and wrapping the annual festival
- Attending sponsor, donor, and fundraising meetings alongside senior leadership
- Managing defined projects and logistics with increasing independence
- Maintaining organized records of key relationships, traditions, and workflows
- Participating in board meetings as a non-voting attendee

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Attn: Linda Rossi, Personnel Committee, or Andrea Ward,
Personnel Committee

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Finalists will be invited to participate in scenario-based interviews and meet key festival leadership.

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Meet The Plastics

THESPIANS AT VERGENNES Union High School will take to the stage this Thursday, Friday and Saturday for a production of "Mean Girls: The Musical," an adaptation of the popular 2004 film in which new student Cady Heron navigates the social hierarchy of an Illinois high school. Pictured at a recent dress rehearsal, clockwise from above, are Isabel Van Voorst; Megan Willis; Asher Jewell and Abby Lentendre; Georgia Kunkel; Kayla Kilburn and Amyrah Hekkers; Gina LeBeau and Phoebe Raphael; Abby Flint, Ellie Brooks and Chloe Gosselin; Maddie Stroup, Phoebe Raphael and Tatum Raphael; LeBeau and Kunkel; and Willis.

Photos by Jason Duquette-Hoffman



Janoo 1st Dem in governor's race

By ETHAN WEINSTEIN, VtDigger

The first Democrat has announced her candidacy for governor.

Amanda Janoo, an economist raised in Stratford and now living in Burlington, is a first-time candidate for statewide office. She will presumably face the daunting task of unseating Gov. Phil Scott, the long-running, most popular governor in the country, according to polls.

"We're all being called to step up in ways maybe we never expected," Janoo said in an interview, explaining her decision to run. "From an economic perspective, Phil Scott has been talking about affordability for almost a decade now, and it really hasn't materialized. If anything, things have gotten insanely expensive."

Despite Vermont's strong Democratic leanings in congressional elections, Democratic candidates for governor have struggled to sway voters when challenging Scott, a Republican who is yet to declare whether he'll seek a sixth term. Scott has won more than 68% of the general election vote in each of his last three campaigns, winning by increasing margins each time.

A detailed list of policy priorities — including free primary and preventative health care — accompanied Janoo's announcement. The top bullet point appeared tethered to the state's political moment: rejecting forced school consolidation.

The priority is a clear counterpoint

to Scott's push to transform Vermont's school governance and finance systems, consolidating schools and districts along the way. While many top Democrats in the Legislature have cosigned those goals, the party's left flank and rural members have been critical of forced consolidation.

Janoo said the increasing cost of public education is driven by health care costs and growing student mental health needs, cost centers Scott's plan doesn't fully reckon with.

"You're just giving up on our rural communities," she said of closing rural schools.

Janoo said she'll also seek the Progressive Party's endorsement. After moving back to Vermont in 2018, she founded the Wellbeing Economy Alliance of Vermont, and she's served on the boards of organizations such as the ACLU of Vermont and Rights & Democracy.

While Janoo hasn't held elected office outside of serving as a justice of the peace, she said she's spent her entire career as an economist working with government, particularly the executive branch.

Though no other Democratic candidates have announced their gubernatorial campaigns, Janoo may face challengers in the August primary. No Republicans have yet announced they're running.

In a statement, Lachlan Francis, Vermont Democratic Party chair, stopped short of endorsing Janoo but said she is "bringing bold ideas to this race, and we're glad to see her in it."



AMANDA JANOO

Immediate suspension sought for Eva Vekos

By ALAN J. KEAYS, VTDigger

MIDDLEBURY — An attorney who handles discipline for lawyers in Vermont is seeking the "immediate suspension" of Addison County State's Attorney Eva Vekos's law license.

The 23-page filing from Jon Alexander, disciplinary counsel for the Vermont Professional Responsibility Board, cites Vekos's conviction for drunken driving late last year after police said she drove to a suspicious death scene intoxicated in January 2024.

The Vermont Supreme Court, which oversees the discipline of all judicial officers and attorneys, is set to take up the matter at a hearing on March 19.

The filing submitted earlier this month to the Vermont Supreme Court also points to interactions Vekos had with police on the night of her arrest as well as after the incident as reasons for the suspension request.

"State's Attorney Vekos committed her crime during the course of her law practice and performance of her public duties," Alexander wrote in the filing.

"In an effort to avoid prosecution for her DUI," Alexander added, "she also committed additional and related professional misconduct of abusing her public office, attempting to improperly influence police officers and interfering with the administration of justice."

Alexander wrote in his filing he is seeking the immediate suspension of Vekos's law license "during the pendency of forthcoming disciplinary proceedings before a Hearing Panel of the Professional Responsibility Board."

Neither Vekos nor her attorney could immediately be reached Wednesday for comment.

Vekos pleaded no contest in December to a charge of drunken driving and received a six-month deferred sentence. A deferred sentence allows the conviction to be cleared from her record provided she does not commit any violations during that six-month period.

The suspension request comes as Vekos, a Democrat, has faced calls to resign from the leaders of the Vermont Democratic and Progressive parties as well as Republican Gov. Phil Scott, following reporting by the

Independent and VTDigger about complaints from crime victims about how they'd been treated by the county's top prosecutor.

Vekos has challenged the allegations and has maintained that she has no plans to step down.

Also, last month, the *Independent* reported on an internal investigation conducted by a law firm hired by the Vermont Department of State's Attorneys and Sheriffs that found Vekos had shown "significant failures" related to ethical and legal responsibilities.

Shortly after Vekos's arrest in 2024, her law license was temporarily suspended, with Alexander claiming that Vekos failed to cooperate with his investigation into her paid medical leave that followed the drunken driving charge.

The Vermont Supreme Court lifted Vekos's suspension after roughly three weeks, ruling that she had since come into compliance with the investigation.

Alexander's filing with the Vermont Supreme Court earlier this month seeking the immediate suspension of Vekos's law license centers primarily on the drunken driving case. It does not include any information regarding any allegations of misconduct included in the report conducted by the law firm hired by the state Department of State's Attorneys and Sheriffs.

The timing regarding the filing of the petition by Alexander earlier this month is not clear. Many of the allegations raised in it relate to Vekos's DUI arrest more than two years ago and her eventual conviction about three months ago. Alexander could not be reached for comment Wednesday.

Timothy Lueders-Dumont, executive director of the Vermont Department of State's Attorneys and Sheriffs, late on Wednesday said that in light of the Professional Responsibility Board filing, Vekos herself should act.

"With the calls for SA Vekos's resignation by the entire Addison County legislative delegation and Gov. Phil Scott, and now with the PRB's call for suspension, it seems in the best interest of the residents of Addison County, and the integrity of the justice system, that Ms. Vekos resign from her position," Lueders-Dumont said in a statement.

"Our priority remains the proper administration of the work of Vermont's 28 county offices of State's Attorneys and Sheriffs. The Department will continue to work with all stakeholders to support the duties of the Office of the Addison County State's Attorney."

Lueders-Dumont lost a 2022 Democratic Primary race for state's attorney to Vekos, who then won the general election. She took office a few months later in early 2023.

Vekos was arrested on the night of Jan. 25, 2024, on the drunken driving charge after she drove to the scene of a suspicious death investigation in Bridport and troopers claimed she was intoxicated.

Vekos refused to do field sobriety tests or take a breath test at the state police barracks in New Haven where she was taken for processing, according to charging documents. She told police she had only one gin and tonic earlier in the evening of her drunken driving arrest before being called to the suspicious death scene, according to court records.

Vekos, in the days after her arrest, took part in an email exchange with law enforcement officials in Addison County, in which she said she no longer felt safe around police and mocked their intelligence and grammar abilities.

Alexander wrote in his filing to the Vermont Supreme Court seeking Vekos's immediate suspension that drunken driving was a "serious crime" that included aggravated factors in the case. Vekos, Alexander wrote, tried to "persuade" a trooper to "shirk his duty" to investigate her for drunken driving and let her leave the scene.

Before she was taken to the barracks, Vekos could be heard on video footage from the scene telling the trooper, "Are you serious, Ryan? Can't you just have a friend come and get me," according to court documents.

Also, in asking the trooper if he was "serious," Alexander wrote of Vekos, "was not suggesting that suspecting her of DUI was implausible or spurious, but was instead implying that it was laughable or outrageous for a police officer to investigate the State's Attorney for DUI, a tacit but unmistakable demand for special treatment on account of her law enforcement status."

Vekos is up for re-election in November.

Coalition

(Continued from Page 3A)

negotiated rates.

"Health care for all can no longer be ignored by our Legislature," coalition leaders stated. "It is time for our legislators to fulfill the promise of affordable health care for all Vermonters. It is not possible to kick the can down the road anymore when our health care system is in crisis. We demand that our

state legislators take up legislation that will implement the principles laid out in existing statute (encoded through Act 48 of 2011) for universal, publicly financed health care."

Middlebury's Ellen Oxfeld is vice president of Vermont Health Care for All, a nonprofit established in 2003 to "educate the public about the advantages of a universal publicly financed health care system for

Vermont," according to its website. Oxfeld, in tandem with Middlebury pediatrician Dr. Jack Mayer, spearheaded the successful Town Meeting Day resolutions on universal primary care in seven Addison County towns.

"Although the coalition and town meeting petition efforts are related, they are somewhat different angles," Oxfeld explained through

an email exchange with the *Independent*. "The town meeting resolutions were clearly a way for the public to weigh in directly through our local elections. The coalition is a way for organizations that have many different focuses (farmers, union members, public interest groups, racial justice, etc.) to weigh in on the importance of the health care issue for them, and for their support of

universal publicly financed health care as a necessity since we can no longer nibble around the edges..."

It remains to be seen whether major health care reform legislation will make "crossover" day (March 13) in the Statehouse — the date by which most bills must be reported out of their last committee of reference to become candidates to advance to final passage.

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Sweet lessons

Maple syrup — it's synonymous with Vermont, which produces more than half the nation's supply. But how do you get that sublime nectar from trees?

Mark Raishart, who runs Foxglove Farm in Leicester, had the answers for a couple dozen visitors who attended his introduction to maple sugaring on Sunday.

From identifying trees — both sugar and red maples — which yield the sap, to how to tap the trees and boil down that sap to get the amber gold that our state produces around 3 million gallons of each year.

Raishart, a county forester, and his wife Catherine, a

representative of the Vermont Woodlands Association, have some 600 maples on their property and expect to produce about 250 gallons of syrup in the next four-six weeks.

After firing up his boiler for the first time this season on Sunday, Raishart showed visitors how the process reduces the raw sap to a delicious syrup at a ratio of about 40 gallons of sap to 1 gallon of syrup. And after snacks of maple doughnuts and hot cocoa, visitors left with a greater understanding of where maple syrup comes from — and a free sugaring starter kit, courtesy of Bread Loaf View farm in Cornwall.

— Steve James




Photos by Steve James

MARK RAISHART ANSWERS a query from Edna Rey-Vizgirdas of Middlebury on Sunday during an open house and maple sugaring lesson at Leicester's Foxglove Farm, which he runs with his wife, Catie. Raishart, a county forester in addition to a sugarmaker, hiked around the property with a couple dozen visitors.


Addison County Substance Use & Prevention Coalition

Addison County Parent SURVEY


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Table of delights

A PACKED HOUSE for New Haven's town meeting last week was perfect for the Beeman PTO and their annual Town Meeting & Voting Day Bake Sale! The group more than doubled its record sales and raised over \$1,200 for the PTO, which uses money raised to support enrichment opportunities for Beeman Elementary School students. That includes paying for things like downhill skiing at Cochran's, author visits, 4 Winds Science program, the school garden and many art and theater residencies, just to name a few. Staffing the table just before town meeting got underway are, from left, Dylann Roleau (6th grade), Liv Lunser (4th grade) and Lila Bessette (6th grade).

Photo submitted by Margo Roleau

Bristol projects move along

By MARIN HOWELL

BRISTOL — Bristol officials are in the midst of a couple of projects aimed at addressing sidewalks on West Street and aging waterlines in town.

The selectboard discussed both of those efforts at a Feb. 23 meeting. Selectboard members that evening voted unanimously to accept a bid from Williston's Munson Earth Moving for the Bristol West waterline replacement project, the second phase in a multi-year effort to replace about half of the waterlines in the town's aging water distribution system. Many of those waterlines are over 100 years old and have been contributing to significant water loss.

The town previously contracted with Munson Earth Moving on the Pine Street waterline replacement project, which marked the first phase of the effort. The Bristol West phase will tackle some or all of Munsill Avenue and Maple, Pleasant, Church, Elm, Taylor, West, Park, and School streets. The project is expected to take place over the 2026 and 2027 construction seasons.

At the Feb. 23 meeting, town engineer Steve Palmer of VTM Engineering said the town received nine bids for the project, though a couple of those bids didn't include everything they were required to and were disqualified. Munson Earth Moving was the apparent low

bidder with a bid of \$2.4 million.

A project cost summary presented by Palmer and factoring in Munson's bid reflected probable total project costs of \$3,356,111, which includes a \$150,353 construction contingency. Bristol voters in Nov. 2024 agreed to bond for up to \$3.95 million for the project.

"It's great news; we're \$600,000 under what our estimate was or thought we were going to be," Palmer said.

Town officials noted in Bristol's town report that the project "received full funding through the Vermont State Revolving Loan Fund, supported by a Vermont Bond Bank loan."

WEST STREET SIDEWALK

Bristol officials are also making progress on a West Street Sidewalk Scoping Study that's exploring ways to improve sidewalk connections on that road from Holley Hall to the Village Creeme Stand. The town has been working with civil engineering company VHB on the effort.

The town report notes that a study presented in September highlighted several areas of concern, "including grade variations, inadequate separation from the roadway, deterioration, misalignment, and gaps." Alternatives were presented this past December, and selectboard members got a closer look at the

preferred alternative at their Feb. 23 meeting.

The presentation offered selectboard members a chance to review details of that alternative, ask questions and offer suggestions. Planning & Zoning Administrator AZ Larsen highlighted various aspects of the alternative, including feedback received from a landowner in the project area and sections of sidewalk eyed for replacement.

"The goal has been to keep costs low while also maintaining connections," Larsen explained.

Town officials also discussed potential changes to parking spaces on West Street identified in the alternative, such as converting perpendicular spaces along the Town Green to spaces at an angle. Larsen noted that feedback from state officials is that angled parking is preferred.

"I think angled parking is the proper thing to do," Selectman Ian Albinson said. "It matches every other parking space pretty much that we have in the downtown area, and so I think it is an important thing to do. I know it creates some problems in some areas, but it does make it safer, and that's the whole point of this project."

The selectboard is expected to receive a final presentation on the West Street Sidewalk Scoping Study from VHB later this month.

Bristol Police Log

BRISTOL — Bristol police on Feb. 19 arrested Joshua Emmons, 40, of Starksboro on three warrants. According to police, Emmons had failed to appear for previously scheduled criminal court hearings — one in Addison County and two in Chittenden County.

Between Feb. 15 and 21, Bristol police completed 24 foot patrols and checked security at Mount Abraham Union High School seven times, at Bristol Elementary School seven times and at local businesses six times.

Police also processed eight fingerprint requests, conducted four sex offender registry checks and responded to one 911 hang-up call

that was dialed accidentally.

In other recent activity, Bristol police:

- On Feb. 16 assisted Bristol Rescue on West Street.

- On Feb. 16 told a local business that a lock on its front door wasn't working properly.

- On Feb. 16 received a report of a lost dog that had gone missing on East Street. Police said the dog was found.

- On Feb. 16 helped someone with accessing mental health services.

- On Feb. 18 responded to a loose dog on Liberty Street. Police identified the owner, returned the dog and issued a verbal warning for dog at large.

- On Feb. 18 received a report of a juvenile problem on Pleasant Street in Bristol.

- On Feb. 18 received a report of a motor vehicle passing a school bus with its red lights activated on Airport Drive.

- On Feb. 18 assisted Vermont State Police on Monkton Road.

- On Feb. 19 police and Bristol's community resource specialist helped Mount Abraham Union Middle/High School with a truancy concern.

- On Feb. 19 received a report of a noise similar to gun shots or fireworks on North Street. Police did not identify the source of the noise.

Bristol Beat

Bristol bus going to Montpelier No Kings rally

BRISTOL — The organization Bristol Area Indivisible is organizing a roundtrip bus to Montpelier from Bristol on Saturday, March 28, for the third big No Kings Day Rally.

The chartered a bus will leave from 74 Munsill Ave. (BristolWorks) at 9:30 a.m. sharp and will depart from Montpelier at 2:15 p.m.

Registering and reserving a seat is required: \$15 per person. Minimum 30 people.

No one turned away for inability to pay. "Generous" donations appreciated.

First reserved, first served. Sign up at luvskatr@yahoo.com. Please include the subject line: "Montpelier" and include your cell phone number.

Organizers will create a waitlist if reservations exceed capacity (50).

Deadline to register March 18. Payment options: cash or QR code to Act Blue at the bus or

QR code found on poster around towns.

A core principle behind all No Kings events is a commitment to nonviolent action. Bristol Area Indivisible organizers expect all participants to seek to de-escalate any potential confrontation with those who disagree with BAI values and to act lawfully at these events. They ask that weapons of any kind, including those legally permitted, not be brought to events.

ADDISON COUNTY School Briefs

For the fifth consecutive semester, **Natalie Adams** of Monkton was named to the president's list at Bryant University in Smithfield, R.I.

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Piggy tradition!

COSTUMED RACERS FROM throughout the region joined the fun at Blueberry Hill Inn's Pig Race this past Sunday for laughs, good food and raucous ski racing with ample obstacles. Pictured, top left and clockwise, entrants started with a jog around the ski hut before the ski race began. Center right, two contestants flash big smiles, while Jodi Brown of New Haven, Erica Mathis in a cow suit, Luke Rein of Norwich, and Hailey Ronconi of Monkton show their enthusiasm.

Independent photos/Steve James



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Vt. investigated for Medicaid waste

By OLIVIA GIEGER, VtDigger
MONTPELIER — Vermont is the target of the latest federal probe into Medicaid fraud, waste and abuse.

State officials received a March 3 letter from representatives on the U.S. House Committee on Energy and Commerce requesting information on the state's Medicaid program. The committee sent nine other states — almost all of which are Democratic-led, including Maine and Massachusetts — similar requests for information.

The letter cites the federal investigation into Minnesota's Medicaid program surrounding suspected fraud, waste and abuse in how health care providers bill the health coverage program for those with low incomes.

"The Committee is concerned that your state's Medicaid programs may be similarly vulnerable to (fraud, waste and abuse) that harms Medicaid enrollees, legitimate providers, and taxpayers," the letter reads.

Jill Mazza Olson, the Medicaid director for Vermont's Agency of Human Services, said the state was not necessarily expecting this letter to come from the congressional committee, but has had a "heightened awareness" around waste, fraud and abuse in Medicaid surrounding the national attention.

"It's something we take really seriously in Vermont," she said. "We really try to watch the national landscape."

Vermont has long been reliant on

federal dollars in the federal-state partnership program. In 2024, the program spent \$2.3 billion, \$1.45 billion of which was drawn from the feds. More than 156,900 Vermonters rely on the program, the letter cites.

In January, the Department of Vermont Health Access, which administers Vermont Medicaid, requested a \$33 million budget adjustment from the federal government to cover this year's Medicaid costs.

Federal dollars, which are matched to state spending, are "critical" to Vermont, Olson said.

The congressional letter, signed by the committee's Republican majority leaders, says that Vermont's reliance on Medicaid makes it "high risk" for fraud, waste and abuse.

The authors go on to cite a number of cases of such errors that the state attorney general's Medicaid Fraud and Residential Abuse Unit has pursued. That included a \$200,000 settlement the Burlington mental

health care provider Eden Valley had to pay for submitting more than 150 false records on 50 Medicaid claims.

Another example detailed the felony Medicaid fraud charges the Vermont Attorney General's Office brought against a Lamoille County couple for submitting thousands of dollars worth of false timesheets for caretaking by an unauthorized provider.

"I think I would be concerned about a state that didn't have any

cases of fraud. That would suggest to me that they weren't looking," Olson said. "These are examples of cases of fraud that as a state, we have found and identified, and that's the purpose of the systems that we have in place."

The letter's authors write that mental health care and personal care services, which allow Medicaid patients to get support in their own homes or communities, are particularly susceptible to Medicaid fraud.

They single out Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA) therapy for those with autism. At the end of 2025, Vermont Medicaid implemented a controversial change to how it bills for ABA therapy, citing these concerns of fraud, waste and abuse. At the time, the state program expressed a desire to be "proactive" against scrutiny from the federal government that could more deeply jeopardize Medicaid services.

The congressional committee requested the state Agency of Human Services provide it with further information about how Vermont investigates and protects against Medicaid fraud.

In a statement, the agency said it is currently working with the Department of Vermont Health Access on its response to comply with the committee's March 17 deadline.

"Vermont takes program integrity seriously and maintains safeguards to ensure Medicaid resources are used appropriately," the agency's spokesperson, Ted Fisher, wrote in a statement. "Vermont's program integrity teams work closely with the Attorney General's Medicaid Fraud and Residential Abuse Unit to investigate and address suspected fraud."

Notes of appreciation

Local communities help Addison County children

I'm writing on behalf of the Board of Directors at Otter Creek Child Center (OCCC) to thank residents in Bridport, Cornwall, New Haven, Middlebury, Ripton, Salisbury, Shoreham, Vergennes and Weybridge who voted and helped

secure town funds for OCCC.

These contributions offer critical support for the daily operations at our new, expanded center, including providing three fresh, healthy meals (prepared on site) for all children as well as books and learning tools. OCCC

serves children and families throughout Addison County (and beyond) and the entire OCCC community is incredibly grateful for your historical and ongoing support.

Jenn Ortegren
Brandon

Starksboro

(Continued from Page 1A)

Elementary, which has been considered for closure again even with the most recent ENDS Monitoring Report showing (higher test scores)," selectboard members Carin McCarthy and Koran Cousino told the *Independent*. They also noted Robinson's enrollment is expected to increase next year (to 106 students), based on information shared by Principal Andy Weis at town meeting.

ON THE TABLE

MAUSD officials back in October identified three education delivery models to explore more in depth:

- Keeping all schools open.
- Operating two elementary schools and a regional middle/high school.
- Operating a regional middle/high school and two elementary schools with grade banding (grouping students in a school building by age rather than geography).

MAUSD currently operates four elementary schools, along with Mount Abraham Union Middle/High School in Bristol. At the October meeting where the three models were selected for further study, some school board members, including Starksboro representative Kristen Toy, advocated for keeping options open when evaluating which schools are considered for closure.

Cousino and McCarthy said the petition to warn Article 11 garnered 198 signatures, more than twice the 75 required.

"With this response, it is fair to say that Starksboro residents care deeply about having a say in what happens, if anything, to the town elementary school," they wrote.

Starksboro voters have previously demonstrated how much they care about their elementary school. In May 2022, more than 200 Starksboro residents voted at a special meeting to withdraw from MAUSD. At the time, Starksboro resident and Save Our Schools member Nancy Cornell explained the withdrawal vote was "really about preserving our town's right to vote on school closure."

Starksboro was ultimately denied exit from MAUSD in August 2022, when a "no" vote from the town of New Haven stopped the town's withdrawal effort. Voters in New Haven, Bristol and Monkton had been asked whether to ratify Starksboro's withdrawal vote, with Bristol and Monkton voting in favor.

McCarthy and Cousino noted

Starksboro's Save Our Schools group — which played a key role in previous withdrawal efforts — has organized again in response to recent MAUSD Board actions.

"We hope that we will not need to withdraw from the school district to keep our school open, but we want to understand the updated requirements for withdrawing from the school district if we need to do so," McCarthy and Cousino wrote.

They noted that rules around withdrawing from a school district have changed since 2022. That year, Gov. Phil Scott signed into law bill H.727, which in part made significant changes to the withdrawal process for towns looking to separate from a unified school district.

"The new rules create a more complex process," Cousino and McCarthy said. "This approval of (Article 11) shows the community's support for exploring those new rules for communities like ours to pursue withdrawal, in the event that that becomes necessary."

Cousino and McCarthy highlighted discussion around Article 11 and Robinson Elementary School in general at the town's annual meeting. They noted that at the start of the gathering, Weis invited residents to stand if they had attended or been involved in educational and community offerings at Robinson.

"Nearly the entire gymnasium was on their feet," they wrote. "The school plays a central role in Starksboro's community, and the community plays a central role in Robinson's curriculum."

McCarthy and Cousino said there was also "expression of strong support" for MAUSD board members from Starksboro, "who have asked the MAUSD Board to consider CESAs/BOCES (two kinds of resource-sharing structures for districts) as one key cost-savings approach that would not involve closing schools." Residents also had questions for lawmakers in attendance about schools, housing and support for rural communities like Starksboro, they said.

WHAT'S NEXT

As for discussion around Article 11, Cousino and McCarthy said, "this portion of the Town Meeting provided the opportunity for residents to talk about whose responsibility it is to represent Starksboro's interests and how we might need to take a stand for our school."

"There was active discussion about whether or not to name the Starksboro Save Our Schools

organization as the action group, but it was determined that the message that we want to send to the district is that our community — as a whole — stands by our school and has the support of the people to follow the legal process to ensure fair representation in all decisions."

Cousino and McCarthy said Save Our Schools group members have volunteered to study the new withdrawal process and develop a potential timeline for initiating that process if necessary.

"The timeline will depend, in part, on the MAUSD board's willingness to fairly consider the options moving forward according to our Articles of Agreement," McCarthy and Cousino said.

They noted that if the need for a special meeting arises, the town would host "a community event to answer questions and address concerns."

"There is a strong and active following of this topic on Front Porch Forum and we will provide as much information as available to inform the residents in advance of any pending actions," they wrote.

McCarthy and Cousino also highlighted Starksboro residents' concerns over aspects of MAUSD spending and expressed gratitude for Starksboro's school board representatives, who they said, "have proactively asked budgetary questions and tried to convince the administration and board that there are many better ways to address financial and program challenges that would not require closing schools."

Starksboro selectboard members inquired about such options in questions directed to the MAUSD Community Engagement Committee following a presentation given by that committee to the selectboard on Feb. 3. Those questions also asked about financial considerations for the options being explored, any administrative cost reductions being considered, busing, a timeline for next steps, and other topics related to the district's exploration of educational delivery models.

Cousino and McCarthy said they were still waiting to hear back from district officials on those questions last week.

"The people of Starksboro have demonstrated their value of the Robinson School and we aim to maintain the agreed upon democratically representative process in any changes that take place moving forward," McCarthy and Cousino wrote.

ACSD

(Continued from Page 1A)

three members of the now-defunct Ripton School Board. That board formed after Ripton briefly left the ACSD to see if it could pivot to an independent PreK-12 school system, to prevent closure of its K-5 elementary school. The community, after an extensive exploration, determined its school independence goal was untenable for a town of Ripton's size.

Ripton rejoined the ACSD, which last spring closed the school after its student numbers failed to meet the district's class-size minimums. Ripton's K-5 students now attend neighboring Salisbury Community School. On March 3, Ripton residents voted to reacquire their school and repurpose it — potentially as new town offices, a municipal library and community gathering space.

Wilson joined the ACSD board in March 2021 and has served as its chair for the past three years. She will continue to hold Shoreham's lone seat on the 13-member panel, until this summer. That's when she and her husband, George Gross, will relocate to Roquebrune-Sur-Argens, a commune in the Var department in the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur region of Southeastern France.

They'll be residing around 45 minutes from their son and

his family, who live in Moulans-Sartoux, France.

"It isn't without some sadness that I will be leaving the board later this year. It has been a very rewarding experience. With that said, I believe that we have an excellent board and excellent district leadership and I will be leaving ACSD in very good hands," she said through an email exchange.

The couple will sell their Solar Haven Farm in Shoreham, where they've grown organic fruit and berries to make jams and sorbet.

"Over the past two years, even before we decided to move, I started to retire from my Solar Haven Farm business. I found as much as I loved growing and making my jams and sorbet products that folks really loved, it was getting harder and harder to do, especially with the demands associated with chairing the ACSD board, not to mention getting older," she said.

Wilson will leave at a cathartic moment in Shoreham Elementary School history. The ACSD board last year voted to merge Shoreham and Bridport students at Bridport Central School, while converting the Shoreham school to a new PreK facility. It's a move predicated on declining enrollment and a desire to offer single-grade instruction to children on both towns, as a way to improve standardized test scores.

The ACSD board will need to appoint people to fill two vacancies on the panel — Wilson's, once she leaves, and (more imminently) a Middlebury seat that drew no takers on March 3. Once appointed, those new members will serve until next March, when they can choose to seek reelection.

MIDD SELECTBOARD

Meanwhile, the Middlebury selectboard on Tuesday evening unanimously picked member (and Vice Chair) Andy Hooper as its new chair. Hooper succeeds longtime selectboard Chair Brian Carpenter, who chose not to seek reelection on March 3 after 12 years on the panel.

Hooper, assistant vice president of IT operations for Union Mutual and a former longtime IT professional for Cabot Creamery, joined the selectboard in 2022 and was reelected last March to his second consecutive three-year term.

During his brief pitch for the selectboard chairmanship, Hooper said that while "I take this responsibility very seriously, I don't take myself very seriously, which I think can be a good mix."

He suggested the board leave daily operations to town staff, "who are good at their jobs," thus freeing up the board to focus more on policy and long-range planning.

"Our job is to guide the ship, not necessarily pull the oars," he said.



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Transfer station is in the works for Lincoln

LINCOLN — Lincoln residents next month could once again have a spot in town to bring their household trash.

Lincoln town officials have stated that all required materials and inspections for the transfer station at 1111 Downingsville Road have been completed. If all goes to plan, the transfer station will be able to again accept bags of household trash on April 4.

“We are actively working on this and will keep the community informed through notices on the Town Website and the Front Porch Forum,” reads an update on the Lincoln town website.

Town officials have been working to resolve permitting and contracted services needed for the transfer station to accept bagged household trash. The Lincoln selectboard briefly discussed updates on those efforts during on March 4.

“We’ve moved forward with that,” selectboard Chair Tim McGowan said, adding the town now needs to think about getting a shed for the station.

The selectboard is expected to talk more about plans for the shed at a future meeting. Town Administrator Trish Waugh said the town can start accepting household trash without the shed once it receives its certification.

Town officials stated on the website that the draft certification for the transfer station has been posted on the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources Environmental Notice Bulletin website and is open for public comment through March 19.

“Any comments received during that period will be addressed and then the final certification will be issued,” the website states.

In the meantime, recycling and metal drop-off is available. Town officials pointed to other options for Lincoln residents to dispose of their household trash: the Bristol Town Garage on Pine Street on Saturdays from 8 a.m. to noon and in New Haven at 100 Kings Way from 8 a.m. to noon on Fridays.

— *Marin Howell*

Douglas

(Continued from Page 1A)

under control is vital if we want to grow Vermont’s economy. Creating a strong, sustainable health system focused on quality and access is essential for Vermont’s future and the quality of life of our residents.”

Douglas was invited to co-helm VHC911 just before its launch in January of 2025. Health care,

housing, property taxes and education were the four challenges in an “affordability” crisis he underscored during his time as governor.

“We need to attack them all if we’re going to make Vermont an affordable place to live,” Douglas said.

Fifteen years after leaving Montpelier, the same four challenges remain, he noted.

“The message from employers is the same — ‘health care costs are squeezing us,’” Douglas said. “And a quarter of the increase in school budgets last year was related to the rise in health care (premiums).”

How deep is Vermont’s health care crisis? The new VHC911 report includes some of the following food for thought:

- In 2025, Vermont had the most expensive health insurance premiums of any state.

- “Our costs were 2.5 times the national average and are far more expensive than our neighbors in Maine and New Hampshire,” the report states.

- Vermont’s primary care providers are struggling. Its Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs), which serve roughly one-third of all Vermonters, ran a combined \$8.5 million deficit last year.

- The state is on track to be 100 short of the primary care physician needs by 2030.

- In 2020, the Kaiser Family Foundation found Vermont had the fourth-highest health care spending

per person of any state. Since 2021, Vermont hospital spending has grown from 35% to 44.5% of total health care spending.

- Vermonters spend 19.6% of their personal income on health care, the highest rate in the country, according to a Vermont Chamber of Commerce study.

- As a state, Vermont’s hospital safety ratings rank 48th in the country with no Vermont hospitals having an “A” rating.

- Changes in federal health care subsidies will hit Vermont hard. According to AARP-VT, an estimated 30,000 Vermonters will go uninsured as federal Obamacare assistance sunsets. Further, as many as 45,000 low-income Vermonters will lose coverage from Medicaid.

“Both of these dynamics will mean people get sicker or even die because

they aren’t getting the care they need. It will also increase charity care pressure in our hospitals, forcing hospitals to make up those costs elsewhere (ie. commercial insurance rates),” the VHC911 report states.

Not all the news is gloom and doom, however.

Douglas and his VHC911 colleagues noted steps the state Legislature and hospital administrators took in 2025 to start bending the curve on health care spending and affordability. Those steps included:

- Act 68 which called on the Vermont Agency of Human Services to develop a statewide health care delivery strategic plan, requiring collaboration among providers to reduce hospital spending “by at

least” 2.5% in fiscal year 2026. Act 68 also mandates that the state’s Green Mountain Care Board (GMCB) implement hospital reference-based pricing by fiscal year 2027, setting maximum payments for services pegged to Medicare rates.

- Act 55, which capped the profit Vermont hospitals could enjoy through the Federal 340B prescription drug program at 120% of cost.

- Act 49, which expanded the GMCB’s authority to adjust hospital reimbursement rates and ability to appoint a hospital observer.

- Vermont’s promised receipt of federal grants—potentially for each of the next five years — as part of the “Rural Health Transformation Grant.” That money, coupled with new leadership Blue Cross/Blue Shields of Vermont and UVM Health Network, “may be our best chance to change the culture and get all players pushing to create an affordable system appropriate for our rural state,” reads the VHC911 report.

“(Lawmakers) took a lot of positive steps on their own to push this process along,” Douglas said.

TOP-HEAVY ADMIN

VHC911 officials are making some recommendations of their own, including that hospitals pare their top-heavy administration.

Compared to their peers across the Northeastern U.S. — and adjusted for bed capacity, population and the like — Vermont hospitals spend 31% more than their peers on labor costs devoted to non-patient care, according to the report.

The group also stressed that Vermont hospitals “must bring costs down to be more in line with Medicare reimbursements.”

In 2023, UVM Medical Center lost \$116 million treating Medicare patients, putting it in the top

“We’re going to keep our foot on the gas. We’re encouraged by these early signs that we’ve seen. This is a marathon, not a sprint. We need to focus on bringing those costs down so they’re not so disproportionate compared to other states and other systems.”

— *James Douglas*

“We need to attack them all (health care, housing, property taxes and education) if we’re going to make Vermont an affordable place to live.”

— *James Douglas*



FORMER GOV. JAMES Douglas of Middlebury now co-chairs Vermont Healthcare 911, a coalition of Vermonters seeking a more cost-effective and sustainable health care system for the Green Mountain State. The group has just released a new report detailing current health system problems and possible fixes.

Independent photo/John S. McCright

10 worst performers out of 107 comparable hospitals.

Douglas is glad he signed up with VHC911 and believes it’s been making a difference. The group doesn’t lobby; its functions on donations and a small paid staff.

“We’re going to keep our foot on the gas. We’re encouraged by these early signs that we’ve seen. This is a marathon, not a sprint. We need to focus on bringing those costs down so they’re not so disproportionate compared to other states and other systems,” Douglas said.

Jessica Holmes is a member of the GMCB, as well as being a

professor of Health Economics & Public Policy and director of Global Health at Middlebury College. She said VHC911’s work has been helpful.

“Efforts to raise public awareness about the drivers of Vermont’s rising health care costs are always welcome,” she said. “VHC911 has contributed thoughtful, evidence-based analysis that helps Vermonters better understand the challenges our health care system faces and the difficult choices ahead.”

John Flowers is at johnf@addisonindependent.com.



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A NEST FILLED with bobolink eggs sits tucked away in a field. A Feb. 27 event in Ferrisburgh highlighted how hay fields and pastures serve as key habitat for bobolinks and other grassland bird species, as well as how farmers can manage their land in bird-friendly ways.

Photo by Hyla Howe

Grasslands

(Continued from Page 1A)
use patterns, so we're seeing development of former farmland, reforestation of former farmland, conversion of prairie to development and row crops," Howe explained. "And then we also are seeing an intensification of haying practices on the remaining open lands that we have."

The loss of those habitats is a major factor behind the significant decline in grassland bird populations. Howe noted Eastern meadowlarks in particular have lost about 75% of their population and are likely to be listed as an endangered species in Vermont in the near future.

"We have probably around 100 in the state, so if you have them in your field, if you can do anything for them to protect them, you're really making a big difference for this species," she said.

Howe shared a few examples of what landowners can do to support grassland birds, such as using the delayed haying practices The Bobolink Project helps farmers implement. Howe highlighted two recommended haying timelines:

- A delayed first cut, with no disturbance in the field before July 15. This delays the first cut until after the birds' breeding season.

"The trade-off really is that it protects the full suite of grassland birds, so it'll protect meadowlarks as well," Howe said. "But the trade-off for farmers is you're missing the first cut, it's a much lower quality hay harvest."

- A delayed second cut with no disturbance in the field between May 20 and July 24.

"That basically allows for an early cut, but then protects the field while birds are nesting," Howe said. **GRAZING & GRASSLAND BIRDS**

While those haying strategies were discussed, the main topic of the event was how grazers can support grassland bird habitat.

"Grazers have always been a part of grassland systems, thinking of bison in the native prairies," Howe said. "They provide natural fertilization to fields... Grazers also stimulate grass growth because they remove the grass mechanically and it causes the grass to grow back even stronger and more robustly."

She added that farmers have the machinery, knowledge and livestock needed to manage fields in a way that balances bird conservation with the needs of the farming landscape and food system.

With that in mind, Howe offered some general recommendations for farmers with grazing pastures:

- Keeping stocking density (the number of animals grazing on a piece of land over a period of time) below 40 cattle days per hectare.
- Resting fields for six weeks after grazing.
- Grazing fields with the highest abundance of nesting birds later.
- Starting rotations in the spring in areas that don't have as many birds, then rotating "a low stocking density of cattle through birdy fields in late May/early June."

Attendees also got to hear from farmers with experience grazing

cattle on pastures with grassland birds. Mike Eastman of Mike's Farm, an organic dairy operation in Addison, said he uses long rotations (around 60 days) at his farm, and he waits to clip pastures until later in the season on account of grassland birds like bobolinks.

"To me, pasture and cows and bobolinks sort of all go together," he said. "So, I didn't really want to do anything to their detriment."

Eastman noted cattle and grassland birds know how to interact with one another. He recalled one early morning when he was out herding cows and noticed the animals stopping to look at something in the pasture before moving around it.

"I was curious; I was going really slow trying to find it, and there's this little clump of grass, there's this little baby meadowlark hiding in there, and the cows could see that," he said.

Sam Dixon, another presenter at the event, underscored the symbiotic relationship between cattle and grassland birds. Dixon is the dairy farm manager at Shelburne Farms, which he noted operates on around 1,000 acres of grassland, including some land that was originally part of the farm and is now owned by other landowners.

For over two decades, Shelburne Farms has worked with ornithologist Noah Perlut, who has studied grassland birds at the farm. Dixon noted that research has informed the team's management of the farm.

He noted herbivores are an essential part of grassland ecosystems.

"Animals are critical for enhancing the habitat for these grassland birds," Dixon said. **CALL TO FARMERS**

Howe highlighted other research on grazing and grassland birds conducted in Ontario and Virginia but noted there's not much research in Vermont exploring the same questions as those studies. She said The Bobolink Project isn't studying anything yet, but she's interested in hearing from farmers about what they're seeing and have found successful.

"I would love to see a research project really come out of this, and my questions are kind of, 'What do you see that's working, what are your gut feelings, what are your observations?'" she

explained. "And then, 'How could The Bobolink Project or other conservation partners similar to our program help? What do you need from us to make that happen; is it funding, is it monitoring?'"

Howe wants to connect with Addison County community members who are grazing livestock and seeing grassland birds in their fields, as well as those wanting to learn more about bird-friendly management. Those interested can email Howe at bobolinkproject@massaudubon.org.

A full recording of the Feb. 27 event can be found at tinyurl.com/grasslandbirds.

By the way

(Continued from Page 1A)
in other ways that are easily recognizable as valid and official because they contain accurate and detailed personally identifiable information. If you receive an unexpected message about fines or payments, don't click on links, don't provide personal information, and don't make payments.

Middlebury College senior and men's soccer player Alem Hadzic is gearing up for a half marathon in Bosnia and Herzegovina and is looking to raise funds through the effort for an organization that serves children fighting cancer in that region. Hadzic will run the Mostar Half Marathon on March 21. He's raising money for Udruženje Srce za djecu oboljelu od raka (Association Heart for Kids with Cancer), a nonprofit that supports children diagnosed with cancer, survivors and their families in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Hadzic's parents came to the U.S. after the Bosnian War, and he previously raised funds for the Red Cross in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina through a campaign last spring. For more details on the effort visit tinyurl.com/Hadzicgofundme.

United Way of Addison County is inviting parents and caregivers of students in grades 6–12 to complete the Addison County Parent & Caregiver Survey, open through March 31. This survey will help local organizations and schools better understand the experiences, concerns, and needs of families across Addison County. Parents who complete the survey can choose to enter a raffle for one of three \$100 gift cards to a local restaurant. Take the survey at tinyurl.com/4fm3y686.

The last day to view "In the Blink of an Eye," Vergennes artist Doug Mack's stunning photography exhibit, will be Tuesday, March 17, at the Bixby Library. Mack's

dynamic photography collection spans 50 years of his artistic growth and exploration, featuring everything from early black-and-white images taken with a Diana plastic camera, to vivid color pinhole photography and expansive drone-captured landscapes. All works are available for purchase, with 40% of proceeds supporting the Bixby Library's programs and services. Inquire at the circulation desk if a piece catches your eye.

With the warming temperatures, melting snows, and Vernal Equinox next week, spring is arriving. That means that amphibians are beginning to awaken from their winter slumbers to head for nearby pools, with breeding on their mind. This means it's time for the annual "Salamander Soirees" in Salisbury. For more than 20 years, Otter Creek Audubon Society and the Salisbury Conservation Commission have sponsored organized nights on Morgan Road, where interested citizens can help salamanders, frogs and toads safely cross the road to get from their upland wintering sites to the swamps and wetlands where they'll breed. Two organized nights will be held this year between March 15 and April 15, scheduled according to weather conditions. To be placed on the email notification list, please email Heidi Willis (redsprings@myfairpoint.net). If you were on last year's list and wish to remain, please email to confirm. More detailed information about location, notification, etc. will then be sent.

Speaking of creatures on the move, bears are beginning to emerge from hibernation with warmer temperatures. And some of them will be looking for food anywhere they can find it — such as from bird feeders and trash bins. One of the best ways we can help keep both bears and people

safe is by bringing in bird feeders this time of year. Bears have an incredible sense of smell and bird seed is like a high-calorie energy bar to them. Once a bear finds a reliable food source near homes, it can quickly become a habit that's hard to break. And they'll teach their cubs to visit feeders too. By simply taking feeders down for the season, we help keep bears wild and reduce the chance of conflicts in our neighborhoods. Also, store trash and compost securely. To learn more about living with bears check out tis Vermont Fish & Wildlife webpage: tinyurl.com/44cnjffx.

In 1996, National Bank of Middlebury made its first move outside of Middlebury. On March 18 of that year it opened its Bristol branch at 5 Main St., in the space now home to The Bobcat Café. To mark the anniversary, National Bank of Middlebury will host a community celebration at the Bristol branch next Wednesday, March 18, from 4:30 to 6 p.m. The event is free and open to everyone. Festivities include giveaways, an invitation to community members to share their favorite Bristol memories and hopes for the next 30 years, and surprises throughout the day.

Average gasoline prices in Vermont have risen 38 cents per gallon during the past week, averaging \$3.36 per gallon right now, according to GasBuddy's survey of 626 stations in Vermont. Prices in Vermont are 38.2 cents higher than a month ago and 25.6 cents higher than a year ago. According to GasBuddy, the cheapest station in Vermont sold for \$2.88 this week; the most expensive was \$3.89. Meanwhile, the national average price of gasoline has risen 51.1 cents per gallon during the past week, averaging \$3.45 per gallon right now. The national average is up 54.1 cents from a month ago and 41.6 cents higher than a year ago.



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Hescock

(Continued from Page 1A)
Incumbent Addison-Rutland Rep. Jim Casey, R-Hubardton, could have a big say in Hescock's election day plans, however. Casey, rounding out his first term in Montpelier, confirmed to the Independent that he'll seek reelection.

"My (candidacy) I think conveniently coincides with what I would be good at and what is needed: Stronger representation," Hescock, a 65-year-old Democrat, said during a recent interview at the Independent.

"In this state, you have a rich opportunity to partake in a democratic process that's a special part of being a Vermonter," he added of the low constituents-to-state-representative ratio of 4,290 and grassroots political climate.

Hescock is general contractor and owner of Golden Ruler Construction, through which he revitalizes homes and does agricultural construction. He's also contractor and owner of Cornwall-based Vermont Victory Greenhouses.

His resume also includes stints as an educator at Northlands Job Corps & People's Academy, orchardist, farmer, bus driver, truck driver, painter, church leader, Scout master, Addison County Fair & Field Days helper, and hockey/basketball coach.

Hescock and his wife, Kim, have four adult children and four grandchildren.

With retirement right around the corner, Hescock believes he's ready for a new challenge.

"This is a good time in my life to do it," Hescock said of service in the Legislature. "And frankly, I'd like to bring my values to Montpelier."

His interview with the Independent and his website, hescock4house.com, shed insights on where he stands on some of the bigger issues the state is facing. Here's what he has to say on:

• **Housing.** "Vermonters are getting priced out of their own

state. Twenty years ago, the First National Bank of Orwell took a chance and helped us buy a house for our growing family. After years of renting, finally we had a place of our own where our children could grow and flourish, our business could expand and our ability to build equity increased. Every working Vermonter needs the same opportunity," he said.

How would he address the current shortage and soaring costs of housing?

He'd revisit rules through which the state allows out-of-state landowners to lock up property (through the Land Use Program) with relatively small carrying costs; he'd advocate for a relaxing town zoning rules that he said are delaying or killing some housing projects; he'd advocate for a state taxation system predicated on income rather than property wealth; and would lobby for an expansion of the state's Tax Increment Finance system to facilitate infrastructure for workforce/affordable housing.

• **Health care.** Hescock praised former Gov. Howard Dean for championing Vermont's Dr. Dynasaur program, which guarantees health care coverage to all children in the state up to 18 years old.

"The timing (of Dr. Dynasaur) was critical, as our oldest son spent nearly a month in the hospital," he said. "Without it, our future lives would have been seriously altered with huge medical debt."

To further relieve the burden of health care costs on Vermonters, Hescock would advocate for a single-payer system as a long-term solution. In the short term, he would support "increasing and expanding the role of our Vermont Health Connect navigators" in helping folks reduce medical costs and insurance payouts.

• **Education.** Hescock is closely watching how the Legislature implements Act 73, which calls for a more streamlined public education system tailored to a declining student population.



SHOREHAM DEMOCRAT JONATHAN Hescock is running for the Addison-Rutland House seat that represents Shoreham, Orwell, Whiting, Sudbury and Hubbardton.

Independent photo/John S. McCright

"Closing a school in a community can be a real blow for the life of the community, create greater transportation and logistical challenges for families and students and affect property values," he said. "However, given the costs of education and a declining student population, I support much of Act 73. New and creative initiatives need to be considered to strengthen community life."

• **Property tax.** He proposes "lowering property taxes for Vermont residences by increasing property taxes on out-of-state landowners," "eliminating current loopholes in the property transfer tax on out-of-state purchases," and "eliminating state land use subsidies on nonagricultural land owned by out-of-state investors."

Hescock said he supports "equality and a 'Vermont for all,'" adding he'd support measures to "protect the rights and prevent discrimination and hate towards any Vermont citizens, including immigrants, migrant workers and LGBTQ individuals." He said he

also supports women's rights and is pro-choice.

On the wider stage, Hescock said he'd favor reversal of the U.S. Supreme Court's Citizens United decision that allows corporations and outside groups to spend unlimited money on elections, is against gerrymandering, favors higher tax brackets for billionaires, stricter gun laws and a ban on automatic assault rifles, more federal support for higher education, and preservation of Social Security.

He vowed, if elected, to be attentive and inclusive in his representation.

"I'll bring that lived experience and common sense to Montpelier and represent the needs of the Addison-Rutland district, and the many challenges faced by those with limited incomes. I take seriously the role of House Representative and the responsibility and privilege in serving all my constituents," he said.

John Flowers is at johnf@addisonindependent.com.

Jordan program

(Continued from Page 1A)
Director of International Programs Bill Mayers said there are seven students taking part in the Jordan program this semester.

The Jordan students were notified of the move on March 3 — four days after the start of the war.

"Middlebury felt compelled to move them from Amman (in Jordan) to our School in Morocco," Mayers told the Independent. "They went to the airport at night on Thursday, March 5, with the director of the School in Jordan, and departed via a direct commercial flight to Casablanca (in Morocco)."

He added the students arrived in Morocco in the early morning of

March 6 and were driven by a hired bus to the Middlebury School's location in Rabat, Morocco.

The U.S. and Israel launched strikes on Iran on Feb. 28, and the conflict has since pulled in other countries in the Middle East and beyond. Middlebury has 16 schools abroad across the globe, from Uruguay to France to Cameroon.

Mayers said college officials last week sent a letter with general reminders to all students at the institution's schools abroad and "have been in contact with our security advisors as we pay attention to the situation in general."

"But there isn't a particular School Abroad that gives us special concern at this time," Mayers said.

Salisbury

(Continued from Page 1A)
released to the media Wednesday, March 4.

Both PHCC Superintendent Nicole MacTavish and Career Center board Clerk Linda Barrett reiterated this week that budget ballots had been hand delivered to town clerk's offices in all of the PHCC's sending communities, including Salisbury, prior to the March 3 vote.

Salisbury selectboard Chair Pat Dunn said Town Clerk Allen Hathaway claimed he didn't receive the ballots and that a subsequent search of the town office — including the vault — proved fruitless.

PHCC delivers Career and Technical Education to students in the Addison Central, Addison Northwest and Mount Abraham school districts. Ballots from each

member town are delivered to a central tabulating location where they are comingled and counted.

The PHCC budget passed by a substantial enough margin that it would still carry the day even if all of Salisbury's more than 800 registered voters were to turn out and vote against it.

Barrett said she was told by Vermont Secretary of State officials that the PHCC budget should be considered passed — unless the Salisbury selectboard were to request a revote so that its residents could field the spending plan. That revote request would be decided by an Addison County Superior Court judge.

But Dunn said on Wednesday the Salisbury selectboard discussed the PHCC vote and decided not to request a revote, which would cost taxpayers more money and not change the March 3 outcome.

The PHCC budget passed by a substantial enough margin that it would still carry the day even if all of Salisbury's more than 800 registered voters were to turn out and vote against it.

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VUHS boys' basketball triumphs over Winooski on path to Barre

By SOPHIA KESHMIRI
WINOOSKI — It would have been reasonable to guess the Commodores would beat Winooski in the teams' third meeting this year, considering they'd overcome them twice in the last two months. But Saturday's postseason game on the Spartans' home turf was a real test — all that was left for the Vergennes Union High School boys' basketball team to do was win a playoff against Winooski, a task the team had fallen short of three times in the last four years.

Despite the weight of that history on their backs, the Commodores defeated Winooski, 59-53, earning a spot in the Division-III semifinal against Randolph in Barre on Thursday evening. "It's amazing," senior co-captain Ryan Wright said after the game. "We've work so hard throughout all four years." Anybody driving up Route 7 would have known to cheer on the team, thanks to a paper sign proclaiming "Go VUHS Hoops" hanging from a sign along the road.

Though the game was in Winooski's gym, there was no shortage of royal blue to contrast the Spartans' green insignia throughout the gym. Half the stands were packed with people ready to roar for the next Commodore points. VUHS kept a small lead for most of the game, but it was never enough to indicate their triumph was a given. Wright felt the team had momentum from the get-go. He and junior Cohen Howell both drained three pointers to start the game.

"I thought that was big momentum for us, get us started," he said. The Commodores ended the first quarter the same way they started it. Wright hit a second three pointer with seconds left to give the team a four-point lead going into the second. That play started with Ryker Mosehauer, Wright's co-captain. He pulled down an offensive rebound after a missed Commodore foul shot, and found Wright waiting at the right-center of the arc. Wright threw up the shot,

ending the quarter 18-14, VUHS. Mosehauer opened the second with a steal under the Commodore basket, just one of the defensive looks in VUHS Coach Eric LeBeau's arsenal. "Our identity is defending," he said. "And we did a really nice job today." Shortly after, junior Jude Bragg put up another Commodore three-pointer to extend the lead to 21-14. Winooski responded with their own three about a minute later, reducing the gap to four points, and

then to three points with a made free throw, reminding the Commodores they were still on their heels. After a Winooski steal and Commodore timeout, junior Quinn LeBeau came out and hit another trey, making it 24-18. VUHS couldn't maintain that gap the rest of the quarter. The Spartans were able to square up the score twice, but the Commodores ended the half with a 28-26 lead, thanks to a two-point field goal from Mosehauer. (See VUHS boys, Page 3B)



MIDDLEBURY SENIOR GOALIE Sophia Will makes one of 61 saves for the Panthers during a triple-overtime NESCAC semifinal against Colby on Saturday in Kenyon Arena. Middlebury lost 2-1, but Will's game made her the program's goalie with the most saves.

Independent photo/Steve James



PANTHER TRINITY WALSH battles a Colby player for the puck in the Kenyon Arena on Saturday during the NESCAC semifinals. Walsh, a first year, was named NESCAC Rookie of the Year.

Independent photo/Steve James

VUHS, MUHS girls' hoop end seasons

By SOPHIA KESHMIRI
BARRE — The Middlebury and Vergennes union high school girls' basketball teams' seasons ended in the state semifinals at the Barre Auditorium last week. Both fell to the No. 1 seeds in their divisions — D-II for MUHS and D-III for VUHS. The No. 5 Tigers were coming off an upset in Fair Haven going into the March 4 game against Lamoille, which ended 43-34. "Our Tigers got off to a good (See Girls' hoop, Page 3B)

ScoreBOARD

HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS	
Girls' Basketball	
3/4 Lamoille vs MUHS, D-2 semi	43-34
3/5 Hazen vs VUHS, D-3 semi	55-39
Boys' Basketball	
3/4 VUHS vs Bellows Falls	76-55
3/4 U-32 vs Mt. Abe	71-51
3/4 MUHS vs Otter Valley	63-54
3/6 Lamoille vs MUHS, D-2 quarter	59-52
3/7 VUHS vs Winooski, D-3 quarter	59-53
Boys' Hockey	
3/4 MUHS vs Brattleboro	8-1
3/7 MUHS vs Stowe, quarter	3-1
3/11 MUHS vs Harwood, semi	Late
Girls' Hockey	
3/6 MUHS vs Missisquoi	5-4
3/11 MUHS vs U-32, semi	Late
COLLEGE SPORTS	
Men's Hockey	
NESCAC at Hamilton	
3/7 Semifinal, Midd v Bowdoin	3-2 (OT)
3/8 Final, Williams vs Midd	4-2
Women's Hockey	
NESCAC at Middlebury	
3/7 Semi, Colby vs Midd	2-1 (3 OT)
Baseball	
3/7 Midd vs Emory	7-4
3/7 Emory vs Midd	16-15 (11 inn.)
3/8 Emory vs Midd	8-4
3/10 Midd vs Norwich	11-3
3/11 Keene State vs Midd	Late
Softball	
3/8 Midd vs Platts	9-1 (6 inn.)
3/8 Midd vs Platts	11-2 (6 inn.)
3/10 Midd vs SLU	1-0
3/10 Midd vs SLU	6-1
Women's Lacrosse	
3/4 Midd vs Skidmore	20-1
3/7 Midd vs Conn College	15-1
3/8 Midd vs SLU	19-7
Men's Lacrosse	
3/4 Midd vs RPI	16-7
3/7 Midd vs Conn College	9-7

Schedule

HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS	
Boys' Basketball	
D-III Tournament in Barre	
3/12 Semi, VUHS vs Randolph	5:30 PM
3/14 Final	7:30 PM
Boys' Hockey	
3/15 D-II Final at UVM	7 PM
Girls' Hockey	
3/15 D-II Final at UVM	5 PM
COLLEGE SPORTS	
Baseball	
3/12 Norwich at Midd	3 PM
3/15 VSU Castleton at Midd	1 PM
3/17 VSU Lyndon at Midd	3 PM
3/18 Midd at Skidmore	3:30 PM
Softball	
3/14 SLU at Midd	1 PM
3/14 SLU at Midd	3 PM
Women's Lacrosse	
3/14 Trinity at Midd	11AM
3/15 Midd at Franklin & Marshall	1 PM
3/21 Midd at Bates College	12 PM
Men's Lacrosse	
3/14 Midd at Trinity	1 PM
3/15 Midd at Babson	1 PM
3/21 Bates at Midd	1 PM

Neither Midd hockey team make the NCAA tournament this year

By SOPHIA KESHMIRI
MIDDLEBURY — After securing a spot in the NESCAC finals with overtime wins in the quarters and semis, the Middlebury College men's hockey team this past weekend dropped the championship game against No. 6 Williams on Sunday in Clinton, N.Y. The final score was 4-2. The day before back home in the Kenyon Arena, the Panther women's team fell, 2-1, in a six-period semifinal to Colby (that's right, three regular periods followed by three overtime periods). Both teams' seasons ended with NESCAC. Neither got a spot in the NCAA tournament. The men's team had their best

shot of doing so in years. After barely sneaking through the league quarterfinals, the No. 4 seeded Middlebury team beat No. 2 Bowdoin, 3-2, in overtime during a semifinal game on Saturday. The Polar Bears opened scoring during the March 7 game. That goal didn't come until just over halfway into the second period. Though Bowdoin got on the board first, sophomore Reece Brednich quickly tied it for the Panthers with a goal within four minutes. He was assisted by senior Michael Fairfax and first year James Schneid. The rookie then got the Panthers a 2-1 lead nine-and-a-half minutes into the third period. He got

the puck from first year John Halverson, who got it from first year Landon Brownlee. Middlebury held off the Polar Bears until there was less than a minute-and-a-half left in the game, when their opponent scored the game-tying goal. Though the Panthers had proven proficient in last-minute goal scoring against Wesleyan in their NESCAC opener a week prior, putting away two heartbreakers against the team in the last two minutes of the game to force overtime and ultimately win, the remainder of the third wasn't enough for them to finish off the Polar Bears. The Panthers needed just 11 minutes of overtime to finish

Bowdoin on Saturday. Brownlee got the puck to junior Revy Mack, who got it to first year Cole Semenik for the winning goal. That play sent the Panthers to the finals for the first time in more than a decade, and with three high-pressure wins as preparation. Before kicking off the post-season with the Wesleyan quarterfinal, the Panthers defeated the NESCAC No. 1 seed Hamilton, also ranked third nationally, to close the regular season and enter the tournament on a high note. On Sunday, in the NESCAC final, the Panthers took on Williams, the sixth seed in the tournament. The Purple Cows upset their way to the championship game, beating No. 3 Tufts in the quarterfinal and

No. 1 Hamilton in their semi. Middlebury and Williams split two regular season meetings, with the most recent one ending in a 2-1 victory for the team from Massachusetts. In the teams' third meeting this season, Williams got on the board first, just six-and-a-half-minutes after the first puck drop. Then a powerplay at the end of the first led to a second Williams goal, and left the Panthers with a two-goal deficit to dig themselves out of. First year Tyler Wishart made headway for Middlebury with a goal about five-and-a-half minutes into the second. He was assisted by first year Jake Stevens and junior Bobby May. (See Midd hockey, Page 2B)

Tiger boys' hockey makes semifinal

MUHS defeats Stowe 3-1, moves on to Harwood
By SOPHIA KESHMIRI
MIDDLEBURY — The No. 5 MUHS boys' hockey team defeated No. 4 Stowe, 3-1, in the Division II quarterfinal on Saturday after losing to the Raiders earlier in the season. That sent the Middlebury squad to Waterbury for a semifinal game against No. 1 Harwood on Wednesday night. The game was played after deadline. "We had one of our best games of the season in the quarterfinals," Coach Jordan Stearns told the Independent. "I was super impressed and proud of how hard we competed for the entire game." That rematch came after the Tigers swept No. 12 Brattleboro, 8-1, on March 4 in their postseason debut to advance to the D-II quarterfinal. "It was great to get a win tonight and (we got) our playoff legs under us," Coach Jordan Stearns said after the Brattleboro game. "I thought we played a really solid game, we stuck to our game plan and it made a difference." Junior co-captain Gabriel Quesnel was especially prolific during both games — he scored

six of the 11 Tiger goals over the pair. Against Brattleboro, he had half (4) of the Tiger goals (8), and assisted a fifth. Three minutes into that game, Quesnel assisted MUHS's first goal of the night, scored by sophomore Jude Grant. Four minutes later, Quesnel got his first off an assist from freshman Watson Malcolm. Then with about two-and-a-half minutes left in the period, Grant returned the earlier favor to Quesnel, assisting his captain's second and the team's third goal. Brattleboro made it 3-1 about 2:40 into the second. Senior Adrien Malhotra was quick to respond with a goal less than a minute later. Then with about 40 seconds left in the period, he assisted Quesnel's hat-trick. His goal ended the period 5-1 in favor of the Tigers. Quesnel came back in the third to put one more away five minutes in. He was again assisted by Malhotra. About a minute-and-a-half later, junior Otto Seigfried scored off an assist from senior co-captain Logan McNulty. (See Boys' hockey, Page 2B)



TIGER SENIOR LIA Calzini celebrates her first of three goals during a playoff game on Friday against Missisquoi. The co-captain scored her 100th career point in the game, which was the game winner.

Photo by Valerie Calzini

MUHS girls' hockey defeats Missisquoi

Faced top seed U-32 in playoff semifinal
By SOPHIA KESHMIRI
SWANTON — The MUHS girls' hockey team won their playoff opener against fourth-seeded Missisquoi, 5-4, on Friday. The No. 5 Tigers progressed to a Wednesday semifinal match for a second shot at No. 1 U-32, to whom they lost,

5-3, early in the season. That game was played after deadline for this edition. Senior Lia Calzini's offensive effort was key to the victory over Missisquoi — the co-captain, who has scored in 13 of the Tigers' 19 games this season, put away a hat-trick and assisted a goal. The Division II Tigers took a three-goal lead within the first 11 minutes of the opening period.

One of Calzini's co-captains, fellow senior Sawyer Witscher, got the rally started with a goal just two minutes into the game in Swanton. She was assisted by junior Kate Kozak and senior co-captain Quinn Doria. About five minutes later, Witscher got the puck to Calzini, who got it to sophomore Becka Seeley for a second Tiger goal. (See Girls' hockey, Page 2B)

Last ski marks the end of a glorious run of winter

By mid-morning on Monday, the temperature was already up into the 50s and on its way toward 60, with a forecast of 60-degree temps (or close to it) for the next three days. And with proverbial April showers forecast along with the April-like temperatures. The result of that forecast was not difficult to predict. Deborah and I had made it up to Rikert Outdoor Center in Ripton on Thursday for a little Nordic skiing to end the day. The conditions were fantastic, but we also saw the hints that — as nice as the conditions were — they would likely come crashing to an end very soon. It was partly the first little hints of bare ground beneath the thicker stands of hemlocks, but even more than that it was the forecast.

One of our favorite reasons for buying a season's pass every year is that we feel freer to head up the mountain for a quick ski even if we only have an hour or so (perhaps over lunch break on a workday). It's hard to justify buying a day-pass when we know we might only ski an hour or so. Having a seasons pass eliminates that disincentive. So when we woke Monday and saw that the forecast for several more

warm days hadn't changed, and that the morning grooming report at Rikert was that the conditions were still holding up, we headed up late morning for our lunch break with a mix of delight and also the sad-but-realistic recognition that it was likely our last ski of the year. (By the time this column appears in print, readers may know whether the prediction held true.)

When we arrived, the sun was bright and the air felt ever warmer than the thermometer indicated. I was glad I'd slathered on sunscreen and remembered my sunglasses. Although Deborah started off with a light jacket, she had it off almost at once. I was jacketless from the start, and in just a single layer for the first time of the year. Surprisingly, the snow wasn't too wet. Though a little soft, we were still getting a nice glide with our classic stride. Bare patches were starting to open up on the trails, however — even on trails with snowmaking. A few of the patches covered well over half the trail, and with the

midday sun hitting the dark earth, they seemed to be growing even as we watched. Still, there was always enough snow get past, we didn't have to jump any water bars, and only once on one of the south-facing hills did I suddenly hit a slow spot and have to fight to keep my upper body from shooting unrecoverably far ahead of my lower body.

Among the many consequences of climate change are the warmer, shorter winters. On the Maine lake where I have done almost all of my ice fishing over the past 40 years, the typical number of days between ice-in and ice-out has shortened by about a month. And though the occasional January thaw has been a thing since my childhood, a week of weather over 50 in late March like we experienced this week is very much a new norm — like the droughts, floods and extreme storms we now regularly see along with wildfires in Canada or the U.S. west that are so bad that we get

air quality warnings in Vermont. Which is to say: If you love winter like I do, you've got to enjoy it while you can. And this winter has provided several weeks of glorious ski conditions at Rikert.

Indeed, a second reason we buy seasons passes is the Ski Vermont Cross Country Reciprocal Pass program (skivermont.com/cross-country-reciprocal), which allows you to use a pass at any of the participating Nordic ski areas for one free day of skiing at any of the other participating centers. (Note that for a very limited time, Rikert is selling season passes for next year at a significant discount (rikertoutdoor.com/season-passes). This is the first year we can remember that we never used it; all of our skiing has been at Rikert, in part thanks to conditions that were consistently good through most of the winter, except one brief period when a new glacier moved across New England and everything was ice for a few days.

And if it was our last day of the season, it was a wonderful last day as well as a wonderful season. I easily could have been skiing in a t-shirt.



MATTHEW DICKERSON
Outdoor Columnist

Girls' hockey

(Continued from Page 1B)

Calzini got on the board shortly after that. Just over 10 minutes in, she got the puck from Doria, and put it in the back of the net.

Missisquoi got on the board with about two minutes remaining in the period, closing it at 3-1.

The Thunderbirds made quick work of a second goal that came about two-and-a-half minutes into the second period. After that, the game was scoreless until Calzini had her second and the Tigers' fourth of the night about nine minutes later, giving her team a two-goal cushion.

MUHS entered the third with a 4-2 lead.

Though Missisquoi shrank the gap to 4-3 about five minutes in,

Calzini got the goal back about three minutes later off an assist from Witscher. That brought the score to 5-3.

The goal wasn't just a sigh of relief for the Tigers, or Calzini's third of the game. It was also her 100th and the game-winner.

The Thunderbirds put one more in the MUHS net with under six minutes left in the game. But junior goalie Heaven Ross kept the 'birds out of the net after that, tallying 24 saves for the game.

The Tigers outshot Missisquoi, 35-28.

The Tigers were due to play their semifinal vs. U-32 on Wednesday, March 11, at 8 p.m. in Northfield at the Kreitzberg Arena.

Boys' hockey

(Continued from Page 1B)

game, Siegfried assisted junior Jase Kozak, to bring the final tally to 8-1.

Stearns was happy with his team's play, but his mind was also on the test ahead.

"Now we have to start preparing for another tough opponent for the quarterfinals," Stearns said after the game.

SATURDAY'S GAME

The Tigers took a two-goal lead over Stowe within the first 10 minutes of the March 7 game. Sophomore Case Pitner opened scoring about seven minutes in. He was assisted by Malhotra.

Two-and-a-half minutes later, Quesnel had his first of the night.

There were no more goals until 26 seconds into the third, when Stowe scored, bringing the score to 2-1 and putting the Tigers on high alert.

No more goals were had until the last minute of the game. With the quarterfinal nearly won, Quesnel still saw fit to put another past the Raider goalie. He scored with 10 seconds left, and was assisted by

Grant.

Shots were essentially even, with Stowe taking 30 and MUHS taking 29.

Tiger goalie T.J. Baron made 29 saves that night, and Stearns noted, "made a couple key saves to keep us in the game, one at the end of the first period stopping a two-on-one."

"It was truly a team effort and that is one of our biggest assets."

The Saturday win brought the Tigers' D-II record to 10-3-1. MUHS fell to Milton and North Country, and tied Missisquoi earlier in the regular season, but beat all three in later rematches. Their only other loss was to Stowe, who the Tigers this past weekend crossed off their list.

The Tigers had never played their Wednesday night semifinal opponent, No. 1 Harwood.

"As we look forward to the semifinals we will be going up against a super-skilled Harwood team," Stearns said ahead of the game.

"We will need to work hard for the whole game and make sure to have another entire team effort to come home with a win."

Eagle, Tiger boys fall in basketball playoffs

ADDISON COUNTY — The Vergennes Union High School boys' basketball team is the lone local hoops squad still in the playoffs after Middlebury and Mount Abe fell in early rounds of the Division-II post-season.

The Commodores passed their most recent test, a road game against No. 4 Winooski. That March 7 game ended in a 59-53 victory. VUHS, seeded fifth in Division III, must get past No. 1 Randolph to get a spot in the finals (see story on Page 1B).

Last week, the Middlebury Union High School team, seeded seventh in the D-II bracket, made it to the quarterfinals after beating No. 10 Otter Valley, but fell in an overtime 59-52 heartbreaker to No. 2 Lamoille in the quarters.

The Eagles dropped their first playoff game to U-32, 71-51.

TIGER BOYS

Before being eliminated by Lamoille, the Tigers beat the Otters, 63-54, in the teams' March 4 playoff game on March 14.

Brandon a second loss this season.

MUHS senior **Cooke Riney** put up 38 points, the most of any player that stepped on the court that night. The co-captain also pulled down 20 rebounds. He ends his MUHS basketball career with 613 rebounds, the school record.

In addition to contributing 5 points and 3 rebounds, Coach Chris Altomese said junior co-captain **Ryan Brouillard** "took care of the ball well."

- Also for the Tigers that night:
 - Junior **Colin Chicoine** — 9 points, 7 rebounds, four assists.
 - Junior **Taylor Altomese** — 7 points, 6 rebounds, 6 assists.
 - Senior **Jonathan Kafumbe** — 3 points, 4 rebounds, 3 assists.

Two days and one practice later, MUHS headed to Lamoille for the teams' first meeting of the season.

"It was a low-scoring, defensive game," Altomese said of the March 6 quarterfinal.

Both the first and second quarters (See Playoffs, Page 3B)



PANTHER FIRST YEAR Caroline Thomas watches as the puck she just shot hits the Colby post. Middlebury and Colby played a six-period NESCAC semifinal last Saturday in the Kenyon Arena.

Independent photo/Steve James

Midd hockey

(Continued from Page 1B)

About six minutes later it was back to square one — Williams scored again, sending Middlebury into the third still in need of two goals.

About halfway through the final 20 minutes, junior Jackson Morehouse got the Panthers within one of Williams off an assist from Brednich, who got the puck from sophomore Dimitri Tzafaris.

Given the Panthers' recent high-pressure, last-minute wins, a one goal deficit with just over eight minutes to go almost wasn't worth

too much of a sweat.

But a fourth and final Williams goal with less than three minutes left made a Panther comeback that much more unlikely.

The game ended 4-2, in favor of Williams, their first NESCAC title.

A win would have been Middlebury's first NESCAC title since 2010. Their runner-up finish still marks the team's best NESCAC performance since 2012, when they fell in the final to Amherst.

Both Williams and Hamilton made the NCAA tournament.

The 2025-2026 season was the Panthers' best in many years. They ended 15-9-3. The 2024-2025 season was the first time since 2013 the team finished with a winning record, and just barely hit that mark with a 13-12-1 in 2025.

PANTHER WOMEN

On the women's side, ending the season with no hardware felt more unusual for the dynastic program.

The last NCAA tournament they missed was in 2019.

The top-seeded Panthers' NESCAC bid ended in an overtime semifinals loss to No. 4 Colby.



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AFTER RECEIVING A pass, VUHS senior Theo Elzinga turns toward the basket in Saturday's game in Winooski. He scored 13 points in the Commodore victory.

Independent photo/Sophia Keshmiri

VUHS boys

(Continued from Page 1B)

The Commodores managed to pull away by seven points again about two minutes into the third.

Mosehauer opened with two points, bringing the score to 30-26. Winooski responded with their own 2-point field goal.

Commodore junior Juan De La Cruz responded with a bucket, followed by two missed free throws by the Spartans.

Wright followed up with a three-pointer, bringing the score to 35-28 with about 6:18 left in the quarter.

The Spartans got two back; Wright hit a jump shot, followed by a Winooski free throw made it 37-31.

With about 4:15 left, Mosehauer made a layup off a pass while running toward the basket on the break, and the Vergennes lead was eight.

During the next two minutes, the Spartans closed the gap to within a point of the Commodores, 38-39.

But a 10-3 Commodore run in the last two-and-a-half minutes gave them a 49-41 edge going into the fourth period: senior Theo Elzinga hit two foul shots, and Mosehauer

found a lane and drove for a layup. Mosehauer made that shot despite being fouled but missed his free throw.

A little later, he took a charge. In the last minute and a half, Elzinga hit two buckets while posted, bringing the score to 47-38.

Winooski scored, but on a subsequent trup down the court fouled Bragg, who made both free throws.

The Spartans made one more free throw before the end of the quarter, ending it 49-41, Commodores.

The score was 50-45, Commodores, with about 4:40 left. Mosehauer drove the lane for a layup, then Wright did the same with 3:46 left.

Wright then hit one of two three throws, securing a 10-point lead, 55-45.

The closest Winooski got after that was 56-51, with about two minutes left.

The game ended 59-51 in favor of the Commodores.

By the last few seconds, Coach Eric LeBeau knew they could breathe. He broke the seriousness of the last two hours briefly to

celebrate with a player off the court, before wrapping up the game.

"It was a complete team effort," LeBeau said. "A lot of work from the assistant coaches, bench was loud."

"I feel like I demand a lot. So sometimes when the reward isn't there, maybe there's some frustration. So it's nice to see them get rewarded."

Wright put up the most points of any Commodore (16), followed by Mosehauer (15), and Elzinga (13).

Before Saturday's match, the Commodores won their first playoff game 76-75, against No. 12 Bellows Falls on March 4.

Wright and Howell were the high scorers for the night, with 17 points apiece. Wright also had game-high 11 rebounds. Mosehauer scored 16 and Elzinga 10.

In Thursday's semifinal, the Commodores face No. 1 seed Randolph. Tip-off is at 5:30 p.m. in the Barre Auditorium.

This is the Commodores' first time making the semis since 2022. That year, VUHS dropped the game to Winooski, though that's no worry this time around.

Girls' hoop

(Continued from Page 1B)

defense start," MUHS Coach Eric Carter said. "We had to adjust offensively and defensively late in the 1st ... after falling behind 9 to 0."

Though the Tigers got five of those points back by the end of the first quarter, they weren't able to convert any two point shots until the final eight minutes of the game. Before then, all 27 of their points were from free throws and three pointers.

Even with trouble getting baskets inside the arc, MUHS kept up with the Lancers, taking opportunities where they came.

In the first quarter, junior co-captain Isabel Quinn and freshman Ava Wood went a combined 5 for 6 from the line, and as a team the Tigers were 10 for 13 in the game.

The Tigers kept up with the Lancers in the second quarter, scoring 9 points, made up of three three-pointers, one each from sophomore co-captain Louisa Orten, sophomore Lillian Paquette and freshman Emma Quinn. The Lancers had 13 points that quarter.

After halftime, Orten, who was the game's high scorer with 16, had another three and went 4-4 on foul shots.

Her points plus three's from Isabel Quinn and sophomore Sophie Simpson brought the score to 27-30 by the end of the third period.

"The game was back and forth for three and half quarters," Carter said.

In the fourth, Orten, who's double-digit scoring was no anomaly this season, finally broke scoring beyond the three-point line for the Tigers, putting up 6 points off 2-point field goals.

"We jumped up by three points (in the middle of the fourth)," Carter said. "But in the end, we had trouble converting on some close-range

layouts and chippies. Meanwhile Lamoille made some deep three's and beat us on our weak side."

Carter is encouraged that the Tigers have made the Final Four in the D-II tournament for two consecutive years. Several of the young Tiger players who led the team back to Barre this season will return next year.

COMMODORES FALL

The day after that D-II semifinal, the VUHS team headed to Barre with hopes of a ticket back on Saturday. Though Hazen would get that seat, beating the Commodores 55-39.

VUHS only trailed by a point, 9-8, at the end of the first quarter. And the Commodores had a 19-16 lead going into half.

"We had a good defensive first half," Coach Bill Waller said.

"In the second half Hazen imposed their will on the glass and forced us into some turnovers that lead to easy fast break points for them," the Mountain Division coach of the Year added.

"Even though we did not play our best in the second half, I'm very proud of the girls' efforts all season long, finishing with a 17-5 record on the season."

Ayla Kittredge was the Commodores' high scorer, putting up 12 points. The freshman, who was dubbed the Mountain Division Rookie of the Year, also grabbed 7 rebounds.

Senior co-captain Ashtin Stearns, who was named the Mountain Division Player of the Year, scored 7 points. Senior Summer Gosliga, the team's other captain, was given the Pete Hart Award, which names a team player with a strong work ethic and good sportsmanship.

Her classmate Ava Francis pulled down 10 rebounds during the game, scored four points and assisted teammates six times, and junior Georgia Krause scored 6

points.

Waller is optimistic despite graduating six seniors.

"We return Georgia, (sophomore Sidi Miguel) and Ayla and we had a very successful JV team that should have many of them jumping into varsity roles next season."

Lamoille and Hazen were back in Barre on Saturday for the D-II and D-III championships.

Lamoille lost 37-20 to Hartford in the final. Hazen topped Windsor 55-53 in overtime to be named the D-III victor.



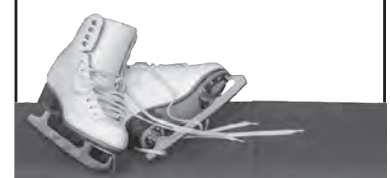
Upcoming Events

Thursday, March 12:

9:00 - 11:00 AM Public Skating

3:00 - 4:45 PM Stick & Puck

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Playoffs

(Continued from Page 2B)

ended with buzzer-beating, lead-getting three pointers. Brouillard dropped one at the end of the first, to give the Tigers a 10-9 edge. A Lancer hit one at the end of the second, to lift them 24-19 over MUHS going into the half.

Though that wasn't hanging over the Tigers for long. In the third, they put up 17 points in the same amount of time Lamoille managed just 4.

Taylor Altemose contributed to that run with three three-pointers. "Midd led by 8 when Lamoille called timeout. Lamoille cut into Midd's lead after the timeout," Coach Altemose recounted.

The Tigers went into the fourth with a 40-37 lead.

"The scoring slowed for both teams in the 4th and the lead changed multiple times," Altemose noted.

Taylor Altemose, who had 18 points, the most of any Tiger, hit a critical game-tying free throw with just under a minute and a half left.

"Midd played great defense and held Lamoille to one tough shot near the end of regulation and the game went to overtime tied at 45," the coach said.

The Lancers snuck past MUHS in the extra time with a layup, three-pointer and free throws, according to Altemose.

In addition to hitting double digits in scoring, Taylor Altemose had 10 rebounds.

Also for the Tigers:

- Riney — 16 points, 13 rebounds, 2 blocks.

- Chicoine — 10 points, 2 rebounds, 2 assists.

- Brouillard — 5 points, 3 rebounds, 3 assists.

MUHS ended the season 12-10.

MOUNT ABE

The No. 8 Eagles ended the season 10-11 after falling 71-51 to No. 9 U-32 in their first playoff game on March 4.

The Eagles played their third game of the season to U-32 back in December, and lost 83-61.

During the most recent post-season meeting, senior co-captain Charlie Germon was the highest point-earner for Mt. Abe, with 15.

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Granville man sentenced after guilty plea

GRANVILLE — After he pleaded guilty to two crimes of violence, a Granville man on Monday was told by a judge that he will be spending several years on probation.

Mark Balch Jr., 35, pleaded to one misdemeanor count of reckless endangerment and one misdemeanor count of simple assault in Vermont Superior Court, Addison Criminal Division, the Attorney General's Office reported.

Judge Alison Arms sentenced

Balch to one to two years in prison, all suspended with four years of probation. The court's probation conditions mandate that Balch complete mental health and anger management treatment and prohibit him from possessing or using firearms and deadly weapons, from contacting the victim, and from engaging in violent or threatening behavior.

Judge Arms also ordered Mr. Balch to pay restitution for the victim's losses.

This past June, Vermont State Police cited Balch for aggravated assault with a deadly weapon, reckless endangerment and unlawful mischief after investigating an April 8 incident on Route 100 in Granville. Police alleged that Balch discharged his firearms recklessly on multiple occasions, with one shot striking the front fender of a moving vehicle.

If Balch violates the terms of his probation, he faces up to two years in prison.

Beta Technologies selected for federal pilot program

BY THEO WELLS-SPACKMAN, VTDigger

BURLINGTON — Beta Technologies announced Monday that the company had been selected for a federal pilot program that will allow the South Burlington-based electric airplane maker and its partners to begin medical flights to and from Vermont this year.

In a call with investors Monday morning, Kyle Clark, the company's founder and CEO,

called the initiative a "huge opportunity" that was effectively "advancing our entire business model by more than a year."

Though the company reported a net loss of nearly \$750 million last year in its financial update on Monday, Beta's stock jumped by over 10% later in the day for its highest close in over a month.

The pilot program was created by the Trump administration last year and is designed to fast-track selected electric aircraft through the rigorous Federal Aviation Administration approval process.

Beta will work with Metro Aviation and the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey to operate "medical and cargo logistics" flights between Vermont and New York, Monday's statement said. New York is the "lead state" on the project.

Metro Aviation, a medical helicopter transportation

company, already flies medical equipment and cargo back and forth across Lake Champlain.

Beta was approved for seven of the eight projects within the program that the company applied for, leadership said in the statement. Projects will take place in at least 10 states.

"Congratulations to the great American innovators behind each of these exciting pilot programs," U.S. Secretary of Transportation Sean Duffy said in a statement Monday.

Selection for the program will also be a boon to Beta's electric aircraft charging network, which has expanded across much of the eastern United States, according to company leadership.

"This advances our strategy to maintain ownership of the network that controls the flow of energy into electric aviation," Clark said Monday.

Police say intoxicated man drove away from crash

MIDDLEBURY — Middlebury police cited Charles Birchard, 26, of Middlebury for driving under the influence and leaving the scene of an accident, following a vehicle crash on North Pleasant Street on March 3. Police said Birchard left the scene but was found by officers a short time later.

In other action last week, Middlebury police:

- Responded to a domestic dispute at a Monarch Court home on March 2.

- Helped Middlebury Regional EMS with a woman found unconscious at Hannaford Supermarket on March 2.

- Responded to the report of an unresponsive woman at a Jackson Lane address on March 3. Police said the woman — 36-year-old Tara Mitchell — was pronounced deceased at the scene. Police said an investigation is underway to determine the cause and manner of Mitchell's death.

- Responded, with Middlebury Regional EMS, to a report of a car-versus-pedestrian accident on North Pleasant Street at around 7 p.m. on March 4. Police said the pedestrian was injured.

- Investigated an untimely death at a Lower Plains Road home on March 4. Police said the deceased — 73-year-old Susan Maning — had passed from natural causes.

- Enforced Middlebury's

overnight winter parking ban downtown on March 4.

- Responded, with Middlebury Regional EMS, to a report of a car-cyclist collision on Court Street at around 6:39 p.m. on March 5. Police said the cyclist was injured.

- Broke up a domestic dispute at a Route 7 North residence on March 5. Police said no physical violence had occurred and they separated the parties for the evening.

- Took into custody, for a mental health evaluation at Porter Hospital, a resident of the Counseling Service of Addison County's Hill House on Route 7 on March 5.

- Investigated a shoplifting complaint at Kinney Drugs on March 5.

- Responded to a "juvenile issue" at Middlebury Union High School on March 5.

- Responded to a report on March 6 of a person who had allegedly been refused food at a Court Street restaurant because the person was unable to pay for it. Police said the customer had left upon their arrival.

- Were called to the Court Street area on March 6 to respond to an unspecified "juvenile problem."

- Contacted the local dog warden to respond to a complaint in the Lower Plains Road area on March 6.

- Asked the local dog warden to take into custody an aggressive

Middlebury Police Log

dog found in the Court Street area on March 6.

- Cited Timothy E. Edwards Jr., 38, of Ripton for domestic assault following an investigation in the Court Street area on March 6. Police said Edwards was lodged at the Marble Valley Correctional Facility.

- Responded to a report of an unresponsive woman at McDonald's Restaurant on March 6. Police said the woman had recovered and left upon their arrival.

- Cited Morgan B. Brunell, 38, of Lincoln for driving with a criminally suspended license on Court Street on March 6.

- Responded to a two-vehicle accident, with no injuries, at the intersection of Court Street Extension and Middle Road on March 6.

- Responded to a report on March 8 of a man and woman allegedly walking near the intersection of Pulp Mill Bridge Road and Weybridge Street holding a stop sign.

- Responded to a report of a drunken man on Route 7 North during the afternoon of March 8.

Speeding stop turns into DUI citation

ADDISON COUNTY — An Addison County Sheriff's Department deputy on March 4 pulled over a vehicle driven by Patrick Bushey, 55, of Leicester on Route 22A in Shoreham for speeding. The officer ended up citing Bushey for driving under the influence.

Between Feb. 22 and March 7, the sheriff's department completed patrols in multiple towns, stopped 112 vehicles for various motor vehicle violations, attempted to serve 32 pieces of civil process around the county and provided a car seat inspection for a family with a new seat.

In other recent activity, Sheriff Michael Elmore and his deputies:

- On Feb. 23 transported someone in Middlebury for the Department for Children and Families.

- On Feb. 23 followed up on a complaint from the trash transfer station in Middlebury about someone who forgot to pay before driving off. An officer found the person and they returned and paid what was owed.

- On Feb. 23 transported a person to jail for Middlebury police.

- On Feb. 26 Sheriff Elmore met with the Addison Northwest School District superintendent to discuss truancy issues.

- On Feb. 26 followed up on a report of trash being dumped on Upper Notch Road in Bristol.

- On Feb. 26 helped transport

a person experiencing a mental health crisis from Orwell to the hospital.

- On Feb. 26 dealt with a noise complaint at an apartment on Route 74 in Shoreham.

- On Feb. 26 unlocked a car for a person in Middlebury who had locked their keys in the car.

- On Feb. 26 checked the welfare of a person in Ferrisburgh and found them to be alive and well.

- On Feb. 26 found a loose dog on Maple Street in Waltham and reunited them with their owner.

- On Feb. 27 and again on March 6 took a person interested in joining law enforcement on a ride along with an officer.

- On Feb. 27 found a person had lost some pallets in the middle of Route 22A in Addison. Deputies assisted them with cleaning up and escorted them safely to their destination down the road.

- On Feb. 28 found a car off the road on Route 30 in Middlebury. The deputy called a tow truck and they were pulled out.

- On Feb. 27 checked on a vehicle parked in the fishing access on Hawkins Road in Ferrisburgh and told occupants that there is no overnight parking and told to move along.

- On March 2 a deputy began a week in Royalton training how to weigh overweight vehicles.

- On March 2 transported a person to jail who had been arrested by Middlebury police.

- On March 2 completed two

Sheriff's Log

background investigations.

- On March 2 provided security for a special event in Middlebury.

- On March 3 provided security at the Leicester town office for elections.

- On March 4 assisted a rescue squad with a call on Bristol Road in Monkton.

- On March 5 assisted a landlord with an eviction on South Bingham Street in Cornwall.

- On March 5 provided a civil standby for a court ordered moveout in Cornwall.

- On March 5 assisted Middlebury police with a call.

- On March 5 followed up on a report of a suspicious vehicle parked on Knox Hill in Orwell but could not locate the car.

- On March 6 assisted state police with a vehicle crash at the junction of Route 7 and Route 17 in New Haven.

- On March 6 assisted Middlebury police with a fight in progress on Court Street.

- On March 6 transported a person to jail who was arrested by Middlebury police.

- On March 7 located a vehicle that appeared to be abandoned at the Richville Dam in Shoreham. A deputy found the owner and told them to remove it.

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community calendar

mar 12 THURSDAY
"Mean Girls the Musical" in Vergennes. Thursday, March 12, 7 p.m., Vergennes Union High School. Whether you're a "Mathlete" or a "Plastic," you won't want to miss this high-energy show that offers humor, fast-paced music, and mature themes. The Vergennes Union Middle/High School musical production is a spectacle to behold, and it always pleases. Purchase tickets — \$15 for adults / \$12 for students & seniors — at the door or online at www.CUR8.com.

Using Social Media in Salisbury. Thursday, March 12, 6 p.m., Salisbury Free Public Library (in meeting house), 853 Maple St. Want to use Instagram and Facebook to keep up with your friends without feeling like it's taking over your life? Join web and design guru Sam Smith to learn how to create effective posts and use your settings to see only what you want to see.

mar 13 FRIDAY
The Art of the Hanson Family in Bristol. Friday, March 13, 10:15 a.m.-11:30 a.m. Howden Hall, 19 West St. Rescheduled from Feb. 20, join the Bristol Elder Eagles in extending a warm welcome to local residents Kevin and Patty Hanson, who will share their passion for art that spans across generations. Sponsored by Bristol Rec Department.

Monkton Mount Abe Little League Registration Day in Monkton. Friday, March 13, 5-7 p.m., Monkton Central School Gym. Meet the coaches and ask any questions. For kids in kindergarten through 6th grade. For more info contact Rick Kinsman at Rick.kinsman@gmail.com.

All you can eat Friday fish fry in Bristol. Friday, March 13, 5-7 p.m. St. Ambrose Parish Hall at the corner of School & West streets. Meal includes fried or baked haddock, french fries, coleslaw, fresh baked dinner roll, beverage & dessert. Adults-\$17, children 9 & under \$9, immediate family of five-\$50.

Pinewood Derby in Vergennes. Friday, March 13, 6 p.m., St. Peter's Parish Hall, South Maple St. Come cheer on 30 kids from Vergennes Cub Scout Pack 539 and Burlington Pack 119 as they race their homemade wooden cars in an exciting competition.

"Mean Girls the Musical" in Vergennes. Friday, March 13, 7 p.m., Vergennes Union High School. Whether you're a "Mathlete" or a "Plastic," you won't want to miss this high-energy show that offers humor, fast-paced music, and mature themes. Purchase tickets — \$15 for adults / \$12 for students & seniors — at the door or online at www.CUR8.com.

mar 14 SATURDAY
Legislative breakfast in Weybridge. Saturday, March 14, 8:30-9:45 a.m., Weybridge Congregational Church, 2790 Weybridge Rd. Community legislative breakfast sponsored by Bridport Grange and Addison County Farm Bureau, moderated by Charlie Roy. All are welcome to attend and ask questions of local legislators and senators. Breakfast available by donation 30 minutes before the discussion. RSVP to Bill at 802-881-8836 or wjcottjr@comcast.net.

American Red Cross blood drive in Middlebury. Saturday, March 14, 9:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m., Porter Hospital, 115 Porter Drive. Community blood drive hosted by the American Red Cross. Appointments at RedCrossBlood.org or 1-800-RED CROSS.

"Mean Girls the Musical" in Vergennes. Saturday, March 14, 3 p.m., Vergennes Union High School. Whether you're a "Mathlete" or a "Plastic," you won't want to miss this high-energy show that offers humor, fast-paced music, and mature themes. Purchase tickets — \$15 for adults / \$12 for students & seniors — at the door or online at www.CUR8.com.

Takeout corned beef and cabbage supper in Vergennes. Saturday, March 14, 5-6 p.m., Vergennes United Methodist Church, Main Street across from the opera house. The menu is corned beef, cabbage, potatoes, carrots, onions, roll and dessert. \$12. Order by Thursday, March 12. Call 802-877-3150. Pick up at the side door of the church on East Street.

Pi Day in Shoreham. Saturday, March 14, 5-7 p.m., Shoreham Congregational Church, 28 School St. Celebrate Pi Day and the arrival of spring. Sample various types of pie at \$4 a slice, enjoy complimentary tea, coffee, cocoa and water, and enter the raffle to win a pie a month for six months. The winner will receive one pie that evening and one pie per month for the next five months, with dates and varieties arranged with the baker. Raffle tickets are \$5 each or three for \$10. The winner will be drawn that evening, you don't need to be present to win.

"Peace by Chocolate" film screening and chocolate tasting in Middlebury. Saturday, March 14, 6:30 p.m. Town Hall Theater, 72-76 Merchants Row. The Vermont Chocolate Festival opens with a special chocolate tasting and a screening of the documentary film "Peace by Chocolate," which follows a Syrian family as they work to rebuild their chocolate business in Nova Scotia. Tickets at townhalltheater.org. Free to attend with registration — donations are welcome and all proceeds will go to Migrant Justice.

King Pede card party in Ferrisburgh. Saturday, March 14, 6:30 p.m., Ferrisburgh Town Hall and Community Center, 3279 Route 7. The Ferrisburgh Grange hosts a King Pede card party and sandwich supper. King Pede is a longstanding Ferrisburgh tradition that requires tactics and strategic thinking.

Live music by Hot Neon Magic in Middlebury. Saturday, March 14, 7-10 p.m., American Legion Post 14, 49 Wilson Rd. Dust off your leg warmers, tease up that hair and come dance the night away to 80s pop hits from the MTV era. Open to the public. Admission by donation.

mar 15 SUNDAY
Cub Scout breakfast and silent auction in Vergennes. Sunday, March 15, 8-11 a.m., St. Peter's Parish Hall, South Maple St. Enjoy a delicious meal, some of it made from donated local foods, and



Pie on Pi
SHOREHAM CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH will mark Pi Day (the mathematical constant called "Pi" is rounded to 3.14) this Saturday, March 14, with, what else — Pie! Sample various types of pie at \$4 a slice and enter the raffle to win a pie a month for six months. Shown on Pi Day a couple years ago are Christy Lombardo, left, with pumpkin pie and Judy Blake with raspberry.

Independent file photo/Steve James

bid in the auction. Fundraiser for Pack 539
Vermont Chocolate Festival in Middlebury. Sunday, March 15, 11 a.m.-5 p.m., Town Hall Theater, 72-76 Merchants Row. The First annual Vermont Chocolate Festival celebrates fine and craft chocolate with tastings, live demos, s'mores, games, raffles and more. Presented by Adagio Chocolates. \$30 general admission; \$50 generous admission; \$100 VIP; \$20 students; free for children 12 and under. Admission includes access to all demos and presentations and one chocolate tasting. Family pass discount and tasting add-ons available. Tickets at townhalltheater.org.

My Dentist's Son in Ferrisburgh. Sunday, March 15, 3-4:30 p.m., Ferrisburgh Town Hall 3279 Route 7. This is a space to share tales of magic and miracle and to find meaning in stories that don't seem to fit. All are welcome to share or simply listen. For more information and to RSVP, visit www.mydentistsson.com.

Choral Evensong in Middlebury. Sunday, March 15, 4 p.m., St. Stephen's Episcopal Church on the Green. The Choir of St. Stephen's will sing music of the Renaissance at Choral Evensong, including Adrian Batten's Fourth Evening Service and G.P. da Palestrina's famous motet, Sicut Cervus. 2025-26 marks the 500th anniversary of the birth of Palestrina, whose use of dissonance and polyphony is still studied by aspiring professional musicians.

mar 16 MONDAY
American Red Cross blood drive in Middlebury. Monday, March 16, 10 a.m. - 3 p.m., Vermont Cider Company, 1321 Exchange St. Community blood drive hosted by the American Red Cross. Appointments at RedCrossBlood.org or 1-800-RED CROSS.

Vermont's Draft Conservation Plan public listening session in Middlebury. Monday, March 16, 4 to 5:30 p.m., Middlebury Town Offices. Co-led by MALT and ACRPC, this first session will provide an overview of the draft plan, including its key objectives and the scientific and planning tools behind it.

Blarney Pilgrims: Irish Music in Monkton. Monday, March 16, 7 p.m., Monkton Town Hall, 92 Monkton Ridge Road. Monkton Museum and Historical Society is hosting Addison County's Blarney Pilgrims. Formed in 2023 as a way to congregate over a pint and practice jigs and reels, the band has evolved into its current form and is ready for a wider audience. Musicians from Middlebury and Bristol will share lively traditional Irish tunes in their delightfully informal, yet authentic fashion. Donations for the band warmly encouraged.

mar 17 TUESDAY
Rokeby Museum virtual book group. Tuesday, March 17, 6-7 p.m., online. Discussion of "The Zorg: A Tale of Greed and Murder that Inspired the Abolition of Slavery" by Siddharth Kara, examining the doomed 1780 voyage of the ship Zorg and its role in the early fight against slavery. Free. More info at rokebymuseum.org.

Pops 2026: Jazz Through the Ages in Bristol. Tuesday, March 17, 6 p.m., Mount Abraham Union High School, 220 Airport Drive. Join the Mount Abraham musicians for their annual Pops Concert featuring jazz music from across the decades. Special guests Swingin' Seven will perform alongside student musicians. Doors open at 6 p.m., the middle school concert begins at 6:30 p.m., and the high school concert begins at 7:30 p.m. Admission by donation at the door.

St. Patrick's Day New Moon Circle in New Haven. Tuesday, March 17, 6:30 p.m., New Haven Congregational Church, 91 Town Hill Road. Celebrate St. Patrick's Day with a New Moon Circle exploring the story of St. Patrick. Bring a journal and pen, and a snack to share if desired. Free. More info at pastornewhavenchurchvt@gmail.com, 802-282-6944.

Beyond Buzz Words: Higher Ed Climate Action Lessons with Alex Barron at Middlebury College. Tuesday, March 17, 7 p.m., Franklin Environmental Center at Hillcrest, Room 103. Alex Barron, associate professor of Environmental Science and Policy from Smith College, will talk about his research focused on the design of climate policies to reduce greenhouse gas pollution and avoid catastrophic climate change. His higher education research has covered carbon neutrality and decarbonization, carbon offsets and contributions, internal carbon pricing, and reform of tenure to promote engaged scholarship. Free and open to the public.

mar 18 WEDNESDAY
American Red Cross blood drive near Vergennes. Wednesday, March 18, 12 noon-4:30 p.m., Cross Life Church, 1759 Route 7. Community blood drive hosted by the American Red Cross. Appointments at RedCrossBlood.org or 1-800-RED CROSS.

Native plant gardening in Brandon. Wednesday, March 18, 6 p.m., Brandon Free Public Library. This free public event will explore the joys of gardening with native plants. Guests will leave feeling empowered with knowledge and resources to start their native plant gardening journey in 2026. Talk will be given by Devon Snyder from Sedge & Soil.

mar 19 THURSDAY
Ilsley Classic Film Club watches "The Adventures of Robin Hood" in Middlebury. Thursday, March 19, 1 p.m., Marquis Theater, Main St. The club this spring watches four films with the theme "The 1930s in Color!" Join fellow community film lovers to see the films at the theater, followed by a short discussion of the film. Popcorn is on us.

mar 20 FRIDAY
Spring Equinox Gathering at SpIn in Ripton. Friday, March 20, 6:30-8:30 p.m., Spirit In Nature Paths, Goshen Road. Follow the lantern-lit path to the Sacred Circle, joining friends and neighbors in the warmth of community around a fire. Pour yourself a cup of tea. Share poetry, words of encouragement, stories, song. Through a reading of the picture book "Safe Crossing" participants will learn how they can support our salamander and frog neighbors. Young or old, of any faith or none at all, all are welcome! Consider bringing a flashlight, and perhaps a poem, a song, or a thought to share.

mar 21 SATURDAY
Green Mountain Club Hike on Bristol Trail Network. Saturday, March 21, 9 a.m. This is a great mud season hike because the gravel soils in Bristol drain well so the trail is always open. Plan for 2.5-3 hours for the 3.4-mile section around Bristol's historic areas. Elevation gain under 100 feet. Excellent options for snacks/lunch locally. Please register by contacting Porter Knight at knight@gmavt.net or 802-343-3920. More info at gmcbreadloaf.org.

Legislative breakfast in Shoreham. Saturday, March 21, 8:30-9:45 a.m., Shoreham Congregational Church, 28 School St. Community legislative breakfast sponsored by Bridport Grange and Addison County Farm Bureau, moderated by Cheryl Connors. All are welcome to attend and ask questions of local legislators and senators. Breakfast available by donation 30 minutes before the discussion. RSVP to Bill at 802-881-8836 or wjcottjr@comcast.net.

Fiber Crafts Collective in East Middlebury. Saturday, March 21, 10 a.m., Sarah Partridge Library, 431 East Main St. A welcoming fiber crafts gathering focused on creativity, shared learning and community connection. Participants work on knitting, crochet, weaving, spinning, sewing, embroidery, felting, macrame and more. All skill levels welcome. Free. More info at artfulsouventures@gmail.com.

Biodiversity Builders: Understanding Your Site in Vergennes. Saturday, March 21, 10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m., Bixby Library, 258 Main St. First in a series of hands-on workshops demonstrating how to bring native plants into outdoor spaces. Native plants boost biodiversity, support pollinators and birds, and reduce maintenance, fertilizer use, and runoff. Learn why native plants matter, how to assess and prepare your site, choose the right plants, convert your lawn step-by-step, and maintain long-term success. Presented by Lisa Sausville and Ashley Robinson. For more information email to arobinsonld@gmail.com. Registration link: tinyurl.com/BuillyBioAtBixby.

Easter Baskets for Tots in Vergennes. Saturday, March 21, 11 a.m.-2 p.m., Bixby Library, 258 Main St. The public is invited to the 2nd Annual Easter Baskets for Tots event. Hop on over to the Bixby Library to help assemble Easter baskets for under-resourced kids, which will be distributed through CVOEO, a local non-profit. All ages are welcome!

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ADDISON COUNTY INDEPENDENT

Monkton

Have a news tip?
Contact Liz Pecor at
rascal0406@gmavt.net

NEWS

MONKTON — Join hosts Monkton Museum and Historical Society for toe-tapping fun next Monday, March 16, at 7 p.m. with Blarney Pilgrims, back for a repeat performance after last year's success, with little ones dancing in the aisles! We aren't guaranteed the same stunning sunset, but the music will be great and light refreshments will be available.

It's free, but donations for the band are warmly encouraged!

Addison County's Blarney Pilgrims formed in 2023 initially as a way to congregate over a pint and practice jigs and reels, but it has evolved into their current form and is ready for a wider audience. The band's members, a group of locals from Middlebury and Bristol, are eager to share lively traditional Irish tunes in their delightfully informal, yet authentic fashion.

This event will be at the Monkton Town Hall, 92 Ridge Road. Monkton Museum and Historical Society thanks their business sponsors on every page of their website: monktonhistory.org. Call Lauren with any questions: 802-233-1397

New Vermont Folklife Fellows document Monkton's rich agricultural life.

Twenty-five years ago Last Resort Farm's co-owner, Eugenie Doyle, (also an author) set out to honor her farm's previous owner, William C. Shattuck, by sponsoring a writing contest in his name. Every year since then Monkton Central School third- to 6th-graders are invited to submit stories, essays and poems exploring the topic "Farming in Monkton." Over the years, beautiful work has been awarded cash and other prizes, including an exhibition of student writing paired with professional artwork at Frog Hollow Gallery in Middlebury.

Recently, however, the contest sponsor and judges have noticed that entries display less detailed knowledge of local agriculture, perhaps because fewer children live on farms. In Monkton, as nationwide, many farms have gone out of business in recent years. In addition, because of budget and

time constraints there are fewer field trips to local farms. But the school community remains committed to the importance of agricultural literacy, has nurtured a school garden, and has remained supportive of the Farming in Monkton writing contest.

To provide resources for the students, their teachers, and community members Doyle has teamed up with Lauren Parren, former Mount Abraham Unified School District teacher and Monkton Historical Society Board member, to secure help in the form of a Fellowship from the Vermont Folklife Center. The recently awarded fellowship will provide training and materials so that Doyle and Parren can interview interested Monkton farmers and make recordings available to the public at the MHS Museum in the town library. The fellowship also provides stipends to the farmers willing to be interviewed.

Any members of the Monkton farm community willing to be interviewed for the sake of agricultural education and town history can contact Eugenie (eugenie.lastresortfarm@gmail.com) or Lauren (laurenparren@gmail.com).

A new taekwondo program may soon be coming to Monkton! Local instructor Samantha Champagne is exploring interest in launching Champagne's Black Belt Academy, offering martial arts classes focused on building confidence, respect, focus, and physical fitness for children, families, and adults in the community.

Classes are expected to begin in Fall 2026. While a final training location has not yet been secured, the goal is to offer classes locally within Monkton.

Programs being considered include:

- Preschool "Little Dragon" classes (ages 3-5)
- School-age youth Taekwondo
- Family and adult classes
- Self-defense workshops for children and women

Community members who are curious about Taekwondo are

Vt. Community Foundation grants \$5K to nonprofits

VERMONT — Nonprofit organizations across Vermont can now apply for funding through the Vermont Community Foundation's Nonprofit Development and Support competitive grant program.

This grant program supports projects that strengthen organizational effectiveness and long-term sustainability, helping nonprofits better serve their communities. Funding is available in two key areas:

1. Nonprofit Capacity Building
2. These grants support

consultant-led planning and development work that increases an organization's capacity to make confident decisions about the future, build long-term stability, and effectively serve their community. Examples include: Strategic planning

- Financial sustainability planning
- Merger or partnership planning
- Diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives
- Board and leadership development

Visit vermontcf.org/nonprofit-capacity-building to learn more and apply.

2. Special and Urgent Needs (SUN) SUN grants assist nonprofits facing unexpected, time-sensitive challenges or opportunities that affect their ability to fulfill their mission. Funding may be used to address unbudgeted emergencies or respond to unforeseen opportunities that strengthen organizational impact. Examples include:

- Emergency repairs to building structures or mechanical systems

• Urgent services or resource needed due to unforeseen circumstances

• Replacement of essential equipment or technology

• Support for staff and volunteer mental health and wellbeing in times of extraordinary need

• Unexpected or timely opportunities

Visit vermontcf.org/sun to learn more and apply.

Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis through Nov. 1, 2026. Grants of up to \$5,000 are available.

Lincoln

Have a news tip? Call Dawn Mikkelsen at 453-7029

NEWS

LINCOLN — The Lincoln Library and the Lincoln Conservation Commission continue their Vermont Reads Speaker Series on Thursday, March 12, with host Zapata Courage, wetlands scientist with the state of Vermont Wetlands Program. The presentation, titled "How Wetlands Support Community Resilience in the Face of Climate Change," will take place from 8:30 p.m. at the library.

Zapata Courage will provide an overview of wetlands, how they help reduce local flood and drought risk, and how they help build community and regional resilience through carbon storage, wildlife habitat and connectivity for wildlife movement. This event is free and open to the public.

Mt. Abe Little League has officially opened registration for the upcoming season. Programs are available for all skill levels

and ages, including T-Ball, Farm League, Little League Baseball and Little League Softball. Please complete the online registration form at clubs.bluesombrero.com/mtabell no later than this Sunday, March 15.

Little League provides a space for local youth to build teamwork skills, confidence, and lasting friendships within the five-town community.

FROM THE TOWN: Lincoln town roads are now posted for seasonal weight limits to help protect roads during the spring thaw. These restrictions will remain in effect until Friday, May 15, or until further notice. Seasonal posting helps prevent damage to roads when they are most vulnerable due to thawing conditions. We appreciate everyone's cooperation in protecting Lincoln's road infrastructure.

Until next time...Expect Nothing. Appreciate Everything.

invited to complete a short interest form. Those who sign up will also receive an invitation to attend a no-commitment, free introductory class when the program launches.

The interest form will help determine class schedules, age groups, and preferred training times. Families who complete the survey will also receive early registration access when

enrollment opens.

Complete the interest survey and sign up for a free trial class here: forms.gle/PuibHWgJGvz9yGHMA

Questions can be directed to: Samantha Champagne, Champagne's Black Belt Academy, www.champagnesbba.com, Info@champagnesbba.com, 802-730-3015.

Vt. State University names deans list

RANDOLPH CENTER — Vermont State University has announced the students who earned placement on the Dean's List for the Fall 2025 semester. To qualify for this academic honor, students must maintain full-time status and achieve a 3.5 or greater semester grade point average.

Ava Almeida of Addison.

Declan Anderson, Carson Babbie, Kyle James, Vin Paquette and Kestin Puechl-Sproul of Orwell.

Cloey Bell, Kaitlyn Brown, Fraser Pierpont and Alanna Trudeau of Salisbury.

Io Binder, Robin Chamberlain, Emma Deering and Aless Delia-Lobo of Middlebury.

Valentine Blake of Cornwall. Justin Bolduc and Breanne Preston of New Haven.

Evan Brooks and Payden Garthaffner of Vergennes.

Sarah Calvin, Morgan Currier, Jamie Dube-Bordeau, Kylee Forrest, Pajua Gamba, Makenna Gatchet, Mariska Harding, Klara

ADDISON COUNTY School Briefs

Hopkins, Taber Kerins, Sophie Moore, Cadence Muth, Asher Oberkirch and Elyse Singh of Brandon.

Ava Collins, Kimari Collins and Sam Cowan of North Ferrisburgh.

Bella Gale of East Middlebury. Thane Gill, Felicia Poirier, Cece Mills, Chase Stokes and Sydney Weber of Ferrisburgh.

Logan Hayes of Goshen. Cebelle Hull and Bri Stevens-Clark of Whiting.

Zoraida Jennings, Hayden Lutz, Caitlyn Marcotullio and Amanda Ruplin of Bristol.

Kailyn LaDuke and Carter Paquette of Shoreham.

Katlyn Lapell, Elsa Michaels, Haley Scott and Audrey Tembreull of Vergennes.

Cadence Mailhot and Graham Mattrick of Rochester.

Sara Roberts and Sylvia Vorsteveld of Bridport.

ages! Also check with Russell Memorial Library about passes (some free) to various areas and site around Vermont. Call 802-453-4471 for info.

Eugenie Doyle continues Yoga every Sunday at the Town hall from 4:30 to 5:30 p.m. If you would like to join in, contact Eugenie at 802-989-3378 or email edoyle@gmavt.net.

STUDENTS OF THE WEEK FROM AREA HIGH SCHOOLS

Vergennes Union High School

Ila Crowley

Vergennes Union High School is excited to announce Ila Crowley as its latest Student of the Week. Ila lives in Ferrisburgh with her mom, dad, sister, and dog, Bailey.

Her favorite subject is biology, finding it interesting and therefore easier to retain. She considers Ms. Thompson an engaging teacher because they do a lot of guided notes and hands-on projects and labs in class. Ila has received four underclass awards throughout high school for classes including German, science, English and health. She plays varsity lacrosse in the spring.

Outside of school, Ila works at Wake Robin Life Plan Community in Shelburne. She assists residents with mealtimes, helping them into their seats, taking orders and noting dietary needs. Ila would like to be a nurse, and she likes that this work gives her experience in that arena and makes her excited for the future.

In her free time, she likes to hike, spend time with friends and family, travel and explore Vermont. She loves spending time on the lake and on top of Mt. Philo.

Ila thinks her greatest lesson in high school is that hard work overcomes raw talent. She states, "I found myself very frustrated throughout high school because true understanding of a subject didn't always come easily for me. I was constantly revising work and retaking tests. I learned that I am not a naturally gifted student, but a hardworking one. I have to really buckle down to earn good grades, and in the end, I think that makes me a better student and I am proud of the hard work that I put in."

Next year, Ila will be attending the University of Vermont for Nursing with the hope of eventually becoming a Nurse Practitioner specializing in pediatrics.

Everyone at Vergennes Union High School wishes Ila all the best!



Ila Crowley
VUHS

Middlebury Union High School

Logan Edmonds-Beattie

Middlebury Union High School is proud to recognize senior Logan Edmonds-Beattie as its Student of the Week. Logan is the son of Jennifer Edmonds and Bryan Beattie and lives in Hancock. He has an older sister and brother, and a younger brother. He also has three pets: a dog named Nikki and two cats, Pumpkin and June.

When asked what he enjoys most about school, Logan shared that he values the strong sense of community and the access to resources that help him achieve his goals. He has especially enjoyed his art and science classes. Reflecting on the adults who have supported him, Logan expressed gratitude for Mrs. Stoddert, who works closely with him to find effective ways to learn and problem-solve, and Mr. Lewis, his school counselor, who has been a constant source of support and someone who is always fun to talk with. Logan has earned honor roll recognition throughout his high school career, and strives to academically challenge himself with difficult courses.

Logan has a strong interest in painting, photography, horticulture and flower cultivation. He is also deeply passionate about the sport of volleyball. He was instrumental in starting a book club at the school with the support of librarian Mrs. Sherman. In addition, Logan has coached March Madness at the Middle School and participated in the Peer Leader program at the beginning of senior year.

During the summer, Logan works at two camps. At Summer Music for Kids, he serves as a counselor. At Camp Killololet, he works as a cook and baker.

Outside of school and work, Logan enjoys spending time outdoors hiking, swimming, and biking. He also pursues photography, painting and bouquet-making in his free time.

Logan attended an elementary school where his grade consisted of just three students, including himself. Transitioning to middle and high school meant learning how to become part of a much larger community. Through that experience, he discovered the many benefits a larger community can offer. His advice to others is to recognize the resources around you and to not be afraid to reach out for help—sometimes stepping out of your comfort zone is where you will find the best support to chase your dreams.

Following graduation, Logan plans to attend college to study horticulture and minor in art, though he has not yet committed to a specific school.

Middlebury Union High School congratulates Logan on his many accomplishments and wishes him continued success throughout his senior year and beyond.



Logan Edmonds-Beattie
MUHS

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Congratuatiions, Logan and Ila!

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

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

Public Meetings

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Public Meetings

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

More Help Wanted ads can be found on Page 10B.

Help Wanted

Public Meetings

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Experience preferred but will train. Valid driver's license required.
Please send resume to apply for this position.
Send inquiry to joan@theinnergarden.com

Help Wanted

Help Wanted

Help Wanted

The Addison County Parent/Child Center is looking for a NURSE to join our team

About the Role
We are looking for a nurse to provide services in homes, schools, community settings, and at our center, with a focus on reproductive, maternal, and infant health.

- The Job**
- Provide support and education to pregnant or postpartum individuals and groups.
 - Lead classes and groups on reproductive health, safe sex, consent and healthy relationships.
 - Partner with medical providers, social services and community organizations to address health disparities.
 - Communicate effectively, demonstrate cultural humility and work independently in diverse settings.

- What We Offer**
- Meaningful work in a supportive environment
 - Competitive salary and generous paid time off
 - Comprehensive medical insurance and benefits
 - Eligibility for Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF)
- Requirements**
- Active RN or Certified Nurse Midwife license
 - Valid driver's license and reliable vehicle (mileage reimbursed)

Send cover letter, resume/CV, and three references to dbailey@addisoncountypcc.org



E-Mail Us!

News Articles
news@addisonindependent.com

Advertising
advertising@addisonindependent.com or classifieds@addisonindependent.com

Help Wanted

BETA IS HIRING:
TECHNICIANS, MANUFACTURERS, ASSEMBLERS



COME BUILD ELECTRIC AIRPLANES WITH US!

Help Wanted

Turning Point Center OF ADDISON COUNTY

We're hiring!

Turning Point Center of Addison County is looking for a Development & Community Relations Coordinator to strengthen fundraising, communications, and community partnerships. If you care about supporting recovery services and building a healthy Addison County, please consider applying—or sharing with someone who might be a great fit.

Turning Point Center of Addison County is a recovery community center for neighbors impacted by substance use, offering services like recovery coaching, peer support groups, and connections to local resources.




Scan for Job Info & Application

Help Wanted

Help Wanted

MILL WORKER PAINTER/FINISHER



Addison Residential is seeking to hire a full-time finisher for our busy paint shop. Finisher will be responsible for spraying a variety of projects – cabinetry, siding, trim, etc. along with using a variety of finish products. The ideal candidate will have previous experience with finishing. The job requires repetitive motion and ability to lift-up to 65lbs. The candidate should be able to work independently, as well as be part of a team, and have a keen eye for detail.

Benefits package available.
Pay is based on experience/skill level.
Apply by emailing resume to: info@addisonresidential.com.

Opportunities

Opportunities


Opportunities

Opportunities

Opportunities

Opportunities


Community Impact Funding Volunteers



United Way of Addison County is looking for Community Impact Funding Volunteers.

Our team of volunteer reviewers are responsible for reading Letters of Interest, conducting relevant topical or organizational research, preparing for, conducting, and scoring site visits and making allocation recommendations to UWAC's Board of Directors. Our team of volunteers meet at the end of March.

To learn more about being a CIF volunteer reviewer, please reach out to Amy Hoekstra at amyh@unitedwayaddisoncounty.org.



Delivering your paper takes a dedicated crew... ..and the Addy Indy's is one of the best!



We're hiring substitute drivers to help our team sort and deliver the weekly paper each Thursday.

\$15- \$20/hr, 3-9 hour shifts

Must be willing to wake up early, lift 50lbs and carry a valid drivers license.

Call or email Sean to apply: frontdesk@addisonindependent.com or 802-388-4944, ext 104.

ADDISON COUNTY INDEPENDENT
Serving Addison County, Vt., Since 1946

Addison Independent **CLASSIFIED ORDER FORM**

ADDISON INDEPENDENT
58 Maple Street, Middlebury, VT 05753
802-388-4944
addisonindependent.com • [email: classifieds@addisonindependent.com](mailto:classifieds@addisonindependent.com)

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

DEADLINE: Monday at 5 p.m.

RATES

- 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

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. Respon-

Help Wanted

sibilities: 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,

Help Wanted

warm, and gracious under pressure, Obsessed with details and good systems, Reliable, punctual, and self-directed. Shift & Compensation: Hours: 3:00 p.m. – 11:00 p.m. Schedule: Part-time, includes some weekends and holidays. Pay: \$20-\$22 Hourly, commensurate with experience, bonuses and tips. Apply Today. Email your resume and a short note to owner@swifthouseinn.com. Learn more about us at swifthouseinn.com

FARM WORK Looking for full/part time person willing to work flexible hours. Job requires ability to operate farm tractors, do light mechanic work, and multitask. \$18-20 an hour depending on experience. Call Jason at 802-373-6281

Help Wanted

Help Wanted

Elderly Services, Inc. Project Independence Adult Day Center

Do you love cooking for a crowd?

Elderly Services is hiring people to prepare delicious family style meals for older adults in a beautiful commercial kitchen.

Full / part-time available. NO nights or weekends!

Starts at \$18-20/hour depending on experience.

<https://elderservices.org/job-opportunities/>



ALWAYS HIRING?

Keep your business in front of local job seekers with a discounted year-round help wanted ad.

A 52-week display ad campaign starts at just \$50/week!

advertising@addisonindependent.com

PLUMBER Middlebury College. Full-time, \$28.14-\$35.19/hr. Install/maintain plumbing, heating, and electromechanical systems. Requires Master Plumber license, valid DL, and 4+ years exp. Excellent benefits: tuition reimbursement, dental, generous CTO, and retirement match. Background check & physical required. Please call 802-443-5472 or apply at: <https://apply.workable.com/middleburycollege/j/94F974C6DF/>

For Rent

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.

Help Wanted

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

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.

For Rent

MIDDLEBURY SUGAR-WOOD APARTMENTS is currently taking waitlist applications for 2, 3, 4 bedroom apartments. Minimum occupancy requirements. No smoking/ No pets. Income limits apply- Rent based on income. Equal Housing Opportunity 802-247-0165 TTY: 800-253-0191 www.SummitPMG.com.

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

For Rent

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

Wood Heat

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

Att. Farmers

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

AUCTIONS



MARKET REPORT ADDISON COUNTY COMMISSION SALES

RT. 125 • EAST MIDDLEBURY, VT
Sales for 3/5/26 & 3/9/26

BEEF	LBS.	/LB	\$
Deer Valley	1210	1.725	\$2087.25
Blue Spruce	1630	1.60	\$2608.00
J. Allen	1095	1.575	\$1724.63
H. Degraaf	1525	1.525	\$2325.63
Goodrich	1965	1.40	\$2751.00

CALVES	\$
Deer Valley	\$1827.50
Forbes	\$1787.10
Barnes Bros	\$1786.40
Green Mtn Dairy	\$1680.00
Doton	\$1624.50

Total Beef - 128 Total Calves - 169

We value our faithful customers.
Sales at 3 pm - Mon. & Thurs.
call 1-802-388-2661

Public Notices

can be found on Pages 10B & 11B.

- Addison (1)
- Addison Northwest School District (1)
- Ferrisburgh (1)
- Goshen (1)
- Leicester (1)
- Lincoln (1)
- Middlebury (1)
- Middlebury College (1)
- Orwell (1)
- Salisbury (1)
- Starksboro (2)
- Slate Valley UUSD (1)
- State of Vermont (1)

TOWN OF MIDDLEBURY PROPERTY TAX BILLS

MARCH INSTALLMENTS ARE DUE IN THE FINANCE OFFICE ON OR BEFORE:

MONDAY, MARCH 16, 2026
(SINCE THE 15TH IS A SUNDAY)

Finance Office:
388-8100 ext. 203, 204 or 208
accountclerk@townofmiddlebury.org

Office Hours:
Mon – Fri, 8:00 am to 5:00 pm

Please allow extra time if you are mailing your payment, postmarks are not accepted as timely payment.

For your convenience there is a secure payment box located in front of the Town Office.

TOWN OF ORWELL SPECIAL TOWN MEETING ATV/UTV ORDINANCE VOTE

Voters are further notified and warned to meet on Saturday, April 18, 2026, 10:00 AM, at the Orwell Firehouse in Orwell, Vermont, to vote on the sole article of "Shall the voters of the Town of Orwell disapprove the 'Ordinance Regulating All-Terrain Vehicles (ATVs)' adopted by the Orwell Selectboard on January 27, 2026?" Copies of the Ordinance are available at the Town Clerk's Office on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 9:00 AM to 3:30 PM and on the town website at townoforwellvt.org.

STATE OF VERMONT, SUPERIOR COURT PROBATE DIVISION, ADDISON UNIT DOCKET NO.: 26-PR-00926 IN RE ESTATE OF: WIGHT E. MANNING NOTICE TO CREDITORS

To the Creditors of: **Wight E. Manning**, late of Vergennes, Vermont. I have been appointed to administer this estate. All creditors having claims against the decedent or the estate must present their claims in writing within four (4) months of the first publication of this notice. **The claim must be presented to me at the address listed below with a copy sent to the Court. The claim may be barred forever if it is not presented within the four (4) month period.**

Dated: 03/08/26

Mary Manning
5479 Greenbush Road
Charlotte, VT 05445
802-425-3009
rookie@gmavt.net

Publication: Addison Independent

Publication Date: 3/12/26

Name of Probate Court: Vermont Superior Court, Addison Unit, Probate Division
Address of Court: 7 Mahady Court, Middlebury, VT 05753

TOWN OF LEICESTER NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING LEICESTER DEVELOPMENT REVIEW BOARD

The Leicester Development Review Board will hold a public hearing **Tuesday, March 31, 2026, at the Leicester Town Office at 6:00 p.m.** to consider the following application:

- (26-04 DRB)**, Application 26-04 DRB of James A. Greenamyre, 1245 Hooker Road, Leicester, VT, Parcel 212027, for a 2.0 +/- subdivision from Parcel 212021, Justin & Eileen Smith, 1134 Hooker Road, Leicester, VT.

The Smith parcel of 108 +/- acres will be reduced by the 2.0-acre parcel to 106 +/- acres after the subdivision. This is the second subdivision of the Smith parcel within a five (5) year period and therefore requires a hearing before the Leicester Development Review Board.

Applications are available for inspection at the Town Clerk's Office, 44 Schoolhouse Rd., Leicester, VT during regularly scheduled hours.

Participation in this proceeding is a prerequisite to the right to take any subsequent appeal.

Jeff McDonough
DRB Chairman
March 5, 2026

TOWN OF GOSHEN INVITATION TO BID

The Town of Goshen, Vermont is accepting bids for the Goshen Town Hall Renovation Project. We invite qualified contractors to review the project details and submit a bid.

Key Details:

- Mandatory General Contractor Site Visit:** Friday, March 20th, 2026 at 8:30 am, Goshen Town Hall
- Bid Deadline:** Monday, March 30, 2026 by 5:00 PM
- Bid Opening:** March 30, 2026 at 6:30 PM, Goshen Town Office
- Bids Open for Acceptance:** 30 days after closing

Full bid documents, specifications, and the Bid Form are available at: <https://goshenvt.org/goshen-town-hall-renovations-2026/>

Direct all written inquiries to: townhallproject@goshenvt.org

Note: Clarification requests must be submitted at least 7 days before the bid deadline.

ANWSD BOARD MEETING NOTICES FOR MARCH 2026

Wednesday, March 4	4:00 PM	Negotiations Mtg. with ANSSA** VUES Library
Thursday, March 5	5:00 PM	Negotiations Mtg. with ANTA* VUMHS Library
Monday, March 9	6:00 PM	ANWSD Board Meeting VUMHS Library
Wednesday, March 11	4:00 PM	Negotiations Mtg. with ANSSA** VUES Library
Monday, March 16	4:00 PM	Facilities Committee Mtg. VUMHS Library
	4:50 PM	Finance Committee Mtg. VUMHS Library
	6:00 PM	ANWSD Board Mtg. VUMHS Library
Wednesday, March 18	5:30 PM	Community Engagement Committee Mtg. Virtual only
Wednesday, March 25	4:00 PM	Negotiations Mtg. with ANSSA** VUES Library

* ANTA - Addison Northwest Teachers Association

** ANSSA - Addison Northwest Support Staff Association



Greenhouse/Nursery Sale Associate

20-30 hrs per week position (Seasonal)

Responsibilities include Care and Sales of Greenhouse and Nursery Plants, Seeds and Bulbs, plus a genuine interest in providing knowledgeable customer service.

Extensive Plant knowledge preferred!

Any Cashier experience is a plus.

Qualified Candidate must have a dedicated work ethic and be able to perform physical lifting as required, and work hard in the spring and summer seasons.

Excellent Perks and a Flexible Schedule

Availability to work weekends is a MUST.

Cashier - Customer Service

Part-time and Full-time Positions

Must be able to work until 6pm

Availability to work weekends is a MUST.

Up to 40 hours per week.

Wage commensurate with experience.

All of our positions offer generous, twice a year bonuses and employee discount on all products.

Please stop in to pick up an application or send Resume to:

Middlebury AGWAY Farm & Garden,

Attn: Jennifer Jacobs

338 Exchange St. Middlebury, VT 05753

or by email to info@middleburyagway.com

Middlebury Agway 338 Exchange St. – Middlebury, VT.

Pickup truck ends up on railroad tracks

ADDISON COUNTY — A Cornwall man had a scary incident last Friday that ended up with his pickup truck on the train tracks, according to Vermont State Police.

On March 6 at a little after 2:30 p.m., troopers from the New Haven barracks got a report of a single-vehicle crash near

Vt. State Police Log

Ram 1500 southbound on Route 7 when a vehicle in front of him suddenly slowed. Hirschberg later told police that he lost control of his vehicle and it left the roadway,

Route 7 and Route 17, otherwise known as the New Haven Junction. Police said Scott Hirschberg, 48, was driving a 2022 Dodge Ram 1500 southbound on Route 7 when a vehicle in front of him suddenly slowed. Hirschberg later told police that he lost control of his vehicle and it left the roadway, went over a snowbank and onto the train tracks before coming to an uncontrolled rest on the tracks. The pickup sustained major front-end damage and was later towed by Middstate Towing. Hirschberg, who was wearing a seatbelt, reported no injuries. In the only other Addison County case that state police reported in the past week, troopers logged a Feb. 23

report of a vandalism that occurred at 2829 Route 7 in Leicester — the place where the big gorilla is holding the car above its head. State police said they determined that Dominique S. Colford, 25, of Leicester had intentionally caused damage to a building located on the property. Finally on March 8, police located Colford and cited her for unlawful mischief.

Two arrested after traffic stop in Vergennes

VERGENNES — Vergennes police officers on March 2 apprehended two Berlin residents during an incident that began as a traffic stop for a motor vehicle violation.

Following the stop, which occurred on Main Street, police cited Justin Barlow, 34, for driving with a criminally suspended license and driving under the influence.

Authorities cited his passenger, Richard West, 55, with being a fugitive from justice and held him on \$15,000 bail.

Also last week, Vergennes police conducted 22 traffic stops, eight directed patrols, two foot patrols, two commercial vehicle inspections, one Vehicle Identification Number verification, one background check and took fingerprints once.

In other recent activity, the city police:

- On March 2 responded to front door alarm activation at the Eagles Club on New Haven Road. A contractor tripped the alarm while repairing the door.
- On March 3 assisted Vermont State Police in New Haven by doing a drug recognition expert phone consult for a driver suspected to be impaired by drugs.

- On March 3 took a report from the Vergennes Union Elementary School about an altercation between two students at recess. The parents were made aware of the incident and the school will be handling it.
- On March 3 assisted Westfield police by serving an abuse prevention order to a Vergennes resident.
- On March 3 checked on a report of a suspicious person. Officers checked on the individual, who was having a mental health issue, and provided resources.

- On March 4 issued a Vergennes resident a trespass notice.
- On March 4 took a report of a man having a mental health crisis at a local restaurant. The person left the restaurant without issue.
- On March 5 received the report of a vehicle that was rummaged through and smoked in with nothing missing. An investigation was ongoing as of Monday.

- On March 5 offered services to a person struggling with mental health issues.
- On March 5 took five reports of thefts from unlocked vehicles. Two occurred on South Water Street, one each on School, Comfort Hill and North streets. Investigations were ongoing as of Monday.

- On March 5 responded to a report from a local business where a customer was reportedly acting in a manic manner, smelled of alcohol and was purchasing about \$500 worth of merchandise. Employees expressed concern for the man's well-being after he appeared to be randomly selecting items that wouldn't have fit him. Officers offered the business the option to issue a no trespass order, but it declined the offer.
- On March 5 as part of Project Vision North, toured the Vergennes Grand residence with a resident who is struggling with some health issues and needs assistance.
- On March 5 took a report of an unlocked car being entered overnight. Nothing was reported stolen.
- On March 5 assisted Vergennes Area Rescue Squad.
- On March 6 responded to a residence in Vergennes where there was an unresponsive elderly woman. VARS also responded, and the woman was pronounced deceased at 5:14 a.m. Police officers conducted a death investigation with assistance from the Addison County Medical Examiner. Based on that, police said the death does not appear to be suspicious. Vergennes police declined to release the name of the person who died.
- On March 6 arrested Richard Memoli, 69, of Vergennes after a road rage incident. He was issued a citation and released. He is due in court on March 23 to answer to the charge of simple assault.
- On March 6 received a report from the Ferrisburgh Central School about an incident involving juveniles. No police action is being

Vergennes Police Log

taken, but they will keep the report on file.

- On March 6 received a report from Vergennes Union Middle School regarding a student who threatened to use a firearm against another student. The investigation found that there was no credible threat to either the student or the school.
- On March 6 assisted a man experiencing a mental health crisis.
- On March 7 responded to a report of a man trying to use a key to enter someone's apartment. He left the area when confronted. A description of the person was given and he was known to officers, who spoke with him and told him to stay away from his neighbor's house.
- On March 7 spoke with a business owner who was concerned about a male who was spending hundreds of dollars at the store. This would normally be great, however

the business owner did not feel the man was in his right state of mind. An officer spoke with the man, who assured police that he was making his decisions freely.

- On March 8 took a late report of a physical altercation that occurred in the front yard of a Vergennes residence the evening before. Both

of the men who were involved were identified and it was found to be an argument between brothers. One was experiencing a mental health event while the other was attempting to calm him. Nobody was injured in the incident, no charges are pending, and officers provided services to the one man.

TOWN OF ADDISON REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS TOWN HALL REPAIRS

The Town of Addison, in Addison County, Vermont, is seeking the services of a qualified contractor to complete repairs to the Addison Town Hall. The selected contractor must be insured and will be expected to (1) demonstrate the ability to complete the needed roofing, chimney, bell tower, and window repairs, (2) have experience in related work. A detailed scope of work can be found on the Town of Addison's website at www.addisonvt.gov on the Town Hall Building Committee page, or at the town clerk's office. There are two separate RFPs: 1) stabilization and repairs to the Bell Tower and associated roof work, 2) repair of historic windows and installation of storm windows.

A Pre-Bid meeting will be held at 1PM on April 1, 2026, for prospective bidders to access areas in the planned scope.

Bids will be accepted until 5:00 pm, April 30, 2026, by email to townclerk@addisonvt.gov with "Town Hall Repair RFP" in the subject line, or by mail to the Town of Addison, 65 VT RT 17W, Addison, Vermont 05491. Questions? Contact Town Clerk Cheri Waterman at (802) 759-2020.

The Town of Addison is an equal opportunity provider and employer and does not discriminate based on race, color, national origin, age, disability, religion, gender or familial status.

TOWN OF STARKSBORO DEVELOPMENT REVIEW BOARD NOTICE OF HEARING

Alan and Nancy Norris submitted application 26-DRB-01PUD for a Preliminary Plan Review Hearing for a 9-lot Planned Unit Development (PUD) located on a 84.89+/- acre parcel #10815 at 2798 VT Route 17 in the Town of Starksboro. The proposed PUD is in the ASRR, LDRC, and HDRC districts. The Preliminary Plan Review Hearing on this application will be held per Sec. 427 of the Starksboro Land Use and Development Regulations (SLUDR).

The Starksboro Development Review Board will conduct the hearing on **April 9, 2026**, starting at 6:30p.m. at the Starksboro Town Office with remote access (info below). The full application is available to review by request of the Starksboro zoning office, and on the website at <https://www.starksborovt.org/agendas-and-minutes>

Pursuant to 24 V.S.A. §§ 4464(a)(1)(C) participation in this local proceeding is prerequisite to the right to take any subsequent appeal.

Town of Starksboro is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89617415124>
 Meeting ID: 896 1741 5124
 Or by Phone: +13052241968

Warning Date: March 12, 2026

SLATE VALLEY UNIFIED UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT 2026-2027 BOARD MEMBERS

The Slate Valley Unified Union School District is seeking school board members to fill vacant seats on the District School Board from March 2026 to March 2027. To complete our board, we need:

- One (1) Hubbardton citizen
- One (1) Orwell citizen
- Two (2) West Haven citizens

If you are interested in serving your community, please submit a letter of interest to the Slate Valley School Board, in care of Superintendent of Schools, 33 Mechanic Street, Fair Haven, VT 05743 or email: bfarrell@svuvt.org.

Position will remain open until filled. EOE

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).

Refugee Medical Assistance Rule Update. Vermont Proposed Rule: 26P004

AGENCY: Agency of Human Services
CONCISE SUMMARY: This proposed rulemaking amends the Refugee Medical Assistance rule which was last amended effective November 1, 2019. This proposed rule establishes criteria and process used to determine eligibility and provide coverage under the Refugee Medical Assistance program. Updates to this rule are strictly formal, adopting the federal APA outline standard, as required for implementation within the Agency's upcoming eligibility and enrollment technology system. There are no substantive changes to this rule.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, CONTACT: Tracy Dolan, Agency of Human Services, 280 State Drive, Center Building Waterbury VT 05676 Tel: 802-233-1117 Fax: 802-241-0450 E-Mail: Tracy.Dolan@vermont.gov URL: <https://human-services.vermont.gov/rules-policies/health-care-rules>.

FOR COPIES: Gabriel Epstein, Agency of Human Services, 280 State Drive, Center Building, Waterbury VT 05676 Tel: 802-585-5925 Fax: 802-241-0450 E-Mail: gabriel.epstein@vermont.gov.

Third Party Liability. Vermont Proposed Rule: 26P005

AGENCY: Agency of Human Services
CONCISE SUMMARY: This rule, Medicaid Covered Services Rule 7108 Third Party Liability, is being amended to remove the estate recovery language and adopt that language into a new rule. Estate recovery is a federal requirement for states to recover certain Medicaid benefits paid on behalf of a Medicaid enrollee from the individual's estate. This rule is not being amended other than to remove the estate recovery section.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, CONTACT: Beth Quill, Agency of Human Services (AHS), Department of Vermont Health Access (DVHA) 280 State Drive, Waterbury, VT 05671-1000 Tel: 802-585-5415 Fax: 802-241-0260 E-Mail: Beth.Quill@vermont.gov URL: <https://humanservices.vermont.gov/rules-policies/health-care-rules/health-care-administrative-rules-hcar>.

FOR COPIES: Susan Coburn, Agency of Human Services, 280 State Drive, Waterbury, VT, 05671-1000 Tel: 802-578-9412 Fax: 802-241-0450 E-Mail: Susan.Coburn@vermont.gov.

Estate Recovery. Vermont Proposed Rule: 26P006

AGENCY: Agency of Human Services
CONCISE SUMMARY: This new rule, "Estate Recovery," outlines the Medicaid Estate Recovery Procedure. Estate recovery is a federal requirement for states to recover certain Medicaid benefits paid on behalf of a Medicaid enrollee from the individual's estate. The rule needs to be updated to be added to the Health Care Administrative Rules (HCAR). The rule amends the estate recovery provisions from Medicaid Covered Services Rule 7108 "Third Party Liability". The amendments in this new rule include adding a definitions section for clarity and increasing the undue hardship estate value threshold.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, CONTACT: Beth Quill, Agency of Human Services (AHS), Department of Vermont Health Access (DVHA) 280 State Drive, Waterbury, VT 05671-1000 Tel: 802-585-5415 Fax: 802-241-0260 E-Mail: Beth.Quill@vermont.gov URL: <https://humanservices.vermont.gov/rules-policies/health-care-rules/health-care-administrative-rules-hcar>.

FOR COPIES: Susan Coburn, Agency of Human Services, 280 State Drive, Waterbury, VT, 05671-1000 Tel: 802-578-9412 Fax: 802-241-0450 E-Mail: Susan.Coburn@vermont.gov.

STATE OF VERMONT

SUPERIOR COURT ADDISON UNIT

SAILFISH SERVICING, LLC PLAINTIFF

VS.

RONALD DRAGON AND OCCUPANTS RESIDING AT 66 MURRAY LANE, RIPTON, VT 05766 DEFENDANT(S)

CIVIL DIVISION DOCKET NO: 25-CV-01628

NOTICE OF SALE

In accordance with the Judgment and Decree of Foreclosure by Judicial Sale filed on August 18, 2025, in the above captioned action brought to foreclose that certain mortgage given by Ronald Dragon to Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc., as mortgagee, as nominee for Primelending, a Plaincapital Company, dated December 4, 2013, and recorded in Book 47, at Page 41, of the Town of Ripton Land Records, of which mortgage the undersigned is the present holder by Assignment of Mortgage recorded in Book 56, at Page 178, for breach of the conditions of said mortgage and for the purpose of foreclosing the same will be sold at Public Auction on April 15, 2026 at 01:00 PM at 66 Murray Lane, Ripton, VT 05766 all and singular the premises described in said mortgage,

To Wit:

A parcel of land containing 1.21 acres, more or less, with residence and other improvements thereon, known and designated as 66 Murray Lane in Ripton, Vermont, and being all and the same lands and premises conveyed to the herein Ronald M. Dragon by Limited Warranty Deed of Federal National Mortgage Association dated December 3, 2013, and recorded December 9, 2013 in Book 47, at Page 37 in the Ripton Land Records, and described as follows:

Being all and the same lands and premises acquired by Federal National Mortgage Association by virtue of a Confirmation Order issued by the Vermont Superior Court, Civil Division, Addison Unit, in the cause entitled: Wells Fargo Bank, N.A. v. Audrey Bryant, Administrator of the Estate of William J. Murray, et al., Docket No. 91-5-11 Ancv, which Order was dated April 8, 2013 and recorded in Book 46 at Page 248 of the Town of Ripton Land Records; and being further described as follows:

"Being all and the same lands and premises conveyed to William J. Murray and Helen P. Murray by Warranty Deed of Rodney E. Goodro and Elizabeth A. Goodro dated June 7, 1968 and recorded June 10, 1968 in Volume 17 at Page 83 of the Ripton Land Records.

Being a portion of the same lands conveyed to the herein Grantors by Administrator's Deed in the Estate of Claudia E. Smith, dated November 19, 1966, recorded in Book 16 at Page 480 of the Ripton Land Records, the portion herein conveyed being more particularly described as follows:

Begin at a point marked by an iron pipe two hundred twenty (220) feet, more or less, easterly of the easterly edge of Maiden Lane, said point being the northeasterly corner of lands now or formerly of the late Claudia E. Smith and being the northwesterly corner of the lands herein conveyed;

Thence go southerly three hundred twenty (320) feet, more or less, along the easterly line of said Smith to a point marked by an iron pipe, being the southwesterly corner of the lands herein conveyed;

Thence go easterly one hundred sixty-seven (167) feet, more or less, along the northerly line of lands now or formerly of one Billings to a point marked by an iron pipe, being the southeasterly corner of the lands herein conveyed;

Thence go northerly three hundred ten (310) feet, more or less, along the northerly line of lands now or formerly of one Billings to a point marked by an iron pipe, being the southeasterly corner of the lands herein conveyed;

Thence go westerly one hundred sixty-seven (167) feet, more or less, in a line parallel to the northerly line of said Billings, to the point of beginning.

Together with a right of way twenty (20) feet in width, to be used in common with the remaining lands of the herein Grantors, for the purposes of ingress and egress and installation of utility lines, said right of way to begin at the easterly edge of Maiden Lane and follow the southerly line of the lands of the Grantors to the northeasterly corner of the lands herein conveyed.

Said lands herein conveyed shall be subject to the following restrictions, which shall be in the nature of covenants running with the land herein conveyed, but shall not be interpreted to apply to the remaining lands of the herein Grantors:

1. Said lands shall be used only for residential purposes.
2. Said lands shall not be further sub-divided."

Reference is made to the following quitclaim deeds in reference to the easterly boundary line of the above described parcel:

1. Quitclaim Deed dated July 14, 1980 from Rodney E. Goodro and Elizabeth A. Goodro to William J. Murray and Helen P. Murray, as recorded in Book 22, Page 52 of the Ripton Land Records; and
2. Quitclaim Deed dated July 14, 1980 from William J. Murray and Helen P. Murray to Rodney E. Goodro and Elizabeth A. Goodro, as recorded at Book 22, Page 55 of the Ripton Land Records

The description of the property contained in the mortgage shall control in the event of a typographical error in this publication

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.

Terms of Sale: \$10,000.00 to be paid in cash or by certified check by the purchaser at the time of sale, with the balance due at closing. The sale is subject to all liens, encumbrances, unpaid taxes, tax titles, municipal liens, if any, which take precedence over the said mortgage above described.

The Mortgagor is entitled to redeem the premises at any time prior to the sale by paying the full amount due under the mortgage, including the costs and expenses of the sale.

Other terms to be announced at sale.

Sailfish Servicing, LLC
 Bozena Wysocki, Esq.
 BROCK & SCOTT, PLLC
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 2nd Floor
 Plainville, MA 02762
VT_Noticesofhearing@brockandscott.com



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Lambert Potting Mix **\$8.99** 1 cu. ft.

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Soil Doctor Turf Lime **\$13.99**



Hoffman Vermiculite **\$31.99** 2 cu. ft.



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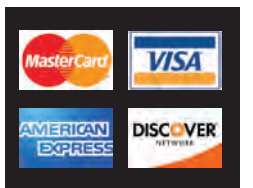


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ARTS + LEISURE

The Addison Independent

March 12, 2026



Advanced art students Tristan Baucom (left) and Sawyer Cash Witscher (right) stand with Visual Arts teacher Kylie Wolgamott (center) in the art studio at Middlebury Union High School. Together with senior Spencer Copeland and others, these students will present an art show at Jackson Gallery in Middlebury, from March 18-27.

INDEPENDENT PHOTO / ELSIE LYNN PARINI

Middlebury art students advance to professional gallery

Student from Middlebury Union High School will get their moment to adorn the Jackson Gallery in the lower level of Town Hall Theater, March 18-27. It's the annual MUHS Student Art Exhibition, featuring the work of the diploma program (DP) seniors Spencer Copeland and Sawyer Cash Witscher, among other students.

By **ELSIE LYNN PARINI**

"At the end of year two we do an exhibition," said Witscher, explaining that the DP program extends over two years. "For the final exhibition we do 8-11 pieces."

Standing in front of a partially finished piece in the MUHS art studio early this week, Witscher explained her thinking behind the show. "The theme of my exhibition is reflection; commenting on the reflection of people in society and also the reflection of yourself and reflecting on the past. This is going to be a

girl, seeing her reflection in this window, and behind her are these buildings."

Witscher, who was born in Arizona, said she moved around a lot in her youth. This piece for her considers how where you live, and your environment, can shape you as a person.

Pointing to a completed oil painting, the Shoreham student continued.

"This piece I just finished is a self-portrait," she said. "This is from a picture taken in the fall at an orchard with my mom and grandma... It presents both the crisp fall and the summer with the sun shining on my face. This was a time — like between summer and fall — a very in-between time for me. I was applying to colleges and figuring out what I wanted to do."

For his part of the show Copeland, took on the topic of war.

"I followed a theme of war," he said simply at the start of class on Tuesday. "It's relevant to today and on my mind."

"THE THEME OF MY EXHIBIT IS REFLECTION."

— Sawyer Cash Witscher

Copeland filed through a few of his works:

"I used watercolors, sculpture, oils, and themes from cubism and Basquiat," the Middlebury senior explained. "This piece has a more traditional Japanese style watercolor on one side, and then on the other side it's more chaotic, oil pastel."

Copeland pulled out a propogandist style poster and monochromatic oil, both indisputably on brand for his theme.

See *STUDENTS* on page 3

Starksboro's library welcomes a new coffeehouse-style music series

Starting on Friday, March 20, the Starksboro Public Library will present a monthly music series — coffeehouse style — on the third Friday of the month through May.

Erin Cassels-Brown will kick off the new series at the end of next week. Micah Plante will follow on April 17. And Doug Anderson will play on May 19.

By **ELSIE LYNN PARINI**

Cassels-Brown is a songwriter, carpenter and solar installer from Starksboro. Over the past decade he's released music independently and performed in dive bars, clubs and living rooms while working in the building trades to help keep the lights on. He's currently working on "Count Us Lucky," a record inspired by Addison County and the people who live here. You can find his

"THERE AREN'T ENOUGH PLACES FOR FOLKS TO PLAY... LET'S GIVE THESE LOCAL PLAYERS SOME LOVE!"

— Johnne Dickason

music on streaming services and follow him on Instagram @erincasselsbrown.

A new venue for music is always welcome! Starksboro's library can hold about 30-35 guests, said Johnne Dickason, a fellow musician and Starksboro resident who's the energy behind this new music series.

"It's a beautiful old building and is really nice acoustically," Dickason said. "We won't need much amplification if any."

Dickason also spent his career as a builder and musician — you might remember him from Gumbo YaYa — and he felt a calling to help other musicians find ways to get their music out there.

"There aren't enough places for folks to play," Dickason said last week. "I felt like we should try to do this... Let's give these local players some love!"

Donations are welcome at the event. And those interested in performing, should text Dickason at 802-777-1231.

MOVIE SCREENING: THE WISDOM OF TRAUMA

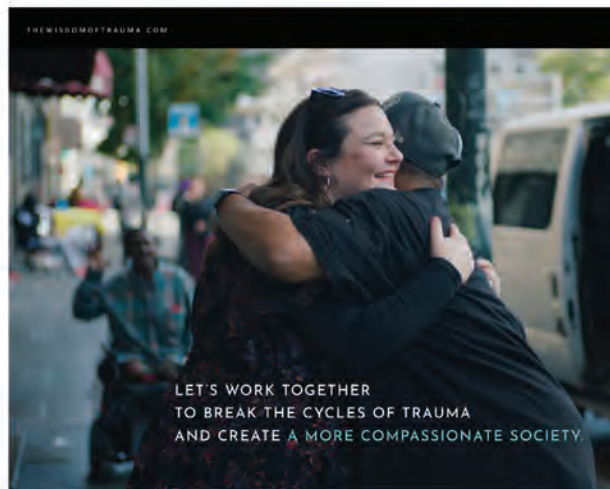
WHEN: **Saturday, March 21, 2–3:30 pm**
followed by a discussion 3:30–4:30 pm

WHERE: **Turning Point Center of Addison County**

This documentary explores the ways that trauma shapes our lives, its connection to anxiety, chronic illness, and substance-use, and **how we might shape a world concerned with healing souls—not fixing behaviors.** This film asks us to be curious about why someone may exhibit certain harmful behaviors rather than lead with judgement and condemnation.

The film will screen starting at 2pm and end roughly around 3:30pm. After the screening, there will be space, lasting about an hour, for a **discussion and reflection** on what we watched together.

Light snacks and coffee/tea provided. **Parking** is limited, so feel free to use the high school parking lot across the street.



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OF ADDISON COUNTY

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Contact us: info@tpvt.org or (802) 388-4249
tpvt.org



Erin Cassels-Brown will perform at the Starksboro Library next Friday, March 20. The concert is free and open to all — donations welcome.

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STUDENTS

continued from page 1

"Sawyer and Spencer have finished the full DP program," congratulated MUHS Visual Arts teacher Kylie Wolgamott. "They must show their art in an exhibition as part of their final exam in this class."

Wolgamott added that the two seniors' artworks will be accompanied by work from the DP art students in year one, as well as other art students and some 10th-graders who made art for their personal projects.

"It will be a good variety of student art," said Wolgamott, who has been teaching at MUHS for more than a decade.

Tristan Baucom, an 11th-grader from Middlebury, will be showing a piece during the exhibit that highlights his interests in art and entomology.

"This is a piece I made for my most recent inquiry cycle... How can I use perspective in space to magnify a living organism? I have a general intention to make these creatures — that are generally quite small — seem much larger and more powerful and intimidating, rather than just the creepy sense they generally have.

"This is the face of a centipede, beetle horns, a wasp head..." he detailed, pointing over his drawing. "I'm looking at a lot of different things scientifically and anatomically... This is definitely an extension of my interests."

Advanced art students like Copeland, Witscher and Baucom get 90 minutes every other day to work on their art. But it takes more than that.

"We come in during advisory time and free blocks — it's not your average art class, it's elevated," said Witscher.

But she doesn't seem to mind.

"The school day is very long and the classes



Shoreham art student Sawyer Cash Witscher gets ready for her upcoming exhibit at the Town Hall Theater's Jackson Gallery in Middlebury, March 18-27.



INDEPENDENT PHOTOS / ELSIE LYNN PARINI

are very rigorous... The art of actually making art — the process — is really important to me," she said. "Having time to be with myself, reflect, and work on my art, it gives my brain a break and allows me to feel more prepared and energized in my other classes."

Witscher identified the process of putting together this exhibit as one of her "favorite parts of this academic year as a whole."

"I feel like a lot of the work I've created in the past has been fleeting and unimportant," she said. "Whereas this, I have a goal I'm working towards and I have an audience. That pushes and motivates me to make interesting and thoughtful pieces of work, which I appreciate.

"It also makes me feel confident in my abilities," continued Witscher, who hopes to study psychology in college. "I feel like my art is worth presenting... Having this exhibition gives me an outlet to put my art out into the world. I think more people should feel confident to put their art out there because it's really important."

With just two students in this year's second-year DP art class, Wolgamott has gotten close to both seniors.

"It's just such a process," she reflected. "Spencer and Sawyer have been with me for two years. In their first year they had to do a ton of research and writing. We started to get into ideas and how to communicate meaning, and work on skills in that first year. In the second year they're like fully blossomed artists who come into the art room and make art

independently. They can talk about art, they can write about art, they are really good at reflecting and giving feedback on their art. It's great to see how they progress as humans and as artists in those two years together."

Don't miss your chance to see MUHS student art on display. It will wow you — promise. Or better yet, meet the artists in person during an opening reception that will be held Friday, March 20, from 5-6:30 p.m. It's free and open to all.



Middlebury art student Spencer Copeland holds up a piece he will be exhibiting at Jackson Gallery later this month.

INDEPENDENT PHOTO / ELSIE LYNN PARINI



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UPCOMING MUSIC

Celebrate Saint Patrick's Day with Celtic quintet Goitse at the Mahaney Arts Center

Come celebrate St. Patrick's Day at the Mahaney Arts Center! The multi-award-winning quintet Goitse will visit the Middlebury Performing Arts Series on Saint Patrick's Day, Tuesday March 17. They will perform a contagiously energetic program of Irish folk songs and original tunes played on fiddle, accordion, bodhrán, guitar, banjo, voice and more.

The band is one of Ireland's most dynamic and celebrated traditional ensembles. Forged in the white-hot creative crucible of Limerick's Irish World Academy — a renowned program within the University of Limerick — Goitse

is now celebrating 15 years of touring and captivating audiences around the world.

About Goitse

Goitse (Donegal slang for "come here," and pronounced "go-wit-cha") has released six critically acclaimed recordings and maintains a year-round touring schedule that includes performances throughout Ireland, the UK, Germany, France, and the United States. Musicians include World and All-Ireland Bodhrán champion Colm Phelan; Conal O'Kane, who is fast making a name for himself as one of the finest guitarists of his generation; the sweet, charismatic voice of Áine



Celtic quintet Goitse will play contagiously energetic Irish music at the Mahaney Arts Center on Saint Patrick's Day, Tuesday, March 17.

PHOTO / EDDIE KAVANAGH

McGeeney; multi-instrumentalist Alan Reid on the banjo, bouzouki, and more; and All-Ireland Champion Daniel Collins, known for his distinctively intricate bass work on accordion.

Known for electrifying live performances, Goitse has built a reputation for energy, warmth, and an uncanny ability to connect with audiences everywhere. The band members and their music were recently featured on the hit Apple TV series *Bad Sisters*.

See GOITSE on page 8

Zach Nugent brings his Dead Set to Town Hall Theater's mainstage

Zach Nugent's Dead Set is more than just a cover band; they are an extraordinary ensemble that brings the Grateful Dead's timeless music to life with remarkable precision and passion. See them perform on Friday, March 20, from 7:30-9:30 p.m., on the Rothrock Mainstage at Town Hall Theater in

Middlebury.

Led by Nugent, Dead Set's uncanny ability to channel the spirit of Jerry Garcia is nothing short of astounding. Nugent's virtuosic guitar work captures Garcia's essence, enchanting audiences with spellbinding solos and

breathtaking improvisations. The band's tight-knit chemistry and unwavering dedication ensure that every note resonates with the same magic that made the Grateful Dead legendary.

See DEAD SET on page 8

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Join Sommelier Ella Donnelly-Wright for themed wine tastings every Wednesday through May. Drop by between 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. Complimentary nibbles included. Deep discounts on featured wines.

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ART ON EXHIBIT

BRANDON ARTISTS GUILD

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For more info visit brandonartistsguild.org or call 802-247-4956.

"Cabin Fever Creations" features the work BAG member artists have created during the months of cold and bluster. On view through April.

EDGEWATER AT THE FALLS

1 Mill Street, Middlebury.

For more info visit edgewatergallery.com, call 802-458-0098 or email info@edgewatergallery-vt.com.

"The Work of Paper," featuring 30 artworks, selected from over 200 entries nation-wide, juried and curated by Danny Volk. Artists were invited to submit work that explores what paper can do and what paper can mean. On view through March 28.

JACKSON GALLERY

68 S Pleasant Street, Middlebury

Visit townhalltheater.org/jackson-gallery or call 802-382-9222 for more info.

"Wild Encounters." McKenna Dickerson and Matthew Dickerson (daughter-in-law and father-in-law) will share images of encounters with the natural world, especially in the wilder places of our public lands: national parks, national forests, and state parks. Free and open to all. On view Feb. 3-March 14

JOHNSON EXHIBITION GALLERY

78 Chateau Road, Middlebury

For hours and info visit middlebury.edu/events

"Cultural Fabrics; The Kimono Through Literary, Cross-Cultural, and Practical Lenses." This multidisciplinary exhibit explores the kimono in dialogue with Japanese literature, Western aesthetics, fashion, and fiber crafts. On view Feb. 9-March 19. Free and open to all.

MIDDLEBURY COLLEGE MUSEUM OF ART

72 Porter Field Road, Middlebury

For more info visit middlebury.edu/museum/exhibitions

"Angels & Ghosts" features evocative oil paintings from artist Damian Stamer's acclaimed "Collaboration Series," that emerge from an artistic partnership between human creativity and artificial intelligence. This exhibit was curated by Dexter Wimberly, and offers a unique meditation on how we might navigate our relationship with AI. On view Jan. 20-April 19.

"Beyond Boundaries: Rethinking African Art at Middlebury" highlights how unequal, and at times

See EXHIBITS on page 8

Get your exhibit listed.

EMAIL ELSIE: elsie@addisonindependent.com

Cosmic Forecast

ARIES: March 21/April 20. Sometime this week you may discover a hidden talent you didn't know you have, Aries. Embrace this new aspect of your identity and put it to use.

TAURUS: April 21/May 21. This is a time when you might feel grounded and secure, Taurus. Your inner strength will allow you to take a calculated risk that will pay off, either with your finances or relationships.

GEMINI: May 22/June 21. You might find that this week a mental fog will lift, leaving you with a crystal-clear vision for the future, Gemini. Start moving toward your goals ASAP.

CANCER: June 22/July 22. Your emotional intelligence is your greatest asset right now, Cancer. You help a friend navigate a tricky situation with ease midweek, and by the weekend you're still going strong.

LEO: July 23/Aug. 23. Right now your confidence is unshakable, Leo. Use all of your energy to advocate for something you believe in. Chances are you will evoke some change as a result.

VIRGO: Aug. 24/Sept. 22. Virgo, order brings you joy, which means you may want to tackle transforming your workspace into a more detailed operation. This will boost your mood and your performance.

LIBRA: Sept. 23/Oct. 23. Romance is a priority right now, Libra. Whether you are single or in a relationship, expect a moment this week when the spark is ignited once more.

SCORPIO: Oct. 24/Nov. 22. A small change in your routine may lead to a big increase in energy, Scorpio. Try rearranging your schedule to see what works best for you and then make it a habit.

SAGITTARIUS: Nov. 23/Dec. 21. Sagittarius, a dream you had is more attainable than you might think. Take the first step and quickly the path will open up for you. Enlist friends to push you even further along.

CAPRICORN: Dec. 22/Jan. 20. Leadership comes naturally to you now, Capricorn. People will be looking to you for guidance this week. Try to deliver it with kindness and no sense of ego.

AQUARIUS: Jan. 21/Feb. 18. Your "Eureka!" moment might come sooner than you would imagine, Aquarius. Pay attention to the details this week and tune your way of thinking toward innovation.

PISCES: Feb. 19/March 20. Nature walks or creative hobbies may nourish your soul this week, Pisces. You might find yourself deeply attuned to the world around you and the beauty you discover.

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Middlebury

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- MARCH 14 — Simone Biles, gymnast, Olympic Gold Medalist (29)
- MARCH 15 — Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Supreme Court Justice (d)
- MARCH 16 — Mark Carney, Prime Minister of Canada (61)
- MARCH 17 — Katie Ledecky, swimmer, Olympic Gold Medalist (29)
- MARCH 18 — Queen Latifah, rapper (56)
- MARCH 19 — Earl Warren, Supreme Court Justice (d)

FAMOUS BIRTHDAYS

CALENDAR

March 12-26

2026

THURSDAY, MARCH 12

"MEAN GIRLS THE MUSICAL" IN VERGENNES. Thursday, March 12, 7 p.m., Vergennes Union High School. Whether you're a "Mathlete" or a "Plastic," you won't want to miss this high-energy show that offers humor, fast-paced music, and mature themes. The Vergennes Union Middle/High School musical production is a spectacle to behold, and it always pleases. Purchase tickets at the door or online at CUR8.com.

HIRSCHFIELD INTERNATIONAL FILM SERIES: THE VOICE OF HIND RAJAB AT MIDDLEBURY COLLEGE. Thursday, March 12, 7 p.m., Dana Auditorium (Sunderland Language Center), College Street. In this 2025 Tunisian film directed by Kaouther Ben Hania, Red Crescent volunteers receive an emergency call. A 6-year-old girl is trapped in a car under Israeli army fire in Gaza, pleading for rescue. While trying to keep her on the line, they do everything they can to get an ambulance to her. Arrive early at 6:30 p.m. for free pizza, popcorn and snacks!

"A ROOM IN THE CASTLE" IN MIDDLEBURY. Thursday, March 12, 7:30 p.m., Town Hall Theater, 72-76 Merchants Row. Middlebury Acting Company presents a

reimagining of the women in Shakespeare's "Hamlet." It focuses on their emotional journeys and struggles for agency in the Danish court, exploring themes of power, class and female relationships. Tickets \$39 generous/\$33 standard/\$28 budget/\$15 student. More info at addisonarts.org.

FRIDAY, MARCH 13

"MEAN GIRLS THE MUSICAL" IN VERGENNES. Friday, March 13, 7 p.m., Vergennes Union High School. Whether you're a "Mathlete" or a "Plastic," you won't want to miss this high-energy show that offers humor, fast-paced music, and mature themes. The Vergennes Union Middle/High School musical production is a spectacle to behold, and it always pleases. Purchase tickets at the door or online at CUR8.com.

"A ROOM IN THE CASTLE" IN MIDDLEBURY. Friday, March 13, 7:30 p.m., Town Hall Theater, 72-76 Merchants Row. See March 12 listing. Tickets \$39 generous/\$33 standard/\$28 budget/\$15 student. More info at addisonarts.org.

SATURDAY, MARCH 14

GREEN MOUNTAIN CLUB HIKE AT SNAKE MOUNTAIN IN WEYBRIDGE. Saturday, March 14, time TBD. Hike Snake Mountain from the east trail on the Weybridge side. Moderate six-mile hike

with 1,075 feet of elevation gain: take the loop that goes to the summit with a beautiful view of the Adirondacks, then hike the east loop around by the beaver ponds. For more information, contact Cary Beckwith at cwbeckwith@yahoo.com or visit gmcbreadloaf.org.

"MEAN GIRLS THE MUSICAL" IN VERGENNES. Saturday, March 14, 3 p.m., Vergennes Union High School. Whether you're a "Mathlete" or a "Plastic," you won't want to miss this high-energy show that offers humor, fast-paced music, and mature themes. Purchase tickets at the door or online at CUR8.com.

"PEACE BY CHOCOLATE" FILM SCREENING AND CHOCOLATE TASTING IN MIDDLEBURY. Saturday, March 14, 6:30 p.m. Town Hall Theater, 72-76 Merchants Row. The Vermont Chocolate Festival opens with a special chocolate tasting and a screening of the documentary film "Peace by Chocolate," which follows a Syrian family as they work to rebuild their chocolate business in Nova Scotia. Tickets at townhalltheater.org. Free to attend with registration — donations are welcome and all proceeds will go to Migrant Justice.

LIVE MUSIC BY HOT NEON

MAGIC IN MIDDLEBURY.

Saturday, March 14, 7-10 p.m., Middlebury American Legion Post 14, 49 Wilson Rd. Dust off your leg warmers, tease up that hair and come dance the night away to '80s pop hits from the MTV era. Open to the public. Admission by donation.

"A ROOM IN THE CASTLE" IN MIDDLEBURY. Saturday, March 14, 7:30 p.m., Town Hall Theater, 72-76 Merchants Row. See March 12 listing. Tickets \$39 generous/\$33 standard/\$28 budget/\$15 student. More info at addisonarts.org.

SONGS AND ARIAS AT MIDDLEBURY COLLEGE.

Saturday, March 14, 7:30 p.m., Mahaney Arts Center, 72 Porter Field Road. Music Department vocal students present a lively evening of songs and arias. This concert will also be streamed, with access to the performance stream available starting at showtime. youtube.com/@robisonhall.

SUNDAY, MARCH 15

CHAMPLAIN VALLEY FIDDLER'S CLUB IN MIDDLEBURY. Sunday, March 15, 11 a.m.-4 p.m., VFW, Exchange Street. Come and join the monthly jam. \$3 cover charge, plus there will be a 50/50 raffle, door prizes and refreshments. All proceeds go to the Fiddlers Club. Anyone who plays a fiddle or any instrument is welcome

to come play, or sing! Bring dancing shoes or boots.

VERMONT CHOCOLATE FESTIVAL IN MIDDLEBURY. Sunday, March 15, 11 a.m.-5 p.m., Town Hall Theater, 72-76 Merchants Row. The First annual Vermont Chocolate Festival celebrates fine and craft chocolate with tastings, live demos, s'mores, games, raffles and more. Presented by Adagio Chocolates. \$30 general admission; \$50 generous admission; \$100 VIP; \$20 students; free for children 12 and under. Admission includes access to all demos and presentations and one chocolate tasting. Family pass discount and tasting add-ons available. Tickets at townhalltheater.org.

"A ROOM IN THE CASTLE" IN MIDDLEBURY. Sunday, March 15, 2 p.m., Town Hall Theater, 72-76 Merchants Row. See March 12 listing. Tickets \$39 generous/\$33 standard/\$28 budget/\$15 student. More info at addisonarts.org.

MY DENTIST'S SON IN FERRISBURGH. Sunday, March 15, 3-4:30 p.m., Ferrisburgh Town Hall 3279 Route 7. This is a space to share tales of magic and miracle and to find meaning in stories that don't seem to fit. All are welcome to share or simply listen. For more

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.	
Channel 1071 Through the Night: VT Media Exchange, Bulletin Board Thursday, March 12 4 a.m. Democracy Now 5 a.m. Press Conferences 8 a.m. Congregational Service 12 p.m. Selectboard 10 p.m. Eckankar 11 p.m. Democracy Now Friday, March 13 4 a.m. Democracy Now 5 a.m. Energy Week 7:30 a.m. Congregational Service 12 p.m. Selectboard 4 p.m. Memorial Baptist Service 10 p.m. Democracy Now Saturday, March 14 4 a.m. Democracy Now 5 a.m. Press Conferences 8 a.m. All Things LGBTQ 10 a.m. Selectboard 5 p.m. All Things LGBTQ 11 p.m. Democracy Now Tuesday, March 17 4 p.m. Memorial Baptist Service 5:30 p.m. Eckankar 6 p.m. Energy Week 7 p.m. Catholic Mass 8 p.m. Public Affairs Sunday, March 15 5 a.m. Press Conferences 9 a.m. Catholic Mass 9:30 a.m. Press Conferences 11 a.m. Memorial Baptist Service 4 p.m. Congregational Service 6:30 p.m. Eckankar 7 p.m. Catholic Mass 11 p.m. Democracy Now Monday, March 16 4:30 a.m. Democracy Now 5:30 a.m. Eckankar 6 a.m. All Things LGBTQ 10 a.m. Selectboard 5 p.m. All Things LGBTQ 11 p.m. Democracy Now Tuesday, March 17 4 p.m. Memorial Baptist Service 5:30 p.m. Eckankar 6 p.m. Energy Week 7 p.m. Catholic Mass 8 p.m. Public Affairs Sunday, March 15 5 a.m. Press Conferences 9 a.m. Catholic Mass 9:30 a.m. Press Conferences 11 a.m. Memorial Baptist Service 4 p.m. Congregational Service 6:30 p.m. Eckankar 7 p.m. Catholic Mass 11 p.m. Democracy Now Monday, March 16 4:30 a.m. Democracy Now 5:30 a.m. Eckankar 6 a.m. All Things LGBTQ 10 a.m. Selectboard 5 p.m. All Things LGBTQ 11 p.m. Democracy Now Tuesday, March 17 4 p.m. Democracy Now 9:30 a.m. Eckankar 10 a.m. Selectboard 7 p.m. Selectboard 9:30 p.m. Eckankar 11 p.m. Democracy Now Channel 1091 Thursday, March 12 5 a.m. Tai Chi 5:30 a.m. Chair Yoga 7 a.m. Yoga for Kids 4 a.m. Democracy Now 9:30 a.m. Eckankar 10 a.m. Selectboard 4 p.m. Congregational Service 5:30 p.m. All Things LGBTQ 7 p.m. Selectboard LIVE 11 p.m. Democracy Now Wednesday, March 18 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 7 p.m. Selectboard 9:30 p.m. Eckankar 11 p.m. Democracy Now 7:30 a.m. School Board Meeting/s 3:30 p.m. Cooking in Harmony 4 p.m. High School Sports Friday, March 13 4 a.m. Gardens & Nature 6 a.m. Tai Chi 6:30 a.m. Yoga 7:30 a.m. School Board Meetings 2 p.m. Authors and Poets 4 p.m. High School Sports Saturday, March 14 5 a.m. Tai Chi 6 a.m. Chair Yoga & Yoga 7:30 a.m. Gardens & Nature 9 a.m. School Board Meeting/s 3 p.m. High School Sports 8 p.m. Gardens & Nature Sunday, March 15 5:30 a.m. Tai Chi 6 a.m. Yoga 7:30 a.m. School Board Meeting/s 2 p.m. High School Sports 8 p.m. Authors and Poets Monday, March 16 5:30 a.m. Tai Chi 6 a.m. Chair Yoga 7 a.m. Cooking in Harmony 12 p.m. Authors and Poets 3 p.m. High School Sports 6:30 p.m. School Board Meetings Tuesday, March 17 5:30 a.m. Tai Chi 6 a.m. Yoga 8 a.m. School Board Meeting/s 3 p.m. High School Sports 8 p.m. Authors and Poets 9 p.m. Music from around VT Wednesday, March 18 5 a.m. Tai Chi 5:30 a.m. Chair Yoga 7 a.m. Authors and Poets 9 a.m. School Board Meeting/s 3 p.m. High School Sports 10 p.m. Authors and Poets					

information and to RSVP, visit mydentistsson.com.

CHORAL EVENSING IN MIDDLEBURY. Sunday, March 15, 4 p.m., St. Stephen's Episcopal Church on the Green. The Choir of St. Stephen's will sing music of the Renaissance at Choral Evensong, including Adrian Batten's Fourth Evening Service and G.P. da Palestrina's famous motet, Sicut Cervus. 2025-26 marks the 500th anniversary of the birth of Palestrina, whose use of dissonance and polyphony is still studied by aspiring professional musicians.

MONDAY, MARCH 16

BLARNEY PILGRIMS: IRISH MUSIC IN MONKTON.

Monday, March 16, 7 p.m., Monkton Town Hall, 92 Monkton Ridge Road. Monkton Museum and Historical Society is hosting Addison County's Blarney Pilgrims. Formed in 2023 as a way to congregate over a pint and practice jigs and reels, the band has evolved into its current form and is ready for a wider audience. Musicians from Middlebury and Bristol will share lively traditional Irish tunes in their delightfully informal, yet authentic fashion. Donations for the band warmly encouraged.

TUESDAY, MARCH 17

POPS 2026: JAZZ THROUGH THE AGES IN BRISTOL.

Tuesday, March 17, 6 p.m., Mount Abraham Union High School, 220 Airport Drive. Join the Mount Abe musicians for their annual Pops Concert featuring jazz music from across the decades. Special guests Swingin' Seven will perform alongside student musicians. Doors open at 6 p.m., the middle school concert begins at 6:30 p.m., and the high school concert begins at 7:30 p.m. Admission by donation at the door.

"THE ARTIST'S WAY" READING AND PRACTICE GROUP IN VERGENNES.

Tuesday, March 17, 6 p.m., 3 Squares Cafe, 141 Main St. Weekly study and discussion group working through Julia Cameron's "The Artist's Way," a 12-week method of creative unblocking and self-discovery. Open to first-time and returning participants in a supportive, non-hierarchical setting. Coffee,

tea, and pastries available for purchase. Free.

ROKEBY MUSEUM VIRTUAL BOOK GROUP.

Tuesday, March 17, 6-7 p.m., online. Discussion of "The Zorg: A Tale of Greed and Murder that Inspired the Abolition of Slavery" by Siddharth Kara, examining the doomed 1780 voyage of the ship Zorg and its role in the early fight against slavery. Free. More info at rokebymuseum.org.

GOITSE IN MIDDLEBURY.

Tuesday, March 17, 7:30-9 p.m., Mahaney Arts Center, Olin C. Robison Concert Hall, Middlebury College, 72 Porter Field Road. Celebrate St. Patrick's Day with the award-winning Celtic quintet Goitse. \$30 general admission, \$20 Middlebury ID holders/PASS members, \$10 youth under 21. \$5 Middlebury students. Tickets at go.middlebury.edu/tickets.

THURSDAY, MARCH 19

ILSLEY CLASSIC FILM CLUB WATCHES "THE ADVENTURES OF ROBIN HOOD" IN MIDDLEBURY.

Thursday, March 19, 1 p.m., Marquis Theater, Main St. The club this spring watches four films with the theme "The 1930s in Color!" Join fellow community film lovers to see the films at the theater, followed by a short discussion of the film. Popcorn is on us.

PIANO CONCERT IN BRANDON.

Thursday, March 19, 6 p.m., Brandon Congregational Church. Concert pianist Alan Chiang is returning to the area to share another free concert, which will last around an hour and include works by Bach and Brahms.

FRIDAY, MARCH 20

LUNCHTIME CONCERT SERIES IN VERGENNES.

Friday, March 20, 12:15 p.m., St. Paul's Episcopal Church, 6 Park St. Sallie Mack, former co-founder and co-director of the Ripton Community Coffee House, and Rosi Gowdey, storyteller and social change advocate, present an eclectic program of folk, bluegrass ballads and original compositions on guitar and keyboard. Free and open to all.

COFFEEHOUSE IN THE LIBRARY IN STARKSBORO.

Friday, March 20, 7-9 p.m., at the library in the village. Erin Cassels-Brown kicks off springtime and a new music series that highlights Addison County musicians, organized by Johnne Dickason of Starksboro. Some refreshments will be available. Donations welcome. Let's give these local players some love.

ZACH NUGENT'S DEAD SET IN MIDDLEBURY.

Friday, March 20, 7:30 p.m., Town Hall Theater, 72-76 Merchants Row. Zach Nugent's Dead Set brings the music of the Grateful Dead to life with note-for-note precision and high-energy improvisation, featuring selections from across the band's expansive catalog. Tickets \$25 standard/\$35 generous. More info at addisonarts.org.

SATURDAY, MARCH 21

GREEN MOUNTAIN CLUB HIKE ON BRISTOL TRAIL NETWORK.

Saturday, March 21. This is a great mud season hike because the gravel soils in Bristol drain well so the trail is always open. The 3-mile loop around the village offers a scenic mix of history and geography and takes 2.5-3 hours. The elevation gain is under 100 feet, but there are some steep sections and uneven terrain. Bring microspikes and poles. Excellent options for snacks/lunch in Bristol before or afterward. Meet at 9 a.m. Register by contacting Porter Knight at knight@gmavt.net or 802-343-3920. More info at gmcbreadloaf.org.

BIODIVERSITY BUILDERS: UNDERSTANDING YOUR SITE IN VERGENNES.

Saturday, March 21, 10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m., Bixby Library, Main Street. First in a series of hands-on workshops demonstrating how to bring native plants into outdoor spaces. Native plants boost biodiversity, support pollinators and birds, and reduce maintenance, fertilizer use, and runoff. Learn why native plants matter, how to assess and prepare your site, choose the right plants, convert your lawn step-by-step, and maintain long-term success. Presented by Lisa Sausville and Ashley Robinson. For more

information email to Ashley at arobinsonld@gmail.com. Registration link: tinyurl.com/BuildyBioAtBixby.

THE MET: LIVE IN HD: "TRISTAN UND ISOLDE" IN MIDDLEBURY.

Saturday, March 21, noon, Town Hall Theater, 72-76 Merchants Row. The Met Opera's live broadcast of Wagner's transcendent meditation on love and death. \$24 adults/\$10 students. More info at addisonarts.org.

TUESDAY, MARCH 24

"THE ARTIST'S WAY" READING AND PRACTICE GROUP IN VERGENNES.

Tuesday, March 24, 6 p.m., 3 Squares Cafe, 141 Main St. Weekly study and discussion group working through Julia Cameron's "The Artist's Way," a 12-week method of creative unblocking and self-discovery. Open to first-time and returning participants in a supportive, non-hierarchical setting. Coffee, tea, and pastries available for purchase. Free.

THE MOTH IN MIDDLEBURY.

Tuesday, March 24, 7 p.m., Town Hall Theater, 72-76 Merchants Row. Listen to true stories or share your own at this open-mic storytelling competition. The evening's theme is "Fumbles and Fouls,"

inviting five-minute stories about mistakes, missteps and lessons learned. More info at themoth.org and addisonarts.org.

THURSDAY, MARCH 26

MOUNT ABRAHAM SPRING MUSICAL "ONCE UPON A ONE MORE TIME" IN BRISTOL.

Thursday, March 26, 7 p.m., high school auditorium. Powered by the chart-topping hits of Britney Spears, the undisputed Princess of Pop, "Once Upon A One More Time" turns our favorite fairy tales upside down with a clever twist! When a fairy godmother goes rogue and plops copies of "The Feminine Mystique" in the laps of classic heroines, the damsels embark on a quest to rewrite their stories and redefine "happily ever after." The show is described as "colorful PG13 hip hop fantasy" and "a big, modern, musical dance party, with Britney's beating heart at its core." Tickets: \$15 adult/\$12 seniors and children under 12. Purchase online at bit.ly/oncenc.

See more

CALENDAR LISTINGS

Online!

ADDISONINDEPENDENT.COM

Ilsley Library's Classic Film Club Winter/Spring 2026 Session At the Marquis Theatre!

Join fellow community film lovers to watch this session's films at the Marquis Theatre, followed by a short discussion of the film. What a great opportunity to treat yourself to a delicious southwestern lunch before or even during the film. As always, the popcorn is on us!

This session our theme is "The 1930's in Color."
Will run February - April.

All movies will begin at 1:00 pm



March 19
@ 1:00 PM

THE ADVENTURES OF ROBIN HOOD



April 2
@ 1:00 PM

THE WIZARD OF OZ

FREE ADMISSION courtesy of Ilsley Public Library.
Marquis is open for lunch beginning at 11:30am.



middleburymarquis.com



EXHIBITS

continued from page 5

violent, encounters among Africa, Europe and the United States have long configured Art History's understandings of African art, and how

our interests and epistemologies infuse, shape and distort our representations of Africa in the museum. On view Jan. 20-April. 19.

PHOTOPPLACE GALLERY

3 Park Street, Middlebury

For more info visit photoplacegallery.com.

"Cut. Paste. Transform.," a dynamic exhibition exploring the art of photo-based collage. Juror Francine Weiss, Ph.D has selected works that reflect over a century of photographic reinvention through cutting, layering and reassembling images — spanning analog, digital and hybrid approaches. The exhibition will be on view March 6-28.

SPARROW ART SUPPLY

44 Main St., Middlebury

For more info visit sparrowartsupply.com

"Spotlight on Chris Nathan." This exhibit features mixed media by Chris Nathan. Plein air ink reflections on home, place and moments easily missed. On view through the month of March.

GOITSE

continued from page 4

introducing their sound to an even broader global audience.

Performance Details

Goitse will perform at the Mahaney Arts Center's Olin C. Robison Concert Hall on Tuesday, March 17, at 7:30 p.m. Tickets are \$30 for the general public, \$20 for Middlebury faculty/staff and alumni, \$10 for youth, and \$5 for Middlebury College students; tickets are going fast. Information about free and discounted ticket programs is available at go.middlebury.edu/boxoffice. For tickets, further information, or assistance with accessibility services, call (802) 443-MIDD (6433) or visit middlebury.edu/arts.



Hear Goitse play in Middlebury on Patrick's Day, Tuesday, March 17.

PHOTO / EDDIE KAVANAGH

DEAD SET

continued from page 4

Experience a musical journey like no other as Dead Set transports you through the ethereal realms of the Dead's extensive catalog. From the cosmic explorations of "Dark Star" to the uplifting anthems of "Sugar Magnolia," every song is delivered with unwavering authenticity and a contagious enthusiasm that will leave you dancing and singing along all night long. Don't miss your chance to be part of

this extraordinary celebration of Jerry Garcia and the recently departed Bob Weir's enduring legacy. Immerse yourself in a one-of-a-kind experience, and feel free to dance or kick back and enjoy the music.

Tickets \$25/regular and \$35/generous at townhalltheater.org or call 802-382-9222. Cash bar available.



Get tickets now for Zach Nugent's Dead Set on Friday, March 20, at Town Hall Theater in Middlebury.

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PUZZLES

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ACROSS

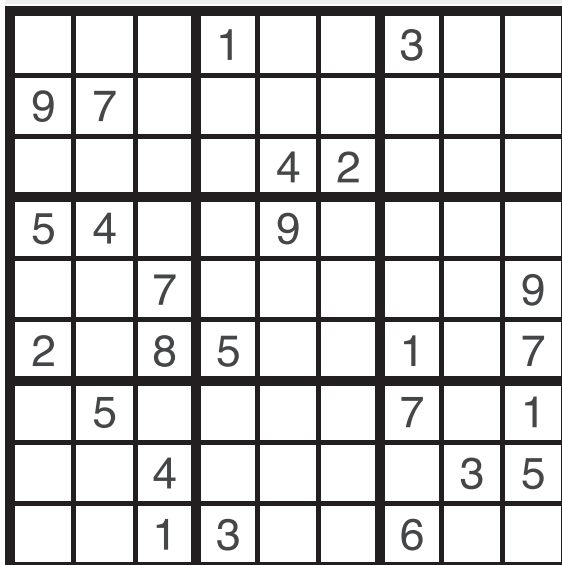
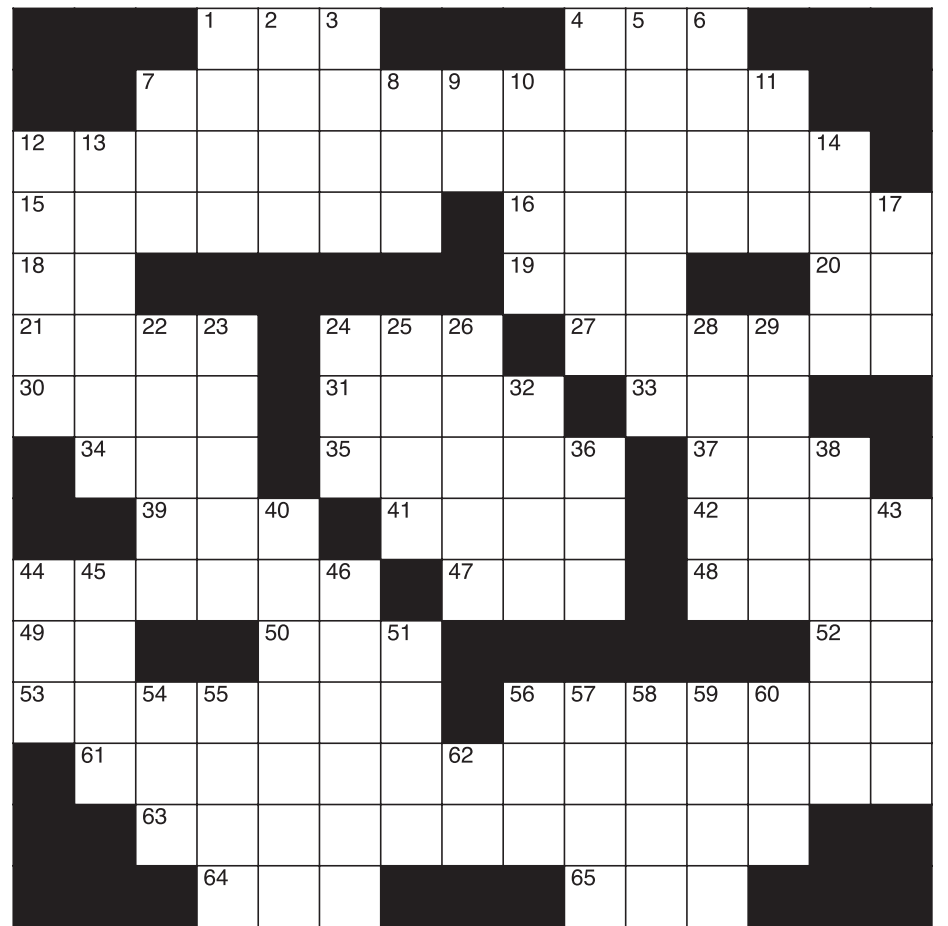
- 1. Blockchain-based entity
- 4. A woolen cap of Scottish origin
- 7. Painted with glue
- 12. Legendary crooner
- 15. Structure made with strips of wood
- 16. Tropical fruits
- 18. Commercial
- 19. Comedienne
- 20. The Ocean State
- 21. Ancient Scot
- 24. Basics
- 27. Stated propositions
- 30. Scottish island group

- 31. Expression of annoyance
- 33. Large tree
- 34. Engine additive
- 35. Conspiracy
- 37. Drunkard
- 39. Someone who is morally reprehensible
- 41. Ancient Syrian city
- 42. Mild yellow Dutch cheese made in balls
- 44. Carry (slang)
- 47. Sweet potato
- 48. European river
- 49. The Golden State
- 50. Windy City ballplayer
- 52. New Testament
- 53. Possess spiritually
- 56. A treeless grassy plain

- 61. Popular historical novel
- 63. In a law-abiding way
- 64. A place to sleep
- 65. Criticize

DOWN

- 1. Impression in a surface
- 2. Computer language
- 3. Relating to the ear
- 4. Occupant
- 5. Member of Great Plains people
- 6. Social media firm
- 7. Digital audiotape
- 8. Midway between east and southeast
- 9. Chronic,



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 13.

progressive disease

- 10. Chinese lute
- 11. Not wet
- 12. Moves wings up and down
- 13. Communication devices
- 14. Swiss river
- 17. Female sibling
- 22. Receive
- 23. Relating to a type
- 24. General's assistant (abbr.)
- 25. Steep bank

26. Taxi driver

- 28. Moves into without difficulty
- 29. Bicycle manufacturer
- 32. Traditional rhythmic pattern
- 36. Fugitives are on it
- 38. Bitter-tasting organic substance
- 40. Die
- 43. Matched
- 44. Literary genre __-fi
- 45. Cannot

46. Pounded

- 51. British rock group
- 54. Debt relief order
- 55. 2006 NL Cy Young winner
- 56. Green vegetable
- 57. Tough outer skin of fruit
- 58. __ Spumante (Italian wine)
- 59. Ailments
- 60. Famed singer Charles
- 62. Camper

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Spotlight @ Sparrow

Chris Nathan

mixed media

Plein air ink reflections on home, place, and moments easily missed.

On view thru March



ASK A MASTER GARDENER

SPRING COVER CROPS FOR THE VEGGIE GARDEN



Amy Simone is a UVM Extension Master Gardener volunteer from South Burlington.

The ground may still be covered in snow, but now is an excellent time to start planning to improve the soil in your vegetable gardens for the planting season ahead.

By **AMY SIMONE**

Cover crops are effective tools in the gardener's toolbox for soil improvement. While some are food crops, they are not planted for harvest. Instead, they share the beneficial

qualities of their species to either build organic matter and tilth, add nitrogen, suppress weeds, and/or fight soil compaction in your garden.

Cover crops planted in the spring can provide a number of benefits to your garden right at the beginning of the growing season. Start by determining what your goals are for the cover crop. If your soil is compacted and simply needs to be loosened up prior to planting

your summer crops, a round of oats, fava bean, field peas, or annual rye could be planted.

If, however, your soil's needs are greater, or not precisely known, it is best to start by assessing its deficiencies or imbalances with a soil test, available at: go.uvm.edu/soiltest. Using the results of the test, choose the cover crops that best address the needs of your soil.

Soil that is low in nitrogen fertility will benefit from a legume cover crop like field peas, fava beans, hairy vetch, crimson clover, and red clover. If the issue is a lack of organic matter or a need for better tilth, cover crops like oats or annual rye can provide that to your soil.

In recent years, garden centers and online seed providers have made it easier for home gardeners to find cover crop seeds. They can be found both in bulk and pre-packaged options. Blends of two or more species of plants, such as field peas and oats, take the guesswork out of application rates and supply multiple benefits.

Ideal cover crops for spring can germinate at colder temperatures, for example, 38 F for oats, or 42 F for crimson clover. This allows you to put in a crop as soon as the snow is gone and the soil can be worked. Some may even be frost-seeded, using the spring's natural freeze-thaw cycle to ensure good seed-to-soil contact.

Most of these crops will mature between 45 and 60 days and they should be terminated 2 to 3 weeks before you intend to plant in the soil. This means that you may plan to plant your cover crops in March and into early April.

Unlike a fall cover crop, which dies off naturally in the winter cold, you will need to plan how and when to terminate your spring crops. Pay attention to timing — some cover crops (especially annual rye) should not be allowed to flower to avoid creating an unintentional bed of weeds. Many of the crops can simply be chopped and dropped or tilled under and will break down, improving biomass. Follow the directions for your specific crops to extract the most benefits from them.

Another excellent use of early cover crops is as a living or green mulch. Rather than laying down straw, cover bare soil around your vegetable plants with a ground cover such as white clover or lacy phacelia. These plants can suppress weeds and reduce soil erosion while also producing flowers for pollinators.

Your vegetable garden soil works extremely hard for you. Give it a boost with early cover crops to get your growing season off to an excellent start.



Legume cover crops can help improve soil fertility for vegetable plants while providing nectar and pollen to beneficial insects.

PHOTO / DEBRA HELEBA

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Pet of the Week



Hello Elain!

Elain is a 6 year old guinea pig who lives with 4 younger pig sisters in East Middlebury. She is feisty and a leader by nature. She loves pets, treats, and bossing her sisters around!

Submitted by Lena Poynter of East Middlebury.



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Pets In Need

HOMeward BOUND

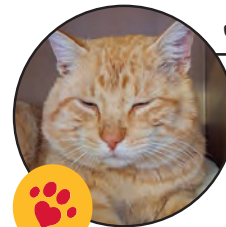
Addison County's Humane Society

Hoodoo



Hoodoo is shy and is looking for an understanding person who will let him warm up on his own timeline. He is currently residing in a foster home because he was so fearful and withdrawn in the shelter setting. Once Hoodoo realizes that he has nothing to be afraid of, he opens up and is an affectionate and friendly cat, so don't let his quiet demeanor chase away your interest

Jeremy



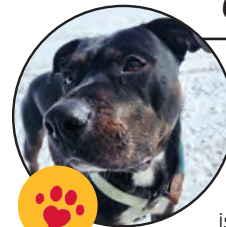
Meet **Jeremy!** This handsome boy came to us as a stray. After being initially quite shy, he has warmed up to staff and is ready to find his forever home. He is healthy but FIV+, so he would need to live an indoor-only life. If you're looking for a hunky orange cat, we would love the chance to introduce you to Jeremy!

Jojo



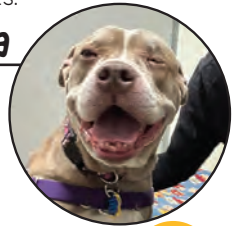
Jojo is an absolute sweetheart who prefers the company of people over other animals. She was previously living in a multi-animal household, and it was too stressful for her. Even the presence of energetic small children sent her hiding. At the shelter, she has a space of her own and she has quickly shown us how much she loves it. She is very nifty and affectionate towards staff and volunteers. We are hoping to find her a low-energy, adult household where she can flourish and enjoy all the things a house cat should! Her previous owner said she is very snuggly and would fall asleep next to her every night.

Cicada



Cicada is a handsome, happy boy with a lot of love to give! He gets excited easily and can be a bit jumpy for greetings, but is working really hard on his "sit" cue. He's lived with other dogs and seems to enjoy the company of a canine friend. He is house-trained and crate-trained. When not outside to play, he loves cardboard box enrichment and puzzle toys. Cicada can live with older children and teenagers. He has no exposure to cats.

Orla



Orla is a wiggly girl with a heart of gold! She loves being near people and will happily sit on your lap for snuggle time. Orla has lived with dogs previously, but tends to guard toys from other dogs, so we're looking for a home where she can be the only pet. We're unsure of her previous exposure to cats and children. Orla can't see out of her left eye and can easily get startled by movements on that side of her body. Overall, she's coping really well and doesn't seem bothered by the eye. Orla enjoys walks, playtime, and chew toys. This loving gremlin is looking for her forever home and endless cuddles!

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WHAT'S HAPPENING

NEXT DOOR

Hinesburg Artist Series to present a celebration of American music

The 250th birthday of the United States of America is the inspiration for the music to be presented by the Hinesburg Artist Series on Sunday, March 15, at 2 and 4:30 p.m., at St. Jude Catholic Church in Hinesburg. The South County Chorus and Hinesburg Artist Series Orchestra, under the direction of Rufus Patrick, will perform a program featuring American composers, as well as music with a Vermont connection.

As the nation prepares to celebrate 250 years since its founding and Vermont marks 235 years of statehood, this concert will combine regional pride with timeless American song, spotlighting selections from Randall Thompson's "Frostiana." This composition, including "The Road Not Taken" and "Choose Something Like a Star," draws directly from the Vermont-born poet



Rufus Patrick leads the South County Chorus on Feb. 23. The Hinesburg Artist Series will have their next concert on March 15.

SUBMITTED PHOTO

See HINESBURG on page 15



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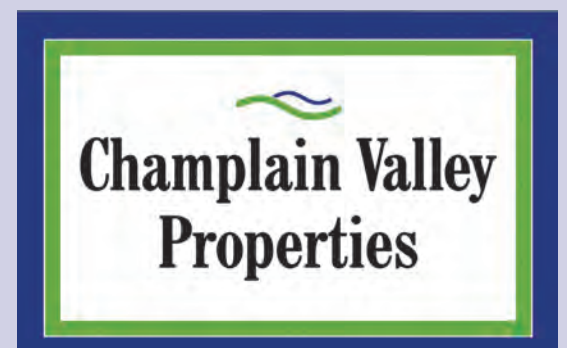
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HINESBURG

continued from page 14

Robert Frost, weaving Vermont's landscape and spirit into a national celebration. Also featured will be "American Mass," by Ron Kean. This Missa Brevis cleverly merges American hymns and

spirituals with traditional choral liturgy.

"We are excited to bring to the community a variety of exciting music to celebrate America and Vermont," said Patrick, HAS Music Director and founder of the organization.

The Hinesburg Artist Series Orchestra will perform "American Folk Rhapsody," by Claire Grundman and "Variations on a Shaker Tune," by Aaron Copeland, while the new HAS woodwind quintet will perform "Novelette," by Kevin Kaisershot. The South County Chorus and HAS Orchestra will also present "My Country 'Tis of Thee," by Mary McDonald, "How Can I Keep from Singing," by Taylor Davis, "You Raise Me Up," by Rolf Lovland, and "Colossus," by Paul Barker.

The featured guest artist is Margaret Roddy. She and accompanist Evan Allen will perform "Cantilene" for clarinet and piano by Luis Cahuzac.

"We are so grateful to our community for supporting our performances," Patrick added.

Tickets for the concert are \$25 (free for children under 12) and available at the door or on the HAS website, hinesburgartistseries.org.

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Local caterers help make for the perfect occasion

By MARIN HOWELL

ADDISON COUNTY — Behind the scenes of any wedding is a group of people working to ensure the happy couple's day is as memorable as possible. Oftentimes that team includes the caterers that bring the couple's food-related visions to life and support them throughout their big day.

Addison County is home to a variety of catering teams that specialize in anything from wood-fired pizza to Asian-inspired cuisine. Local teams are often flexible in their offerings and dedicated to helping couples develop the perfect menu.

"I love to see happy people and enjoy the fact that they enjoyed the food," said William Wisell of Farmers Market Pizza. "A lot of people put in a lot of time to these things for their wedding day; you've got people that think about it their whole life...and that day's a big day, so just making that day theirs is what I strive for."

William and Cristy Wisell make up the two-person team behind Farmers Market Pizza, a mobile wood-fired

catering company based in Vergennes. Like other caterers around the county, Farmers Market Pizza handles a variety of other gatherings in addition to catering weddings — from baby showers to corporate celebrations.

The pair previously owned and operated Cucina Antica restaurant in Shelburne, where they operated a wood-fired pizza oven at the local farmers market. That work led to the launch of their frozen pizza line, Half Baked Pizza. They later sold the business and returned to their roots of catering with the pizza oven through Farmers Market Pizza (www.farmersmarketpizzavt.com).

"When we went to Half Baked and started doing the production and manufacturing, we just lost that personal touch with people, so this gives us that opportunity to be connected with people and showcase Vermont," Cristy said of the catering business.

In each of the operations they've run, one of their main focuses has been offering clean, GMO-free options. The pair grows many of the ingredients they use at their Vergennes property.

"We try to grow most of our vegetables for our grazing tables...flowers for our décor, herbs for our pizzas," Cristy said.

Farmers Market Pizza offers packages for pizza and other catering options, all customizable. For appetizers, the caterer's offerings include grazing tables — a spread filled with charcuterie, veggies and fruits, cheeses, and other snacks — as well as wood-fired chicken wings, beef skewers and salad bars.

During the summer, the pair focuses on their wood-fired pizza and enhancements like appetizers, salads and dessert tables. Cristy noted serving ciabatta-style pizza allows the pair to whip up meals quickly.

"We can definitely feed 100 people in about 35 minutes, and that's the process of us pre-building and then just cooking and continually refilling the board before pizzas run out," she said.

Winter catering options include buffet-style pulled pork, roasted turkey and other protein options served with various sides.

William noted the pair welcomes couples to make the menu their own.

"One time we had a guy who was a big time game hunter. He brought wild boar, he brought venison, he brought elk, a whole bunch of stuff for the pizzas and we put that on all the pizzas," he said.

Once food service begins, Cristy and William find a rhythm and work to ensure the event goes smoothly.

"We can circumvent any obstacles that a wedding day will put in front of you,

and believe me, there are obstacles," William said. "This allows us to not be one of the worries, and when you don't have to worry about your food on your wedding day, that's a load off your mind."

Making sure couples and guests can celebrate worry-free is also the goal for the team at Crooked Ladle Catering in Middlebury.

"Our job is to help people feel relaxed and for no one to have to worry about a single thing," said Jenny Urban, who runs Crooked Ladle with her husband, Lou.

The pair opened the business in 2022, bringing to the table prior experience at local eateries like the Black Sheep Bistro in Vergennes and Bristol's Bobcat Café. Crooked Ladle began as a catering

(See *Caterers*, Page 7)

"We can circumvent any obstacles that a wedding day will put in front of you, and believe me, there are obstacles ... and when you don't have to worry about your food on your wedding day, that's a load off your mind."
— William Wisell



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● ● ● ● ● *Questions to ask when interviewing caterers*

A wedding reception is a joyous occasion that affords newlyweds and their guests an opportunity to celebrate into the evening. Various components combine to ensure a memorable reception, but food is a major highlight of the festivities for guests. That places a significant responsibility on couples to find a reception center or third-party caterer who can dish up food that will have guests saying “I do” to a great meal.

These considerations and questions can help couples find the right caterer for their weddings.

Does my venue mandate use of a particular catering service?

The wedding planning website Zola advises that many wedding venues require couples to use a specific catering service. They may have an arrangement with a particular caterer who they trust, or the venue has in-house chefs and servers. In the earliest planning stages after the wedding date has been set, a couple should be sure to pick a venue that will serve the best food possible. Couples who have a specific caterer in mind may need to shop around for a venue that will allow outside vendors.

Identify your preferred meal

First and foremost, a couple should know how they want to have their food served and inquire with potential

caterers about their standard options. Service types often include a formal sit-down dinner reception, a buffet dinner service, a family-style dinner, or a more minimal cocktail offering without a full dinner. The couple can cross out prospects that don’t offer the type of service they desire most.

Ask what’s included

A couple should determine if a catering service offers food prepared by professionals, the amount of flexibility related to menus, if table settings are included, and if cleanup is part of the fee. Full-service catering typically includes all of this, while more limited service may be food brought in that requires the venue’s own staff to serve and clean.

Compile the right questions

It’s important to ask caterers some key questions to narrow down prospects. Some of these include:

- Are you a participant in any local business associations?
- What events with a similar concept have you catered?
- How many weddings do you book each year?
- Will my wedding be the only event you cater on that day?
- How many guests can you accommodate?
- Do you handle special food requests, such as gluten-free or kosher

meals?

- How many chefs and cooks prepare the meal, or are meals exclusively prepared by the business owner?
- Do you allow substitutions or customization to a set menu?
- Do you have references for other events you have catered?
- Do you have any preferred vendors?
- What do we need to know and do regarding delivery?

Keep location in mind

The distance a caterer has to travel to cater the wedding will affect the price. It’s helpful to find a caterer who knows the venue or has had experience with a similar place.

What are the contingency plans?

When interviewing caterers, Cvent, an event management software company, suggests asking about any last-minute changes they’ve dealt with to gauge how the caterer handles problem-solving. Inquire about how they adapt if a certain menu item is no longer readily available or what they do if a piece of equipment breaks down the day of an event? Answers to these types of questions can separate seasoned professionals from those caterers who may not be as experienced.

Food is a vital component of a wedding reception, which underscores the significance of finding a talented and experienced caterer.

— Metro Creative





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This is what people spend on weddings

Vermont is a relatively small state among the 50 that make up the United States, but it pretty much falls in the middle when comparing how many weddings are hosted here each year, the number of guests at each wedding, and the average cost of weddings. That comes from The Wedding Report Inc., which tracks trends in the industry nationally.

The company reports that the average cost of a wedding in Vermont in 2025 was \$39,616.

That number probably makes most engaged couples say, “Wow!”

And it is reported that the nationwide average for 2025 was \$32,899, so that puts

the Green Mountain State a little above average.

What is the most expensive state for a wedding in 2025? Hawaii. The average wedding price there was \$53,369, followed closely by the District of Columbia at \$49,810.

Where are the most affordable weddings located? Mississippi (\$23,432) and New Mexico (\$23,776) represented the most budget-friendly states for couples in 2025.

But local couples need not freak out about the price of a wedding quite so much. The Wedding Report’s numbers are for the “Average” costs, which reflects the total economic footprint of the industry.

For some, a better thing to look at is the “median” amount spent on weddings, which provides a more realistic middle-point for typical wedding budgets by removing ultra-luxury outliers.

In Vermont, the median spent on a wedding in 2025 was \$19,462.

That’s still above the national median, which was \$18,23.

Average costs are often skewed by a small number of ultra-luxury weddings costing six figures or more. The median spend identifies the exact middle point of the market, where 50% of couples spend more and 50% spend less, providing a more attainable target for most planners, according to The Wedding Report.

Hawaii, not surprisingly, also had the highest median spend at \$21,117, followed by Massachusetts (\$20,584) and D.C. (\$20,381).

The Wedding Report asked what is the “typical” national wedding spend? The fact that the median spending falling between \$15,000 and \$20,000 seems to indicate that many couples are successfully finding value by inviting fewer guests to their wedding and prioritizing key amenities, like venue, catering or entertainment.

In 2025, Vermont hosted 4,564 wedding. That is a small fraction (0.226947%) of the total number of weddings in the U.S.,

2,011,044. But it does show the popularity of Vermont as a location for weddings as the Vermont population was only 0.1996% of the country’s total population.

California leads the nation in volume with 208,178 weddings in 2025, followed by Texas (175,052) and Florida (158,764).

Why does Nevada have such a high wedding volume relative to its population?

Despite being a smaller state, Nevada (79,271 weddings) remains a major outlier due to its status as a destination for elopements and quick-ceremony services, particularly in the Las Vegas market.

Vermont is slightly above average in the Wedding Guest Count; it was 136 in 2025. The national average number of guests at weddings was 127.

Which state has the largest average wedding guest count? Maryland with an average of 169 guests per wedding, followed by New Jersey (168) and New Hampshire (164). The Wedding Report assesses that this reflects strong regional traditions of larger, multi-generational community celebrations.

Nevada (48) and Hawaii (79) show the lowest guest counts because they are primary destination hubs. The travel and logistical requirements of a destination wedding naturally result in smaller, more intimate guest lists.

The Wedding Report that in 2026, the guest count will be the primary driver of total cost for weddings. Every additional guest adds significant variable expenses in catering, rentals, and bar service, with the average cost per guest now ranging between \$200 and \$250 depending on the venue type.

— John S. McCright





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3 tips to create a reasonable wedding budget ● ● ● ●

Weddings are momentous occasions in the lives of couples. Recently engaged couples likely know that weddings can be expensive. The experts at the online wedding resource Zola estimated that couples would spend around \$36,000 on their weddings in 2025. If that figure produces some sticker shock, couples can rest easy in the knowledge that such estimates reflect a host of variables, not all of which are applicable to each wedding. It also can calm couples' nerves to develop a budget as the first step in wedding planning. Once a budget is worked out, couples can then use that to guide their decisions.

The need to budget for a wedding may seem obvious, but couples, particularly those tying the knot for the first time, might not know where to begin. Couples facing such a situation can consider these three budget-building tips for their wedding.

1. Identify where funds are coming from. Parents of the bride were once the traditional sources of wedding funds, but that's less common than it used to be. According The Knot Real Weddings Study, the average age of marriage in 2024 was 32 years. That means many couples are now on relatively firm financial footing by the time they get married, prompting some to pay for the entire affair themselves. Couples looking

to establish a wedding budget can first identify who's helping to fund it. If couples are going it alone, then this is a simple step in the process. If parents and other relatives offer to pitch in, couples can count such offers toward the total amount of money they have to fund the big day.

2. Consider working with a financial planner. Another strategy to building a budget is to work with a professional to determine how much you can afford. Many couples now live together prior to getting engaged, and Zola notes that more than half (53 percent) even shop for rings together.

3. Identify your priorities. The Knot reports that venue and rentals accounted for slightly more than one-quarter (27 percent) of couples' wedding budgets in 2025. While venues and rentals are typically the biggest expense when planning a wedding, couples building a budget should identify their biggest priority. Some might want a stunning venue, while others might feel a backyard ceremony is perfect for them. Identifying your biggest priorities and then devoting enough funds to those areas can guide the budget-building process.

Weddings can be expensive. Budgeting can help couples get the wedding they want without breaking the bank.

— Metro Creative



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Caterers

(Continued from Page 3)

service, later expanding with a restaurant and event space at 51 Main St. in Middlebury.

Over the years their team has grown into a 20-person staff that Urban noted is instrumental to Crooked Ladle's work.

That team continues to offer catering services, working around 100 weddings in addition to other celebrations since starting in 2022. Couples can peruse a few different packages and menu inspirations on Crooked Ladle's website, which can be customized and built off of.

"It just depends on the couple and what they want," Urban said.

Crooked Ladle's offerings range from Asian to French-inspired fare, and the team has worked with couples on anything from slider sandwiches to 184-person plated dinners. In addition to food, Crooked Ladle also offer bar service.

Past wedding menus have included gnocchi with fresh market vegetables, seared duck breast, flatbread bites, and pasta with kalamata olive and fire-roasted tomato chicken.

"Often we'll start with the question of, 'What's you and your fiancé's favorite food to eat,' or 'What's food that you like to celebrate with,' and then we'll design a menu based on that," Urban said.

Each celebration has its own flavor, from smaller gatherings to elaborate wedding dinners. Urban highlighted some memorable moments from this past wedding season, such as whipping up espresso martini shots while guests danced to Sabrina Carpenter's "Espresso" and catering a few fully-vegan weddings.

"That was a cool challenge for us," Urban said.

Regardless of what's on the menu, one of Urban's favorite parts of the job is connecting with couples. She noted those connections often last long after the vows are said.

"(Crooked Ladle recently hosted) a

birthday party for somebody who had gotten married with us in our very first year catering as Crooked Ladle in 2022," Urban said. "It was so fun to see the people that were at the wedding and meet the baby and hear about their life, and knowing that you're part of their life at that very beginning part of the wedding day is kind of fun."

Working with local couples is also a highlight for Andy Buxton of Mave Catering, formerly Buxton's Store catering. The former Buxton's Store owner has offered catering services for around 15 years, both on his own and as part of other establishments.

Buxton noted that he likes to specialize in smaller venues, with parties of up to 100 guests being the sweet spot. As for the menu, Buxton works with couples to build the lineup of food offerings from

scratch.

"I like to say to my clients, 'The slate is clean, I will build you any kind of menu you want,'" he said.

Buxton works within couple's budgets and can provide examples of menu options if that's what they're looking for.

He noted that with each bill he sends, he'll make a note listing all of the local producers he sourced ingredients from.

"I write down when I send the bill that 'I used cream from Monument Farms and cheese from Cabot and local beef from so and so,'" Buxton explained. "We really focused on, as long as it was within the client's budget, really supporting local as much as possible."

His favorite part of the job is watching a couple's plan become reality and helping inspire their wedding day menu.

"The best thing is definitely being able to work with the customers one on one and seeing what they wanted (come together)," he said.

Those interested in learning more about Mave Catering can contact Buxton at 802-989-8720.

"We really focused on, as long as it was within the client's budget, really supporting local as much as possible."

— Andy Buxton



THE CROOKED LADLE Catering team whips up a meal for guests. Crooked Ladle is one of several local catering options for couple's planning to say, "I do," and the team's offerings range from slider sandwiches to 184-person plated dinners.

Photo courtesy of Crooked Ladle Catering



AMONG THE OFFERINGS of the catering team at Farmers Market Pizza are grazing tables, such as the one pictured here, filled with charcuterie, fruits, veggies, cheeses and other snacks.

Photo courtesy of Farmers Market Pizza



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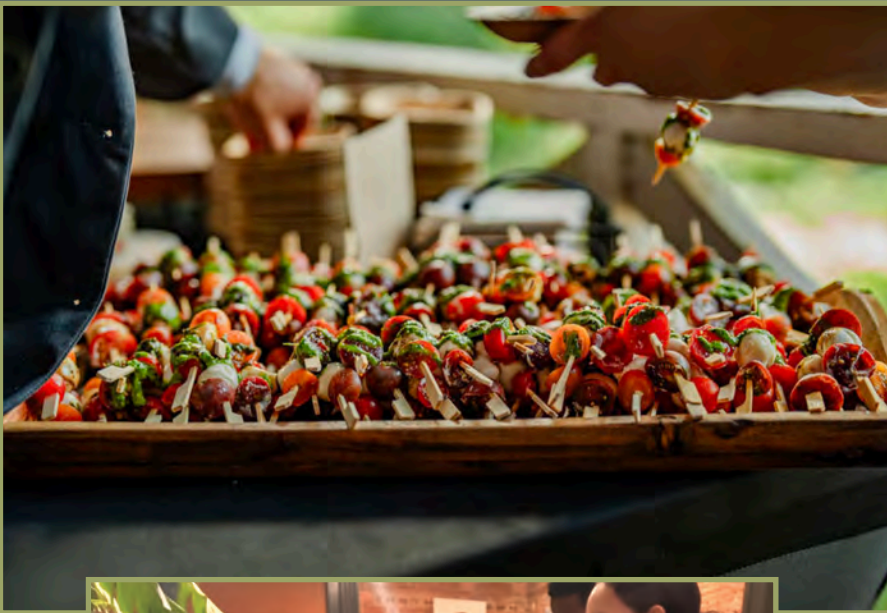
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Wedding fare

WHEN IT COMES to weddings, the menu is a key ingredient to a couple's big day. Local caterers offer a plethora of options for celebrations of all sizes and styles, whether it be wood-fired pizza and dessert tables from Farmers Market Pizza, pictured right, or cheese boards and French-inspired fare from Crooked Ladle Catering, pictured left.

Photos courtesy of Crooked Ladle Catering and Farmers Market Pizza



Crooked Ladle Catering



Tips to streamline a wedding day

Marriage is a social institution that is thousands of years old. Marriage has undergone changes over the years, but plenty of people are still tying the knot and hosting amazing wedding celebrations.

A total of 2,065,905 marriages were

recorded in the United States in 2022. Statistics Canada indicates 98,355 registered marriages took place in 2020. Prospective brides and grooms may be inclined to host more simplified and streamlined weddings in order to

(See Streamline, Page 10)

State offers some help with promoting Vermont's best side

Vermont Department of Tourism and Marketing promotes weddings in the Green Mountain State through its Vermontvacation.com website.

“Say Yes to Vermont,” the site trumpets.

It pitches Vermont as the ideal wedding destination:

“While Vermont is celebrated for its natural beauty like verdant forests, green mountains, charming lakes and covered bridges, its bounty doesn’t end there — especially when considered by couples planning their weddings. The state’s intimacy and seclusion, variety of recreational opportunities, and distinct seasonal draw for guests make it an ideal

place to tie the knot.”

That’s a pretty good summary of the benefits of a Vermont wedding.

For planning beyond the ceremony, state marketers say there’s much for guests and couples to do in Vermont while they are here for a wedding. It promotes local attraction under the headings:


- Vermont Regions.
- Historic Downtowns.
- Places to Stay.
- Food & Drink.
- Getting Here.
- Travel Planning Directory

Find out more how your guests visiting Vermont can experience more of the Green Mountain State by heading online to vermontvacation.com/vermont-weddings.

Are you looking for the perfect wedding venue? Look no further.

Imagine gathering with family and friends at a picture-perfect Vermont wedding to celebrate your most special occasion. Whether you envision a wedding reception that’s traditional, formal, intimate or grand, the historic Middlebury Inn has set the stage for your ceremony, rehearsal dinner, morning brunch or special event.




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How to navigate wedding transportation

On a couple's wedding day, some effort will be required to transport the bride and groom and wedding party participants and guests. Coordinating transportation is a task couples must add to their planning checklist.

Wedding transportation is perhaps best broken down into three categories: transportation for the couple and the wedding party, transportation for guests, and transportation for unique situations. These tips can make navigating wedding transportation needs go smoothly.

Transportation for the couple and wedding party

Ensuring that the couple and wedding party participants arrive to the ceremony (and later the reception venue) on time is essential. Couples and their attendants

traditionally arrive in some sort of hired car, whether it's a limousine or vintage/classic ride. It's important to find a service that will pick up the couple (separately) and their bridesmaids and groomsmen as well as parents of the bride or groom and bring them to the ceremony site. Drivers usually wait for the ceremony to end before taking passengers to photography locations and eventually the reception venue. Vendors typically price for hourly service with a minimal rental period. Larger vehicles will have a higher hourly rate.

Transportation for guests

Although it's not customary to offer transportation for all guests to the ceremony or reception venue, in the event of circumstances like hotel room

accommodations close to the reception, couples may want to offer shuttle service between the reception center and hotel. If the wedding reception will be non-traditional, and take place at various stop-off spots, like a bar crawl, party buses or trolley service could be considered to keep all guests together.

Unique situations

Couples may want to enhance their wedding festivities with some specialized details that might require unique transportation situations. For example, a wedding that takes place on an island would require a ferry service or water taxi. Couples tying the knot during the picturesque winter season can go the extra mile and commission horse-drawn sleighs. Rustic weddings have grown in popularity. A charming hayride can complete the picture for a wedding reception held at a farm or in a converted barn.

After the festivities

The couple also may need to consider transportation once the wedding has ended. Those going directly to a honeymoon may need a hired car to take them to the airport. Transportation also will be needed for any wedding party participants who did not take their own vehicles to the wedding, but rode in party buses or limousines.

Wedding transportation may not be the most glamorous aspect of wedding planning, but well-coordinated transportation is a necessity that couples, their friends and family will appreciate.

— Metro Creative



Streamline

(Continued from Page 9)

save money and time. Finding ways to streamline a wedding is not necessarily that challenging.

• **Keep the ceremony short.** While this may not always be an option for couples who are having a traditional religious ceremony that is beholden to the rules of the faith, some couples can opt for a shortened ceremony that is more direct and to the point. A

streamlined ceremony can stick strictly to the exchange of vows, rather than including readings, musical interludes, candle lighting ceremonies, and more. Couples who want religious ceremonies can speak with their officiants to see how they can stick to tradition, but keep the ceremony more succinct.

• **Communicate roles for the wedding party.** Having designated people to handle a variety of tasks at the

wedding fosters efficiency and can save time by moving things along. It also allows for smooth transitions during parts of the ceremony. For example, the maid of honor traditionally holds the bride's bouquet during the ceremony. But other bridesmaids can be enlisted to hold items or fix the bride's train or veil as well.

• **Select one venue.** Holding the wedding ceremony and reception in the same place cuts down on travel time and logistical issues for both the guests and those involved in the wedding. It also reduces necessary costs for transportation.

• **Choose a nearby location.** Asking guests and vendors to travel great distances can add time to the wedding festivities. Selecting a centrally located ceremony site and reception hall will streamline many of the steps people would have to take to attend. It also might remove the need to arrange overnight accommodations for the wedding.

Streamlining a wedding and making it more efficient can save time and money.

— Metro Creative

A wedding checklist

Planning a wedding is a significant undertaking.

After the question is popped — and accepted — the couple has the monumental task of choosing a wedding party and a guest list. Consult family and friends for help with that.

And then there's planning the nuts and bolt of the big day.

Though many tasks associated with wedding planning are enjoyable, the number of variables that must be coordinated can make the process feel a little overwhelming at times. Staying organized can make wedding planning a lot easier, and this checklist of vendors can be used by couples looking to stay calm as they plan their big day.

- Wedding venue
- Reception venue
- Caterer
- Bakery
- Photographer
- Videographer
- Florist
- Officiant
- Entertainment
- Jeweler
- Transportation
- Hotel
- Salon/hairdresser
- Makeup artist
- Wedding planner
- Bridal gown retailer
- Groom's attire
- Favors vendor

One suggestion is to get a blank book, and keep lists of everything you are thinking about and working on in this book. It is not only a good way to keep organized by providing a single place to turn to when looking up a detail you are working on or have already decided, but it is a nice keepsake the couple can treasure for years after their wedding.

— Metro Creative



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Helpful suggestions for choosing a wedding officiant

Many things come to mind when couples are planning their wedding. Brides-to-be may envision walking down an aisle decked with beautiful flowers in a space populated with their closest loved ones, while grooms may anticipate the moment they first see their beloved in a beautiful gown.

One person who will be there to witness it all may not garner too much of a couple's planning energy, but officiants are nonetheless notable components of a couple's big day.

Wedding officiants come from a variety of backgrounds. Many are representatives from a couple's house of worship, such as a parish priest or the rabbi from their synagogue. Others are friends of the couple who get certified to officiate weddings just for the occasion. Many more are officiants who couples meet for the first time in advance of their wedding.

For those going that latter route, knowing what to ask when vetting an officiant can increase the chances of finding the right fit. No two couples are the same, so some of the following questions may not apply to every couple, but many can come in handy and help couples identify the right officiant to preside over their nuptials.

- How long have you been officiating?
- Are you a legally recognized officiant?
- What inspired you to become a

wedding officiant?

- What is your fee?
- What is included in your fee?
- Do you ever book more than one wedding in a day?
- Can we write our own vows?
- Can you share remarks you've prepared at previous weddings you officiated?
- Can you share references from past couples whose weddings you officiated?
- What is the biggest challenge to arise during a ceremony you officiated and how did you handle it?
- Is it possible to customize our ceremony?
- Are you available on our wedding day?
- When do you typically arrive at a ceremony venue?
- What is your availability during the season we want to tie the knot?
- How far will you travel to officiate a wedding?
- How often do you meet with couples in advance of a wedding?
- How long is the average ceremony you officiate?
- Are you familiar with unity ceremonies?
- Are you available for the rehearsal?
- Do you perform religious ceremonies?
- Do you perform inter-faith ceremonies?

• What do you typically wear during a ceremony?

- Do you plan to stay for the reception?
- Do you have a backup officiant on call in case you cannot make it at the last minute?

• Do you have any specific requests

of the couple?

Choice of officiant is a significant decision, and these are just some of the questions couples can ask when vetting prospective wedding officiants.

— Metro Creative



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Just in case — create a backup plan for outdoor wedding

A wedding day is a magical and memorable day for a couple and their family members. Months or even years of planning may go into making a wedding day special.

For some, an outdoor wedding and celebration amid the beauty of nature is the ultimate setting in which to tie the knot. When Mother Nature is your decorator, the setting can be hard to match. Perhaps that's why 62 percent of couples opted for outdoor nuptials in 2023, according to The Knot 2023 Real Weddings Survey. However, there may be some extra

work involved when exchanging vows outdoors, hosting a reception outside or both. That work includes having a contingency plan in place if the weather does not cooperate. Here's what couples should know about having a backup plan for their outdoor weddings.

- Identify a second location. Couples who book outdoor receptions at catering halls can inquire how they handle inclement weather. Many will have a clause built into the agreement to move the party indoors in the event of bad weather. Others may enable the wedding

to move to a different space for an added fee. Smaller, less formal weddings taking place at other locations may require a bit of ingenuity when looking for a backup space. Perhaps a friend has a large house where everyone can gather, or an employer may have a warehouse, loft or even a barn that can be transformed into unique venues at the last minute?

- Choose outdoor spaces with covered areas. The wish might be to have blue skies overhead, but it's impossible to control the weather. So it's safe to select outdoor spaces that offer a measure of

weather protection, such as a pavilion in a park or a covered deck at a lakeside locale. Such sites offer a little security without detracting from the ambiance.

- Look into a tent rental. A tent is a great investment because it keeps everyone out of the elements rain or shine. Even on a lovely summer day, the blazing sun can make being outdoors uncomfortable. A tent is the solution. Couples should coordinate with a wedding planner or the venue itself to be sure that a tent is allowed on the grounds.

- Hire a wedding planner or enlist a family member or friend to play that role. The Knot suggests hiring a wedding planner or coordinator who can pivot to plan B in the event of bad weather. This helps take some of the stress off of the couple so they can enjoy the day.

- Plan wardrobe and hair/makeup accordingly. Brides and bridesmaids can choose fabrics for dresses that will be comfortable and not become blown around or see-through due to rain and wind. The wedding party can ask hair stylists to create a wedding hairstyle that is somewhat weatherproof. Experienced makeup artists likely know some tricks to keep makeup looking flawless even when the weather isn't.

Outdoor weddings can be beautiful events, but it is important to have a backup plan in place in case weather doesn't cooperate.

— Metro Creative



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