

The Charlotte News

November 28, 2024

Your nonprofit community news source since 1958

Vol. 67, No. 12

Wanted: Tree or trees for environmental art

Scooter MacMillan
Editor

A tree may grow in Brooklyn, but a tree will hang in Burlington. Or trees.

Artist Nancy Winship Milliken of Charlotte and her team of co-designers have won a commission from Burlington's Main Street Project to hang a tree, or several trees, over a 60-foot section of sidewalk on the north side of Main Street, a block west of Church Street.

If you have been in the Queen City in the past few months, you almost certainly have encountered construction on Main Street. About 18 months of work is going into replacing underground infrastructure and then dressing up the street with public art installations.

For several months now, there has been migrating digging in Burlington as out-of-date water pipes, wastewater pipes and such are replaced or repaired. Detours have been pervasive as the work has progressed block by block.

After this necessary work is finished, an aesthetic phase of the project will follow. This is where Milliken and her team come in. They are one of four groups of artists that have won commissions for public art installations. When you think art in relation to this project, you should imagine fun, rather than staid or sedate.



A rendering of how Nancy Milliken's environmental sculpture might look with one tree.

Courtesy photo

The original vision of Milliken et al was to hang a 35-foot tree over the sidewalk, but they have begun to broaden their vision as a couple months of searching and social media inquiries have not turned up a suitable tree. If the proper candidate is not found they may hang several trees.

"The materials dictate the pieces," said Milliken, who, as an environmental artist, is well versed in modifying her inspiration to fit what the environment provides. "It's really listening to the community and what's out there in the landscape."

Her work can be found outside,

celebrating the natural world and incorporating objects found there. In 2022, four of her pieces were installed on the lawns of Shelburne Museum as part of its 75th anniversary. One of those pieces featured raw wool suspended from

PUBLIC ART continued on page 2

We're grateful to these Charlotters

John Quinney
Board of Directors

As part of our year-end fundraising campaign, I invite you to make a Gift of Gratitude.

When you make your gift and recognize someone who makes a difference in your life — or in the Charlotte community — we will publicly acknowledge this person in the Dec. 12 newspaper.

Gifts of Gratitude may be made on our secure website at charlottenewsvt.org/donate, and thanks to our fifth NewsMatch grant, all gifts up to \$1,000 are doubled.

Some of our volunteers at the newspaper expressed their gratitude like this:

- "I commend as a group the many volunteers in this town who do so much behind the scenes, clearing downed trees on town trails, organizing and staffing town events like the Town Party at the beach and Concerts on the Green, running the Charlotte Food Shelf, cleaning up litter on Green Up Day, helping at the senior center, organizing pickleball games, volunteering for fire and rescue, serving their faith communities, and so on."

- "I am grateful for Ken Spencer who is dedicated to changing the way people think about litter and the throw-away culture. He is involved with the Chittenden Solid Waste District, the tractor parade, Green Up Day and town plastics recycling. He models what it means to take care of our town, our neighborhood and our neighbors."

- "I am grateful for Dave Quickel and the crew at Stony Loam Farm who provide our community with delicious vegetables and gorgeous flowers. Despite a farmer's constant daily grind, Dave greets everyone at the farmstand with a warm smile and he also pens a darn entertaining newsletter."

- "I would like to express gratitude for the people who maintain and carry out all the tasks involved with keeping the Charlotte Food Shelf up and functioning. This involves a lot of work, from picking up food, loading and unloading trucks, to stocking shelves. It's important work."

GRATEFUL continued on page 2

Read the complete list of newspaper volunteers on page 3

Long Ferry Road speed-limit discussion; 25 mph remains

Scooter MacMillan
Editor

Reducing the speed limit on the hill on Ferry Road from Greenbush Road to the train tracks was back on the agenda for the Charlotte Selectboard at its Monday's meeting, and once again it proved to be a long, controversial discussion.

The topic, that had been scheduled for 10 minutes, lasted almost an hour.

The discussion on Nov. 18 started with Charlotte resident JD Herlihy objecting to the board considering increasing the speed limit that had been reduced to 25 mph a couple of months ago. Herlihy said, according to Robert's Rules, "decisions are supposed to have finality."

Because the issue has already been considered by the selectboard, voted on and approved, it should

not be up for reconsideration, he said.

A couple of people countered that Robert's Rules pertain to conduct within a meeting. One of those was Charlie Russell, who said he was putting on his town moderator hat in addressing Herlihy's objection and said the selectboard does have the authority to revisit previous decisions and amend them.

If the board moved to increase the speed limit, it would be "renewing on a decision," Jack Pilla said because the opponents to the speed limit change had the opportunity to express their dissatisfaction before the selectboard voted for it.

Board member Lewis Mudge has been a strong advocate for the 25-mph speed limit change, but he disagreed with the assertion that the board could not reconsider the decision.

Herlihy's definition of "finality"

was too broad, Mudge said. It was just a "process" issue he said he was advocating for, not opposition to the change itself.

"Surely, the selectboard has the right to enact an ordinance and at a time later unspecified — it can be weeks later; it can be years later — change that ordinance," Mudge said.

So, the discussion continued with a number of people saying reducing the speed limit makes it safer going down the hill for pedestrians, bicyclists and drivers, while others said the lower speed limit was actually more dangerous.

Chair Jim Faulkner said the primary issue was safety.

In considering the issue, Faulkner said the board has heard from road commissioner Junior Lewis saying, that on icy or snowy roads, it was dangerous going down that hill at 25 mph in big trucks because those vehicles would "slide all over

the place" in those conditions at that speed. And they have heard selectboard member Frank Tenney say the lower speed was also dangerous for school bus drivers like him.

The Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission's memo recommended 10 measures for safety on Ferry Road and lowering the speed limit to 35 mph was only one of those measures, Josh Main said. He felt only adopting one, and none of the other nine recommendations, would make the town liable if anything happened there.

Main also said the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission's memo didn't collect any data on the increase in pedestrians and biking with the addition of the improved trailhead on Ferry Road for the Town Link

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PUBLIC ART

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a large frame.

Initially, Milliken's group was searching for a 35-foot-tall white oak, cedar or black locust, but they do not want a tree to be pushed down for this project. They are searching for a tree that has already blown down with roots intact, or a tree that is planned to be taken down for development.

"We're trying to be super conscious of our relationship to trees," Milliken said.

So, now her team is searching for several trees, or even limbs, that are at least 5 inches in diameter. They still need for the donated trees or large limbs to be white oak, cedar or black locust, and not rotten. These species of trees will last the longest.

Milliken said that early in the design process they had considered using driftwood, partly because that would not involve taking a live tree. That idea was abandoned when they realized it wouldn't last the many years the installation is intended to stand.

Whether it is one tree or several, they will be suspended horizontally from an archway, high enough that people will walk under them.

The installation will include 60 feet of pollinator garden installed on both sides of the sidewalk. Part of Milliken's team is Mike and Tawnya Kiernan of Bee the Change in Weybridge (beethechange.earth). It is Bee the Change's mission to plant pollinator habitat in every Vermont town, hoping to tell the story of pollinators and their importance.

The Milliken's tree, or trees, will tell the story of how trees contribute to the riparian ecosystem of healthy forests and how necessary they are to keeping the lake clean and healthy.

Milliken's project is just one of four commissioned by Burlington City Arts as part of the Main Street Project, which also is known as Great Streets. Besides just making necessary repairs and replacements to the underground infrastructure, Burlington is making changes and improvements above ground.

Some of those changes involve optimizing the roadway by switching from diagonal to parallel parking, so there can be wider sidewalks with more appropriately sized trees to help with storm water management and a protected bike lane. Each of the intersections on Main Street are planned to have outdoor seating, bike parking, views of the lake or public art.

"The Great Streets plan is for long-term



Nancy Milliken at work in her studio.

Courtesy photo

sustainability and transforming our streets into dynamic public spaces, while ensuring that renovations and improvements can be responsibly maintained for decades to come," according to the Great Street Main Street Project website (greatstreetsbtv.com). "The Main Street concept is about balancing all of the uses of our public right of way."

Burlington has allocated \$500,000 for the public art piece of the project to four artists, and Milliken's project won the lion's share of that. Of the other three other artists commissioned by the Main Street Project, two are from Vermont and one is from California, said Colin Storrs of the Burlington City Arts or BCA. All four arts installations will be on Main Street.

Storrs said the four arts groups were determined by a public review committee during the fall of 2022 and spring of 2023. The art should be installed beginning next summer and finished in the spring of 2026.

Noa Younse, with Pixel Patch Creative of Richmond, will install several multi-colored aluminum blocks that are taller than a person and "represent the disparate parts of the community coming together as a whole," said Storrs.

The blocks will have an internal light that changes as it "reacts to a data set," Storrs said. What the data set will be is yet to be determined and difficult to explain, but it could be that the internal light reacts to how

many people are tweeting about Burlington or how weather is changing.

Lydia Kern of Burlington's piece will include an approximately 11x9-foot archway of poured colored resin that will incorporate dried local flowers. Light will pass through the archway casting colors on the pavement.

Wowhaus of California had three snails made of marble in Barre this past summer. Storrs said the snails are about 4 feet high and can be sat upon. The concrete sidewalk at this installation will be poured with dark aggregate to represent the snails' trails.

"It will be sort of a nice, family-friendly, whimsical piece," Storrs said, a description that could apply to all four of these pieces.

Storrs believes that public art is an important factor in keeping downtown Burlington a vital, lively community. And even more of a tourist destination.

"Public art is integral in making Burlington an exciting place for people to visit," he said.

So, if you've got a white oak, cedar or black locust that's 2 feet in diameter — or at least 5 inches in diameter — that has already been felled or is scheduled to be, Milliken would love to hear from you at nancy@nancymilliken.com.

It could become a part of something you could point to for years to come. After all, they're still crowing about a New York borough with a tree growing in it.

GRATEFUL

Continued from page 1

- "I'm grateful for the town staff who keep Charlotte humming and thriving, especially our first responders."

- "Ted Roberts and Beth Sytsma (with help from Alexandra Lehmann) take it upon themselves to decorate the World War I memorial space by the Old Brick Store. They donate the time and materials to make beautiful and creative displays that enhance one of the busiest intersections in town. Their displays have ranged from the solemn to

the whimsical, but they also showcase great originality and a strong sense of civic pride."

Tell us about someone in town who you want to recognize for their volunteer contributions. You can use the envelope included in last week's newspaper or make a Gift of Gratitude on our secure website. And, for a limited time only, all Gifts of Gratitude of up to \$1,000 are matched, dollar for dollar, thanks to our fifth NewsMatch grant.

(John Quinney is a member of the board of directors of The Charlotte News and chair of the fundraising committee.)



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To engage and inform Charlotte and nearby communities by:

- Publishing rigorous, in-depth reporting on town affairs.
- Providing a home for stories from our neighbors and friends.
- Reporting on how other towns have addressed challenges similar to our own.

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The editor makes final decisions on the stories that are published in The Charlotte News. While we are funded by advertising revenue and donor contributions, our news judgments are made in accordance with our mission and are independent of all sources of financial support.

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The Charlotte News has adopted the Society of Professional Journalists Code of Ethics as the touchstone to guide newsroom practices. The Society of Professional Journalists Code of Ethics is built on four principles:

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- Minimize harm.
- Act independently.
- Be accountable and transparent.

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Consistent with our mission, The Charlotte News publishes letters to the editor, opinion pieces and obituaries submitted by our readers. All such materials are subject to review and approval by the editor in accordance with the standards and requirements listed on our website at charlottenewsvt.org/about.

Send submissions, questions, photos, etc. to scooter@thecharlottenews.org.

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JAN. 9

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Thanks to volunteers helping tell our community's story

Bill Regan and John Quinney
Board of Directors

As board members, we're thankful to everyone who is involved in producing The Charlotte News. In print for 66 years, the newspaper has evolved and the publication process for each issue is now quite complex. It doesn't just "happen."

So, what does it take to produce 25 editions of the newspaper each year?

First, financial support from our

readers is vital and this is an excellent time to make your gift, since all gifts up to \$1,000 will be matched, dollar for dollar, thanks to our NewsMatch grant. Your gifts have twice the impact.

Second, our four-person staff — Anna Cyr, Scooter MacMillan, Susan Jones and Susie Therrien — work together to write and organize the stories, place advertisements, lay out the newspaper, update the website and take care of the bookkeeping. We're grateful to each of you.

Third, as you'll see from the list below, a much larger group of more than 150 people — all unpaid volunteers — also contributed to the newspaper this year. They wrote stories, submitted photos, proofread every edition, distributed papers around town, provided advice and served on our board and

committees.

Without their talent and efforts, The Charlotte News would be a much less vibrant newspaper. Publishing this list is our way of saying thanks; it's our Gift of Gratitude to these individuals, many of whom have been involved with the newspaper for decades.

As we enter the holiday season, please take a moment to tell us about someone you're grateful for their personal support or their contributions to the Charlotte community. You can do this when you make your Gift of Gratitude on our secure website at charlottenews.org. Our deadline for Gifts of Gratitude is Nov. 30 — give or take a couple of days. We'll publish the list of everyone honored with a Gift of Gratitude in our Dec. 12 newspaper.

All Gifts of Gratitude are matched, so when you make a gift of, say, \$100, we receive \$200. A \$60 gift becomes \$120, and so on. It's quick and easy to make your tax-deductible Gift of Gratitude on our secure website at charlottenews.org.

Each year, it takes our staff, our freelancers and more than 140 volunteers to produce The Charlotte News and to make it freely available to everyone who lives here. It also takes financial support from everyone in Charlotte who is able to help, even just a little. We're grateful to everyone who contributes by volunteering or making a gift — or both. Thank you all.

(Bill Regan is chair of the board of directors of The Charlotte News. John Quinney is a member of the board and chair of the fundraising committee.)

Thank you!

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Super moon



Photo by Silvia Doyle

The beaver moon rising on Nov. 15 as seen from Hinesburg Road. This is the last of four consecutive supermoons, full moons when the moon is closer to the Earth than normal. It's called the beaver moon because this is the time of year when beavers are getting ready to settle into their lodges until spring. It was also the best time for trappers to hunt them because their furs were ready for winter cold and at their thickest.

SPEED LIMIT

Continued from page 1

Trail or of housing density in the area.

There are also roads in Charlotte with steeper hills, and it is possible to drive the speed limit in those places. Main said, "If they can't, I would suggest it's their car that needs work, not our road."

Supporting Herlihy's objection to revising the speed limit again, Maura Wygmans said she has seen the selectboard make decisions multiple times based on the provided information and change its mind after there was a public reaction. These public outcries have often come after the item was on the agenda, it was warned properly and the board made its decision.

Those who opposed the speed limit reduction also had the option to petition it, but they couldn't get enough signatures, Wygmans said.

"Why is this being revisited at this point?" she said. "And it's crazy to say that it would be less dangerous to have a higher speed limit."

Lewis said the issue was probably back

on the agenda because of his objections. He was surprised that, after the selectboard had discussed dropping the speed limit to 35, it was instead dropped to 25, which he feels is too low.

"I just want to be on record that I am not for 25 miles an hour. I'm not going to say 'if'; I'm going to say 'when there is an accident,'" Lewis said. The town's road commissioner said the potential for an accident is higher because cars are being passed more now on the hill with the speed limit at 25 mph.

Rosemary Zezulinski said she had tried to get signatures for a petition, but because the selectboard's decision was made during the summer when people were away and because some were afraid to speak out, it was difficult to get enough.

In the end, the selectboard didn't reverse its decision, deciding to let it go for the time being.

The board members' consensus opinion seemed to be that they had heard from many on both sides of the issue, so it would be best to leave the decision alone now. The board will probably wait for six months and see how the speed limit change is or isn't working.

Letter to the Editor

Golden clam discovery like déjà vu all over again

To the Editor:

With the recent announcement of the discovery of golden clams in Lake Champlain, the total number of known invasives in that lake rises to 52. This follows the recent announcement this summer that Eurasian watermilfoil, also an aquatic invasive, has now been found in Joe's Pond, the second inland lake in the last three years to be added to the infested waterbodies list. These were certainly disappointing announcements.

Aquatic invasive species are biological pollutants. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service notes that aquatic invasive species spread is "harming vital ecosystems and native wildlife and plants and impacting recreation, human, animal and plant health, the economy and infrastructure." (See fws.gov/initiative/aquatic-invasive-species.)

The most widespread aquatic invasive in Vermont is Eurasian watermilfoil. This milfoil can seriously damage native aquatic habitats by outcompeting native species. Milfoil does not provide the food that native fish and amphibians need to survive. Once it crowds out native plants, the natural food web is broken and the

aquatic ecosystem begins to deteriorate. In addition, milfoil grows so vigorously and thickly that it can form mats on the surface of the water, leading to surface rot and encouraging algae growth.

That's the bad news.

The good news is that we have the tools to slow, if not stop, the spread of Eurasian watermilfoil and to reduce or even eradicate existing infestations.

The most important and cost-effective tool available to stop the spread of aquatic invasives is prevention, but there are barriers to effective prevention.

The main aquatic invasive species prevention effort at the state's inland lakes and ponds is carried out by the greeter programs managed by volunteer lake associations. Greeters inspect and clean boats entering and leaving waterbodies to ensure invasives are not transported.

However, there are fewer than 40 such programs at public accesses, many of them only staffed part-time, yet there are several hundred public accesses in the state and over 800 lakes and ponds.

Why so few programs? And why are too many only part-time?

In a word: money. The state provides very little funding (well under \$1 million) for aquatic invasive species prevention and control programs. Although invasives are biological pollutants, these programs

are not eligible for Clean Water Funds.

As a result, not only the work of managing prevention and control programs, but also the work of raising the funds to make that work possible, falls to volunteers.

Another issue is that there are hundreds of accesses to lakes and ponds spread around the state with nearly all open 24/7, 365 days a year. While additional funding is necessary to expand and staff current greeter programs at the busiest times, even with exponentially greater funding and hundreds more staff, it would be impossible to staff every access all the time.

Other challenges to prevention exist, yet despite these barriers, we believe that prevention is still the best option, but it will take every citizen and every visitor who uses Vermont's public waters to be part of the solution.

Aquatic invasive spread is caused by human actions. Therefore, changing our actions can help to solve the problem.

The first step is to be aware that every single piece of gear that touches the water — not just motorboats but also canoes, kayaks, fishing tackle, life vests, even children's toys — has the potential to harbor invasives and carry them from one waterbody to another.

The second step is to always clean, fully drain and fully dry all aquatic gear

before entering any waterbody. You can find much more information on aquatic invasives and preventing the spread at vermontlakes.org/aquatic-invasive-species.

We are incredibly lucky here in Vermont to have abundant freshwater resources with many clean, invasive-free, pristine lakes. However, human activities and climate change are putting more and more pressure on these fragile ecosystems. Yes, we need more funding, we need greater user education and commitment to lake and pond protection, and we need state officials to place a high priority on protecting our lakes from aquatic invasives and on reducing existing infestations. Our volunteer lake associations remain determined and dedicated to this work but it takes all of us working together to protect and preserve Vermont's precious public waters.

Pat Suozzi
Hinesburg

(Pat Suozzi is the president of the Federation of Vermont Lakes and Ponds, a statewide coalition of lake and pond associations dedicated to fostering environmental quality standards and preserving Vermont lakes, ponds, watersheds and aquatic ecosystems. Learn more: vermontlakes.org.)

Around Town

Condolences

Nancy Johnson Bassett

Nancy Johnson Bassett of North Pomfret, Vermont, left this life on her own terms, Nov. 15, 2024. After a vibrant and energetic life of 99 years and a brief illness, she died peacefully where and how she had wished — at the Jack Byrne Center in Lebanon.



Born in Fairfield, Connecticut, on Aug. 22, 1925, Nancy was the daughter of Mabel Gravesen and John Peter Johnson. She was a graduate of Roger Ludlow High School in Fairfield and of Oberlin College. On the afternoon of her Oberlin graduation in 1947, she married fellow Oberlin graduate, John Putnam Bassett, also of Fairfield. Nancy was co-editor of the Oberlin Review and, during the summer of 1944, a reporter for The Bridgeport Post. As a 19-year-old, Nancy

was assigned to call on the bereaved families of soldiers who had died on D-day. During the war, Nancy used her father's gas rations to drive cancer patients to their treatments in New York City. These experiences helped inform her lifelong kindness to, and interest in, everyone around her.

Nancy and John lived in San Francisco for several years after their marriage, returning to Fairfield in the early 1950s, where they raised their family. In 1951, John started an independent insurance agency in Bridgeport, where Nancy initially maintained the books. As the business grew, Nancy was able to hand off this work to focus on her family and volunteer work.

In 1962, John and Nancy bought an abandoned house on the Bassett family farm in North Pomfret. Beloved by parents and children, the home became central to decades of family life. Nancy and John welcomed friends and family to their home — filled more with love than with heat. North Pomfret became their full-time home after John's retirement in 1993. Nancy embraced life in North Pomfret, becoming involved in her community and building lifelong friendships. She especially loved her neighbors, whose

kindness and support meant so much to her.

Hospital volunteering was central to Nancy's life from the 1960s until the pandemic. At Bridgeport Hospital, she served on the board as well as on a committee that established the Clinical Pastoral Education Program.

During a stay in Kenya for the International Executive Service Corps, Nancy volunteered at a hospital refuge for young mothers and their babies. For more than 25 years, Nancy served as a patient family advisor at Dartmouth Hitchcock. She visited patients, capturing their stories, and taught generations of nurses and residents about the importance of patient-centered care. In 2019, Nancy was named Dartmouth Hitchcock's Volunteer of the Year.

Nancy volunteered and served on the board at David's House, co-chaired Woodstock's Red Cross Blood Bank and for decades advocated for hospice and palliative care. Nancy was a member of the planning group for the Jack Byrne Center for Palliative and Hospice Care at Dartmouth Health where she hoped to draw her last breath — a wish fulfilled.

Nancy traveled the seven continents, played tennis and golf and was a downhill and cross-country skier. After John's death, Nancy traveled with her children in France nearly every fall. She was a voracious reader with wide-ranging interests. Until the last week of her life, she walked daily in her beloved Vermont hills, always savoring the beauty around her, especially

spring wildflowers.

Nancy adored watching her grandchildren and great-grandchildren find their way in life. She is survived by her children, Elizabeth Bassett (John Pane) and James Bassett (Ellen); grandchildren Putnam Pane (Kelly Pettijohn), Victoria Pane (Travis Titus), Jesse Bassett (Mary), John Bassett (Rachel Johnson) and Hannah Bassett (Ian Lusty); great-grandchildren Stella and Austin Titus, Ada and Jack Bassett, and Roslin and Adeline Pane.

A celebration of Nancy's life will be held next summer. Donations in Nancy's memory can be made to the Jack Byrne Center at Dartmouth Health.

The Charlotte News

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Fiber progress



Photo by Lee Krohn

Workers have been putting in conduit for fiber at various locations along Greenbush Road. Here conduit is going in at Ten Stones Circle.



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Commentary

Is sunset of renewable energy just over the horizon?

Mike Yantachka
Contributor

There is no doubt that the trajectory of our country has changed in the past month. Based on the recent election and signals from the incoming Trump administration, the reversal of our nation's approach to climate change will have significant implications not only nationally, but locally and globally.

In mid-October I attended REV2024, the annual conference organized by Renewable Energy Vermont and sponsored by numerous businesses involved with renewable energy development. Renewable energy, including wind, solar, hydro and geothermal power generation, is key to reducing our dependence on greenhouse gas-producing fossil fuels for our electricity, heating and transportation needs.

While the current Biden administration encouraged renewable energy development through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and the Inflation Reduction Act, the incoming administration has openly promised not only to end those efforts but to move in the opposite direction promoting fossil fuel consumption. President-elect Trump's selection of Chris Wright, a CEO of a fracking company and a climate change denier, for energy secretary portends serious backtracking on efforts to fight global warming.

In the meantime, we will see more droughts leading to wildfires, more extreme weather events leading to floods and mudslides, and longer periods of extreme heat leading to heat-related fatalities, all of which will cost lives and increase the cost of recovery efforts. With the loss of federal support, it will fall to the states which recognize the seriousness of the situation to take up the cause of fighting climate change.

While the outcome of the election was still uncertain at the time of the conference, presenters spoke to the current state of renewable energy development and the challenges that must be overcome. Allison Clements, a commissioner on the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, emphasized the need to move to an electric energy economy, calling it "the backbone of our modern society." She noted that our inherited generation systems remain an obstacle to developing clean generation systems, and fossil fuel companies will continue to have a larger influence on public policy than the renewable sector. Furthermore, continued growth of renewables will require making the existing grid more efficient as well as building new infrastructure for transmission.

During the last session of the Vermont legislature, a significant change was made to the Renewable Energy Standard. State Senator Chris Bray, chair of the Senate Natural Resources and Energy Committee,

and Representative Laura Sibilgia, vice-chair of the House Environment and Energy Committee, spoke about the changes in Vermont's energy policy. The Renewable Energy Standard set a requirement in 2015 that every Vermont electricity distribution utility would have to produce 75 percent of its electric demand from renewable generation by 2032. As of 2022 three utilities, Burlington Electric, Swanton Electric and Washington Electric Co-op, claimed to be 100 percent renewable using solar, wind, hydro and biomass, i.e. burning wood. In 2024, the standard was upgraded to require every utility to source 100 percent of its electricity demand from renewable generation by 2035. This achievement would be the foundation for our state's transition from fossil fuels to clean electricity for transportation and heating, the major sectors contributing to greenhouse gas emissions.

In addition to the Renewable Energy Standard upgrade, the legislature also passed, over Governor Scott's veto, the Affordable Heat Act, originally known as the Clean Heat Standard. This controversial legislation would require importers of fossil fuels to finance methods of reducing the fossil fuel consumption of their customers by weatherization, heat pumps and advanced wood heating.

The big unknown in this plan is whether the consequential increase in the cost of

fuel would be offset by the savings in the reduction of fuel use and whether the increase could be equitably distributed across households based on their energy burden. Energy burden is the percentage of household income devoted to heating and cooling. While Vermont households with lower incomes typically use less energy than those with higher incomes, lower-income households spend considerably higher percentages of their income on energy.

The Clean Heat Standard is not yet fully implemented because the Affordable Heat Act requires the Public Utility Commission to design the system, estimate the effect on heating costs to the consumer and report back to the legislature, which will then either approve the plan or go back to the drawing board. Considering the change in the political makeup of the legislature on Nov. 5, its ability to override another veto is unlikely.

There are other opportunities currently available to help Vermonters reduce their dependence on fossil fuels. Efficiency Vermont and Vermont Gas Systems still have incentives for home weatherization, heat pump installations, heat pump water heaters and do-it-yourself energy improvements.

One breakout session at the conference featured community geothermal heating systems, which use the constant temperature

ENERGY continued on page 7

Commentary

From summit to lake: A walk from Mt. Philo to town beach

Stephen Hale
Contributor

What would it be like to use the Charlotte Town Link Trail to walk from Mt. Philo, the highest point in town (elevation 968 feet), to the Town Beach on the lowest point, the Lake Champlain shoreline (average elevation 95.5 feet)?

As written in the Town Plan, this is the western part of the town's vision to develop an off-road walking-bicycling-skiing path to connect the East and West Villages (and the Town Beach) by way of Mt. Philo. My wife Lynne and I decided to find out.

The Charlotte Trails Committee (charlottevt.org/trails_committee) is charged with developing and maintaining the town's trail system. The Charlotte Bicycle and Pedestrian Scoping Study in 2017 (charlottevt.org/trails_scoping_studies) laid out possible paths from Mt. Philo to the West Village.

Some of this lies on state land, some on town land and some on easements generously allowed by private property owners. Pieces of this trail are currently in place: Mt Philo to the Champlain Valley Co-Housing and from the Old Lantern Inn up over Barber Hill and on to Ferry Road.

From the summit of Mt. Philo, we could see the entire existing Town Link Trail, including the trailhead lying directly below at the junction of Mt. Philo Road and State Park Road. We walked from the summit down the first-rate trail with sections of well-crafted stone steps to this trailhead, then down along State Park Road. The Melissa and Trevor Mack section travels through a vineyard and a field before arriving at an underpass under Route 7. Delightful murals painted by CVU high school students on the walls of the underpass show the landscape and recreational opportunities along the trail. We passed by Thorpe Pond and the town ballfield, entered an old meadow with abundant wildflowers and ambled through a wooded section to the Co-Housing. At

this point, we had traveled 3.5 miles and dropped to 225 feet elevation.

Next, we began a road walk up the Co-Housing access road and then along Greenbush Road to the Old Lantern Inn trailhead. While there are lovely views of farms and mountains from the road, narrow shoulders, vehicle speeds, lack of white lines on the sides and limited sight distances in the rolling terrain make this unappealing for many walkers. The Trails Committee would like to move this road section off Greenbush Road to one of the paths to the east recommended by the 2017 scoping study. There are some existing easements on private property, but the challenge is to link together a continuous path.

Leaving the trailhead at the Old Lantern Inn, the Town Link Trail overlaps with the Village Loop Trail as it climbs to the top of Barber Hill (384 feet), where there is a bench under a couple of maple trees with a pleasant view of Pease Mountain across the valley. The trail then descends, goes through the woods on the recently built boardwalk over a wetland and ends at Ferry Road.

The Town Link Trail Western End Off-Road Alignment Study in 2021 (charlottevt.org/trails_scoping_studies) laid out the vision and possible paths to get from the West Village to the Town Beach. We walked down the south side of Ferry Road to west of the railroad, a risky section because of the narrow shoulders, deep ditches and heavy traffic. This is the section that the Trails Committee is currently focusing on so that walkers and cyclists will be able to cross to the area west of the railroad tracks safely.

Because a continuous series of easements across private properties along the possible off-road paths outlined in the 2021 scoping study is not yet established, we walked on the existing mowed grass trail that goes west along Ferry Road, crossing the recently repaired bridge over a tributary of Thorpe Brook, to the farm at the corner of Ferry and Lake roads, 3.1

miles from Co-Housing.

Next, we walked north along Lake Road 1.9 miles to the Town Beach. One of the highlights of this section is the charming Holmes Creek Covered Bridge, built circa 1870 to accommodate passage of "a load of hay, high and wide." It is one of three covered bridges in Charlotte and one of the shortest in the state.

We treasured the rural beauty of Charlotte hills, farms and woods provided by the Town Link Trail. Mt. Philo, with its scenic vistas, hiking and picnicking and the town beach, with its swimming, boating, picnicking and playing on the playground, tennis-pickleball courts or sports fields — and one of the few spots in town where there is public access to Lake Champlain — make attractive bookends. About 5 miles of this 8.5-mile walk are on completed off-road sections. To get this walk off Greenbush and Lake Roads,

the selectboard and trails committee are looking at the paths recommended in the two scoping studies and exploring possibilities for trail easements.

To support the Charlotte Trail system, please consider helping the committee on one of its work days, giving a donation during the annual appeal and making it known how you enjoy the trails. Folks wanting to talk about new easement agreements can contact one of the members of the selectboard or the trails committee.

(Stephen Hale is a member of the Charlotte Trails Committee, an ecologist, writer and editor. His article, "An Ocean Walk in the Ocean State," was published in the summer-fall issue of "Appalachia," the journal of the Appalachian Mountain Club. See digitalcommons.dartmouth.edu/appalachia.)

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ENERGY

Continued from page 6

of the ground to generate heat for multiple buildings. Charlotte's new town garage uses geothermal heating powered by the solar panels on its roof.

The panels produce more than 90 percent of the electricity used by all five of the buildings owned by the town: the garage, library, town hall, senior center and fire station. Since the library is heated and cooled with air-source heat pumps, it, like the garage, is fossil fuel-free. With additional solar generation, it would be conceivable to build a geothermal system that would heat and cool the other three town-owned buildings in the west village.

This is something Charlotte might look to in the future, assuming that the incentives of the Biden administration remain available.

So, from the federal perspective, the outlook for renewable energy generation and greenhouse gas reduction looks bleak. But

there is a silver lining in that the states can continue to transition to renewable sources. Even many red states have come to appreciate the benefits. Iowa produces 59 percent of its electricity by wind. Texas produces 28 percent from wind and 8 percent from solar and leads the nation in total megawatt-hours of renewable energy production followed by California. According to Yale Climate Connections, South Dakota has the most renewable energy generation by percentage (83 percent), followed by Vermont (76 percent), Washington (74 percent) and Idaho (69 percent).

Progress has been made and will continue despite changes being planned by the Trump administration because renewable energy makes good economic sense. We just have to keep doing our part.

(Mike Yantachka is a member of the Charlotte Energy Committee and a former state representative who served 12 years on House committees responsible for energy policy.)

Commentary

HomeShare VT: Multi-benefit answer to housing shortages

Sarah Hudak
Contributor

We all know Vermont is experiencing a severe housing shortage. People from all walks of life, from young professionals to families, are struggling to find housing they can afford, and the state's aging population is struggling

to afford to stay in their homes.

When my family and I decided to relocate from Colorado to Vermont to be closer to loved ones, we had no idea how challenging it would be. Nevertheless, we packed up the car and started the journey. Fortunately, we received a call during the trip that we were under contract for a home. It was a fixer-upper

at the top of our budget, but at least we had a place to land.

That's not the case for everyone looking for housing in Vermont.

As a new Vermonter, I knew I wanted to work for an organization that was making a real impact. HomeShare Vermont felt like exactly that, a place where I could make a difference in addressing Vermont's housing challenges, one match at a time.

HomeShare Vermont offers a unique solution to our state's housing challenges. It pairs hosts who have extra space with guests who need housing, a mutually beneficial arrangement in its very design. And there are no age restrictions. We serve hosts and guests of all ages.

Hosts may come to us seeking extra income in the face of rising utility costs. They might also just want a little help around the house or some companionship.

Our guests apply for various reasons, too. They might be unable to find affordable housing, crave a sense of community or simply want to make a positive difference in someone's life.

Regardless of the reasons, my job is to create matches that meet the needs of our hosts and guests. Finding the right match takes time and patience. It's not meant to be a quick fix, but a long-term solution that genuinely serves all parties.

I know sharing a home with someone is personal, which is why the matchmaking process is so intentional. We start by interviewing each host and guest, learning their story, listening to what they're

looking for in a home and housemate and understanding their unique needs. From there, we work to find the right match, where both parties feel safe, comfortable and supported.

But HomeShare Vermont's impact goes beyond just providing housing.

We are working to strengthen our communities, create connections and fill gaps in support networks. In recent months, we've helped individuals impacted by flooding find housing and provided much-needed companionship for those facing significant health challenges. The work we're doing isn't just about putting roofs over heads; it's about creating a support system, especially for those who might otherwise feel isolated or overlooked.

For those wondering if homesharing might be right for them, my advice is to give it a try. There's no upfront cost to apply, no obligation to commit. Whether you're on the fence or simply curious, applying could lead to a life-changing experience. We're always looking for more hosts to join our community, and each new match makes a difference.

At a time when housing options are so limited, programs like HomeShare Vermont are vital to addressing the lack of affordable housing but also the growing need for community and connection.

I hope more Vermonters will open their homes and hearts to this program. Together, we can work toward a Vermont where everyone has a safe, affordable place to call home.

(Sarah Hudak, of Montpelier, is one of HomeShare Vermont's case managers.)

Mt. Philo colors



Photo by Lee Krohn

The tamaracks on Mt. Philo have taken on their golden hue of autumn.

Education & Sports

Local schools make good grades, according to magazine

Scooter MacMillan
Editor

The Champlain Valley School District looks to be in pretty good shape, according to U.S. News and World Report.

The magazine, which is known for its educational rankings, has just released its 2025 rankings of Vermont's top 10 elementary, middle and high schools, and local schools have reasons to be proud.

Charlotte Central School was No. 1 on

the U.S. News and World Report ranking of Vermont's top 10 middle schools. The school didn't make the list of top 10 elementary schools.

However, there is an anomaly to the listing because Hinesburg Community School was named as No. 7 on both the list of top 10 elementary schools and the list of middle schools, when both schools are properly indicated as PK-8 schools.

Champlain Valley Union High was named No. 2, behind No. 1 Mt. Mansfield Union

High.

Williston Schools, which are part of the Champlain Valley School District, were named No. 10 on the list of top 10 middle schools in the state.

Top 10 ranked Vermont elementary schools

1. Marion W. Cross School (PK-6) - Norwich
2. Cavendish Town Elementary School (PK-6) - Proctorsville
3. Waitsfield Elementary School (PK-6) - Waitsfield
4. Stowe Elementary School (PK-5) - Stowe
5. Rumney Memorial School (PK-6) - Middlesex
6. Braintree Elementary School (PK-6) - Braintree
7. Hinesburg Community School (PK-8) - Hinesburg
8. Washington Village School (PK-4) - Washington
9. Warren Elementary School (PK-6) - Warren
10. Moretown Elementary School (PK-6) - Moretown

Top 10 ranked Vermont middle schools

1. Charlotte Central School (PK-8) - Charlotte
2. Main Street Middle School (5-8) - Montpelier

3. Camels Hump Middle School (5-8) - Richmond
4. Woodstock Union Middle/High School (7-12) - Woodstock
5. Stowe Middle School (6-8) - Stowe
6. Albert D. Lawton Intermediate School (6-8) - Essex Junction
7. Hinesburg Community School (PK-8) - Hinesburg
8. Frederick H. Tuttle Middle School (6-8) - South Burlington
9. Browns River Middle School (5-8) - Jericho
10. Williston Schools (PK-8) - Williston

Top 10 ranked Vermont high schools

1. Mt Mansfield Union High School - Jericho
2. Champlain Valley Union High School - Hinesburg
3. South Burlington High School - South Burlington
4. Middlebury Union High School - Middlebury
5. Essex High School - Essex Junction
6. Craftsbury Schools - Craftsbury Common
7. Montpelier High School - Montpelier
8. Lake Region Union High School - Orleans
9. Green Mountain Union High School - Chester
10. Colchester High School - Colchester

Sports All-State



Courtesy photo

CVU team members who played in the North-South All-Star game on Nov. 16 in Castleton are, from left, Caleb Scrodin, Jacob Armstrong, Nolan Walpole, Billy Bates, Dylan Frere, Josh Quad and Sean Kennedy. The North won 33-14.

CVU well represented with post-season football awards

Scooter MacMillan
Editor

The Vermont Football Coaches Association announced their All-State Nominations for this past fall, and among its many awards, Champlain Valley Union High football coach Rahn Fleming was named Division I Coach of the Year. CVU players nominated are:

- First Team Offensive Line — Sean Kennedy, Will Hilgerdt, Josh Quad
- First Team Quarterback — Orion Yates
- First Team Running Back — Nolan Walpole
- First Team Tight End — George Taylor
- First Team Wide Receiver — Jacob Armstrong, Billy Bates, Dylan Frere
- Second Team Offensive Line — Caleb Scrodin, Owen Fowler
- Second Team Running Back — Daniel Tuiqere, Dylan Terricciano
- Honorable Mention Wide Receiver —

Jeremy Bikule

- First Team Defensive Line — Sean Kennedy, Ethan Plante, Josh Quad
- First Team Inside Linebacker — Stuart Allard, Lucas Almena-Lee
- First Team Outside Linebacker — Orion Yates, Dylan Terricciano
- First Team Defensive Backs — Billy Bates, Dylan Frere, Chase Leonard
- Second Team Defensive Line — Wade Nichols
- Second Team Inside Linebacker — Zane Martenis
- Second Team Outside Linebacker — George Taylor
- Second Team Defensive Back — Daniel Tuiqere
- Honorable Mention — Gabe Merrill (defensive line), Jacob Armstrong (defensive back), Jacob Barrett (defensive back)
- First Team Punter — Orion Yates
- First Team Kicker — Alex Jovell
- First Team Returners — Dylan Frere, Billy Bates, Chase Leonard.

Ho Ho Ho Holiday Stroll

Downtown Vergennes

Breakfast with Santa
9:00-11:30am
United Methodist Church 129 Main Street
presented by the Rotary and Lions Clubs
\$10/person, \$6/6 and under

Meet Us at the Bixby Library
ALL DAY: Festive Food and Drinks,
Puzzle Swap, Holiday Card Making
258 Main Street
9:00 -1:00pm Book Sale
10:30am Santa Story Time
11:00am Va-et-Vient Performance
12:00pm Maiden Vermont Performance

Pictures with Santa, Crafts & more
1:00-3:00pm
One Credit Union 48 Green Street
FREE Pictures with Santa, cookie decorating,
story time with Mrs. Claus,
cookie decorating, crafts and more!

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Education

School enriched by STEM event and dance performance

Naomi Strada
(Summarized by Tom Scatchard)

The week of Nov. 11, Charlotte Central School experienced some moments that brought our school community together in meaningful and joyful ways. While amazing things happen in Charlotte classrooms every day, two special schoolwide events stood out for their ability to spread creativity, collaboration and positive energy across school.

On the evening of Wednesday, Nov. 13, Charlotte Central School hosted its annual STEM Night, which brought caregivers and students together to build, create, explore and have fun. STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) teacher Steve Flint and the PTO organized this incredible event. The night was filled with hands-on activities, big smiles and a buzz of excitement.

On Nov. 14, students were treated to a performance by the Echo Dance Team, a traveling troupe from New York City. Their assemblies reinforced the Charlotte Central School core tenets: Take care of yourself, take care of others and take care of this place.

The kindergarten-fourth grade students danced out of their seats, clapped along and left the performance declaring it was



Courtesy photo

Last year's First Lego League state championships at Norwich University.

“the best thing ever.”

A huge thank-you to Betsy Lloyd and the PTO for sponsoring this special event and to all the families and community members who generously support opportunities that enrich Charlotte Central School students' learning experiences.

Holiday Market

The Charlotte Central School Holiday Market is on Saturday, Dec. 7, 10 a.m.-2 p.m. There will be two gyms filled with exhibitors, a children's do-it-yourself craft area and a bake sale, as well as several on-site food options.

All exhibitor registration fees will go

to the PTO to support student enrichment programs, including but not limited to STEM, theater, athletics, as well as the community Angel Fund. Your support is greatly appreciated.

Music news

The Charlotte Central School Music Department will present a winter concert on Wednesday, Dec 11, 6:30 p.m. in the multi-purpose room. This concert will feature the concert bands, the jazz band and the chorus. It is free. We hope to see you there.

Lego robotics volunteers

On Dec. 14, Shelburne Community School will be hosting the First Lego Robotics League qualifier for northern Vermont. All of the Champlain Valley School District's kindergarten-eighth grade schools have teams and many will be participating. So will teams from across northern Vermont.

To operate the event, the school is looking for more than 40 volunteers, including judges, resetters and scorekeepers. Not all roles require a technical background. Those interested in volunteering should email Sarah Samuelson at sarahesamuelson@gmail.com with questions or concerns.

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Education

Consciously adding joy important to campus experience

Margo Bartsch
Contributor

“Because I’m happy/Clap along if you know what happiness is to you,” sings Pharrell Williams in his aptly titled, hit song “Happy.”

However, Fortune reported recent election data indicating that many Generation Z students and graduates (born 1997-2012), or about 20 percent of the U.S. population, are feeling disillusioned and left behind about their futures. Making a conscious effort to add joy to everyday choices and activities can create a noticeable impact on personal well-being.

The CNN podcast “Chasing Life with Dr. Sanjay Gupta” explores the five key elements of happiness: physical health, social life, relationships, self-expression and embracing change. This science of happiness began with a 1938 Harvard study of adult development and continues to this day.

First, don’t neglect the basics of physical health like exercise and eating well. With hectic class schedules and commitments, many students spend more time responding to others and carving less time for themselves. Neuroscience research suggests that lonely people have higher levels of stress hormones and weaker immune

systems.

As the weather gets colder, consider going to sleep a half-hour earlier to wake up a half-hour earlier. Changing your routine to walk around campus or go to a café can become a positive distraction and productive habit.

In thinking ahead for second semester, consider adding an elective like ballet barre, signing up for indoor soccer or joining bouncy horse races. An active body can help to clear the mind for the day ahead. In the process, meeting new people can make campus more fun.

Second, adding social engagement is part of social fitness. Generation Z is known as “digital natives” because they have grown up with technology. Social media is integral to their personal development, schoolwork and professional lives (Zoomers). Meeting new people, beyond the screens of existing friends, can be tough at first, like the first day of school. However, happiness can be improved when making strides with social connections and career networking.

This October, the Washington Post highlighted the popularity of business etiquette classes. Many young adults began their careers with remote work and are now going back to the office. It is important to be prepared for social interactions such as

how to dress, make small talk and avoid office drama. Feeling confident in how to approach unfamiliar settings with a positive attitude can contribute to successful outcomes.

Third, strengthening existing relationships can impact happiness. Expressing gratitude for friendship is a two-way street in sharing appreciation with each other. Taking time to connect with friends can also expand social groups.

Friendships can also help with expanding career opportunities. Expand social networks by brainstorming a list of people who have experience in fields of interest who can pass along recommendations.

Consider reaching out to professional contacts. This is a chance to discuss a personal or career fork in the road and ask for suggestions to move forward. The phrase “six degrees of separation” means there is a common connection among a loose network of people. Friends of friends can provide insight toward a goal. Making progress can give an incredible feeling of happiness from a supportive community.

Fourth, self-expression is an outlet that provides personal immersion and happiness. Each person’s core values can be catalysts to reconnect with their authentic self. Pursuing favorite activities can broaden social circles to form new friendships

with common interests.

For example, enrolling in the Shelburne Craft School for pottery or woodworking classes is a great excuse for creative pursuits. Feeling engaged in an activity allows you to put your best foot forward and feel more hopeful.

Finally, the fifth pursuit of happiness is accepting and embracing change. Part of being a student and young adult is to be curious. Pushing out of your comfort zone to be open to new situations is a growth opportunity. It takes practice to get comfortable with being uncomfortable.

Confidence can be gained in adjusting to the unknown. Being willing to adapt to various social settings becomes easier after tackling previously uncomfortable situations. People are drawn to individuals who do not shy away from new experiences.

Feeling happy is not a guarantee. It takes conscious effort to add a sprinkle of joy to busy routines, but soon you will be hooked on the habit. Enjoying a happy Thanksgiving begins with oneself.

(Margo Bartsch founded College Essay Coach, a full-service college admission business, and has been an adjunct professor in business at Champlain College and at Middlebury College.)

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Hi! Neighbor

Julia Parker-Dickinson has created a path for pollinators

Phyl Newbeck
Contributor

Julia Parker-Dickinson was depressed. A space near the Quinlan Bridge which she saw as an intersection of wetland, woodland and wildland was consistently mowed by the town.

She decided to establish a small garden there, and soon people began providing her with additional plants, compost, manure and money for supplies.

"It became a neighborhood endeavor," she said, "and I was joined by people I hadn't previously known well. It's a garden of unsung heroes."

The Quinlan Bridge Garden was the start of the Charlotte Pollinator Pathway, a volunteer community effort sponsored by Sustainable Charlotte to build biodiverse habitats at key public buildings, along historic roads and in private gardens throughout town. The second garden Parker-Dickinson worked on was at the intersection of Rotax and Roscoe Roads and the group continued from there, creating a pathway of eight gardens from West Charlotte to Monkton through East Charlotte.

Parker-Dickinson notes that the gardens have suffered losses, getting run over by cars and having trash thrown on them, but they continue to survive.

"These aren't aesthetically display gardens," she said. "They are food shelves for pollinators and wildlife."

Parker-Dickinson is thrilled at the amount



Photo by Josh Dickinson

Julia Parker-Dickinson enjoying the butterfly garden at the Quinlan Covered Bridge.

of volunteer help she has been receiving, including cyclists who stop their rides to pull up weeds.

"The whole neighborhood picks up trash," she said. "People really work together."

Through her work with the Pollinator Pathway, Parker-Dickinson was able to meet the boards of the Lewis Creek Association and Sustainable Charlotte. She joined the latter and praises the many things they do, including putting on Repair Cafes to keep items out of landfills and the Window Dresser program, which helps people, who have leaky windows but can't afford to replace them, with more energy-efficient models.

"Knowledge is power" Parker-Dickinson said. "Sustainable Charlotte helps ask the

questions about what we can do to reduce our ecological footprint."

Roughly 20 years ago, Parker-Dickinson was working for the National Gardening Association when she took the University of Vermont's master gardener course. Five years ago, she became a master gardener project leader. Of all the pollinator gardens, only the one at the Quinlan Bridge is a master gardener project, but Parker-Dickinson has been gratified by how many master gardeners have helped out with the other gardens.

She praised the program for giving people an opportunity to learn more about the plants that populate our state. "Plants are the foundation," she said. "That seems obvious but there is an important connection between plants and everything else on our planet."

A native of Chicago, Parker-Dickinson moved to Vermont with her husband whose family is from Dorset. They chose their Charlotte home 11 years ago based on what she described as a "blank slate of a yard" and the view. The house needed some work and Parker-Dickinson devoted her efforts to building a big garden where she could enjoy the quiet and the view of the Milky Way at night.

"Charlotte is gorgeous," she said. "We are so fortunate to live in a town with so much conserved space."

Parker-Dickinson currently teaches a combined first and second grade class at Monkton Central School after several years at Smilie School. She also runs the school's garden program and just started an ecology

club for third through sixth graders.

Parker-Dickinson has chosen younger children for a reason. "They are curious," she said, "and I think there is happiness and optimism in them."

Previously, she worked as a preschool teacher at the YMCA and ran the extension site at the Charlotte Children's Center.

Parker-Dickinson interlaces environmental education into her lesson plans. "You only care about something if you know about it," she said. "Even Vermont kids are spending less time outside."

Periodically, Parker-Dickinson thinks about quitting teaching so she can be a full-time gardener. "Teaching is underpaid and underappreciated," she said, "but it's a really important job and I feel like I have a chance to make a difference."

Recently, Parker-Dickinson found another forum to disseminate her knowledge and love of plants. She is the new garden expert on WCAX's weekday show, Across the Fence. Her goal is to help people find ways to improve their gardens that don't require much work or money.

"We all have this opportunity as individuals, especially homeowners with land, to make a difference," she said. "Our spaces can make a big difference to our environment." Parker-Dickinson is still in awe of the beauty around her in Charlotte.

"You take care of the things you love," she said. "We need to treat our properties in a way that shows we care about our state and our planet."



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Radio tags let scientists monitor muskies in Missisquoi

Kate Kampner
Community News Service

Shawn Good has been working to restore muskellunge fish since 2010, when Vermont began stocking them in the Missisquoi Bay and River. But he's had the idea to bring the species — a once-widespread relative of the pike that can grow to 5 feet long — back to prominence in Lake Champlain for close to 20 years.

Following a dip in their population in the 1960s and 1970s, the muskellunge in the Missisquoi were seemingly wiped out after an untreated waste spill from a mill during the '80s.

Now, after years of releasing fish into the lake, Good and other fisheries biologists have just finished capturing and retagging six muskies, as they're known, to watch their spawning behavior and learn more about how successful the fish have been in reproducing naturally.

"This project is all about bringing them back," said Good, the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife scientist leading the program.

Since 2010, the department has stocked over 66,000 muskies, each tagged with a microchip that people can scan to identify a specific fish. Those tags have allowed Good's team to monitor muskie growth and survival.

The team finished the final tagging only a few weeks ago and is now waiting until the spring for the muskie spawning season to start. Team members tag the fish early to let the muskies have time to recover and get used to their tags, which are inserted into their

abdominal cavity. The radio tags last up to six years and allow state workers to find and keep track of where the muskies spawn and lay eggs, Good said.

On the final day of tagging in late October, the scientists were on the Missisquoi River using a slim metal antenna to detect and track the sixth fish in the water.

"We're just trying to see if the fish are generally in the area right now," Good said.

The scientists use a metal pole-like tool to send an electrical current into the water and stun the fish so that they can bring them aboard.

"When it comes time to actually start detecting it and their locations for actually spawning and laying their eggs, we're gonna want to be a lot more specific," he said.

Each device costs \$220, and Good said the team could only fund six for the project so far. But the hope is that those six fish will eventually lead Good and his team to larger populations they can monitor.

They're especially interested in tracking and documenting the number of baby muskies.

When the scientists survey the muskies, they're looking for how much the fish have grown in length and weight. By using the implanted tags, they can track a fish down and scan it to look at its past numbers. Then scientists can compare those records to the fish's current length and weight.

"It tells us how much it's growing in how much time and it gives us good information on how healthy the fish is in terms like, is it growing slow, is it growing fast," Good said.

The team does the same with other fish species, including northern pike, salmon, trout



Photo by Kate Kampner

Shawn Good holds up the sixth and final muskie to be tagged that October day.

and sturgeon — just some of the many fish that can be found in the Missisquoi.

"With this boat, we get to see all the fish that a lot of people don't get to see," said Dan DeLucia, a seasonal fisheries technician working with Good and his team. "When you start seeing them, it's great."

The surveys will allow Good and his team to make a decision on whether they want to stop stocking hatchery fish in the river altogether, he said.

Dave Gibson, a fisheries scientist who has been with Fish and Wildlife for 33 years, said that throughout the process and during his years working, he's enjoyed seeing how much has changed and how much has improved.

"We're helping maintain and sustain a population," he said.

DeLucia said much of the same. "It's crazy how many we've caught this year," he said.

"They're supposed to be all spread out, so it kind of gives you the assumption that this is a spawning area, that they're all congregating."

The goal of the project, Good said, is to restore the muskellunge to a self-sustaining population that naturally reproduces.

"This is a restoration project. We're trying to restore these fish species to Vermont," Good said. "It's a career of work you're seeing."

At the heart of it all, DeLucia said, "We're just trying to get people to care about them like we care about them."

(Via Community News Service, a University of Vermont journalism internship.)

The halls of Proctor's Wilson Castle are alive ... with paranormal investigators



Photo by Catherine Morrissey

Wilson Castle in Proctor.

Noah Diedrich
Community News Service

If the assembly of tents outside Wilson Castle on a mid-October night was any indicator, the old brick mansion's reputation for being haunted is not without merit.

Perhaps it's the chill that pervades every room, the antique music box that is said to occasionally play on its own accord or the ornate Gothic statues that would make even Shirley Jackson quiver.

Since its completed construction in 1885, Wilson Castle has changed hands several times, eventually being purchased by Herbert Lee Wilson, a former radio engineer and the castle's last permanent resident, who died in 2010.

Since then, the castle's Addams Family-esque halls have been vacant. Or have they?

Rumors swirl of ghostly residents haunting the castle halls — the jury is still out — but the castle is still very much alive with visitors, paranormal or otherwise.

Hundreds of enthusiasts come every year in search of supernatural experiences, said Andy Probst, the castle's tour guide, social media manager and odd-job man. The castle boasts visits from the likes of Jason Hawes, one of the star investigators from the television show "Ghost Hunters," Probst said.

On the night of Oct. 18, one of the many groups that poke around the estate each week gathered their ghost-hunting gear and set off to look for evidence of the paranormal.

Unsurprisingly, one of the most active floors for investigations is the attic, Probst said. While the rest of the castle has undergone significant renovations in recent years, the attic was left unfinished to give it an eerie feel.

The rooms of the attic are staged for photography and investigations, including props like a child's bed, a baby carriage, a wheelchair and a real body basket — a wicker precursor to body bags.

But Probst said the rooms aren't all for show. Visitors typically experience some sort of paranormal encounter in one of the attic's

many rooms, he said.

"(The spirits) always let you know they're here in some way," Probst said. "Not one group that's left has said it was a very quiet night."

Probst said the spookiest item in the attic is a small table in the corner of the attic's ballroom. The table is littered with notes and children's toys left by guests — bouncy balls, Matchbox cars, rubber ducks — in hopes of pleasing Elliot, the alleged spirit of one of the original castle owners' sons.

"They think that he comes back here as a 6- or 7-year-old child," Probst said. "He did not die at that age. He was in his 50s when he passed, and he didn't pass in this house. One of the theories is that he's here at that age because those were the best years of his life."

As he continued the tour through the attic, Probst issued an ominous warning to the group.

"Watch for shadow figures up here," he said. "They tend to peek through the door entrances."

Ed Bresette, a member of Portal Spirits Rising, a paranormal investigative team that makes videos of their spectral inquiries, attended the investigation that night to scout out the location for a future video with the rest of his team.

Bresette, a resident of Plattsburgh, New York, said the cool temperatures inside the castle were optimal for spirits.

"If it's hot, the spirits just don't like that," he said. "They just like more of the cold. They get more energy from that."

While Bresette was being interviewed by a reporter in the castle's kitchen, a nearby device began to twitter and chirp — a signal that a spirit was nearby, he said.

The gadget was an REM pod — the acronym stands for "radiating electromagnetic," a term that defies even Google's comprehension. According to Bresette, the pod operates like a theremin, emitting lights and noises in the direction that it senses changes in an electromagnetic field.

Bresette also demonstrated a piece of

HAUNTED

Continued from page 14

equipment he recently purchased called a grounding pad, which he said is used to gather energy from the earth into the body of the user. Spirits, he said, can harness that energy to communicate better with the human world.

You place your bare feet onto the rubber mat, which plugs into a wall outlet. “You just take your shoes off, socks off and just sit there,” Bressette said. “I do about 15 to 20 minutes.”

One floor below the attic is the bedroom of Sarah Johnson, one of the castle’s original owners. Nothing about its distinct pink walls, ornate mirror and unassuming closet elicit any signs of deviousness on their own, but Probst said otherwise.

The pink bedroom has the most reports of hauntings since the 1970s, Probst said, and many guests have reportedly taken photos there in which the figure of a woman, believed to be Sarah herself, can be seen lurking in the background.

Within the bedroom closet is Wilson Castle’s portal between the spirit world and the human world, Probst said. He said he first learned of the ghostly amenity from some visitors who told him the portal functions as a revolving door between dimensions.

“When they told me that, I think I laughed for a half an hour. I said, ‘This is insane, what am I doing here?’”

Now, however, Probst considers himself a believer.

“It’s the consistency of what these groups tell us,” he said. “We’ve had guests come during the daytime for our historical tours where we’re not talking ghosts, and they’ll pull us aside and say, ‘What the hell is going on in that closet?’”

Probst said guests report experiencing an uneasy feeling when near or inside the closet and that paranormal investigators’ electromagnetic field equipment goes haywire when placed inside.

“You couldn’t pay me to spend the night in this room,” Probst said.

But groups often do — and can pay upwards of \$135 a pop for the chance.

A company called Are You Afraid of the Dark? Paranormal Events hosts group investigations and camp-outs at paranormal sites, including Wilson Castle.

One of the company’s founders, Olivia Taylor, said it started with private events hosted by her and three friends. “(My friend) said, ‘Why don’t we make this a business?’ And so we did,” Taylor said.

The company, which celebrated its one-year anniversary last month, provides equipment for beginners to use. In the castle’s art gallery recently, tools seen in shows like “Ghost Hunters” were strewn across a table: spirit boxes, a Ouija board, electromagnetic frequency meters and the like.

Participants are encouraged to explore the castle on their own and investigate where



Photo by Catherine Morrissey

Andy Probst conducts a paranormal investigation at the Wilson Castle in Proctor.

they see fit, Taylor said. Sometimes, they investigate until 4 o’clock in the morning, she said.

Take the company-hosted excursion on that mid-October night:

Gathered in a circle, a few brave souls stood in silence while “GhostTube VOX,” a smartphone app that claims to emit the voices of spirits picked up over AM radio waves by the phone’s sensors, played garbled bits of speech.

The investigators, seven in number, asked questions of what they believed to be a spirit in the room with them.

“Who are we talking to?” “Is it Sarah?” “Somebody else passing through?”

It wasn’t clear whether they got the answers they were looking for. But based on the excitement that night, they seemed to get their money’s worth.

(Via Community News Service, a University of Vermont journalism internship.)

Autumn leaving



Photo by Lee Krohn

A tree stands in the late afternoon light, a silent testament to the fact that it is truly stick season now.

Environment

Wrapping up the water quality stewardship field season

Kate Kelly and Portia Butrym
Contributors

For yet another summer, volunteers of all ages hopped in kayaks and canoes to remove European frogbit, a non-native invasive plant species that spreads rapidly in bays and wetlands if given the opportunity.

In 2007, Lewis Creek Association initiated the Water Quality Stewardship Program and has since worked annually to manage the invasive plants and water quality of the rivers and streams that drain directly into Lake Champlain.

The volunteer-driven frogbit project is the result of cooperation between many individuals and groups, including the association, Charlotte, Shelburne, Hinesburg and the Shelburne Bay Boat Club.

European frogbit, a common aquarium plant, spread to the United States via the St. Lawrence River after it was introduced to arboretum ponds in Ottawa in 1932. It is now considered an aquatic invasive species because it dominates native species in the competition for sunlight, nutrients and surface area. Lewis Creek Association's volunteer efforts have proven highly successful since friends of Lewis Creek Association discovered frogbit covering 50 percent of Town Farm Bay in 2007.

Annual paddling and weeding trips, with a side of bird- and turtle-watching, have reduced frogbit to under 4 percent cover.

In contrast, when frogbit was discovered in the wetlands of the LaPlatte Natural Area, it had a much lower percentage cover; this gave the Lewis Creek Association volunteers the opportunity for "early detection, rapid response." Though the invasive plant will never be eradicated in either location, maintaining this low population allows native plants and animals to thrive.

This summer, volunteers spent 159 hours removing 720 pounds of frogbit from Town Farm Bay, more than was harvested in 2023. Volunteers spent 63 hours harvesting 450 pounds of frogbit, more than seven times the amount from last year, in the LaPlatte River wetlands.

Heavy rainstorms throughout the month



The beautiful scene from Town Farm Bay (with a basket full of frogbit).

of July impacted the water level of Lake Champlain, greatly increasing the amount harvested by volunteers. Frogbit became more visible to volunteers at both Town Farm Bay and the LaPlatte River wetlands because the higher water levels submerged the native lily pads (*Nymphaea odorata*), which cover much of the water surface area. High water levels also allowed volunteers at the LaPlatte River wetlands to paddle into a previously inaccessible area to boaters; this area produced the majority of Frogbit harvested at this location, likely because volunteers were unable to harvest from this area during most previous summers.

Lewis Creek Association's Water Quality Stewardship Program also includes the annual monitoring of water quality in the LaPlatte River, Patrick Brook, McCabe's Brook, Thorp Brook, Kimball Brook and Lewis Creek and its tributaries, by volunteers for South Chittenden River Watch. Volunteers collect water samples which are then analyzed by the Vermont Agricultural and Environmental Laboratory and interpreted by Lewis Creek Association technical consultants.

The sampling season has recently wrapped up, and included sampling for nutrients (phosphorus, nitrogen) and chloride to help understand sources of nutrient loading to Lake Champlain and help inform water quality improvement plans.

The 2024 results will be available on Lewis Creek Association's website (lewis-creek.org) in the spring of 2025; to see the last three years' results, visit bit.ly/lca-waterquality.



Photos by Portia Butrym

Volunteers remove European frogbit plants and load them into boats.

Check out more information on water quality and what you can do to improve it on Lewis Creek Association's YouTube channel at bit.ly/lca-youtube.

If you are interested in assisting with water quality monitoring or invasive plant removal in 2025, contact kate@lewis-creek.org or 802-488-5203.

(Kate Kelly is program manager and Portia Butrym is non-native invasive plant coordinator of the Lewis Creek Association.)

Our Local Feast

So, should we invite Brussel sprouts to the holiday table?

Dorothy Grover-Read
Contributor

They are big and plump this year, little cabbage-like buds that you either love or hate. Actually, you can feel both ways about Brussels sprouts since so often they are cooked to grey mush and smell up the house. A few childhood memories here.

But I gave them a second chance in my adult life, and I'm glad I did, because I really do love them if cooked properly. Roasted in the oven, or atop the stove, these sweet and slightly bitter sprouts are delightful, and the odor doesn't linger in the house for days.

A northern staple, picked in late fall, they have a long growing season, but luckily, they can stay in the field right up to snow. They keep well, and we'll enjoy them all winter, or at least as long as the supplies last.

In the north, we take advantage of what we have that grows well in our cold climate, and these sprouts are a regular on restaurant menus from pubs to fine dining. They are abundant and relatively inexpensive, and you have little waste because you can cook up just what you want and save the rest for another meal.

I've grown them in my own garden and most of the time was successful, with an odd year here and there where all I got was tiny little marbles, probably in dry years when I didn't water as faithfully as I should.

The sprouts, which really do resemble little cabbages, form at the base of each leaf on the stalk of the plant. My favorite part when growing them was stripping most of the leaves off, except the top ones at the end of the season so the energy goes into the sprouts and not the leaves. The garden looked like it was full of little palm trees.

If you can find them at the farm stands still on the stalk, it's a good thing because they will keep even longer.

A member of the brassica family, sprouts, like all its relatives, are low in calories but filled with vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, phytonutrients, fiber and are good for your immune system and bones. There is also evidence they can help ward off cancers and diabetes. All good reasons to give them that second chance.

Lots of folks love to eat them deep fried,



Brussels sprouts often get a bad reputation if overcooked. But these northern treasures are worth a second chance.

no surprise, with lots of little charred petals, but a soft interior. In my book, they are better roasted, and if you top them with some toasted garlic chips or crispy shallots and drizzle them with balsamic vinegar, you have a holiday-worthy side dish you can also enjoy any night of the week.

This dish is quick to make, and if you are having a gathering, do all the cooking in advance and rewarm, just don't add the chips until ready to serve.

Pan-roasted Brussels sprouts with toasted garlic chips

Place a large skillet over medium heat and add:

- 1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil
- 4 thinly sliced garlic cloves

Cook gently until browned on both sides. If the heat is too hot, the garlic will burn and get quite bitter, so keep the heat under control and watch them. It doesn't take long. Fish them out of the pan with a slotted spoon, drain on towel, and season lightly. Set aside.

In the same pan, add:

- 1 pound of Brussels sprouts, trimmed and cut in half lengthwise
- 1 small diced purple onion

Place the sprouts cut-side down in the pan, top with the onions, season with salt and pepper, and turn the heat up to just slightly over medium.

Keep an eye on them, and using tongs, turn them over as they brown. Once they are all browned, mix things up a bit to distribute the onions, and turn them again to the second



Photos by Dorothy Grover-Read

Pan roasted Brussels sprouts adorned with crispy garlic chips can make a convert out of those whose experience with these vegetables was less than delightful. A drizzle of balsamic vinegar makes it even better.

side.

Turn the heat back down and continue to cook for a couple of minutes. Test with a paring knife, until the sprouts are where you want them. I like them just barely cooked through, but others will like them softer. Correct seasoning if necessary.

Plate, drizzle with a little balsamic vinegar and sprinkle with the reserved garlic chips.

Crispy shallots

If you don't care for garlic, you can top these with crispy shallots, and this year, our farm stands offer really big ones. These are easy to make, quite tasty and also go well with asparagus, green beans or really just about any vegetable. Use them for a soup topping as well, or tuck them in a sandwich.

Just take a couple large shallots, cut into thin rings, place in a small saucepan and cover with olive oil. Bring to a simmer and cook slowly until they are browned. Keep an eye on them.



Garlic chips are easy to make, and you can use these on everything from salads to sandwiches, and of course, as a topping for roasted Brussels sprouts.

Place on a towel to drain, sprinkle with salt. Strain the oil and use for other purposes; you can drizzle this on soup or vegetables, brush on baguette slices or flavor a vinaigrette. It's a delightful byproduct.



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Weed's in the Garden

Recipes for sweets from past Christmases revive memories

Joan Weed
Contributor

After deciding that this column would include holiday sweets from bygone days, I found myself reminiscing and greeting old friends as well as old recipes. I got out my two wooden card file boxes and a pile of saved clippings.

Oh my, what fun. Sharing recipes is what families and friends do, and each time we make that dish we're reminded of someone who may be long gone now. I found such things.

I'll be offering sweets to share or make for gifts or delights to welcome guests to our homes. We need to plan before supplies run out at the markets. Some can be made ahead and frozen as well. In a few cases, I'll use the old-fashioned phrasing which adds to the charm.

Kathy's Pecan Candy

1 pound bag of pecan halves broken lengthwise
4 tablespoons butter
1 bag Wilton dark cocoa candy, melted
Preheat oven to 300 degrees and melt butter in 13-by-9 pan. Stir in nuts to coat. Toast for 30 minutes, stirring every 10 minutes. (Watch!) Just before 30 minutes is up, melt chocolate in microwave — one minute using a plastic bowl. Stir until it's all melted. Add in small increments if needed. Stir to test.

Stir in nuts and drop by teaspoon onto waxed paper lined sheets. Refrigerate to set. Store in a cool place.

I can attest that these are delicious.

Microwave Peanut Brittle

(shared by Beth Merritt)

1-1/2 cups raw unsalted, roasted, shelled peanuts
1 cup sugar
1/2 cup light corn syrup
1 teaspoon butter
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1 teaspoon baking soda
1/8 teaspoon salt

Mix peanuts, sugar, salt and Karo syrup in a deep microwaveable bowl.

Cook on high for four minutes. Stir and cook for four more minutes.



Left: Mahlon Zilch Haines was an early cook at the senior center who shared the skills he'd learned as a cook in the Navy.



Photos by Joan Weed

Right: Grandkids love to decorate butter cookies.

Stir in butter and vanilla and cook two minutes more.

Remove from oven (carefully), add baking soda. Stir quickly and pour onto warmed cookie sheet. Let spread naturally. Break into pieces when cooled completely. The whole business takes about 15 minutes. Have things ready to move quickly.

Pumpkin cheesecake

Crust

Combine 1 1/2 cups zwieback crumbs, 3 tablespoons sugar, 3 tablespoons melted butter. Press into bottom and up 2 inches of the sides of a 9-inch springform pan. Bake at 325° for 5 minutes.

Filling

In large mixing bowl, combine two 8-ounce packages of softened cream cheese, 1 cup light cream, 1 cup canned pumpkin, 3/4 cup sugar, four egg yolks, 3 tablespoons all-purpose flour, 1 teaspoon vanilla, 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon, 1/2 teaspoon ground ginger, 1 teaspoon ground nutmeg and 1/2 teaspoon salt.

Beat until smooth. Fold in four stiffly beaten egg whites. Turn into prepared crust.

Bake in 325-degree oven for one hour.

Topping: Combine 1 cup sour cream, 2 tablespoons sugar and 1/2 teaspoon vanilla over cheesecake. Bake five minutes more. Chill thoroughly before serving. Makes 12 servings.

It's a tradition at our house to make plain butter cookies with my collection of cookie cutters. The grandkids decorate and eat them, even in their 20s. I know for a fact that Santa loves them.

Best-ever butter cookies

1 cup unsalted butter
1 cup granulated sugar
1 egg
2 tablespoons orange juice
1 tablespoon vanilla extract
2 1/2 cups flour
1 teaspoon baking powder
Cream butter and sugar till light and fluffy. Add egg and beat till combined. Add juice and vanilla and beat in flour and baking powder till all is absorbed.

Wrap in waxed paper or plastic wrap and chill for at least 30 minutes. Can be refrigerated for a few days if necessary. (I do

this, letting dough come to room temperature to roll.)

Lightly flour a board and rolling pin. Cut dough into quarters and keep unused portions wrapped. Roll one quarter of the dough to 1/4 inch thick and cut with various cookie cutters.

Sprinkle with colored sugars. Using a spatula, remove to an ungreased cookie sheet and bake at 400 degrees for 6-10 minutes or till lightly browned on edges and crisp.

Continue with remaining dough. Store in airtight container when completely cooled. These keep well.

Florentines

This Italian recipe came from a magazine in the 60s — maybe Family Circle or Woman's Day.

Combine 1/2 cup heavy cream, 3 tablespoons butter and 1/2 cup sugar in a saucepan and bring to a boil. Remove from heat and stir in 1 1/4 cups finely chopped almonds, 1/3 cup sifted flour and 3/4 cups finely chopped candied orange peel.

Drop by tablespoonfuls on greased and floured cookie sheet, keeping cookies 3 inches apart.

Bake in a 350-degree oven about 10 minutes. Cool 5 minutes. Remove carefully with spatula to cake rack to cool.

Spiral melted chocolate over cookie tops and decorate with tiny colored candies. Makes about two dozen 3-inch cookies.

Some of the cooks from the early days of the senior center might remember Mahlon Zilch Haines. He was one of the very first volunteers to make lunch. He learned his art as a Navy cook. Here is his wassail recipe.

Wassail

1 gallon cider
2 cups orange juice
1/2 to 1 cup sugar, depending on how sweet the cider is
32 whole cloves
6 tablespoons whole allspice
12 whole cinnamon sticks
(2-3 lemons sliced) as garnish and for tartness

Place the spices in a cheese cloth bag and bring all ingredients to a slow boil.

Add one bottle of Laird's apple jack and enjoy the warm feeling of the holidays.

Calendar

Send your events two weeks in advance to news@thecharlottenews.org.

Middlebury museum train display

Friday, Nov. 29, 11 a.m.

Middlebury's Henry Sheldon Museum will hold opening day for Rolling Down the Tracks: Holiday Trains. The elaborate model train layout will be on display through Jan. 4. The trains will be running Wednesdays 2-4:30 p.m., Thursdays 10:30 a.m.-1 p.m.; Fridays 11 a.m.-3 p.m. and Saturdays 11 a.m.-3 p.m. Info at 802-388-2117 or henrysheldonmuseum.org/events/holidaytrains.

Annual Messiah Sing

Sunday, Dec. 1, 4-5:15 p.m.

Charlotte Congregational will host its annual performance of Handel's "Messiah" as a classic singalong. Anne Decker will conduct four of Vermont's preeminent vocal soloists (Helen Lyons, Nessa Rabin, Cameron Brownell and Erik Kroncke) along with a professional chamber ensemble, including the Skylark quartet. When attendees arrive to this family-friendly event, they'll be offered a score and invited to sit in sections based on their vocal ranges: soprano, alto, tenor or bass. Not all will choose to sing, and some may want to sit with their friends and family, so the section seating is just a suggestion. Also, the balcony will be open. Dotted throughout the performance will be times for the attendees to raise their voices in song. The event will culminate with everyone bursting out for the "Hallelujah Chorus." Childcare available, and donations encouraged (suggested \$5 for children, \$20 for adults and \$50 for families). For more info, visit charlotteuicc.org or email



Courtesy photo

The Hinesburg Artist Series rehearses for its annual holiday concerts at 2 p.m. and 4:30 p.m. on Sunday, Dec. 8, at St. Jude Catholic Church in Hinesburg.

Jane Kittredge: jane Kittredge@gmail.com.

Grange line dancing

Wednesday, Dec. 4, 7-8 p.m.

Andrea Warren, owner of Good Time Line Dancing, returns to teach a one-hour class, formatted for beginners, at the Grange in East Charlotte. The lesson will start with an easy-to-follow, warm-up dance, followed by two beginner dances taught in small segments building up to doing the whole dance together. Space is limited, so register to reserve a spot at <https://tinyurl.com/yy384wf7>. Suggested donation is \$5-20. All ages welcome. Refreshments will be available.

Searching for lost ski areas

Friday, Dec. 6, 5-8 p.m.

The Vermont Ski and Snowboard Museum, 1 South Main Street in Stowe opens the exhibit Searching for Vermont's Lost Ski Areas - Part 2. Part 2 incorporates the artifacts included in last year's Part 1. The exhibit opening is free. Thereafter, the museum is open Thursdays-Sundays, noon-5 p.m. through the winter. The museum has been documenting Vermont's "lost" and "lost and found" ski areas for 25 years. To date, 184 have been identified and introduced through photographs, interviews, newspaper clippings and memorabilia from the museum's collection.

Community College of Vermont chorus

Friday & Saturday, Dec. 6 & 7, 7:30-8:30 p.m.

The Community College of Vermont chorus will perform two concerts at the beginning of December. On Dec. 6, the chorus will perform at Abenaki Way in Winooski, and on Dec. 7 it will perform at the First Congregational Church at 38 S. Winooski Ave. in Burlington. Both concerts start at 7:30 p.m. and are free.

School holiday market

Saturday, Dec. 7, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

The Charlotte Central School Holiday Market is looking for local artisans, crafters and vendors. The market will be held in two gyms bursting with exhibitors, a DIY craft corner for the kiddos and a smorgasbord of tasty treats. Registration fees support a variety of school programs including PTO, STEM, theater, athletics and our Community Emergency Care Fund. Vendor application at <https://tinyurl.com/442xxurh>. Email vendor suggestions to ccsholidaymarket@gmail.com.

Science Fun Day

Saturday, Dec. 7, 1:30-3:30 p.m.

Third-fifth grade students are invited to spend an afternoon exploring space-related topics through workshops led by VTeen Science Ambassadors, a group of high school students who love science and have taken a leadership role in creating science programming for younger youth. The free event includes building and launching straw

rockets, taking core samples of "moon" rocks and constructing an astronaut lander. Science Fun Day will happen on the University of Vermont. The program is free but registration is required by Dec. 5. Sign up at go.uvm.edu/funday24. For more information: margaret.coan@uvm.edu or 802-656-7634.

Hinesburg Artist Series holiday concerts

Sunday, Dec. 8, 2 p.m. & 4:30 p.m.

The Hinesburg Artist Series will present its annual holiday concerts at 2 p.m. and 4:30 p.m. at St. Jude Catholic Church in Hinesburg. The concert will feature the South County Chorus and the Hinesburg Artist Series Orchestra under the direction of Rufus C. Patrick. The featured choral works will be "Gloria" by Randol Alan Bass, "Nutcracker Jingles" by James Pierpont, "Angels We Have Heard on High" arranged by Joan Pinkston, "O Little Town of Bethlehem" arranged by Dan Forrest, "O Hear the Angel Voices" arranged by Larry Shackley, "Gloria" by John Leavitt, and "A Wreath of Carols" arranged by Greg Gilpin. The orchestra will perform "A Most Wonderful Christmas" by Robert Sheldon and "Nutcracker Ballet" arranged by Merle Issac. The concert will also include a singalong. Free but donations are welcome, and the audience is also encouraged to bring something for the food shelf. Info: hinesburgartistseries.org.

Shelburne grab-and-go meal

Tuesday, Dec. 10, 11 a.m.-noon

Age Well and St. Catherine's of Siena Parish in Shelburne are providing a to-go meal to people age 60 and older on Tuesday, Dec. 10. The meal will be available for pick up in the parking lot at 72 Church Street. The menu is beef stew with vegetables and potatoes, winter mixed vegetables, wheat biscuit, tapioca pudding with peaches and cream, and milk. A \$5 donation is suggested, but not required. To order a meal contact agewellstcath@gmail.com or call 802-503-1107 by Wednesday, Dec. 4. This will be the last grab-and-go meal offered by Age Well in Shelburne, which is returning to its original vision of meeting in person for community in January. These meals will be offered on the second and third Tuesday of the month.

Historical Society open house

Sunday, Dec. 15, 2-5 p.m.

The Charlotte Historical Society will hold its 47th annual holiday open house at the museum. There will be refreshments inside and a festive fire ring on the front lawn.

'Highlight' New Year's Eve

Tuesday, Dec. 31

Burlington City Arts is holding the seventh "Highlight" New Year's Eve celebration from midday Dec. 31 until past midnight. Tickets for "Highlight" go on sale at noon, Friday, Nov. 1, at <https://tinyurl.com/46v6nw9c> and cost \$15 throughout November, before going up to \$18 in December. Kids 5 and under do not need a ticket. "Highlight" will feature programming with community-powered, multidimensional experiences throughout the downtown and waterfront areas of Burlington.

Charlotte Congregational Church Services

Lighting the Advent Wreath

Sundays, Dec. 1-22, 10 a.m.

Each Sunday the church will light candles of hope, peace, joy and love.

All of the following Charlotte Congregational Church services will be livestreamed.

Messiah Sing

Sunday, Dec. 1, 4-5:15 p.m.

Four of Vermont's preeminent vocal soloists along with a professional chamber ensemble, including the Skylark quartet, will lead the audience in bringing Handel's timeless masterpiece to life. This family-friendly event is open to all and will be livestreamed. Childcare and scores will be available. Donations encouraged (suggest: \$5 children, \$20 for adults and \$50 family maximum).

Taizé service of hope, peace, joy and love, Wednesday, Dec. 11, 5:30 p.m.

A simple candlelit service in the sanctuary with singing of Taizé chants, holding silence, praying and listening to scripture.

Christmas Pageant

Sunday, Dec. 15, 10 a.m.

A creative and imaginative enactment of the Christmas story.

Christmas Eve

Tuesday, Dec. 24, 4 p.m.

Outdoor family carol sing for all will be held rain or snow in the courtyard around the Christmas tree with Christmas bells for the children.

5 p.m. Indoor service of lessons and carols with children's choir and Christmas bells for the children.

7 p.m. Indoor service of lessons and carols

(A special offering taken at 4, 5 and 7 p.m. services will be used to support the church's partners near and far.)

First Sunday After Christmas

Sunday, Dec. 29, 10 a.m.

Rev. Hadley Bunting will lead worship. For more information call 802-425-3176.

On Books

Thank heavens for the alternate universe of books

Katherine Arthaud
Contributor

The holidays are upon us after a beautiful, golden fall, the days looking increasingly November-y, and, wow, what a crazy time it is in the world.

Since Nov. 6, each day brings tidings worse and more surreal than the day before. Many have been trying to save what sanity they have left by ignoring the news; not easy in a world where information blows in like chilly winds through the clapboards. Lately, instead of turning on the TV in the morning, I've been retreating to the quiet living room, coffee cup and (you guessed it) book in hand, for a few minutes of peace before the day starts in earnest. Because a book for me is, among other things, escape ... comfort ... immersion in another place and time.

As my father used to say, "Don't pull the wool off my eyes." Exactly. Thank heavens for the alternate universe of books.

Recently, a friend told me she was rereading "The Red Tent." What an interesting idea, I thought. And then: What a good idea.

"The Red Tent," which many of us read in the late 90s, was a book club favorite, a Los Angeles Times, Washington Post, San Francisco Chronicle, USA Today and Entertainment Weekly bestseller. I usually pass books along or donate them to rummage sales, so imagine my surprise when I found a copy gathering dust on my office shelf. I began it immediately and soon found myself utterly swept up in another world, another time, another culture, a completely different life. Just what the doctor ordered.



The novel, by Anita Diamant, is a story narrated by Dinah, a character originally found in the Bible, in the book of Genesis, the only named daughter of Leah and Jacob, best known for being abducted and raped by Shechem, son of Hamor the Hivite, while visiting some women in a neighboring town, and the bloodbath that ensued. Hers is a troubling story, but Diamant does a brilliant job retelling it. She did a ton of research, but says she doesn't think of the novel as "scholarly or theological."

"From the start," she says, "I intended to depart from the text to make the story my own."

Rich and beautiful, colorful and intense, one is left, after reading this novel, with a strong sense not only of the difficulties, hardships and restrictions experienced by women living in the Near East in ancient times, but also of the profound sense of bonding, comfort and identity that existed in women's circles at that time.

In case you are wondering, the titular red tent was where menstruating women would go to spend a few days in each other's company, away from men, resting and communing with one another, telling stories, returning their blood to the earth that bore them.

Says Dinah, "In the ruddy shade of the red tent, the menstrual tent, they ran their fingers through my curls, repeating the escapades of their youths, the sagas of their childbirths. Their stories were like offerings of hope and strength poured out before the Queen of heaven, only these gifts were not for any god or goddess — but for me."

Because Dinah's father had a number of wives (kind of a thing back then), Dinah had many mothers. "I can still feel how my mothers loved me," she says. "I have cherished their love always. It sustained me. It kept me alive. Even after I left them, and even now, so long after their deaths, I am comforted by their memory."

Dinah lived to carry her mothers' tales into the next generation, "but the stories of my life were forbidden to me," she says, "and that silence nearly killed the heart in me. I did not die but lived long enough for other stories to fill up my days and nights."

"And now you come to me," she says, to us, her readers, "women with hands and feet as soft as a queen's, with more cooking pots than you need, so safe in childbed and so free with your tongues. You come hungry for the story that was lost. You crave words to fill the great silence that swallowed me, and my mother, and my grandmothers before them."

This is a book for the ages. A book for the late 90s. And a book for 2024, when women have come so far since Dinah's world, yet are finding themselves (ourselves) facing dangerous restrictions on reproductive freedom, preparing for a president who vows to protect women whether they like it or not, and experiencing surging sexist and abusive media attacks, like "Get back to the kitchen" and "Your body, my choice."

Seriously? Bring on the red tent, I say. Can we get one set up in Charlotte? I highly recommend reading, re-reading or re-rereading this fine, transporting, beautifully crafted novel.

Another book that's been gathering dust on my shelves is the universally acclaimed, rapturously reviewed, instant New York Times bestseller "Know My Name" by Chanel Miller, survivor of the famous Stanford case that was all over the news back in 2015. The one where two bystanders

interrupted the assault, called for help and pinned the attacker to the ground.

Glennon Doyle writes, "I opened 'Know My Name' with the intention to bear witness to the story of a survivor. Instead, I found myself falling into the hands of one of the great writers and thinkers of our time. I could not put this phenomenal book down."

The Washington Post says, "A gut-punch, and in the end, somehow, also blessedly hopeful."

Miller is a gifted, wrenchingly honest writer. Her book takes us from when she was a child too shy to play an animal in the school play about a safari. Instead, "I was grass," she writes. "I've never thrown my own birthday party."

She goes on, "I'll put on three sweaters before I ask you to turn on the heat. I'm okay losing board games. I stuff my coins haphazardly into my purse to avoid holding up the checkout line. When I was little, I wanted to grow up and become a mascot, so I'd have the freedom to dance without being seen."

This is the person who was called into the national spotlight at the age of 22, after she was assaulted by a Stanford student outside of a frat house, at which point "my old life left me, and a new one began."

In this startling memoir, we are told the truth. The truth of what happened, as well as the deeper, sustaining truth of what it means to speak up, speak out and to claim one's place in this world. The truth that Alexander Che alludes to in the frontispiece: "It is our duty, to matter."

This memoir took my breath away. First, with what happened out of the clear blue

during a college frat party, and then with what came after. And then, with the way Miller, in the span of a few minutes, minutes in which she was unconscious, went from being a daughter, sister, worker, college grad, girlfriend, friend, to being "Rape Victim, Emily Doe."

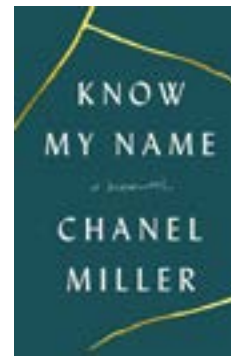
And then, with the deeper story of just how she survived, and persevered, and spoke up and out, despite a serious aversion to attention and the sustained pushback of many, fighting for her life in a culture that doesn't make any of this easy.

"When society questions a victim's reluctance to report, I will be here to remind you that you ask us to sacrifice our sanity to fight outdated structures that were designed to keep us down. Victims do not have the time for this. Victims are also students, teachers, parents, who can't give up work or education. The average adult can barely find time to renew their license at the DMV. It is not reasonable to casually demand that victims put aside their lives to spend more time pursuing something they never asked for in the first place. This is not about the victims' lack of effort. This is about society's failure to have systems in place in which victims feel there is a probable chance of achieving safety, justice and restoration rather than being retraumatized, policy shamed, psychologically tormented, and verbally mauled. The real question we need to be asking is not, Why didn't she report. The question is: Why would you?"

In the end, despite the shock, the indignity, the agony, the tremendous toll that was taken on the life of this young woman and her loved ones, this memoir is a triumph. A hard-won, beautifully articulated answer to the question: Why fight?

Highly, highly recommend.

Happy Thanksgiving. Fight on.





CHARLOTTE TOWN MEETINGS AND AGENDAS

Visit charlottetv.org for more information

<p>Thanksgiving Day Holiday - Town Hall Closed All Day</p> <p>Regular Selectboard Meeting Monday, December 2, 6:30 p.m.</p> <p>Trails Committee Monthly Meeting Tuesday, December 3, 2024 at 6:30 PM</p> <p>Charlotte Energy Committee Meeting Wednesday, December 4, 7 p.m.</p> <p>Library Board Meeting Thursday, December 5, 6 p.m.</p>	<p>Planning Commission meeting Thursday, December 5, 7 p.m.</p> <p>Recreation Commission Meeting Monday, December 9, 5:30 p.m.</p> <p>Development Review Board Wednesday, December 11, 7 p.m.</p> <p>Regular Selectboard Meeting Monday, December 16, 6:30 p.m.</p> <p>Development Review Board Wednesday, December 18, 7 p.m.</p>
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Get gift book inspiration; consider donations for mitten tree

Margaret Woodruff
Director

Check out our best picks for the readers on your gift list. On display at the library in time for your holiday shopping and available at the Flying Pig Bookstore in Shelburne.

The library's annual mitten tree goes up this week. They welcome donations of cold-weather accessories to adorn the tree. These will go to neighbors in need at the start of the New Year.

Programs for kids

Babytime

Saturday, Dec. 7, 10 a.m.

You're invited to a monthly unstructured hour for parents, caregivers and babies to play, explore books and chat in the young children's area. Ages birth to 18 months.

Preschool story time

Tuesdays, 10 a.m.

Come to the Charlotte Library for preschool stories, crafts and activities. No registration required. Age 2 and over.

Preschool free play

Wednesdays, 10 a.m.

Play in the preschool years enables children to explore and make sense of the world around them, as well as to use and develop their imagination. Explore the sensory table, sorting, playing with blocks, playdoh — these are a few of the open-ended projects planned for Wednesday morning play-based learning at the Charlotte Library.

Wildcard Wednesdays

Wednesdays, 2-3:30 p.m.

Who knows what Wednesday will bring? Science sessions? Crafts and games? Sign up and show up on Wednesdays to join in the fun activities for kids fourth grade and up. For registration information, contact the library at info@charlottepubliclibrary.org. The December schedule is Dec. 4 — wildcard game day, Dec. 11 — pop-up circuit cards and Dec. 18 — winter art.

Babytime

Thursdays, 9:30 a.m.

You're invited to an unstructured hour for parents, caregivers and babies to play, explore books and chat in the young

children's area. Ages birth to 18 months.

Let's Lego

Saturdays, 10 a.m.-1:30 p.m.

Drop-in for Lego free play. We'll have loads of Lego bricks out, along with some books and prompts for inspiration. For all ages. Please note: Children under 10 must be accompanied by an adult.

Programs for adults

Stillwater meditation

Saturdays, 9 a.m.

Poetry and meditation are offered freely and in person to the Charlotte community. Come for quiet reflection, contemplation and gentle meditation instruction. Respect for all beings and faiths is a foundational quality of our time together. Beginning and experienced meditators are welcome.

Tech help at senior center

Wednesday, Dec. 11, 10 a.m.

Email enigma? Kindle conundrum? App apprehension? Computer questions? Or maybe you want to learn how to use your library card to read or listen to books on a device.

Sign up for a 20-minute, one-on-one session at the senior center with Susanna, Charlotte Library's Technology Librarian, for some tech support! She will troubleshoot with you and will provide suggestions for next steps. Make sure to bring your device and any necessary login information. When registering, please provide a specific topic/item that you need help with and include the device you will be bringing to the session (e.g. Windows or Mac laptop, Kindle, iPhone, iPad, Android phone). To register, call the senior center 802-425-6345.

Mystery book group

Monday, Dec. 16, 10 a.m.

In "The White Priory Murders," Marcia Tait is a Hollywood star who has come to England to make a historical film. She is found beaten to death in the Queen's Mirror Pavilion, the 17th-century trysting place of King Charles II and his mistresses. The problem is particularly puzzling because the pavilion is surrounded by new-fallen snow, with only one set of footprints leading to it and none leading away. The suspects include a man who thought he was marrying her — and her husband, whose marriage was unknown to all. Sir Henry Merrivale



Courtesy photo

The library is looking for donations of cold-weather accessories to adorn its annual holiday mitten tree.

joins the investigation, but is too late to stop the second murder. Copies available at the library circulation desk.

Book swap & recommendations

Wednesday, Dec. 11, 7 p.m.

You're invited! Join the Better Together Book Club, a group that discusses books related to parenthood. Bring a list of favorite reads and, if you'd like, wrap a book to swap. Light refreshments served.

Men's book group

Wednesday, Dec. 11, 7:30 p.m.

The group is reading "Differ We Must" from journalist and historian Steve Inskeep, an exploration of the political acumen of Abraham Lincoln via 16 encounters before and during his presidency, bringing to light not only the strategy of a great politician who inherited a country divided, but lessons for our own disorderly present. This is a hybrid program. Copies available at the circulation desk.

Short story selections

Wednesday, Dec. 18, 1 p.m.

Join library director Margaret Woodruff to share and discuss short stories old and new on the third Wednesday of each month. Story selections are sent out by email the Friday before the meeting date. Please contact margaret@charlottepubliclibrary.org if you'd like to join the group.

Recurring programs

Book chat

Wednesdays, 3 p.m.

Meet each week to discuss new books,

old books and books we might have missed. Each week, library director Margaret Woodruff selects a theme and highlights related titles from the library collection. No registration necessary.

Crochet & knit night

Wednesdays, 5-6:30 p.m.

Join in a casual weekly session of crocheting and chatting, knitting and catching up. Bring your project or start a new one with yarn and needles available at the library, along with plenty of books to instruct and inspire. For teens and adults.

Please note: The library will close at noon on Tuesday, Dec. 24, and be closed Wednesday, Dec. 25. The library will be open Dec. 26-30 (except Sunday, Dec. 29). We will close again at noon on Tuesday, Dec. 31, and be closed Wednesday, Jan. 1.

Library contact information:

Margaret Woodruff, director
Cheryl Sloan, youth services librarian
Susanna Kahn, tech librarian
Phone: 802-425-3864
Email: info@charlottepubliclibrary.org

For the latest information about programs, books and activity kits, sign up for the newsletter at <https://tinyurl.com/n5usd25r>.

The Charlotte Library Board of Trustees meets the first Thursday of each month at 6 p.m., unless otherwise rescheduled following the Opening Meeting Law. Contact the library or visit the library website (charlottepubliclibrary.org) for more information.

Send us your photos!

Charlotte events, people or places. We want to publish your photos.
Email them to: news@TheCharlotteNews.org



Senior Center News

Making ornaments to seasonal music, get into holiday spirit

Lori York
Director

The senior center is getting into the holiday spirit. Participants created porcelain holiday ornaments with Charlotte resident and potter Judy Devitt. Others joined in for a boxwood tree workshop held by Shelburne resident Diane Boucher.

Looking for ways to get into the holiday spirit? Consider joining a winter solstice meditation or listening to seasonal music performed by the Segel children from Charlotte.

Community

Magical World of Birds exhibit Dec. 9-Jan. 31

The Magical World of Birds, photography by Barbara Motyka, will be the next art exhibit at the senior center.

Avoiding scams

Thursday, Dec. 5, 1:30 p.m.

Protecting yourself and your money this holiday season will be the theme of the securities division of the Vermont Department of Financial Regulation. This presentation will look at how to spot and avoid scams. The holidays are a time of increased vulnerability. Last year, the reported losses to scams in Vermont were more than \$9 million. Seniors suffer the most significant losses of any age group, often losing a substantial portion of retirement savings. The 30-45 minute presentation incorporates a scam-and-fraud bingo game to reinforce the lessons (and to have fun and win some prizes). Free. Registration suggested at 802-425-6345.

Segel family concert

Wednesday, Dec. 11, 2:30-3:30 p.m.

Enjoy a celebration of the season as the five Segel children from Charlotte (ages 5-17) perform on piano and strings. They will play a diverse selection of solos, duets and ensemble pieces, featuring everything from sacred music to classical favorites. Free. Registration suggested at 802-425-6345.

Alzheimer's caregivers support

Wednesday, Dec. 11, 3-4 p.m.

Are you caring for someone with Alzheimer's? Do you know someone who is? Please join us for the monthly caregivers support group on the second Wednesday of each month from 3-4 p.m. The meetings provide a safe place for caregivers, family and friends of persons with dementia to meet and develop a mutual support system. Please note the earlier time during the winter months. Free. No registration required.

Gen-hub

Friday, Dec. 13, 1 p.m.

Gen-hub is a new group of social gatherings for seniors interested in building friendships and making new connections in a cozy environment. Join for light refreshments and lots of conversations and mingling. If there is interest, the group will plan for monthly gatherings. Registration required at 802-425-6345, so there is enough refreshments. Free.

Exercise

Pilates fitness

Tuesdays & Thursdays, 8:30-9:30 a.m.

Join Phyllis Bartling in this pilates class,

geared to folks 55+. This class is challenging and includes upper-body strength work with hand weights and mat exercises while working on core muscles to improve balance, strength and posture. \$10 a class. No registration required.

Bone Builders

Tuesdays, 10:30 a.m.-11:30 a.m.,
Wednesdays, 1:30 p.m.-2:30 p.m. &
Fridays, 11 a.m.-noon

RSVP Bone Builders, a program of United Way of Northwest Vermont, is a no-impact, weight-training program designed to prevent and even reverse the negative effects of osteoporosis in older adults. Bone Builders consists of a warm-up, balance exercises, arm and leg exercises and a cool down with stretching. Free. No registration required, but there is paperwork to complete for the RSVP Bone Builders program.

Tai chi

Thursdays, 9:45 a.m.-10:45 a.m.

The Yang international short form is the most popular form of tai chi practice. It consists of slow continuous soft circular movements which are coordinated with breathing. Regular practice helps to improve balance, mind-body connection, mental awareness, flexibility, stability, coordination and overall health. When practiced in the company of others, it is both uplifting and energizing. Taught by a certified instructor who has studied with the founder of the Tai Chi for Arthritis Association. Email questions to belizahammer@hotmail.com. \$10 a class. No registration required. No class on Nov. 21 and 28.

Yoga strength-building practice

Wednesdays, 11 a.m.-noon

Heidi Kvasnak leads an integrative practice that builds strength and stability while maintaining a sense of ease and spaciousness in both body and mind. The group will practice longer-held postures that strengthen muscles, bones and core, as well as breath-led flowing movement, including sun salutations. Prerequisite: Must be able to easily get down to and up from the floor with or without props. \$10 a class. No registration required.

Programs

Brain games

Fridays, 2-4 p.m.

There are many ways adults can stimulate their brains to increase mental health, improve memory skills and contribute to overall well-being. Research finds that positive interaction with others and engagement in group activities sharpens cognition and increases memory ability. Come play various games, share laughter and enjoy one another's company. Some games are available, but feel free to bring your own games. Free. No registration required.

Snowy winter landscape

Thursday, Dec. 12, 12:30-2 p.m.

Bring a friend and enjoy a relaxing afternoon sipping coffee and painting with acrylic paints on canvas. Unlike traditional paint & sips, this "coffee & canvas" will allow you to create your own unique painting. There will be plenty of inspiration from paintings of landscapes with lots of instruction. No prior painting experience needed. All materials



Photos by Lori York

Kerry Pughe (left) and Susan Cartwright are part of a group creating boxwood tabletop trees.



Seniors work on handcrafted porcelain ornaments

included. Cost: \$30. Registration at 802-425-6345 and payment required by Dec. 6.

Italian for total beginners

Fridays, Dec. 6-20 & Jan. 3-17, 10-11 a.m.

Are you interested in beginning your study of Italian? This class is for those who want to start with the basics. Explore the beauty of the Italian language and culture through conversation, reading, writing, singing and humor. For questions about whether this class is the correct level, contact Nicole Librandi at nicolelibrandi2@gmail.com. Cost: \$60. Registration and payment required by Monday, Dec. 2.

Shanghai mahjong

Tuesdays, 12:45-3:45 p.m.

New or experienced in the Shanghai style of mahjong, you are welcome to join this informal get-together. For questions email Nan Mason: anne.mason@uvm.edu. Free. No registration required.

Winter solstice meditation

Friday, Dec. 20, 5-6 p.m.

Join Charlie Nardozi and Heidi Kvasnak in celebration of the winter solstice for a candlelight meditation on Dec. 20, 5-6 p.m. Beginning with seated, gentle movements, followed by soft chanting, a longer sitting meditation and a closing chant. No experience

necessary. Suggested donation: \$5-\$20. Registration recommended at 802-425-6345.

Meals

Menus are posted on the website: charlotteseniorcentervt.org.

Monday lunches

Served weekly. Lunch is served 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m., or until the food runs out. Suggested lunch donation \$5. No registration required.

Senior center info:

The senior center offers programs for adults 50 and older from Charlotte and surrounding communities. Priority is given to seniors, but programs are open to adults of all ages. Sign up for the email newsletters at charlotteseniorcentervt.org. The "Week Ahead" email is sent out on Friday mornings with activities, lunch menus and special programs for the upcoming week.

Lori York, director, lyork@charlotteseniorcentervt.org
212 Ferry Road, Charlotte
802-425-6345
charlotteseniorcentervt.org

Follow the senior center on Facebook or Instagram at charlotteseniorcentervt.

No shortage of cookware or laughter at senior center

Susan Ohanian
Contributor

As we recover from Thanksgiving and start worrying about December meals, this kitchen conundrum from The New Yorker may ring true for more than a few cooks, a “simple dish” that requires more pieces of large cookware than you actually own. “What Not to Cook This Week,” The New Yorker, Jan. 21, 2020 (<https://tinyurl.com/mr3c8xwt>).

Volunteer cooks at the Charlotte Senior Center can tell you that there’s no shortage of cookware in that well-stocked kitchen. Go enjoy a meal there, and you’ll see that there’s no shortage of laughter either.

December Monday Munches at the senior center offer a great range of international fare. For a fascinating exploration of language and food, look up both “tzatziki” and “quinoa” at Wikipedia and then go enjoy these international flavors at the great Dec. 2 Monday Munch.

Certainly worth noting: Quinoa was nicknamed by the Incas as “chisiya mama,” meaning “mother of all grains.”

The venerable flatbread probably originated in the Fertile Crescent, spreading to Mesopotamia, Egypt and then the rest of the world. Its interesting history can also be found at Wikipedia, where over 100 flatbread varieties are listed.

When my college history professor learned that I’d married an Armenian, he sent me his Armenian cookbook, and ever since, I’ve made lavash.

Upcoming Monday Munches at the senior center offer more international fare. From Mediterranean Quinoa to Italian sausage soup to Mandarin oranges and a caramel delight, you will enjoy many food



Adobe stock photo

flavors from around the world right there on Ferry Road.

No matter your opinion on traffic speeds on Ferry Road, rejoice in the fact that we don’t have the problem faced in a Texas highway stretch a few months ago. This headline offers a summary: “North Texas freeway reopens after truck spills load of chicken and alligator parts.”

It took four hours to clean up the mess.

The picture accompanying the story on Fox News showed a mass of chicken “remnants” and, yes, an alligator head.

Maybe it was just Texas being Texas, but there was no explanation of how or why the truck happened to be hauling an alligator head.

Speaking of Texas, one food feature there

that seems both to be banned and a living legend is the cow’s head barbecue. Cows’ heads are wrapped in water-soaked burlap and maguey leaves and buried in a pit heated by wood embers. The pit is covered with more maguey leaves, and the swaddled head is left to cook for hours until the meat is very tender.

“Gastro Obscura: A Food Adventurer’s Guide,” which is stuffed full of unexpected, often amazing, food stories, offers a full description of what they term “every delicious part of that head.”

The whole thing is eaten. “Tongue, lips and even eyes have an a la carte price.”

You can read all the details in Texas Monthly’s “How to Cook Authentic Barbacoa” (<https://tinyurl.com/knmcjy9>).

A better idea is to relax and enjoy Monday Munch at the Charlotte Senior Center. This lets you forget any worries about cookware, cooking, cleanup, stray alligator parts or cows’ heads.

And be sure to drive carefully on the full length of Ferry Road.

End-of-the-year tip for those who save old wall calendars: Your 2014 calendar will work fine in 2025.

Monday Munch

Dec. 2, 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Mediterranean quinoa with roasted vegetables, flatbread with fresh tzatziki, tossed salad and caramel cookie bars.

Monday Munch

Dec. 9, 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Italian sausage soup with white beans and spinach, holiday salad (greens with pecans, mandarin oranges and cranberries), bread, beverage and dessert.

Men’s Breakfast

Friday, Dec. 13, 7-9 a.m.

On the second Friday of the month, the men gather for breakfast and conversation. All pitch in to prepare the meal, set tables, or clean up. Doors open at 7 a.m. Breakfast at 7:30 a.m.

For December, there will be no guest speaker scheduled, but rather this will be a social breakfast as an opportunity to slow down and connect during the hectic holiday season. If you are planning to attend the men’s breakfast, please email lmorrison@gmavt.net by Tuesday, Dec. 10. Registration required by Tuesday for the Friday breakfast. Suggested donation: \$6.

Note: My latest book is “Trump, Trump, Trump: The Swan Song.” Contact me for a copy. Also available: “The Little Red Book of Trump Quotations.”

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