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# The Charlotte News

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Summit of Mount Philo with fascinating window of blue sky and sunshine amidst dark low clouds. Photo by Lee Krohn



## Contemplating goodness: Memories of #44, Hank Aaron

Jonathan Silverman  
CONTRIBUTOR

Many of us are at an age when our revered sports figures leave us to enter the great big tunnel. On Jan. 22, #44 left life for a different field of dreams. Hank Aaron has always been a part of my life's journey.

Although I have lived in Vermont most of my life, I grew up in the suburbs of Hartford, Connecticut. Allegiance to sports teams in Hartford has always been a tug of war between Boston and New York. My dad grew up following the Boston Braves "farm" team in Hartford, and subsequently I became a die heart Braves fan, even though the team moved to Milwaukee in 1953, when I was two. And as soon as I was able to shove a Rawlings baseball glove onto my left hand, I needed a player to embrace, and that player was Hank Aaron.

Hank and I were rookies together. He could hit a curve ball very, very far and I, on the other hand, attempting to emulate the snap of his wrist and his fluid swing might occasionally manage to smack one to deep shortstop on a field full of grit and undulations. I played with a cast of multiage sandlot characters whose stars were Mickey Mantle, Ted Williams or Willie Mays. I was 7 years old when Hank Aaron won the most valuable player award and his team, my team, the Milwaukee Braves won the pennant.

Each day I fastidiously checked the box scores in the Hartford Courant to see how



The signed glove of a hero: Throughout his time in and out of the limelight Hank Aaron exuded humility, gentleness and decency.

Photo courtesy Jonathan Silverman

Hank performed. Admittedly, I knew little about his story and life as an African American in the deep South. I cared about his performance on the field and the team's fate and was oblivious to the reality of racial inequalities.

In the 1960s and early 1970s Aaron continued to excel and his national fame amplified. He was a model of consistency

SEE **HANK** PAGE 2

## Assistant position in the works, other Selectboard business

Chea Waters Evans  
NEWS EDITOR

The Selectboard has been busy with Land Use Regulations and public hearings, but they also got a lot of other stuff done over the past few weeks, with extra meetings scheduled to handle a variety of topics that include town budget issues for FY21-22, job descriptions for a new zoning administrator, and parking on Plouffe Lane.

In the wake of Zoning Administrator Daniel Morgan's departure last month, the Selectboard is moving forward with the process of reconfiguring staffing in the **planning and zoning office** in Town Hall. Conflicts arose during Morgan's tenure on the job because his responsibilities as ZA overlapped with his clerical duties as the Zoning Board of Adjustment's clerk, often resulting in his quasi-judiciary role as ZA butting up against the ZBA's wishes.

The solution to those dueling positions is the creation of a new, 20-hour per week administrative assistant position. In addition to assisting the town planner and the zoning administrator, this town employee will also provide support to the town administrator. Responsibilities will include clerical work, scheduling, maintaining records, and staffing the front desk in the window at Town Hall, as well as serving as the town's E-911 coordinator. Town Administrator Dean Bloch is going to research area pay for comparable positions, and the board will vote at the next meeting

to finalize the salary and benefits before publicly posting the job.

There's a new member of the **Charlotte Park and Wildlife Refuge Oversight Committee**—Cathy Marshall lives near the park, which is colloquially known as the Demeter, and said during her few years living in Charlotte she has appreciated the beauty of the area's wildlife and plant life.

Walking trails on **Plouffe Lane**, which are privately owned but accessible through an agreement with the town, have gotten heavier use during COVID-19. The parking situation, especially with the snow, has impeded Road Commissioner Jr Lewis from properly plowing the area. The Selectboard is going to work with Jim Carrol to arrange a snow threshold for plowing to make sure the parking lot is clear to allow access to rescue vehicles and make sure no one parks on the side of the road when using the trails.

The **Charlotte Ferry** has been closed since early January due to a lack of passengers. Concerns from the Charlotte Selectboard, the Essex, New York, town government, and many Charlotters prompted the board to send a letter to Lake Champlain Transportation, which operates the ferry. The purpose of the letter was to let the privately owned ferry company know that "this is a valuable asset to Charlotte," McCarren said. Though the ferry can't be compelled to remain in business, the

SEE **SELECTBOARD** PAGE 4

## Impending future of East Charlotte goes to a vote

*Charlotters concerned about conflicts of interest, impact of potential development*

Chea Waters Evans

After years of work and considering more than 70 potential Land Use Regulation amendments, the Planning Commission's role came to a close on the issue at Monday night's Selectboard meeting with the final hearings on proposed amendments to the Town Plan and LURs. The many changes up for vote on Town Meeting Day on March 2 were mostly overshadowed by two ballot items. One is a proposed amendment to the Town Plan that would expand the East Charlotte Village Commercial District's borders; the other concerns zoning changes that would allow denser development within that district. The changes stem from a survey of East Village residents that was completed in 2010.

The Friday and Monday Zoom hearings were the last opportunities for public comment before the articles are published in the Town Report, which heads to the printer on Thursday in order to meet public warning

deadlines before voting day. In addition to the Selectboard, more than 50 people attended Monday's meeting.

During the meetings there was confusion about the exact size of the current commercial district and how much bigger it would get should the Town Plan amendment pass. In a conversation with *The Charlotte News* on Tuesday, Town Planner Larry Lewack said he consulted with the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission to get the exact acreage figures.

The East Charlotte Village Commercial District is currently 19.79 acres, and the amendment to the Town Plan would increase it to 43.64 acres, adding a sector of land on the southeast corner of the intersection of Spear Street and Charlotte Hinesburg Road, crossing Spear Street and including property on the southwest corner of that intersection, which is also known as Baptist Corners.

East Village resident David Adsit said he thought that because there isn't "complete information" available regarding potential

environmental impact, taxpayer burden, and wastewater infrastructure, the items are "just not ready" to head to voters.

Brownie Adsit, who also lives in the area, agreed. Noting that impact studies aren't required until after the amendments are approved, he said increasing the boundary of the commercial district "without knowing the impact makes zero sense to me; to not do impact studies is just totally backwards and ridiculous to me." Dina Townsend agreed and added that she worried about comprehension on the part of the general voting population, considering that there is "too much confusion from people who are investing their time into learning" about the issues.

The increased density issue prompted participation during both meetings from Clark Hinsdale, a former Charlotte resident, who owns the property referred to as the Sheehan House on the southwest corner of the proposed commercial district. The expanded commercial district boundaries would include this lot; in conjunction with

passage of the East Village LUR amendment regarding density, it would allow Hinsdale to develop his five acres on the corner into senior housing. Hinsdale said that it's important when considering the issue to think about numbers. "Be sure that we understand the math," he said.

The math on development proved also to be a point of contention for many; Lewack cleared up this issue on Tuesday as well. Using the metaphor of planting old seeds in a garden, he explained that you can plant a bunch of old bean seeds and theoretically have the potential for dozens of bean plants, but the reality is that you will have considerably less than that.

With the current zoning laws, he said, "If everything lined up to make it possible, with adequate septic and water supply, there could be up to 25 units of housing, commercial development, or a combination—that number is accurate," he said. "If somebody were to propose some of that to include affordable housing, they could potentially add 10 units; if somebody wanted to make the development into elder housing, there could be 20 additional units on top of the 25." That would be either 25 regular units, 35 affordable housing units, or 45 senior

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# Town

## LURs

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housing units.

With the new regulations, that would increase, he said. “If we bump out boundaries to what’s been proposed, and if we change the rules to match, that 25 goes up to 45 potentially, and those density bonuses still apply...but there’s a lot of ifs there.” The ifs he’s talking about include septic capacity and water mains, and, depending on usage, could have to go through Planning Commission, Zoning Board of Adjustment, and/or Selectboard review.

Meeting participant comments were overwhelmingly against increasing the boundaries and changing the density zoning requirements, with the exception of Hinsdale and Selectboard member Carrie Spear. There are six landowners whose land would be included in the expanded ECVCD boundaries; Selectboard members Carrie Spear and Frank Tenney are two of those six.

Charlotter Amy Brosius asked during public comment whether or not any Selectboard members had a conflict of interest that required them to recuse themselves from the Monday vote. Chair Matt Krasnow and members Louise McCarren and Jim Faulkner all said no. Tenney said that he was not going to recuse himself from the vote despite owning property in the zone and the fact that his brother owns a store and land in the district. “The property I have already has one residence per acre,” he said, and noted that he thinks any density changes “won’t affect what I have there now.”

Spear also decided not to recuse herself; she owns Spear’s Store in Baptist Corners, a general store that also has the only commercial gas pump in town. She has a current application with the ZBA to add a deli and apartment to her store and has

plans to sell it in the near future. When she responded to Brosius’ inquiry, she shared her support for passing both the Town Plan and LUR amendments.

“If we lose Sheehan House [to a different developer], the character will go away,” she said. Spear referenced the decades of work Hinsdale has done to conserve farmland surrounding the East village area. She also said she does not stand to profit from expanding the boundaries or increasing density, saying she will “have no financial gain, whether you think I do or not...I’m going to get rich at heart.”

Support for the amendments also came from Planning Commission Chair Peter Joslin, who has been working on shepherding these amendments through a lengthy process, including several earlier public meetings throughout the past year. He said on Friday, “I don’t see how you could encourage development in the village when there’s a five-acre requirement,” noting that such a large acreage requirement for residential zoning prohibits most development—the notion of desired development in the area being the impetus for the amendments in the first place.

Krasnow said that the Selectboard’s role is to advance these questions to a vote. “The question of how a town should develop... should not be made by the five Selectboard members who are currently in the position of making decisions...to that point, I think it’s important for the town to decide how it wants to develop in the future.” Faulkner agreed. “We’re just the middleman, putting it to the voter,” he said.

The proposed articles—the three LUR amendments and the Town Plan amendment—were approved by the Selectboard to be warned for a vote on Town Meeting Day.

## HANK

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year in and year out, and my allegiance to him never wavered in my teens and early 20s. The layers of my ignorance began to be exposed. As this was a (another) ripe time for civil rights awakening, I slowly became aware of my childhood idol’s background of poverty, hardship and prejudice. As I witnessed how he managed the threats and intimidations while closing in on Babe Ruth’s insurmountable record, I shifted my admiration from merely ball player to character.

Even though he had so many at bat and on field accomplishments Aaron never pumped his chest, stopped to stare at the ball leaving the park, or ostentatiously twirled the bat. Rather, if he hit a home run there was a slow rhythmic and graceful trot around the bases; there was an inner peace, a sense that on a given moment, in four tenths of a second, he figured out the previous pitch.

Throughout his time in and out of the limelight Hank Aaron exuded humility, gentleness and decency. He was dedicated to the art of both sport and sportsmanship. With his internal pledge to play ball with quiet intensity and respond to the myriad of injustice he endured with dignity and determination, he spoke truth to power. In his own quiet way, he sustained his commitment to social justice beyond the ballfield by empowering youth and breaking barriers as he became a vice president in the Atlanta Braves organization.

Reliving Hank Aaron’s story is refreshing in our time of uncertainty. Here was a sports figure who became larger than life to me because of the character of his soul that accompanied his grandeur on the ballfield. As I reflect on my lifelong appreciation of Hank Aaron, I wonder broadly: Who becomes our heroes? Who do we look up to for guidance on our evolving understanding of the human condition, how we learn to live together and sustain higher morals?

He had no idea of how he helped advanced my awareness of white privilege and shape my perception of a more just world. Those of us who grew up with comfort yet sheltered from the trials of everyday discrimination ideally are compelled to find meaningful ways to challenge our paradigms and open our prism to the life of others. (Speaking of challenging paradigms, I fully support the changing of the team’s name from Braves to something more inclusive.)

In the 24 hours after Hank Aaron died I received condolences from family members and friends knowing how much #44 was a part of my own journey. Perhaps, the swell of memories of Hank Aaron’s life offer all of us a chance to pause and contemplate goodness.



## The Charlotte News

### Mission Statement

The mission of *The Charlotte News* is to inform our readers about current events, issues and topics, and to serve as a forum for the free exchange of views of town residents and community volunteer organizations on matters related to Charlotte and the lives of its residents.

### Editorial independence

The Board of Directors retains full authority over all editorial and advertising content 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 independent of all sources of financial support, including support given through our affiliated 501(c)3 organization, The Friends of *The Charlotte News*.

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Consistent with our mission *The Charlotte News* publishes letters to the editor, commentaries and obituaries from our readers. All letters, commentaries and obituaries are subject to review and approval by the news editor of the paper and to the following rules and standards:

- Letters to the editor, commentaries and obituaries should be emailed to [news@thecharlottenews.org](mailto:news@thecharlottenews.org) as attachments in .doc format. All letters, commentaries and obituaries must contain the writer’s full name, town of residence and, for editing purposes only, phone number.
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- The news editor makes the final determination whether a letter to the editor, a commentary or an obituary will be published as submitted, returned for rewriting or rejected.

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# Report from the Legislature

## Reflections on a momentous week



Rep. Mike Yantachka

The first few weeks of a legislative biennium get off to a relatively slow start, not momentous at all. Bills are just beginning to be introduced and assigned to committees for consideration. Not only do new members have to get up to speed on subject matter of the committees to which they are assigned, but returning members assigned to different committees than before may have to as well. In other words, there is not a lot to report.

There were two exceptions this year, however. During the first full week we were back in session, the House quickly passed a bill that authorizes municipalities and school districts to hold town meetings remotely, use Australian ballots to vote on all matters including budgets, or postpone town meetings to later in the spring. The Senate quickly followed suit and sent the bill to the governor for his signature.

The Senate was also at work passing S.9, which extends certain workers compensation

amendments related to COVID-19 that were enacted last year. These amendments give the benefit of doubt in certain circumstances that a worker who is diagnosed with COVID-19 is entitled to benefits under Vermont’s workers compensation laws. The House concurred with the Senate after fixing a date reference in the bill that had been overlooked. The next significant action will be to approve the budget adjustment bill that the Appropriations Committee has been hard at work on since day two of the session.

What really made the week special, though, was the change of administration in Washington, D.C., as I joined most of my fellow Americans in welcoming the Biden administration with the hope of a less divisive political atmosphere for the next four years. I was especially impressed with poet Amanda Gorman’s inaugural poem. In it she says,

“It’s because being American is more than a pride we inherit, it’s the past we step into and how we repair it.”

It is with sincere hope that Congress, the



Photo by Mike Yantachka

Senate included, will be able to join with the administration in an effective national response to the pandemic and hit the economic defibrillator once again to jump-start the economy. The executive orders President

Biden signed as soon as he took office will go a long way to reverse those of the previous administration that diminished the greatness of America.

For the past four years, a small package sat on my bookshelf waiting for its moment. In December of 2016, I attended a conference in D.C. and had an opportunity with other legislators from across the country to attend a briefing in the White House Office Building. We were given favors of Hershey kisses in little packages with the presidential seal. I decided to save mine until the incoming President was no longer in office. I had almost forgotten about it until the night of the inauguration after watching the televised spectacular fireworks display on the National Mall.

It was time. After four years, the kisses were as sweet as I expected, capping off this truly momentous week.

I welcome your emails (myantachka.dfa@gmail.com) or phone calls (802-233-5238). This article and others can be found at my website (MikeYantachka.com).

## Letters to the Editor

### Better, not bigger

To the editor:

When Planning Commission Chair Peter Joslin notes that “The town has to grow,” I wonder if he ever studied the history of growth and what long-term effects result from going down the path of ever more and more growth? I would suggest to those who believe that growth is good read *Better not Bigger* to become aware of the eventual results of their proposal for more growth.

I experienced the results of extreme growth having lived in the New Town of Columbia, Maryland, from its inception to its eventual build-out of 100,000 people 40 years later, all on 14,000 acres, less than half of Charlotte’s acreage. At first there were old dairy farms and 3-acre zoning. Then came a development proposal for 14,000 acres to be the only compact city to be built in the small Howard County, located between Baltimore and Washington, D.C.

Then came 1-acre zoning followed by the relaxing of density limits surrounding the New Town. Then came suburban sprawl and when “build-out” had been reached came the expansion of the water-sewer district, infill development and on and on. In 50 years, the county grew from 60,000 to over 300,000. The result: traffic congestion, noise, bad air, and a more and more unpleasant place to live.

Yes, I am one of those retiree immigrants to Vermont, my favorite state. There are more beautiful spots on this earth, but they are being rapidly desecrated by an overflow of humanity because of their former beauty and

good weather (think California, Colorado and Florida). Vermont’s guard against being overrun has been its long and cold winter, that is now slowly moderating. If we want to preserve what we have, we will have to make Vermont not bigger, but better along the lines advocated by [betternotbiggerVT.org](http://betternotbiggerVT.org).

*Wolfer Schneider*

**Clark’s Kwiniaska in East Charlotte**

To the editor:

Regarding Chea Evans’s recent article, “LURs wend their way to the ballot; budget has to budge a bit” (January 14), I take issue with the highlighting of Mr. Hinsdale’s complaint about senior housing in town.

Hinsdale claims he just wants to save the elderly from moving away by building a seniors’ utopia in a rural hamlet with few services. What a lovely thing to do. But he can already do that. And he hasn’t.

He just lets the historic property slowly slip into a corner slum with half-cut trees, peeling siding, a dilapidated barn, the works. Add to that the falling down house behind Spear’s and sure, we’d like it to look a little nicer in East Charlotte Village. But it could be done at any moment with our current land use regs.

So why is he leading the charge, with help from Carrie Spear, to change our Town Plan and Land Use Regulations?

It’s because he wants to throw 10-12 residential plots on 1 acre back there, very similar to the debacle going on at Kwiniaska in Shelburne. And lord only knows what kind of

deal Carrie Spear struck with David Fassler to buy her store.

The fun catch for our little town is the Planning Commission are only pushing for this change of 5 acres to 1 acre for residential development in the East Charlotte Commercial District. Not in West Charlotte. Why? Because it would have a snowball’s chance in hell of passing there.

So the Planning Commission thinks that after some poorly attended public hearings (are we in a pandemic?) they can slip this onto the ballot and give Hinsdale and Fassler a mandate to build, build, build.

It’s developer-driven, regulation overreach that makes me a little queasy.

Adding to queasiness is a pretty clear conflict of interest case with Selectboard members Carrie Spear and Frank Tenney, both owning property in the area under consideration. Neither thought it prudent to recuse themselves from the vote to put these changes on the ballot.

I encourage *The News* and your readers reference page 19-27 of the Vermont Selectboard Handbook on Conflicts of Interest. Maybe even the Selectboard will read it themselves if they value public trust in their decisions.

*Alex Buntun*

**Mudge running for Selectboard**

To the editor:

My name is Lewis Mudge and I am running for the two year seat on Charlotte’s Selectboard. I have spent most of my career in Africa, where, for the last decade, I have documented some of the world’s worst crimes. Documenting human rights abuses and crimes against humanity across war zones can reinforce some key truths and drive home what is important.

I have entered a new phase of my career and when my wife and I decided to move to

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### Bernie gets caught up on The Charlotte News

Senator Sanders’ office does subscribe to *The Charlotte News*, and we’re glad he decided to bring it along while he waited for the inauguration to start.

*Photoshop by Anna Cyr  
Original photo by Brendan Smialowski, a photojournalist for Agence France-Presse.*

# Town

## LETTERS

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Vermont, we set out to choose a community that reflected our values: community, fellowship, safety and space. In early 2017, my wife flew from our home in Kenya to view what would become our house on Greenbush. It was her first time in Charlotte and she signed the paperwork straight away before flying straight back to Africa. She discovered what I already knew: a uniquely special place where our young family could thrive. We have lived in Charlotte now for four years. That time has confirmed that this is where we want to raise our children and contribute to the community.

I am running for a seat on the Selectboard to help the town thrive. With a family actively engaged at the Congregational Church and two kids at CCS (and a third starting kindergarten soon), I want to ensure that the town has the representation that reflects a community that has its eyes on the future while never forgetting its past. I have the time, energy, and commitment to support the community. While I will keep a professional eye towards Africa, a change in my work assignments means that I will be working from home and will only be traveling overseas occasionally.

The Selectboard can manage big decisions that affect the way we live. One of the best parts of this town is the civilized way our fellow Charlotters disagree and challenge one another at town meetings...even during this new time of Zoom calls.

I put myself forward as a candidate for Selectboard with skills I can bring to the table. I have management and financial experience that will be relevant to the town. I will support development plans that are in line with Charlotte's vision. I strongly feel that we must develop on our own terms, in keeping with the spirit of why we all live here in the first place: open spaces, access to incredible nature, and a genuine sense of community.

I want Charlotte to remain a place that young families, like my own, want to move to. Despite our disagreements about development zones, recreation centers, or septic policy, I think we can all agree on one thing: this is still

one of the best corners of the world to raise a family.

Most importantly, if I were elected, I can promise Charlotters this: In me you will have a transparent and approachable Selectboard member. I will be on call, 24/7, to respond to your concerns. That's a promise I hope to be held to.

I've fought for pro-democracy activists in the Congo, journalists in Burundi, and against police brutality in the Central African Republic. In what seem to be turbulent times back home, nothing gives me more hope than active participation in the democratic process. I have a vested interest in making sure our town succeeds and thrives. Over the next month I'll be making my case for the Selectboard and I'd be honored to have your vote.

*Lewis Mudge*

### Parking at the Red Onion

To Charlotte residents:

Thank you for the warm welcome and support you have given to The Red Onion!

We want to remind the community that parking to access our building is in the lower gravel parking lot. You can then access The Red Onion and our other tenants by the stairs or walking around to the front. The Charlotte Planning Commission only approved one ADA space next to the ramp to access our building's upper entry. There is no other parking available at the front of the building. We don't want the new interim zoning administrator to be instructed to issue any zoning violations to us due to parking in front of the building.

The gravel space at the front of our building is there for emergency vehicles to access the building and access the ADA ramp. We utilized this front space to build out the upper floors for construction and supply delivery vehicles. This summer will bring enhanced landscaping, signage and easier access for those with disabilities.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,  
*Debra Kassabian*

## SELECTBOARD

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Selectboard wanted to express its support for the ferry and its enthusiasm for a future return, which at the moment is not on the horizon.

An article will be presented on the March 2 ballot advising voters that **Road Commissioner Jr Lewis** will most likely be increasing the use of clear salt during inclement weather this winter. Though Lewis already has the authority to determine how much salt to use, Charlotte roads are traditionally treated mostly with sand in order to protect farms. Lewis said that when the temperatures raise and lower the way they have been this winter, roads can become icy. He said he wants to present to voters the idea that he would use clear salt on occasion, even though such a vote isn't necessary for him to do so. He said he just wants to make sure that voters are aware that paved roads might occasionally be treated with only salt and to use the vote as an enthusiasm barometer for the idea.

**Lot 41 on Thomspen's Point** has been in front of the Selectboard multiple times over the past year; there's a dilapidated, 400-square-foot shed on the property that the owners, Jeff Price and Leena Ritchie,

would like to tear down. The shed is on two lease lots, and the owners proposed last August that a boundary adjustment be made to increase their lot size so that the shed remains on their property; the other lot is not leased and is town land. They do not want to reconstruct the shed on their own property because they want to preserve two large trees, one of which would have to be moved in order to make room for the shed.

Lawyers for both the town and the Price/Ritchies have since decided that a boundary adjustment is not an ideal solution because it could trigger an Act 250 review by the state. The next step in the process would be a recommendation by the Selectboard to the Planning Commission to take a certain action. Planning Commission Chair Peter Joslin agreed during the Jan. 19 Selectboard meeting that he thought a boundary adjustment was not in the best interest of the town. The Selectboard had inadvertently approved a boundary adjustment at an earlier meeting, thinking they were approving the promotion of the boundary adjustment issue to the PC—they voted during the Jan. 19 meeting to refund permit application fees relating to that boundary adjustment.



Around Town .....

**Congratulations:** to former Charlotter and now Shelburnite **John Hammer** who was highlighted as a Board Member of Age Well on Jan. 19. John joined the organization’s board in July of last year and has been driving Age Well’s Meals on Wheels for over three years. Age Well is the largest provider of Meals on Wheels in Vermont with a goal of allowing older, needy adults to remain independent and living at home as long as possible.

**Sympathy:** is extended to family and friends of **Elizabeth Ann Tenney Sorell** of Charlotte who passed away Jan. 15 at the age of 81. After working for many years as a switchboard operator, she became a school bus driver for the Champlain Valley School District. Her surviving family includes her daughter, Jessica Sorrell, and sons Thadeus Sorrell and Timothy Tenney in addition to grandchildren and great-grandchildren. She will be buried privately at the convenience of her family. A service for friends and family will be held at a later date.

is extended to family and friends of **Joan Krech**, most recently of Colchester, who passed away Jan. 13 at the age of 86. Joan and her late husband, Fred, moved to Charlotte in 1993 in order to be closer to daughters and grandchildren. She served as deacon of the Congregational Church in Burlington, and she and Fred delivered flowers on a weekly basis for 17 years to patients at the UVM Medical Center. She and her husband lived their later years in assisted living facilities in Shelburne and South Burlington before ending in Colchester. The family asks that those wishing to make donations in her memory consider doing so to the First Congregational Church of Burlington, UVM’s McClure Miller Respite House in Colchester or to a charity of their choice.

**Paul Sprayregen**  
Longtime Charlotte resident Paul Sprayregen, 71, died suddenly on Dec. 14, 2020.  
Born in Stamford, Connecticut, he spent summers with his family sailing the northeast

coast. After his father’s passing in 1959, he and his brothers spent summers in rural France (his mother’s country of birth), creating adventures and a lifetime of memories.  
In 1967 he moved to Burlington to attend the University of Vermont, drawn by the natural landscape of Vermont. Paul always knew he would build a business of his own, and not long after graduating in 1971, he founded Investors Corporation of Vermont (ICV), a real estate development firm. Over the course of nearly 50 years, his projects transformed Burlington and the surrounding communities.

Never one to be idle, by the 1980s Paul began developing projects in Hartford, Connecticut, East Hampton, New York, and Palm Beach, Florida. Later he added projects in Plattsburgh, New York, and Lebanon, New Hampshire.

While Paul’s defining legacy is ICV, his greatest love was his family and time spent together on Lake Champlain and the Florida coast.

He was predeceased by his parents (Richard Sprayregen and Monique Sprayregen Eastman). He is survived by his beloved wife, Emeline, of Palm Beach, Florida, his sons Robert Sprayregen (Dina) of Palm Beach, Florida, and Richard Sprayregen (Anna) of Charlotte, his daughters, Mary Sprayregen (David Schilling) of Shelburne and Stephanie Sprayregen (Calle von der Lancken) of New York, New York, his brothers Peter Sprayregen (Lucy) of Lincoln, Massachusetts and Philip (Laurie) Sprayregen of New York, New York, as well as four grandchildren, three nephews and one niece.

The family asks those wishing to honor Paul’s life to consider donating to the American Cancer Society or the American Heart Association.



Paul Sprayregen

Town .....

Meet the Candidates: they’re ready to run

Chea Waters Evans

The Charlotte Grange and *The Charlotte News* are once again hosting candidates for the Town Meeting Day election at a Meet the Candidates night. On Tuesday, Feb. 16, we’ll meet by Zoom; a link will follow as the date approaches.

This year has a three-way race for both open Selectboard seats. As of press time, incumbent Frank Tenney was on the ballot for both seats; also running in the two-year race are Lewis Mudge and Mike Dunbar, and Mike Russell and Justin Bora are running for the three-year seat.

The candidates running as of Jan. 27 are as follows; the deadline to drop out of a race was Wednesday evening after press time.

Auditor: 1, 2 & 3-year terms available  
Mike Dunbar, 1-year term; Kelly Devine, 3-year term

Cemetery Commissioner: 1, 2 & 3-year terms available

CVSD School Director: 3-year term  
Meghan Metzler

Library Trustee: 5-year term  
Robert Smith (incumbent)

Delinquent Tax Collector: 1-year term  
Mary Mead (incumbent)

Town Moderator: 1-year term  
Charlie Russell

Road Commissioner: 1-year term  
Hugh Lewis Jr. (incumbent)

Selectboard: 2-year term  
Mike Dunbar, Lewis Mudge, Frank Tenney (incumbent)

Selectboard: 3-year term  
Justin Bora, Mike Russell, Frank Tenney

Town Agent: 1-year term

Town Clerk: 3-year term  
Mary Mead (incumbent)

Town Treasurer: 3-year term  
Mary Mead (incumbent)

Trustee of Public Funds: 1, 2 & 3-year terms  
Moe Harvey (incumbent) filed for 3- year term.

Town

# COVID resources and an update from Community Partners

Trina Bianchi  
CONTRIBUTOR

The Resilience Surveys are complete and in the process of being tabulated. We ended up with 182 completed surveys, more than any other town in Vermont has garnered through this process, so we are happy. Because several members of our team pledged to send a donation to the Charlotte Food Shelf for each survey received, our food shelf will be the recipient of some extra dollars this month. A big thank you to those members for their generosity.

So, now what? Our goal is to gather the raw data and then not only publish it here so everyone in town has the opportunity to see it—it will be posted on the websites for the Town of Charlotte and the Charlotte Library. We will also be sending it to the various organizations, committees and commissions in town.

The hope is that, with this information, various groups, organizations, town committees and others will brainstorm and discuss changes that could be made, bring about innovation in some areas and/or create solutions that will make Charlotte an even better and safer place for people to live, now and into the future.

The goal is to have the report ready by Town Meeting Day along with a short video that will be presented via Zoom.

**Available resources:**  
**Emotional and mental health**

Vermont 211 from your phone—available for referrals and questions.

Pathways Vermont at 883-888-2557 is free and is available 24/7 to call or text. Talk with a peer who has dealt with mental health issues in the past.

NFI Vermont, access through [nfivermont.org](http://nfivermont.org). Serves Vermont families whose children are struggling with emotional, behavioral or mental health challenges.

First Call, 802-488-7777, is for crisis situations. Available 24/7.

**Assistance with utility bills**

The Vermont Department of Public Service has arranged for the local community action agencies to assist people who are not able to access the application for help with overdue electric, gas, telecom or water bills online. Call CVOEO Monday–Friday at 802-863-6248. Bills need to be 60 or more days overdue.

**Financial assistance**

Emergency financial assistance is available through the Food Shelf, Charlotte Congregational Church and Our Lady of Mt. Carmel. Call 425-3252 or 425-3130.

**The latest information**

Stay abreast of the ongoing news in Vermont with respect to CV-19, check on what is opening, new regulations for traveling into our state, where to get a test if you need one, and how to remain safe and well. [www.healthvermont.gov/response/coronavirus-covid-19](http://www.healthvermont.gov/response/coronavirus-covid-19).

# Two positive COVID tests at CCS in a week

Chea Waters Evans

Prior to last week, there had only been one case of Covid-19 at Charlotte Central School. On Jan. 18 and Jan. 22, CCS families received emails alerting them to the presence of a positive COVID test in the “school community.” One case was in 4th grade and one was in kindergarten, though the school didn’t specify if those cases were from a student or an adult who works with students in those grades.

CCS Co-Principal Stephanie Sumner answered questions via email about the current case count at school and Champlain Valley School District’s policies for handling them.

**Is there a threshold at which the school or school district decides that there have been too many cases in too short a time and will have the entire school go to remote learning?**

The matrix/ benchmarks we use for maintaining in-person learning include:

- Positivity rates within school community rising—capacity to manage contact tracing
- Sufficient staffing levels to safely maintain in-person instruction
- Ability to adhere to the Department of Health/Agency of Education Safe and Healthy Guidance
- Student attendance rates

We consider the capacity of the system (school) to maintain in-person learning at every level— individual classroom, grade level and whole school.

**What is the protocol for an identified case—in the most recent case, kindergarten? Does the whole class stay home? Is there required testing? Are kids immediately remote or are there days off?**

The protocol is well defined by the Department of Health in terms of how we do contact tracing. When there is a case within a specific classroom, such as the cases we’ve had, our practice is to move the whole class remote.

The AOE guidelines for grades K–6 allow students to be within three to six feet, yet contact tracing is specifically within six feet. Because of the nature of classrooms, we have pivoted the entire classroom fully remote for a focus on utmost caution, as it is difficult to track every movement in the course of a day. In the case of kindergarten, our contact tracing yielded enough information to indicate that there was possible contact across groups, so the entire grade has been identified.

When this happens, the entire classroom and/or grade goes fully remote. Teachers and staff in the classrooms may also be identified as close contacts, therefore creating a staffing impact that prohibits us from bringing students back in a staggered manner as they get negative test results. Testing seven days after the last known exposure is required for a return to school once someone is in quarantine.

There have been no days off—we have immediately gone remote in each situation. Throughout the school year, teachers have been preparing for this possibility and designed instruction, schedules and activities that are ready to go when needed.

**Have there been any cases yet in CVSD of school transmission?**

At this time, there is no evidence of school-based transmission in our CVSD schools. With each case, we work closely with the Department of Health to examine any possible connections and review any specific concerns with the Epi Team at the DOH. The Department of Health School Team and Epi (epidemiology) Team have a very detailed process that they follow to review cases in community settings to determine if there is an epidemiological link between cases. Our CVSD team relies on their knowledge, experience and investigation when determining instances of school-based transmission.

**If a student is positive, do their siblings stay home as well?**

If the Department of Health determines that siblings and family members are close contacts, based on the science that defines what constitutes a close contact, they must quarantine. One of our daily screening questions that everyone (staff and students) must answer each day is: “Have you been in close contact with a COVID positive person?”. If the answer is “yes,” then you are not to come into our school buildings.

When a student is identified as a close contact, but not positive themselves, siblings are still allowed to attend school if the person (parent or child) who is a close contact is able to quarantine from the rest of the family. If families are unable to keep the close-contact parent or child quarantined from all other family members, they must keep their other students at home. Each family system and setup is unique in terms of how and when they interact in their home, so it’s not a one-size-fits-all answer. This can also vary greatly depending on the age and developmental stage of the student.

# Students’ scholastic successes

Staff report

**Saige Alpeter** was named to the dean’s honor list for the fall 2020 semester at Gettysburg College in Gettysburg, Pa.

**Amelia Anair** achieved dean’s list honors at Vermont Tech in Randolph Center for the fall 2020 semester.

**Moira Brown** was named to the dean’s list at the College of William & Mary in Williamsburg, Va., for the fall 2020 semester.

**Amelia Chicoine** was named to the president’s list at Castleton University in Castleton, Vt., for the fall 2020 semester.

**George Davis** achieved dean’s list status for the fall 2020 semester at Bucknell University in Lewisburg, Pa.

**Ezra Miller** was named to the fall 2020 dean’s

list at Roger Williams University in Bristol, R.I.

The following students were named to the University of Vermont dean’s list for the fall 2020 semester:

**Carly Alpert**  
**Hannah Bernier**  
**Annabelle Creech**  
**Brandon Donahue**  
**Spencer Dooley**  
**John Eagan**  
**Katie Emberley**  
**Mary Feeney**  
**Meara Heininger**  
**Seamus Higgins**  
**Samuel Knox**  
**Trevor McGlaflin**  
**Antonio Pugliese**  
**Andrew Slauterbeck**  
**Faith Thompson**

# Hi, Neighbor!

## Scott Jaunich: An unconventional voice for Audubon Vermont



Phyl Newbeck  
CONTRIBUTOR

Scott Jaunich readily admits he’s not what most people would expect from a member of the Audubon Vermont Board of Directors. “I’ve seen more birds from the bead of a shotgun than I have from binoculars,” he said. “I’m not a birder, so it was unusual that I was invited to be on the board, but I’ve always had an interest in birds and the environment.” Jaunich’s interest in birds is evident from his collection of decoys and bird stamps and his honor thesis at Middlebury College on mallard duck population dynamics and range expansion in northern New England. He spent the summer and fall of his junior year touring Newfoundland and Labrador with the Center for Northern Studies, studying biology, ecology, native culture and geology while living in tents. Jaunich is also a graduate of the National Outdoor Leadership School, having participated in a 33-day kayak expedition in Prince William Sound, Alaska, during high school.

After college, Jaunich attended Vermont Law School where he got a degree in environmental law. He and his wife, Lynne, a physical therapist, looked at job opportunities across the country. Initially, they relocated to California where they bought a house in San Jose, ten miles from

where Jaunich had grown up. After working at several legal practices, Jaunich and some colleagues opened their own real estate law firm, but the lure of Vermont was strong.

“Lynne and I always thought we’d end up in New England,” he said. The couple and their three children moved to Charlotte in the summer of 2001. Jaunich practices real estate, land use and environmental law at Downs Rachlin Martin, where he chairs the Real Estate practice group. He is a Fellow of the American College of Real Estate Lawyers.

Serving on the Audubon Vermont Board is not Jaunich’s first foray into nonprofit work. He sat on the board of California Fly Fishers Unlimited, and in Vermont, he was on the boards of the Lund Family Center and Mobius. Public service runs in the family; Lynne is the chair of the Champlain Valley School District school board. Jaunich was initially approached to be on the Audubon Board by Curt Alpeter of Charlotte five years ago. “I knew Curt from hunting pheasants,” Jaunich said. “I met with him and Jim Shallow, who was executive director at the time, and I was intrigued. This was a chance to be on a board with an environmental ethic which was more in tune with my personal interests.”

Jaunich hasn’t been doing much bird hunting of late but said that his true passion is fly fishing. He is also a member of the

Frostbite Fleet, a group of salmon fishermen who go out on the lake in the colder months. The group formed 20 years ago as a communal organization of boaters who are willing to head out on days when they have to shovel and sand the boat ramps and break the shoreline ice in order to get out on the lake.

Jaunich said the Audubon Board has grown over the years and has also become more diverse. “It’s been a good run,” he said. “Our intention is to expand the breadth of the board, and now not only do we have good birders but also other environmentalists.”

The past year was a challenge for Audubon because they were unable to do their usual programming, but Jaunich said they have been able to work on their three major initiatives: getting more people in tune with nature, getting people outside, and advocating for birds and the environment. He said there has been an increase in people using the trails at Audubon’s property in Huntington, and the organization has been able to hold some of their organized events, including Pride Hikes.

Although he insists he’s not a birder, Jaunich has taken part in several bird-a-thons since joining the board, and on a safari trip in Botswana, while their driver crashed their vehicle through a wash to avoid a charging elephant, Jaunich cried out triumphantly that he had just seen a



Scott Jaunich      Photo contributed

roseate spoonbill. He is proud that Audubon Vermont successfully lobbied the Vermont Legislature to pass a migratory bird protection bill and lauds their new Youth Conservation Leadership Program.

Audubon Vermont recently held a retreat and Jaunich said he is pleased with how the organization is doing. “It’s been a struggle to adapt to COVID,” he said “but we’ve got a good board and several committees. I’m really happy to be part of it.”



Sports

# Twin State soccer team rosters include a number of Redhawks

EDD MERRITT  
CONTRIBUTOR

Both men’s and women’s Twin-State soccer teams that are scheduled to play New Hampshire in July were named recently. Because of the pandemic, the schools did not hold tryouts but, instead, relied on last fall’s performance as well as needs for positions in order to select members for the 24-player roster. This year’s Twin-State showing should

be the 46th cup. However, last year’s game was cancelled because of concerns over the coronavirus pandemic.

This year’s women’s roster includes CVU’s Jess Klein, Josie Pecor and Olivia Zubarik as well as Rice’s Emma Blanck from Williston.

The men’s team includes Henry Bijur and Ben Sampson from CVU.



Charlotte All-Stater Ben Sampson dribbles past a Hornet. Photo by Al Frey

Parenting

# Practice kindness

Maris Rose  
CONTRIBUTOR

Make kindness second nature for a happy, healthy family member and community member. Practice. Practice. Practice. That is how we master the skill.

Compassion, kindness and gratitude contribute greatly to our sense of belonging. When we contribute, cooperate, and care, we know we belong. Kindness and sharing also have the added benefit of giving us and our children the sense that, when we share, there can be enough and plenty for everyone.

Always encourage and invite kindness from a perspective of love, joy, empathy and connection. Never use guilt or shame.

Ideas to teach your children about offering kindness, compassion and gratitude:

First and foremost, be a model. Practice frequent acts of kindness and compassion and express words of gratitude several times each day. Then involve your children.

- Write thank you notes for every gift, for acts of kindness, help, care and service. Be specific about the reasons you appreciate it. If your children are too young to write it, then you write it for them, hopefully quoting some of their words. They can add a picture or their name. Keep note cards and paper handy for frequent notes of appreciation.
- Welcome new neighbors with a gift and a note—cookies, fruit, flowers, garden veggies and herbs, etc. Invite them to dinner.
- Bring a meal to an ailing neighbor or family member. (Even if you do not cook or bake, you can buy a cup of good soup and bring it to them).
- When at the grocery store, make it a practice to select an item or two for the food shelf and place it in the box provided.
- At dinner time share about something you are grateful for, something helpful or kind someone did for you that day, and something helpful or kind you did for someone that day.
- Have children regularly thank their coaches, teachers, activity teachers, bus drivers, lunch helpers, waitresses, store

clerks and baggers, parents who host children for play dates, farmers at the farmers market, etc. It will become a good habit.

- Have children do kind or helpful deeds for siblings, parents, other family members.
- Pack an extra granola bar, cookie or piece of fruit for your child to share with someone at lunch.
- Walk a dog or shovel a walk or bring in the trash cans for a neighbor.
- Feed the birds.
- Offer a ride to an older community member. Pick up groceries for a family member or neighbor.
- As children are older, make dinner for the Salvation Army or participate in preparing lunch for COTS.
- Through church or a community organization find an elder who needs a visit from time to time. (Adopt a grandparent!)
- Write notes to your children and place them in their lunch box.

It’s so important to notice and delight in a child’s impulse to give. From the moment a baby offers a taste of their soggy teething biscuit or mushy Cheerio, to picking dandelions for mommy, it’s important to respond with pure delight. These are their authentic initiatives. Even if you don’t actually eat the Cheerio, find a way to convey delight and gratitude.

At the holidays, when the presents theme is so prevalent in our culture, I like to balance this with an emphasis on letting our (heart) lights shine through acts of kindness and giving. This leads to so many joyful moments with children actually saying, “He let me use the shovel! He let his light shine!” “I helped Daddy fold the laundry last night! I let my light shine!”

I believe children learn best when we give gentle, sincere, consistent attention to acts of kindness and expressions of care.

*Maris Rose is the owner of Maris’s Tree House, a preschool program in Shelburne, and gives parenting classes and workshops through Maris Rose Educational Services.*



# Champion Trees .....

## Time to update the Hamilton Roster of Charlotte’s Champion Trees

Vince Crockenberg  
CHARLOTTE TREE TRIBE

Every year or so the Charlotte Tree Tribe, under the leadership of Tree Warden Mark Dillenbeck, invites all Charlotters to help update the Hamilton Roster of Champion Trees, named in honor of former Charlotte tree warden Larry Hamilton.

The roster, in the sidebar, lists the currently identified biggest trees of each species in Charlotte, whether on private or public property. For purposes of the roster, champion status is determined by the tree’s girth, in inches, four and a half feet from the ground.

If you believe you have identified a candidate for champion status—a tree that is larger than the current champion of that species or that places a new tree species on the list—measure the tree at that height. Then send your measurement, along with a photo if possible, to Tree Steward Vince Crockenberg at vince.crockenberg@gmail.com or to Deputy Tree Warden Sue Smith at ssmith@gmavt.net with the words “Champion Tree?” in the subject line. One of us will then contact you and set up a time to confirm the tree’s species and girth.

In addition, many of the listed champion trees may well have grown substantially in girth since they were last measured; if you think that might be the case with a champion on your property, let us know and we’ll come out and remeasure it.

Finally, we’re trying to provide GPS coordinates for each of our champion trees so we and others can more easily find them. We’re missing those



Deputy Tree Warden Sue Smith and Cliff Mix, a retired forester who manages Mary Cheney’s lands, measure the new champion black cherry.

Photo by Meg Berlin

addresses for many of the champs. If you have a champion on your property and could provide us with the GPS coordinates, in either decimal degrees or degrees/minutes/seconds, we’ll add those coordinates to the roster.

A constantly updated Hamilton Roster, which includes information on where the current champion trees reside, can be also found on the town website. Go to charlottevt.org, in the left-hand column click on the Tree Warden tab, then at the bottom of the page on Hamilton Champion Tree Roster.

### Hamilton Champion Tree Roster

Species and circumference in inches measured 4.5 feet above ground

Species, Circumference and location (GPS in degrees, minutes, seconds)

**January 2021 - Native to Charlotte**

Ash, Black, 49, Donegan, Carpenter Rd. (44/20/12 N, 73/9/56 W)  
Ash, Green, 165, Krasnow, off One Mile Rd.  
Ash, White, 172, McGarghan, Lake Rd. Ext. (44/16/55 N, 73/16/9 W)  
Aspen, Big Toothed, 63, Keyes, Upper Old Town Trail  
Aspen, Trembling, 49, Keyes, Upper Old Town Trail  
Basswood, 164, Thorp Cove Rd.  
Beech, 130, McGinnis, Mt. Philo Rd.  
Birch, Black, 76, Butnor, Guinea Rd.  
Birch, River, 15, Town Green  
Birch, White, 63, Donovan/O'Donnell, Lake Rd.  
Box Elder, 121, Shifrin, Ferry Rd.  
Butternut, 134, Woodruff, Garen Rd.  
Cedar, Red, 58, Town land, Thompson's Point Rd.  
Cedar, White, 153, Barber Hill Cemetery (44/18/5 N, 73/15/18 W)  
Cherry, Black, 10, Cheney, Lewis Creek Rd. (44/16/11 N, 73/10/38 W)  
Cottonwood, 174, Philo Ridge Farm  
Elm, American (White), 128, Donegan, Carpenter Rd. (44/20/32 N, 73/9/54 W))

Elm, Slippery (Red), 106, Krasnow, off One Mile Rd.  
Gum, Black, 15, Town Green  
Hackberry, 19, Town Green  
Hemlock, 110, Muggenthaler, Near Williams Woods  
Hickory, Bitternut, 41, Keyes, Upper Old Town Trail  
Hickory, Shagbark, 109, Cheney, Lewis Creek Rd. (44/16/28 N, 73/10/37 W)  
Hop Hornbeam, 61, North Shore Rd., near Whiskey Bay  
Locust, Honey, 142, Preston, One Mile Rd.  
Maple, Black, 87, Lake Rd. (44/16/42 N, 73/16/15 W)  
Maple, Red, 131, McCabe Brook, Lime Kiln Rd.  
Maple, Silver, 164, Lander, 826 Carpenter Rd. (44/20/26 N, 73/10/44 W)  
Maple, Sugar, 211, PuRd.um, Fox Run Rd. (44/19/28 N, 73/14/48 W)  
Oak, Bur, 183, Donaldson, Garen Rd.  
Oak, Pin, 42, CCS (44/19/3 N, 73/13/20 W)  
Oak, Red, 157, Handy, Dickens on Guinea Rd. (44/201/49 N, 73/11/38 W)  
Oak, Scarlet, 137, Moraska, Spear

Street  
Oak, Swamp White, 166, Beal, Thompson's Point Rd. (44/16/44 N, 73/16/38 W)  
Oak, White, 179, Keenan, North Pasture Lane  
Pine, Red, 61, Thompson's Point Rd., SW of Association Way  
Pine, White, 160, Cheney, Lewis Creek Rd. (44/16/18 N, 73/10/32 W)  
Sycamore, 60, Walker/Boynton, Lake Rd. (planted in 2000)  
Serviceberry, 20, UVM Natural Area, Pease Mountain  
Tamarack, 64, Hinsdale, west of Spear St.  
**Non-native but widely planted or escaped**  
Horse Chestnut, 134, HorsfoRd., Greenbush Rd.. (44/19/20 N, 73/15/1 W)  
Locust, Black, 158, HorsfoRd., Greenbush Rd.. (44/19/20 N, 73/15/22 W)  
Maple, Norway, 95, Crockenberg, Thompson's Point Rd.. (44/16/42 N, 73/16/54 W)  
Poplar, White (European), 93, Garvey, Baldwin Rd.  
Walnut, Black, 137, HorsfoRd., Converse Bay Rd.  
Willow, Weeping, 254, Mt. Philo Rd., near Shelburne line



## Tunes to Tune Into

# Greetings from Los Angeles, hello to Francesca



John Moses  
CONTRIBUTOR

It's been a long time since I last wrote. I could say life got in the way of my column, but truthfully, I've been grappling with its format. This year has been tough on my music discovery—all of the world's doom and gloom has encouraged me to revisit my all-time favorite sad-guy albums and stay inside. My enthusiasm for sitting down and finding the next best thing is waning; with so much going on in the news, my big question is "who cares?" I think there are far more compelling themes to explore in the unique times we're living in.

Outside of my writing, isolation in a pandemic resonates throughout the creative industry in a variety of forms. Songwriters and artists struggle to find inspiration to make music, record labels fight to promote their projects in an endless breaking news cycle, and music venues have to completely change their business models to adapt to concerts with no crowds. I've had conversations with friends in all facets of the industry who are trying to figure out how they fit into this new world and what their work means now.

One of these conversations I've had is with my longtime friend and recording artist Francesca Blanchard, who self-released her sophomore full-length album "Make It Better" last July. I first met Francesca

running cross-country at Charlotte Central School and almost immediately knew she had an x-factor. She spoke multiple languages, acted, performed, sang. Over the years she went off for acting gigs, threw concerts in the barn behind her parents' house, and released her debut LP through Charlotte-based world music label Cumbancha Records to critical acclaim.

In this interview, Francesca and I discuss creativity in quarantine, navigating the satisfaction of releasing an album, and how to feel after you've shared your best work. She is currently living and working in Paris.

### How has your creative output been?

I think there were many phases to the "lockdown effect." Inspiration comes in and out. I'll be honest, since June I've only been writing sad songs! This year's been one of the most physically and emotionally isolating, and I write about my own experiences so the demos I'm working on are all pretty much a reflection of that solitude. I feel like I've been sweating out the really depressing ones in order to make room for some upbeat bangers, we'll see if those come naturally.

**Close to the release of "Make it Better" you issued a statement about the moral dilemma of promoting your work during such a tumultuous time in our country. What was it like finally releasing the record?**

Releasing the album felt like a huge exhale. I was definitely ready and excited to finally



Francesca Blanchard just released her second album, "Make it Better." *Courtesy photo*

share it in full. Within the context of spring 2020 however, it was also incredibly difficult and I was very torn. The last thing I wanted to do was take up room or make noise that felt irrelevant to what was going on in America at the time. We were at the height of the Black Lives Matter protests following the death of George Floyd, and I was knee-deep in new information and processing a kind of communal guilt I hadn't ever faced before. They were, and are, incredibly important emotions to sit with, yet they conflicted immensely with the joy of releasing new work. I chose not to hold off on the release because I found that doing so would inherently mean I was waiting for a more "appropriate" time—for

the dust to settle, so to speak. And I couldn't justify that morally.

What I wish I did differently... perhaps to have not been so afraid to actually celebrate and promote the release. I'm very proud of this work, of what it stands for personally. I'd spent the last two years of my life putting my absolute all into it. But I went into hibernation mode the very next day because I was afraid. But that silence hurt me economically and set me back creatively. That said, I know there's a silver lining in all of it.

**You describe "Make It Better" as "an album about overcoming heartbreak and making good out of pain." Do the songs and album take on a different meaning to you since being in lockdown?**

The album's message certainly took on a whole new layer of relevance due to COVID. I think its namesake, "Make It Better," was the pinnacle of what I wanted my music to communicate both to myself and my listeners, and when everything started to change, there was like a "right place, right time" moment, thematically speaking. This year has felt very stagnant, like it's felt impossible to grow and move forward. These feelings of solitude and heartbreak I wrote about pre-COVID were suddenly universal and I think that made the music all the more relatable, which is important to me. In that sense, I'm glad that the circumstances surrounding the release



# Town .....

## Thank you from the Food Shelf

Susan Ohanian  
CONTRIBUTOR

From garden produce to winter coats to ceramic bowls, 2020 was a good year. We thank Brian Houghton, Bud, Barbara, and Tessa Lawrence, Carrie Spear, Nan and Oopey Mason, Louise McCarren, Lori Racha Silverman, Jennie MacDonough, Liz Foster, Pete Purdum, Rick Tenney, Bethany Brightland, Hilary Smith, Tara Mullen and Bill Lockwood, Will Murphy, the Harvey family, Jen Slater, Joan White Hansen, Tai Dinnan, Linda Hamilton, Karen Tuininga, Lisa Brester, Marie Andriola, Kelly Stockwell, Kristen Nelson, Kristin Wright, Seth Zimmerman, Suzanne Ferland, Pati Naritomi, Ted Mo, Maris Cookson, Jessica Sanford, Vince Caloiero, Jessica Shevitz Rauch, Liza Woodruff, Kate Jennings and her neighbors, Katie Devoid, Alice McEnaney, Thomas Hengelsberg, Judy Hill, Scott and Liz Lollis, Brad Palmer, Claire Simon, Alexis Mittelstadt, Kathy Ridge, Nick Frigo & family, Jason Hackerman, Deidre Holmes, Cecelia Wu, Jeanne Blackmore, Julia Parker-Dickerson, MaryEllen Hebert, Deborah Dodd Squires, Alice Trageser, Abby Foulk, Rose Garritano, Fat Cow Farm, Charlotte Children’s Center, Bill Lockwood and Tara Mullen, Susan Raber Bray, Ella Kenny, Calista Lasek, Giving Tree participants at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church and the Charlotte Congregational Church.

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**In memory of Cowboy and Arline Lewis;** in memory of Fr. Gerald Ragis; in memory of Irene Santulli; in memory of Jane H. Stevens; in memory of Louise Simone.

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**Volunteers are at the heart of the Food Shelf**—none of this could exist without their dedication. Here’s just a sample: Nancy Bloch completes the Food Bank order; John Lavigne, Cindy Tyler, Bill Doris, Kelly Stockwell and Anne Marie Andriola keep the shelves stocked. Current food shoppers include: Karen and Bill Doris, Rosemary Raszka, Wolfie Davis, Alaina Murphy, Janet Landrigan, Peggy Sharpe, Marilyn Holmberg and Sharon Richards.

**Longtime distribution volunteers include** Nancy Bloch, John Lavigne, Karen Doris, Cindy Tyler, Liz DesLauriers, Bill Doris, Liz Foster, Anne Marie Andriola, Elaine Ittleman and Pete Purdum. Groceries are delivered weekly by Kelly Stockwell and Louise McCarren. New distribution volunteers are Jim Hyde, Glen Findholt, Marcia Vogler and Noelle DesLauriers. Additional helpers from the Charlotte Congregational Church congregation include: Hadley Abernathy, Claudia Marshall, Mark Gabel, Lewis Mudge, Nancy Farley, Chris Hopwood, Rachel Stein, Adel and son Peter Holoch. Other important behind-the-scenes volunteers are Diane Cote who writes all of the thank yous and Mary Volk who keeps our books.

The Charlotte Food Shelf, an all-volunteer organization located in the Congregational Church vestry at 403 Church Hill Road, is open Wednesday evenings from 4–6 p.m. for curbside pickup. Delivery is available. Call: 425-3252. For more information: [www.charlotteuicc.org/charlotte-food-shelf](http://www.charlotteuicc.org/charlotte-food-shelf)

# Sacred Hunter

## The Miracle



Bradley Carleton

A few years ago, I was working for an outdoor retailer, running programs that taught people to appreciate what nature can teach us through participation.

As a child, I had a traumatic experience with a religion that almost cost me my life. I was an angry young man, who felt that the universe was a cruel joke designed to break my spirit. I discovered that I felt at home in the woods and waters. Nature surrounded me with the wonderment that we are all born with, and I discovered the feeling of belonging. Belonging to the universe and all her beauty, power and grace.

As I was working for this retailer, I was given the responsibility as keyholder to the room where the safe was kept, and I was told that if I were to ever lose this key, I would immediately lose my job. I put it on a key ring with a detachable pinion and affixed a snap to the pinion whereby I would only take the safe key with me when I was headed to work.

It was a stunning helio and sage sunrise over Maquam Bay on northern Lake Champlain, which is about one mile wide and ranges in depth from 10 feet to its shallow shores of mere inches. I was lying on my back in a layout boat just above the surface of the water, which was about two feet deep. I was camouflaged and nearly invisible to the Canadian geese that were using this area of the bay for an early morning loafing area. My friend John was about ¼ mile away in a large v-hulled tender boat, watching over me as I waited for the geese to fly in from a feeding field about one mile away.

Soon, with all the coffee I had consumed and the gentle rocking of the boat, biology condemned me. I stepped out of the boat to relieve myself and noticed a strange looking crooked, knotted old stick on the sandy bottom. Next to it was a razorback mussel. I picked it up and pried it open to

inspect its life form. I smelled it as if I were a child—amazed at its simple complexity. I raised it to my mouth and thought about tasting it, to see if it would be salty, but upon inhaling its freshwater essence, chose not to try it. I dropped it and got back in the boat.

The geese came and chose to light in another area of the shoreline. John poled the big boat toward me, and the wary flock took off in a clatter of wingbeats and splashes. They did not fly anywhere near me. We picked up all our decoys and loaded the layout boat on top of the tender and headed back to the access ramp a mile or so away.

When we got to the access, we were saying our goodbyes and telling each other that although our plan to harvest geese failed, it was still a great sunrise and much better than going to work.

It was when I reached into my wader pants pocket that I realized my keys were not with me. I had planned on going straight to work from the hunt, but now, my keys to my truck, my house and my own trailer were not to be found. In a moment of sudden terror, I realized that on that same keychain, attached to the snap on the pinion, were the keys to the safe of my employer.

We searched frantically through every decoy bag, every pocket, every corner, nook, and cranny of the boat. After half an hour of searching I relented. “We have to go back.”

And so, we loaded up the boat once again and headed south to the bay. The bay had to be entered by swinging in from the south end over a sandbar. As we motored toward our destination, the big 60 hp motor began to sputter and stall. John, who is an airline pilot, is quite gifted at managing crises. He maintained a steady pace on just one cylinder. And then, the wind picked up. From the south. The waves grew and tempo. We were headed into the teeth of a 20-knot wind. Waves broke over the bow. The bilge pump at the stern was whining, over-



“I chose to surrender and somehow knew everything would be all right. I don’t know why. It was a strange feeling. Like a faith I had never found.”  
*Courtesy photo*

whelmed by trying to match the volume of water that was coming over the bow.

We turned east and the waves were now hitting us broadside, against the gunwhales. I sat down on the floor of the boat just above the waterline and looked up into the sky. I wondered to myself, “Is this how it ends?” I felt a strange calm come over me. I looked up at the sun peeking through gathering clouds, shooting pillars of light onto the roiling lake. I noticed how the wake behind the stern was glistening in the sunlight. A gorgeous sage color; white froth blew off the top of the waves. I chose to surrender and somehow knew everything would be all right. I don’t know why. It was a strange feeling. Like a faith I had never found.

Just before the sandbar the waves threw us violently onto the grainy bottom. John captained the boat using every crest to further us toward the shore of the bay. “You’ll have to get out and walk the rest of the way, Bradley. I can’t go any further without getting us permanently stranded.”

I crawled over the side of the boat, and John asked, “Does anything look familiar to you?” We had come into the bay in the dark, and as the horizon had started to grow lighter by a beautiful purple and indigo blue, I pointed out a small stand of John-

son grass. It was about two hundred yards away.

As I was walking a quiet thought popped into my relaxed brain. “Turn ten degrees east.” Without thinking, I did. I walked another 150 yards toward the stand of weeds and stopped to gauge my distance. I looked down and saw this strange crooked, knotted old stick underwater. And next to it another razorback mussel. “How weird is that?” I thought. Something shiny caught my eye just to the right of the stick.

My keys. I reached down and picked them up. My heart filled with gratitude deeper than any I have experienced. I breathed in deeply to say thank you to whoever would listen, when I noticed the mussel slowly moving toward me at a mussel’s pace. I reached down to pick it up. I looked longingly at the creature and felt that maybe I needed to make amends for unnecessarily taking the life of one of its tribe. I raised the mussel to my mouth, pursed my lips, and kissed it. I said “Thank you, brother,” then set him gently back down on the sandy bottom beside the crooked old branch.

*Bradley Carleton is executive director of Sacred Hunter.org, a nonprofit that seeks to educate the public on the spiritual connection of man to nature.*



# Town

## Library news



Margaret Woodruff  
DIRECTOR

The American Library Association Midwinter Conference featured poet Joy Harjo who shared from her upcoming book, *Poet Warrior: A Call for Love and Justice*. Those two terms seem particularly

relevant for February, a month when we celebrate Valentine's Day and also recognize Black History Month.

If you're looking for a way to learn more about the Black experience in our country, you can access the library's collection of literature, history and narrative through the library website and also find links to films and digital resources through Hoopla and Kanopy.

These local cultural institutions also offer a wide lens on the history and currency of African-Americans:

**Clemmons Family Farm:**  
[www.clemmonsfamilyfarm.org](http://www.clemmonsfamilyfarm.org)

**The Rokeby Museum:** <https://rokeby.org/>  
(Look below for details about the Rokeby book discussion selection for February)

### Upcoming Programs

**Please contact the library at** [info@charlottepubliclibrary.org](mailto:info@charlottepubliclibrary.org) for the Zoom registration links to our programs.

**Valentine Activities:** Sign up to bring home one of these "Take & Make" kits!

**Adults:** indulge your craftiness with origami and cookie projects as well as some tea and sweets.

**Kids:** make up a heart-shaped seed bomb to give to your favorite gardener for Valentine's Day. Reward yourself a cup of hot chocolate using the library's cocoa recipe set.

### Coding Club

**Wednesdays, 3 p.m.**

Get coding with Susanna and coding mentor Charlie! All levels are welcome to learn Scratch or hone their Scratch skills. Ready to take your coding know-how to the next level? We will have a breakout room with Charlie to work on different platforms. 4th grade and up.

### Book Chat

**Fridays, 10 a.m.**

Join Margaret for a virtual stroll through the library collections. Focusing on a different topic or theme each week, she'll share new



titles and some old favorites. There will be plenty of time to share your ideas and suggestions, too!

**Seed Library Book Discussion: *Seed Underground***

**Friday, Jan. 29, 11 a.m.: Part 2**

Join Linda Hamilton, Charlotte Seed Library Co-Coordinator, for a discussion about this essential book. Acclaimed author Janisse Ray draws us into the issues and the urgency of protecting food sovereignty through seeds, weaving together inspiring stories of ordinary gardeners who are doing the essential work of saving time-honored, open-pollinated varieties for themselves and to share with others. An important read for everyone who gardens, and, in fact, for everyone who eats! Copies of the book available at the Charlotte Library.

**Mystery Book Group: *One of Us Is Lying***  
**Monday, Feb. 15, 10 a.m.**

*The Breakfast Club* meets *Pretty Little Liars*, *One of Us Is Lying* is the story of what happens when five strangers walk into detention and only four walk out alive. Everyone is a suspect, and everyone has something to hide. Pay close attention and you might solve this. Only, Simon never makes it out of that classroom. Before the end of detention, Simon's dead. And according to investigators, his death wasn't an accident. On Monday, he died. But on Tuesday, he'd planned to post juicy reveals about all four of his high-profile classmates, which makes all four of them suspects in his murder. Or are they the perfect patsies for a killer who's still on the loose? Everyone has secrets, right? What really matters is how far you would go to protect them. Copies available at the library via porch pickup.

**Men's Book Group: *Cod: A Biography of the Fish That Changed the World* by Mark Kurlansky**

**Wednesday, Feb. 17, 7:30 p.m.**

The Cod. Wars have been fought over it, revolutions have been triggered by it, national diets have been based on it, economies and livelihoods have depended on it. To the millions it has sustained, it has been a treasure more precious than gold. This book spans 1,000 years and four continents. From the Vikings to Clarence Birdseye, Mark Kurlansky introduces the explorers, merchants, writers, chefs and fisherman, whose lives have been interwoven with this prolific fish. He chronicles the cod wars of the 16th and 20th centuries. He blends in recipes and lore from the Middle Ages to the present. In a story that brings world history and human passions into captivating focus, he shows how the most profitable fish in history is today faced with extinction. Copies available at the library via porch pickup.

**Rokeby Museum Book Discussion:**

Discovering Black Vermont: African American Farmers in Hinesburgh, 1790–1890 by Elise Guyette

**Tuesday, Feb. 23, 6:30 p.m.**

**Register here:** <https://rokeby.org/visit/programmevents/>

Copy available at the library via porch pickup.

**Library Book Discussion: *The Custom of the Country* by Edith Wharton**

**Thursday, Feb. 25, 7:30 p.m.**

Considered by many to be her masterpiece, Edith Wharton's epic work is a scathing yet personal examination of the exploits and follies of the modern upper class. As she unfolds the story of Undine Spragg, from New York to Europe, Wharton affords us a detailed glimpse of what might be called the interior décor of this America and its nouveau riche fringes. Through a heroine who is as vain, spoiled and selfish as she is irresistibly fascinating, and through a most intricate and satisfying plot that follows Undine's marriages and affairs, she conveys a vision of social behavior that is both supremely informed and supremely disenchanted. Copies available at the library via porch pickup.

For the latest information about programs, books and activity kits, sign up for our monthly newsletter: "Charlotte Library Newsletter".

The library building is closed to the public, but books and other materials are available for porch pickup. Porch pickup hours:

**Monday, Wednesday, and Friday:**  
11 a.m. to 6 p.m.

**Tuesday and Thursday:**  
10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

**Saturday:** 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Please call or email to let us know what we can set out for you! Not sure what to read? We're happy to help select books for readers of all ages!

### Library Contact Information


**Margaret Woodruff**, Director

**Cheryl Sloan**, Youth Services Librarian

**Susanna Kahn**, Tech Librarian

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# Town

## Charlotte Senior Center news



Carolyn Kulik  
SENIOR CENTER  
DIRECTOR

“The Moving Finger writes; and, having writ,  
Moves on: nor all thy Piety nor Wit  
Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line,  
Nor all thy Tears wash out a Word of it.”

~ Omar Khayyám

Have you been sitting at home much? There’s no time like the present to sign up for an online exercise course or two. You are always welcome to try out one class—if you decide you do not want to continue with it, the fee is waived. Although online exercise classes may seem like a contradiction, they have actually worked out very well, and we have lots of happy participants and great instructors.

### Ongoing exercise courses

These are all ongoing—which means you can start them any week of the season. Meanwhile, here is a brief list for every day of the week:

**Chair Yoga:** Mon. & Wed., 9:30–10:30 a.m.

**Gentle Yoga:** Mon., 11 a.m. to Noon

**Pilates Plus - Tues., 9–10 a.m.**

**T’ai Chi Ch’uan For Beginners:** Tues. & Thurs. 10:30–11:30 a.m.

**Essentrics:** Wed., 8:30–9:30 a.m. & Fri., 9:30–10:30 a.m.

**Pilates:** Thurs., 8:30–9:30 a.m.

For course descriptions, please visit: [CharlotteSeniorCenterVT.org](http://CharlotteSeniorCenterVT.org). For registration and payment information please go to the end of this article.

### Next week

These courses have no fees and do not require a commitment to attend every week. See the directions at the bottom of this article for how to register.

### 1/27: Coping with COVID

### with Karen Chatfield

Wednesday mornings, 11–12. Dates: 1/27, 2/10 & 2/24.

Registration required by prior Monday. Join your peers to explore coping strategies and share methods you have used to deal with life during the pandemic. This group is designed to provide connections and support as we navigate “the new normal” together. Please note that this group is not intended to be a substitute for therapy or professional mental health treatment. Registration is required, but one need not attend every meeting.

### 1/27: Mindfulness Meditation Practice with Jill Abilock

Wednesday afternoons, 2:30–3:45. Ongoing. You can’t always change what you experience in life, but you can change how you experience it. Mindfulness Meditation provides tools that help change how you experience things, increasing fulfillment and happiness and reducing stress. Registration necessary.

### 1/27: Snowshoe Expeditions with Susan Hyde

Wednesday mornings. Dates: 2/10 & 2/24. For more information, please email Susan directly at: [susanfosterhyde@gmail.com](mailto:susanfosterhyde@gmail.com).

### Talks on Wednesdays at 1 p.m.

These free, interactive events are online via Zoom.

Please note that they do *not* require registration. The Zoom invitation/link to the talks are posted on the website the day before: [CharlotteSeniorCenterVT.org](http://CharlotteSeniorCenterVT.org). The link also appears in Front Porch Forum for that week.

### 2/03: Chocolate: Techniques & Recipes for Simply Spectacular Desserts with Chef Arnd

Join us for an interactive, live chef demo from The Residence at Shelburne Bay Bistro. This will include tips, techniques and easy-to-follow instructions on how to create special desserts using chocolate as the key ingredient. Chef Arnd will explore the beauty and texture

of different kinds of chocolate just in time for Valentine’s Day. For all of you chocolate lovers, this is one not to miss!

~ Arnd Sievers is a European Certified Master Chef who serves as the Culinary Services Director at The Residences at Shelburne Bay and Quarry Hill. He is from Hamelin, Germany, and has worked throughout the U.S. and internationally in fine hotels and restaurants.

### 2/10: Looking at The Night Sky with Jack St. Louis

People have always looked up at the lights in the night sky and wondered, “What are those lights?” The ancients connected star patterns into outlines of people, creatures and objects familiar to us that are still in use today. And, chances are you’ve seen the five visible planets without even realizing it. Eventually, with the use of telescopes, science revealed the secrets of the objects on the celestial sphere. Anyone can become an amateur astronomer, learn the secrets, track the planets as they move, and photograph constellations, meteors and comets. ~ Jack is current president of The Vermont Astronomical Society. He has made mirrors, built his own Newtonian telescopes, and taught astronomy courses at Burlington College and UVM.

### 2/17: Nepal: Through the Eyes of An American with Sandi Detwiler

### 2/24: Here’s Looking at You...Louise Nevelson! with Linda Finkelstein

### Art Exhibits

The Senior Center’s monthly art exhibits are suspended until further notice.

Keep being careful. We are all in this together. The end is in sight.

“So comes snow after fire, and even dragons have their endings.”

~ J.R.R. Tolkien,  
*The Hobbit, or There and Back Again*

For more expanded descriptions, as well as additional courses and talks, please visit [CharlotteSeniorCenterVT.org](http://CharlotteSeniorCenterVT.org). The mission of the Senior Center is to serve those 50 and up; some course enrollments are limited, and if a course is not full, younger participants are welcome to enroll. Feel free to leave a message anytime at 425-6345; voicemail is checked frequently.

### How to Register for a Course

All courses are online—and all require registration in order to receive the invitation/link.

To register, send your name, mailing address and phone number to: [CSCZoom@gmavt.net](mailto:CSCZoom@gmavt.net). Be sure to note the title of the course in the subject line of the email. You will receive confirmation that you are registered. Please send a separate email and registration information for each course.

**Payment:** If there is a fee, kindly pay by check (made out to CSC) and send to: P.O. Box 207, Charlotte, VT 05445. Be sure to note the title of the course in the memo line.

• For ongoing exercise courses, please pay at the *end* of each month for the classes attended. Unless otherwise stated, tally your attendance and figure \$5/class.

If fees present a hardship, don’t hesitate to request an adjustment by sending an email to [CSCZoom@gmavt.net](mailto:CSCZoom@gmavt.net). We want everyone to be able to keep themselves healthy and engaged, especially during this challenging time.

Questions? Need help with Zooming? Please email: [CSCZoom@gmavt.net](mailto:CSCZoom@gmavt.net), or leave a message at (802) 425-6345.

Charlotte Senior Center  
802-425-6345  
[CharlotteSeniorCenterVT.org](http://CharlotteSeniorCenterVT.org)

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Outdoors

Surviving winter (without a wood stove)

Elizabeth Bassett  
CONTRIBUTOR

If the world seems quiet beneath its blanket of white, think again. Hidden in plain sight, or under the snow and ice, there’s plenty of winter activity. Here’s a window into some critters’ cold-weather strategies.

With little temperature flexibility, warm-blooded mammals find warmth where they can—in caves, stone walls or your compost heap. Dormant animals alternately sleep and wake, venturing out on warm days in search of food but otherwise slumbering. Vermont’s dormant population includes black bears, raccoons, skunks and chipmunks.

Many mammals do what humans do—accumulate an extra layer of fat. Fur coats thicken. Deer grow hollow hairs to retain additional body heat. Snowshoe hares and weasels turn white for camouflage against the snow, the hares growing extra fur on their feet that serves as snowshoes.

True hibernators lower their body temperature and heartrate. In Vermont, the jumping mouse, woodchucks, bats, the familiar red eft, and some turtles, frogs and snakes hibernate. Some species of frog have enough glycerol in their blood to survive thawing and freezing through several cycles each winter.

The only marsupial in North America, the

Virginia opossum or “possum,” has moved north into Vermont with climate change. Poorly adapted to our winters with a thin coat and hairless ears and tail, the possum gets frost-bitten frequently, which ages them prematurely. They generally do not live to be two years old in Vermont, whereas they can live much longer in warmer regions. Given their poor adaptations for winter and high mortality rate, how do any possums survive here? They put on a layer of fat, providing a little extra insulation, and remain in their dens on exceptionally cold days.

In warmer climes possums can have two to three litters each year, but in Vermont they generally have just one. A mere 13 days from breeding, the honeybee-sized young crawl unaided to the mother’s pouch where they will nurse for the next 50 to 70 days. At about three months, they are fully weaned. The Vermont Center for Ecostudies *January Field Guide* says that the defense mechanism of “playing possum,” or playing dead, is a last resort if hissing and fluffing out its coat does not frighten predators. The possum becomes limp and motionless, lying on its side with mouth open and tongue hanging out. Heartbeat and breathing slow to almost undetectable; it sometimes releases a putrid-smelling green fluid from glands on its rear.

Take note and leave possums alone to eat the ticks in your yard! Possums consume



Snowy owl in Shelburne. Photo by Lee Krohn

up to 95% of the ticks in their path and can eat more than 5,000 each season. I’m wondering how to make our yard more attractive to them.

What becomes of pond dwellers? Unable to regulate their body temperatures, cold-blooded animals slow their activities as their metabolism shuts down. They generally survive if they are not encased in solid ice. Beneath the icy surface in water that never freezes, these creatures are insulated from temperatures that may plunge well below zero. Some turtles sink to the muddy bottom of ponds and rivers where they will remain until spring. Amphibians, such as frogs and toads, may sleep through winter on land,

beneath logs and leaf litter, or lay eggs that will hatch in the spring whether or not the parent survives.

Snowy owls, the adults mostly white, hunt by day and often perch on posts or fences beside an open field. Quick and nimble, they pounce on small mammals and can catch birds in flight. Snowy owls breed in the tundra and some years, if their traditional food sources are in short supply farther north, they winter in Vermont. Recently a snowy owl has been spotted wintering in Shelburne.

January is courtship time for some of our non-migratory owls, including Great Horned. You may hear them during our long nights, their haunting hoo-hoo-hoos echoing back and forth. Among the earliest nesters in Vermont, Great Horned Owls use abandoned nests of eagles, hawks, osprey or squirrels and cavities or caves that are 30 to 70 feet above the ground. Females lay one to four eggs that hatch after 30 to 37 days. In February, listen for the courtship of Barred Owls, of which there are many in Charlotte: “who-cooks-for-you.”

Meanwhile, humans keep warm by turning up the heat or exercising to get blood flowing in the outdoors. Whatever your strategy, take heart. Spring will come one day.

TUNES

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

were such that the songs became all the more impactful (not that I’m glad about the circumstances, let’s make that clear!).

Reviews of “Make It Better” seemed overwhelmingly positive—one of my favorite comments was from a group discussion at Seven Days, where they described the record as sounding “like it’s driven by a woman in her twenties rather than the older adults around her.”

I was very moved by this review, and that line in particular. This album definitely marks a departure in my songwriting, but more importantly in my own relationship to music. Since pursuing music more professionally, I started getting a bit lost in what was expected of me. The focus

suddenly became about the reception of the output, rather than the process itself. This album to me will always be about that rediscovery of the process, about giving myself permission to work my way. When I released “Free” (the album’s first single) in 2017, I had no idea how it would be received. It was such a musical shift. I almost considered finding a different band name so it would “fit” more. I didn’t know I’d be returning to music at the time. I think that’s why I placed it as the album’s opening track, it felt like the catalyst for change. In a broader sense, to make and release this album was to give myself permission to say what I want to say however I want to say it, and that is precisely an artist’s job. There are no rules. I didn’t know that before this album.

Give me a life tip.

You are not what you feel; it’s just something you’re going through.

Francesca Blanchard’s album “Make It Better” is available across digital platforms worldwide. <https://francescablanchard.bandcamp.com/album/make-it-better-album>.

You can listen to select singles from the album, along with Francesca’s recommended music at the Tunes to Tune Into playlist on *The Charlotte News* website at [charlottenewsvt.org/category/voices/music](http://charlottenewsvt.org/category/voices/music).

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