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The Charlotte News

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Photo by Lee Krohn

Flags for those who have served



Stuart Robinson placing Memorial Day Flags in 2020.

Photo contributed

This coming weekend in preparation for Memorial Day observances, Grange members will be visiting cemeteries across the town and placing flags on the graves of those who have served our country, a tradition they are proud to continue.

Planning Commission focuses on planning for community outreach



Nancy Richardson
CONTRIBUTOR

At its May 6 meeting, Planning Commission members were treated to a seminar on community outreach by Ravi Venkataraman, Richmond Town Planner. Richmond and Charlotte share similarities and

differences. With populations of about 4,000, they are nearly the same size. Both towns have also struggled with achieving consensus on land use regulations.

In 2011 a unified development ordinance was defeated in Richmond. The Town Plan was revised and accepted in 2018. However, the land use regulations do not reflect state requirements or the revised Town Plan. Richmond has since been working to involve the community in the design of new land use regulations. Residents have been asked, "How would you envision a community that maintains its current characteristics, but responds to future needs?"

Richmond's process of planning and design began in earnest just as the pandemic hit. It was soon slowed by the need for Zoom meetings to disseminate information. Outreach gained momentum in October 2020. Venkataraman outlined ongoing efforts to engage the public that include focused meetings on town goals and needs. There have been envisioning discussions of how the town

would look in different districts if changes are made in zoning regulations.

In addition to notices in newspapers and on Front Porch Forum, key people have been contacted in different districts to ensure participation. Detailed information was disseminated prior to the sessions. Deliberate efforts during these meetings were made to keep discussions tightly focused and anchored in specific information.

Richmond planners are taking information from the public sessions and surveys to formulate zoning amendments that align with state regulations and Smart Growth guidelines. These drafts will be presented to the public in June for further feedback.

Comments from Charlotte planning commissioners focused on technical details concerning the staffing of Richmond's planning department, the presence of water and sewer services, and the nature of incremental planning. Mike Russell then commented that Richmond residents appear to agree that sustaining the town requires that growth and development occur. Russell is not sure that this sentiment is held by most Charlotters. Venkataraman responded that support varies across districts in housing and other development activities. Some favor multi-housing projects; others like smaller duplex structures. Moving deliberately and

Meet our News Editor

John Quinney
INTERIM PRESIDENT AND PUBLISHER

We are pleased to announce that Mara Brooks is joining the paper as our Editor, effective immediately.

We first heard about Mara from emails that we sent to a number of community newspapers, including the *Montpelier Bridge*, a nonprofit paper like *The Charlotte News*, where Mara was formerly the editor-in-chief and business manager. At *the Bridge*, Mara managed the newsroom, assigned stories to reporters and freelancers, made all the editorial decisions for print and digital, and boosted the organization's online presence. In her more than two decades in print and online journalism, Mara has covered topics ranging from environmental issues to crime, science, art, entertainment and culture. Since 2019, Mara has been the editor for community newspaper *The Hardwick Gazette* and she is the communications coordinator for the Community of Vermont Elders, a nonprofit advocacy group.

"Community journalism is my first love," Mara said. "I am so excited to join *The Charlotte News* team and learn everything there is to know about this incredible town."

Mara will visit Charlotte on a regular basis and is looking forward to meeting and getting to know our readers, community volunteers, and those working at Town Hall, the Charlotte Senior Center, Fire and Rescue and the Charlotte Library.

Mara currently lives in Barre, and, surprise fun fact, is fascinated by theoretical physics.

"Reading about physics is how I de-stress," she said. "I know that sounds weird but contemplating the second law of thermodynamics is very relaxing."

Welcome aboard, Mara.



Mara Brooks

Selectboard considers Town Beach improvements

Nancy Richardson
CONTRIBUTOR

The Selectboard's May 10 meeting made its way through topics relating to improvements in the Town Beach park. A site visit, led by Bill Fraser-Harris, included members of the Selectboard and several interested residents. Topics of discussion centered on how to reprogram certain areas for different uses, plans for additional parking, and how to ensure safety on Lake Road in front of the park.

A later discussion at the Selectboard meeting recognized the three issues that will go to the top of the list for work next summer: (1) additional parking; (2) more tennis courts; and (3) modification of some courts for pickleball.

The Selectboard underscored the importance of a process to engage the public in a discussion about improvements, but that process is not yet defined. It was noted that there is space in the upper fields for overflow parking that can be used this summer, and the three tennis courts will have new lines and nets. Additional improvements would be slated for 2022.

Lewis Mudge expressed concern about the safety along the road that separates the parking and picnic area from the lakefront. Children cross the road with no public safety measures. He will contact Jr Lewis about possible remedies, both temporary and permanent.

The agenda then moved on to appointment of new members of the Planning Commission. Among the questions posed to candidates were whether they would recuse themselves from matters that contained actual or even the appearance of conflict of interest. They each concurred. Kyra Wegman and Linda Radimer were eventually approved to fill the open slots. Robert Bloch was appointed



A site visit to the Town Beach park was led by Bill Fraser-Harris and included members of the Selectboard and several interested residents.

Photo by Peter Richardson

to the Thompson's Point Design Review Committee, and several other volunteers were appointed to other town positions.

On May 22 there will be a walk on the proposed new leg of the Town Trail from Cohousing to the Mack property. The purpose is to study the topography and determine obstacles that might make the trail construction difficult.

The Recreation Committee's proposal for music at the beach on the weekend of June 16 was approved. Bill Fraser-Harris stated he was not comfortable in proposing a traditional town party this year, given COVID restrictions, but that music and social distancing would be an appropriate combination. Participants will be able to bring their own food.

Finally, the Chittenden Solid Waste budget was approved. Because of the length of the meeting and two preceding site visits, multiple appointments and the other issues, the matters having to do with Selectboard rules and new COVID guidelines were postponed.

Letter from The Editor

Can you trust us?

Mara Brooks
EDITOR

As many of our readers know, in March former *Charlotte News* editor Chea Waters Evans and this paper parted ways following months of Evans' controversial reporting on alleged conflicts of interest at the Zoning Board of Adjustment. Soon after, several *The Charlotte News* board members, including the paper's then-publisher Claudia Marshall, also jumped ship. In the weeks that followed, Evans gave statements to several Vermont news outlets suggesting TCN's own conflicts had played a role in her sudden departure. (Marshall is married to former zoning board member Matt Zucker.) The resulting scandal left some readers wondering if *The Charlotte News* could be trusted to report objectively and allow its reporters to pursue stories without interference.

As an LA transplant who moved to Vermont just three years ago, I've often felt self-conscious of my flatlander status in the close-knit towns that make up this magical state. But when I learned my first assignment for *The Charlotte News* was to investigate the town's conflicts of interest scandal, for once I thought my lack of local roots might be a good thing. My deep dive into Charlotte's seedy underbelly (ha!) was a crash course in local politics and the nuances of balanced reporting. It also got me thinking hard about conflicts of interest and the issue of

transparency.

Conflicts of interest are all but built into small-town politics, and citizens holding seats on more than one board at the same time is a fairly common (and legal) practice in Vermont. Conflicts can also exist between a local newspaper and the town officials it covers, or in cases where a reporter is friends with one of their sources. Ideally, a reporter with conflicts can pass the story off to another writer, but what if there are no other writers? What if the sole investigative reporter at a paper doubles as its editor?

If there's one thing I learned while investigating this story it's that bias is in the eye of the beholder—and in a town of only 3,800 people, there are plenty of accusations to go around. (See my report on the ZBA scandal below.)

Much has been written in the local press recently about the need for transparency among public officials—and community newspapers. But while transparency is a start, it does not equal accountability or provide the tools to measure or mitigate the conflicts it exposes. Instead, for better or worse, the public is left to speculate about the integrity of those implicated. To suggest transparency is enough to combat conflicts of interest is to distract from the issue of the conflicts themselves.

At their best, news journalists can serve as

watchdogs for the community with the power to expose corruption that might otherwise go unchecked. For that reason, reporters must diligently check our own biases before sending a story to print. If we're too eager to be the town crusader, we risk distorting the facts. If we're intent on finding scandal, we can lose perspective and unfairly damage reputations. The simple act of emphasizing some facts while minimizing others can result in biased reporting or conjecture disguised as hard news. And bias, which is often unconscious, can be difficult to self-detect.

I accepted the job as editor of *The Charlotte News* because I was impressed by what I found here: a small group of dedicated people, mostly volunteers, who care deeply about their town. I've been told by those who hired me to go where the facts lead and to report the news as I see fit. I currently have no conflicts of interest in Charlotte, but in time that could change. Our team is already drafting a new, detailed set of policies to address a variety of ethical conundrums to ensure the continued integrity of our paper.

I'm excited to work with our small but brilliant editorial team, and I look forward to getting to know our readers. I hope you'll continue to enjoy and trust the stories we bring you about this unique and beautiful town. Feel free to drop me a line at mara@thecharlottenews.org and by all means: send news.



The Charlotte News

Mission Statement

The mission of *The Charlotte News* is:

- to publish rigorous, in-depth, fair reporting on town affairs, and,
- to source stories of interest from our neighbors and friends.

The News is a forum for the free exchange of the views of Charlotte residents and community volunteers on matters related to the town and the people who live here.

Editorial independence

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

Letters, Opinions and Obituaries

Consistent with our mission *The Charlotte News* publishes letters to the editor, opinion pieces and obituaries submitted by our readers. All such materials are subject to review and approval by the editor in accordance with the following standards and requirements:

- The views expressed in letters or opinion pieces are those of the author, and are not endorsed by either the board or the editorial staff of the paper. Opinion pieces and letters to the editor will be clearly labelled as such.
- The *News* strives to stay clear of conflicts of interest. If an actual or perceived conflict arises or becomes known at a later date, it will be fully disclosed.
- While letters or opinion pieces may endorse political positions or candidates for public office, the paper always remains objective and impartial in such matters.
- All submissions are strictly monitored for personal attacks, score settling, blatantly false information and inflammatory language. The editor reserves the right to reject any submission that is deemed contrary to the paper's standards.
- All submissions are subject to editing for clarity, factual accuracy, tone, length and consistency with our publishing style.
- Efforts will be made to publish submissions in their entirety and to preserve the original intent and wording, but minor editing may nonetheless be necessary. Contributors will be notified before publishing, if in the editor's judgment, significant changes are required, or the submission is rejected.
- Submission requirements:
- Letters to the editor, opinion pieces and obituaries should be emailed to news@thecharlottenews.org as attachments in .doc format and must contain the writer's full name, town of residence and, for editing purposes only, contact phone number.
- Letters may not exceed 300 words, obituaries 500 words and opinion pieces 750 words.
- All published letters and opinion pieces will include the writer's name and town of residence.
- Before publishing any obituary, we will need proper verification of death.

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Town

Why they left: Former ZBA members open up

Mara Brooks
EDITOR

After enduring what they described as months of negative press coverage and unfounded allegations of misconduct, Zoning Board of Adjustment members Matt Zucker and Jonathan Fisher resigned last month, and Vice Chair Stuart Bennett announced he would not return when his term expired at the end of April. Chair Frank Tenney, a longtime member of the ZBA who was re-elected to the Selectboard in March, also stepped down in April amid growing concerns about conflicts of interest among town officials.

The exodus signaled the final act of a tumultuous eight months for the ZBA that left the board with only one remaining member: Lane Morrison, who took over Tenney's role as chair. (As of May 3, new ZBA

members Karina Warshaw, Ronda Moore, John David Herlihy and Charles Russell had been selected, along with alternate Andrew Swayze.)

The four now-former ZBA members spoke with *The News* to set the record straight about why they left and to clear up misconceptions they said were fueled in part by antagonistic press coverage in *The News* and *The Charlotte Bridge*.

"There's always a reason if four out of five board members quit all at once," said Fisher, who served on the ZBA since 1990.

Zucker, whose second term was scheduled to end in 2023, said he stepped down because the "whispering" about ZBA members "had an impact on my life, personally and professionally. I just couldn't afford to be associated with something like that."


"What was upsetting to me is, I was trying to be a good citizen, get involved, volunteer, put my shoulder to the wheel, and then I feel like I got exposed to all of this really icky stuff."

— Matt Zucker

That whispering included allegations ranging from conflicts of interest to violations of Vermont open meeting laws in connection with a zoning application filed in October by then-Selectboard member Carrie Spear.

Spear's application was for a conditional use permit to add an apartment and a deli to her existing retail space, Spear's Corner Store, in East Charlotte. Then-Zoning Administrator Daniel Morgan approved the application and warned it for hearing. But after reviewing the materials, Tenney said he found Spear's application, like many others Morgan routinely approved, to be incomplete. (Daniel Morgan resigned as ZA, effective January 1, 2021. He could not be reached for comment.)

By state statute, the ZA has the sole authority to approve zoning applications independent of any other town official or board. But the problem of incomplete applications had plagued the ZBA throughout Morgan's tenure, and the frequent continuations of hearings were "time consuming and confusing,"



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Town

ZBA

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

Bennett said.

“It was becoming very frustrating in the last two years kicking the can down the road with the applications,” he said. “It was not an efficient way for us to do business.”

In an effort to preempt another fruitless hearing, Fisher said the ZBA members “talked [to each other] ahead of the first Spear hearing about what we needed.”

Tenney also reached out to Morgan to tell him the application was incomplete.

“This was an important and high-profile application and we wanted to do it right,” Bennett said.

But instead of making the application process more efficient, the board’s decision to “help” Morgan would soon come back to haunt them.

Morgan inhabited several roles in his employment with the town: Zoning Administrator, Sewage Control Officer, Public Health Officer and E-911 coordinator, and staff for the ZBA. And while ZBA members were wise to tread carefully in their communications with Morgan the ZA, they were free to engage more openly with Morgan in his role as ZBA staff. At least in theory.

“We weren’t asking the *zoning administrator* to get more information [to complete the Spear application,” Tenney said of the board’s pre-hearing communications with Morgan. “We were asking our *zoning clerk* to get more information.”

The distinction between the two positions is valid, said Selectboard Chair Matt Krasnow.

“In an ideal world, the zoning board staffer would go to the ZA and say, ‘Hey there’s some materials missing in this application,’” Krasnow said. “And the ZA would either say, ‘You’re right, I made a mistake, this isn’t ready for a hearing,’ or, ‘I disagree with the zoning board chair’s assessment, it is ready for a hearing.’”

But there can be a fine line between offering feedback to a ZA and seeking to influence their decision, Krasnow said.

“The zoning administrator is supposed to have the latitude to make decisions independent of the boards that they funnel applications to, based on the land use regulations,” Krasnow said. “And that is supposed to be a one-way street.”

For that reason, Krasnow said he couldn’t say if Tenney’s communications with Morgan had been appropriate.

“Anytime two people communicate without oversight, it’s hard to know the truth,” he said.

Although serving on more than one municipal board at the same time is not uncommon in Vermont, doing so might be a case of it works until it doesn’t. The incestuous waters of small-town government get even murkier when officials are required to keep track of which hat to don before speaking to which town official about what issue. And if longtime board members found it tricky to navigate such complex political terrain, the local press might have found it even harder.

Tenney recused himself from Spear’s Oct. 14 hearing because his brother, Rick, was Spear’s neighbor. Bennett, who led the meeting, informed Spear and her project manager that her application was incomplete. After a tense discussion between the parties, the ZBA voted 3-1 to deny the application, with Lane Morrison voting to approve.

In the weeks that followed, *Charlotte News* coverage of the ZBA intensified. Then-news

“I didn’t see that there were any decisions the board made by majority votes that were being criticized in the press. I saw that there were individuals that were being criticized. To me, the board is constituted by what their statutorily charged to do and given authority over, and I didn’t see that there was any criticism of that.”

— Matt Krasnow

editor and investigative reporter Chea Evans announced she had filed a public records request seeking all ZBA communications related to the Spear application. She followed it up with an appeal seeking unredacted versions of some of the documents she received. (Evans and *The Charlotte News* parted ways in March.)

As for what might have sparked Evans’ suspicions of wrongdoing at the ZBA in the first place, Zucker said he believed someone at the town was “selectively leaking town business to the press.”

“No idea who,” he said.

In her story on the public records dump, Evans’ zeroed in on Tenney’s alleged conflicts of interest and transcribed email exchanges between ZBA members she felt might have violated open meeting laws. The gist of Evans’ reporting seemed to be that something smelled rotten at the ZBA and she was going to get to the bottom of it.

“My feeling is that [Evans] thought she was on some sort of Watergate-novel, Woodward-and-Bernstein investigation,” Fisher said. “That seemed to be her modus operandi, like ‘these are a bunch of crooks and I’ve got to find this out.’”

When reached for comment, Evans indicated she found Fisher’s comparison an apt one.

“I’m flattered that Mr. Fisher would compare me to such iconic American investigative journalists,” Evans said in an email. “I share their commitment to holding government officials accountable and asking difficult questions to keep readers informed. Also, a fun fact: Nixon eventually resigned and so did four members of the ZBA!”

When asked if she meant to suggest the members resigned because they were guilty of misconduct, Evans did not respond.

“[Evans] spent ten thousand dollars of Charlotte money of doing the FOIA (Freedom of Information Act) request and she didn’t get a whole lot because there wasn’t anything to get,” Fisher said. “Nobody was getting paid off, there weren’t any bribes.”

“It was just boring internal emails,” Zucker said.

Fisher said he felt the Selectboard should have stepped in to defend the ZBA, but the volunteers “got absolutely no support from the Selectboard. And we were being pretty much picked on by Chea, first in *The Charlotte News* and then in *The Bridge*.”

Krasnow said he was not aware the ZBA was under fire in the press.

“I didn’t see that there were any decisions the board made by majority votes that were being criticized in the press,” Krasnow said. “I saw that there were individuals that were being criticized. To me, the board is constituted by what their statutorily charged to do and given authority over, and I didn’t see that there was any criticism of that.”

Krasnow said the Selectboard never received any requests from ZBA members to address the issue publicly.

“If any town volunteer feels like they’re being criticized in public, I would encourage them to respond in public, either through a news article, on Front Porch Forum, or in a Selectboard meeting, to discuss any issue that is concerning them,” Krasnow said.

Tenney said although he felt “attacked” by the local press, he and other board members repeatedly declined Evans’ requests for an interview.

“I think we all avoided her like the plague,” Fisher said.

But if they managed to avoid Evans, it proved harder to avoid the implications of her coverage.

“What was upsetting to me is, I was trying to be a good citizen, get involved, volunteer, put my shoulder to the wheel, and then I feel like I got exposed to all of this really icky stuff,” Zucker said.

Zucker criticized the town’s “lack of will” to address issues relating to conflict of interest.

“What I saw was this ad hoc response to whisper campaigns, and that’s not what government officials are supposed to do,” he said. “They’re supposed to stand up for the laws and the documented process and procedure that’s in place. To not do that affects people’s lives and their professional situations in a way that’s intolerable in a small community like this.”

Krasnow agreed the town needs a new conflict-of-interest policy but described the ZBA scandal as “a case where it was more about the perception of a conflict than an actual conflict.”

“These are perceptions that are dependent on other people’s opinions,” he said. “And our current policy just doesn’t address that issue adequately.”

Krasnow said the town is in the process of replacing its existing personnel policy “to better address the ability of employees and volunteers to be able to clarify the distinctions of roles and responsibilities.”

For starters, the zoning administrator will no

longer serve as the staff to the zoning board.

“We’re trying to create the ability to have fewer hats per person to mitigate the perception of conflicts of interest,” Krasnow said.

Other changes to town rules of procedure include “an expectation that Selectboard members are not on any other board, commission or committee.” That amendment has yet to be adopted, Krasnow said.

Fisher said while he thinks the town will recover from the zoning board upset, he disagrees with policy changes that will prevent citizens like Tenney from serving on the Selectboard and the ZBA at the same time.

“It was so well known that Frank Tenney was like Mr. Zoning, I mean, the guy has a photographic memory of the regulations,” Fisher said. “And to say he really can’t be on the zoning board anymore—that isn’t what the state statutes say.”

Bennett agreed Tenney’s expertise would be hard to replace.

“I was on the zoning board for six years with what I consider to be really an excellent group of people,” Bennett said. “We worked well together, and we were dedicated to the job. Frank Tenney knew the zoning regulations backwards and forwards. He was, in my view, an exceptionally good chairman.”

But in Krasnow’s vision of local government, expertise may come second to what he called “a healthy process.”

“Since the day I joined the Selectboard, my priority has been to advocate for healthy process and not worry about outcomes,” he said. “All municipal governments have to juggle the individual narratives people bring to the process, but the process to me is the most important piece.”

Fisher disagreed the zoning board resignations signaled a healthy change in the town’s government.

“A very good zoning board quit, and the town Selectboard doesn’t really care too much,” Fisher said. “I think that does have a detrimental effect.”

Tenney, now serving his second term on the Selectboard, said he is optimistic about the future.

“I was on the zoning board for 14 years, and this conflict-of-interest thing has been hanging over me for eight months,” Tenney said. “But now we have a new zoning administrator (Wendy Pelletier) and the few times I’ve talked with her it seems like she’s moving forward so, it’s looking brighter. Let’s put it that way.”

Sports

CVU Track and Field place first and second in Essex Invitational



Edd Merritt
CONTRIBUTOR

After placing fourth as a team in the Burlington High School Invitational Track and Field Meet May 8, the Redhawks claimed the top two team trophies at the Essex Invitational on May 12. The men's team placed first and the women second. The Essex tournament has been running for a number of years and brings together six of the better track programs in the state. CVU and Essex seem to share honors annually.

On the men's side, seven Redhawks placed among the top 15 sprinters for the 100-meter dash. Griffin Newberry won the javelin throw, Drew Buley the high jump, Greg Seraus the 200 meters, and Mathew Servin, the 800

meters.

The women also had a mix of winning runners and throwers. Harper Danforth won the javelin toss, Jasmine Nails, the 400-meter run, and Alicia Veronneau, the 1500 meters.

Other spring sports do well also

Lacrosse, baseball and softball, tennis and a relatively recent addition, ultimate frisbee have provided sports activities for a good number of students. Given the limitations on school programs as a result of the pandemic, sports sustain a learning and activity contact between students and their high schools. A former graduate professor at Columbia University commented that learning results from a constellation of activities and was not simply schooling. Athletics is a part of this constellation.



Norah Van Vranken steals the frisbee against BFA Fairfax.

Photo by Al Frey

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The **Charlotte News**



Put that shot out there.

Photo by Al Frey

Letter to the Editor

Proposed development on Lake Road

In regards to the development plans for south west corner of Lake and Greenbush Road: We would like to thank Jim Donovan and Patricia O'Donnell for flying four balloons to mark their proposed eight-house development on the SW corner of Greenbush and Lake Rd. As our property abuts the 125 acres of this proposed development, it is not surprising that from our vegetable garden, all four balloons were easily visible. As well as our concern about the impact of the new road which will cut across the open fields, probably on the crest of the hill, to reach the houses from Lake Road

and the effect of increased demand on the water supply, we will all miss our beautiful view of the fields unencumbered by houses, roads and lights at night. Is there really no possibility of protecting this land from development? Have all options for conservation really been investigated? We look forward to reviewing Jim and Patricia's revised plans, but want to reach out to folks for any creative ideas as to how to save this truly spectacular property, where the addition of a housing development will forever alter the rural character of our neighborhood.

*Sharon Mount and Barry Finette
Charlotte*

Around Town

La Vie en Rose, film by Natalie Stulz

Yvan Plouffe of Charlotte is a master rose gardener. Natalie Stulz made a short film about him and his attention to roses as well as his design and configuration of pottery in the Shelburne Craft School. Her film recently aired again on "Made in Vermont" on Vermont Public Television.

Yvan moved to Charlotte from Quebec with his family to a farm in East Charlotte. There, in addition to crops, he became fascinated with the growing of roses of many colors. He became very well known for sharing his rose bouquets around our area. One could recognize Yvan by the bright red rose on the front of his baseball cap. Check for this film at vtpbs.org.

Congratulations:

to **Ava Rohbraugh** of Charlotte whose poem "Smoke" appeared in the April 23 *Burlington Free Press* "Young Writers Project." Ava says children learn a good deal from dreaming of smoke. They "learned to live in a chimney stack before they could count." "Children born in smoke know how to light a fire," which accounts for the direction of their lives.

to **Rose Lord** of Charlotte whose poem "A ghost in the closet" was selected to appear in the May 14 "Young Writers Project" of the *Burlington Free Press*. Rose says that this year in quarantine has seemed liked a year in "dry monotony." She says that a ghost lives in her closet and whispers in the dark. She thinks of ghosts as spirits, " 'cause what else could they be?" She fears they may be connected to her person, one part of her in the closet, another in her own head. "But the voice is mine, and mine alone," and that's what she dreads.

Sympathy:

is extended to family and friends of **Theresa Hayden** of Winooski who passed away May 1 at the age of 75. She worked at one time as a bus driver for Champlain Valley Union High School.

is extended to family and friends of **Kristina Oxholm**, currently of Canton, New York, who passed away at age 60 on March 22. A public servant, Kristina volunteered for the Charlotte Rescue Squad as an EMT as well as serving as a member of the fire departments in both Charlotte and Shelburne. A fund is being established in her name. To contribute, please send donations to the Vermont State Firefighters Association, c/o Robert Schlachter, VSFA Treasurer, 10 Rutland Street, Rutland, VT 05701. Donors may also consider gifts in her name to Homeward Bound Animal Shelter, 236 Boardman Street, Middlebury, VT 05753.

Sandra B. Lewis

Sandra Lewis (Byington), a life-long Shelburne resident passed after a hard fought battle with kidney disease on May 10, 2021. She was born on "3-3-30" to Charles Keith and Mary Nancy Byington. Sandra grew up on Harbor Road, graduated from BHS, and settled on Falls Road, which quickly became a second home for neighborhood kids, grandchildren, and great grandchildren.

Sandra welcomed everyone with a huge smile, snacks, and an offer to help with anything. She was completely selfless and shared love unconditionally.

She cared deeply about her work and the friendships made over more than fifty years employed at the Town of Shelburne. She made delivering one's tax/water/sewer check pleasant by guaranteeing a friendly face and bowl of M&Ms at her desk.

She worked until kidney failure forced her from her office directly to the hospital. She paid little attention to statistics about dialysis - she never gave up. She loved being part of her family's lives - the milestones and the countless little moments in between - and rarely missed opportunities to watch "the kids" activities or join a loved one for a walk or car ride.

Regardless of her own worries or pain, she exuded a love more forgiving, enduring, and sincere than anything most could imagine. She nurtured a close-knit family and huge network of unofficial kids and grandkids.

Material stuff didn't matter; She lived a simple life full of books, road trip adventures (aka wild goose chases - she'd never say no), shopping sprees (always for the kids), Red Sox and Celtics broadcasts, and casual days greeting neighbors from her bright red porch chairs.

Having proudly lived through the depression and many serious health issues, she believed in wasting nothing, recycling everything, and supporting others. She practiced what she preached and gave generously however she could. You were all that mattered when with her - she made everyone feel special and comfortable. She led by example in focusing on the positive, treating others as you wish to be treated, and laughing at yourself (a lot)! She made boring stuff fun and difficult stuff easier.

We will miss our ever-present confidant and cheerleader, steady and fiercely determined survivor, and most loving and positive role model.

Sandra was predeceased by her parents Keith and Nancy Byington, sister, Anne Wilkinson, daughter, Holly Galyean and daughter in-law, Mary Lewis. She leaves behind her son, Rick Lewis, daughter Nancy Longe (Randy), sisters Nancy Edmunds and Marsha Childers, grandchildren Kerri Wolyneec, Ryan Lewis, Lindsay Longe, Caleb Longe, Nicole Martel, Wade Wood, Stevie Galyean (and their partners), 12 great grandchildren, and her beloved cat Squirt.

A celebration of life will be June 27th at The Old Lantern, 3pm. To honor Sandra's loving nature, please join us wearing something red, her favorite color, and consider a donation to the Humane Society.

Sandra's family is grateful for the Joy Drive Dialysis staff - a second family that provided abundant care and good humor three mornings a week for nearly a decade - and Brenda Dion and team at Birchwood for their recent support.

New tree champion



Kip and Mary Mesriow, of Lime Kiln Road, stand in front of their newly crowned champion weeping/silver birch tree. The largest of the multiple trunks of the tree measures 65 inches in girth at breast height. *Photo contributed*

Report from the Legislature

House passes voting, health and safety measures



Rep. Mike Yantachka

As I write this, the Vermont legislature is nearing the end of the session – we hope! Several bills passed both chambers, House and Senate, in the last two weeks and have been sent to the Governor for his signature. Several others need to have differences resolved between the House and Senate versions before getting a final vote by both chambers. The most significant is the fiscal year 2022 budget, a.k.a. The Big Bill. Once the budget is passed by both chambers, it is time to adjourn. Anything left unfinished will have to wait until January. Governor Scott is also weighing in with his priorities, particularly with respect to spending the \$1.25 billion American Recovery Plan Act money coming to Vermont. The legislature would prefer to spend about half of it in FY22 and hold off on the rest for future needs. States have until the end of 2024 to spend the ARPA money.

The tremendous participation of last year's general election proved the feasibility and popularity of universal vote-by-mail in Vermont. The House passed Senate bill S.15 this past week which authorizes universal vote-by-mail for all future general elections and allows the option for municipal elections as well. S.15 builds on the work that was done to help Vermonters vote safely during 2020 in several ways. It creates new provisions for town clerks to cure defective ballots by notifying voters who forget to sign the certificate envelope or fail to return unvoted primary ballots along with the voted ballot of their chosen party and allowing them to come into the office to correct the mistake. It also provides for expanded access by providing secure ballot drop boxes that are accessible 24/7 for voters to return their ballots and limits the number of ballots someone can deliver on behalf of others. Passing on a vote of 119 to 30, this legislation is in stark contrast to the prevailing trend across the U.S. where state legislatures are curtailing voter access with more restrictive election laws.

Vermonters' health and safety were also addressed by major bills passed by the House. The House gave final approval to a nation-leading bill, S.20, to ban toxic PFAS chemicals from food packaging, firefighting

foam, ski wax, and carpets and rugs. PFAS chemicals -- per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances -- are linked to harmful health impacts including high blood pressure, thyroid disease, kidney, and testicular cancers, and suppressed immune system function. They are particularly dangerous because they "bioaccumulate" in our bodies and last throughout our lifetime. PFAS is found in groundwater and drinking water across the country; it is found in the runoff (or leachate) from active and abandoned landfills in Vermont as well as in every wastewater treatment facility in Vermont. Perhaps most concerning, PFAS can be found within the blood of almost everyone in the United States. S.20 passed on a vote of 145 to 0.

With a vote of 143 to 0, the House also passed this week a bill that ensures a crime victim would know if the person accused of the crime is set free because they were found incompetent to stand trial or not guilty by reason of insanity. The legislation, S.3, is intended to make sure the crime victim knows when the accused person is released to the community. Under the bill, the state Department of Mental Health must provide at least 10 days' notification of the accused person's upcoming release to the prosecutor in the county where the crime took place. That prosecutor would be obligated to notify the crime victim. The same notification process would take place if an offender escaped from custody. S.3 also funds a study to determine if a separate holding facility should be established for accused persons found to be incompetent or insane and who are considered a danger to themselves or others.

Finally, the month of May has been designated Asian-American and Pacific Islander month. As with any discrimination, we cannot tolerate and must condemn the violent attacks against persons of Asian or Pacific Island heritage that have been reported for several months across the country. Each and every one of us has the responsibility to actively stand against hate, discrimination, and violence aimed at anyone regardless of their ethnicity, nationality, race, religion, disability status, age, gender identity, or sexual orientation.

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

News from *The News*

Advisers to *The News*

John Quinney
INTERIM PRESIDENT AND PUBLISHER

Over the past two months at *The News*, we have listened to many voices from our community and beyond. These are people who care passionately about local news and are strong and thoughtful supporters of our 63-year-old paper. In this regard, we want to recognize and thank three people who have recently agreed to join us as Advisors to *The News*.

Nancy Wood grew up in Charlotte and attended Charlotte Central School. Three of her children graduated from both CCS and CVU. Her career has included working in marketing and customer service at Garden Way in the 1970s, business experience as the owner of Apple Mountain, a Burlington retail store, and serving as executive director of the Burlington Business Association. She has served as Town Lister and Auditor in Charlotte, and City Councilor and State Legislator in Burlington. Nancy was a member of the youth group that started *The Charlotte News* and served briefly as its first editor. She was also the publisher of *Vermont Times* in the 1990s and returned to *The Charlotte News* in 2009 as a board member and then editor for four years.



Anne Galloway is the founder and editor of *VTDigger* and the executive director of



the Vermont Journalism Trust. Anne founded *VTDigger* in 2009 after she was laid off from her position as Sunday editor of the *Rutland Herald* and *Times Argus*. She has grown *VTDigger* from a \$16,000-a-year nonprofit with no employees to a \$2 million nonprofit daily news operation with a staff of 25. In 2017, Anne was a finalist for the Ancil Payne Award for Ethics, the Al Neuharth Innovation in Investigative Journalism Award, and the Investigative Reporters and Editors FOIA Award for reporting on allegations of foreign investor fraud at Jay Peak Resort.

Bill Schubart has lived in Vermont with his family since 1947. After college, he co-founded two businesses, Philo Records and Resolution. Always active in cultural, civic, educational and business organizations, Bill has served as a board member and chair of institutions ranging from Vermont Public Radio, UVM Medical Center, Vermont College of Fine Arts, Vermont Arts Council, Vermont Journalism Trust and the Shelburne Museum. These days, Bill writes about Vermont in fiction, humor and opinion pieces and also speaks extensively on the media and other civic issues. He has been a regular commentator on Vermont Public Radio and now writes a biweekly column for *VTDigger*. Bill has four children and lives and writes in Hinesburg with his wife, Kate, also a journalist.



Welcome aboard Nancy, Anne and Bill – we look forward to working with you as we sustain, strengthen and grow *The Charlotte News*.

PLANNING

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

implementing incrementally, with time for transitioning, are strategically important.

The discussion then moved to the research being done on the design review board model for facilitating the planning, zoning and review in Charlotte. Selectboard member Jim Faulkner, who heads a three-member committee charged with studying the DRB approach, reported that there will be a public presentation of the committee's findings during the last week in June. He said a DRB may or may not make sense for Charlotte, but the matter deserves consideration. Jim Donovan offered that the matter had been studied by the town 20 years ago and was rejected. Mike Russell noted that things have changed in 20 years. Permitting and regulation were not as important then as they are now.

According to Russell, if we were designing a system today, why would we put in place a model that has two bodies involved in both permitting and regulation? The Planning

Commission is spending half its time on zoning issues. The current model makes no sense and contributes to the problems we have seen in the past few years. Bill Stuenkel countered that the DRB model would disconnect Planning and Zoning from the design review process. These and other questions will be addressed in a public meeting to be held during the last week of June with representatives from the Vermont League of Cities and Towns.

On a final topic, Mike Russell reviewed the work of the Community Partners organization that was formed to examine Charlotte residents' needs for planning and services during the pandemic. Russell would like to see participation grow to facilitate the type of community conversation and outreach that is taking place in Richmond. A series of public meetings is scheduled on different topics, and the next meeting, on May 18, will focus on resident perceptions of the availability of basic services in Charlotte. Information on the meetings is available at <https://bit.ly/convo05445>.

Volunteer EMS and Volunteer Firefighter Needed



CVFRS is always looking for new faces. If you ever wondered about or had any interest in giving back to your community, fire fighting or emergency medical services, we encourage you to contact us at:

www.cvfrs.com

Town

And the survey says...



Trina Bianchi
CONTRIBUTOR



Do you know which plants threaten the Charlotte landscape? Do you feel that Charlotte is doing enough to protect, improve and/or conserve our landscape?

If you love the Charlotte landscape, we invite you to join us on Tuesday, June 1, at 7 p.m. for the third of five discussions focused on the results of the Resilience Survey that circulated last November/December.

The June 1 conversation will focus on the environment and natural resources of our town. The survey asked multiple questions around this topic, and we invite you to engage in a conversation around how we can improve and even better protect our environment. Take a few minutes and review the results of the survey.

The link to join the discussion is: <https://bit.ly/convo05445>. You can also find this link the Charlotte Library website.

Hosted by the Charlotte Community Partners, these community conversations are designed to give all of our residents the opportunity to voice their concerns, opinions and ideas on the various subjects addressed in the

The section below is from the actual survey with the results.

ENVIRONMENT & NATURAL SYSTEMS - Working with strong and functioning ecosystems						
Category & factors of very resilient systems	Score					
SCORE: How do you think your community resilience rates in each of the following categories? 1 = not very resilient 5 = very resilient	1	2	3	4	5	Not sure
River corridors & floodplains Extensive, integrated protection and restoration with regional coordination; residents, businesses and town are educated about and are maintaining land and water sources to support health of ecosystems; town bylaws prevent new development on waterways; town flooding is reduced by functioning wetlands and floodplains	6 3%	23 13%	46 25%	67 37%	14 8%	25 14%
Land use Public and private land use works with ecosystems to maximize health of human and non-human communities; local and state regulations incentivize soil, water and air quality improvements for businesses and residents utilizing natural resources; regular outreach, education and resources for landowners; farming and forestry are integrated into town plan	7 4%	25 14%	57 31%	59 33%	13 7%	20 11%
Sensitive natural areas (wetlands, habitat for endangered species, etc.) Robust inventory and protection of all sensitive areas; strong coordination of public and private efforts to restore and protect sensitive areas; strong public education and outreach to landowners; sensitive areas are connected with wider protected areas	6 3%	26 14%	43 24%	69 38%	21 12%	16 9%
Common spaces & public access Multiple open, common spaces that are free and accessible physically and socially; public areas are safe; information is posted at access points in several languages, including Abenaki; sites are integrated into local plans; active stewardship and plans for long-term stewardship	13 7%	24 13%	46 25%	64 35%	20 11%	14 8%
Invasive species Some invasives present, are being monitored and are causing few problems; integrated public and private control measures, including education, uses and restoration; community productively uses existing invasives (fuel, medicine, economic value)	11 6%	39 22%	57 31%	41 23%	7 4%	26 14%

Resilience Survey. This group has met twice a month since last April and includes representatives from CCS, CCS PTO, Senior Center, Transition Town Charlotte, Seed Library, CVF&RS, the Charlotte Grange and others. With a mind toward learning if people thought our town was resilient and beginning the discussion of how to become more resilient if necessary, the group partnered with Vermont-based Community Resilience

Organizations, which has run these assessments throughout the state. It's now time to discuss the results!

Do you have questions or comments? Feel free to get in touch beforehand with Margaret Woodruff at margaret@charlottepubliclibrary.org or Kevin Goldenbogen: revkevmg@gmail.com.

We hope you will take the time to add your

voice to the conversation!

In the interim, stay safe, stay well—and we encourage you to get vaccinated! For assistance in getting the vaccine, contact VaxHelp05445 at VaxHelp05445@gmail.com or by phone at 425-3864 (Charlotte Library). With more and more people vaccinated, we can start to enjoy a real Vermont summer... seeing friends and family!

Removing wild parsnip to prevent further spread

Ronda More
CONTRIBUTOR

It's spring and it's glorious. The chipping sparrows, white throated sparrows, robins and bluebirds have returned to the yard to feed on seed in the feeders joined by red-bellied, downy, hairy and pileated woodpeckers on the suet cakes. A phoebe

has built a nest on my front porch. I'm looking forward to phoebe babies. The grass seed that was spread to repair damage done by the voles is fair game for the birds, squirrels and chipmunks. The lawn and field are Fenway Park green now. All is well but, but, but wait... *WHAT* is that low-spreading, fern-like plant protruding from the earth on my Fenway Park? Omigosh, it's a young wild

parsnip plant!

Grab the shovel, drag it out by its feet, throw it into a black plastic trash bag (better than it deserves), place it in the sun and let it rot!

Wild parsnip has spread widely in Charlotte along roadsides, fields and adjacent to ponds and streams where mowers never reach and where the fields and roadsides were mowed after wild parsnip seed heads were formed. I know how this can happen. About 10 years ago my field was "planted" with wild parsnip seeded by a mower that had previously mowed a field supporting these plants. For the past 4-5 years I have been somewhat successful in removing wild parsnip by mowing when the plants have blossomed and before the plants have gone to seed. For persistent plants, I put on gloves and a long-sleeved shirt to prevent contact with the plant's sap that causes a nasty skin burn when exposed to sunlight. Wild parsnip has been frighteningly successful in Vermont. In mid-summer, thousands of these noxious plants inhabit the roadside of I-89, extending their inexorable grip deep into the adjacent fields.

Best that we take steps now to prevent further spread of wild parsnip. Wildlife



ISTock photo

that forage in fields and along waterways and ponds will move on as these incredibly successful plants form dense barriers. And as for Vermont's livestock, the quality of hay harvested from fields with wild parsnip will not be suitable as feed for our domesticated beasts.

I don't have the answer to this problem in Charlotte, but *well-timed* mowing of fields and roadsides over several years may at least slow the spread. I'm open to other suggestions. How about a volunteer wild parsnip removal team? Maybe a wild parsnip Green-Up Day in the rain or at dusk? In the meantime, I need to get back to clearing my field.



Town

Food Shelf news

NOTICE: New Pickup Time
Starting in June, the Food Shelf will be open the 2nd and 4th Wednesday of every month from 4 to 6:30 p.m.

In dismay, we watched the ever-cheerful daffodils droop, covered with April snow, but then the wild violets began popping up, bringing May’s renewal of good spirits. *Viola sororia*, popularly known as the common blue violet, is native to eastern U.S. Yes, it’s ours and we know it by a number of names: common meadow violet, purple violet, woolly blue violet, hooded violet and wood violet. But to paraphrase Shakespeare, What’s in a name? That which we’d call a violet by any other name still brings the same end-of-winter joy and hope for a good new year.

Numerous poets have written of the violet as a sign of the wakening earth, a new beginning. Here’s William Cullen Bryant, romantic poet, journalist and long-time editor of the *New York Evening Post*:

The country ever has a lagging Spring,
Waiting for May to call its violets forth...
and chase the wintry gloom...

The poets don’t write about all the good ways we can eat violets. According to *Stalking the Healthful Herbs* by Euell Gibbons, violets are “nature’s vitamin pill” containing 150 mg of vitamin C per 100g of blossoms, three times the amount of that in oranges weight for weight. According to Wikipedia,

Gibbons’ favorite recommendations included lamb’s quarters [pigweed], rose hips, young dandelion shoots, stinging nettle and cattails.

Try some violets in your salad tonight. Or freeze flowers in an ice cube tray and brighten up your next cold drink.

The Food Shelf volunteers remain grateful for all the help our community offered to ease the wintry gloom, and, of course, we are looking forward to those bountiful Charlotte gardens that are beginning to sprout. Please see below for a few things we need.

The Food Shelf is now accepting paper goods: paper towels, Kleenex-type tissues, paper napkins and toilet paper are all welcome.

We are planning for healthy snacks for the kids this summer: snacks and non-perishable lunch items. We would definitely appreciate donations to help with this important program for kids.

Items can be left on the covered entry hall at the back of the Congregational Church on Wednesdays (our distribution day) or at the drop box for the Food Shelf at the library.

Registration for the Full Plates VT program is set to begin starting on May 24. Vermonters can visit the Foodbank’s website or call 1-800-585-2265 for more information. Website: vtfoodbank.org/.

Reminder: Registration for the COVID-19

vaccine is now open for 12- to 15-year-olds.

Appointments can be made through the Health Department website, healthvermont.gov, or call 855-722-7878. This includes clinics run by the Health Department, National Guard, Costco, Walmart and Hannaford. You can also register at Walgreens, CVS, and Kinney Drugs.

Charlotte’s VaxHelp volunteers are here to help.

- Do you have questions about the vaccine?
- Need help signing up for a vaccine?
- Need a ride to a vaccine site?

Three ways to contact VaxHelp:

- By phone: 802-425-3864 (Charlotte Library)
- By email: VaxHelp05445@gmail.com
- **Sign up for the vaccine on the Library porch.**
There is a Chrome book available to use during library hours with links to sign up for the vaccine, vaccine information and to get assistance from VaxHelp.

Get vaccinated and celebrate Spring!

Keeping safe
The Food Shelf continues to take precautions to help everyone keep safe. Anyone who has a fever or cough—or symptoms that might seem like a cold—should not come to the distributions. Also, don’t come if you have

been in contact with anyone who has these symptoms. Instead, call 425-3252 and leave your name and number. You will receive a call back and we will come up with an assistance plan. We need to help families and volunteers stay safe.

Financial assistance
Reminder: The Food Shelf has some funds available for emergency assistance with fuel and electric bills. Call 425-3252 if you need assistance.

Check the Food Shelf website for more information on different types of financial assistance and eligibility. Applications are available at the Food Shelf and online. <https://www.charlotteucc.org/charlotte-food-shelf>.

For emergency food, call John at 425-3130.

The Charlotte Food Shelf, Inc. is a nonprofit organization supported by the Charlotte Congregational Church, Our Lady of Mount Carmel Catholic Church and the Charlotte community. Our organization is run by volunteers, and all donations made to the Food Shelf go directly for nutritious food and assistance to our neighbors in Charlotte and North Ferrisburgh.

Donations: Checks may be mailed to Charlotte Food Shelf and Assistance, P.O. Box 83, Charlotte, VT 05445.

We offer thanks to people who find many ways to offer assistance. May the joy you give be returned to you in abundance.

BUILDING GREEN AT HILLSIDE
AT O'BRIEN FARM

Lipkin Audette Team
HillsideatOBrienFarm.com
(802) 662-0162

A CUT ABOVE THE REST

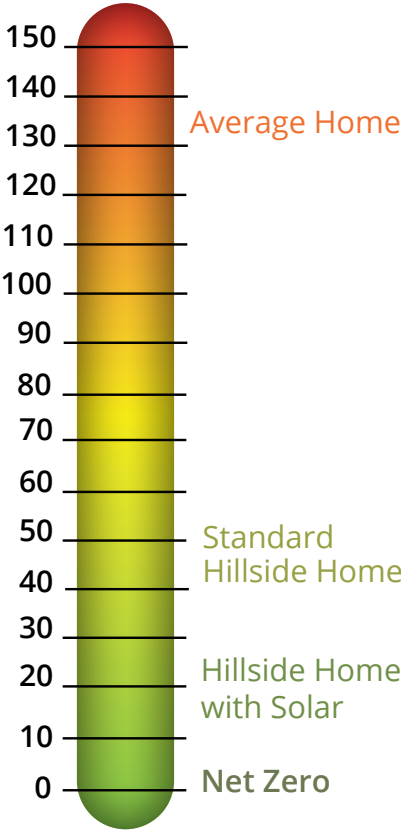
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Hi, Neighbor!

Jeff Giknis: Keeping his uncle's name alive at the Town Beach



Phyl Newbeck
CONTRIBUTOR

Jeff Giknis never met his uncle, Fred St. George, but he is determined to keep the veteran's legacy alive. Now that he is a member of the Recreation Committee, Giknis would like Charlotte to erect a flagpole at the Town Beach to commemorate St. George, the only Charlotte native to be killed in Viet Nam. Since there are currently plans to make changes at the beach, Giknis hopes the town will take the opportunity to honor his uncle.

According to Giknis, the correct name of the beach is the Fred St. George Field, but he doubts anybody knows that, despite a plaque that bears those words. "In 1982, Senator Leahy dedicated the area to the memory of my uncle," Giknis said. "It was designated the Fred St. George Memorial Field through an act of legislation." Giknis said the St. George family has been in Charlotte for centuries. "The family is on the original town charter," he said "and probably goes back even earlier to the French trappers."

Giknis readily admits he did poorly in grade school and high school, thanks in part to having dyslexia and attention deficit disorder. "Art was the only thing I could do without getting into trouble," he said. Giknis enrolled in a community college before heading to SUNY where he studied graphic design. He spent a few years in New York state, doing



Left: Jeff Giknis *Photo contributed*

design work and fly fishing before returning to the home his family has owned since the 1700s. Giknis continues to indulge in his passion for fly fishing, with an emphasis on trout. "I find it really relaxing and meditative," he said. "It's a knowledge-based sport that you can dedicate a good chunk of your life to. It can take you 20 years to figure it out."

When Giknis moved back to Vermont in 2008, he got a job with Otter Creek Brewing Company and followed that with a position at Fiddlehead Brewing Company. He has always done freelance work on the side and now has his own business called JBG Design. "I pick up jobs that interest me," he said. "It's got

to be something I'm excited about." Giknis spent a good portion of the last year as a stay-at-home dad, but with the economy picking up, he's hopeful to get some new design opportunities.

Giknis' skills extend beyond design work. "Photography goes hand in hand with graphic design," he said. "Early on I learned the hard way that stock photography is expensive, so I needed to find a way to take my own pictures." Giknis has what he calls an "off-shoot career" doing photography and video production, mostly for commercial ventures like car dealerships and breweries.

Thanks to what Giknis describes as a Vermonter work ethic, he supplements his computer skills with physical ones, including carpentry work. For several years, he and his wife admired an old mill in North Ferrisburgh; eventually he approached the owner and purchased it. The building is often referred to as the Blue Seal Mill because of the sign advertising those products. "It's an early 1800s grist mill," Giknis said. "I got tired of staring at computers. I've worked with other buildings on things like signs, vanities and



Right: A plaque displayed at the Town Beach commemorates St. George. *Photo by Phyl Newbeck*

architectural elements, and I guess that with my ADD I thought 'ooh, look, a new shiny thing'."

Giknis is uncertain what he'll do with the old mill, but he's happy to have the skills to work on the renovations. "It's really interesting," he said. "It's a big, crazy, blue building, teetering on a handmade stone foundation on Lewis Creek." Giknis recognizes that he has a lot of work ahead of him, including septic surveys, permitting and engineering. "There are a lot of things we need to explore before we can come up with a list of possibilities of what to do with it," he said. "It's a delicate and long-term process, but I hope we can create something cool for the community."

In the meantime, Giknis wants to make sure his uncle is not forgotten when improvements are made to the Town Beach. "I thought this would be a good time for someone to donate money to refurbish the monument in his name and erect a flagpole," he said. "It's really easy for the public to lose sight of why we have the beach." Giknis feels cheated because he never got to meet his uncle, but recognizes that he is not alone in that regard. "There must be 8,000 stories just like his," he said.

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Outdoors

Art in the outdoors



Elizabeth Bassett
CONTRIBUTOR

If you're ready to bust out of your pandemic cave, two outdoor sculpture parks in Northern Vermont beckon. In addition, Shelburne Museum will have more access this year when it opens to the public on June 2.

But back to the sculpture parks.

"Frank loves and collects sculptures," Charlotter Elaine Ittleman says of her husband, a cardio-thoracic surgeon at UVMMC. "About four years ago we decided that we wanted to share the pleasure of our 50 sculptures with the public. Lemon Fair Sculpture Park was born."

Located on Route 74 in Shoreham, Lemon Fair Sculpture Park offers a one-mile mowed path that threads amongst artworks from across the United States in addition to one sculpture from Argentina. The park is open seven days a week, free of charge, from May to November.

"Every weekend Frank mows the walking paths, stopping to talk with visitors. He loves the meet and greet part of welcoming the public," Elaine says. "People love to come—the first weekend in May, Mother's Day weekend, we had more than 50 visitors."

Among the artworks on display are a metal horse by Panton artist Eben Markowski and an installation by David Stromeier from Enosburg Falls. Stromeier and his wife, Sarah, also open their sculpture park, Cold Hollow, to the public. "David and Frank were classmates at Dartmouth," Elaine adds.

"Many of the sculptures at Lemon Fair are for sale," Elaine says. "Interested collectors can contact the artist directly or we can connect them via our website."

Parking and additional details are at lemonfairsculpturepark.com. Leashed dogs are welcome. There is no admission charge, but there is a box for donations used to support upkeep of the grounds. Lemon Fair is about a 45-minute drive from Charlotte.

Cold Hollow Sculpture Park in Enosburg Falls is farther from Charlotte but still suitable for a day trip. The 200-acre park not only serves as an exhibition space but also the outdoor workshop for sculptor and owner David Stromeier.

"When David graduated from Dartmouth in the early 70s," says David's wife, Sarah Stromeier, "Vermont was experiencing



Left: Sculpture, Leap of Faith by Pater Lundberg. Standing with the sculpture are Anna and Reed Von Gal who is 6' 4". Middle: Sculpture, Mother and child by David Wade. Right: Constellation by Joel Gaesser



Photos contributed

a rebirth with a wave of young people moving to the state. David pored over topographic maps of the state, looking for land suitable both for his work and as a backdrop for displaying his art. Ultimately he purchased a dairy farm in the foothills of the Cold Hollow Mountains in Enosburg Falls. The scale and contours of the land suited his needs."

Stromeier creates both in the outdoors and in his workshop. "David uses large rocks and pieces of metal to fabricate his art," Sarah says. "The process can include a 'rock drop,' providing both a visual and acoustic experience. Cranes are suited to slow movement—imagine constructing a bridge or large building. David wanted big boulders to plummet from on high, settling into the earth," Sarah continues. Stromeier created the rock drop, suspending a large boulder from a clamp at the end of the crane's cable. With a high-powered rifle he shoots at the clamp, opening it and unleashing the rock with a sharp report as the rifle fires and the boulder crashes on a bed of steel.

To celebrate five decades of David's work at Cold Hollow, the Stomeyers had planned a 50th anniversary celebration in 2020, complete with a rock drop. The pandemic, of course, intervened and the event included only a small audience.

"For 45 years I thought of my sculptures as individual expressions," David says.

"With the formation of Cold Hollow Sculpture Park I realize that I have always

been working on one big artwork, which is the park."

Cold Hollow Sculpture Park opened to the public in 2014 and recently received nonprofit status. After being closed in 2020, Cold Hollow will open this year on June 12. The park is available to visitors, free of charge, Thursday to Sunday from noon to 6 p.m. through October 11.

Executive Director Rosemary Gill says, "We're incredibly eager to welcome the public back to the park. Visitors are what make CHSP the park we love. Always, but particularly in 2021, we hope the park can offer restoration and invigoration to

Vermonters and all our visitors."

Directions and other details are at coldhollowsculpturepark.com as well as this statement from the Stomeyers: "Our founding goal has been to provide free, world-class art experiences to all who come while conserving the art and land. Now a nonprofit, our vital focus is to secure the park's role in Vermont's cultural landscape for generations to come".



Have a hot news tip?

Call us:
425-4949
or email us at:
news@TheCharlotteNews.org

The **Charlotte News**

Conservation Currents

Murderous plants

Roelof Boumans
CONTRIBUTOR

If you are like me, you assume that every time an insect meets a plant, that insect will eat that plant. And yes, you’ve heard of insectivorous plants, but those are typically not in your backyard. Instead, we mostly see insects eating plants: hornworms on the tomato plants, Japanese beetles on your flowers, leek moths drilling holes in your green onions, and webworms helping out in controlling wild parsnips. But, of course, insects are not always eating plants either! There are also lots of lovely things insects do, for example, pollinating—flying from flower to flower, spreading the pollen picked up at the stamens of the one to the stigmas of the others. Honey bees do that, but so do a whole lot of other insects. Together they are called pollinators. In general, plants reward these insects for their work with nectar, a sugary water that bees can make into honey through evaporation, a little like making maple syrup. But it is not always for the reward that insects pollinate flowers. There are many fascinating ways that plants can trick insects in other ways to perform this action. And while this is really interesting, it’s not really what I wanted to write about!

I want to write about plants being the aggressors—and specifically about insectivorous plants that digest animals. Why plants eat insects is fairly well known: they benefit from the nitrogen locked up in the proteins of the critters they digest to build their own proteins. Carnivorous plants typically

grow where the availability of nitrogen is scarce. Not really nitrogen, as roughly 80 percent of air is nitrogen, but the nitrogen that is bonded to oxygen as nitrate. Unlike phosphates (phosphorus bonded to oxygen), nitrate is easily dissolved in water and easily flushed from the soil. Have you ever noticed that your garden vegetables turn yellow after several rainstorms?

There are several very well-known carnivorous plants native to bogs, such as pitcher plants, Venus flytraps and sundews. Bladderwort is also a species of floating vegetation with small yellow flowers native to lakes and ponds, including Lake Champlain. These plants have small hollow sacs that actively capture and digest tiny animals, such as insect larvae, aquatic worms and water fleas, making do in the low-nitrogen environment on the top of a water column.

These particular carnivorous plants are not on your property unless you own a bog or pond, but others are. Researchers are finding that the ability to digest insects is really not so unusual. According to researchers, there may be an obscure little plant in your yard called shepherd’s purse with carnivorous seeds. These seeds possess a sticky layer with chemicals that can attract, kill and digest mostly microscopic roundworms.

There are other insectivorous plants here in Charlotte that are not obscure at all. I have noticed an increase in cup plants that are typically 3–8 feet tall and have lovely yellow flowers on my land. The stem is square, and the stalks that attach the leaf blades to the stem



Venus Fly trap Photo by Aenic from Pexels

are fused around it to form cups. I never knew what that cup was for. Because it does collect water, I thought maybe this was how that plant dealt with periods of drought. Only recently, I learned that my suspicion was far from the truth. That water is there to attract insects for them to drown. The water contains enzymes to metabolize their flesh, and the organs in the stalks are there to absorb the digested insects into the plant.

After I learned about the cup plant’s murderous nature, I started looking for other vegetation with this kind of feature. I came across one of our invasive plants with the same cup formation around the stem: the cut leaved teasel. Here in Charlotte, we find it in fields, roadsides and waste areas. It was introduced

around the 18th century to New England from Europe for carding wool and, from what I’ve heard, abandoned after the carders found out it was the wrong plant.

Although I have not kept records to prove my point, I have seen more cup plants and cut leaved teasel than ever before along our roadsides. Is it possible that the heavy rains we experience in spring flush enough nitrates out of the soil to lead to an increase in carnivorous plants in our landscape? Keep an eye out!

Roelof Boumans is a member of the Charlotte Conservation Commission. The commission meets on the 4th Tuesday of every month via Zoom. Please see the town calendar for agendas and meeting information.

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HEATING

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Outdoors

Land Trust board volunteers in honor of former board member

Frances Foster
CONTRIBUTOR

This year the Charlotte Land Trust Board lost two valuable members who both died unexpectedly. David Watts had been a board member for over seven years and passed away suddenly in January. Marty Illick and her husband, Terry Dinnan, were killed in a tragic boating accident on Lewis Creek in April. Marty had served on the board for over 20 years.

How does a small board deal with such a blow? We decided to honor each of these amazing board members separately. A future event is being planned in Marty's memory. On Sunday, May 16, the board gathered to pull invasives and remember David. This volunteer work felt just right to honor him as he had long recognized the impacts of invasive species and had conducted his own 40-year battle against them. He despaired of the ever-increasing buckthorn and honeysuckle encroachment on much of Charlotte's conserved land.

Local invasive warrior Sue Smith helped us organize a work morning to pull honeysuckle and buckthorn from a beautiful section of the Charlotte Park and Refuge. This lovely birch forest has been overrun by the aforementioned invasives, and fortunately, the forest still had damp soil and most of the "bad guys" were easy to yank out. We did have occasion to use the rugged "buckthorn extractor" that is available to borrow from the Charlotte library. Let me just say that tool is impressive! We cleared about one quarter of the forest, and we hope that more groups will step up to continue the work in these beautiful woods.

Seventeen people showed up to pull invasives and help the Land Trust Board remember and honor David. We shared oatmeal chocolate chip cookies at the end of our work, which David's wife Lynne said were his favorite. Everyone left the event feeling a shared love for David and satisfaction for a morning well spent.



Charlotte Land Trust Board. Front: Steve Schubart, left to right: Jay Strausser, David Pill, Lindsay Longe, Jessie Price, Kate Lampton, Frances Foster, Mary Volk. Missing from photo: Jane Lawlis.
Photo contributed

Sacred Hunter

May fair



Bradley Carleton
CONTRIBUTOR

After a nearly non-winter of moderately poor ice fishing, I've been reveling in the bright sunny days of early spring. The lilacs and honeysuckle permeate the air, smelling like the candy "Sweet Tarts" I knew growing up. After the bobolinks have had their chance to raise a brood in the fields, the first cut of hay smells so sweet. The lake begins to render up its fresh fragrance, and all the world seems to be waking up to stretch our limbs. Buds pop on the maples, and willows begin weeping quiet tears of joy in the morning light. We have been through such a dark period that this spring feels like it's possible that everything will be all right.

We've collected the fiddleheads and sauteed them in butter and garlic, pickled them with mustard seeds, and canned ramps with honey ginger and balsamic vinegar. We've had screaming matches with the big gobblers on the ridge at sunrise, but still have not talked one all the way in. There is so much abundance in May. Rainbow trout are beginning to feed heavily in the big rivers, and one of my favorite wild edibles to forage is beginning to pop up every 48 hours, the much beloved wild asparagus.

It is kind of funny when someone asks me, "Where did you find those?" I look at them quizzically, like they had just asked me for directions to King Solomon's temple, where he had hidden his treasures. I love to share my treasures with others—after they've been picked. But for God's sake, man! Don't ask me where they are!

The wild asparagus plots are a fraternal secret known only to those who seek the wisdom of sages like Euell Gibbons. It's not much different than asking a hunter where his best coverts for timberdoodle or



Bradley is excited about his wild asparagus treasure.
Photo contributed

partridge are located. Or the honey hole in the mountain streams where one can catch a dozen colorful brook trout. These morsels of outdoor wisdom are given only to those who earn them.

I have been criticized for writing about foraging, hunting and fishing because it makes it more popular and causes the hard-won prizes to be distributed in a manner that is sometimes not advantageous to the master forager. If you don't believe it, try asking someone: "Where, exactly, did you find those morels?" You will get that same face that screws up one eye and pinches one side of the lips upward, to indicate that that must be one of the most ridiculous questions

ever asked.

Don't get me wrong. I do like to share, and I like to teach others how to hunt, fish and forage. But the emphasis is on the "how" not the "where." I believe that the effort taken to learn about the plant, where it resides, what conditions it favors, when it tends to appear, and under what type of tree, will lead to further learning and discovery about our natural world. With this will come respect and thoughtfulness for the actual being, be it plant, animal or mineral. All have a divine purpose, and by seeking the wisdom to find that for which we seek, we learn to cherish the world we live in every day.

It's so easy to go about our lives, focused on accomplishing some tasks, achieving some status, or just putting more money in our bank accounts. And there is value in learning to take care of oneself in this manner. But those ventures frequently take us away from our connection to Mother Earth, on which we tread every day.

Focusing on the ethereal and enlightened world of natural life around us brings mindfulness and serenity. So, dear reader, as you ponder my pedantic musings, take time to consider stepping outside and learning about the benefits of sauteing tender nettle shoots or steaming dandelion greens. Get down on your hands and knees in the woods and use the vision of the field mouse. Look closely and you may find an entire world that can sustain and nurture you in a way that fills your heart and your belly with joy. And when someone asks you "Where did you get those beautiful maitake mushrooms?" you can look at them, twist your face into a contorted caricature and reply, "I was crawling on the ground in the woods."

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.

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Property Transfers
January through April 2021

Jan. 4 Richard Pete Family Trust Teresa Pete Family Trust to John Streng & Jessica Price, 5.17 acres with dwelling, 728 Whalley Rd., \$425,000.

Jan. 19 Berkeley & Bentley Brooks to Brovar Development Co., Inc. 6.43 acres with dwelling, 1501 Ferry Rd., \$449,000.

Jan. 21 Donald & Sarah Aiken to Jacob Gardner & Katherine Martin, 10.3 acres with dwelling, 679 One Mile Rd., \$680,000.

Jan. 28 John & Nancy Kerr to Edward & Michele Chiappini, seasonal cottage, 131 Lane's Lane, \$389,000.

Feb. 1 Clark Hinsdale III to Steven Schubart, 71.90 acres, land only, 1708 Hinesburg Rd., \$140,000.

Feb. 17 Bank of America to Southeast Acquisitions, 16.2 acres, 3965 Lake Rd., \$420,000.

Mar. 2 Scott Andrews to Adrien & Christopher Preston, 1.29 acres with dwelling, 2545 Greenbush Rd., \$630,000.

Mar. 8 John & Patricia Gowland to Michelle Machesky, 1.03 acres with dwelling, 235 Wildwood West, \$469,000.

Mar. 12 Braxton Robbeson & Perunnah Ragosa to Drew & Brittany Slabaugh, 1.0 acres with dwelling, 54 Mutton Hill Rd., \$294,948.

Mar. 15 Daniel Boardman Trustee to Jennifer Wheel & Christopher Magistrale, 5.02 acres with dwelling, 50 Moss Rock Rd., \$750,000.

Mar. 23 Russell & Melissa Beatty to Vermont Land Trust, 56.28 acres with dwelling & farm, 4702 Ethan Allen Highway, \$592,000.

Mar. 23 Richard Cusick to Jasmine Darland, .06 acres with dwelling, 8 Common Way, \$329,000.

Mar. 23 Martin Gawron & Cara Taussig to Davis & Suzanne Davis, .06 acres, 24 Common Way, \$359,900.

Mar. 25 John & Carol Snow to Vermont Land Trust, 71.67 acres, operating farm, 6069 Ethan Allen Highway, Lot 3, \$375,000.

Mar. 25 John & Carol Snow to Bryan Seward & Katharine Leonard, 76.78 acres, operating farm, 6069 Ethan Allen Highway, Lot 3, \$235,000.

Mar. 29 Ariel V. Ballard to Michael & Heather Roberts, 18.57 acres with dwelling, 1535 Lime Kiln Rd., \$650,000.

Apr. 1 Sandra Raymond to Scott & Madeline Wilson, 1.0 acres with dwelling, 1016 Church Hill Rd., \$385,000.

Apr. 8 W. Schuyler Thurber to Penny Royal LLC, 2.0 acres with dwelling, 170 Holmes Rd., \$583,500.

Apr. 9 Matthew & Gabrielle Clow to Justin Coplan & Danielle Prior, 1.8 acres with dwelling, 273 Lynrick Acres, \$388,000.

Apr. 9 Michael S. & Carrie Spear to Thomas Hergenrother Sr. & Andrea Couture, 38.8 acres, land only, 3400 Lake Rd., \$375,000.

Apr. 14 Thomas & Virginia Nola to Derek & Melissa Yackel, .76 acres with dwelling, 2101 Hinesburg Rd., \$450,000.

Apr. 14 Peter Schneider & Jessica Donovan to Michael Apodaca Jr. & Keri-Ann Jennings, 1.24 acres, land only, 650 Elfin Ln., \$180,000.

Apr. 21 Astra Prindle LLC to Brovar Development Co., Inc., 40 acres with dwelling, 1142 Prindle Rd., \$570,000.

Apr. 21 Hayes I. & Susan H. Sogoloff to Stewart & Dorothy Read Trustees of Dorothy Grover Read Revoc. Trust, 113 acres with dwelling, 175 McGuire Pent Rd., \$2,375,000.

Apr. 21 Andrew Tammaro Trust to Balaban Family Trust, 10.75 acres with dwelling, 515 Guinea Rd. \$670,000.

Apr. 22 Jenkins & Jackson LLC to Peter & Melissa Krusell, 1.07 acres with dwelling, 105 State Park Rd., \$300,000.

Apr. 22 Estate of Charles P. Stearns to Hergenrother Construction LLC, 1.44 acres, land only, 6851 Spear Street, Lot #1, \$104,000.

Apr. 29 Leandro & Amy Vazquez to Ryan C. & Katrina A. Frere, 1.75 acres with dwelling, 2952 Greenbush Rd., \$1,250,000.

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Into The Woods.....

Old forests on our landscape

Ethan Tapper
CHITTENDEN COUNTY FORESTER

In our altered modern landscape, the idea of an old growth forest is captivating; we picture primal, untouched wilderness, massive trees and forests full of life. But what is “old growth,” and what role should it play on our modern landscape?

Depending on who you ask, “old growth” means different things. Some say that old growth forests are “primary” or “original” forests—forests that have never been extensively altered or managed by humans (or, alternately, by European-descended humans). Others say a forest becomes “old growth” when it has avoided significant disturbance or human management for a long time—often at least 150 years. A third definition is that a forest becomes “old growth” when it is old *and* has achieved a certain advanced stage in forest development—what foresters call “late-successional forests.”

Forests are dynamic, forever changing. As they change, they (usually) pass through a predictable series of developmental stages. Each stage “succeeds” the last, and so we call this process “succession.” Changes in the forest are driven by tree mortality; while old growth forests have generally avoided catastrophic disturbances for a long time, they are defined by constant, small-scale disturbances that kill small numbers of trees. As a result, they often look “messy,” with some big trees but also trees of all different sizes and ages. Dead-standing and fallen trees are everywhere and the forest floor is punctuated by “pits and mounds” created by the upturned root systems of trees that have succumbed to windthrow.

What most people call “messiness,” foresters and ecologists call “complexity.” Forests tend to become more complex as they age, and so old growth forests are generally much more complex than the young (60- to 100-year-old) forests that now cover Vermont’s landscape. With complexity comes many benefits—from a rich variety of habitats for wildlife and other organisms to the qualities of *resilience* and *adaptability*, which allow forests to stay healthy amidst great stress and change and to adapt to novel conditions, such as the pervasive effects of climate change.

Prior to European colonization, it is



Image by Free-Photos from Pixabay

estimated that 55–60% of New England’s forests were older than 150 years. Most forests in New England (as much as 80%) were cleared in the early-mid 1800s, some converted into agricultural land and maintained as such for a century or more. Today only about 0.4% of New England’s forests are older than 150 years. In Vermont, only about 1,000 acres of old growth forest remains, mostly small fragments spread across the State.

Old growth forests are unique and incredibly important; they are repositories of biodiversity and powerful demonstrations of the way that forests grow and develop when left unmanaged. I would argue that they are also *intrinsically* important, valuable independent of their value to us. However, at the same time that we revere old growth, we also need to demythologize it.

First, we need to remember that forest succession is a cycle; every old growth forest was once a young forest and will be one again. While younger forests are not as charismatic as old growth, forests of all ages are natural and valuable, providing unique habitats and ecological functions. Old growth is so important because older forests, and their unique qualities, are relatively underrepresented across our landscape. While we can’t create old growth, many of us in the ecological forestry community have been working

to make young forests “old-growthier,” actively managing forests to create old-growth attributes sooner than they would naturally occur.

As we navigate our complex world, we need to balance many different objectives and realities. Our “landscape” is more than just forests; we belong to a cultural landscape, a historical landscape, a landscape that includes people in a way that it didn’t a few centuries ago when old growth forests dominated Vermont. Humans will always consume resources and those resources will always have costs to ecosystems. The question is not *if* we want to have an impact, but rather *what we want our impact to be*. Managing forests locally, and using local renewable resources in general, may give us more control over the impacts of our lives on ecosystems and peoples across the globe.

Charting a path forward will be as nuanced and as complex as our forests. It will involve creativity and compromises, like simultaneously recognizing that both old growth forests and managing forests can be part of how we build a better world.

Ethan Tapper is the Chittenden County Forester. He can be reached at ethan.tapper@vermont.gov or by phone at (802) 585-9099.

Education

Follow the Yellow Brick Road . . . to Zoom Town?



Margo Bartsch
CONTRIBUTOR

The memorable song, “Follow the Yellow Brick Road” illustrates the golden road to the magical city of Oz. In real life, the Collins Dictionary defines this symbolism as the path to success or happiness. Since the pandemic began, the term “Zoom towns” has been coined to represent this ideal: a migration to “gateway communities” or small towns near major public lands and ski resorts as people’s jobs increasingly become remote-friendly, according to *Fast Company*. Currently, the quintessential Zoom towns, including Charlotte and other Vermont towns, have represented the ability to work remotely while enjoying a more balanced quality of life.

As college students begin to select their fall, 2021 courses, they can plan ahead if they want to be part of the Zoom town phenomenon. They should consider the academic classes, extra-curricular activities, and internships that can pave the way toward having the flexibility and enjoyment a Zoom town offers, while pursuing their careers.

First, choosing a range of college classes and academic majors can help put students in a position to work remotely. Recently, *Fast Company* reports that nearly 60 percent of employees are working remotely either full or part time. More than 20 percent of workers would continue to work remotely after the pandemic if given the opportunity, according to *U.S. News*. Some professional fields with good paying remote jobs include customer service, computer technology, sales, graphic design, engineering, education, and program management. These yearly salaries can range from \$40,000 to \$90,000, reported by *MarketWatch*.

Most college websites highlight the specific majors and coursework that can point a student to specific careers. For example, if a student is a History major, adding a minor in Education will allow them to teach in a Zoom town or tutor remotely. Also, the LinkedIn professional network includes the ability to list academic courses, majors, and educational background. Many employers use artificial intelligence (AI) to scan LinkedIn profiles to identify students with the necessary coursework to match their job responsibilities. Essential skills for remote work include

working independently, showing time management, and participating in team work.

Also, joining a range of extra-curricular activities can expose a student to their personal interests outside of the classroom. Most colleges have an incredible list of activities to engage with the campus community and find friend groups. For example, if a student likes biking and is attending the University of Colorado-Boulder, they can join the Mountain Biking Club or the CU Cycling Club. The incredible hills out west may become a lifestyle priority in choosing where to live in the future. As long as a Zoom town has dependable Internet access and a convenient airport to visit the corporate office, biking can become a defining lifestyle characteristic when choosing a Zoom town to work.

With job interviews, the student’s resume highlights their professional experiences and academic courses; however, it is the conversations that an applicant has beyond the typical questions and answers that can propel a student to the top of the list in being offered the job. For example, when wrapping up an interview, a frequent question is: “What do you plan to do after our talk?” This is actually a behavioral question to identify a student’s core values and interests. If the applicant responds, “Go mountain biking,” this shows a love of nature and commitment to fitness. Each part of the college experience can show a “fit” for the corporate culture and team dynamic.

Finally, it is important to identify internships that allow for remote work. Even if the internship is at a physical location, the ability for a flexible work schedule can become an important future consideration. For example, Google recently announced that workers can voluntarily return to the office, while expanding their remote work policy to four weeks a year. This flexibility can encourage a student who is a Math major to add Computer Science classes and take Google Certifications to be prepared for a technology career.

The silver lining of the pandemic has shown that remote work is both possible and productive. Many companies with remote workers are reporting incredible growth and stock increases. With careful college planning, students can have the right skills to begin their careers without needing to be in the office or commuting regularly to work. Who would



Photo by Andrew Neel from Pexels

have thought that Zoom towns would redefine the work-life balance of the future?

Margo Bartsch founded College Essay Coach,

a full-service college admission business, and has been an adjunct professor in business at Champlain College and at Middlebury College.



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Tunes to Tune Into

Nacho Cano: Aligning spirit, outlook, and character with his music



Greetings from Los Angeles.

In my last column I wrote about my daydreams in escapism and finally leaving the safety of my apartment to enter the real world. Well folks, that day has come (sort

of)! Both my wife and I are fully vaccinated and are ready to take to Hollywood in grand fashion; we're ready to live lavishly like never before and, alongside long-lost friends, take full advantage of the fruits Los Angeles has to offer. Problem is, the more I think about it the more I realize I've completely forgotten how to be myself in a social setting. How hard does one squeeze in a handshake? How long do I hold the handshake? Is it normal that I'm intertwining fingers in a handshake? I'm sure all of this will come back to me in waves, although it's clear getting back to normal and "being myself" will be a work in progress.

In these existential meditations I've been thinking about a particularly nice interaction I had before the shutdown with a local **Los Angeles artist, Nacho Cano**, who records and releases lush indie pop under the pseudonym **Harmless**. I first found Nacho's work through one of my favorite music discovery websites, Bandcamp, and was immediately drawn in by his story. In 2017 as he was biking to work Nacho was hit by a drunk driver, resulting in years of recovery and physical therapy. During that time, Nacho produced an EP release, **Condiciones**, which explored ambience and introspection in a way previously untapped by his earlier work. The record is sparse, beautiful, and extremely personal in a way that encourages invitation and investigation from its listener - needless to say I had to play it on my radio show.

Radio play prompted Nacho to reach out to me on social media and over a cup of coffee I eventually came to find his personality matched the sincerity of music. After five minutes of sitting down we had skipped over basic small talk and had launched into comparing wedding proposals and talking in depth about our experiences in the music industry. Nacho is genuine, and when an artist can align their spirit, outlook, and character with their work you know they're in touch with something uniquely special.

Since our introduction over coffee, Nacho

and I have stayed in touch and continue to talk about our relationships, music we like, walking around the neighborhood, and being an artist in the digital age. He was kind enough to expand on some of our conversations for *The Charlotte News*, and, just like his music, I think you'll find his thoughts to be equally earnest:

Perhaps our first connection when we met was that we'd both recently become engaged. I think both of us relate to feeling an awkwardness in grand gestures like proposals

and wedding ceremonies - it's hard sometimes to publicly display your love when in so many ways those feelings are private between you and your spouse. In contrast I find your music to be deeply personal, both lyrically and sonically - I get a sense that your work comes from an honest, emotional place. I'm wondering what you feel the differences are

in expressing yourself through marriage and art? Is one form of expression easier for you? Has marriage (or engagement) changed the way you relate to your craft and to your fans?

I think about this a lot lately. But I am not sure if I have an answer. It's rare to actually create a fork in the road. I think that's what made me so nervous about proposing. It wasn't what the answer was going to be but that I was actually creating a diverting path in my life. That no matter what, from here on out, my life is going to fundamentally change forever. I couldn't be happier to have made that choice though. My life in many ways has gotten better and easier. Especially when it comes to the artistic process. My fiancé isn't exactly the biggest music person, which actually makes her really helpful when showing her songs. My approach to music has changed cause it doesn't feel like I am writing songs for myself, but more for my fiancé to enjoy. I know something isn't fundamentally being translated if she doesn't understand it or if it's getting complicated. It's

allowed me to make songs less convoluted. It's a creative partnership in a way that I think I've always needed. Couldn't be happier to be honest.

At the risk of asking another "how has the pandemic affected your creativity" question, I do think there's a connection between this last year and the time spent recovering from your injury in that they're both periods of which any normalcy is replaced by relying on the resolution of a singularly focused, unavoidable event. During your recovery you were able to write and produce Condiciones and during the pandemic you've been focused on turning out singles and short-form projects. While starkly different circumstances, are there any comparisons in how you approach music making between these two periods of stagnation?

I also think about this a great deal. Mostly in that this liminal space we have all shared in the last year or so, has been one that I have been a part of since 2017. That awful limbo. I've had conversations with loved ones who now have a greater understanding of the mental prison that I was in for so long. As a result, I think I am just a bit weathered. As with every other artist this year, I did make some pandemic singles. I don't think I had it in me to make anything long form though. The approach has largely been the same, writing-wise, except maybe this time I think less and less about what it means to me and more about how I get out of my head. Everything is a bit more daunting when you can't go outside. I remember when I was in a wheelchair and I made beats, or what would become the start of Condiciones. It really costs a lot more when you can't go outside. This whole year has been a huge trigger.

In an interview you did with LVL3 in September you mentioned a disparity between existing on the internet and in the real world as an artist. This was in reference to making a creative career financially viable. On Spotify you have nearly 1.5 million monthly listeners, your most popular song has 45 million plays, and you've had a lot of success reaching new audiences on TikTok, although I know just like anyone else you're hustling hard to make a living as a full-time artist. That dichotomy is pretty interesting - if you took those numbers at face value, I think any normal person would assume you're HUGE. I'm wondering if you can expand on your quote about digital and real-world popularity - how has your success on streaming and social media platforms informed the decisions you make in your career, especially as we emerge from the pandemic? Is there a bridge you can see for yourself between digital popularity and finding longevity beyond the internet? How does an artist best exist in real life?

The short answer is. I don't feel I am huge, or famous, or any of these types of things. I often respond to messages on Ig (Instagram) who like my music. Many times, they are surprised I took the time out to respond which surprises me because I truly don't believe I have any fame or all that. I feel very much like I am still hustling and competing with larger acts. Every time I send an email out to someone, for advice or an opportunity, I get scared. I have my fiancé check it over and all that. I can't tell you how many times over the year I've been ghosted or have had things fall

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Books

Beholding the lilacs and two good books

Katherine Arthaud
CONTRIBUTOR

It isn't easy to compose an article on a laptop while sitting outside in the sun, but this day is too beautiful to spend sitting inside in a darkened room, so I'm going to try. I don't think I have ever experienced a more beautiful spring than the

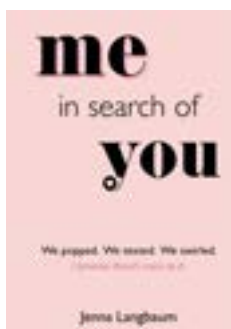
one we are having. Green fields! Flowers! Blossoming trees! And a sweet fragrance that seems to be almost constantly wafting through the air, not only by day but into the evening as well. It is quite intoxicating, and I can't get enough of it. I confess that all I've been wanting to do lately is plant myself on the grass like one of the many golden-yellow dandelions and behold my lilac bush—its fragrant lavender blossoms, its shining green, heart-shaped leaves, inhaling my favorite aroma in all the world, bright sun warming my back and shoulders. It's been heavenly. And I don't want to miss a minute.

As for reading... I recommend a petite, slim volume I never would have heard about or probably even stumbled upon had not a friend mentioned it to me: *me in search of you*. "We popped. We texted. We swirled. I promise there's more to it," reads the subtitle. Which probably leaves you wondering, okay, great, interesting, but what's this book about? Basically, dating is the answer. Online dating. But wait, this is so creatively done. Jenna Langbaum explains her work as "a collection of the blips, the starts and stops, the ebbs and

flows, the closings and openings, the scratches, the tears, and the deflates and reflatates of trying ... the conversations I stew and squander in, the bubbling intimacy I've buried—all unearthed from the basement bin of my heart." Her book is young, refreshing and unusual, more prose than poetry, yet firing in short, pointed blips like poetry. Even though the author is the age of my children, this book hits

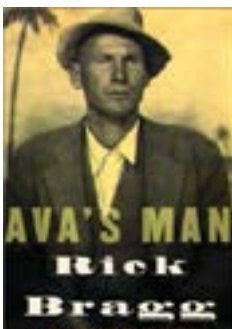
home—right where it counts, as they say—in heart, gut and memory, rekindling flames and tumbling embers of longing, angst, shame, dazzling hope and sorrowful regret. "I find myself waiting for this seemingly inevitable you, like the held breath of a countdown, like the footsteps of the man delivering my pizza, like the zoom of my family car pulling up my street. It is in this waiting that I am simultaneously shrinking and billowing. It is in this waiting that I just want to scream, *Come get me. I'm out front. I'm in my party dress; you'll know it's me. Text me when you get here.*"

There is a hint of Bridget Jones here, maybe a touch of Nora Ephron, but this is edgier, more daring, a kind of wayward and fast-moving cupid's arrow that hits its mark in the reader's own deep knowing/remembering re: searching, waiting, waltzing, buzzing, submerging,



spilling, playing, plunging, exhaling (all titles from Langbaum's scribbles, musings and fitful, incisive blips, scratches and typewritten doodles). Okay, I don't know the author personally, but I almost do. She is the Jenna that Cat, my best friend's 27-year-old daughter, has been talking about since she was in second grade—one of her best friends—that's pretty close, right?

While reading her work, I detect echoes and harmonies of the humor of that generation. Jenna's book (I can call her Jenna, right?) currently lives in a ray of sunshine on my bedside table, too fresh, bright and alive to put on a shelf, yet. You can pick it up and start reading on any page, as each short entry has a life—a beginning, middle and end—of its own. But I recommend reading it through from start to finish (it won't take long) because there's a story here, just as I suspect there is a story for all of our love-lives...and I'm talking not just the main narrative we would recount to acquaintances and our children, but the real one, with all its starts, stops, highs, lows, inconsistencies, contradictions, failings, pretensions, seekings, seethings, burnings, guzzlings, waltzings, plungings.... Though light and easily readable in a sitting or two, this book takes one deftly, passionately and memorably through the



samsara of, well...of the timeless odyssey of me looking for you. Highly recommend.

A wordcount limit will prevent me from delving as deeply as I would like into some other worthy books I have read as of late, so I will tell you of only one other. *Ava's Man*, by Rick Bragg, is a book my tennis coach and friend, Jake, loved so much that he drove it all the way from South Burlington to my door. "You gotta read this," he said as he turned to drive back to the tennis court. It tells the story of the author's grandfather, who died before Bragg was born but whose life was so vivid and remarkable that it was impossible, it seems, to lay him to rest. It begins with a description of Charlie's widow, Ava, whose "face had a line in it for every hot mile she'd walked, for every fit she'd ever threw." "No, hon," she would say, when asked, "'I ain't goin' to get me no man.' And then she would start to rock again, with satisfaction. 'I had me one.'"

Her man Charlie was "probably the only man on earth who could love that woman and not perish in the flame," writes Bragg, whose book takes place mostly in the backwoods hamlets of Georgia and Alabama, when roads were dirt and you could feed your children hot biscuits, ham and fresh cantaloupe on Sunday and buy your oranges by the bushel. But this family couldn't always indulge in such luxuries. The story begins in the foothills of the Appalachians in the 1930s and proceeds through the Great Depression, when Charlie,

SEE **BOOKS** PAGE 19

TUNES

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 16

through. It's the nature of the biz, and I am still getting used to it. I often feel like a weathered teenager, still trying to make my dreams feel validated with a show, or a placement or something. Except now, I have a fiancé, I have dogs, debt, and so on and so forth. That's all real world stuff. Things and problems that are totally separate to me being online. I hope to materialize my digital into something real with some shows and a tour soon. I would love to just be a supporting act to a larger band and see if anyone who has used my sound on a TikTok would show. I think artists best exist in a tangible setting. It's why I am trying to make more merch or vinyl. I think when you're able to hold what you love, it feels more real than it does so in your head. Y'know?

You and I live in the same area in LA (Los Feliz) and both like to take walks to clear our head. Since there's been less hustle and bustle, I've felt as though I've noticed small, new things I can appreciate. Is there anything new you've noticed or appreciated wandering the neighborhood over the last year?

I wish I was one for quiet and tranquility and appreciating the sites of Los Feliz but I can't say I've loved its emptiness. I miss running into people. Quiet walks around the neighborhood have often left me alone with my thoughts for far too long. I'm the type of dude that will think themselves into a spiral. I think people get me out of my head more than anything else. When I was in recovery, being surrounded by people made the whole experience easier. This time around, my mind has made it worse on myself.

Who should I be listening to?

I can't stop listening to Spirit of the Beehive. I don't think I've had a band get me this excited in a while. Separate from that I have been listening a lot to Rei Harakami's album (Lust) - It's becoming a mission of mine to purchase that LP but it's one of those Discogs nightmares. 300 for a used copy? Like what!

You can listen to select songs from Harmless' discography, along with his recommended music. Go to charlottenewsvt.org/category/arts-entertainment/

Follow Harmless on Instagram and support his music on Bandcamp.

Town

Charlotte Senior Center news



Carolyn Kulik
SENIOR CENTER
DIRECTOR

And so, with the sunshine and the great bursts of leaves growing on the trees, just as things grow in fast movies, I had that familiar conviction that life was beginning over again with the summer.”

~ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*

Well, wasn't that a surprise! The CDC's announcement about masks last Friday managed to make the CSC's Summer Schedule out of date—just as it was being printed. (Please see it inserted in the current issue of this paper.) Actually, it is not really obsolete—just confusing. It was constructed on the assumption that CSC would remain closed for at least half of the summer. Now it is looking like we will start the re-opening process soon—and this is very good news. Re-opening will be happening in stages. Activity groups and instructors will be contacted separately at the beginning. It looks like meals will be the last thing to come back because we need to create new cooking teams. The CSC Board will have a hand in the planning, and the Selectboard also needs to give its approval to the plans. We look forward to seeing you very soon!

Courses Starting in June

6/04 – WRITING YOUR LIFE STORY
with Laurie McMillan
Friday mornings, 11:00–12:30.

Session A: 6/4–6/25. (4 weeks)
Explore storytelling techniques and utilize in-class exercises to help launch your own meaningful and important stories. Newcomers welcome. Please register by 6/1. Fee: \$48 for the series of 90-min. classes. [online]

6/04 – POETRY WORKSHOP

with Kristin D'Agostino
Friday afternoons, 2:00–3:00.
Dates: 6/4–6/25. (4 weeks)
Geared toward writers at all levels, each session of this four-week workshop will focus on exploring a different writing prompt. Please register by 6/1. Fee: \$32. [online]

6/08 – JUNE HIKE #1

with Teri Fitz-Gerald
Destination: Audubon Vermont near Huntington, VT
Meet at the Center at 8:30 a.m. for departure. Including travel time, we should return by 1 p.m. To register and for more information, contact Teri directly at tfg417@gmail.com. No fee.

6/09 – BIRDING EXPEDITION #1

with Hank Kaestner
Registration begins 6/01. Group size is limited. Please send your name, mailing address, and phone number to: CSCbirdingW@gmavt.net. No fee.

6/09 – BETTER BALANCE

with Laurel Lakey
Wednesday mornings, 11:00–11:45.
Dates: 6/9–7/28 (8 weeks)
In collaboration with Dee Physical Therapy, this 8-week course is designed to improve your balance and reduce fall risk. Newcomers welcome. Fee: \$30. (Please pay at the start; directions at end of article.)

6/11 – KAYAKING for WOMEN

Destination: Green River Reservoir with Nancy Stead and Mary Silverman
For more information, please email Susan Hyde directly at susanforsterhyde@gmail.com. Registration required. Maximum is determined by leaders. Paddlers need to provide their own boats for all trips. No fee.

For expanded course descriptions see the SUMMER SCHEDULE inserted today, or visit 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.

Ongoing classes continue year-round. Check out the website and consider signing up for an online exercise or health course – which can be joined at any time during the season: **Chair Yoga (M, W); Essentrics™ (W, F); Gentle Yoga (M); Pilates (Th); Pilates PLUS (Tu); Tai Chi for Beginners (Tu, Th); and Mindfulness Meditation Practice (W).** And, if a course is offered twice a week, you can opt for participating on just one of those days, if you wish.

Talks at 1pm – Wed. & Thurs.

These online, interactive talks do *not* require advance registration, are always free—plus, they now include a closed captioning option for those who are hearing impaired. The Zoom invitation/link to each talk is posted on the website the day before at: CharlotteSeniorCenterVT.org. The link also appears in Front Porch Forum for that week. Can't make it? Talks are recorded and posted for 2 weeks afterwards on the website.

5/27 (Thurs.) at 1pm: INSIDE THE INTERNET: HOW IT WORKS

with Brian Bock
Did you know that the Internet of today evolved out of a military project which was actually designed to survive a nuclear war? What do acronyms like HTTP or DNS mean, and why are they important? Find out how the Internet really works from a technical perspective – but geared toward the non-techie. At the end, you will have a chance to ask your burning questions. ~ Brian Bock has worked online his entire career and in 1996 started his own Internet-based software development firm.

6/02 (Wed.) at 1pm: ENDANGERED ALPHABETS: AN INTRODUCTION

with Tim Brookes
More than 85% of the world's alphabets are in danger of extinction—suppressed, marginalized, excluded from education, sometimes even banned. When they are forced into disuse, centuries, even millennia of written documents will be incomprehensible to the very culture that created them, and whose identity and value they underwrite. ~ Tim Brookes, founder of the Endangered Alphabets Project, is the only person on Earth publicizing this loss, and working to prevent it.

6/09 (Wed.) at 1pm: CHINESE MEDICINE & ACUPUNCTURE: ANOTHER WORLDVIEW

with Molly Fleming, N.D., L.Ac.

This talk will introduce you to Chinese

medical theories and how they allow us to understand the body and its functions in a whole different way: It truly was the first 'wholistic' medicine. Acupuncture will be demonstrated, and its use for treating many conditions will be discussed. Bring your questions for a lively interaction. ~ Dr. Fleming is an acupuncturist who has integrated Chinese medicine with naturopathic medicine for nearly 40 years.

Art Exhibits

The Senior Center's monthly art exhibits are planned to restart in August with three artists exhibiting. Stay tuned.

Plant Sale Coming Soon

5/29: The Senior Center PLANT SALE is back! Rain or shine on Sat, 5/29 from 9-12. Find what your garden needs at great prices—and say hello to a friend or two.

Job Opening

CSC is looking to fill a new part-time position: Assistant to the Senior Center Director. It's an interesting, multi-faceted job, varied hours, great environment. You can find the full description at the website: CharlotteSeniorCenterVT.org. To apply, email your cover letter and resume to charlotteseniorcenter@gmail.com, or mail to Charlotte Senior Center Board, P.O. Box 207, Charlotte, VT 05445. Application deadline is 5/21.

Almost time to congratulate ourselves. Not quite out of the woods yet.

How to Register for a Course

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

To register, email your name, mailing address, and phone number to: 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. The invitation/link for the course will be sent to you by the instructor the week that classes start.


How to Pay – If there is a fee, kindly pay by check (made out to CSC) and send to: CSC, PO Box 207, Charlotte, VT 05445. Be sure to note the full title of the course in the memo line of your check.

• 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 per class hour. (This price will continue through the summer months—even after we are open again.)

• For courses with set dates, please pay at the start and note the fee listed in the course description.


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

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Town Library news



Margaret Woodruff
DIRECTOR

Library Reopens June 7!

We are delighted to announce that the Charlotte Library will open to the public on June 7. We look forward to welcoming you into the library to browse and to check out materials. Please note that we will continue to follow safety guidelines and that porch pickup will remain an option for getting books and other materials from the library. We can't wait to see you! Please refer questions to Margaret Woodruff, margaret@charlottepubliclibrary.org.

In preparation for our reopening, we thought we'd share some favorite staff reads:
Mary Cheney: *Four Hundred Souls: A Community History of African America, 1619-2019*.

Jenny Cole (shared with her granddaughter): *Extremely Cute Animals Operating Heavy Machinery* written and illustrated by David Gordon, *Jazz Baby* by Lisa Wheeler and illustrated by R. Gregory Christie, *Little Green Donkey* by Anuska Allepuz, *If All the Animals Came Inside* by Eric Pinder and illustrated by Marc Brown.

Georgia Edwards: *A Long Petal of the Sea* by Isabel Allende.
Susanna Kahn: *Miss Benson's Beetle* by Rachel Joyce, *The Mother-in-Law* by Sally Hepworth, *Hidden Valley Road* by Robert Kolker.

Cindi Robinson: *Joyland* by Stephen King, *The Year of the Hare* by Arto Paasilinna.
Cheryl Sloan: *Busman's Honeymoon* by Dorothy L. Sayers, *The Complete Guide to No-Dig Gardening* by Charlie Nardozzi, *The Eagles of Heart Mountain: a true story of football, incarceration, and resistance in World War II America* by Bradford Pearson.
Margaret Woodruff: *Klara and the Sun* by Kazuo Ishiguro, *The Dictionary of Lost Words* by Pip Williams, *We Begin at the End* by Chris Whitaker.

Seed Library News:

Help celebrate World Bee Day!

The UN declared May 20 World Bee Day to raise awareness of the importance of pollinators, the threats they face and their contribution to sustainable development. According to un.org/observances, "the goal is to strengthen measures aimed at protecting bees and other pollinators, which would significantly contribute to solving problems related to the global food supply and eliminate hunger in developing countries."

To help welcome and encourage pollinators in our area, we're bringing back Wildflower Seed Bomb Kits. Pick up a kit in the library entry and help to spread the word and the wildflowers!

VaxHelp 05445: Charlotte's VaxHelp volunteers are here to help.

- Do you have non-medical questions about the vaccine?
- Need help signing up for a vaccine?
- Need a ride to a vaccine site?

Three ways to contact us:

- By phone: 802-425-3864 (Charlotte Library)
- By email: VaxHelp05445@gmail.com
- Online: bit.ly/VaxHelp

Please spread the word to friends and neighbors who could use some help.

Take & Make Activities for May: Available in the library entryway

Create a festive piñata for any of your spring celebrations!

Pick up an Arbor Day kit to commemorate our forests and trees all month long.

Upcoming Programs Online

Any questions? Email: info@charlottepubliclibrary.org or call 425-3864.

Coding Club for Kids

Wednesdays at 3 p.m. through May 28

Scratch enthusiasts are invited to join Susanna to work on a project, connect, and problem solve with other coders. Drop in for one or more Zoom sessions. *Recommended for 4th*

graders and up with some Scratch experience. Please register in advance for link.

Community Conversations Session #3: Environment & Natural Systems Tuesday, June 1, 7 p.m.

CCP joins with the Conservation Commission to host a conversation about how to protect and preserve our natural landscapes and the wildlife that lives in them.

The Charlotte Community Partnership* is taking the next step using the data from the Resilience Survey we conducted in November and December to foster a series of 5 community discussions. Each discussion will focus on one of the 5 survey categories: 1) COVID-19, 2) Basic Needs and Services, 3) Environment and Natural Systems, 4) Physical Infrastructure, and 5) Community Connections and Capacity. We hope you will add your voice to the discussion!

**This group has met twice a month since last April and includes representatives from CCS, CCS PTO, Senior Center, Transition Town Charlotte, Seed Library, CVF&RS, the Grange and others. With a mind toward learning if people thought our town was resilient and beginning the discussion of how to become more resilient if necessary, the group partnered with Vermont-based Community Resilience Organizations, which has run these assessments throughout the state. Join the meeting.*

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 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!

BOOKS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 17

an itinerant roofer and a moonshiner who ingested exactly one pint for every gallon sold, struggled to keep his family fed, clothed and shod. He was a man of some contradiction. He was a lover AND a fighter. He could brawl with the best of them, and often did, but had an abiding soft spot for children and babies; "his heart melted around them, his spirit soared." He spoke with a smooth, low voice. "If he wanted to make a point, he just said damn, for punctuation, as in 'That's a damn big house, fellers, to roof in this damn heat.' He did not spit in front of ladies, usually, and among men he drew a line between good, solid biblical cursing and what he called 'ugly talk,' which was anything a twelve-year-old would scrawl on an outhouse wall. He did not spit in front of ladies, even if he had to swallow the juice. He tipped his hat, like in a cowboy matinee." He was blessed with "that beautiful, selective morality that we Southerners are famous for." He condemned liars and stealers, yet "he saw nothing wrong with downing a full pint of likker—a full pint is enough to get two men drunk as lords—before engaging in a fistfight that sometimes required hospitalization." "He saw no reason to obey some laws—like the ones about licenses, fees and other governmental annoyances—but he would not have picked an apple off another man's ground and eaten it."

Ava's Man draws to a quiet close in the same place it started, in the foothills of the Appalachians, but in the present day, with the author pondering what his feisty, bigger-than-life grandpa would think of him, not as a man, but as a boy. He muses, "I bet he would give me some candy, and sing me a song."

This book tells a great story about a great (in his own way) man in the great (in its own way) deep south in a greatly trying time. As one reviewer put it, "a masterly family chronicle and a human portrait so vivid you can smell the cornbread and whisky." Thank you, Jake, for bringing it around.

And now, back to the lilac bush, where I can be found, rather like Ferdinand the bull in the old childhood classic, peacefully smelling the flowers.

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