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The Charlotte News

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 16, 2021 | VOLUME LXIV NUMBER 13

***Tis the season for COVID
Christmas ornaments.
Photo by Lee Krohn***

Little free library for East Charlotte



Stuart Robinson pictured with his "little free library" after presenting it to the Grange. In the spring the library will be installed outside and opened for business. Photo by Mike Walker

Mike Walker
CONTRIBUTOR

Stuart Robinson of Charlotte has built and donated a "little free library" for East Charlotte. The self-serve, book-sharing box was presented to the Grange on Dec. 6. In the spring, the box will be installed outdoors next to the Grange Hall.

The library will be open seven days a week, 24 hours a day, and will be freely accessible so that anyone may take a book or share a book. It will function on the honor system, and, while you do not need to share a book in order to take one, please try to bring some back to share when you can. The Grange is really excited to host this initiative and has registered the little

free library with the national organization so it will appear on a world map of similar libraries!

Stuart has done a great job, carefully designing the library to reflect the shape and color of the Grange Hall. The project was an important component of Stuart's Eagle Scout Award, the highest achievement in Boy Scouts of America and the culmination of 10 years of scouting for him. Stuart says, "Throughout these years, scouting has taught me valuable skills that I can use for the rest of my life and has given me the opportunity to meet people outside of the school setting to have a lifelong connection with. It was a pleasure doing this project!"

A new farmer makes the cut on the former Nichols Fodder Farm

Lucie Lehmann
CONTRIBUTOR

Figuratively speaking, farmers have always had to "make hay while the sun shines." But when growing hay really is your business, the old adage has special resonance.

Dave Nichols knows that better than most, because for decades that's all he did on his 315 acres in East Charlotte. After an eight-year turn there as a dairy farmer, he sold the herd, pivoted to hay, and stuck with it. In the 40 years that he raised hay the fields produced an average yearly yield of 45,000 bales. During that time, he cut, tedded, baled and sold close to two million square bales of fragrant green fodder. Not, he says, that he actually set out to do that.

"The hay business wasn't anything I planned on; I fell into it," Nichols admits from central Florida, where he and his wife are spending the winter enjoying retirement. "My wife came from New York State, and she had a friend with a horse that needed some hay," he explains. And nearby was a feed store that also needed some hay. What started as serendipity became a multi-state hay business, with almost all of his customers out of state, some as far away as Martha's Vineyard. Before the ubiquity of horse farms in Charlotte, none of his customers were local. "In Vermont you either sold your hay to a grain farmer or you used it yourself. In New York State it was different," he explains, of the established horse industry.

And so, for decades Nichols loaded box trailers full of his fragrant hay and headed



Photo by Lucie Lehmann.

down Route 22A, mostly to New York and Connecticut. Most years, the fields produced three good cuts of hay. It was hard work that he did mostly on his own with some seasonal help. One of those helpers was a teenager from Hinesburg named Nick Powden, who also eventually did carpentry work there. The two men formed a lifelong friendship that evolved into a working partnership and, gradually, a succession plan—at least in Nichols' mind. "I was 70 years old and it was time to quit," he reasons. "My body was telling me it was time to quit."

He eventually approached Powden about taking over the business and buying the farm. The younger man, despite being surprised and unsure whether he could afford it, agreed, in part because Nichols told him

SEE **FARM** PAGE 6

Zoning administrator resigns

Mara Brooks
EDITOR

For the second time this year, the town will be on the hunt for a new Zoning Administrator.

In a letter addressed to the Selectboard, current ZA Wendy Pelletier resigned unexpectedly Tuesday. *The News* obtained a copy of Pelletier's resignation letter and has it at: charlottenewsvt.org/2021/12/09/zoning-administrator-resigns.

"We're very sorry that Wendy is leaving," said Town Administrator Dean Bloch in an email. "She really hit the ground running, and she hasn't stopped! She brought engineering experience, a keen eye for detail, diligence, persistence, an even temperament and a sense of humor. She accomplished a lot during her relatively short time here, and she will be missed."

Pelletier noted that "[t]here are members of the Charlotte Community who speculate on the motives of public officials," but said that her reasons for leaving the job

were personal and "not related to the creation of the DRB, which I support."

In an interview with *The News* last May, Pelletier said she hoped to serve as ZA "for the long haul."

Pelletier wrote that she would be available "as an hourly resource" from Dec. 20 to 30 to complete specific tasks for the town and might be available after the new year to help train the new ZA.

"The last eight months have certainly been enlightening and have provided me with a new perspective," Pelletier wrote, without expanding further.



Wendy Pelletier
Photo by Katie Pelletier

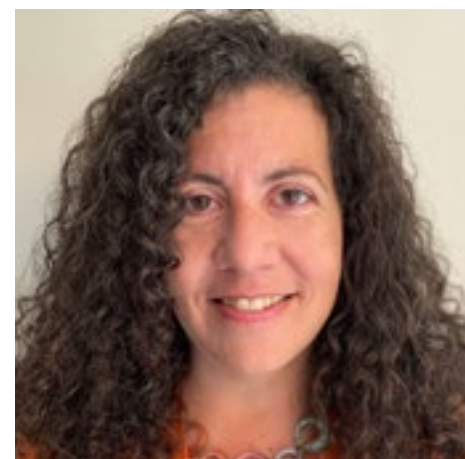
Charlotte Senior Center announces new director

Lane Morrison
CHARLOTTE SENIOR CENTER BOARD MEMBER

The board of the Charlotte Senior Center is excited to announce that Lori York will be our new Senior Center Director as of Dec. 20. Lori's warmth and outgoing personality, combined with her extensive background working with volunteers and events, is a perfect fit for our community of people age 50 and over. We are looking forward to working with Lori to expand the center's activities and provide a warm and welcoming place for people to gather.

Previously, Lori worked as the Assistant to the Director at the Charlotte Senior Center and as the Center Manager at the Heineberg Community Senior Center in Burlington. Prior to that she worked for many years in admissions and outreach for independent schools in both New Hampshire and Vermont.

Please stop by the Senior Center and



Lori York

Photo contributed

congratulate Lori on her new role, learn about our wide range of programming, and find opportunities to make connections in this welcoming community.

News from The News

2021 was not that great - what comes next?



John Quinney
PUBLISHER &
PRESIDENT

This was a tough year for *The Charlotte News*.

We lost two editors and several board members for a variety of reasons. We struggled at times to cover key meetings in town and to do the reporting that our readers expect to see in *The News*. We ran stories that

earned both praise and even scorn.

But we didn't miss an issue.

What is that worth to you? *The News* offers local, independent, nonprofit journalism, and it costs a lot to produce. We are asking for your financial support, as we do each year at this time. And we are laying out our plans for 2022.

First, it needs to be said that the success of the paper this year is due largely to staff members Anna Cyr, Christy Hagios, Mara Brooks and Susan Jones. They work hard. We also extend gratitude to our community writers, advertisers, donors and board members. And

let's not overlook the volunteers who copy edit, proofread and deliver our papers every other week all year long.

The top priority for the board in the New Year is recruiting the next editor. Readers can help by spreading the word and asking around.

I also want to give you an idea of new and refreshed features we're working on for 2022:

- We're launching a new monthly column, "Stronger Together," coordinated by Linda Hamilton and the Grange.
- We'll run a beefed-up calendar of events in every issue thanks to our newest volunteer, Mary Landon.
- Peter Joslin who recently stepped down after 17 years on the Planning Commission, will be writing periodically about planning and town governance as it relates to the future of Charlotte.
- Our readers will continue to enjoy Phyl Newbeck's "Hi Neighbor" column, Lucie Lehmann's coverage of local farms, and stories from Dan Coles on Charlotte history.

On the news side, we have two goals:

- To cover every meeting of the

selectboard, planning commission, development review board, and the school board.

- To introduce what's known as solutions journalism by reporting on how people in Charlotte and nearby towns are responding to problems, with an emphasis on solutions that work.

If you value the paper, and support our plans, please help by investing in local news and making a year-end gift to help fund this work. We are a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, so all gifts are tax-deductible.

Better yet, every gift we receive is doubled, thanks to several generous donors. They have pledged an additional \$10,000 to encourage our readers to make investments that strengthen our local news coverage.

If you're one of the 290 people who have made a gift this year thank you!

For others, there is still time to support local news and to make your gift go further, so don't delay. Give today, and for every dollar you give, *The News* receives two. Mail your check to us at P.O. Box 251, Charlotte, VT 05445 or use your credit card to make a tax-deductible donation on our secure website, www.charlottenewsvt.org.

Whatever your response to this request and to our plans for the New Year, thank you for reading the paper, and for your contributions to the health of this town, this state, and the world at large.

Letter to the Editor

Selectboard passed a masking regulation for Charlotte's town buildings

At last Monday's meeting the Selectboard passed a masking regulation for Charlotte's town buildings. I would like to applaud them and especially acknowledge Chair Jim Faulkner's leadership in getting the proposed regulation on the agenda. The Selectboard listened to community concerns, solicited input from town employees and consulted with those affected at the Senior Center and Library. The regulation passed by a vote of 5 to 0.

We are entering a worrisome time here in Vermont as case counts driven by the Delta variant have doubled since July. While we can hope that the Omicron variant will not prove as ominous as some fear, we have at our disposal infection control tools that work. There is no question that masking is an effective and essential part of any infection control strategy. Together with vaccination, physical distancing and occupancy limits we can control the course of events.

The regulation as passed is not as inclusive as I would have liked. It only applies to the town's three municipal buildings and must be renewed in 30 days. However, it does send several important messages. It acknowledges the gravity of the threat to the public's health. It reminds us that we have effective controls at our disposal and it tells us we have elected leaders who are concerned about the health of the town's residents and employees. Kudos to the Selectboard for their leadership.

Jim Hyde
Associate Professor of
Public Health Emeritus
Tufts University School of Medicine



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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The Charlotte News

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NEXT PUBLICATION DATES

HAPPY NEW YEAR

January 13, 2022

Copy Deadline: Friday, Jan. 7

Ads Deadline: Friday, an. 7

January 27, 2022

Copy Deadline: Friday, Jan. 21

Ads Deadline: Friday, an. 21

News from The News

The Charlotte News would like to thank everyone listed below for contributing their words, their pictures and their time to the paper in 2021. These dedicated volunteers make this a truly local paper created by Charlotters for Charlotters. We couldn't do it without you!

Thank you!

Alex Buntен	Elizabeth Bassett	Katherine Lampton	Mary VanVleck	Rebecca Foster	
Alex Linde	Elizabeth Hunt, M.D.	Kellyn Doerr	Matt Byrne	Rob Mullins	
Alexa Lewis	Emily Raabe	Kevin Goldenbogen	Matt Jennings	Robert Bloch	Proofreaders
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Claudia Pfaff	Janice Heilmann	Linda Hamilton	Nancy Wood	Suzy Hodgson	Property transactions
Colleen Armstrong	Jessica Scriver	Louis Cox	Nick Bishop	Tai Dinnan	Jay Strausser and Nancy
Cynthia M. Marshall	Jim Hyde	Louisa Schibli	Nicole Conley	Tara Pereira	Warren - Four Seasons
Dan Cole	Joan Weed	Lucie Lehmann	Norm Riggs	Tim Etchells	Sothebys International Real
Dean Bloch	John Hammer	Lydia Clemmons	Olivia Hagios	Trina Bianchi	Estate
Deborah J. Benoit	John Moses	Margaret Woodruff	Pete Demick	Vince Crockenberg	
Deirdre Holmes	Justin Trombly	Margo Bartsch	Peter Joslin	Wade Maki	Newspaper delivery
Dennis Delany	Kate Kelly	Mark Dillenbeck	Phyl Newbeck		Jim Fox
Edd Merritt	Katherine Arthaud	Mark Kestner	Quinn Sunderland		Tom Scatchard
					Peter Richardson

Opinions

The Charlotte News should be...

John Quinney
PUBLISHER & PRESIDENT

Two weeks ago, Anna Cyr, our managing editor, and I sent a request to several Charlotte residents asking the question, “What sort of paper should *The Charlotte News* be?” We’re publishing the responses that we received.

We all know that Charlotters hold a wide range of opinions about many issues that come up during the meetings of our various boards, commissions and committees. We witness the same diversity at town meetings and in casual conversations around town and around our dinner tables.

The Charlotte News is a beneficiary of the thoughtfulness, passion, enthusiasm, expertise, criticism and questions that town residents apply to the content of the paper. We benefit because we learn more about what matters to our readers, and how we can better meet the needs of this community. So, keep it coming.

Bill Schubart is a Hinesburg resident, a passionate advocate for community journalism, and an advisor to *The News*. In an email exchange from six weeks ago, here’s what he wrote about community newspapers:

“A good paper is not going to make everyone happy. Using facts and citing examples, it should raise issues both warm and chilling, that engender discussion, compromise, and improvement. It should also celebrate community: children and families, the police blotter, culture, history, local institutions, natural resources, recreation, and story. It should also issue corrections when a fact is misreported, but it should not amend its policy because a story makes some members of a community uncomfortable. The catchphrase for the work of journalism as it relates to community, is ‘sunlight is the best disinfectant.’”

On behalf of our staff and board, I want to thank the five Charlotters who sent us their opinions concerning *The Charlotte News*.

By Bill Regan
Charlotte is fortunate to have its own paper. Not many small towns can boast of such a resource, let alone one that deals in real reporting rather than running a couple of generic articles amid what is essentially an ad circular. I come to the question of what kind of paper *The Charlotte News* should be as an avid consumer of local, national and international news, and as someone whose first career was devoted to researching and writing about foreign affairs, and then managing staff writers and editing their work. In short, I have spent a lot of time thinking about what stories are told and how writers tell them.

Let me start with what I enjoy about *The Charlotte News* and thus what the paper should strive to preserve. The paper serves as a document of record about the people and public business of Charlotte. It provides the necessary “first rough draft of history” about our community.

After over three decades of combing through national papers, with their appropriate emphasis on the weighty issues of the day, I love that *The Charlotte News* covers the people and events that define life in Charlotte. What student is not thrilled to see his or her name in the paper for an academic achievement, charity work or win on the playing field? The paper should always make room for articles on local businesses, nonprofits and community events.

Where *The Charlotte News* could improve is in its coverage of public policy. Articles about Selectboard meetings and other debates on controversial issues often were of the “he said, she said” variety, and at times took a “gotcha” approach to public meetings. (I would challenge any journalist to speak extemporaneously in public and not utter a thought or two in a way that could have been phrased better.) At times, writers for *The Charlotte News* seem to forget that most times they are covering volunteer, non-professional town administrators working late into the evening after a long day of paid work and family commitments. I would recommend all journalists give the people they are covering the benefit of the doubt until reliable evidence emerges that the subject of the story is, indeed, engaged in some sort of subterfuge. Once that point is reached, the paper should both remain dispassionate and pursue the truth

aggressively.
The Charlotte News would be a better paper if it did a better job of summarizing the “what” aspect of a story (versus transcribing the “he said, she said” at length and ending the piece there), and then devoting more thought and column inches to the “why” part of the issue, and—most importantly for readers—on “what

does it mean?” The “what” should be a concise and impartial description of what happened. The “why” should attempt to explain the reasons that drove events to unfold as they did. The “what does it mean” is the most value-added part of a story, answering for the reader why they should care and what the

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New This Year!

Gifts of Appreciated Stock

The Charlotte News now accepts gifts of appreciated securities, such as stock. Giving appreciated securities has a double benefit:

- The full market value of the security is tax deductible as a charitable contribution, and,
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For more information, please contact John Quinney, President, Board of Directors. john@thecharlottenews.org. 802-318-7189.

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The Charlotte News

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Opinions

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implications are for the town if one decision is taken over another.

Let me try to make this concrete. Despite reading each issue cover to cover, I still do not have a good understanding of what Charlotte will look like 10 years from now by choosing a Development Review Board over other zoning and planning models. I do not know whether individuals challenge development projects because of legitimate concerns about the environment or because they are using environmentalism to mask their NIMBY objections to the project in question. I cannot tell whether town policies actually make it harder to operate a business here or whether businesses are complaining about sensible rules. The list could go on much longer. And, of course, part of this lack of understanding is on me, not the paper.

The goal of *The Charlotte News* should be to help inform the public's understanding of the issues that impact them and help inform the Selectboard and the town's various commissions and committees so they can make better decisions. Even in a town as small as Charlotte, public policy issues are frequently complex. I imagine few if any residents or town officials have degrees and work experience in wastewater management. Same with community planning, transportation engineering, climate change mitigation, pandemic response and so on. Yet these are the kinds of issues town officials wrestle with in their daily business, and on which residents are called to weigh in. The great service *The*

Charlotte News could provide would be to elevate the debate.

By Janice Heilmann

I told a friend of mine awhile back, when asked about *The Charlotte News* and other papers covering the news of our town, that I would support the paper that published the Town Meeting lunch menu. That was the kind of news that made sense to me.

Of course, like many things that have changed in life, there is no Town Meeting lunch—no beans and franks, Ethel's homemade rolls, applesauce cake served in chunky Melamine dishes. It probably will never return. But Town Meeting—perhaps in a different form temporarily—survives.

The articles in *The Charlotte News* that hew to the simpler roots of the paper are the ones that speak to me. What is it like to be a farmer? Where should I take a winter walk on a full moon evening? Who owns the oldest dog in town? Of course, we need to know what's happening with the Selectboard and the Planning Commission. Questions of town governance are important. But what I don't like is the treatment of our elected and appointed officials as if they are hiding important information. It's not the questions. It's the way they're asked.

Is it old-fashioned to want this kind of reporting and respect for the neighbors who serve us? How can that be relevant in this age of racial reckoning and a warming world? I think that's why people live here, send their kids to school here, buy eggs from the guy down the road, give way at a four-way stop. We can live in this treacherous world if we can

wrap our community around us. I would like *The Charlotte News* to reflect that. (The idea recently postulated that Charlotte is on a 24/7 news cycle is funny unless referring to dads burping babies at four a.m. or rescue squad members arriving at the home of a neighbor in distress at midnight.)

I think *The Charlotte News* has taken a detour, but that it has the spirit and the talent to get out of the muddy ruts and back onto solid ground. There is so much about *The Charlotte News* that speaks to me. I'd like to see that return. How does that happen? Hire an editor that, if not physically local, is community-minded and commits to respecting all members of the town.

Once in a while, an institution like *The Charlotte News*, or any group that's been around for years, goes off to the Big City and tries on Big City Shoes. (How about the "Freedom of Information Act Broughams"?) But soon enough, they don't fit, and it's once again time to dig out the comfortable old boots that will get you to the mailbox or the neighbors' house with dinner without slipping in the road.

By Lindsay Longe

When I think of *The Charlotte News*, I think of a paper that celebrates and connects our local community. I look for it to be a source of information that brings together neighbors around important and sometimes controversial ideas or changes. Bringing together need not mean agreeing, but rather, coming to the table to respectfully engage in dialogue. I believe *The Charlotte News* can be a venue for supporting such a thoughtful exchange of ideas.

Necessary to thoughtful idea exchange is

accurate, accessible information from diverse perspectives. Neighbors often need a common language and shared knowledge to build upon when they connect. *The Charlotte News* can authentically provide such a foundation without flooding our screens or investing in fortunes to get our attention. *The Charlotte News* should continue to be relevant and empowering to as many Charlotters as possible. I appreciate the recent efforts to solicit varied perspectives about *The News's* future. Personally, I want our local paper to help me feel informed and inspired to engage in healthy local dialogue. I appreciate the printed paper—it's a welcomed break—as well as the digital resources and social feeds for more time-sensitive matters.

Time-sensitive items might be a post reminding one of how to join a Selectboard Zoom call, and while I rarely have time to do so or even read the minutes of a town committee meeting, I appreciate the chance and like to scan the highlights. Similarly, I can't imagine reading every page of our town plan or zoning regs, but I care. I might read more of the plan if it was presented differently—maybe a Q & A feature with key contributors, or a sidebar interview with someone working to bring an aspect of the plan to fruition. I'd like to know what elements of the plan might affect young families. What about those with loved ones who may wish to retire here? Or someone who would like to operate a business or nonprofit here?

For me, I would like to hear about news that impacts the future of our community—education, land use and conservation,

SEE **OPINIONS** PAGE 5



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Opinions

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE.

business growth, housing development and public spaces (e.g., a community center, new playground or garden space, expanded trails, etc.). What's new and what's on the horizon in these various areas? What are the opportunities for community engagement?

I would enjoy reading about local entrepreneurs; whether their goods or services are of immediate need to me is secondary to simply knowing how I could support someone local in the future. Knowing of these business leaders and content experts might allow me to connect someone looking for a job, internship, or simply a helpful expert's perspective. It would be meaningful to learn about advocates and innovators in order to explore synergies around ideas, careers, hobbies, challenges or needs.

As a parent of young children, I enjoy stories about family-friendly activities in and around town and appreciate cheerful pictures of children enjoying our community assets, such as the beach playground, Mt. Philo and local farm stands. While I admittedly Google most of my parenting questions, I might enjoy hearing from local experts, educators and neighbors about opportunities, concerns and helpful ideas specific to our community.

I enjoy reading about the accomplishments of my neighbors—Charlotte Central School students completing cool projects, athletes excelling locally or beyond, businesses and volunteers making a difference, or local authors giving book talks. These fun, inspiring stories expand upon the reasons that I'm proud to live here.

I would enjoy reading more about the good people and good work happening around me that I'm unlikely to encounter in the hustle of my daily routines. I look to *The Charlotte News* to celebrate this good work in ways that appreciate our sometimes hectic and overwhelming lives, while simultaneously reminding us to connect and be grateful for our Charlotte community.

By Molly McClaskey

The Charlotte News is fundamental to our community. It is for us, by us, and about us. When I moved to Charlotte in 1983, a friend told me to be sure to read the local paper. "It's legendary," he said. I soon learned why we were and still are known for our paper. For one thing, values like local involvement, integrity and excellence shape the paper's firm foundation. For another, *The Charlotte News*

has pivoted over the years, adjusting to change and growth in our town and times. Since its humble beginnings in the church basement, it has found more space and more staff. It covers a wider range of topics and has joined the digital age. These steps have been essential to its survival and development. *The Charlotte News* has also listened to community members and reflected upon its own work. This too has strengthened "*The News*" and its endurance. In the spirit of listening and reflecting, I offer this opinion.

What should our paper strive for and how can it best reflect our community? From my perspective, *The Charlotte News* should be the sort of paper that offers an honest picture of us, so that we can see ourselves within it and find out who we are. I want it to capture our collective core and reflect what we do and say. I want to read about our experiences and expertise. This is how we come to know our community and stay connected to one another. I want our paper to include the goings-on around us, so that whether we are public or private participants we feel part of it. I want to look forward to regular installments, like books worth reading, hikes worth walking and plants worth digging. I also want our paper to report on a range of topics critical to the essence and organization of our town: committees, town boards and events that welcome us all. I'd like to read about the institutions that make our town what it is: the school, the Town Hall, the Grange, the library and the Senior Center. I want to read local concerns about worldwide issues, like the environment and the creeping threat of climate change, forest health, invasives, land conservation, development and more. I'd like to try someone's seasonal recipe from time to time too. I believe these are the themes that keep *The Charlotte News* timely and important in the eyes of its readers. I'm looking for a hometown brew of investigative reporting along with informational pieces and personal storytelling.

And I hope *The Charlotte News* will continue to fulfill a purpose that affects all of us and that reaches beyond us as well. I am looking for our paper to have the support and fortitude it needs to endure these fragile times in journalism and thereby do its part to foster democracy. Quality reporting is inherently controversial, simultaneously educational and critically important. We need it! In my view, a newspaper should poke at our assumptions, cause us to question, push us to think, and help us discern fact from falsehood. Just as honest news and the newspapers that print it is a bulwark of democracy, *The Charlotte News* is the cornerstone of our community. We depend

on it! In this time, when newspapers here and across the country are folding and social media is quickly filling the void, I want *The Charlotte News* to stay standing and hold onto its place in our town. I want it to stay steadfast to its mission ("to publish rigorous, in-depth, fair reporting on town affairs, and to source stories of interest from our neighbors and friends") and its commitment to tell our stories and report the news. Our sturdy paper bravely prints the pulse of the town. I value that, and I am grateful for it.

By Nancy Wood

When asked to address this question, my first thought was to dig through the archives for clues about what has been successful in the past. I specifically searched on the website for the "Foothills to Shoreline Summit" that was held in 1998, bringing together residents of Charlotte and adjacent towns to discuss our common goals and hopes for the future. I remembered the camaraderie and excitement of this summit as we all contributed our ideas about what makes this corner of Chittenden County special, and how it could be enhanced in the future.

I found much more than the announcement of the Summit in the October 8, 1998 issue of *The News*. Like so many issues over the years, it captured the spirit of that time in our town. Two articles of special interest were about the bond that Charlotte Volunteer Fire & Rescue was seeking to buy a new ambulance and renovate the station and about the \$500,000 bequest of Walter Irish for a senior center.

A front-page article described the fire department proposal. Several opinion pieces and letters from voters expressed their support or objection. One, in particular, highlighted the need to first resolve problems caused by the WIZN transmitter on the department's tower on Pease Mountain. The WIZN high-powered signal interfered with radio reception in the surrounding area. It even interfered with the Sunday morning service at the Charlotte Congregational Church, where rock music replaced the sermon in the earphones of attendees who were hard of hearing.

The other front-page article offered a glimpse into the life led by Walter and Gert Irish, who lived in Charlotte for their final 20 years. Before she died in 1992, the retired couple enjoyed many trips in their RV. After his wife's death, Irish spent as much time as possible with good friends and neighbors. Loving the company, Irish felt the town needed a place for seniors to gather and left the town \$500,000 in his will with powerful strings attached, ensuring that it would be used in a reasonable

period of time for that use only. We know now how important that generous gift was.

Sprinkled throughout this October 1998 issue were other articles about town affairs and resident activities. Low-cost ads were numerous, promoting the services of local businesses and the three candidates for state office. The ever popular "Around Town" section congratulated and sympathized, and a calendar listed town events for the next two weeks.

The paper was printed in black and white, without the colored photos of today. There was no associated website, email or social media. It was a step up from our hand-typed, mimeographed and stapled pages of the 1950s, while primitive compared to today's technology. But it served the needs of the community. It provided objective information important to us as voters. It celebrated the generous spirit of a former resident. It was an outlet for personal views and for contributions by volunteer writers, artists and photographers. Advertisers could reach their neighbors on a regular basis. And there was a sense of familiarity with town officials, who are liberally quoted and identified.

Stepping back from reading these stories, I mused about how different our world and country are today in more ways than the technological advances. The divisiveness in much of our public discourse is unsettling. The pandemic has isolated many of us for nearly two years, disrupting livelihoods, education and social life. Now more than ever I believe we need institutions that promote community spirit and mutual support. We are so fortunate to live in a small town with abundant attributes, from our natural environment to our long history of volunteer participation. We enjoy the closest thing to direct democracy that can be found in this country, with the opportunity for all residents to attend and vote on town affairs at the annual Town Meeting. And importantly, our elections for town offices are nonpartisan. Differences of opinion, not uncommon, are based on issues not politics.

The Charlotte News, no longer just a "paper," can and should continue to chronicle the story of Charlotte. It strengthens the foundation of our local institutions by regular, objective reporting of decisions by town officials, and of activities at the library, Senior Center and Fire and Rescue Department, as well as about local nonprofits and businesses. It introduces residents to volunteer opportunities and achievements. And as it is archived, it provides future generations with inspiring insights into our progress through history.



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Town FARM

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

he would make the transaction work. Now the deal is moving forward and is a source of satisfaction and relief to Nichols. “I’m just grateful that I have a young man of the caliber of Nick who was interested in doing what I was doing.”

Powden, who describes Nichols as a second father, is equally pleased with the outcome. “I was pretty happy when he asked me to take it over,” the 35-year-old says, sitting above the main barn in a room that he helped to build. Below, tens of thousands of pale green square bales reach for the ceiling in neat rows. “I felt proud...that he didn’t want anybody else.”

It was a trust earned over a 20-year apprenticeship. Nichols taught Powden everything he needed to know about the business. “I learned how to drive the trucks and make the hay, the best way to stack the hay, how to work hard. He taught me a lot about working on the tractors and the balers ...so I can pretty much do all of my own maintenance,” Powden notes. And Nichols took Powden with him to help on his out-of-state deliveries, introducing him to his customers and teaching him the bookkeeping system. Nichols is proud of Powden and certain that he’s ready to assume full ownership of Green Mountain Hay, as the new owner has renamed the business. “I feel confident,” Nichols says firmly. “He doesn’t lollygag around. He gets things done and he’s very good at it.”



Owner, Nick Powden surrounded by stacks of hay..

Powden and his wife, Marla, just sold their home in Essex, and they’ll use that money for the down payment on the farm, most of which he hopes will eventually be conserved. He’ll use the winter to work



Left to right: Hunter Kehoe, Nikolai Pughe and Nick Powden stand in front of a loaded trailer of hay. Photos by Lucie Lehmann.

with USDA’s Farm Service Agency, banks and the Charlotte Land Trust to design and structure the overall purchase.

Now, it’s just Powden and his two young helpers, Nikolai Pughe and Hunter Kehoe, running the farm and delivering hay to their far-flung customers. Just as Nichols mentored him, Powden is doing the same with the two young men, and the bond among them is palpable. Both Pughe and Kehoe speak of the trust that Powden places in them, and how he is teaching them the same skills that Nichols taught him. “He’s more of a friend than a boss, because we all get along very well together. It’s more of a family job. We all treat each other as family,” Pughe explains.

For his part, Powden is grateful to already have good help and not to worry, as so many other farmers have to, about reliable labor. As the father of two young children and, now, the boss, he has a lot of responsibility. “A lot of times in the summer I have things to do with my family, so I like to spread out all the jobs. They know how to do them, so why not?”

Like Nichols before them, the three men are united in their love of farming, their desire to work outdoors and be largely independent, their commitment to their customers, and in keeping the land productive and free from a housing development. “Let’s get 20 generations out of this place,” Kehoe enthuses.

Green Mountain Hay’s deliveries will continue through the winter and spring, right up until the first cut in June replenishes the farm’s supply and begins the cycle all over again. The fields may be dormant, but the farm itself is decidedly not.



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Town

How is local governance working in Charlotte?

Nancy Richardson
CONTRIBUTOR

This report provides a summary of telephone interviews conducted during the first few weeks of November 2021. A selection of Charlotte community leaders, town staff members, and regional and local planners from nearby towns offered their insights and opinions. The observations were then distilled, and common themes and recommendations were extracted.

This was not a scientific survey. Rather, it is a snapshot of how informed decision-makers and community volunteers view the state of our town's governance. The observations of respondents were collected and organized through the lens of the author.

Charlotte is one of the wealthiest and most beautiful of towns in Vermont. The rural character of its striking landscape, which stretches inland from Lake Champlain, has been substantially preserved through diligent community efforts.

Charlotte's Town Plan presents bold initiatives critical to maintaining its vitality. The plan was first adopted in the 1990s and was rewritten and approved in 2008. Since then, various amendments have been adopted.

- Among the eight overriding goals, two stand out as particularly aspirational:
- To reinforce historic settlement patterns by focusing growth in our hamlets, and east and west villages, while conserving our Areas of High Public Value.
 - To promote social, economic, cultural and racial diversity, and sense of community through actions that encourage moderately priced and affordable housing, a sustainable agricultural economy, social, educational and commercial services, and environmentally sound rural and small business enterprises.

How are we progressing on the implementation of these goals? What steps has our local government taken to realize the vision described in the Town Plan?

Many interviewees approved of Charlotte's progress on land conservation and the town's efforts to sustain small family farms. But there was also some frustration about the lack of services and development in town centers. One respondent suggested that the two Town Plan goals would never be implemented because "Charlotters are afraid of development." Others said that the town governance system fails to focus on the implementation of priorities.

An example of such inaction is in the pursuit of affordable housing. Despite creation of the Affordable Housing Trust Fund a decade ago, only a few units have been produced that might contribute to diversity. Support for new development in the village centers has stalled. Sidewalks for pedestrian safety prove controversial. Waste water services are limited, and the town has no central town water source. Charlotte offers few community services necessary to sustain a thriving town.

1. **Focus and implementation**

Local public planners and managers attest to the need for a vision—and specific goals—to move communities forward. Those goals must define where an organization is headed and what it seeks to achieve. Town Plans offer the vision and define the goals that selectboards are charged with implementing.

One planner described town plans as containing hundreds of tasks waiting to be accomplished. This bundle of initiatives would be impossible to implement in a reasonable time frame—and certainly not in a single year. Success in any policy advancement relies on **focus**. The Selectboard needs to prioritize a few major initiatives each year.

The second important aspect of advancing priorities is to design **implementation systems**. To be successful, systems need paths that are structured, that lead to completion, and that can be accomplished in a timely manner. "Timely" should be measured in months, not years. Many Charlotte initiatives have died because there were no strategies to implement them. Implementation efforts

require schedules for getting prioritized items on the Town Meeting agendas and end dates for project completion.

Planners from Richmond and Westford underscored the need to include communication plans in project rollouts. Communication is essential for securing meaningful input and buy-in from community members in early design phases. It does not mean that all citizens must agree on an action, but the public should have a reasonable opportunity to express opinions and offer suggestions. One participant suggested that the Selectboard report annually to the broader community on the progress of implementing the Town Plan.

2. **Leadership by the Selectboard**

Most of those interviewed recognized the time and work that goes into serving as a Selectboard member. Managing public administrations has become a complicated affair. There are ever increasing legal and regulatory requirements, a long list of compliance tasks and multiple budgetary conflicts.

Some respondents felt that our Selectboard management is acceptable, but that members would benefit from assistance in how meetings should be conducted. Other respondents felt that major changes in management and procedures should be adopted.

Respondents identified persistent Selectboard management issues including: actual or perceived conflicts of interest; lack of knowledge of substantive items on meeting

SEE **GOVERNANCE** PAGE 8

Girl Scouts spread holiday cheer



Cindy Bradley
CONTRIBUTOR

Charlotte Girl Scout Troop 30066 is continuing to dedicate their time to helping spread a little holiday cheer this month. Last week, at their Monday meeting, the girls worked together to make almost 100 holiday ornaments, which have been delivered to the residents of Green Mountain Nursing Home in Colchester and Porter Nursing Home in Middlebury. The ornaments consisted of popsicle-stick Santas and snowmen, clothespin and clay-pot Christmas trees and beaded holiday wreaths.

On Saturday, Dec. 18, we invite you to watch for us as we travel through parts of East Charlotte (weather permitting), singing holiday songs on our festive and fun "blinged-out" hay wagon. Our planned route is as follows: We will leave 584 One Mile Road at approximately 4 p.m., traveling from there to Mt. Philo Road,

where we will turn left and travel south to Spear Street. We will follow Spear Street until we turn left onto Guinea Road, staying on Guinea until we take a right onto Bingham Brook Road. At the end of Bingham Brook, we will take a left back onto Spear Street and head north, stopping at Spear's Corner Store briefly before turning left onto Hinesburg-Charlotte Road, then traveling west until turning left back onto Guinea Road, and then turning back onto One Mile Road, returning to our starting point.

Come on out and greet us and we will sing you a song! If you are traveling these roads that afternoon, please be mindful that we will be out there on a wagon being pulled by a tractor that will require our traveling at a slower rate of speed than a car or truck. Our goal is to spread holiday cheer and keep everyone safe at the same time. Thank you in advance for your consideration. Happy holidays, everyone!

The Charlotte News

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NOW HIRING for Editor

The Charlotte News is a bi-weekly, nonprofit community newspaper. We publish rigorous, in-depth, fair reporting on town affairs, as well as stories of interest from our neighbors and friends.

The News is a forum for the free exchange of views of town residents and celebrates the people, places and happenings that make the Town of Charlotte unique.

The editor is responsible for:

- Planning each issue of the paper.
- Assigning stories to freelance writers and volunteers.
- Ensuring coverage of Charlotte public meetings and important issues.
- Editing submitted articles.
- Providing some photos, and writing two or more bylined stories for each issue of the paper and newsletter.

Job description and more information available at: charlottenewsvt.org/about

To apply, email your resumé, along with three or more writing samples, to publisher John Quinney at: john@thecharlottenews.org. Application deadline is Dec. 31.

The News staff is producing the paper remotely, so most work can be done from home. However, occasional travel to Charlotte is required.

Town

GOVERNANCE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

agendas; overuse of executive sessions to shield discussion; and endless meetings that are packed with too many administrative matters. These problems have detracted from achieving progress on essential matters facing the town, including movement on major town goals. In addition, there were concerns about overall management of committees and staff. Frequent staff turnover is an indicator of problems in supervision and management.

Many expressed general support for greater efforts between the town administrator and the Selectboard chair to define priorities that require approval and action. Briefing materials for scheduled meetings should be

distributed sooner, and consent agendas that can be accomplished quickly crafted. Two to three hours was frequently mentioned as an appropriate time limit for regular board meetings.

There was broad support for the town administrator being authorized to assume more management functions or for a shift to a town manager model. Whether the title for the position is town manager or town administrator, many felt that the description should provide for supervisory powers over town operations. As currently designed, the administrator's function is primarily to serve as administrative assistant to the Selectboard. Strong leadership by the Selectboard chair was emphasized by all as a requirement for the town to move forward. There was unanimous support for the institution of the Development Review Board.

3. The management of public comment

The Vermont Selectboard Handbook states that public comments should be limited in duration. Specifically, "agenda items such as Other Business and Public Comment should be used sparingly."

Charlotte allows for public comment after each agenda item. Time is also allotted for comment on items that may not be on the agenda. This lax arrangement often results in a dialogue between Selectboard members and members of the audience that can interfere with the proper consideration of agenda items. One participant stated, "public comment is not an exchange. It is comment directed by the rules."

Many towns provide ten minutes for public comments on both agenda and non-agenda items, with allotments of no more than three

minutes per person. If a particular item needs more time, the Selectboard must vote for that extension. For issues that are controversial, a sign-up sheet is employed and all commenters have time limits. Concerned citizens may voice their opinions, but they cannot seek to engage with other audience members or with the Selectboard itself. The management of public comment requires firm leadership from the chair.

4. Public communication in the process

Several professional planners described public participation in the early stages of implementation as key to successful public support. Appropriate, early participation can answer the question posed by one respondent: "What will development in the town look like?"

One nearby town worked through a planning process to learn more about how a wastewater system might be installed in the village. After a site was identified, a group of key citizens led a communication plan to engage the public. This effort included a website, public meetings, field visits and articles in the local news with visuals and other graphics. The involvement of town leaders in public discussion reinforced the feeling that the town cares about its citizens.

5. The role of committees

Representative government in Vermont is enhanced by the number of volunteers who participate. In Charlotte, as many as 160 residents serve on numerous town committees. One respondent said, "Volunteers are our treasure, but that comes with many difficulties in management."

Volunteers reflect a wide range of expertise and experience. But interviewees stressed that they should all receive training in their responsibilities as committee members under the law. To start, they should read the Town Plan as it relates to their committees. One person suggested that the town create a handbook for volunteers.

Charlotte committees were described as "silos, operating on their own with little interaction or supervision by the Selectboard." Some

people join committees because they have strong positions on specific issues. While committees are a place to exercise advocacy, the duty of members should be understood as acting in the best interests of the town while implementing aspects of the Town Plan.

Both outside planners and some local residents suggested that either the town administrator or the Selectboard chair meet with the chairs of major committees every two weeks to review progress. If there is a problem in the functioning of committees, the administrator or chair would have the authority to intercede. All committee chairs should also meet together at certain times in the year. One local respondent suggested that the town consider hiring a "volunteer coordinator."

6. Implications

In its Town Plan, Charlotte has defined the kind of town it wants to be. Though adhering to some elements of the plan may be cumbersome, it must be more than a "ghost plan." The Town Plan should be an active guide for both initiatives and decision-making. The Selectboard must adopt key priorities and supervise the focused implementation of those goals through structured and accountable management.

The full report with recommendations can be found at: charlottenewsvt.org/2021/12/16/how-is-local-governance-working-in-charlotte/

Nancy Richardson's professional career has included senior positions in government at the federal, state, and local levels. She has authored several reports and articles on the leadership and implementation of government initiatives in Vermont and in eight other states.

Interviewees for this report were Peter Joslin, Larry Lewack, Dean Bloch, Nancy Wood, Kate Lampton, Charles Russell, Lee Krohn (Shelburne), Tod Odit (Hinesburg), Bill Schubart, Lane Morrison, Regina Mahony (Regional Planning), Tom Grady (League of Cities and Towns), Mike Russell, Dana Hanley, Gretchen Morse, Melissa Manka (Westford), Ravi Venkataraman (Richmond), Robert Bloch, and Beth Humstone.

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Hi, Neighbor!

Rebecca Foster: Bringing her focus on climate change to the Charlotte Energy Committee



Phyl Newbeck
CONTRIBUTOR

In 2012, Rebecca Foster held a celebration for the completion of a community solar project at Ten Stones where she resided. That’s when Suzy Hodgson, who was serving as chair of the Charlotte Energy Committee (CEC), invited her to become a member of the committee and she accepted. After spending a few years co-chairing with Hodgson, Foster became the sole CEC chair two years ago.

Foster is proud of the CEC’s most recent accomplishments, one of which is a new website. The committee still has some pages on the town site, but having their own location gives them the opportunity to provide the public with more information. Not only is Foster pleased with the outcome, but she is also tickled by how the project came to fruition. Two interns from Oberlin College were paid by the college to work on the site. “It was great for them, and it was great for us,” Foster said. “We probably would have been able to do it on our own, but it wouldn’t have come out the same way because we’re all very busy and it takes a lot of time to put together a new site.” Foster said the committee really enjoyed interacting with young people who were excited about their mission. “Nobody met in person,” she said, “but we created this wonderful thing online.”

Another recent CEC accomplishment is a dual-use demonstration project. “There’s a movement in renewable energy to say we can use the land for two things at least,” Foster said. “It doesn’t have to be just solar panels. We can also have pollinator beds or sheep.” To showcase the idea of dual use, the CEC put an off-grid, 100-watt solar panel on the roof of a compost shed at Charlotte Central School. “The shed was already there,” Foster said, “and it’s been part of the curriculum for enhancing the whole farm-to-table idea, growing vegetables and putting compost waste in the shed. It’s been a teaching tool for the school.” The work required the assistance of a local engineer, who connected the panel to an inverter and battery. Now there is an outlet for members of the school community to charge their phones, laptops or even

electric bicycles. The Charlotte Energy Committee recently received a \$1,500 grant from the Vermont Council on Rural Development’s Climate Catalysts Innovation Fund for their energy shelf project. The project was born in 2015 and revived in a different form this year with the goal of connecting lower-income households with weatherization resources. The Charlotte Food Shelf helps with outreach since those who are served by the food shelf are also eligible for weatherization assistance. “It’s challenging to do outreach with volunteers,” Foster said. “We used the money to hire a community consultant to help us. She just started, but the intention is to have her connect people to existing free virtual energy tours and make sure everyone knows we have DIY weatherization materials.”

Foster doesn’t have a background in energy or science. She’s an art historian and author, specializing in American modernism, with emphasis on her grandfather, Harold Weston. “The legacy I’ve inherited from him—a conviction in the transcendent qualities of the natural world—is directly related to my deep concern about climate change, and thus, my small effort to do what I can through the Town Energy Committee,” she said.

Since Charlotte is an agricultural community, Foster would like to see other methods of working toward a better climate future, including carbon sequestration. She feels strongly about having the CEC collaborate with other committees, as well as other towns. As an example, she noted that the Trails Committee and the CEC have “a harmony of interest and purpose” regarding the way people move around town. “There are so many different areas where we can work with others” she said. “I just wish we had twice as many people on the Energy Committee.”

Foster noted that if there was a theme to the CEC’s actions in 2021 it was working with other people, including the two college interns and the new consultant. Since most members of the committee are over 50, it was exciting to have those youthful additions to the group. “I know there are many people in Charlotte who are deeply concerned and motivated to gracefully enter into a future



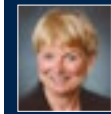
Wolfgang Schneider and Rebecca Foster installing the solar apparatus at the CCS compost shed last summer.
Photo by Deirdre Holmes.

where we have more balance in our energy consumption and production,” Foster said.

“I’m hopeful there will be more support at the decision-making level.”



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Around Town

Cassandra Townshend will leave Charlotte Central School as Director of Special Education

Cassandra Townshend announced that as of the first of next year she will no longer be the CCS Director of Special Education. She will take a position with the University of Vermont as Co-director of the BEST/VTPBIS Program in which she will work with schools statewide to advocate for students’ social, emotional and behavioral well-being. She has been the CCS Director of Special Ed. for the past five years. Stephanie Sumner (K-4) and Jen Roth (5-8) will assume these duties for their grade level areas of responsibility.

Charlotte-raised Emily Kenyon returns to Vermont to represent low-wage workers

Attorney Emily Kenyon has returned to her home state to take a poverty law fellow position at Vermont Legal Aid. She drew the case to represent Fletcher Joestar of Stowe who found herself without a job and who found, on filing for unemployment, that she owed the state more than \$5,000. While her undergraduate and law degrees were laudable, her “demonstrated commitment to public service and legal issues affecting the underserved/unrepresented made her stand out from her peers,” according to an article in the December 1 *Seven Days*. Emily grew up in Charlotte, and her family owns Charlotte’s Nitty Gritty Grain Company.

Congratulations:

to Charlotte students **Perry Bouragault** and **Margaret Eagan** whose poems appeared in the December 10 “Young Writers Project” in the *Burlington Free Press*.

Perry’s poem is titled “My school poem.” In less than 20 words he says that, even though he comes to school every day, he does not necessarily see a reason to stay.

Margaret spreads her thoughts to “Humanity.” She looks at us human beings as a “species that defines itself as supposedly superior” with a frail “tolerance for feeling things.” We are proud of our emotions. They seem to serve as diplomas on the wall. She ends, however, by asking that if we truly were so able, “would we need to tell the world, to flaunt that fact at all?”

Obituary

Eric W. Bown

Eric W. Bown, 72, of Monkton, passed away peacefully early Tuesday, Nov. 16, 2021.

He was born Nov. 20, 1948, to Harold and Eleanor (Orvis) Bown of Monkton. In 1952 Eric and his family moved to Bostwick Farm in Shelburne, where his parents worked. Eric had very fond



Eric Bown

memories of growing up on Bostwick Farm with Lake Champlain as its backdrop. He attended Shelburne schools, Central Valley Union High School, and Vermont Technical College in the Building Architecture program. Eric was also in the United States Army Reserves, graduating from basic training in 1968.

Eric eventually moved to Charlotte, where he raised three sons, Thomas, Will and Alex, before returning once again to Monkton, where he built a home and shop in an old orchard. He gladly took on maintenance of the orchard and cider pressing as some of his many passions and projects.

Eric’s career in construction started in Shelburne in 1972 with his design build company, Turnkey Builders. His years in construction were gratifying, establishing deep relationships with clients and the countless people that supported his projects in the field. He thoroughly enjoyed the process and always sought to find a better way to build. He made a lasting impression on those who worked for him and leaves behind an incredible legacy of houses built by Turnkey Builders throughout Chittenden and Addison County.

Eric was always there for his friends, family and the entire community. As a self-proclaimed social butterfly, Eric enjoyed a good party. His greatest joy came out in the countless gatherings he hosted. Those who knew him well appreciated the free apples and cider he handed out in the fall, knowing that all he wanted in return was a good apple pie or apple crisp and some help filling his freezer with cider. On a nice evening he could often be found sitting outside his shop, sharing a drink or two with a friend after a hard day’s work.

Passionate about local history and antique equipment, Eric worked along with his relative and companion Roger Layn for many years in the antiques area of the Addison County Fair and Field Days. He always looked forward to getting the equipment out and tuned come August, and most importantly he enjoyed the company and conversations. Throughout the rest of the year, Eric operated, maintained and restored his own equipment, and with great skill and knowledge could always negotiate the next “good buy.”

Eric taught us to love, give, be honest, be loyal, be grateful, be the teacher and to just be there.

Eric could not be prouder of his three boys who survive him: Alex Bown of South Burlington, Thomas Deckman and his wife Emily Clairmont of Richmond, and Will Bown, his wife, Megan Browning, and their daughter Haddie Bown of Monkton. Eric is survived by his loving siblings Lynda Jeffrey, Susan Schryer and Mark Bown, his partner Linda Laroche, and his bountiful circle of extended family and friends.

A celebration of Eric’s life will be held in the spring in the orchard amongst the apple blossoms. Additional details to be announced.

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Town

Kwanzaa Storytelling Program for Families

Lydia Clemmons and Susan Crockenberg
CLEMMONS FAMILY FARM

On Sunday, Dec. 19, the Clemmons Family Farm invites us to join a Kwanzaa Storytelling event via Zoom. From 4 to 5 p.m., the storytelling is for children grades pre-kindergarten to grade 3 and their families. From 5:30 to 6:30 p.m., storytelling is for children grades 4-8 and their families.

The interactive program introduces participants to African American traditions and the celebration of Kwanzaa, a festival welcoming the first harvests to the home, created in response to the commercialism of Christmas.

Four remarkable storytellers, “Queen Nur” and Kunama Ayanwale Mtendaji of the National Association of Black Storytellers, and Glenn Herring and Lydia Diamond from the Vermont African American/African Diaspora Artist’s Network, share delightful stories that nurture fun, kind and caring exchanges. Another Vermonter, Kia’Rae Hanron, hosts the program.

For 29 years, “Queen Nur” (Karen Abdul-Malik) has enthralled listeners of all ages with her stories in venues that include the opening of the Smithsonian National African American Museum of Culture and History and PANAFEST in Ghana. In 2020 she received the National Association of Black Storytellers’ Zora Neale Hurston Award, and in 2018 the Governor’s Award in Arts Education, and the Artist of the Year Award for Young Audiences in New Jersey and Eastern Pennsylvania.

Kunama Ayanwale Mtendaji began his storytelling career in 1981, co-founding the duo “Taifa” and performing all over the United States and in schools in Ghana, West Africa. Since 2001, he has told stories of the folklore of the African Diaspora with music and dance, including “Stories from the Heart,” “All About Pride,” and “Black Pioneers, Hunters and Warriors.” Mr. Kunama’s storytelling and drumming session is just right for children in grades 4-8 and their families.

Glenn Herring is a talented storyteller and singer, and a teaching artist specializing in song and music, with the Clemmons Family Farm Windows to a Multicultural World Program. He has been singing since first grade, growing up on the South Side of Chicago. He attended the Roosevelt University Music Conservatory, graduated from Chicago State University, and went on to train and perform with members of the Chicago Symphony Chorus and the Chicago Choir. Now a Burlington resident, he has performed with the Burlington Choral Society.

Lydia Diamond is a teaching artist with the Clemmons Family Farm’s Windows to a Multi-cultural World Program. She will open the Kwanzaa session for children in grades 4-8 and their families with stories about how her own family celebrated Kwanzaa as a child. She is also a hair-braider of some renown, and a community organizer who co-founded A.W.A.R.E. (A Work Against Racism Everywhere), an organization that fought racism in the Vermont public school system. Inspired by her granddaughter, Brooklyn, she founded Brooklyn Strong, an organization that advocates and fundraises for children diagnosed with cancer.

Kia’Rae Hanron, Windows to a Multicultural World K-12 Arts learning adviser, will host the Kwanzaa program and open the two storytelling sessions by telling her own



Glenn Herring



Karen Abdul-Malik (Queen Nur)



Kia’Rae Hanron



Lydia Diamond



Kunama Ayanwale Mtendaji
Photos contributed

short story about discovering Kwanzaa. Ms. Hanron is a 2020 graduate of the University of Vermont with a Bachelor of Science in Arts Education. She uses her considerable talents to help students, youth, educators and parents practice empathy and gain strength, confidence and resilience through creative expression.

Register online for free tickets: bit.ly/CFF-Kwanzaa-Stories. Hope to see you there!

Food Shelf News

Susan Ohanian
CONTRIBUTOR

Next month's *Charlotte News* will include a fulsome "thank you" to the many people and businesses in our community whose generosity makes our work possible throughout the year. But now we focus on December, which is filled with lots of activity and many people who deserve our heartfelt words of special appreciation.

Thank you to SCHIP for the bountiful grant they awarded.

Thank you to those who have made special efforts to spread seasonal joy. The holiday baskets prepared by lots of people at Charlotte Central School overflow with good tidings.

We are thankful that Hunger is Hard, Baking is Easy is back! On Dec. 17, they accept baked goods for the Food Shelf holiday baskets. Baked goods should be wrapped and put in bags or on plates that do not need to be returned. Please indicate if an item contains nuts. Bring baked items to the Charlotte Congregational Church Dec. 17 from 8:30 to 10:30 a.m. Please message Holly Rochefort if you need to make other arrangements: hwcoolboots@gmail.com.

We are grateful that, as at Thanksgiving, the Rotary Club of Charlotte-Shelburne-Hinesburg makes sure every one of those holiday baskets has a turkey. Dale Garvey added cheese for each basket, Louise McCarren provided fresh fruit, and Cooper Harvey donated 90 pounds of venison.

Giving Tree shoppers and Secret Santas have been working hard in the background to make this trying time special for each child. Thank you to Laura Iglehart who coordinates the Giving Trees and the wonderful toy and children's book donations. WowToyz in Vergennes continues their annual generous gift of toys. The Flying Pig's Snowflake Program ensures that each child receives a special book. Big thanks to Stephanie Wells who helped sort the donated toys and books for holiday baskets pick-up day. Big thanks also to Jon Davis and Wolfie Davis for all their work on pick-up day.



Holiday basket pick-up: Dec. 18, 10 a.m. to noon, in the Charlotte Congregational Church parking lot.

New winter hours starting Dec. 29: Food Shelf open 4 to 6 p.m., and the second and fourth Wednesday of each month thereafter.

The new year

In a November presentation to the Selectboard, Food Shelf Secretary Peggy Sharpe told the Selectboard, "The Food Shelf is searching for a new location." Peggy asked that we keep our eyes to the ground for any locations that would be a good fit for a nonprofit. She noted that, although the Congregational Church has been incredibly generous in sharing space with us, "we

really need to find something that works better for volunteers and better for the people that we're serving."

Peggy emphasized that the Charlotte community has always been very generous to the Food Shelf, which is a volunteer

organization with no paid employees. Currently, there are over 40 volunteers who handle such things as food procurement, purchasing, distribution, emergency requests, special holiday programs, collaboration with CCS, fall backpack/school supplies program, winter clothing, CCS shoe-in program, the summer lunch program, and the assistance program, through which people may apply for assistance for heat, utilities, rent and other things such as appliance repair. Not to mention balancing the books, publicity and thank-you notes.

Peggy asked the Selectboard to put the Food Shelf on their radar; this would be the start of finding new ways to forge a more formal collaboration that would assist and enhance the Food Shelf's ability to meet and extend outreach into the community.

Contact Information

For Emergency Food, call John: 802-425-3130.

For Information, call: 802-425-3252.

Monetary Donations

Charlotte Food Shelf, Inc., P.O. Box 83, Charlotte, VT 05445

Thank you for understanding and helping with our need to keep everyone as safe as possible.

Education

Early birds catch worms: College application trends



Margo Bartsch
CONTRIBUTOR

The phrase, "The early bird catches the worm," as defined by Dictionary.com, highlights "One who arrives first has the best chance for success." Similarly, applying to colleges by the early deadlines can provide distinct advantages

for students who are prepared to seize the opportunity. There are often three application deadlines: Early Decision (ED), around Nov. 1, with a binding commitment with decisions around Dec. 15; Early Action (EA), around Nov. 1, non-binding option with notification typically starting in December; and Regular Decision (Regular), around Jan. 1, with the typical deadline to hear by April 1. With many colleges receiving a record number of applications, Forbes magazine highlights five trends that could give early applicants an advantage.

First, Forbes encourages "authenticity and resilience as prized traits for applicants." Authenticity is reinforced when a student extends their talents outside of academics or athletics. Resilience is shown when a student overcomes obstacles while sharing their passion with others. For instance, if a student loves skiing, working on ski patrol or volunteering

for middle school ski programs are everyday activities that can bring a student's skills to life and make a difference. Colleges are building communities, where an applicant can emphasize their potential future contribution to the college campus.

Second, with COVID cancelling or limiting standardized test center availability, there is a trend toward test-optional admissions. However, Forbes describes this trend as "optional but preferred." For example, with last year's class of 2025, Georgetown University reported a 30 percent increase in applications with a 12 percent acceptance rate, the lowest in Georgetown's history. In considering scores as part of the Georgetown application review process, more than 80 percent of candidates included scores, and nearly 90 percent of those accepted submitted scores.

Standardized testing is just one element of the Common Application. Colleges can compare a student's GPA with SAT, ACT and AP scores to see if they are congruent. Since many high school juniors took the PSAT this October, analyzing the test results can highlight subjects to practice and future classes to take. Testing can indicate college classroom preparedness.

Third, the numbers of early admissions applications continue to rise. Forbes explains that the 2020-21 increases show a boost for

MIT by 62 percent and Harvard by 57 percent. In addition, the volume of regular applications continued to increase even more. Many colleges cite test-optional requirements, making an application seem less burdensome. This trend is expected to continue this year with most colleges forecasting overall increases in applications.

Fourth, Forbes is predicting that more international students will consider applying to U.S. universities and be returning to campus. The Migration Policy Institute reports that in 2021 the share of all global students enrolled in U.S. higher education continues to increase: 1980-2010: around three percent; 2010-2015: around five percent; and 2015-2020: to nearly six percent or 1.1 million students. This November, the Wall Street Journal reports a four percent increase in 2021-22 international student enrollment.

Finally, the fifth trend is more students taking a gap year before college, according to Forbes. Each college has specific gap year policies to evaluate. The pandemic became a catalyst to reconsider the composition and pathway of education. With online and hybrid learning, along with increasing costs of college, some students choose to defer admissions for a year of work, community service, advocacy and various interests.

Colleges have identified students taking a gap year as a category when composing the freshman class. For example, this October, The Dartmouth newspaper published a student's opinion piece describing the class of 2025: "... of course, there are the gap year kids. For me, my year of adventures was incredible, but also virtually incomparable to the experiences of any other gap year student. Some worked on farms in Hawaii... and many completed fascinating internships at a wide variety of top-notch companies...." Thus, there is not just one direct timeline to college. The route toward higher education can include many learning experiences.

Collectively, all five of these trends are elements that colleges factor in when evaluating the increasing number of candidates for limited spots. With college Early Decision and Early Action notifications starting in December, many admitted students have incorporated these five trends to receive that coveted early acceptance letter. It is never too early to plan ahead to become one of the early birds and catch a well-earned winter break!

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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Holiday Shopping

Keeping it local for the holidays

Mara Brooks
EDITOR

Whatever your budget, you can find unique and beautiful gifts for loved ones of all ages without ever leaving the neighborhood. From Christmas ornaments to comfy sweaters and robes, seasonal candles and even Nutcracker bath bombs, shopping in Charlotte is an uncommonly delightful experience—and supporting local business owners is great for the (holiday) spirit!

a little something

Shelburne Bay Plaza
2989 Shelburne Road, Shelburne

If you're in need of stocking stuffers, fun party gifts or a nice warm sweater for mom, a little something has you covered. Owner Deidre Senior's Shelburne Road boutique is equal parts elegance and whimsy, and shoppers can easily spend an hour or two taking in all the "little something's" this shop has to offer. Visit a little something in person or shop online at alittlesomethingvt.com.



Delightful holiday gifts abound at a little something on Shelburne Road. Pictured is a cozy Hat and Mittens set (\$46.99), Festive Frosty Mints (\$4.99), Silver Braided Picture Frame (from \$36), Holiday Pebbles (\$8.99), and other holiday-themed items.



The Gilded Elephant

3488 Ethan Allen Highway, Charlotte
203-605-7119

The Gilded Elephant owner Jen Novak knows a thing or two about delighting the visual senses. An interior designer by trade, Novak opened The Gilded Elephant last April to bring quality home décor to her clients and customers. For the holiday season, Novak has filled her shop with "a unique selection of Christmas ornaments and some really fabulously scented candles," she said. Visit The Gilded Elephant online at gildedelephanthome.com.



The Gilded Elephant offers exquisitely unique holiday decor. Pictured here, Natural Wood Bead Garland with Tassels (\$24), Lands Downunder Throws (\$128), Semi-Matte White Mini Vase No. 9 (\$22), Semi-Matte White Mini Vase No. 3 (\$20), Candlefish Engraved Fish Candle (\$32), Ceramic White Reindeer Ornament (\$18), and Vintage Small Lidded Dish (\$20).

The Horsford Nursery

2111 Greenbush Road, Charlotte
802-425-2811

The Horsford Nursery is the state's oldest plant nursery and has sat on the same 40-acre Charlotte plot since 1893. Driving onto the garden grounds, I quickly become intoxicated by heavenly winter sights and smells: decorative wreaths, burning wood crackling in an outdoor fire pit and row upon row of fragrant, impossibly lush Christmas trees. While Horsford's might be a local jewel, each holiday season the nursery's signature wreaths are shipped to loyal customers all over the country. The nursery's many holiday offerings can be found online at horsfordnursery.com/local-holiday-shop.



From full, lush Christmas trees, the nursery's signature wreaths and bows for the entryway, Pointsettas for the table, holiday cuttings for the mantel, and colorful ornaments for the tree, Horsford Nursery offers one stop shopping for home holiday decor.



Mysa

65 Falls Road, Shelburne
802-489-5511

Mysa is the boutique to visit when you're shopping for someone special. From candles to clothing to jewelry and accessories, this small but exquisite store is a study in understated luxury and casual elegance. The apparel can be pricey, but the quality is top notch, with gorgeous cashmere and wool sweaters and slacks in winter-perfect neutral shades and striking minimalist jewelry. Visit Mysa online at mysavermont.com.

Mysa offers a brilliant selection of gift items including scented candles (from \$30), Makana Diffuser (\$40), soaps, room sprays, lotions, and bubble baths. (Prices vary).



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Charlotte History

Origins of the railroad through Charlotte

Dan Cole
CHARLOTTE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Two journalists from *The Burlington Weekly Free Press* traveled to Rutland in January 1847 to report on the new railroad’s stockholders meeting and spent two days bumping and lurching in sleigh and wagon to get there. They wrote that what took them two days of “unpleasantness” could be accomplished in two hours on the train. Cities and towns vied for railroads, expecting economic and social advantages over those communities bypassed by rail. In Charlotte, the West Village became the focus of the town, with nearby passenger and freight service, telegraph service, a milk transfer station, a mercantile building containing a general store, a grist mill, a feed store, a hay press, livery stables and storage sheds rented out.

Rail was promoted for rapid movement of people and produce, yet the Rutland would become plagued by a history of low profits, natural disasters and persistent labor problems.

In 1843, Burlington developer Timothy Follett was appointed president of a new railroad corporation and began to seek backers for a railroad with its terminus at the Burlington docks. The project would be known as the Lake Champlain-Connecticut River Railroad, connecting Burlington with Bellows Falls, via Rutland. Civil engineer William B. Gilbert surveyed the most efficient route, reporting on August 4, 1845 that grading would be contracted out while the corporation would absorb the cost of rails, ties and spikes, with the estimated cost for completion at \$22,529.75 per mile—a total of \$2.7 million.

Approximately half of the issued stock, 5392 shares, was purchased by 1304 farmers seeking more markets for their produce. In August 1845, according to *The Boston Advertiser*, Follett and the directors made a pitch in Boston for

investment capital. Nervous investors worried other competing railroads like the Central Vermont would diminish potential income. Much of the legislative agenda was taken up by railroads being presented for incorporation.

Strident arguments filled the newspapers as wealthy challengers schemed to scuttle each other’s proposals. At the stockholders meeting on January 14, 1847, a committee decried the “back room” deals of competitors threatening to derail the entire project (after they had \$1,000,000 subscribed) by discouraging prospective investors.

After several committee reports, the directors immediately awarded contracts in seven separate sections for the grading of the rail bed. On January 22, 1847, *The Burlington Weekly Free Press* promoted building the Rutland line, “because it will open at least 65 to 70 miles of a direct railway communication with New York [and the Boston and Atlantic markets], because of its cheapness as well as the very large amount of way-business alone which it must necessarily command, it cannot fail to be a profitable investment ...”

On October 26, 1847, the Vermont Legislature officially renamed the Champlain-Connecticut River Railroad as the Rutland-Burlington Railroad Corporation—later shortened to just the Rutland Railroad.

A great discovery slowed work near Mt. Holly where, in early October 1848, workers uncovered an eight-by-four-inch fossil tooth in a peat bog. Nearby were two tusks and some bones that would later be identified as a woolly mammoth, which eventually became Vermont’s official terrestrial fossil.

The section passing through Charlotte, covering 50 miles from Burlington to Brandon, was awarded by the directors to Pratt & Company of Burlington, whose chairman, John Bradley, was



The Consolidation #14 (a 2-8-0 engine) hauling the local freight past the Charlotte depot in the early 1940s. The house on the far right is still standing. From *The Rutland Road*, by Jim Shaughnessy; photographer, Philip Hastings.

Follett’s business partner. The bid was \$7300 per mile for grading, masonry, bridging, land damages, etc. Despite aggressive efforts, by June 5, 1849, only five miles of this segment had been laid south from Burlington, and track was just beginning to be laid from Vergennes.

In early September 1849, workers uncovered strange bones in heavy blue clay in Charlotte. They were retrieved by naturalist, professor and clergyman Zadock Thompson, and discovered to be the bones of a saltwater beluga whale—now Vermont’s official marine fossil. At the time, geologists were confused, unaware that the weight of the glacier had depressed the Champlain Valley several hundred feet, allowing the Atlantic Ocean to rush in. It would be almost three millennia before the land rebounded enough to return Lake Champlain to fresh water.

In January 1850, the railroad was completed. When anticipated revenues fell short of projections, the railroad went bankrupt in 1853. Most of the large investors, like Timothy Follett, were financially ruined. By 1871, the line was leased to the rival Central Vermont, which in its turn was bankrupted by the machinations of the St. Albans-based Vermont-Canada Railroad, helped by a new group of investors on the board of the Rutland RR.

Since its inception, the Rutland RR endured monetary peaks and valleys, and managed to survive the Great Depression with the

cooperation of its unions, whose members accepted lower pay and benefits to keep their jobs. Post World War II competition from developing airlines, along with improving highways, eroded rail profits. When Rutland businessman William Ginsburg became president in 1957, the railroad was facing financial straits due to ever-decreasing freight traffic and looming deficits, coinciding with the advent of the interstate highway system that favored trucking, and by increasing demands from labor unions. Ginsburg implemented improvements, attempting to modernize and meet federal standards by the only avenue left open to him: reductions in employees and service.

The employees should have anticipated the precarious position the railroad was in but walked off the job in September 1960. A federal court issued an injunction, and strikers were forced back to work, with a one-year moratorium on further strikes. But contentious discussions deadlocked. Believing he had no alternative to staving off ultimate bankruptcy, on Dec. 4, 1961, Ginsburg stunned everyone by petitioning the ICC for abandonment of the entire line. On Jan. 29, 1963, the Rutland Railroad was granted its petition for abandonment. Legal entanglements delayed the inevitable until Nov. 4, when the State of Vermont began purchasing sections that are now leased and managed by Vermont Railway.

PROPERTY TANSFERS OCT. & NOV. 2021

- Oct. 1** Michael Apodaca Jr. & Keri Anne Jennings to Miles Calaprete & Claire E. Gear, 1.21 acres land only, 124 Elfin Lane, \$185,000.
- Oct. 4** Raven Davis Living Trust to Cathy A. Hunter, 1.95 +/- acres, boundary adjustment, 385 Toad Rd., \$7521.43.
- Oct. 4** Joseph I. & Andrea G. Bergstein to Laurie Bomba, Trustee of Andrew D. Fromm 2012 Irrevocable Trust, 2.90 acres with dwelling, 202 McNeil Cove Rd., \$4,500,000.
- Oct. 6** Clarke W. Hinsdale III to Lawrence W. Jr. & M. Brigit Robinson, 3.31 acres, Lot 1, 299 Meadows Drive, \$185,000.
- Oct. 8** Kathleen Goodrich to Jane Heath 35rker & I, 81 Thompson’s Point Rd., Lot 22-23 1/3 interest, \$283,333.
- Oct. 12** John David & Damaris Herlihy to Victoria Clarke & Hans Glawischnig, .11 +/- acres with dwelling, 22 Common Way, \$505,000.
- Oct. 12** Andrew Thurber to John David & Damaris Herlihy, 3.20 +/- acres with dwelling, 2848 Greenbush Rd., \$749,000.
- Oct. 14** Laura Cahnrs-Ford Revoc. Trust to Stephen S. & Lynne Z. Hale, 10.9 acres with dwelling, 122 island Farm Rd., \$770,000.
- Oct. 18** Peter & Jill Knox to George & Robin Evarts, 8.21 +/- acres with dwelling, 1055 Prindle Rd., \$1,495,000.
- Oct. 21** Kristopher & Julia Sprague to Peter & Barbara Hammer, 5 Common Way, condominium, \$400,000.
- Oct. 25** Rodney & Donna Stearns to Christopher Barker & Isabella Gallo

- McCausland, 5.05 +/- acres with dwelling, 149 Elcy Lane, \$813,750.
- Oct. 25** Mitchel Shifrin Revoc. Trust to Alexander Ford, 2.01 acres +/- with dwelling, 65 Ferry Rd., \$425,000.
- Nov. 2** Sarah Mackey Bridgman Revoc. Trust to Mehitabel B. Chiott, 10.06 acres +/- with dwelling, 136 Wings Point Rd., \$596,000.
- Nov. 8** Robert & Stephanie Struble to Edward Lalonde & Kaye Alexander, 10.01 acres with Dwelling, 172 Whalley Rd., \$675,000.
- Nov. 22** Brian & Katherine O’Connell to Todd Stellfox & Rain Stickney, 28.9 acres +/- with dwelling, 786 Lewis Creek Rd., \$1,025,000.
- Nov. 22** Mehitabel Chiott to Kinloch Corp., 10.06 acres with dwelling, 136 Wings Point Rd., \$657,500.
- Nov. 22** Bruce Barry to 5697 Ethan Allen Highway, LLC, .96 acres +/- with mobile home, 5697 Ethan Allen Highway, \$220,000.
- Nov. 28** Clyde & Chrystal Armell to Ian R. & Chelsea R. Smiley, 8.26 acres with dwelling, 7873 Spear Street, \$441,000.
- Nov. 29** Alan & Christina M. Chant to James & Katherine Ayers Trust, .74 acres +/- with dwelling, 1687 Church Hill Rd., \$545,500.
- Nov. 29** John F. Guerriere to John F. Guerriere & Deborah Kilkelley, .96 acres +/- with dwelling, 10 Elcy Lane, \$204,850.
- Nov. 30** Richard Jr. & Jill Lowrey to Kristopher & Julia Sprague, 25.07 acres +/- open land with garage, 250 Upper Meadow Lane, \$350,000.

This information was supplied by Jay Strausser and Nancy Warren, Four Seasons Sothebys International Real Estate.



Sports

Fall sports wrap-up and Redhawk basketball teams triumph



Edd Merritt
CONTRIBUTOR

also to senior Paige Comeau, who received honorable mention as a defender.

Men’s Soccer

Chance Therrien, a senior midfielder on the Redhawk soccer team received All-State recognition by the *Burlington Free Press*. Coach Rob Cole said that Chance was the closest thing he had to a coach on the field. Chance received honorable mention last year and was named All-State by the soccer coaches this year and an All-New England selection by the nation-wide United Soccer Coaches. Two other Redhawks received honorable mention by the *Free Press*, forward Holden Batchelder and midfielder Zach Spitznagle

Field Hockey

Congratulations to junior Tess Everett, a Redhawk midfielder who was named to the *Free Press’* First All-State Field Hockey Team. She was also named to the Metro Division team.

And congratulations

All-State Football Defense

CVU’s Ryan Canty, senior linebacker, and Jared Anderson, senior back, both were named to the *Free Press* All-State Football Team on defense.

Redhawk basketball off to a good start

In Rutland last week, the men and women both won their initial games in the North/South basketball tournament. The women treated Mt. Mansfield to a 60-point loss, 77-17. Chloe Snipes led the scoring with 26 points, while Shelby Companion, Addi Hunter and Elise Berger also scored in double figures.

The men defeated Mount Anthony by a mere 39 points, 75-36. Although all 14 CVU players scored, Tucker Tharpe and Kyle Easton led the way with 14 and 13 points respectively.

Men and women’s hockey teams gain a win apiece

Neither Stowe women nor Mount Mansfield men could find the back of the net, as the Redhawks beat them 9-0 and 3-0 respectively. For the women, Samara Tucker and Megan Rexford each scored twice, aided by single goals from five others.

Sports

Major League Baseball can't seem to stop selling itself

Henry Bushy
CONTRIBUTOR

Even though the MLB season is over, there is still a lot of action going on in the baseball world. With the possibility of Major League Baseball's Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) expiring on Dec. 1, there has been a flurry of free-agent action.

The CBA is a deal that dictates who gets what amount of revenue and what the minimum wage for players should be. If the CBA expires on Dec. 1, the owners could force a lockout. A lockout would be a complete stoppage of work in MLB as the owners protest. No free agents could be signed, no trades could be made, and the stadiums and offices would be closed until a CBA agreement is reached. If the lockout goes on long enough, 2022 Spring Training and even the 2022 season could be pushed back indefinitely, like in 1994-5.

In light of that, many teams decided that now is the time to hire free agents. There has been a flurry of signings in the past week, with a whopping \$1.46 billion doled out on free-agent contracts just this month. The main spending craze started on Nov. 27, when the New York Mets signed outfielder Starling Marte for four years and \$78 million, outfielder Mark Canha for two years and \$26.5 million, and infielder Eduardo Escobar for two years and \$20 million. This all went down in a matter of hours. The next day, the Miami Marlins signed outfielder Ávisal Garcia for four years and \$53 million. Also, on Nov. 28, the Toronto Blue Jays signed right-handed pitcher Kevin Gausman, who had an excellent season with the San Francisco Giants. This is a step forward for the Jays rotation as they battle for playoff contention in what may be the best division in all of MLB, the AL East. Last season, for comparison, Toronto finished with a record of 91-71, which is actually better than the World Champion Atlanta Braves. However, the Tampa Bay Rays won 100 games, and the Red Sox and the Yankees were both 92-70, eliminating the Jays from playoff contention. The Texas Rangers also signed three players for a combined amount of \$236 million, the most notable player being second baseman/shortstop Marcus Semien, who set an all-time record for home runs by a second baseman with 45.

On Nov. 29, two of MLB's best pitchers were signed—Max Scherzer and AL-Cy Young award winner Robbie Ray—who went to the Mets and Seattle Mariners respectively. Scherzer signed for three years and \$130 million, while Ray signed for five years and \$115 million. Also, on Nov. 29, the Texas Rangers signed shortstop Corey Seager to a 10-year, \$325 million contract, the largest deal brokered this winter so far. This brings Texas' total offseason spending to an incredible \$561.2 million, including the three players they'd signed earlier. To cap it all off, the Detroit Tigers signed shortstop Javier Baez to a six-year, \$140 million contract.

However, the most interesting thing about the offseason has been that none of the big deals were signed by teams that were in the 2021 postseason. Financial giants such as the Yankees, Dodgers, Red Sox and Padres have also been silent, save for small one-year deals for the Sox and Dodgers. This is unlikely to last forever, though. Look for those teams to make deals late.

Henry Bushey is a CVU student with an interest in journalism, particularly in sports writing. He lives in Charlotte.

Outdoors

Surviving winter and a story of hope



Elizabeth Bassett
CONTRIBUTOR

On a recent gloomy afternoon, a loud crack shattered the quiet along the boardwalk at Raven Ridge, The Nature Conservancy's preserve at the southern edge of Charlotte. An enormous beaver surfaced, breaking through the ice on the marsh beside Rotax Road. A few minutes later, another percussive sound and a second beaver rose out of the murky water, swimming like an icebreaker across the water.

Beavers don't generally operate in plain sight unless they are not fully prepared for winter. In the fall these rodents must build or repair a lodge, their winter residence, and store a raft of branches that will feed them through the winter. This food supply, weighted down with larger limbs, is accessible under the ice where the beavers can eat, safe from predators.

How do other wildlife neighbors, without woodstoves or heat pumps, survive winter?

Strategies of other mammals include true hibernation, when body temperatures drop significantly, heart rate and breathing almost stop, and internal organs become nearly inactive. True hibernators include certain bats, jumping mice, and groundhogs or woodchucks.

Black bears and chipmunks are among the shallow hibernators that are dormant, characterized by drops in heart, breathing and metabolic rate, lowered body temperature, and long periods of inactivity.

A less familiar term is brumation, the hibernation of cold-blooded species. In a previous column, I mentioned a hibernaculum where up to 100 snakes, with minimal body activity, gather beneath the frostline to keep one another warm through the cold of winter. The wood frog, a resident of our vernal pool at Raven Ridge, freezes during winter—no breathing, heartbeat or metabolic activity, with up to 65 percent of the water in its body turned to ice.

Leaving winter thoughts behind, here's a story of hope—something we all could use in this moment.

It's not uncommon for loons to need a rescue, often from entanglements in fishing lines. In early October, loon biologist Eric Hanson got a call about a loon trailing milfoil in Lake St. Catherine. Since 1998, Eric has been the biologist for the Vermont Loon Conservation Project, a joint effort between Vermont Center for Ecostudies and the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department. A follow-up call indicated that a lure was spotted by the loon's webbed feet. Wardens from Vermont Fish & Wildlife attempted to capture her, without success. Only when the loon became stranded on the beach was it possible for Hanson to capture her. "What we found," Hanson said, "was pretty horrifying—a four-inch lure, with treble hooks on both ends, had pierced the webbing on both feet. It was a mess."

First stop was Vermont Institute of Natural Science's (VINS) Center for Wild Bird Rehabilitation. Director Grae O'Toole returned to the facility after hours and, with Hanson, worked for a half hour, sorting out how best to remove five barbs from the loon's webbed feet. "In the end it was my grandfather's pliers/wire-cutter combo tool that did the trick," Hanson said.

Treating the loon with antibiotics and for broken toes, Grae realized that more care was necessary. After consulting with loon veterinary specialists, it was decided that if the loon could outswim the wardens' boat with "both feet tied behind her back," she was a good candidate for surgery. Not many vets are knowledgeable about surgery on webbed feet, but Judy Herman of Animal Wellness Center in Augusta, Maine, is that doctor. Dr. Herman

performed the surgery.

A few days of healing out of the water were followed with swimming time in a pool. Staff noticed that the loon preferred to be in the water full-time, a good sign, and that she was soon diving like other loons. By the end of October, doctors determined that her feet had healed adequately for her to be released. She had also begun to "pace" back and forth in the pool, a sign that she was ready to go.

Before the loon was set free, Lucas Savoy, lead loon biologist of the Biodiversity Research Institute, placed a U.S. Fish & Wildlife silver band on her better leg. On Nov. 7, less than a month from the first phone call, the loon swam into Penobscot Bay, soon becoming a mere speck on the horizon.

May you find reasons for hope in our rich and beautiful outdoors in every season.



Make a bee line to Winter Lights at the Shelburne Museum, a whimsical, musical, and delightful celebration of the beauty of the museum's collection and our dark season. It's such a joy, during this pandemic, to see groups of family and friends, glowsticks lighting the way, laughing and smiling on a cold winter's night. It's worth going just to see the Ti, outlined in red and white and sitting in a pool of blue waves. Tickets at ShelburneMuseum.org.

Photo by Elizabeth Bassett

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On Books

New picture books—great gifts for young readers

Emily Raabe
CONTRIBUTOR

And just like that it's December again. Some things have changed since this time last year, and some things, alas, are still with us...but regardless, the holidays are upon us, and it's time to cozy in with some beautiful picture books. In honor of Covid, this list comes with a caveat – if you have tried to buy an appliance in the last two years, you may know what is coming. Thanks to 'supply chain issues', a couple of my top picks are not available until early 2022. But they were just too good to leave off the list, so I've added them at the end. For the most part, you will find the titles on this list at our own Flying Pig.

We All Play: Kimētawānaw, written & illustrated by Julie Flett. This book is a poem of motion, with each spread dedicated to different animals that hide, hop, peek, peep, sniff, seek, rumble, and roll. The animals' spreads are punctuated by the refrain "We play too!" translated into Cree as "Kimētawānaw mina" and illustrated with children who make the human versions of all the animal motions, ending with yawns and yips and "slowly, side by side," falling asleep. The drawings are soft suffusions of pastel and pencil, and the addition of the Cree words (there is a glossary in the back of the book) is a lovely way to widen the idea of language for a young child. This book is listed for 3-7, but I would recommend it more for 2-5. If you have an older child, try Flett's gorgeous 2019 book *Birdsong*, which is in constant rotation in our house.

Amos McGee Misses the Bus, written by Philip C. Stead & illustrated by Erin E. Stead.

Amos McGee, the beloved zookeeper from the Steads' 2011 Caldecott award winner *A Sick Day for Amos McGee* is back. This time, Amos misses his morning bus to work at the zoo. When he finally arrives, he falls asleep on a bench while his gently concerned animal friends pitch in to help. The magic of the Steads' collaboration lies in the loving kindness of the friendships depicted, and in Erin Steads' moving woodblock and pencil artwork. I never tire of reading the first Amos McGee book aloud, and I expect I will enjoy this one on repeat as well. Ages 3-6.

Cat Problems, written by Jory John & illustrated by Lane Smith. For an entirely different tone, I give you the uproarious *Cat Problems*. Anyone who lives in Vermont is familiar with the indoor cat conundrum: Let the cat out and it gets eaten by a coyote/bobcat/ambitious owl; keep it inside and it becomes cantankerous, destructive and, in the case of *Cat Problems*, a hilariously curmudgeonly bully. Kids will delight in the cat's atrociously bad behavior, as it yowls for attention, demands "a little bowl service around here" and terrorizes the other resident cat. Ages 3-7.

¡¡Manu!! Written & illustrated by Kelly Fernández. I bought this graphic novel for my eight-year-old nephew, but my five-year-old daughter latched onto it and absolutely refused to let it go. I can see why it intrigued her so much. *¡¡Manu!!* is enrolled at La Academia de Santa Domingo, a school for girls learning magic. She is wild and daring, but

also struggling to find her place amid her formidable but chaos-creating magical powers. Get this empowering graphic novel for the 8-12 year-old girl in your life, but also for the boys – I'm buying a second copy for my nephew.

The Night Before Christmas, written by Clement Moore and illustrated by PJ Lynch. If you celebrate Christmas, I'm delighted to introduce you to PJ Lynch, an award-winning Irish illustrator. This year, Lynch offers a true classic – *The Night Before Christmas*. The illustrator does not reinvent here – he merely imagines, in superbly rendered watercolor and gouache paintings, each scene of the beloved poem in loving detail. This is a book to gift, or to add to a collection. And if you don't celebrate Christmas, check out Lynch's 2020 *Haunted Lake*, a ghostly love story that Kirkus reviews calls "Satisfying and visually superb" (Ages 8-12 for *Haunted Lake*).

And here are two of my absolute favorite picture books of this year that you will not be able to get by Christmas. If you are willing to wait, these can be yours in January 2022, right about when all the books that you bought in December have begun to lose their charm...

Night Walk, written and illustrated by Marie Dorléans. In an exquisitely rendered reversal of the picture book about nighttime fears, this book opens instead with Mama "interrupting the night-time darkness" to wake her children, whispering, "Let's go, so we get there on time." What follows is a hushed and lovely family ramble through the sleeping village and out

into the countryside. Led by the moon, accompanied by night sounds, and washed in watercolor blues, the family moves through forests, fields, and over rocks to their mysterious destination. I won't give that away, because I really want you to experience this lovely, quiet, nighttime adventure for yourself. What a beautiful bedtime book. Ages 3-8

The Little Wooden Robot and the Log Princess, written & illustrated by Tom Gauld. I admit, I resisted this book. Robots and log people? Not so sure. But after seeing it on just about every "best of" lists this year, I gave in and got it, and I am so happy that I did. This book is a fantastically creative mix of the familiar (once upon a time, a king and queen wanted a child, so they went to a witch), and the new (they also went to an inventor, and they ended up with a very unusual pair of children). A fairy tale, a hero's journey, and a tale of love and perseverance, this story finds its own very entertaining way to "happily ever after." As an important aside, the cast of this fairy tale, as with *We All Play*, is racially diverse. Ages 3-8.

So there you have it. It was a challenging year in many respects, but it was a great year for books, even if you may have to wait to get your hands on a few of them. But how wonderful, as the weather turns, to curl up with the small people in your life and share the world through pages. Happy Holidays, everyone. Enjoy your giving, your receiving, and your reading!

Preparing our hearts...



Katherine Arthaud
CONTRIBUTOR

so far that promise seems always to end up broken like icicles on pavement—and at some point, usually within two weeks of the Big Day, I realize I've done it again and am once again frazzled, resentful and decidedly un-

Greetings, readers and friends. I hope you are enjoying this holiday season and not getting too stressed out by all the busyness this time seems to require. I swear, every year, I promise myself I will keep things simpler, go a little slower...but

festive. What is it? Seriously...what?

As luck or grace would have it, I stumbled recently upon a podcast by Buddhist psychologist, author and teacher Tara Brach, "Preparing Our Hearts for the Holidays," which I found surprisingly pacifying. The general idea is that, though the holidays can be times of love and celebration, they also have a way of putting Miracle-Gro on relational conflicts and challenges. This short talk—which includes two meditations—explores how we can bring insight, grace and openheartedness to ourselves and to others in our lives. I have listened to it once. I will listen to it again. And probably again, and a

few more times. Honestly, I would do well to listen to it daily. I recommend it highly if, like me, this time of year proves challenging for you. In this holiday talk (there are legions of Tara Brach meditations and talks out there), Brach asks an interesting question: "How would you like to feel after the holiday is over?" I find this inquiry has helped guide me to set an intention for myself—not an intention having to do with how many sheets of cookies I will bake, how many gingerbread houses I will construct (only to watch them implode before my eyes on the kitchen table), or how many presents I will wrap or stockings I will fill or presents I will buy or Christmas cards I will send—but more about how I want to *feel* about the holiday once it is over. Tara Brach's question helps gently steer me away from the Christmas craziness toward the heart of the matter, nudging me closer to the warm, loving person I want to be in this world, for myself and for my friends.

I love Tara Brach. Fifteen years ago, my friend Andie and I kind of by accident heard her speak at Omega in New York City. I was going to say she blew our socks off, but the truth is, she disarmed us both and soothed our monkey minds and helped center us. Radically. Which reminds me, her book *Radical Acceptance* is a must-read. It's been around for a while (since 2004, to be exact), but do check it out. And even if you have read it, rereading it wouldn't hurt. I think I've read it three times, personally. I'm sure I will read it again.

But anyway...do check out "Preparing Our



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On Books

PODCAST

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 16

Hearts for the Holidays” if you want help calming and centering yourself during this time. Just Google “Tara Brach” and you will find this talk listed among many others. It’s all free. Thank you, Tara.

Oh, and another thing. Though her lessons are serious—about mindfulness, and presence, meditation and letting go, etc.—they are peppered with amusing little jokes and stories, which serve to lighten the experience of going deeper, reminding all those who walk this walk that there is joy in the journey and we don’t have to take ourselves so seriously.

A quote I just found from *Radical Acceptance: Embracing Your Life with the Heart of a Buddha*:

“Perhaps the biggest tragedy of our lives is that freedom is possible, yet we can pass our years trapped in the same old patterns... We may want to love other people without holding back, to feel authentic, to breathe in the beauty around us, to dance and sing. Yet each day we listen to inner voices that keep our life small.”

Love that.

Another one: “When someone says to us, as Thich Nhat Hanh suggests, ‘Darling, I care about your suffering,’ a deep healing begins.”

This last quote brings me back to what struck me most deeply about Tara Brach’s lecture 15 years ago. I am remembering that during that time I was quite angry about how things were going with a friend of mine. I felt resentful about the way he had handled something (I’ve now forgotten exactly what) and guilty

and conflicted about taking space from the relationship. At one point in her talk, Brach asked us to think of something that was causing us pain, then, after inviting us to sit with the feelings for a moment, in her soft and very soothing voice, she asked us to speak to ourselves, saying something to the effect of, “Sweetheart (or Katherine/your name) (or Dearest), I am so sorry you are suffering. I see you are in pain...” Etcetera. The idea is not to fight the feeling or hate the pain or seek to run away from it or wish/pray it away, but rather, to shine some loving kindness on it, and on ourselves. It seemed so simple, what she was saying. It still seems simple. But I

was surprised at the time by how powerfully and deeply disarming it was to simply address myself in a gentle, loving way, and express compassion about the pain itself, the struggle roiling within. I remember experiencing a noticeable softening, along with a subtly brightening openness. It’s hard to describe. Maybe you had to have been there. But I have been a devotee of Tara Brach ever since—not the most fervent or consistent devotee, to

be honest, but I do turn to her when I think of it and/or when I need her. And here she is, coming through for me again. Maybe she will for you, too...if it happens that you are looking for this kind of light now.

...And so, peaceful holidays to you. May you experience love and acceptance in your heart, feel a sense of belonging with the people and creatures that surround you, and if it be the will of heaven, find some good new books under your tree and some quiet time to read them.



Buddhist psychologist, author and teacher Tara Brach
Photo contributed.

Out Takes

What’s this bubble of life called music?

Edd Merritt
CONTRIBUTOR

*O, the rising of the sun,
And the running of the deer
The playing of the merry organ,
The holly bears a bark,
As bitter as the gall,
And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ,
For to redeem us all.*

“The Holly and the Ivy Christmas Carol”—
Andrew Peterson

OK, so I’m stuck with speakers through my computer, hearing aids to enhance my listening ability, a three-stack set of shelves that hold a broad selection of CDs, and much of the time the various musical sources serve as escape mechanisms for my written pieces that readers say are marginal—if not full-out lousy—newspaper articles.

So, rather than devour complaints and put my mind to use for the evaluation of what others are saying about my thoughts, I simply turn up the speakers, tilt my wheelchair back a notch or two and listen to Springsteen lament the passing of Elvis Presley. It works wonders on the brain.

It does not make me see physical changes on that part of my anatomy that come and go depending on the song. That data belongs to scientists. My musical data becomes part of a consciousness that emanates as feelings. I feel its effects rather understand its elements.

Where do human beings’ feelings fit in this thing we call life? Let’s not forget that life is limited. I am being made aware of that

as I move closer to the end of my own. In addition to the physical changes one goes through, disallowing what one used to be able to do, there are the recognitional ones too, often brought about by the deaths or severe disabilities of friends and relatives.

I’ve outlived others, but I have lost half a leg in the process. How did that happen? It happened through age and infection, two items I could do little to deter—the aging a foregone conclusion, the infection often something that goes along with it, the amputation a medical treatment.

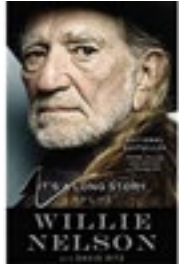
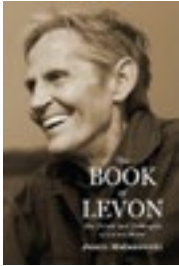
So, how does music help us make it through these changes of age?

My son recently gave me two books by and about musicians. The first was Levon Helm’s autobiography, the second the autobiography of Willy Nelson. I rather struggled through the two authors descriptions of songs they wrote and how these songs and instruments played for and about humanity.

Take Levon Helm for instance, an Arkansas rambler in a largely Canadian band. He brought much of the culture of his home southland to bear on that of his northern brethren, and he did that through his musicianship, largely drumming, no

less. (Were you “beating out the meaning of life,” Levon?)

The dent of Helm’s lyrics he felt needed to be imprinted on others’ lives as well as his own. “The Night they Drove Old Dixie Down,” “The Weight,” “Life is a Carnival,” “Stage Fright,” were songs that grew from his brain



SEE OUT TAKES PAGE 18

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OUT TAKES

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 17

to hit the audience where they lived. When it happened it gave music an imprimatur that matches literature.

Willy Nelson, on the other hand, sees music as a source of power. Certain songs heal wounds of the mind. The fact that they have been sung many times by many different people is “evidence that these old melodies and old lyrics, like old prayers, had proven their power.” Power even goes to the point of understanding despair. Take Willy’s singing of “Home Motel.” It’s where he goes when day is through. It’s off the beaten path, a place to go on “Lost Love Avenue.” Its power goes to the singer and the listener’s understanding of life.

Music may be a bubble in the universe, a space ship that touches down and takes off as people feel it explains galactic events to them.

Is it a native element of the universe? Of the millions of galaxies out there, does music provide sustenance in nearly all of them? Humans are a relatively small part of one star’s planets. That they encourage something called music to define their lives probably means that that “definingness” occurs around a potentially large number of stars. It could quite easily be an element among the millions of stars and planets in the galaxies.

A little closer to home, the Christian holidays are wrapped around music, much of which crosses country boundaries. I’m currently feasting on a CD by the Irish band, The Chieftains, that contains numbers ranging from the “Bells of Dublin” to “A Breton Carol” to a “Brafferton Village/Walsh’s Hornpipe.”

So, as is often the case, humanity may or, then again may not, be the cosmic feature that brings something to light.

It may be time to follow the lead of the Muppet “Animal” as he bangs on the drums and yells to the heavens ----- “MUUSIIC!”

Sacred Hunter
The Christmas duck

Many years ago, when I was struggling to maintain financial stability, I would nurture my spirit as often as I could by spending time outdoors doing things that made me feel like I belonged in this universe. I would fish, hunt, forage, or just sit in the winter woods and watch the snow fall around me. Solitude and quiet were my medicine.

One day as I sat under an old oak in reverie of the gentle snow coming down through the surrounding pines, I was wrestling with some sadness that I couldn’t afford a nice Christmas present for my bride. It had been a tough year and we were relying on our love and faith to pull us through. I asked the Great Spirit for help. The answer that I got was a small voice in my head that I should pursue what I love and that everything would work out.

I got up and walked out of the woods as the snow began piling up. The light fluffy, happy kind of snow. The kind of snow that, as a child, made me feel joy and peace. I walked slowly home through the powdery white covering, kicking the drifts, and watching them explode with all the glee I felt in my childhood. Poof! Poof! I laughed as I walked. My spirit was rebounding, and I took a deep breath. Arriving at the house, I grabbed the keys to my old pickup with the rusted side panels and shoved it in 4-wheel drive. I plowed out of the driveway and began pushing through the snow beginning to accumulate on the road. “Where to?” I thought. Let’s drive down to the beach and see if any ice is forming for ice fishing season.

I took the long way, wandering down Spear Street toward Lewis Creek, around the bend and up the hill toward North Ferrisburgh. Crossing Route 7 at Hollow Road, I turned into the Mobil Short Stop to wish my dear friend Dorrie “Happy Holidays.” Somehow, every time I stopped in here, Dorrie would

cheer me up. When I brought a cup of French roast coffee to the counter she said, “This one’s on me.” Wow! Perhaps, the purpose of the journey today was about realizing that, in general, people are kind. Still, what to do about the Christmas present for my wife?

I pulled out of the station and headed west to Greenbush Road, then North through the West Village. I turned left at Ferry Road and headed toward the lake—a place that always brings peace and, if I’m listening with my heart, answers to my most existential questions. Impulsively, I turned right on Lake Road and headed toward the beach. As I crossed the covered bridge, I saw a lone drake mallard flapping his wings on the shore as he faced the North wind, slapping the shoreline with foot-high waves. I knew from the past that the piece of property south of the beach was not posted or restricted to hunting and was more than the required 500 feet of any occupied property. I parked my truck and watched him for a bit. He appeared to be at peace with his solitude. I considered just watching him, but after a few minutes, he began letting out a series of loud quacks and it seemed as if he was calling to me. Was he presenting himself to me? Was he offering his life to nurture mine? It sure felt that way.

Tentatively, I went back to the truck and let out my Labrador retriever, Buck, picked up my shotgun, and one shell. If I was meant to shoot, I had just one chance, and if I missed, it was not meant to be. I walked slowly toward him. He did not fly away. He just got quiet and looked out over the frigid expanse of the bay. I had Buck heel at my side and wait. I raised my gun, expecting him to take wing. He did not. One more quack and the old shotgun fired. The drake mallard dropped on the shore. A clean shot.



Bradley’s Labrador retriever, Buck. Photo by Bradley Carleton.

I sent Buck to retrieve the bird. When he brought it to hand, he delivered it as if it had some significant importance. It was then that I noticed it was banded. In fact, it was double banded! One gray steel band on one leg and a green one on the other. I was curious. I’d shot many banded birds before but never a green band. I examined it carefully and saw the words “\$100 Reward Band” imprinted on the green steel ring. “Call USFWS.”

I held the magnificent creature in my hands, admiring his beautiful blue and white speculum and his iridescent green head. Snow flurries blowing off the lake caressed my face. I started to cry. I looked out over the wind-whipped lake, my tears stinging as they froze on my cheeks. I closed my eyes and said “Thank you” aloud. My love for my wife, for this bird, for following my bliss, would now allow me to purchase the most meaningful Christmas present I could imagine.

Bradley Carleton is Executive Director of Sacred Hunter.org, a non-profit that seeks to educate the public on the spiritual connection of man to nature.




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Town

Library news



Margaret Woodruff
DIRECTOR

Library Art Sale Dec. 13–20, during library hours

COVID forced a break in 2020. So, we are especially excited to announce the return of the library art event

featuring local Charlotte artists who have generously agreed to donate a portion of the proceeds from the sale of their work. Come shop locally for the perfect holiday gifts for friends and family (or for yourself!) while supporting the library. Included in the sale are original paintings, ceramics, greeting cards and crafts for all tastes, and all budgets!

Mitten Tree: Are you a knitter, crocheter or just like to shop? The Mitten Tree is up at the Charlotte Library and waiting to be decorated with handmade/new cold-weather gear. We are also a designated food shelf drop-off location. All items collected will be going to a local non-profit organization.

Happening at the library Book Chat is Back!

Fridays at 9:30 a.m. via Zoom. Note: no Book Chat on Dec. 24 or Dec. 31. Join Margaret on Friday mornings at 9:30 a.m. to discuss new books, old books and books we might have missed. Each week, Margaret selects a theme and highlights related titles from the library collection. Register for Book Chat on the library website.

Mystery Book Group: *The Thursday Murder Club* by Richard Osman Monday, Dec. 20, at 10 a.m. via Zoom

Join Zoom Meeting: us02web.zoom.us/j/84467010512
Four septuagenarians with a few tricks up their sleeves, a female cop with her first big case, a brutal murder.... Welcome to...*The Thursday Murder Club*.

In a peaceful retirement village, four unlikely friends meet weekly in the Jigsaw Room to discuss unsolved crimes. Together they call themselves the Thursday Murder Club. Elizabeth, Joyce, Ibrahim and Ron might be

pushing 80, but they still have a few tricks up their sleeves.

When a local developer is found dead with a mysterious photograph left next to his body, the Thursday Murder Club suddenly finds itself in the middle of their first live case. As the bodies begin to pile up, can our unorthodox but brilliant gang catch the killer before it's too late? Copies of the book available at the library circulation desk.

Coming in January: *Regeneration Book Discussion*

Sustainable Charlotte and the Charlotte Library are jointly hosting a book discussion of Paul Hawken's newest book, *Regeneration: Ending the Climate Crisis in One Generation*. We'll begin, via Zoom, Jan. 11 at 7 p.m. and continue for the following 10 weeks. Each section of the book is filled with amazing information and deserves its own discussion. This is a hopeful book, filled with fascinating and inspiring stories of regenerative activities from around the world. Anyone can find something that will urge them into some

new action. As Jane Goodall writes in her foreword, "*Regeneration* is a rebuttal to doomsayers who believe it is too late."

For more information, please contact the library: info@charlottepubliclibrary.org or call 802-425-3864. Please register in advance by Dec. 16: bit.ly/2ZRbbEp.

For more information about Sustainable Charlotte, either go to the website at sustainablecharlottevt.org or contact Ruah Swennerfelt at ruahswennerfelt@gmail.com. Copies of the book will be available at the library by Dec. 22.

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

Library Contact Information

Margaret Woodruff, Director
Cheryl Sloan, Youth Services Librarian
Susanna Kahn, Tech Librarian
Phone: 802-425-3864
Email: info@charlottepubliclibrary.org

Charlotte Senior Center news

Staff Report
CHARLOTTE SENIOR CENTER

Winter classes are in full swing at the Senior Center. Check the winter schedule on the center website, CharlotteSeniorCenterVT.org. You can register in person at the center, by mail, or by phone at 802-425-6345.

Almost all Senior Center courses and events are in person. We will post masking and vaccination requirements at the front door and on our website, CharlotteSeniorCenterVT.org. If you are in doubt, please call 802-425-6345 before coming in.

Upcoming January events

Open Café

During January, join us in the Senior Center café on Wednesday and Thursday mornings. Drop in between 9:30 and 11:30 a.m. for coffee or tea and a morning treat. It's a pleasant, sunny spot to visit with friends or meet new ones. Beverages and treats are provided by the Friends of the Senior Center.

Wednesday 1 p.m. Talks

Jan. 5, Africa's Tower of Babel with Lewis Mudge

The Central African Republic is a land of both micro rebellions over small fiefdoms and geo-political fights between Russia and the West. Where is this country, who lives there, what is going on there and why should we care? Lewis Mudge is Central Africa Director at Human Rights Watch, focusing on Burundi, the Central African Republic, Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda. He lived in Africa for over 13 years.

Jan. 12, How Geography Affects History with Brian Bock

Take a look at world history through the lens of geography. How have the peaks and oceans driven various cultures and historical events? What can maps tell us about upcoming conflicts? Is geographical determinism relevant in the cyber age? Can we apply some of the concepts affecting world history to Vermont's past and future? Brian Bock has always had an interest in maps and enjoys dabbling in big-picture, geo-political concepts to see if they make sense on a planet connected by the internet.

Classes starting in January

Note that some of these courses require early registration so materials can be shared.

Short Story Selections

Thursdays, 1–2 p.m., on Jan. 13, 20 and 27

Join Library Director Margaret Woodruff to discuss a variety of short stories. Co-sponsored by the Charlotte Library. Please register by Jan. 6 so reading lists can be shared. No fee.

Oscar Nomination Screening

Thursdays, 2–4 p.m., Jan. 13 and 27.

Sean Moran will screen a to-be-announced movie or documentary from the list of Academy Award nominations. Registration required. No fee.

Italian for Total Beginners with Nicole Librandi

Friday mornings, 10–11, Jan. 7–Feb. 4

You've never studied Italian? Do you dream of traveling to Italy and ordering your morning cappuccino? Feeling tongue-tied? Then this class is for you! Please register by Dec. 31. Fee: \$40.

French for Travelers with Alysse Anton

Fridays, 1–2 p.m., Jan. 7–Feb. 11 on Zoom

Learn to navigate cities and not feel lost when you travel to Montréal or other French-speaking lands. Practice vocabulary and build your confidence. For true French beginners or those who haven't studied French in a long time. Register by Dec. 29. Fee: \$60.

Book discussion: *Lovingkindness: The Revolutionary Art of Happiness* with Katie Franko

Mondays, 10:30–noon, Jan. 10, 14, Feb. 7 and 21.

Learn how the Buddhist practice of lovingkindness can help us discover the joyful heart within us. Pre-register by Jan. 3; limit of 10. No fee.

Meals

Monday lunch on Jan. 3 and 10

Lunch is served from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. The suggested donation is still only \$5. Take-out may be requested.

Gents Breakfast, Jan. 13, 7–9 a.m.

Once a month the men gather for breakfast. Please register by Tuesday, Jan. 11. Suggested donation is \$5.

Ongoing groups

The Fiber Arts and the Arts groups continue to meet weekly. Come in to play Mahjong and duplicate bridge.

Ongoing exercise classes

Exercise classes are ongoing, and you can join at any time. Check out a class one time for free—and you may check out different classes. You are welcome to call with questions or stop in.

Continuing classes include Chair Yoga, Gentle Yoga, Pilates and Pilates Plus, Essentrics, Strength Maintenance, Mindfulness Meditation, T'ai Chi for Beginners and T'ai Chi Advanced, and Meditation with Charlie. Both Pilates classes are hybrid—in-person and on Zoom.

Check the winter schedule on the center's website for days and times: CharlotteSeniorCenterVT.org. Register in

person or by phone at 802-425-6345.

Questions? New to the area? Thinking about volunteering?

Stop in and say hello. We are located at 212 Ferry Road in Charlotte and are open M–F from 9–4. Or give us a call us at 802-425-6345. Residents from other communities are always welcome. Our mission is to serve those over 50. We look forward to seeing you soon.

Classifieds

Reach your friends and neighbors for only \$12 per issue. (Payment must be sent before issue date.) Please limit your ad to 35 words or fewer and send it to The Charlotte News Classifieds, P.O. Box 251, Charlotte, VT 05445 or email ads@thecharlottenews.org.

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Need a fresh start to 2022? Let **Lafayette Painting** give your home a beautiful new look. Our painters can do a lot in a day. **LafayettePaintingInc.com** or call **863-5397** to hear about our winter discount.

Calendar of Events

Today through Dec. 20

Shop locally for the perfect holiday gifts for friends or family at the **Charlotte Library Art Show and Sale**. Participating artists donate a portion of their sales to the library. Stop by during library hours to find some treasures by Charlotte artists. Something for every taste, every age and every budget. Runs through Monday, Dec. 20. Masks required inside library. More info at charlottepubliclibrary.org.

Thursday, Dec. 16 – Saturday, Dec. 18, 7:30 p.m.

It's a Wonderful Life - A live radio play is presented by the Shelburne Players, bringing a beloved American holiday classic to life as a live 1940s radio broadcast. With the help of an ensemble that brings a few dozen characters to the stage, the story of idealistic George Bailey unfolds as he considers ending his life one fateful Christmas Eve. Shows at the Shelburne Town Hall, Shelburne Village. Tickets may be purchased online in advance at shelburneplayers.com, or call 802-343-2602 for more info.

Thursday, Dec. 16 – Saturday, Jan. 1, 5–8 p.m.

Winter Lights at Shelburne Museum is a spectacular and new holiday tradition. The museum campus comes aglow with lights to warm our hearts during this dark month. This uplifting and shimmering show is appropriate for all ages; please inquire about accessibility at info@shelburnemuseum.org. Dress warmly. The museum cafe is open for snacks and warm beverages. Runs 5–8 p.m. many evenings between Dec. 16 and Jan. 1. For tickets and more info, see shelburnemuseum.org/visit/winter-lights.

Friday, Dec. 17, 5–7 p.m.

Join us at the **Shelburne Vineyard** for a casual, festive evening of sipping wine and enjoying instrumental classical Christmas music played on the guitar by local musician Cory Cogley. Admission: free and open to all—no special reservations or tickets required. All tables are FCFS. Indoors, limited seating. For more info, visit shelburnevineyard.com or call 802-985-8222.

Saturday, Dec. 18, 10:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.

Ornament-making for children takes place at the Bixby Library in Vergennes. You can either take-and-make these ornaments at home or drop in and create them on Dec. 18. For more info, call 802-877-2211 or visit bixbylibrary.org/event/ornament-making-for-children.

Saturday, Dec. 18, 7:30 p.m.

Social Band, Burlington's lively band of singers, offer up their **Deep Midwinter Concert**, which will bring some peace and calm amidst the holiday hubbub. The group will put its own special stamp on the season with carols you may have never heard, contemporary works by Vermont composers, stirring songs from the American shape-note tradition, and joyful sing-alongs that allow each and every one of us to sing in community (even if masked). At Temple Sinai, S.

Burlington. \$18 at the door; for tickets and more info: socialband.org/concerts.

Saturday, Dec. 18, 3 p.m.

The Hinesburg Artist Series singers invite the public to join them for outdoor caroling in front of the Hinesburgh Public House. Dress appropriately for this festive gathering. The Hinesburgh Public House will provide cookies and hot chocolate. Join neighbors and friends for an afternoon of joyous singing to celebrate the holidays! For more info: hinesburgartistseries.org.

Saturday, Dec. 18, through Sunday, Jan. 2, daily 10 a.m.–4 p.m. (closed Christmas day)

Christmas at the Farm: Billings Farm & Museum in Woodstock, Vermont, comes alive with holiday activities: visiting farm animals, warming up by campfires with hot chocolate, candle-dipping and possible snowshoeing. Old-fashioned cheer abounds at this festive family event. For more info: billingsfarm.org/events/christmas-at-the-farm-7-2021-12-18/2021-12-18.

Saturday, Dec. 18, 4–6 p.m.

Join the **Green Mountain Druid Order** for an annual sunset ceremony within the stones, around the fire, by the Waters Between. We will pause with the sun in honor of this fertile time of deepest darkness and the rebirth of the child of light. Dress warmly. Meet at the Earth Clock at Oakledge Park in S. Burlington. For more info: greenmountaindruidorder.org.

Saturday, Dec. 18, 5–8 p.m.

Full Moon Viking Feast: Enjoy a torchlit banquet at the Adventure Lodge in Vergennes. To reserve your spot or for more info: adventuredinner.com, or call 248-224-7539.

Sunday, Dec. 19, 4–5 p.m. and 5:30–6:30 p.m.

The Clemmons Family Farm Kwanzaa Storytelling Program
See more on page 11

Sunday, Dec. 19, 2 p.m. or 4 p.m.

Hear the angel voices! The **Hinesburg Artist's Series** brings back the popular **Holiday Concert**, with shows at St. Jude Catholic Church in Hinesburg, with safely distanced seating. Donations to the series are welcome at this free concert; audience members are encouraged to bring items for the food shelf. Rufus Patrick, HAS Music Director, says the group is thrilled to bring back this festive event. "Bringing joy to the community is our goal!" Please pre-register to reserve seating at bit.ly/3pw1mEF. Proof of vaccination and masks required. Under age twelve, masks required.

Sunday, Dec. 19, 10-10:30 a.m.

Join friends and neighbors for the **2021 Christmas Pageant at the Charlotte Congregational Church**. This is a creative and imaginative enactment of the beloved Christmas story. The pageant may be seen in person at 10 a.m. at the

church, or via Zoom and YouTube Live. Please see the church website for links: charlotteucc.org.

Sunday, Dec. 19, 5 p.m.

Charlotte Holiday Lights Roll encourages locals to decorate their homes, then drive around their neighborhoods to look at the magic of holiday lights and decorations to lift the spirits on a dark evening. Don't forget some warm hot chocolate for your thermos. Watch for the lighted cement mixer! Starts at 5 p.m. For more info, reach out to Chea at cheaevans@gmail.com.

Anytime through the holidays

Enjoy the **illuminated Advent spiral walk** at the Charlotte Congregational Church at any time during the holidays for reflective thought or walking prayer. Solar lights turn on at dusk. No registration required. One cohabitating family at a time. Mask and distancing required.

Friday, Dec. 24, starting at 4 p.m.

Traditional Christmas services, and **Caroling**, take place at the Charlotte Congregational Church, 403 Church Hill Road. Caroling is at 4 p.m., outdoors, around the church's decorated tree, rain/snow/shine. Indoor services of Lessons and Carols at 5 and 7 p.m., pre-registration required, and no livestream. Registration by email at: charlotteucc@gmavt.net or call 802-425-3176. A pre-recorded service will be available on YouTube (Charlotte Congregational) after 12 noon on Dec. 24. For more info: charlotteucc.org.

Friday Dec. 31, afternoon and evening activities

A highlight is **Burlington's New Year's Eve celebration** with activities for all ages. Afternoon and evening performances are held around the Burlington area, as well as virtually. Activities include music, visual art, crafts, drumming, dance, card magic, readings, comedy, and fireworks at the waterfront at 8 p.m. For tickets, more info and Covid guidelines, visit highlight.community.

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