Since December has been labeled Fruitcake Month, we can be forgiven for a few more observations on the topic. Fruitcake happened to be one of Franklin D. Roosevelt's favorite foods, and General George S. Patton was known to have devoured an entire brandied fruitcake at one sitting. But according to Alexander Thoreaux's "Einstein's Beets," after doing this, worried about weight gain, Patton went immediately afterwards to the hospital to have his stomach pumped. Thoreaux notes that fruitcake, designed to be given away rather than eaten, may in fact be the ultimate diet food, because it is never actually consumed. Not to worry: Monday Munch offers plenty of delicious food crafted to be consumed in a room filled with good company.
Community Heart & Soul to kick off next month

Brett Yates
Contributor

Who decides the future of a town? According to Vermont’s Orton Family Foundation, it should be everyone who lives there.

That may be easier said than done. But next year, Charlotte will become Vermont’s third municipality to undertake a process called Community Heart & Soul, which promises to engage a wide swath of residents in a two-year series of discussions about what they value about their town. The organization that developed the curriculum boasts that, nationwide, it’s helped more than 100 towns gather diverse input for local planners while strengthening bonds among neighbors and spurring volunteerism. Vermonters in Essex and Canaan reported positive experiences, with a few caveats.

Planning commissioners Kyra Wegman and Robert Bloch told The Charlotte News, tentatively, that the first local meeting would take place on Friday, Jan. 20, at 5 p.m. at the Charlotte Congregational Church.

Their hope is for people to come to the church from after-school activities for some chili and pie. Wegman said, “We can talk about what this is and do a few sample conversations so that people know what we’re up to. Hopefully there’ll be music and good cheer, and we can all sort of feel why we’re so invested in Charlotte.”

As a booster for the event, Wegman sought to downplay her role as a public official, characterizing the program as a citizen-led project, not a government initiative. The Charlotte Selectboard has expressed support for bringing Community Heart & Soul to town, but it has not yet fielded a request for its official sanction, let alone for municipal funding.

And while the planning commission anticipated reviewing public comments collected during the process when it updates the town plan in 2026, supporters believe Community Heart & Soul will yield an impact extending far beyond that document. This could be a cool way just to get people together and to elevate the level of discourse,” Bloch said. “Even though, with this little town, we think we all love

Community Heart & Soul origins

Community Heart & Soul has its roots in Weston where Lyman Orton, heir to the Vermont Country Store, served on a planning commission. In his view, mismanaged the public engagement process around a controversial proposal for a wildlife theme park. This created long-lasting conflicts among locals.

Since 1995, Orton’s private foundation — which has 11 employees (seven in Vermont) and, as of its last public tax filing, $20.4 million in assets — has aimed to help small towns avoid the same fate. More recently, it adopted the trade name Community Heart & Soul, devoting itself exclusively to promoting its namesake method of community engagement.

Its executive director, Mark Sherman, lives in Charlotte. He pitched the town on Community Heart & Soul earlier this year. “We don’t come in with any political, social or religious agenda,” Sherman said. “We’re simply a framework to help the community figure out what its priorities are, based on what the residents feel is most

SEE HEART & SOUL PAGE 3

Town moves closer to town-run fire and rescue department

Scooter MacMillan
Editor

Charlotte took a major step in the march toward a town-run fire and rescue service on Monday night.

At a special meeting on Dec. 5, the selectboard decided to hire a coordinator to help switch Charlotte Fire and Rescue Service to a department of the municipal government, rather than a separate nonprofit organization.

In August, the board issued a request for bids seeking a consultant for no more than $30,000 to aid in this transition. But with only two bids being submitted — for one amount $40,000 and one for $30,000 — the board members instead chose to hire a coordinator for no more than $20,000.

Actually, the bid from Gallagher, Flynn & Co., a South Burlington consulting firm, was for $18,900, but chair Jim Faulkner & Co., a South Burlington consulting firm, was for $18,900, but chair Jim Faulkner said he had realized the board had not submitted the bid for a coordinator for a second round of bids as is prescribed in the town’s purchasing policy and initiated a discussion about whether the rest of the board thought this was a problem.

Charlotte has hired Gallagher, Flynn over the past couple of years to help with human resources issues, most notably with an analysis of town salaries, but the firm is not on the town’s list of preferred providers, which would have made a second round of bids unnecessary.

Searching the town’s website during the meeting, the board did find an exception to the second bid requirement “if the selectboard prefers a vendor because of its history of work for the town or an extensive knowledge of the town’s need.”

“We’ve done a lot of work with them,” Faulkner said.

The town also has an exception if delay would “result in a substantial impairment of the delivery of important town services,”

SEE TOWN COORDINATOR PAGE 2

Raffle against food insecurity

Alexandra Lehmann with the sled she restored and painted to raffle off to raise funds for the Charlotte and Shelburne food pantries.

More News from The News on page 4

Busy — like blue-assed flies

More stories like “Community Heart and Soul to kick off next month” in this issue of the paper, more town histories, news on town affairs and calendar listings for events in town and nearby, more town history and opinion pieces from community writers. In short, we’ll continue to work hard to make your local, nonprofit paper even more useful, interesting and fun to read.

With the support of folks like you, The Charlotte News will keep this community connected, informed and entertained, as we’ve done for almost 65 years. If you have questions about the paper, are considering a gift of appreciated stock or have thoughts about our plans for the future, please reach out. Our emails are john@thecharlottenews.org and claudiamarshall@yahoo.com, or give John a call at 802-314-7189. We’d love to hear from you. This is our last paper for the year. We’ll be back on Jan. 12.

All the best for a happy holiday season,

John Quinney
Publisher and President
Claudia Marshall
Chair, Fundraising Committee

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On The Charlotte News: See the full story on page 5

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Not dead yet

Report from the Legislature

Ches Waters Events Representative-Elect

I cry every time I hear the Vermont state song — and I love the part about looking up at the golden dome. So, it’s been an honor and a thrill to go to work underneath that dome; training for new legislators took place a couple weeks ago, and as January and the start of the next biennium approaches, my work as your new representative in the Statehouse is beginning in earnest.

Legislative training, which ran by the Snelling Center for Government was enlightening and fun and involved an intense barrage of information and a lot of coffee.

We sat in the House chamber (so exciting!) and committee rooms and learned about everything from parking to tax revenue to ethics to how to introduce a bill. Over four days, we met with and heard from people in the Office of Racial Equity, the Joint Fiscal Office, Legislative Counsel, the Vermont Supreme Court justices and more, and got to watch a mock debate on the House floor.

The energy and enthusiasm of my new colleagues is inspiring — no matter your political views, or your views on politicians, I think it’s truly a group of people who are dedicated to doing their best to improve the lives of Vermonters.

I feel the same, and I’m passionate about helping to make our state and our town be the best they can be for young people, families and seniors as well.

The Charlotte News • December 15, 2022 • 3
important.”

Senior director Sara Lightner described a four-step process that starts by identifying “formal and informal groups” in the area. These groups supply “stories,” whose common themes become the town’s “Heart & Soul value statements.” The statements generate ideas for projects, followed by a plan to execute them.

Implementation is meant to continue long after Orton has left town. “Something like a sidewalk, that probably needs to go back to the municipality,” Lightner observed. “But if we want to have a story-walk along our riverfront, maybe the library says, ‘Hey, that’s totally up our alley.’” Ideally, town pride will undergird the whole effort.

Champlain College professor of management Lindsey Godwin linked Community Heart & Soul to a technique called “appreciative inquiry.” Godwin directs the David L. Cooperrider Center for Appreciative Inquiry.

In the 1980s, academics formulated the model as a new way to promote change within businesses and other organizations, but Godwin pointed out that cities like Cleveland, Cincinnati and Tampa later adopted it for the purpose of community development.

“Most of the traditional strategic planning processes try to come from a neutral or a deficit base, where they start with questions about what’s wrong, what’s broken here,” Godwin explained. “Appreciative inquiry has been an approach that has sort of flipped the script on the conversation to say that, in every community, in every organization, in every team, in every individual, there are successes that have gone under-utilized, under-noticed, under-explored.”

By Lightner’s account, for Community Heart & Soul, the model depends upon local buy-in.

“Definitely there are places where it just didn’t work,” Lightner said. “And one example I can give is of a community where the volunteer team that got started to really drive the work — frankly, very few of them were actually from the community. A lot of them were people who worked in nonprofits or different organizations, even a couple of municipal organizations, or for whom this would definitely not be a relevant intervention, or something, we would be able to do it.”

An Addison County resident, Lindsay Varner, helped persuade Bloch and Wegman that Charlotte could benefit from Community Heart & Soul.

Before becoming the director of the Rokeby Museum in Ferrisburg, Varner worked for the Cumberland County Historical Society in Pennsylvania. Through the Pennsylvania Humanities Council, received an Orton grant in 2016 on behalf of a seven-municipality area in the vicinity of Carlisle, Penn. With a doctorate in history, she steered an approach to community revitalization centered on the region’s past.

Among several endeavors that grew out of Community Heart & Soul discussions, the best-known — the Mt. Tabor Preservation Project — took up the task of rehabilitating a circa-1870 Black church.

“I was told over and over again I needed to talk to the Gumby family because they had been there for multiple generations,” Varner recounted. “This was this incredible 45-minute interview, talking about the Black history of the area that’s been lost. Their grandfather, who had been enslaved, had moved to the area and had helped to build this church. They kept talking about the church behind their house, and it was so overgrown you couldn’t see it.”

The log structure “is now a National Register property. So, it is to me the model project that then spiraled into more projects across the county to start to understand and build a more complete narrative of the African-American history in the county.”

Varner recounts:

**Change in Canaan took place**

Wegman and Bloch have also talked to Trish Sears and Steve Mason of Orleans County, a pair of Harvard consultants who coached the town of Canaan, in Vermont’s northeastern corner, through its Community Heart & Soul process. Sears and Mason appeared poised to take on the same role in Charlotte.

When Sears was the director of the Newport City Renaissance Corporation, she and Wegman encountered Orton through a program called Community Matters, which, as a precursor to Community Heart & Soul, came to Newport in 2012, leading to the grassroots development of a neighborhood garden on donated private land.

“People have become dependent on public services to cure their problems,” Mason said. “I think the Heart & Soul process tells people you can make the change without going that way.”

Sears described Community Heart & Soul as a “strengthening” of a town’s social fabric.

“The process is never a smooth one because you’re dealing with so many different kinds of people,” she said.

In Canaan, Community Heart & Soul lasted four years, starting in 2015. Resident Frank Sawicki attributed delays partly to the municipality’s remote location, which, by his recollection, had made accessing meetings a challenge for its out-of-town coaches.

“It was a little bit slower than we thought,” Sawicki said.

In the end, however, it produced a 501(c)(3), Canaan Naturally Connected, that continues to plan beautification projects; charity drives; and community events, such as teen nights at the American Legion and a townwide scarecrow-building competition. Sawicki sits on the board.

Before Canaan Naturally Connected, he felt the town “wasn’t cohesive. We had groups doing the same thing and repeating it, and we didn’t know.”

As a “mid-levelman” for various nonprofits, Canaan Naturally Connected has established communication channels extending into New Hampshire and Quebec. And according to Sawicki, its presence “relieves” local government of some of the burden of managing community affairs.

“If it’s something in that category, then they don’t have to deal with it, really,” Sawicki said. “At the start, it was kind of a battle — like, who’s in charge? But then, as we communicated more that we’re just wanting to help with the municipalities, they started opening up.”

By Sawicki’s estimation, Canaan Naturally Connected has achieved 85 percent of the goals articulated during Community Heart & Soul. But do-si-do spirit does seem to have its limits — specifically, when it comes to the development of much-needed housing for the elderly.

“That hasn’t really come off the ground because we needed land. We needed grants and things like that,” Sawicki said. “It’s very hard to do that when you have volunteerism.”

Sawicki also mentioned Canaan’s demographic struggle to attract and retain working-age adults, particularly between ages 18 and 30. In 2009, Ethan Allen Interiors Inc. laid off 238 workers at Canaan’s Beecher Falls plant, once the largest furniture factory in the eastern United States.

Although Sawicki reported some success in the town’s effort to reverse the trend, the most recent census showed a continued decline for Canaan’s population, which dropped from 972 to 896 between 2010 and 2020.

In the growing Burlington metropolitan area, the relatively bustling, population-town of Essex offered a different version for Community Heart & Soul between 2012 and 2014.

In the telling of State Representative Lori Houghton of Essex Junction, Community Heart & Soul conversations set parameters for economic development and major investments that followed, filling vacant downtown buildings and turning an asphalt lot into a pocket park.

“We had some crime, and we had one coffee shop, which really was more of a deli than a coffee shop. We said really we want to have more places for the community to go to. And we now have four coffee shops,” Houghton said. “We have definitely more of a vibrant downtown than when we started, and to me that’s a success.”

**Couldn’t stop Essex, Essex Junction split**

As in Canaan, Essex residents incorporated a 501(c)(3), Heart & Soul of Essex, to carry out projects, but it disbanded last year. For Dana Hanley, who served as Essex’s community development director between 2005 and 2019, the data collected during the process found its most crucial application in the rewriting of the town’s plan.

The 2016 Essex Town Plan won awards from the Vermont Planners Association and the Northern New England chapter of the

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Now under municipal ownership, the asphalt lot in front of the Firebird Cafe at Essex Junction’s Five Corners is on its way to becoming a pocket park, with development ongoing.

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Photos by Brett Yates

Previously a mobile cart, Nomad Coffee moved last year into a brick-and-mortar location at 3 Maple Street in Essex Junction.
Orton’s report described as “overlapping of one of Community Heart & Soul’s core years took place in seeming contravention committee. Conversation facilitated by a member of cookies, which would accompany a group them into their own homes for coffee and made efforts to locate no-shows at the local attracted people’s attention to it.”

“She said. “They develop very sophisticated meetings at night.”

The plan “has a really cool vision for the town usually can achieve, and they more diverse and broad participation than & Soul’s public engagement. Information gathered from Community Heart attributed its success to the plethora of American Planning Association. Hanley

Even so, Essex’s biggest change in recent “Community outreach is the most

Junction’s Elaine Haney, a former village “I don’t know that Heart & Soul could

In Haney’s view, a “very vocal but small group of people” and their “tactics of separation hasn’t erased Haney’s fond

We all want safety. We all want well-being things are universal.”

We’re looking for someone to help us cover CVU sports for The Charlotte News. This might mean writing stories or briefs about games, or it might mean checking in with coaches for results, some game stats and a couple of quotes about competitions with coaches for results, some game stats and a couple of quotes about competitions — it’s up to you how much you’d like to get involved in. If any of this resonates with you, please apply for college and be looking for something to help separate the wheat from the chaff, or if you’re thinking about studying sports journalism, well, it would be a slam dunk. If any of this resonates with you, please apply for college and be looking for something to help separate the wheat from the chaff, or if you’re thinking about studying sports journalism, well, it would be a slam dunk. If any of this resonates with you, please apply for college and be looking for something to help separate the wheat from the chaff, or if you’re thinking about studying sports journalism, well, it would be a slam dunk. If any of this resonates with you, please apply for college and be looking for something to help separate the wheat from the chaff, or if you’re thinking about studying sports journalism, well, it would be a slam dunk.
Local artist rejuvenates sled for local food shelves

Lucie Lehmann  Contributor

“Tis the season of giving back, and a Charlotte artist, Alexandra Lehmann, has once again used her talents to create something beautiful and jolly — this time, a whimsical winter scene on a restored children’s sled — that will be raffled off and go to a new home, all to benefit two local food pantries.

This is the fourth time that Lehmann, who grew up in New York but spent much of her life in her parents’ native country, Switzerland, before settling in Charlotte 22 years ago, has created a work of art to be raffled with the proceeds going to a local non-profit.

“It all began 10 years ago with a fairy house that my friend Ted Roberts and I created at the monument garden outside the Old Brick Store, which turned into an impromptu raffle when so many people wanted to buy it,” the slender and shy 67-year-old said. “That raised $2,000 for COTS that year, and it lit a spark of possibility that something creative could attract people’s interest enough to buy a raffle ticket.”

Popularly known as COTS, the Committee on Temporary Shelter advocates for long-term solutions to end homelessness and provides emergency shelter, services and long-term housing for Vermonters who are experiencing homelessness or are marginally housed, according to its website.

Between now and Dec. 20, the restored, cobalt-blue children’s sled is on display at Village Wine and Coffee at 5288 Shelburne Road in Shelburne. Interested people can purchase a raffle ticket for $5 and enter a drawing to win the sled and take it home for the holidays.

Cash or checks are the only forms of payment being accepted, and the raffle is being run on the honor system. There is a payment box under the sled, as well as a tin in which to deposit the filled-out raffle stubs. Checks can be made out to either the Charlotte or Shelburne food shelf. The proceeds will be equally divided between the two food pantries.

“She’s been a customer pretty much since we’ve opened, and she’s also donating all of the proceeds to the local food shelves, which is the most important,” said Kevin Clayton, owner of Village Wine and Coffee, which regularly showcases local artists. “Most people don’t understand how much food insecurity there is around here.”

Lehmann said, “I like to find an unusual, found object that I can turn into a creative project that will then offer a raffle potential.”

A graduate of Columbia University with a degree in history, Lehmann finds inspiration in nature and loves working with her hands. For years, she created and maintained four seasonal displays around the World War I monument in Charlotte, before Roberts and his wife, Beth Sytsma, eventually took it over.

“Having always loved anything creative, from carving soap bars as a child to working in fused glass and textiles, if my hands can make it, I love it and I’m always engaged. I find it thrilling that you can make something beautiful out of simple objects and that they then go out into the larger world for someone’s enjoyment.”

This is the second sled that Lehmann has restored and raffled off. She found this one by the side of Lewis Creek Road, all rusted and with the paint mostly gone. Over several weeks she took the sled apart, stripped, sanded, reassembled, painted and then added the forest scene that covers most of the sled’s surface. Finally, she varnished it to protect the antique, which she estimates is at least 60 years old.

It would make a wonderful seasonal display on a covered porch or under a Christmas tree; however, she doesn’t recommend using it in the snow.

Lehmann hopes the Shelburne and Charlotte communities will rally for the local food shelves by supporting this raffle and raising several thousand dollars to help neighbors in need. “I’m grateful to Kevin and his great community spirit, which is allowing me to showcase the blue sled in a favorite community setting.”

Clayton will pick the winning ticket on Dec. 20 at 3:45 p.m.

(Lucie Lehmann is the artistically challenged sister of Alexandra Lehmann, as well as her biggest fan. Village Wine and Coffee is open Monday-Saturdays from 9 a.m.-4 p.m.)
Lampman finds his sweet spot in family business

Phyl Newbeck
Contributor

It’s not always an easy transition when you take the helm of your family’s business, but Eric Lampman made that move when he took the reins from his father in 2016. Lampman thinks the process was easier in his case because the company in question is Lake Champlain Chocolates.

“It’s different from other lines of work,” Lampman said. “It’s pure joy and indulgence and at the end of the day you’re always smiling.”

Lampman graduated from Skidmore College with a degree in management and business and a minor in economics. He enjoyed the fact that the program included case studies of local businesses, as well as some as far away as New Zealand. Although he already knew the family business well, Lampman felt he had a better grasp of it after graduation.

First, however, Lampman headed to Aspen to ski and work in the restaurant industry which, coincidentally, was something his parents had also done, albeit briefly. Lampman got to experience one of the best snow years Aspen has ever had and worked numerous positions, starting with runner but eventually including barbacking, waiting tables and high-end catering.

“That was a great experience in a quick amount of time,” he said. “A lot of my passion for food solidified there.”

Returning to Vermont, Lampman briefly tried to become a professional golfer but that didn’t pan out. His skills at the sport are evident since he was the men’s champion at the Vermont National Country Club in 2003 and 2007-12. Lampman learned the sport from his paternal grandfather at a very young age and he continues to play.

Lampman also plays hockey with a local group and enjoys getting out on frozen ponds. He also plays paddle (sometimes called platform tennis) outside in the winter on what looks like a miniature tennis court, lifted off the ground and surrounded by chicken wire.

“It looks a little like racquetball,” he said, “but it’s outside under the lights. The colder the better.”

Lampman has also been getting his oldest son out on skis and skates.

For years, Lake Champlain Chocolates has used only Fair Trade-certified cocoa beans. All the sugar and coconut and most of the vanilla beans are also certified, and they try to work solely with organic suppliers.

For a time, the company was certified by Fair for Life which goes beyond the supply chain to include a company’s treatment of its workers. Unfortunately, the composite nature of chocolate and the different processes involved in creating product became too complex and it shifted to becoming a certified B corporation in May of 2018. Lampman believes this certification allows the company to focus on their product, their workers and the sustainability of the planet.

Initially, all production was done on Pine Street in Burlington, but that building was sold to Dealer.com. Roughly 10 years ago, the company moved warehousing and shipping to Williston but after some time they realized that dual locations meant trucks moving from one building to another several times a day. All production was moved to Williston in May 2021. The Pine Street facility is still used to make ice cream and retail specialties and houses the research and development team.

Prior to taking the role of president, Lampman led the research and development team, working with cocoa farmers in Africa and Central America. Lampman sees a parallel between those farms and the dairy farms and apple orchards of Vermont.

These days, Lampman is focusing his efforts on developing new products. “One of the things I really enjoy,” he said, “is creating new and interesting small-scale products for stores and then gearing them up for longevity and sustainability.”

Eric Lampman is continuing a delicious family tradition.

Lampman was born in Charlotte and returned to his roots six years ago with his wife Willa. His sister, Ellen Reed, lives in Hinesburg and heads up purchasing and décor initiatives for the company.

Maybe a few years down the road, another Lampman might join the management team and keep Lake Champlain Chocolates a family business for many generations to come, but that may take a while. The Lampmans’ three children are all under 4. “My kids have all shown they enjoy chocolate and ice cream,” Lampman said, “so the building blocks are in place.”

Time to get cracking on town office campaigning

Scooter McMillan
Editor

’Tis the season when “it’s” loses its most-favored contraction status and “’tis” often supplants it as the preferred contraction for “it is.”

’Tis also the season when ‘tis a good time to start thinking about running for vacant town offices. If this sounds too early, consider: The deadline to have the candidate consent form and the candidate petition submitted to town clerk Mary Mead is less than two months away — 5 p.m. Jan. 30, 2023. The petition needs to have 30 signatures by that time.

Both of these forms are available on the town of Charlotte’s website by clicking left of the homepage at charlottevt.org. This year Charlotte will hold its first ever Saturday Town Meeting Day on Saturday, March 4. That’s less than three months away.

Open offices include auditor (three-year term), cemetery commissioners (three-year and two-year terms), library trustee (five-year term), Champlain Valley School District board member (three-year term), delinquent tax collector (one-year term), town moderator (one-year term), road commissioner (one-year term), selectboard (three-year and two-year terms) and trustees of public funds (three-year and two-year terms). ‘Tis time to get cracking. Don’t wait until ’twas the night before Town Meeting Day.
Grange aligned with Northeast Organic Farming Association

Linda Hamilton, Contributor

The Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont (NOFA-VT) and the Charlotte Grange are like two sides of the same valuable coin. The mission and vision of both organizations are closely aligned and we share core values. Our programs reinforce and build on each other, with Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont uniquely able to offer technical services and specific advice related to organic agriculture. Not familiar with Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont? Let me introduce you.

Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont is part of the Northeast Organic Farming Association network which started in the region in 1976-80 after rising disillusionment with industrialized agriculture among those concerned with its environmental, social and health impacts. The Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont is one of the oldest organic farming associations in the U.S., founded in 1971 by a group of Vermont farmers who believed that commercial farming could be done in a much healthier way. Its mission is to promote organic practices to build an economically viable, ecologically sound and socially just Vermont agricultural system that benefits all life. Its vision is for thriving organic farms and agriculturally based communities that nourish people and enhance the environment.

Basic values which both organizations believe in and support:

- Food Security and Equity. All people, regardless of circumstance, should have access to nourishing local, organic and affordable food.
- Farm Viability. Government and local community policies should support farmers’ ability to make a living on the land and support themselves, their families and their employees. Policies should also support the ability of farms and farm enterprises to pass these enterprises on to succeeding generations of farmers. Both organizations advocate at all government levels for laws and regulations which support farm and rural community viability and just practices.
- Ecological and Human Health. Organic practices are promoted because they enhance soil, plant, animal and human health by producing nourishing food and protecting ecological systems and biodiversity for current and future generations.
- Education. We both believe in the importance of education. The NOFA-VT label and certification process is a high-integrity application of the USDA National Organic Program regulations, making it a credible and valuable tool for both producers and consumers.
- Community. Both organizations recognize that resiliency in the face of today’s rapidly changing environmental and social conditions is critically important for both food producers and communities. Both believe that engaged communities are more resilient communities. A vibrant local food system provides opportunities to create genuine connection among people, to nurture those relationships and to honor the work of those who feed others.
- Fellowship is Food for the Soul. The Grange has a long tradition of gathering people together regularly to share good food and conversation, celebrate art and other talents, play and have fun together, engage in dialog around issues of community concern and do community service. The Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont also provides production, business planning and technical assistance; access to relevant information; funding opportunities; and help with farms’ major transitions.

Vermont is open to everyone supporting these values, whether you come from a farming or homesteading background or not, and whether you wish to engage in the programs or just support them through financial contributions. We all have a stake in the success of the programs of these organizations because we all eat, and we all want our communities to be resilient and food secure. To learn more, please visit our website: nofavt.org and charlottegrange.org.

And hey … No farms, no food. So don’t let a week go by without thanking a Vermont farmer either in person, or better yet, by buying what they produce in a market or directly from them. (Linda Hamilton is a homesteader in East Charlotte and member of both the Charlotte Grange and the Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont.)
Trail committee finds a sign is more than just a sign

Scooter MacMillan
Editor

Putting up trail signs is a lot more than digging a hole, putting in a post and nailing a sign to it.

Members of Charlotte Trails Committee can tell you about the many things that are involved in marking a trail so users know the way once they’re on the trail, putting up other signs so people can find the trail and signs to show where to park to access a trail. But they can also tell you about all the things that happened before they had the different signs to put up.

“There’s a lot of behind-the-scenes work that goes into something that might seem as simple as just putting up signs,” trails committee chair Bill Regan said.

Before volunteers could even start putting up signs, the committee had to find a design firm, Brault & Barnes Design in Vergennes, which came up with several options. Then committee members had to go before the selectboard to see if it would endorse the designs the committee preferred for the various signs needed.

The design of a roadside sign needs to be different than a trailhead sign, which needs to be different than a wayfinding sign, which goes up where there’s a trail junction. The committee realized it needed to have an inventory of the number and location of all the places where signs should go. That involved a GPS mapping project as well, Regan said.

Luckily, Brault & Barnes was not only able to come up with a design the committee and the selectboard liked, it also was able to help with the mapping and inventory.

Then the committee had to put the project out to bid for a company to actually manufacture and help install the signs. That bid was awarded to an Essex company with the creative name of Design Signs. And then the signs were made and have been going up for the past couple of months. All the credit for seeing this work through to completion should go to David Ziegelman and Larry Sommers, the members of the trails committee who spearheaded the sign project, Regan said. “They really had the vision.”

“They’ve done enormous amounts of work, untold hours behind the scenes to make this happen. It’s taken really the better part of the year to go from start to finish, so it was a ton of volunteer time on their behalf,” he said.

And the project has come in almost $100 under the just over $17,600 allocated for it. Unfortunately, the work wasn’t over once the signs were installed. Someone shot up two trail signs at Plouffe Lane on Carpenter Road.

“ ‘It’s a lot of behind-the-scenes work that goes into something that might seem as simple as just putting up signs,’ trails committee chair Bill Regan said. Before volunteers could even start putting up signs, the committee had to find a design firm, Brault & Barnes Design in Vergennes, which came up with several options. Then committee members had to go before the selectboard to see if it would endorse the designs the committee preferred for the various signs needed.

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December is a month for taking stock of what we appreciate and how to support the people and organizations we care about. Some year-end free associating follows.

Charlotte is rich in outdoor resources: Vermont’s first state park and three Nature Conservancy preserves, Williams Woods and Raven Ridge, both with marked trails and parking, and Lewis Creek Hill Natural Area, 123 conserved acres on Spear Street that has neither parking nor marked trails.

Charlotte Trails, including the Town Link Trail and Charlotte Park and Wildlife Refuge, are volunteer-driven resources being improved by dedicated Charlotte phobettes and mission and vision. If you are able to make a financial contribution, tax-deductible donations go to: Town of Charlotte, with Trails Committee or Charlotte Park and Wildlife Refuge in the memo line. And, next time you have a chance, thank the volunteers who make your enjoyment possible.

Gifts of experience, nourishment and knowledge

Shelburne Farms membership
Membership supports the stewardship of Shelburne Farms and its educational and agricultural missions. Members receive: free admission to walking trails, including the Children’s Farmyard, advance notice of events, discounts and newsletters. shelburne-farms.org.

CSA membership
Community-supported agriculture (CSA) memberships make great gifts. Subscribers invest in a farmer’s cost in exchange for a share of production. Consider a gift card to a local farm market. Charlotte is home to a number of both, with more appearing each season. (I hesitate to list them for fear of leaving out a farmer.) Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont (NOFA) is a source for local farms and keep reading The Charlotte News.

Green Mountain Club membership
Green Mountain Club is the non-profit stewarded of Vermont’s Long Trail and membership is a year-round gateway to the outdoors. The Green Mountain Club offers classes and clinics and its volunteers organize outings year-round. Other tangible benefits include notications of hikes, member rates for Green Mountain Club workshops (learn winter hiking or how to be safe in the woods) and discounts at some inns and outdoors stores: greenmountainclub.org.

Be prepared
Slippery season
Ice has already settled on some shady stretches of trail. Traction devices to keep us upright abound, a worthwhile investment for anyone who plans to walk or run during the winter months. The number and types of grippers have proliferated, perhaps because climate change has delivered more ice and less snow and perhaps because baby boomers are aging and developing brittle bones. My repertoire includes YakTrax, MicroSpikes, Grit-A-Grip and Icebugs, boots or shoes with spikes embedded in the soles. Shop at a local outfitter to explore the options and see and feel the differences among the offerings. Even the most expensive are cheaper than a broken bone.

Winter hiking
If you plan to winter hike there’s a lot to consider. The Green Mountain Club urges hydration, fuel and staying dry. Make sure to drink water even if you don’t feel thirsty. Carry high-value foods: cheese, peanut butter, trail mix or bars and chocolate. Remember the three Ws: a wicking layer next to the skin; a warm layer (or several) of wool or fleece; and a waterproof and windproof top layer. Leave cotton at home. Once cotton gets wet it stays wet and will leech heat from your body. Wear insulated boots designed for winter hiking. Pack extra clothes — mittens, hats, layers, chemical hand warmers, an extra jacket — even a protective layer in case you get stranded.

Winter days are short so always carry a headlamp. Make sure someone knows where you are heading and when you expect to return. Be smart to stay safe.

Snowshoes
When there’s almost no snow or a fresh dump that’s too deep to navigate on skis, snowshoes are a salvation. They are available in many shapes and sizes and can last for decades (mine have). Variables include bindings, materials, size, shape and crampons. The most basic plastic models for kids start at $30 and new adult snowshoes can be found for about $100. Look for used ones at swaps or second-hand stores. Shoe from your back door or on preserved lands in Charlotte. Float over deep snow, scale steep slopes and stride over stumps and rocks. You’ll burn up to 1,000 calories per hour, stay toasty and see fresh tracks, scat and the landing trail of raptors.

Final thoughts
Shop locally
For every $100 spent in independently owned stores, $69 returns to the community through taxes, payroll and other expenditures. If you shop at a national chain only $43 stays local. Spend it online and nothing comes home.

Charlotte Food Shelf
Many of our neighbors struggle to keep a roof over their heads, food on the table, gas in the car and heat in the radiators. No gift wrap required. Give as generously as you can. P.O. Box 83, Charlotte 05445.

Outdoor non-profits
Local non-profits add value and safety to our outdoor experience. Local Motion’s Trail Finder, trailfinder.info, is an invaluable resource for walking, hiking, biking, cross-country skiing and in-line skating. Your gift supports education, advocacy, the bike ferry, bike and pedestrian safety and special events: localmotion.org.

Other non-profits that support our natural world: Charlotte Land Trust, Lake Champlain Land Trust, Vermont Land Trust, Lake Champlain Committee, Intervale Center and The Nature Conservancy.

If you are able, consider a tax-deductible donation to The Charlotte News where you are reading this. All contributions will be doubled by a grant from NewsMatch. May your generosity and thoughtfulness bring joy this holiday season.
Managing for bats — an important member of the forest community

Ethan Tapper  
Contributor

Scientists from the University of Illinois recently studied the effects of removing bats from a forest, finding that a forest without bats had three times as many insects and five times as much defoliation as a forest with bats.

The researchers postulated that this increased defoliation would increase forest vulnerability — making trees more susceptible to other stressors at a time when forests are already stressed from climate change, invasive species, deforestation, forest fragmentation and more. This research made me consider the many pieces and parts that make forests work, and, more specifically, the role that bats play in forests.

There are over 1,400 species of bats, accounting for about 20 percent of the mammalian species on Earth. Besides being diverse, bats are extremely numerous: about 90-100 percent of the bats on some sites. For Vermont’s bat species, six (five of Vermont’s nine bat species) are a particularly important roosting species — caves and abandoned mines — for the winter, while the other three migrate to southern climes. All nine species spend much of the summer in our forests, foraging, mating and raising their young.

Besides protecting hibernacula and water sources, managing forests for bats largely consists of encouraging two types of habitat: roosting habitat (where bats sleep during the day and raise their young) and foraging habitat.

In the forest, bats roost under shaggy tree bark, in crevices and cavities (holes) in trees, in the foliage of large trees and on sunny cliffs and talus slopes. Active roost trees can be absolutely full of bats: some harbor hundreds of females with their flightless young. You can improve roosting habitat by leaving or creating dead-standing “snags” in a variety of sizes and at different stages of decay. If snags aren’t naturally abundant in your forest you can create some by “girdling” a few unhealthy trees per acre. Additionally, retain legacy trees — large and old trees that are allowed to decline and die naturally — and all shagbark hickory, which are a particularly important roosting species for the federally endangered Indiana bat. If you are planning on cutting any potential roost trees, avoid doing so from April through October, when bats are active in the forest.

In general, great foraging habitat for bats consists of diverse, complex and multi-generational forests. You can encourage habitat like this by cutting small groups of unhealthy trees, which will both create canopy gaps (an important foraging feature for both bats and insectivorous birds) and encourage the development of new generations of trees. Between canopy gaps, you can improve bat habitat by thinning the forest: cutting unhealthy trees which are in competition with healthier trees. As you manage your forest, make sure to leave plenty of legacy trees, snags and cavity trees.

While it’s easy to forget about them, bats are an important piece of the complex community that is a forested ecosystem. Managing for bats is another way to help safeguard the health and the future of our forests.

(Ethan Tapper is the Chittenden County Forester for the Vermont Dept. of Forests, Parks and Recreation. See what he’s been up to, check out his YouTube channel, sign up for his eNews and read articles he’s written at linktr.ee/chittendencountyforester.)
Charlotte Central School is a very busy school! The fifth-eighth grade chorus and four of the fifth-eighth grade classrooms will be meeting in one of the school-based classrooms this week. These questions could be used as conversation starters at home.

The transfer essay questions vary in topics and word counts. Many essay prompts ask for a personal statement, academic interests, reason to transfer, and desire to attend the new college.

Since a college student’s mindset is typically different than their high school mindset, it is important to consider the qualities that draw them to the new colleges. Ideas to write about include their interests in academic majors, abroad programs, internship opportunities and social clubs to join.

Reaching out to current college professors is important to request an engaging reference letter. With winter break approaching, now is the time to contact professors to write a recommendation. Be sure to include the deadline to submit their letter. The student will need to nominate the teacher in the recommendation section of the Common Application.

In contacting a professor for a recommendation letter, here is an example of a short note:

Dear Professor, I hope you had a great vacation. I am considering transferring my college and I wanted to reach out to you for a personal letter of recommendation. I have found your teaching to be both thought-provoking and inspiring, and I am excited to pursue my academic studies alongside you at the next level. Your input will be greatly appreciated.

Best regards,

[Your Name]
Once upon a time: A hockey team in Charlotte

Juliann Phelps
Contributor

Over 77 years ago, Charlotte came together as a community to build a hockey rink and cheer on the Charlotte Rockets, an amateur team who donned their white sweaters and hit the biscuit nearly every winter weekend — weather permitting.

Playing in the Champlain Amateur Hockey league the Rockets suffered losses and skated to victories, playing against teams like the Lakeside Hockey Club, the National Guard and the Service Station Six.

According to “Busy Work,” a book by S. Russell Williams, the genesis of the rink came about in 1954 when townpeople, who played elsewhere, decided to develop McNeil’s Pond, a popular skating spot on Greenbush Road, into a hockey rink.


Williams describes the rink construction in detail. Players and volunteers collected lumber and built “chest-high heavy wooden boards in Bill William’s barn and Albert LeBouf’s blacksmith shop.” An innovation was the first wooden goals were later upgraded to metal and the nets procured enabled them to be folded or removed for use. With the popularity of the games bringing spectators from other towns, Williams said “an old fishing shanty on shore was manned (womanned) by ladies of the Library Association selling hot dogs and coffee. A really festive affair!”

A Jan. 24, 1950, Burlington Free Press brief headlined, “Service Station Six tops Rockets,” said, “One of the first hockey games of the Vermont winter season was played in Charlotte Sunday when the Barcelou and Teller Service Station sextet, formerly the Lakeside team, defeated the Charlotte Rockets 9-6. D. Joyal and Allard scored three goals each while N. Ritchie had two and Meanier one. Webb pulled the ‘hat trick’ for the Rockets.”

The rink was maintained by volunteers who kept the pond clear with varying equipment. A Feb. 11, 1953, article from the Burlington Free Press, “Hockey Game Planned Sunday in Charlotte,” reported on the excellent condition of the pond for skating which would “be kept clear of snow by a snowblower donated by Douglas Burden, Harry H. Webb and Danbar Bostwick.”

Surprisingly, access to the rink wasn’t limited with “the lights also in operation,” according to “Busy Work,” a book by S. Russell Williams. The Charlotte Rockets “did very well — winning many and losing some.”

He lists the players’ names as: Guy Cheng, Dick Thurber, Rhodes Bucklin, Neil Frink, Roy Thoptoe, Romeo Bolduc, Gene Couture, “Pat” Moore, Harry Webb (Shelburne), Ned Jennison (Shelburne), Danbar Bostwick (Shelburne), John Dobson (Shelburne), Alan Cobb (Middlebury). Lastly he writes, “any omitted names would be welcomed by the Charlotte Historical Society.”

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The team decided to keep the momentum going, forming a softball team in the spring of 1949, according to another Burlington Free Press article, “Members of the squad already signed include Roy Thoptoe, Sid Falby, John Sheehan, Don Dolliver, Rodney Dolliver, Rhodes Bucklin, Ed Crane, Bill Horford, Bill Williams, Carroll Wrisley, Thomas Schermerhorn, Harry Webb, Larry Johnson, Pat Moore, Neil Frink, Dick Thurber and Bill Root.”

McNeil Pond remained a popular skating spot until a new rink was built across the road, said Jenny Cole, the Charlotte Library’s interlibrary loan librarian and a local historian.

The pond and new rink are on Ferry Road intersection. Greenbush road approximately a mile north of the Burlington Free Press, Jan. 24, 1950.


“You can see the contours where they made the rink,” she said, noting it included lights, a warming hut and equipment shed. This rink was featured in a winter 1971 Vermont Life article, “Charlotte’s On the Ice All Winter” written by David Brudemier.

“The first skaters to arrive start a fire in the warming hut’s oil drum stove. Wood is brought in to dry. As more skaters arrive, everyone takes time to clear the ice.”

The article, as well as ice skating photos and S. Russell Williams’ chapter about the Charlotte Rockets, are currently on display at the library.

Bremdier paints a vivid picture of a community skating rink: “The city, resort and school rinks are fine in their way, but are too distant and too expensive for many skaters — especially the children living in small towns. Of course, there are the farm ponds

Hockey page 13
**Calendar of Events**

**Vergennes singalong**
Saturday, Dec. 17
5-6:30 p.m.
Local families are invited to gather at City Park in downtown Vergennes for a community singalong around the fire pit. Roast marshmallows, sing cards, sip hot chocolate and feel festive. Free family event. More info at vergennesdowntown.org.

**The Town of Charlotte MEETINGS**
Visit charlottevt.org for more information.

**Planning Commission:**
Regular Meeting
Thursday, Dec. 15, 7 - 8:30 p.m.

**Selectboard:**
Tuesday, Dec. 27, 6:30 p.m.

**Development Review Board**
Regular Meeting - CANCELLED
Wednesday, Dec. 28.

**Monthly Meeting of Trails Committee**
Tuesday, Jan. 3, 2023, 6:30-8 p.m.

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**Charlotte Property TRANSFERS NOVEMBER 2022**

Nov. 1  Patrick & Lisa Roche to Gregory Bright & Kathleen Quinn 981 Church Hill Rd. .55 acres $430,000 w/dwl

Nov. 1  Braxton Robason & Penninah Ragasa to Walnut Grove LLC 175 Church Hill Rd. .50 acres $545,774 w/dwl

Nov. 2  Cody G. & Kylie Spiegel to John H. & Katie F. Bowman 4728 Mt.Philo Rd. 1.04 acres $765,000 w/dwl

Nov. 3 Lee & Deborah Smith to Patrick & Lisa Roche 394 Wildwood West 1.04 acres $530,000 w/dwl

Nov. 10 Kevin & Dawn Wpak to 5483 Greenbush Revocable Trust 5483 Greenbush Rd. 40.52 acres $1,376,665 w/dwl

Nov. 16 Erin Hyer & Christopher Brown to Charles Ashley & Mayo Fuji 2030 Greenbush Rd. 4.08 acres $985,000 w/dwl

Nov. 18 David & Jane Akin to Douglas Schneider & Anita Rorer 1711 Greenbush Rd. 5.9 acres $750,000 w/dwl

Nov. 21 Michael Marshall to Stonehouse Properties LLC 449 Prindle Rd. 25.0 acres $250,000 land only

Nov. 22 Cynthia Marshall to Alien Brook Partners LLC 596 Prindle Rd. 10.0 acres $479,000 w/dwl

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**Charlotte News**

**Mary Landon**
Please send event listings to calendar@thecharlottenews.org at least three weeks in advance.

**Audubon bird count**
The Audubon Christmas bird count is under way. To participate in this rewarding science project, see tinyurl.com/pmzptm56.

**Online open studio**
Thursdays, Dec. 15 & 22, 6-8 p.m.
The Poartry Project of Charlotte hosts an online meeting place for creatives. Drop in, work on your project or craft at home and enjoy sharing inspiration and interacting with others. To register, see poartry.org/open-studio. More info at poartryproject@gmail.com.

**Very Merry Oklahoma!**
Friday, Dec. 16, 6:30 p.m., Saturday, Dec. 17.
The Very Merry Theatre troupe presents Oklahoma! at its Old North End Community Center location on Allen Street in Burlington. Performances are free and appropriate for all family members. Donations gratefully accepted. More info at verymerrytheatre.org/performances.

**Create a succulent planter**
Saturday, Dec. 17, various times
Red Wagon Plants in Hinesburg is offering a make-and-take class. Participants complete an arrangement of succulents in a container, of their own or one from the shop. Class offered at 10 a.m., 11 a.m., or 1 p.m. Sign up at tinyurl.com/yc4e85rv.

**Mushroom medicine**
Monday, Dec. 19, 6-7:30 p.m.
Spontful Herbas offers a class on fungi folk wisdom, processing techniques and medicinal benefits of wild and cultivated forest fungi. Class is at City Market, Burlington’s south end location; see tinyurl.com/bdd8ejuj for more info and to register.

**Teen winter retreat**
Tues., Dec. 27-Sunday, Jan. 1, 2023
The ReTribe organization in Underhill hosts a winter retreat for teens to connect with their community, set intentions and cultivate compassion in a safe and non-judgmental group. Celebrate the passage into a new year with cooking, games, winter sports and more. For info and to register, see retibe.org/winter-retreat.

**Poartry Project, in a virtual art class**
Wednesday, Dec. 28, 6-8 p.m.
Join Charlotte poet, author and artist JC Wayne, founder of the Poartry Project, in a virtual art class for students wishing to increase their comfort with a palette-knife painting. Materials list provided upon registration at poartry.org/workshops.

**Avoid Capital Gains Taxes**

**HOCKEY**
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12
and low fields that sometimes freeze over, but these aren’t reliable and are often spoiled by snow.”

The essence of a community ice rink in Charlotte continues today. After a few iterations, the current rink sits nestled behind Pease Mountain at the Charlotte Central School. It’s still maintained by volunteers, tirelessly flooding and clearing the snow from the ice each season.

This year Craig Raynolds, Bill Fraser-Harris, Ed Silva and Dave Schemmerhorn will be making sure the surface is glasy, the lights remain on and the warming hut stands ready to keep the chill off hands and toes.

Charlotte Recreation is currently promoting its annual ice-skate swap at the town hall.

“All project run by volunteers cannot always boast the most smooth sailing or the finest equipment,” Bredemier said in Vermont Life, “but it is a tribute to the enthusiasm and effort put forth by townspeople and their children, an affirmative test of its value, a source of pride and pleasure to the whole town.”

Who knows, maybe local pick-up hockey games could come around like Little League baseball has again at the town beach ball field.

*(Thanks to Jenny Cole, the Charlotte Library and the Charlotte Historical Society for the images and articles, and NCAA.com for the colorful hockey slang.)*

**News for people, not for profit**

**The Charlotte News**
CALENDAR

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13

Register for Access starting Friday, Jan. 6
The next season of Access classes at Champlain Valley Union High School in Hinesburg runs from Feb. 1-June 2, 2023. The program offers numerous courses for adults and young adults. Classes are of varying lengths. Start registering online Jan. 6 at cvusdvt.com/eleyoor.

Local holiday services
(Masks are recommended indoors, at all locations.)
Charlotte Congregational Church
Christmas pageant
Sunday, Dec. 18, 10 a.m.
Outdoor family carol singing
Saturday, Dec. 24, 4 p.m.
Indoor lessons and carols service
Sunday, Dec. 24, 4 and 5:30 p.m.
(5 p.m. service will be live-streamed. Call 802-425-3176 for instructions.)
Christmas service with Holy Communion
Sunday, Dec. 25, 10 a.m.
United Church of Hinesburg
Route 116
Fourth Sunday of Advent and children’s pageant
Sunday, Dec. 18, 10 a.m.
Family and friends service with special music and candlelight
Saturday, Dec. 24, 36 p.m.
Lessons and carols service with choir and candlelight
Saturday, Dec. 24, 10 a.m.
Prayer and carols service
Sunday, Dec. 25, 10 a.m.
Lighthouse Baptist Church
Mechanicstreet Road, Hinesburg
Christmas Eve service
Saturday, Dec. 24, 4 p.m.
Christmas Day service
Sunday, Dec. 25, 10:30 a.m.
Community Alliance Church
Pond Road, Hinesburg
Live Nativity outings
Sunday, Dec. 18, 5:30 p.m.
Cocoa, treats and candies inside
(Reservations encouraged for Nativity tours at hinesburgcma.org.)
Christmas Eve candlelight service
Saturday, Dec. 24, 6 p.m.
Trinity Episcopal Church
Route 7, Shelburne village
Christmas Eve service and children’s pageant
Saturday, Dec. 24, 4 p.m.
Sunday, Dec. 25, 9:30 a.m.
(For information go to trinityshelburne.org or call 802-985-2269 to watch via Zoom.)

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The Charlotte News  •  December 15, 2022  •  15
Gardening

Deborah J. Benoit
University of Vermont

The daylight hours keep growing shorter, and the days are flying by. Before you know it, the holidays will be here. If you have a gardener (or garden lover) on your holiday gift list, you may be wondering what might make them smile during a season when the garden is buried beneath the snow.

For new gardeners or those who like to dream and plan their next gardening adventure during the cold winter months, consider a book that focuses on their favorite garden subject. Books are available covering all aspects of gardening from regional how-to to growing specific plants such as roses and techniques such as square-foot gardening.

If the gardener on your list likes nothing better than hands-on “playing in the dirt,” there are all sorts of possibilities that will be useful in the garden come spring. Pruners, trowels and other hand tools come in a variety of shapes and sizes.

A gardener can never have too many pairs of garden gloves, but a pair of garden gauntlets can particularly come in handy when pruning roses or working with berry bushes or any other thorny plant. They not only protect the gardener’s hands, but forearms as well.

Something as simple as a foam kneeling pad can make garden tasks far more comfortable. Even better, a combination bench/kneeler that folds flat for storage (and gift wrapping) can be used as a seat or turned upside down to become a kneeler, complete with side handles to make getting back up much easier.

If you’re looking for something perhaps a bit less practical, decorative gifts can add interest and a focal point in the garden. Wind spinners, sculptures, birdbaths and birdhouses are all possibilities.

A themed selection of seed packets can form the basis of a special garden — a flower cutting garden, a pollinator garden or the ingredients for the salad of their dreams. Even just a few packets make a handy stocking stuffer.

For indoor gardeners who prefer houseplants to garden plots, plants such as jasmine (Jasminum polyanthum) or gardenia (Gardenia jasminoides) can fill the indoors with sweet fragrance and make the winter months seem to melt away. If not available at a local nursery, check online for sources that will ship safely even in winter.

Seasonal plants like amaryllis (Amaryllis) are another option. These large bulbs are available in stores leading up to the holidays. They are easy to pot up according to directions provided with the bulb and fascinating to watch as the leaves and tall stem emerge and produce a showy display of flowers.

An easy homemade gift is a selection of spring bulbs packaged to force into bloom indoors well before their outdoor counterparts have awakened from their slumber beneath the snow. Bulbs are still available in many stores or can be ordered online.

Select a container, fill it with potting soil, plant a selection of spring bulbs and include instructions on how to force the bulbs to bloom. Information on forcing bulbs can be found at go.uvm.edu/bulbs.

Still not sure? Consider a gift certificate to their favorite nursery. The recipient will certainly enjoy marking off an item on their garden wish list. Or perhaps your local plant store offers classes. Creating a terrarium or learning the basics of seed starting can be a taste of spring on a cold winter’s day.

Whether it’s packets of seeds as a stocking stuffer, plants or something for the tool basket in anticipation of spring, gardening-related gifts can help spring seem a little closer for gardeners and garden lovers.

(Deborah J. Benoit is a University of Vermont Extension master gardener from North Adams, Massachusetts, who is part of Vermont’s Bennington County Chapter.)
Growing orchids easier than their reputation

Deborah J. Benoit
University of Vermont Extension

Do you admire orchids from afar but haven’t considered growing them or gifting them to a plant lover you know? Sure, they’re a pretty plant, but orchids have a reputation as being difficult to grow.

When you think of orchids, do you picture a climate-controlled greenhouse devoted to a collection of beautiful but fussy plants? The truth is, orchids can be grown as easily as any other houseplant. All it takes is a little know-how and some TLC.

Most orchids require similar care, but there’s one orchid you’re likely to see more than the rest. Moth orchids (Phalaenopsis) are so common you can find them not only at your local nursery or florist, but also in department and grocery stores.

Orchids come in many shapes, sizes and colors that are hard to resist when in bloom. If you’ve given in to temptation and bought home an orchid in full bloom only to give up on the plant and its plain-looking foliage when the flowers have faded, you aren’t alone.

Moth orchids aren’t particularly expensive, so many people consider them a temporary houseplant, to be replaced once the flowers are gone. After all, that’s what we do with cut flowers. But if you give them a chance, you can enjoy their flowers for years to come.

While your first inclination may be to select the plant with the most flowers, think again. Choose an orchid with many buds. Even small buds will develop into flowers, giving you an extended bloom time with flowering lasting weeks, sometimes months.

When the last of the flowers have finally faded, you may be tempted to cut the stem back, but wait. As long as the stem of a moth orchid is green, it may produce additional buds.

Once the stem begins to turn brown and die on its own, cut it back to where it meets the leaves so that the plant can use its resources to grow and rebloom. During this time, continue to care for the orchid as usual.

Like any houseplant, an orchid will thrive in conditions it favors. Moth orchids prefer temperatures between 65-75 degrees Fahrenheit along with bright, indirect sunlight. A grow light also can be used. Orchids are potted in moss or bark rather than potting soil. If repotting, use a similar media.

Water as needed. Depending on growing conditions, that may be weekly or less frequently. Some moth orchids come with instructions to water using ice cubes. While convenient, if the ice contacts the roots or foliage, damage may occur.

A better method is to use room temperature water when the moss is dry. Give the orchid a good watering, letting excess water drain from the pot. Allowing the moss to remain too wet can result in damage to the roots.

Fertilizer can be beneficial, but over fertilizing can burn leaves and roots. An orchid fertilizer can be used according to directions on the package. Alternatively, a urea-free houseplant fertilizer can be used either at half strength once a month when watering or at one-quarter strength each watering.

When your moth orchid is ready to rebloom, it will send up a green stalk that points upward and has a more pointed tip than the paler, rounded end roots. Soon you’ll see buds develop and then the main event, flowers.

So, the next time you’re tempted by the fancy floral display of an orchid, give it a chance. Bring it home. With a little TLC it will bloom again and again for years to come.

(Deborah J. Benoit is a University of Vermont Extension master gardener from North Adams, Mass., who is part of Vermont’s Bennington County Chapter.)

Photo by Deborah J. Benoit
Some stars from the children's picture book universe

Children's Books

Emily Raabe
Contributor

Happy December, all. As I type this some flakes are gathering (finally) on the ground, and it's dark at 5 o'clock. That's why I'm happy to report that 2022 was a bumper year for particularly gorgeous, poetic picture books. With that thought in mind, here are a few blockbusters not reviewed here, mostly because they are on everybody's list this year and don't really need a plug from me (Jon Klassen's hilarious "Billy Goats Gruff," I'm thinking of you).

Here are the ones that did make the cut, all available at The Flying Pig bookstore.

• "Farmhouse," written and illustrated by Sophie Blackall. Over a hill, at the end of a road, by a glittering stream that twists and turns, stands a house. "begins Sophie Blackall's latest significant picture book. "Farmhouse" began with the author's discovery of an abandoned house full of objects, she creates a collage of images, textures, story. Blackall's 2020 "If You Came to Earth" is mind-blowing, ever the more so because it is the truth. It is a nonfiction thriller — you can't make this stuff up. Some stars from the children's picture book universe

Nonfiction thriller — you can’t make this stuff up

Katherine Arthaud
Contributor

I have been waiting for another book from this author since I first discovered "Margaret's Unicorns," a book that gets my vote for the best unicorn, double-knows. It comes out there (no glitter). Like "Margaret's Unicorns," "The Mermaid Moon" is about friendship, this time between a little girl named Molly and her mermaid friend.

On one night each year, the seawolf can swim through the air and visit the human world. "The Mermaid Moon" will want to fall into the dreary, do not dare spread watercolor and gauche illustrations. Last year I raved about Lynch's "Illustrated Night Before Christmas." This one is even better. Ages 3-7.

• "The Lodge That Beaver Built," written by David Shannon and illustrated by Annie Hunter. For a change of pace (and tone) I give you a non-fiction (ish) book. The beauty of this book lies in the balance between the poetry of the language and the specificity of the world. "This is the buttonbush, alder toothbrush and seedslinging new ducklings from Hawk on her ledge/shielding the lodge that beaver built."

Children hungry for information will get it here, but from within the comforting rhythm of a familiar rhyme (the text is a retelling of "The House That Jack Built)."

They will also get Anna Hunter's lively ink and colored pencil drawings. Hunter is the creator of "Pond's Adventures," a long-time favorite in our house. Her delicate drawings give life and personality to every creature depicted in the book and make it fun to return to again and again. Listed at ages 4-8, but I would not hesitate to go a bit younger as well. "The Shortest Night" celebrates the holiday taking place at the turn of the Bell family's calendar. "The Wolf Suit" is a graphic novel, but one that is art-heavy, with relatively brief text. This book is a knockout. Really all you need to know in that illustration are listed as "pencil, watercolor, ink, acrylic and oil." "The Wolf Suit" is a graphic novel, but one that is art-heavy, with relatively brief text.

Riggwelter needs more blackberries, but he is afraid of the forest. As a solution, he sews himself a warm hat, and off we go. "The Wolf Suit" is a graphic novel, but one that is art-heavy, with relatively brief text.
Library News

Consider the library when considering local gifts

Looking for a heartfelt gift with a local touch?
Visit the mini-sale event at the library for cards, bookmarks and other goods made by local artists Dec. 14-21. A portion of the sales goes to the Friends of the Charlotte Library Program Fund. 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 or new cold-weather gear.

The library is also a designated food shelf drop-off location. All items collected will be going to a local non-profit organization.

Consider gift subscriptions to the library. The cost of subscriptions continues to climb. Many magazines offer a free gift subscription with renewal. If you happen to have a gift subscription available, the library would be grateful to receive it.

Sponsoring one of the library’s newspaper subscriptions is another way to support the library. Contact Margaret Woodruff at margaret@charlottepubliclibrary.org if you are interested.

Ongoing programs for all ages

Kids crafts
See what fun activity youth services librarian Cheryl Sloan has concocted for younger library fans. Pick up your monthly craft kit in the library entryway.

Take & make kits
Celebrate the birds of winter. Craft a felt bird bookmark using our take & make kit at the circulation desk.

Copies of this graphic novel are now available at the library circulation desk. Stay tuned for details about our bite-size book talk coming next month.

Book chat at the library

Meet at the library to discuss new books, old books and books we might have missed. Each week, library director Margaret Woodruff selects a theme and highlights related titles from the library collection. Please check the library calendar at charlottepubliclibrary.org for dates.

Short story selections

First & third Wednesdays, 1 p.m.
Join Woodruff Dec. 7 and 21 via Zoom to share and discuss short stories old and new. The reading list will include a variety of authors, and one or two stories will be featured each session. Copies of the stories are available at the library circulation desk or via email.

Book Chat

Fridays, 9:30 a.m.
Meet on Zoom to discuss new books, old books and books you might have missed. Friday is a recap of the Wednesday porch session. Please check the library calendar at charlottepubliclibrary.org for dates. Register in advance for Zoom link: bit.ly/3Bl9bD.

Human Rights Week Expression Wall

Through Dec. 47
Human Rights Week is a week of events to commemorate the anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights signed by the United Nations General Assembly on Dec. 10, 1948. In recognition of this, the library is hosting a “Free Expression” wall in the program room and inviting the community members to share what human rights mean to them by word or illustration.

One-on-one tech help

Thursday, Dec. 15, 1 p.m.
Email enigma? Kindle conundrum? App apprehension? Computer questions? Margaret Woodruff, Charlotte Library’s technology librarian, for some tech support. She will troubleshoot with you and provide suggestions for next steps. Make sure to bring your device and any necessary login information. When registering, please provide a specific topic or item that you need help with and include the device you will be bringing to the session (e.g., Windows laptop, Mac laptop, Kindle, iPhone, iPad, Android phone, etc.). Registration required, please call 802-425-6345.

Winter Crafternoon

Friday, Dec. 16, 1 p.m.
From 3D forest critters to pompom garlands to woven hearts, there will be something for everyone. We will also have our Cricut cutting machine available to try out. Registration is required by emailing susanna@charlottepubliclibrary.org.

Mystery book group: Clark and Division

Monday, Dec. 19, 10 a.m.
Set in 1944 Chicago, Edgar Award-winning Naomi Hirahara’s eye-opening and poignant new mystery, the story of a young woman searching for the truth about her revered older sister’s death, brings to focus the struggles of one Japanese American family released from mass incarceration at Manzanar during World War II. Copies available at the library circulation desk.

In-service day

Tuesday, Dec. 20, 9 a.m.-1 p.m.
The library will be closed Tuesday, Dec. 20 for a staff in-service session and will open at 1 p.m.

Men’s book group: This is Happiness

Wednesday, Dec. 21, 7:30 p.m.
Join Woodruff Dec. 7 and 21 via Zoom to discuss new books, old books and books you might have missed. Friday is a recap of the Wednesday porch session. Please check the library calendar at charlottepubliclibrary.org for dates. Register in advance for Zoom link: bit.ly/3Bl9bD.

Library contact information
Margaret Woodruff, director
Cheryl Sloan, youth services librarian
Susanna Kahan, tech librarian
Phone: 802-425-3664
Email: info@charlottepubliclibrary.org

The Charlotte Library Board of Trustees meets the first Thursday of each month at 6 p.m. For information about agenda and Zoom access, please contact the library director. The next scheduled board meeting is 6 p.m., Thursday, Jan. 5.

New reason to smile:
One appointment = One new crown
If you need a crown, there’s no need for two or three appointments and a week or two of waiting. Shelburne Dental now has CEREC® digital technology, which measures your mouth’s need with the highest level of precision and efficiency for impeccable and immediate results!

One appointment. One crown. One beautiful smile.

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Shelburne Shopping Park
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Peter Fenn
802-734-0353
Are you still searching for a holiday gift or looking for something new to try out in 2023? How about a class at the senior center? There is a wide range of offerings ranging from beginner guitar, ukulele, watercolor or meditation.

The center has expanded its programs to include late afternoon and some evening and weekend classes. Other exciting news: Garnet Healthcare is back offering COVID-19 and flu vaccines at the senior center starting in January.

The senior center offers programming for adults 50 and older from Charlotte and surrounding communities. Interested in receiving a weekly reminder about what is happening? Sign up for the email newsletters at charlotteseniorcentervt.org. The “Week Ahead” email is sent out on Friday mornings with activities, lunch menus and special programming for the upcoming week.

Community Events

Christmas morning breakfast
Sunday, Dec. 25, 8:30-11 a.m.
The holidays are a time to be shared with others. The senior center is extending an invitation to those interested in gathering for community and connection over breakfast to join at the senior center on Christmas morning. Please register by calling 802-425-6345, but also know that drop-ins will be welcome as well.

Do you need a ride to the senior center or have questions? Contact Suzanna at 802-324-8853.

COVID-19 & flu vaccine walk-in clinics
Wednesdays, Jan. 11 & 25, 1-6 p.m.
In January, Garnet Healthcare is back offering COVID-19 vaccines, updated (bivalent) boosters and flu* vaccine walk-in clinics at the Charlotte Senior Center. No appointments necessary. *Flu vaccines are only available for those under 65 years.

Cello performance
Thursday, Jan. 26, 1-1:45 p.m.
Enjoy a solo cello performance at the senior center with Jonah Hutchin, a premier young adult performing cellist of Charlotte, Vermont. Check out jonahhutchin.com.

Free.

Art Exhibit
Wind Castles — and Beyond
Photography exhibit by Rachel Doran is on display through the end of January. Doran has been exhibiting for about 25 years, and this exhibit includes many photographs of Vermont landscapes, as well as glimpses of New York State and Ontario, Canada.

Upcoming Programs

Beginner guitar II
Wednesday evenings, 7-8 p.m., Jan. 18, 25, Feb. 1, 15, 22 and March 1.
Interested in learning guitar? This class is for those who have a basic understanding of beginner guitar and is a continuation of the fall beginner guitar six-week class. If you have questions about whether this class would be appropriate for your specific skill level, please reach out to John Creech at jonchreecr@gmail.com. There will be no class on Feb. 8. Cost is $75. Register by Friday, Jan. 13.

Meditation class
Tuesday evenings, 5-6 p.m., Jan. 10, 17, 24 & Feb. 7.
Kickstart the New Year with some self-care as your resolution and join Charlie Nardozzi for this four-week meditation class. Has your meditation practice fallen to the wayside? Or are you curious about meditation and interested in starting a practice? This class is for beginners and experienced meditators alike. All are welcome. Meditation is an easy-to-learn practice that has been proven to reduce anxiety, stress, pain and depression. Cost is $40 for the four-week session. Pre-registration and payment due by Jan. 9.

Kirtan
Sunday, Jan. 15, 3-5 p.m.
Join Charlie Nardozzi and Heidi Kvasnak for a Sunday afternoon Kirtan. Kirtan is an ancient Yoga gathering where musicians play traditional instruments and sing simple chants. Some chants are call and response and others are singalongs. Feel free to simply sit, listen and enjoy. The goal is to create a peaceful, quiet and soothing space inside. Song sheets will be provided, an explanation about the chants before singing, and some brief, quiet times between chants for meditation. All are welcome and no experience is necessary. Register by Friday, Jan. 13. Cost is free.

Questions? Please contact Charlie Nardozzi at cnardozzi124@gmail.com.

Ukulele
Wednesday evenings, 5:30-6:30 p.m., Jan. 18, 25, Feb. 1, 15, 22 & March 2.
Join John Creech as you learn to play the ukulele in this fun and easygoing class. Ukuleles are easy to learn, even if you have no musical background. This group is for anyone who already plays and just wants to play in a group as well as beginners interested in learning. Bring a ukulele, along with an electronic clip-on tuner, and the curiosity for learning something new. There will be no class on Feb. 8. Registration required by Friday, Jan. 13.

Cost is $75.

Watercolor in winter
Tuesdays, Jan. 31 March 7, 9 a.m.-noon.
In this six-session class with Lynn Cummings, a variety of topics will be explored ranging from “painting whites” and winter wildlife, to details that can be added to paintings, like insects, bubbles and water droplets. Cost is $240 and registration and payment by Jan. 20.

Volunteer opportunities
Alzheimer’s Association support group facilitators
The senior center is seeking volunteers to serve as support group facilitators to help start a new support group for people caring for someone with dementia. Facilitators create a safe, open environment where people share their feelings, thoughts and experiences in a combined effort to better cope with and manage the shared problems of dementia. If you are interested, please contact Jordan Cotto at jccotto@alz.org.

Meals
Menus are posted on the website: charlotteseniorcentervt.org.

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

Weekly Age Well Grab & Go meals
Pick up on Thursdays 10-11 a.m. at the Charlotte Senior Center. Registration is required by Monday for the Thursday meal. To register, contact Kerrie Pughe at 802-425-6345 or kpughe@charlotteseniorcentervt.org. Suggested meal donation $5.

Holiday hours
• Friday, Dec. 23, closing at noon.
• Monday, Dec. 26, closed in observance of Christmas.
• Tuesday-Friday, Dec. 27-30, the senior center will be closing at noon.

Please check the website calendar at charlotteseniorcentervt.org to confirm that a program is being held.

• Monday, Jan. 2, closed in observance of New Years Day.

Senior center contact info:
Lori York, director, lyork@charlotteseniorcentervt.org
Kerrie Pughe, coordinator, kpughe@charlotteseniorcentervt.org

Follow the senior center on Facebook or Instagram at charlotteseniorcentervt.org.
Celebrate Fruitcake Month at the senior center

Since December has been labeled Fruitcake Month, we can be forgiven for a few more observations on the topic. Fruitcake happened to be one of Franklin D. Roosevelt’s favorite foods, and General George S. Patton was known to have devoured an entire brandied fruitcake at one sitting. But according to Alexander Thoreaux’s “Einstein’s Beets,” after doing this, worried about weight gain, Patton went immediately afterwards to the hospital to have his stomach pumped.

Thoreaux notes that fruitcake, designed to be given away rather than eaten, may in fact be the ultimate diet food, because it is never actually consumed.

Not to worry: Monday Munch offers plenty of delicious food crafted to be consumed in a room filled with good company.

**Monday Munch**
**Dec. 19**
Meal to be announced. Check the website at charlotteseniorcentervt.org/ lunch/meals.

**Thursday, Dec. 22, 10-11 a.m.**
Grab & Go Meal pickup
Macaroni and cheese, carrots, peas and mushrooms, pumpkin cookie with raisins and white chips.

**Thursday, Dec. 29, 10-11 a.m.**
Grab & Go Meal pickup
Beef stroganoff with onions and mushrooms, rotini noodles, Brussel sprouts, dinner roll, seasoned apples with cinnamon and milk.

Although these Thursday meals come ready-made by AgeWell, please remember that the Charlotte Senior Center needs volunteer hosts and servers, as well as Monday cooks and dishwashers.

Speaking of noodles, the food section of the New York Times reports that the most popular dish in their pages this year was San Francisco-style Vietnamese American garlic noodles. Besides recipes, this section offers comments from readers who have tried the dishes. In this case they offer tips on how to prepare the required 20 cloves of garlic. If you’d like the recipe, contact me and I’ll send you a gift article.

As you watch icicles form, listen to Billie Holiday singing “I’ve Got My Love to Keep Me Warm” at youtube.com/watch?v=d-hOTV61-8.

For more warmth, come enjoy food and friendship at the Charlotte Senior Center.

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Write Ingredients

Susan Ohanian
Contributor

Tuesday, December 15, 2022  |  Volume 65 Number 13

Charlotte News
Your nonprofit community news source since 1958

Bryn Herlihy deliberates with Santa at the Charlotte Fire and Rescue Station.

There’s always a good crowd for the Monday Munches where the volunteers serve 50-60 meals weekly.