Frolic at dusk

Just before sunset on Sunday, Jan. 22, some felt conditions were getting uncomfortable and went inside for hot chocolate and warmth, but these two thought the plunging temperatures were perfect and stayed outside.

Photo by Alexandra Z. Lazar
Selectboard cuts its proposed budget
Voting remains on Town Meeting Day and by Australian ballot
Scooter MacMillan
Editor

A meeting with just two items on the agenda took almost four hours on Wednesday, Feb. 1. The selectboard had planned a special meeting to discuss reversing its vote on switching to an Australian ballot and hold an informational discussion about the proposed budget for 2023-24. However, a large crowd showed up, in person and online, and they had a lot to say.

As the meeting started, board member Lewis Mudge expressed umbrage about allegations that the board’s decision to switch to Australian ballot had been made suddenly, once again foregoing a traditional town hall meeting with voting from the floor for some items, most notably on the budget. He said it wasn’t in the usual way they had been discussing this change for several meetings.

Mudge took that exception to social media and emails he’d seen where selectboard members were called dictators. The board and residents in attendance also discussed the relative merits of ways to ensure more public participation in town decisions, and whether voice voting or Australian ballot is the best method to boost resident involvement. More people vote in town elections on issues decided by Australian ballot than attend Town Meeting Day and participate in voice voting. But, an individual resident can potentially have a profound impact on a budget by introducing a motion from the floor in voice voting.

“We want to maximize the number of townspersons who can participate in this decision,” board member Louise McCarron said. “If that is in fact the Australian ballot, let’s go with that.”

Chair Jim Faulkner said they had given the issue a lot of thought. A big factor in their decision was choosing to err on the side of safety and decrease the risk of spreading COVID, with the virus still lingering.

“We were following the governor’s sugges- tion,” Faulkner said. “We’re thinking that his experts know more than the selectboard.”

Christina Asquith asked for the selectboard to reverse their decision because she believes town meeting can be held safely. She supports in-person town meetings because it gives people opportunities to discuss issues among themselves instead of only with the select- board.

A lengthy passed bill (H-42), gives towns the authority to postpone town meetings until later in the year, Rep. Chas Waters Evans said. Board member Matt Krasnow lobbied for moving Town Meeting Day back until early summer, so it could be held under a tent to limit the risk of infection.

Lynne Jaunich, who is retiring as Charlotte’s representative to the school board, said she had experienced having a budget defeated, and the selectboard should not be afraid of having its budget shot down. — Lynne Jaunich

“Democracy is really messy.”

Very Merry Theatre puts kids center stage
Alicia Wolfram
Community News Service

Imagine walking into a rustic barn on a rolling Charlotte hill and, instead of finding animals in stalls and hay strewn about, seeing kids busily rehearsing lines, building sets and assembling costumes. That’s a typical day at Very Merry Theatre’s summer camp.

What started almost two decades ago as only a camp in a local barn has grown into a theater organization serving about 1,000 youths annually from northwestern Vermont. Based in Burlington, Very Merry Theatre introduces young people to the art of theater by immersing them in all aspects of play production — acting, set design, touring and more. Parents can register their kids online for a variety of classes, programs and camps ranging in price and age group. The nonprofit welcomes participants 4 to 19 years old, and offers financial aid.

Plays have included “Peter Pan,” “Alice in Wonderland,” “King Lear, the Western,” and “A Midsummer Night’s Dream: The 40s Musical,” among others.

From its small start in 1994, the nonprofit now works with kids at local schools, summer camps and at its studio in Burlington to put on more than 40 shows each year. Along the way, it has nurtured a community of kids, parents, volunteers and board members to ensure children take center stage.

“The group wants kids to ‘develop a sense of belonging and a safe place to explore all the many theater arts,’ said founder Don Wright.

He said the group wants to help kids overcome any obstacles to accessing the program by providing lunch or rides if needed. The organization also partners with schools to stage shows on campus, rather than at the group’s studio or on the road. That way, Wright said, transportation and program costs do not limit participation.

Every child who wants a role in a play gets one. Wright makes sure of that — he adapts more than half of the plays and creates as many new characters as needed.

By the mid-’90s, Wright had started his camp and was volunteering at his kids’ school when he noticed there wasn’t much opportunity for young people in theater. So, he thought up Very Merry. Parents and teachers liked what he was doing, and he kept building. “I just kept knocking on the door of the school to get funded,” he said. Wright held the first camp at a friend’s barn on Mount Philo Road in Charlotte. Eight years later in 2002, under the banner of Very Merry, he moved the camp to Stage Hill Farm Barn on Garen Road, where it remains. “The barn itself is just a very magical place to be rehearsing,” said Jessie Heiser, whose 8-year-old twins Maisie and Beatrice attended the camp last summer and plan to return this year.

Heiser said her daughters felt instantly at home, which speaks to the “power of the kindness and openness” of Very Merry. “They really do care and have fun with children and because of that, kids feel welcome and happy,” she said.

Wright feels the same about Charlotte. “I was fortunate enough to find a barn there that really fit our needs,” he said. “Charlotte’s been a huge presence for us, ... It is the genesis of where it started, and we’re there every year.”

The 7- to 13-year-old “Wagon Tour,” one of the signature camps, spans two weeks and consists of six practice days and four performance days, the latter spent in a different town each time. The first week takes place at Stage Hill Farm Barn. The second week, the show goes on the road with a mobile stage — the wagon — which trails behind a truck and folds out fully decorated for each performance.

“We bring out the best in all of the kids he works with, and he just gives 110 percent to every production he ever does,” said Sloan.

Wight calls it an ensemble effort. “We love the creative, imaginative energy and input from all the age groups. Even a 7-year-old still has ideas on how her character, Piglet, should be expressed,” he said. “That’s part of what’s great about art, that discovery.”

(Community News Service works in partnership with The Charlotte News and other local media outlets to provide opportunities to University of Vermont students.)
Freezing cauldron

Lake Champlain on Friday, Feb. 3, when the temperature was minus 21 and the wind chill much colder. "It was a giant freezing cauldron," said Meg Berlin, who took this photo. "The wind was whipping up stiff chop on the water as the lake's surface evaporated into great columns of steam rising 30 feet into the air." Standing outside her car felt "vaguely terrifying."
Food insecurity rising as food benefits decline

Maj Essinger
Contributor

As I write this, overwintering birds scratch at black sunflower seeds, seemingly preparing to brave the brutal cold forecasted for the upcoming weekend. The food energy they consume will hopefully sustain them through the record frigid temperatures.

The Charlotte Food Shelf and Assistance stands ready to help those in need as temperatures drop, inflationary pressures mount and winter presents its special economic challenges. We remind the community that, if you or someone you know in Charlotte or North Ferrisburgh is facing utility shut-off or an unexpected hardship, the food shelf can be a resource.

All requests and grants are kept private and are available by simply calling 802-425-3225 or by filling out a request form. Request forms are available during food shelf open hours or on our website charlottefoodshelf.org.

Fuel and food prices certainly challenge the vision of a warm home and full table. Whether these benefits should be broken out of discussion was devoted to debate about whether these benefits should be broken out and included in the library budget, but the selectboard decided benefits should be broken out for all town departments in next year’s budget.

Krausnow estimated that about two-thirds of the increase in the municipal budget is due to cost-of-living increases. Paying for the town budget is a small portion of a homeowner’s total tax bill. The total tax rate, including the school system’s estimated budget, is predicted to be almost $1.81 per $100 of property value. Of this, the Charlotte municipal tax rate is predicted to be almost $1.80 per $100 of property value and the school property taxes are predicted to be $1.58. So, if these estimates prove to be correct after the town’s property reappraisal is completed in the summer, town property taxes are less than 13 percent of a homeowner’s total property tax bill.

Town administrator Dean Bloch said: “Lowering the town’s tax rate doesn’t have a very significant impact on the total property tax bill: “If the municipal estimated municipal tax rate for fiscal year 2024 is reduced to $1.79, property values on average are say, 15 cents, that doesn’t change the taxes a whole lot.”

After the reappraisal, town officials estimate property value at $100,000 would owe more than $1,800 in taxes, or more than $9,300 on property valued at $500,000. (Obviously, the odds of having a home valued at $100,000 in Charlotte are very low; that figure is included to make mental calculations easier.)

The property reappraisal will mean that the value of property in town will go up. Various percentages have been repeated and reported, but according to town clerk and treasurer Mary Mead, the total property value of town should go up by 18 percent because property is appraised too low now. Property value has gone up during the COVID property-purchasing frenzy.

The common level of appraisal is a method Vermont uses to ensure that each town is paying its fair share of education property tax. Charlotte’s common level of appraisal is 82 percent now. We’d like to bring our grand list up 18 percent to get to that perfect number,” Mead said. “The property values on average are looking at an 18 percent increase. Some will be more; some will be less.”

After the arduous proposal expense cutout at the Feb. 1 meeting, the remaining four board members (McCarron had left the meeting) voted 4-0 to submit an amended version of the proposed budget, which would ask voters to approve budget expenses of $2,930,988 for the coming fiscal year on Town Meeting Day — down by $163,080 from the $3,093,988 in estimated expenses in the original Jan. 16 proposal for the town budget article.
Planning for the future: Planting the seeds of growth

Peter Joslin
Contributor

It takes time, energy and food for a seed to sprout, and it looks like one has germinated in Charlotte. Based on the impressive turnout at the Community Heart & Soul meet and greet on Jan. 20 and 27, Charlotters are ready to break bread and share ideas, desires and opinions about the future of our town. What was originally planned as one event, became two due to high attendance. Who would have thought?

Paula and I attended the second event, graciously hosted by the senior center; the previous event was hosted by the Congregational Church. At both events, music, chili, cornbread, salad and dessert were the prelude to an introduction to Community Heart & Soul and a brief overview of how it assists towns in organizing and planning for the future.

Kyra Wegman and Bob Bloch, members of the Charlotte Planning Commission, kicked off the event with personal recollections of what drew them to Charlotte, and then introduced Patricia Sears and Steven Mason, who will be the town’s Community Heart & Soul coaches. Mary Theodore, one of the six organizers of the events, guided attendees through the meeting and asked everyone to break up into small groups with folks we did not know. I was part of a group that included a sixth grader who will take a long-term commitment to sustain and grow the process. Optimistic perhaps, but if the first two gatherings are any indication, we’re on the right path. Stay tuned for updates for next steps.

Another seed is germinating at Baptist Corners in the East Village. Jonathan Maguire, who purchased 15.4 acres there, is in the thick of development. As mentioned in a previous article in The Charlotte News, the land includes the historic 1810 Sheehan house on the corner of Spear Street and Hinesburg Road. He plans adaptive reuse of the house as a restaurant and a new structure to be used as a cultural center and residential unit above. In the future, he has plans for 20 units of senior housing in the southwest corner of the property. On a recent snowy Saturday morning, he gave me a tour of the house and an overview of the project with the energy and optimism of an entrepreneur. Maguire has submitted his application to the development review board, which has scheduled his sketch plan review for Wednesday evening, February 22.

A major facelift of the Sheehan house, on a very visible corner, is significant and will be a welcome sight, reinforcing the historic settlement pattern and increased vitality of the East Village — consistent with the town plan. Please consider showing your support at the development review board meeting, in person or via Zoom.

Two seeds, possibly becoming two trees!

(Peter Joslin is a new member of The Charlotte News’ board of directors and former chair of the planning commission.)

Commentary

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Free gift wrapping!

Everything for Valentine’s Day
and any other day
you just need
“a little something”

Photo by Scooter MacMillan

It was chilly on the outside and chili on the inside at the second Community Heart & Soul kick-off event on Friday, Jan. 27. Inside the senior center, the counters were laden with chili, cornbread, deserts and warm conversations.
Free curriculum and contest for Black History Month

Clemmons Family Farm

In honor of Black History Month, the Clemmons Family Farm is releasing “Two Bessies on Two Wheels,” an African American history curriculum for grades K-5.

The curriculum is available online as part of the nonprofit farm’s Windows to a Multicultural World K-12 program. It features two women who were pioneers in airplane and motorcycle travel: Bessie Coleman, the first African-American woman to ride a motorcycle across the United States. Both women broke through barriers of gender and race discrimination to pursue their joy of freedom, travel and adventure.

The online curriculum includes lesson plans and resources from trusted sources for teachers and parents. There are also downloadable worksheets, coloring pages and art projects that enrich students’ learning about the two African American women pioneers in travel.

Clemmons Family Farm approached Vermont singer-songwriter KeruBo to commission a new song that would help bring to life the stories of the two African American women to ride a motorcycle across the United States. Both women broke through barriers of gender and race discrimination to pursue their joy of freedom, travel and adventure.

KeruBo wrote Vroom! to bring to life the stories of the two African American women who were pioneers in airplane and motorcycle travel: Bessie Coleman, the first African-American and Native American to obtain a pilot’s license, and Bessie Stringfield, the first African-American woman to ride a motorcycle across the United States. Both women broke through barriers of gender and race discrimination to pursue their joy of freedom, travel and adventure.

The two women who were pioneers in airplane and motorcycle travel: Bessie Coleman, the first African-American and Native American to obtain a pilot’s license, and Bessie Stringfield, the first African-American woman to ride a motorcycle across the United States. Both women broke through barriers of gender and race discrimination to pursue their joy of freedom, travel and adventure.

The contest guidelines help K-5 students learn the history of Bessie Stringfield and Bessie Coleman with their local communities and discover the motorcycle and airplane adventures of their family members, neighbors and other community members.

The curriculum is available online for free during Black History Month at windows-to-a-multicultural-world.clemmonsfamilyfarm.org/courses/black-history-month-2023-two-bessies-on-two-wheels.

252 community concerts performed for a cooler climate

Brady Jalili
Contributor

Last May composer-pianist David Feurzeig embarked on Play Every Town: 252 free concerts in each of Vermont’s 252 towns to combat climate change through the power of community and music. With this project David will become the first musician to perform in every Vermont municipality.

Feurzeig is traveling in his solar-charged electric vehicle throughout the state, offering free concerts to bring attention to the interrelated issues of climate and community, while bringing the joy of music to his audiences. He will perform at the Charlotte Congregational Church at 2 p.m. on Sunday, Feb. 12.

“I want to support Vermont’s local communities with live performance in village centers and downtowns, while fulfilling the University of Vermont’s mission to serve as a resource for the whole state,” Feurzeig said.

A professor of music at UVM since 2008, Feurzeig specializes in genre-defying recitals that bring together music of an astonishing variety of musical styles, from ancient and classical to jazz, avant-garde and popular traditions. Each program includes local customization. At Charlotte Congregational Church, the choir will sing music of 19th-century Vermont hymnologists, and music director Cameron Brownell will join Feurzeig for a set of songs by Gabriel Fauré. Like every performance on the tour, this one will include its own unique Domenico Scarlatti keyboard sonata: Sonata No. 24 for this 24th concert in the project. The bulk of the concert will be made up of ragtime in surprisingly varied styles from Joplin to contemporary works, including Feurzeig’s “Stride Rite,” a ragtime parody of Stravinsky’s “Rite of Spring,” and “Celebration Rag” by Vermont composer Preston Murphy.

Short classical pieces will round out the program, including “Another Time” by Vermont composer Eve Beglarian.

Feurzeig finds his approach attracts new audiences to so-called “classical” concerts and brings new insight to existing fans. “Classical music culture puts the ‘great composers’ on an almost religious pedestal.”

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Once this was an indication of the audience’s love and respect, but it distances people from the music. It turns away new listeners, who feel like they’re in a stuffy museum instead of a live concert,” Feurzeig said. “Sure, the music can be exciting but there’s no reason anyone should feel intimidated. And if I don’t get a laugh from the audience in the first two minutes, I get worried!”

Follow Feurzeig on his journey on Instagram, find up-to-date events via Facebook or visit the website at PlayEveryTown.com. Feurzeig said, “Like so much of our everyday life, routine jet travel is our everyday life, routine jet travel is worrying!”

“I’m not 100 percent yet, though. I’m still not 100 percent yet, though. I’m still not 100 percent yet, though. I’m still not 100 percent yet, though. I’m still not 100 percent yet, though. I’m still not 100 percent yet, though. I’m still not 100 percent yet, though. I’m still not 100 percent yet, though. I’m still not 100 percent yet, though.
Leslie, the best of you and no regrets…

Community Roundup

League Of Women Voters hosts program on non-citizen voting

The League of Women Voters of Vermont is sponsoring a free program on non-citizen voting at the Fletcher Free Library at 235 College Street in Burlington 2-3:30 p.m. on Saturday, Feb. 18, in the Fletcher Room.

The meeting will feature a discussion on how to participate, please contact University of Vermont’s request a disability-related accommodation requests, contact go.uvm.edu/2023ntcc. Registrations also can be made at 802-656-8407. To get more information, visit stepsvt.org/volunteer.

Volunteer with United Way’s Vermont with questions about the program at league@lwvvt.org.

Volunteer with United Way’s Volunteer Connection

United Way of Vermont’s Volunteer Connection site is set up to connect agencies and volunteers. Agencies are working hard to navigate volunteering during this time with opportunities increasing.

Parenting education

Prevent Child Abuse Vermont invites skilled professionals, experienced parents or grandparents, high school students seeking field work to join a team facilitating virtual parent education classes and support groups. Parents can learn the skills to strengthen themselves and their families. Volunteers are also needed to translate materials into Spanish, Arabic and French. Fill out a volunteer application at pwvt.org/volunteer.

Ending domestic violence

Steps to End Domestic Violence has many ways to get involved: 24-hour hotline. A conference will be held March 9 in Judd Hall on the Vermont Technical College campus in Randolph Center. It is sponsored by University of Vermont Extension’s northwestern crop and soils program. The registration fee is $25 and includes lunch. Registrations accepted until March 6 at go.uvm.edu/2023organicdairyconference.

Organic dairy conference planned for March 9

Farmers who register for the 2023 Vermont Organic Dairy Producers Conference will learn about strategies to manage high feed costs, satellite imagery for better pasture management and research on bedding and mastitis, among other topics. The evening annual conference will be held March 9 at the Vermont Technical College campus in Randolph Center. It is sponsored by University of Vermont Extension’s northwestern crop and soils program. The registration fee is $25 and includes lunch. Registrations accepted until March 6 at go.uvm.edu/2023organicdairyconference.

Community Roundup

University of Vermont sponsors no-till and cover crop conference

The 2023 No-Till and Cover Crop Conference, set for March 2 in South Burlington, will provide information and research updates to farmers and field crop growers on cover crop and manure management.

Speakers hail from New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Vermont. Registration is $75 and $50 for students, payable by Feb. 24 at go.uvm.edu/2023ntcc. Registrations also can be made at 802-656-8407. For disability-related accommodation requests, contact University of Vermont student accessibility services at 802-656-7753.

Aaron Ristow, American Farmland Trust, will open the conference with a talk on the Genesee River Demonstration Farms Network in western New York and biomass productivity and decreased inputs from planting green. He is followed by Kirsten Workman, Cornell University, with a discussion on cover crop alternatives to winter rye, and Glen Arnold, Ohio State University Extension, on precision manifold management and side-dressing in corn.

Night Eagle Wilderness Adventures

A unique summer camp for boys, ages 10-14, located in Vermont’s Green Mountains

CAMP ABNAKI

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• Boys learn skills, build confidence, and make friends
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CAMP ABNAKI is a coeducational United States summer camp for children ages 6-17 located in rural Putney, Vermont. The camp was founded in 1947 as a four-season overnight camp. The camp is open to all children, regardless of gender, sexual orientation and gender identity. The camp is a coeducational camp with separate programs for younger campers and older campers. The camp is a member of the American Camp Association. The camp is a member of the American Camp Association. The camp is a member of the American Camp Association. The camp is a member of the American Camp Association. The camp is a member of the American Camp Association. The camp is a member of the American Camp Association.

1, 2, 3, 4, and 6 week sessions

802-855-8661 NightEagleWilderness.com
Servin named Vermont Boys Cross Country Player of the Year

Contributed

In its 38th year of honoring the nation’s best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced Matthew Servin of Champlain Valley Union High School as the 2022-23 Gatorade Vermont Boys Cross Country Player of the Year. Servin is the second Gatorade Vermont Boys Cross Country Player of the Year to be announced this month with a time of 16:36.7, a victory at the Division 1 state championships and person.”

coach. “He is an outstanding student, athlete Champlain Valley Union High cross-country to be announced this month.

Boys Cross Country Player of the Year award
He is now a finalist for the Gatorade National 2015-2016 and Autumn Eastman 2013-2014.

— Alice Larson 2018-19, Sophia Gorman school year.

Gatorade Vermont Boys Cross Country

Future looking bright for CVU boys basketball

Sweeney, who drained a pair of three-pointers, CVU was able to build a 53-29 lead to take into the fourth.

The win increased CVU’s record to 14-1 and dropped BFA-St. Albans to 7-6.

The Redhawks’ next game is at 7 p.m. this Friday, Feb. 10, at Essex High. The junior varsity contest starts at 5:30 p.m.

CVU 70, St. Johnsbury 48

Although they came close on Monday, Jan. 30 at St. Johnsbury, ultimately the Hilltoppers were not able to top the 35-point peak they had scaled against CVU exactly a month earlier. The first half was a nail-biter with the Redhawks managing to take a slight 29-28 lead into halftime. However, they erupted in the third quarter with a 15-2 run, and the Redhawks took a 51-38 lead into the fourth. The final quarter began with a 203 CVU scoring run.

CVU finished with four players in double figures. Eaton was the high scorer with 18, while senior Alex Provost notched 15. Junior Tucker Tharpe tallied 14. Tharpe may have made the difference in the game with 13 of his points coming in the second half.

CVU 51, Mount Mansfield 31

The Redhawks’ defense held the visiting Cougars to 11 points in the first half to take a 30-11 lead into halftime on Jan. 27.

CVU held visiting Mount Mansfield to 11 first-half points on route to victory.

In the end it was a relatively easy win for CVU, with Sam Sweeney leading the scoring with 12 points.

CVU 49, South Burlington 43

The outcome of a Jan. 24 tilt at South Burlington was undecided until the closing minutes before CVU finally prevailed.

South Burlington was ahead 24-22 at halftime.

Although the Redhawks outscored the Wolves 16-7 in the third quarter to take a 38-31 lead into the final frame, the contest was not over.

South Burlington managed to climb back to a 43-all tie in the fourth, but CVU scored the final six points of the game to seal the win.

Logan Vaughan led the scoring for CVU with 12 points. Tharpe had 11 and Provost 9.

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Lunches limited to sandwiches and salads because of PCB levels

Naomi Strada
(Condensed by Tom Scatchard)

In November, PCB testing was performed at Charlotte Central School. PCBs are human-made chemicals that were used in building materials before 1980. The Charlotte Central School results showed the kitchen area to have a PCB level above the state recommended level. The school district will be working with a PCB consultant to address a level of 110 ng/ml in the Charlotte Central School kitchen. The state threshold is 100 ng/ml.

Charlotte Central will be taking immediate actions to reduce the time our Charlotte Central School kitchen crew spends in the kitchen while working through a course of mitigation including:
• Food prep will relocate to the cafeteria.
• Menu options will be limited to the daily cold food offerings — ham, turkey, sunbutter and jelly sandwiches and chef or garden salads. The menu options will be limited to the daily cold food offerings — ham, turkey, sunbutter and jelly sandwiches and chef or garden salads.
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World Read Aloud Day
Feb. 1 was World Read Aloud Day, and Charlotte Central School welcomed authors Grace Lin, Kate Messner, Tara Dufman and Tanya Lee Stone.

World Read Aloud Day has become an event with millions of readers, writers and listeners from communities across all the world coming together to honor the joy and power of reading and sharing stories.

Across the United States, students participated in virtual read alouds with authors to spread the love of reading and writing. Charlotte Central students in the second and third grades heard Kate Messner and Grace Lin shared details about how they collaborated on the book "Once Upon a Book." Illustrator Grace Lin shared the artistic details that went into the creation of a picture that became the inspiration for their book. "Kate Messner told students, ‘My writers’ notebook is where I go to play.’ This is the place where she drops ideas that she can use as story starters."

"It’s the place where she drops ideas that she can use as story starters." Authors connections continued with students from the Omega Team having a Q&A with Tanya Lee Stone, Vermont author of more than 10 books.

2023-24 kindergarten registration
Charlotte Central School will be opening 2023-24 kindergarten registration for next school year on Feb. 1. The Champlain Valley School District is asking families to register their kindergartners by Feb. 24, in an effort to get more accurate enrollment numbers for the upcoming school year.

Contact Naomi Strada (nstrada@cvsdvt.org or 802-425-6600) to pre-register your child for the next school year if they will turn 5 years old by Sept. 1.

Allergic to reading? No worries! Charlotte students in the second and third grades heard Kate Messner and Grace Lin shared details about how they collaborated on the book "Once Upon a Book." Illustrator Grace Lin shared the artistic details that went into the creation of a picture that became the inspiration for their book. "Kate Messner told students, ‘My writers’ notebook is where I go to play.’ This is the place where she drops ideas that she can use as story starters."

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After this is completed, more detailed information on kindergarten registration dates and visits will be coming in the spring.

Intra-district K-8 school choice
Children entering grades pre-K-8 who live in the towns of Charlotte, Hinesburg, Shilbretai, St. George and Williston may exercise school choice. The goal is to both allow options for families and also make balanced class sizes to provide a positive learning environment for all children.

Processes for intra-district choice of school will be guided by the needs of students, space availability and existing resources. Great effort will be made to meet as many families’ needs as possible. Contact the school office for more information.

Watershed science grant benefits teachers

Ashley Eaton
Contributor

The Lake Champlain Basin Program recently awarded an education grant to the University of Vermont Lake Champlain Sun Grant program to create the Watershed Alliance Teacher and Researcher Partnership.

This new partnership will support middle and high school teachers employed by schools in the Lake Champlain Basin in Vermont and New York, helping them foster stronger connections with researchers to integrate watershed science into their classroom.

The year-long program includes hands-on learning opportunities aboard the Marcelle Melosira, the University of Vermont’s state-of-the-art research vessel, involvement in ongoing water research projects and development of educational materials and lesson plans.

Although there is no cost to participate, space is limited, so teachers will be selected through an application process. Applications will be accepted until Feb. 24 at go.uvm.edu/wat or with successful applicants notified by mid-March.

Priority will be given to teachers from schools with a high percentage of students receiving free or reduced lunch and or diverse student bodies. Teaching teams are encouraged to sign up together.

Once accepted, if a disability-related accommodation is needed to participate, teachers should contact Ashley Eaton at 802-391-4410 or akeaton@uvm.edu by May 1. Participants will receive a stipend for their time and purchase of supplies to implement their lessons. Graduate credits are available although teachers are responsible for paying the applicable tuition.

During the intensive summer session, July 31-Aug. 4, teachers will work alongside researchers to conduct field assessments, water quality monitoring and limnological sampling of Lake Champlain and learn about the watershed’s unique characteristics.

They also will begin to brainstorm ideas for a watershed STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art and mathematics) based unit and be matched with a researcher to collaborate on the development of their new curriculum.

After being tested in the classroom, these individual lessons and corresponding materials will be compiled into a larger curriculum to be shared with other teachers in the Lake Champlain Basin.

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*Subject to availability and eligibility.
Into The Woods

Slight changes can ripple through a forest

Ethan Tapper
Contributor

Each of our native species occupies an ecological niche, influencing the ecosystem around it in different ways. The more we learn about forests, the more we discover how critical each species is to their health and function: from towering trees to tiny invertebrates, from the bats that regulate populations of defoliating insects to the rodents that disperse acorns, seeding future generations of oaks. It is relatively easy to understand the profound impact of an extinction on an ecosystem. What is less apparent is when the role of a native species changes as a result of climate change, historic land use, non-native invasive pests and pathogens, and the many other components of global change. Our modern world has given rise to a phenomenon known as cryptic function loss: when the function of an ecosystem is altered by the extirpation (local extinction) of a species, a change in its abundance or a shift in its behavior as a result of global change.

An example of cryptic function loss is the case of American beech. Historical records suggest that beech once accounted for 40-60 percent of all trees in Chittenden County. While most of us know beech only as a sickly tree with cracked, pock-marked bark, it used to be very different. Once, beech trees were capable of becoming massive and ancient, living 400-600 years. One can only imagine how many habitats healthy beech trees once provided, how many species relied on their abundant beechnuts, in how many ways they shaped the forests of the past.

Today, beech is still common in our forests, but its behavior has changed entirely. With the introduction of beech bark disease (a non-native pathogen), most beech trees live only 40-60 years, dying centuries before they can reach the stature of their ancestors. When beech trees are stressed from beech bark disease, they produce clones from their root systems which can dominate the forest understory, creating a monoculture of trees destined to be as unhealthy as their parents. Another example of cryptic function loss is the shape of our modern forests themselves.

Vermont’s forests have regenerated from the near-complete deforestation of the 1800s, when beech once accounted for 40-60 percent of all trees in Chittenden County.

Gardening

Greening up office space

Deborah J. Benoit
Contributor

Whether your office is in a traditional workspace or tucked away in a spare room at home, practicality rules and, above and beyond all else, your office is a place for productivity. That often means a computer, printer and related equipment, along with a lot of paper and hard surfaces. Adding something living and green just might help alleviate the toil of hours at the keyboard and stress of looming deadlines.

Adding plants to your workspace can provide some of the same benefits as an escape to the garden, all without leaving your desk. Houseplants or, in this case, office plants can distract the senses and ease stress, especially during winter months when a visit to the park or garden for some green therapy isn’t an option.

To successfully incorporate plants into an office setting, there are several things to consider. How much space can you devote to a plant or plants? What are the growing conditions in your office? What are the sources of light? Does the temperature fluctuate? And finally, how much time do you have to maintain your office plants? Generally speaking, an office will have limited light sources, either few or no windows and artificial light. The climate may or may not include air conditioning, and conditions may be quite different on weekends if the office is closed.

The peace lily (Spathiphyllum) will do

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Houseplants: toxic for pets?

Jodi Larison
University of Vermont Extension

In their book, “How to be your Dog’s Best Friend,” the Monks of New Skete suggest that for many people, dogs and houseplants are the only readily available touchstones with the natural world. They also say that owners must reflect on their canine’s environment and make it as healthy as possible.

I recently brought a new member into my pack, Betty, a 9-week-old French bulldog. I knew bringing Betty home meant that I needed puppy-proof my condo, as many plants are toxic to pets including puppies, kittens, dogs and cats. So, part of preparing for Betty’s homecoming was determining which of my houseplants might need to be relocated.

Since I live in a small condo, I do not have many houseplants, just chives, oregano, philodendron, rosemary and spider plants. Of these, chives, oregano and philodendron are toxic for both dogs and cats, while rosemary and spider plants are not. So, I relocated my toxic houseplants to places where Betty cannot access them.

How did I determine which plants were safe for my puppy?

I did some online research and found information on plants that are poisonous and non-toxic to pets on the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) website. You can check out go.uvm.edu/toxic-plants to determine if your plants are safe for your pets. Plants are listed both by common and scientific names.

While many types of plants are toxic to both dogs and cats, the toxicity level often varies by animal species as well as by plant. One of the most common symptoms of plant poisoning in both dogs and cats is vomiting.

However, many plants are not toxic to dogs and cats. Before I add any new plants, I make sure that they won’t harm my fur baby if eaten, especially if they are indoor plants.

Whether bringing home a puppy or kitten or already living with a dog or cat, research your houseplants and determine whether they might be toxic. If they might be, move them to a place where your pet will not have access to them. This advice

See Houseplants: toxic for pets? Page 12

FOREST
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

today covering about 75 percent of Vermont. This fact masks a complex reality: as a result of historic deforestation, the loss of wildlife species, the functional-loss of tree species like beech, elm, butternut and chestnut to non-native pests and pathogens, soil degradation and much more, our modern-day forests have been transformed. While Vermont’s forests (for the most part) consist of the same tree species that were here prior to European colonization, many components of pre-colonial forests — a diversity of tree species and forest types, structural diversity (trees of different sizes and ages), deep, well-developed soils, dead wood, and old trees — and the critical functions and habitats that they once provided are underrepresented or missing in many modern forests.

Cryptic function loss demonstrates a complex and important idea: that in ecosystems it is not enough for something (a species, a forest) to exist — the nuances of how it exists matter. Our forests are resilient and adaptive but also very sensitive. Slight changes in environmental conditions, or the presence or absence or behavior of a single species can have consequences that ripple throughout a forest community, causing harmful and destabilizing impacts.

To me, cryptic function loss is a call to action. In the midst of a climate crisis and a biodiversity crisis, it is our responsibility to protect the health and the resilience of our forests, and the tens of thousands of species that rely on them, and to help them recapture the critical functions that have been lost. Actively managing for diversity and complexity is part of this, as is controlling biodiversity threats like non-native invasive plants, deer overpopulations, deforestation and forest fragmentation, as is promoting resistance to the causal agents of cryptic function loss — such as the non-native pathogens that affect native tree species like beech.

Considering the impact of cryptic function loss on our forests is alarming but also oddly hopeful. Unlike extinction, cryptic function loss is a phenomenon of things that still exist, of species and functions that may yet be rediscovered. Our modern forests have lost so much, but with our help they may find a better path forward.

(Ethan Tupper is the Chittenden County Forester for the Vermont Department 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 lnkdtv.ee/chittendencountyforester.)

OFFICE
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

in a office environment. It thrives in low light or bright, indirect light, but avoid direct sunlight. A weakly watering is best, but if you get sidetracked, it will let you know when it’s thirsty. One look at its sad, drooping leaves will send you off for the watering can.

Prayer plant (Maranta leuconeura) with its patterned leaves adds more than just green to the office color scheme. It adds interest as its leaves fold up at night and relax during the daylight hours. It prefers bright, indirect light, but avoid placing it in a sunny window, which will cause the color to fade. Keep the soil moist (but not wet), and mist to increase humidity.

Rex begonia (Begonia rex-cultorum) is a great choice for the desktop. Foilage is the star, with many options for leaf color and texture. Rex begonias do fine in low light. Foilage can be grown in direct sunlight. Allow the top of its soil to dry between waterings, and then water well.

Lucky bamboo (Dracaena sanderiana) is an easy-to-care-for plant that’s tolerant of low-level and artificial light. It prefers moist soil or can be grown in water alone.

If you’re looking for a little drama, include a trailing vine such as golden pothos (Epipremnum aureum). Grow it in a hanging basket in bright, indirect light, keeping soil moist, but not soggy. Placed on a shelf, pothos will cascade in a green waterfall and, as it grows, the vines will happily drape along the top of a bookcase. But what if you have absolutely nowhere to put a plant? Try an air plant (Tillandisia). These are unobtrusive plants, requiring no soil, not even a pot. They do need light (bright, indirect) and water (weekly by a thorough misting, more often in a very dry setting).

There are many plant possibilities for the office. For the small amount of time needed to care for them, they can bring a bit of the natural world into the workplace, help reduce stress, elevate mood and simply make the office a more pleasant and attractive place to be.

(Deborah J. Benoit is a University of Vermont Extension master gardener from North Adams, Mass., who is part of the Bennington County Chapter.)
Staying warm with Demon and Phuc

Katherine Arthaud
Contributor

It is morning and the temperature is falling. According to weather app it “feels like” negative 29 degrees, and yet as I look out my window, I see sun and blue sky. I took the dogs for a short walk earlier and, honestly, it wasn’t too bad — but they say it’s supposed to get colder before it warms up. A good time to have a reliable heating system and a few books on hand to pass the time. I have a couple of good ones to recommend.

Top on my list is Barbara Kingsolver’s newest, Demon Copperhead. Named one of the “10 Best Books of 2022” by The Washington Post and The New York Times, it is a masterpiece. I am a fan generally of Kingsolver — especially loved her collection of essays, High Tide in Tucson (1995), and novel, The Poisonwood Bible, about a missionary family who move from Georgia (USA) to a small village in the Belgian Congo (1998), but I have to say, in this latest one takes the cake. I am listening to it on Audible, which I notice takes a lot longer than reading it, but it makes driving more interesting. (It is also very well read.)

I am far from alone in my enthusiasm for this novel. It is an Oprah’s Book Club selection, as well as a New York Times, Wall Street Journal and Washington Post bestseller. Beth Macy, author of Dopescik, calls Demon “a voice for the ages — akin to Huck Finn or Holden Caulfield — even more resilient.”

Inspired by Charles Dickens’ epic novel, David Copperfield (first published as a serial in 1849 and later as a book in 1850), Demon Copperhead takes on some of the novel’s themes, such as effects on children, braiding them into a story of Demon’s superpowers (besides, as it turns out, football) is a talent for drawing. Demon Copperhead, as the narrator Demon (or Demon’s field, whom he is officially named by his mother) is born to a strung-out but well-meaning teenage mom in a single-bedroom apartment in Atlanta, where Demon is himself a product of several generations of Demon’s community, along with abuse, neglect and neglect, yet the voice of Demon himself somehow holds steady and strong; warm, insuperable and, even in the very lowest of times, humorous. One of Demon’s superpowers (besides, as it turns out, football) is a talent for drawing — specifically creating superheroes and comic strips. Over the course of the novel, one comes to feel that, despite his weaknesses, failures, misfortune and plain downright bad luck, Demon is himself a superhero. His wit, his life force and his resilient spirit will stay with me for a long time. At least I hope they will. This book is a must read. Highly recommend.

Another book, which lay tucked in an embarrassing tall stack in my bedroom for a long time before I finally picked it up and started reading it, is Sigh, Gone: A Misdemeanor of Great Books, Punk Rock, and the Fight To Fit by Phuc Tran. Did I read a review of this book at some point? Why I drawn to it to cover? Honestly, I don’t remember. However it happened, I am so glad I read it.

Like Demon Copperhead, Phuc is an engaging and resilient narrator. He was a toddler in 1975 when he and his extended family fled the fall of Saigon. After spending time in a refugee camp, the Lutheran Church helped relocate his family to a small town in south-central Pennsylvania, where they basically stood out like sore thumbs in the all-American white community. Tran writes, “Random strangers had saved us. And random strangers were cruel to us, too.”

Critics have called Tran’s writing “loose and rambling,” but I found his style to be companionable, fresh and refreshing. Gambling might be a good word to describe it. The chapters are named after famous books, because one of the things he does is create a dictionary of books that (the author thought educated, cultured Americans should read over their lifetime, beginning with the Bible and ending with Solzhenitsyn.” He bought it. “The Plan,” he writes, “would be the most powerful cannon in my war for assimilation.”

Phuc read that he could in no particular order: Flaubert, Twain, Kerouac, Bronte, Kafka, Thurber, Shakespeare … “But in the course of reading great books, something happened,” he writes. “My reading molded me, the tool hammering its hand into shape. With some magic — and by miracle, I mean great teachers — I pushed past the shallowness and stupidity of my own motivations. I fell in love with the actual literature and the actual ideas of great literature. As an immigrant, as
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Calendar of Events

Sunday in the kitchen, Saturday, Feb. 11
10-11:30 a.m.
Join a virtual cook-chef-making healthy Valentine’s Day desserts. Recipes are free of gluten and refined sugar. City Market offers this free class via zoom at registration at tinyurl.com/yj6yfeyz2.

Revolutionary War author
Saturday, Feb. 12, 2-3 p.m.
Author Dawn Brancheau speaks, via zoom, about her book Espionage and Enslavement. The book has a connection to Fort Ticonderoga’s history and is presented by the historic New York site. To learn more and register, see tinyurl.com/2atbflxw.

Faculty concert
Sunday, Feb. 12, 2-3 p.m.
The University of Vermont Music Department presents its faculty scholarship concert in the Recital Hall. Admission is by donation and proceeds benefit undergraduate scholarships. Program features jazz and classical works. For more info, call 802-655-3040.

Kittens on stage
Tuesday, Feb. 14, 1 p.m.
The Very Merry Theatre troupe presents its new musical based on Beatrix Potter’s story, The Adventures of Mitters, Mopett and Tom Kitten. The free show is at the Old North End Community Center in Burlington; donations gladly accepted. For more info on upcoming winter and summer performances, see the entire calendar at vtrvensherrytheatre.org/performances.

Music in the loft
Tuesday, Feb. 14, 6-30:30 p.m.
The duo Cricket Blue entertains at Shelburne Vineyard as part of the Wine & Chocolate celebration. Buy your ticket and plan 6 p.m. for the free concert; seating is limited. For more info, see tinyurl.com/24nn6zcb.

Where do bats go?
Wednesday, Feb. 15, noon-1 p.m.
Vermont Coverts presents two speakers in this online webinar about the hibernation habits of our local bats. To learn more and register, see vcovers.org/calendar.html.

Black Vermonters 1790-1870
Wednesday, Feb. 15, noon-1 p.m.
The Vermont Historical Society hosts historian Jane Williamson in a talk highlighting the contributions of African Americans to Vermont communities during these years. Her free talk is via Zoom; more info and registration at tinyurl.com/2lphsasa4.

Yoga with live mandolin
Wednesday, Feb. 15, 5-6:30 p.m.
Enjoy a vinyasa practice for all levels at All Souls Interfaith Gathering in Shelburne. For more info or to register, see tinyurl.com/mwks3z0j. Class repeats Wednesday, March 15.

Washington wilderness hiking
Thursday, Feb. 16, 7-8 p.m.
The Green Mountain Company presents Adam and Ruthie LaBoche, Vermonters who spent 10 days backpacking in the North Cascades. Free to register for this Zoom event; donation gladly accepted. For more info, see tinyurl.com/4mznz6frr.

Organic farming conference
Saturday, Feb. 18, 8 a.m.-10 a.m.
The Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont (NOFA-VT) will host its annual event in person in Burlington (some live-streamed options). Interactive workshops are held on Saturday, Feb. 18. For more info and to register, see tinyurl.com/4fnvannr.

Discover engineering
Saturday, Feb. 18, 9 a.m.-4:30 p.m.
The University of Vermont College of Engineering and Mathematical Sciences presents a free event for any youth in grades 5-12. Learn about the field of engineering, meet students and talk to professionals in the field. Discover different kinds of engineering and career pathways through workshops, exhibits and presentations.

Hand art workshop
Saturday, Feb. 18, 10 a.m.-noon.
Working with flat slabs of clay, participants trace their hands and use the clay shapes to form useful items, such as trinket dishes. Program features jazz and classical works. For more info and to register, see tinyurl.com/2pnm9f4d.

Stained glass workshop
Saturday, Feb. 18, 12 a.m.-4 p.m.
Learn the basics of stained glass construction and create a colorful piece for a future use. Register for this class at the Shelburne Craft School at tinyurl.com/mnydck.

Living history
Saturday, Feb. 18, 1-4 p.m.
At Fort Ticonderoga in New York, experience life on the eve of the Revolutionary War. Discover what everyday life was like for the British soldiers and their families, living at the fort in 1774. To learn more and get tickets, see tinyurl.com/2spq4ava.

Audubon Vermont hike
Saturday, Feb. 18, 1-3 p.m.
A pride hike happens in Burlington at the Ethan Allen Homestead and so a new hike free in Burlington. For more info and to register, see tinyurl.com/mndnbpk.

Dave’s day
Saturday, Feb. 18, 3-4:30 p.m.
The Green Mountain Chamber Music Festival presents a violin and piano duo at the College Street Congregational Church in Burlington. Tickets and more info at tinyurl.com/2cm27mpd.

Jazz orchestra
Saturday, Feb. 18, 7-8:30 p.m.
The Brian McCarthy Jazz Orchestra plays at the University of Vermont Recital Hall in Burlington. The 17-piece band features faculty members and former Ray Vega in a program of classic standards and Latin jazz originals. Free and open to all. To see complete schedule of music department performances, see tinyurl.com/mr2c7zfd.

Music and spirituality
Saturday, Feb. 18, 7-8 p.m.
The Reiki instructor at 1st Soils Interfaith Gathering in Shelburne, Ronni Romano, presents a free concert featuring pieces on piano and organ. To obtain free tickets, see tinyurl.com/mwflr7. Donations gladly accepted at the door.

Horse-drawn rides
Saturday, Feb. 18- Mon., Feb. 20.
Shelburne Farms offers its popular rides by wagon, or sleigh if there is adequate snow and frozen ground. Several time slots each day, each for about one-half hour. To register see tinyurl.com/39balkuw.

Valentine film screening
Sunday, Feb. 19, 2 p.m.
The Vergennes Opera House shows the film, The Summer of Walter Harris, in a rare screening. The 50s-era drama was filmed almost entirely in Vermont, and the director, producer and co-writers will be in attendance. It’s a movie with no fancy effects, but good storytelling. For more info and to register, see tinyurl.com/6g46m6u.

Spotted lanternfly
Tuesday, Feb. 21, noon-3 p.m.
The spotted lanternfly, an invasive pest indigenous to parts of China and Vietnam, has spread to the U.S., and is impacting the viticulture, stone fruit and timber industries in the Northeast and elsewhere. Join a free webinar and learn about what can be done to prevent its damage. More info and free registration at tinyurl.com/3pfl54tw.

Online book discussion
Tuesday, Feb. 21, 7 p.m.
For One Day of Freedom will be the topic of a book discussion at the Pharmacy Museum in Ferrisburgh. Free event requires pre-registration at tinyurl.com/4c3n2a27. The next book talk will be on March 14.

Ice fishing clinics
Wednesday, Feb. 22, 9 a.m.-3 p.m.
This free event is for anglers in grades 5-8 to learn and practice ice-fishing techniques and safety. Head out on the ice at the Lake Champlain Maritime Museum in Vergennes and book your spot from Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department instructors. All gear is supplied; dress warmly and wear winter boots. Add ice cleats if you have them. Pre-registration required at tinyurl.com/imr2evf. There will be another clinic on Feb. 24.

Hidden lands talk
Wednesday, Feb. 22, 7-8 p.m.
Fort Ticonderoga staff explore the role of men in the Revolutionary War in Fort Ticonderoga in New York. To learn more and get tickets, see tinyurl.com/2spbeka.

Shelburne Farms offers its popular rides by wagon, or sleigh if there is adequate snow and frozen ground. Several time slots each day, each for about one-half hour. To register see tinyurl.com/39balkuw.

Change the date
Wednesday, Feb. 22, 7-8 p.m.
The Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department staff explore the role of men in the Revolutionary War in Fort Ticonderoga in New York. To learn more and get tickets, see tinyurl.com/2spbeka.

Snowshoe and scavenger hunt
Saturday, Feb. 11, 9 a.m.-1:30 p.m.
Try out snowshoes at Chipman Hill in Middlebury and do a scavenger hunt at your own pace. This family event, organized by Middlebury Area Land Trust, has a limited enrollment. Snowshoes are provided or bring your own. Participants may drop-in at their convenience; all snowshoes must be returned by 1:30 p.m. No restrooms onsite. Dress for outside events; all ages and abilities are welcome.

Sunken chocolate cake
Thursday, Feb. 9, 9-10:30 a.m.
City Market offers this free virtual class, taught Thursday, Feb. 9, 5:30-7 p.m. along making healthy Valentine’s Day desserts. Recipes are free of gluten and refined sugar. City Market offers this free class via zoom at registration at tinyurl.com/yj6yfeyz2.

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Celebrate worm love with a snowy, story-walking tour and a good book. Bye for now.

The Charlotte News  •  February 9, 2023 •  15

Library News

Celebrate worm love with a snowy, story-walking tour

From birds to books, pets to people, February is the month for love. Enjoy the Charlotte Library’s new outdoor story, Worm Loves Worm Story Walk, that has been installed on the library green. Just in time for Valentine’s Day, bundle your family up for a snowy walk and discover how worm meets a special worm and they fall in love.

This book is written by J.J. Austrian and illustrated by Mike Curato, and the Story-Walk project was created by Anne Ferguson of Montpelier.

As part of our celebration, we’ve transformed our Mitten Tree into a book-lover’s Valentine. Use a library heart to tie to the tree if you have a favorite book title to share. Visit our romance book list if you’re looking for Valentine inspiration: bit.ly/3wYSXY.

Arts and crafts at the library

Flex your fingers and your creative muscle with some Spirograph. Try your hand at our gumdrop puzzle. Grab some yarn and needles to knot up something cozy.

The library has ideas and supplies for all kinds of fun activities at bit.ly/3IDF9q4.

Power customer rebates rise while emissions down

Green Mountain Power (GMP) announced renewed savings opportunities for customers in 2023, to continue to switch away from fossil fuel for driving, heating and more. These rebates are available to all customers to offset costs and help cut carbon and costs for customers.

“Our customer rebates and programs are all about making it simple to save money while reducing your carbon footprint. The two biggest sources of carbon emissions in Vermont are driving and heating, so we offer robust rebates for electric vehicles and heat pumps with additional savings for customers who are low income,” said Tara Smith, who leads electrification initiatives at Green Mountain Power.

Green Mountain Power’s rebate for all-electric vehicles (AEVs) at greenmountainpower.com/rebates/programs-electric-vehicles/ev-rebate is increasing for 2023, to $2,200 for qualifying new vehicles, up from $1,500 last year. Income-eligible customers still can get an extra $1,800 rebate for up to $3,000 in savings. If you purchase or lease from a participating dealership, they can apply the rebate during the transaction for immediate savings. This bigger AEV rebate is valid through June of 2023, and can be combined with up to $4,000 in state EV rebates and $7,500 in federal tax incentives for qualifying vehicles, adding up to big savings. Green Mountain Power’s base rebate for used AEVs is also increasing — to $1,500, up from $750 last year.

“We love our Bolt EV and we appreciate having GMP help make it possible to reduce Vermont’s carbon footprint with rebates like this,” said Raven Walters, a Green Mountain Power customer in Waterford who is looking forward to getting a second EV with the new bigger rebate, too.

Green Mountain Power’s popular rebates for heat pumps, e-bikes, motorcycles, yard equipment, and EV chargers will continue through December of 2023. Business customers can also save through custom programs at greenmountainpower.com/rebates/programs/business-innovation to help them shift their operations to clean electricity instead of fossil fuel. Green Mountain Power has a team of experts who will consult with your business free of charge, and offer dollar amounts based on the amount of carbon emissions offset by switching away from fossil fuel. This consultation and planning service is free, and Green Mountain Power has helped businesses with everything from installing electric ovens and coffee roasters, to electric snowmaking equipment, to one-of-a-kind kilns for industrial applications. Incentives are also available for electric vehicles and chargers, forklifts, backhoes and more.

Together, Green Mountain Power business and residential customers helped to offset 306,600 metric tons of carbon emissions through Green Mountain Power programs last year, which is the equivalent of taking about 640 fossil fuel vehicles off the road for a year.

More details on all of Green Mountain Power’s rebates and programs for residential customers are online here: greenmountainpower.com/rebates/programs/electric-vehicles-electric-motorcycle-rebate.

- Heat pumps, $400 rebate with up to $1,000 in savings for income-eligible customers at greenmountainpower.com/rebates/programs/home-and-yard-heat-pump.
- Motorcycle, $500 rebate at greenmountainpower.com/rebates/programs/electric-vehicles-electric-motorcycle-rebate.
- E-bike, $200 instant rebate at participating dealerships.
- Snowmaking equipment, to one-of-a-kind kilns for industrial applications.
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More details on services and incentives for business customers are online here: greenmountainpower.com/rebates/programs/business-innovation.

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Variety is the spice of Charlotte Senior Center life

Interested in learning about the 10 warning signs of Alzheimer’s? Do you have questions or concerns about what is happening with legislation in Montpelier? Or would you rather be inspired by a new art show?

There is a variety of programming this month at the Charlotte Senior Center. Join a new class focusing on yoga strength building or celebrate Valentine’s Day by attending a “Heart Art” coffee and canvas workshop. Learn how to read library ebooks on your Kindle, sign up to take a beginner guitar class or join a Spanish conversation group.

The senior center offers programming for adults 50 and older from Charlotte and surrounding communities. Priority is given to seniors, but programming is open to adults of all ages.

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 & presentations

Art show: Portraits
A collection of paintings and drawings of people from the community, created by a group of artists who gather to paint on Thursday afternoons at a local studio on Mt. Philo Road in Charlotte.

The 10 Warning Signs of Alzheimer’s Thursday, Feb. 9, 1 p.m.
This presentation will help you recognize common signs of the disease in yourself and others. Learn about next steps to take, including talking to your doctor. The program will last about 30 minutes and will be followed with time for Q&A. Cost is free.

Library Books on your Kindle! Wednesday, Feb. 15, 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
Learn how you can read library ebooks for free on your Kindle. Join us at the Senior Center as Tech Librarian, Susanna Kahn, will walk you through the process of finding, checking out and sending ebook titles to your Kindle. Detailed instructions provided. Cost is free. Registration required.

Chat with Chea Monday, Feb. 27, 1 p.m.
Bring your questions and concerns for a legislature meet and greet with Chea Waters Evans, Chea is your newly elected Chittenden-5 representative and is interested in hearing from you so she can bring forward your issues in Montpelier.

Upcoming programs

Beginner Guitar II Wednesdays, 7-8 p.m. Feb. 15-March 29th
Interested in learning guitar? This class on Wednesday evenings is for those who have a basic understanding of beginner guitar. If you have questions about whether this class would be appropriate for your specific skill level, please reach out to John Creech at sonjohncreech@gmail.com. Cost: $75. Registration required by Friday, Feb. 10. (*There will be no class on March 1.)

Yoga strength building Wednesdays, 11 a.m.-noon.
Join Heidi Kvasnak weekly in this integrative practice that builds strength and stability, while maintaining a sense of ease and spaciousness in both body and mind. The class will practice longer-held postures that strengthen muscles, bones and core, as well as breath-led flowing movement, including sun salutations. Prerequisite: Must be able to easily get down to and up from the floor with or without props. Cost: $10 a class. No registration required.

Heart Art Friday, Feb. 10, 10:30 a.m.-noon.
Unlike traditional paint and sip, this “coffee & canvas” will allow you to explore and create your own unique painting. But don’t worry — there will be plenty of inspiration. No prior painting experience needed. All materials included. Cost is $25.

Spanish conversation Tuesdays, 10:30-11:30 a.m.
¡Hablas español? This free group will meet weekly. At each session one member of the group will announce the topic of conversation for the following week. Come join the group for conversation in Spanish. Questions? Contact Bernice Wesseling at bernice.wesseling@uvm.edu.

New backgammon league Tuesdays, 6-8:30 p.m. & Saturdays, 2-4:30 p.m.
Backgammon is a tactical table game with a 5,000-year history. Open to all skill levels from Beginner to Advanced. If you are interested in joining the Tuesday evening or Saturday afternoon Backgammon league, please contact Jonathan at jonathanhart1@gmail.com.

Snowshoe expedition Wednesday, Feb. 1 & 15, 10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
Let’s snowshoe. Weather permitting, the group will meet on the first and third Wednesdays of the winter months. The outings will be approximately two hours with locations to be determined on trails around Charlotte and neighboring towns. Bring your own equipment, snacks and water. The group is also looking for some trip leaders. The cost is free. Registration is required. To register or indicate your interest in leading a snowshoeing trip, contact Susan Hyde at susanfosterhyde@gmail.com.

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

Monday lunches
Served weekly. Lunch is served 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m., or until the food runs out. 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 at kphughe@charlotteseniorcentervt.org. $5 suggested meal donation but not required.

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

212 Ferry Road, Charlotte 802-425-6345 charlotteseniorcentervt.org
Follow the senior center on Facebook or Instagram at charlotteseniorcentervt.org.
Frolic at dusk

Just before sunset on Sunday, Jan. 22, some felt conditions were getting uncomfortable and went inside for hot chocolate and warmth, but these two thought the plunging temperatures were perfect and stayed outside.

Photo by Alexandra Z. Lazar

Write Ingredients

Susan Ohanian
Contributor

Don’t fret if you missed Homemade Soup Day on Feb. 4. You’ll find excellent soup at the Charlotte Senior Center on Feb. 13.

And we can promise the cooks won’t follow President Eisenhower’s recipe for green turtle soup, which begins, “Cut off the head from a live green turtle and drain the blood.” Fortunately, green sea turtles are now classified as endangered.

Come to the Monday Munch on Feb. 13 and you will see that the soup is red and the cooks definitely make this red pepper-tomato soup with heart. Besides the heart-y appearance, check out the ingredients and you will know that the tomatoes and red peppers make this an especially heart-healthy food.

In the 1980s chef, cookbook author (32 books) and pioneer of American cooking shows, James Beard said, “I am convinced that I am the one who introduced quiche to America.”

Considered a classic French dish, according to The Oxford Companion to Food, quiche actually has German roots in the medieval kingdom of Lothringen.

Here’s Judith Viorst on chocolate sundaes: “If I were in charge of the world, a chocolate sundae with whipped cream and nuts would be a vegetable.”

Vegetable or not, you can get your sundae on Feb. 20 at the Charlotte Senior Center.

Monday, Feb. 13, 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
Monday Munch
Tomato and red pepper soup, quiche, light green salad and Janet’s homemade dessert.

Reminder: Registration for Thursday Grab & Go Meal meals is due by Monday at 802-425-6345 or kpughe@charlotteseniorcentervt.org.

Thursday, Feb. 16, 10-11 a.m.
Age Well Grab & Go meal pick up
Swedish meatballs w/sauce, rotini noodles, Brussel sprouts, French green beans, wheat dinner roll and pineapple tidbits. Suggested donation: $5. Registration required by the prior Monday.

Note the international content of this Grab & Go meal: And there’s lots of history embedded in the pineapple. Indigenous to Brazil, a 1493 Columbus expedition discovered pineapple on Guadeloupe, taking a load back to Spain. Only one survived the trip, which Columbus gave to his sponsor, King Ferdinand, who loved it.

Monday Munch
Feb. 20, 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
Comfort food — homemade mac and cheese, tossed salad, warm bread and hot caramel ice cream sundae.

In “The Decameron,” Day 8, Giovanni Boccaccio, who died in 1375, showed us that macaroni has been a comfort food for a very long time: “There was a mountain made entirely of grand parmesan cheese, on which people did nothing but make macaroni.”

Cooks at the Charlotte Senior Center make a whole lot more than macaroni.

Thursday, Feb. 23 10-11 a.m.
Age Well Grab & Go meal pickup
Oven-fried chicken, red mashed potatoes, capri blend vegetables with lentils, pumpkin custard with cream.

Tidbit: Henry David Thoreau declared, “I was determined to know beans.”

You can follow his path when the Charlotte Library celebrates legume love. Stop by and pick up a Bean Bag Kit, packed with info, recipes and ingredients (black beans from Morningside Farm in Vermont) for making a delicious black bean dish at your house. On Feb. 21, the library will keep a pot of beans simmering, so you can stop by for a sample.

It’s February, and here’s Sarah Vaughan singing the Rogers & Hart tune “My Funny Valentine” at youtube.com/watch?v=Q8VRwEVZw04.

Here’s Frank Sinatra: youtube.com/watch?v=zlPlPiicU3rg.

Great soup with no green turtles at the senior center