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# The Charlotte News

Thursday, December 14, 2023 | Volume 66 Number 13

## **For spacious skies**

Photo by Lee Krohn

The sunset as seen from Mt. Philo on Dec. 8 was a glorious reminder of the mountain majesties we enjoy in this corner of America, the beautiful.



## Let’s take it to the next level

Claudia Marshall  
Board of Directors  
John Quinney  
Publisher and Board Chair

People sometimes ask us what makes The Charlotte News different? Great question! Because yes, we are all aware that there is more than one paper in town. So, what’s the deal?

The thing that really sets us apart is that The Charlotte News is devoted to the good of this community. It’s in our mission statement and strategic plan.

Yes, we are also the only paper devoted exclusively to Charlotte, the only paper that is a community endeavor, that’s for the people, by the people. And as a nonprofit, we truly answer to our readers, who supply most of our funding. Oh, and we’ve been at it for more than 65 years.

Lately, we’ve been looking for new and significant ways to amp up our public service. But we can only do it with your support. And our winter fund drive is falling behind right now, so we’re asking you to take two minutes and a few bucks to do your part to ensure that this paper — and website — are here for you in the future.

Here’s the really good news: Thanks to a \$10,000 challenge from six friends of The Charlotte News, plus our NewsMatch grant, all gifts will be triple matched — for a limited time only. For every dollar you give, the newspaper receives three. It’s an amazing opportunity.

Will your donation make a difference?

Listen, this outfit runs on a shoestring budget, so every dollar counts. Plus, we are planning an expansion of our coverage of Charlotte.

Next year, The Charlotte News expects to run several online surveys so that both decision-makers and town residents can learn more about how our friends and neighbors feel about issues that will impact the future of Charlotte.

For example, the town manager question will be on the ballot on Town Meeting Day, Tuesday, March 5. Over the past nine months, there have been several selectboard meetings on the subject, dozens of conversations among those for and against and several reports published in this newspaper, as well. But we can only guess how Charlotters feel on the issue. A survey might make a difference in shaping the conversation.

And that’s just for starters. Other hot-button topics that deserve some scrutiny include development, property taxes, fire and rescue and the town plan.

The Charlotte News specializes in public service journalism, and this is merely a new wrinkle, but one we believe is worth your support. Please make your tax-deductible gift — of any amount — today. We literally can’t do this without you. And since donations are a little slow right now, it’s particularly critical for you to step up.

We need to raise another \$6,000 between now and the end of the year to stay on track. Can you help?

In asking for your gift, we want to express our gratitude to the 270 folks who have already made gifts this year. If you’re not yet among them, now’s the time to make your gift on our website at [charlottenewsvt.org](http://charlottenewsvt.org) or with a check mailed to us at P.O. Box 251, Charlotte VT 05445 — envelope enclosed for your convenience



The 1700s Big Barn on the Clemmons farm. Photo by Nani Clemmons

## Clemmons Family Farm purchased by nonprofit

Scooter MacMillan  
Editor

The Clemmons Family Farm is now owned by a nonprofit organization and plans are for the farm to grow more crops. And art. Lydia Clemmons, president and executive director of Clemmons Family Farm, expects the farm where she grew up to not only raise more vegetables but more variety.

And the farm will also be able to nurture more African artists in their creative pursuits.

The 138-acre farm at 3158 Greenbush Road, which had been leased for a few years by the nonprofit Clemmons Family Farm, was bought by the nonprofit in a sale that began in the spring and was completed this fall for \$2.5 million. The completion of the sale of the historic African American farm was the culmination of an 18-month fundraising campaign.

Clemmons’ parents purchased the farm in 1962 when they moved to Vermont to take jobs at the University of Vermont. The Clemmons were some of the first Black doctors and nurses hired by the university.

The sale coincides with the 100th birthdays of her parents — Dr. Jackson Clemmons and Lydia Clemmons, who were both born in 1923, according to a release.

The property has been a working farm since the 1700s and some of the buildings there date back to those earliest days. Besides working at UVM, the Clemmons worked the farm and restored many of its historic buildings, some of which dated back

to the farm’s origins.

The Clemmons also worked to create space at the farm to share African-American history, culture and arts.

The younger Lydia Clemmons said having the farm owned by the nonprofit rather than leased will enable the organization to do some things it was difficult to do before it owned the farm.

As a tenant, the nonprofit was responsible for some minor improvements and property maintenance, but was limited from more major improvements. Owning the farm will enable the nonprofit to grow and offer more. “Something you cannot do as a tenant, for example, is enter into a long-term lease with someone else,” Lydia Clemmons said. “Now, we can enter into long-term leases with farmers or artists, which gives them security.”

The nonprofit will also be able to make some renovations to the facilities to make them work better for artists, she said.

Since it was established in the 1700s, the farming has been mostly limited to growing hay. Although the Clemmons grew lots of vegetables, it was still small scale.

Lydia Clemmons expects the farm to move to growing more vegetables, particularly vegetables of the African diaspora, like African eggplants, greens, herbs and lemongrass.

“The bigger vision is that this really will be a true economic platform, really giving Black Vermonters a tangible foothold, a place where you can grow your business, do your thing as an artist or a farmer,” she said.

“A food chain is not just producing the food and selling the food. It’s also the cooking, the culinary artists and those culinary businesses that can thrive through this new food chain.”

Clemmons said there are not any major renovations planned for the exteriors of any of the buildings, but they do want to make improvements to make the buildings more appropriate for the artists or the programs they want to do.

Some of the funds raised to purchase the farm came through the sale of a conservation easement to permanently protect the farmland, unique natural communities and wetlands held by the Vermont Land Trust and Vermont Housing and Conservation Board. But 10 acres are held outside the easement. Eventually, Clemmons said, they hope to build affordable housing for artists or farmers working on the farm.

“It’s been an honor to join with Clemmons Family Farm and several other partners to protect this land and secure its future,” said Bob Heiser of the Vermont Land Trust. “This farm plays an essential role in connecting people to African-American history and arts, and to Vermont’s agricultural heritage.”

The organization also hopes to hire additional staff, Clemmons said, “It would be lovely to add at least four positions. One of them would include a property manager.”

For more information about the farm, its work and history, visit [clemmonsfamilyfarm.org](http://clemmonsfamilyfarm.org).

## Selectboard amends cost of living adjustment policy

Brett Yates  
Contributor

The Charlotte Selectboard is still working to satisfy budget-conscious voters who, earlier this year, objected — both verbally and at the ballot box — to the growing cost of the town’s workforce.

With a lack of consensus having delayed a plan to trim municipal employees’ health benefits, the discussion moved, more recently, to the question of their wages and especially to their annual cost-of-living adjustments.

Selectboard member Lewis Mudge presented a draft revision of the town’s salary administration policy on Monday, Dec. 11. Before Mudge’s edits, the document instructed the board to use the Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers for the

Northeast Region to ensure that municipal salaries kept pace with inflation.

“I felt that our staff policy was too prescriptive for the selectboard and didn’t give enough leeway to the selectboard in adjusting COLA,” Mudge said.

Under Mudge’s changes, the document will no longer require the selectboard to apply a cost-of-living adjustment when setting salary expenditures in its budget proposal for the subsequent fiscal year. Instead, it “may” do so, and if it does, it may use an index of its own choosing or “a variety of processes” to determine the size of the adjustment.

Mudge also made additions to the policy language that structures the discretionary salary increases that town employees may receive on the basis of performance and other factors unrelated to inflation. The revision emphasizes that such increases are

“not mandatory” and should depend “first and foremost” on “the fiscal health of the town.”

Margaret Woodruff, the director of the Charlotte Public Library, asked the board to keep in mind the particular importance of COLA for municipal employees who don’t receive health or retirement benefits. Mudge stressed that the changes, while offering flexibility, would not necessarily result in a reduced or eliminated COLA.

“This is, for the moment, really a policy decision,” Mudge said. “We will get to those difficult decisions and conversations on the numbers quite soon.”

After minor modifications, the board unanimously approved the new policy.

“I think it is a good potential change for us, in terms of just allowing us to do what



# Charlotte celebrates town administrator switch, town garage opening

Scooter MacMillan  
Editor

Last week saw a couple of ceremonies and celebrations that herald milestones in the history of Charlotte.

On Tuesday, Nov. 28, a group of residents and four selectboard chairs gathered in the town hall to mark the retirement of town administrator Dean Bloch after 24 years of working for Charlotte.

Besides current chair Jim Faulkner, former selectboard chairs Charlie Russell, Lane Morrison and Matt Krasnow came to bid Bloch farewell and to formally welcome Nate Bareham. Bareham has been working for about a month with Bloch to make the transition as smooth as possible.

On Wednesday, a group of about 100 residents joined in the new town garage and celebrated the completion of that construction project.

Four days before Christmas in 2021, the garage on Church Hill Road, where road commissioner housed his snow plows, burned along with four snow plows and other equipment. Two years later, Charlotte’s first town-owned garage has been completed.

Residents toured the new facility while officials touted the net-zero system that will keep the building comfortable. And eliminate the need for Junior Lewis or his crew to work on their back in the snow to do repair work.

Initially, the selectboard had hoped to have a new garage built before the winter of 2023, but ran into various problems, not the least of which was the high cost of building the facility. In early October of last year, town officials were stunned to have only received two bids. Both bids were for almost \$3.8 million to build the garage just north of Church Hill Road at 3630 Ethan Allen Highway.

That was a problem because town residents had approved only \$3 million in a special election, and both of those bids were rejected by the selectboard.

Faulkner and Block were authorized to work with the two companies that submitted bids to see if there was a way to do some “value engineering” of their bids.

One of the companies didn’t submit a second bid but Farrington Construction of



Photos by Lee Krohn

Highway commissioner Junior Lewis ‘cuts’ the ribbon with his snowplow at the town garage opening ceremony on Wednesday, Nov. 29, while project manager John Kerr celebrates from the sideline.



Highway commissioner Junior Lewis listens while the crowd applauds the completion of the new highway garage.

Shelburne worked with the town and came back with a bid of \$2,958,000.

One of the results of the value engineering was the building that had originally been designed to be steel was changed to a wood frame building.

“We got really creative to build a building without sacrificing any space,” Dave Farrington, president of Farrington Construction, told those gathered.

The building was originally planned to be fossil fuel free, but the solar energy system to realize that goal was not included in the original budget town voters approved. However, this fall voters enthusiastically approved this addition to



Dean Bloch, left, celebrates his retirement as town administrator with new town administrator Nate Bareham.

the project in a vote this fall. “What an incredible legacy Dean and Jim have brought our town,” said Rebecca Foster, chair of the town energy committee. “I’m personally incredibly grateful that with this project the town decided to think forward, to think about the future generations.”

After Foster spoke, one of the garage bay doors was opened and one of Lewis’ snow plows was driven in to “cut” a ceremonial ribbon.

only two yes votes: his own and Louise McCarren’s. Jim Faulkner subsequently moved, successfully, to appoint Tieso.

Kelly Devine had not yet joined the meeting, and Lewis Mudge, who had missed the board’s interviews with the candidates last month, sat out both votes.

Tieso acknowledged his inexperience in municipal government, but he pointed to the comparably technical nature of his job at an investment advisory firm, where he manages operations and compliance.

“I’m intimately familiar with federal securities regulations,” Tieso said. “I am extremely astute. I love to read. I find the boring interesting.”

Tieso’s résumé also highlighted experience as a radio producer, a private investigator and an intern at the Vermont State’s Attorneys Office. While he promised to administer Charlotte’s land-use regulations as written, he expressed a personal preference for maintaining what he called the town’s “rural character.”

“I’m not going to impart my own particular vision on things, but I think it’s important that the town grows consistent with the town plan and in a measured capacity,” Tieso said. “I’m not a big fan of seeing what’s happening up and down Shelburne Road, and we’re just south of that.”

Alexa Lewis, a current member of the development review board, applied for reappointment and received a three-year term.

The selectboard also filled two of the three vacancies on the Charlotte Recreation Commission. Here, too, Tieso had volunteered, alongside Maura Wygmans.

## SELECTBOARD

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

the citizens ask, which is to be more mindful of the cost of employment,” selectboard member Kelly Devine said before the vote. “Our payroll, I think, is approaching a million dollars a year, so it’s not an insignificant portion of our budget.”

## New appointee to join development review board

Charlotte’s development review board will welcome a fresh face at its next meeting: Brandon Tieso, a 2015 graduate of Champlain Valley Union High School who returned to Charlotte after earning a bachelor’s degree in political science from the College of the Holy Cross in Massachusetts.

Tieso will replace Christina Asquith, who did not seek a second term.

“I’m new to trying to help out my town. I have more free time,” Tieso said in a public interview. “I find that this place has made my life growing up here quite special, and I would like to have other people see those same opportunities.”

Tieso beat out Bill Stuono for the two-year appointment on Monday, Dec. 11. Stuono, a former member of the Charlotte Planning Commission, previously served on development review boards in Shelburne and South Burlington and holds a master’s degree in planning and policy.

Selectboard member Frank Tenney’s motion to appoint Stuono, however, received

## Correction

An article in the Nov. 30 edition of The Charlotte News about the town giving wastewater permitting back to the state misspelled the first name of Mathew Citarella.



**Mission Statement**  
To engage and inform Charlotte and nearby communities by:

- Publishing rigorous, in-depth reporting on town affairs.
- Providing a home for stories from our neighbors and friends.
- Reporting on how other towns have addressed challenges similar to our own.

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The Charlotte News has adopted the Society of Professional Journalists Code of Ethics as the touchstone to guide newsroom practices. The Society of Professional Journalists Code of Ethics is built on four principles:

- Seek truth and report it.
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**Postmaster/Send address changes to:**  
The Charlotte News, P.O. Box 251,  
Charlotte, VT 05445 Telephone: 802-425-4949  
Circulation: 2,100

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# Letter to the Editor

## Banned books are books worth reading

To the Editor

In high school, I recall reading a profoundly moving book about a formerly enslaved family who is haunted by what they believe to be the ghost of their dead child. It was a Pulitzer Prize-winning book that engaged in many difficult topics — slavery and race relations, sexual assault, violence — but for me, it put into perspective the brutal realities of the lives that enslaved and emancipated people lived. This book, “Beloved” by Toni Morrison, has also been the subject of dozens of challenges and bans around the country.

Over the past few years in the U.S., we’ve seen a massive proliferation in the number of challenges and bans on books. According to data from the American Library Association, a record 2,571 unique titles were targeted for censorship in 2022, a 38 percent increase from the previous year, and 2023 is already on track to beat that record. These bans and challenges overwhelmingly target books about race and racism, books that have LGBTQ+ characters, books about difficult topics such as grief and death, books that contain any violent or sexual themes, and books by BIPOC and LGBTQ+ authors.

Last winter, I spoke with a friend about how disturbing it was to watch this rise in censorship and book bans around the country. I believe in free speech and democracy. Controlling what people can and cannot read or learn about by removing their access to certain materials is contrary to these beliefs. What’s even more disturbing to me is that this national trend seems to be the result of a relatively small group of people, with an agenda, who do not represent the opinion of the majority of Americans or Vermonters. In the 2021-2022 school year, just 11 adults were responsible for approximately 60 percent of all challenges nationwide. Meanwhile, a large majority of voters oppose efforts to have books removed from their public schools and libraries.

Because of this, I decided to host the Banned Books are Books Worth Reading tour this summer and fall. Over the past few months, I have been to over a dozen communities and spoken with hundreds of Vermonters about their thoughts on book bans. Many impassioned people came to share their support for free speech and to tell stories about the important things they learned from challenged and banned books.

Of course, not everyone who has come to these events has been on the same page. I welcomed people with differing views in civil discussion. Of course, we are not a free society if people are not allowed to have differing opinions. I would like to express appreciation that we were able to have public conversations regarding difficult topics without the yelling and intimidation (from any side) that we have sometimes seen in other settings across the country. However, it was clear that a vast majority of Vermonters agree that we should continue to allow public libraries and schools, with their trained professionals, to maintain their collection free from governmental restrictions. It was also clear that parents should (and do) have the right to ask for

different books for their children if they wish.

Thankfully, while this trend of a few parents censoring what other families have access to in public schools and libraries has taken off around the country, we haven’t yet seen it succeed in Vermont. Although public schools and libraries in our state have not seen well-organized efforts to ban books, I have heard from dozens of librarians, teachers and bookstore workers that there has been increasing pressure from some groups and individuals to restrict access to, or remove, certain books from their shelves. In pockets of Vermont, we’ve also seen some school board candidates run on platforms that include censorship of certain books and materials from classrooms and school libraries. We are not immune from these national trends that are developing due to misinformation that is repeated on some news sources.

It’s been extraordinary to see Vermonters’ passion for free speech, and against the path towards authoritarianism, these past few months. If you agree that access to history and diversity in our libraries and schools is important, I hope that you will go out and support your local bookstores and libraries and consider serving on local boards. If you have any questions or would like any more information on banned books, you can always feel free to contact my office at ltgov.vermont.gov/form/contact. Lt. Governor David Zuckerman Hinesburg

## Encourage Vermont legislators to end sale of flavored tobacco

To the Editor:

I don’t want to feel a crackle run up my chest when I breathe anymore. I noticed it a few years back when I got sick. Every time I took a breath, I felt my windpipes quake. I hated it then. I hate it now. I’m 21 years old, and I’m addicted to tobacco products.

Flavored tobacco has a grip on my generation more than we ever thought it would. Big tobacco companies roped in kids, made millions, and got a whole new generation addicted to nicotine and tobacco through the appeal of 1,000s of flavors. The same generation that clearly understood the harmful effects of cigarettes became addicted to its flavorful twin, vapes.

It isn’t enough to offer children nicotine gum, anti-vaping campaigns and advice on how to quit. We need to destroy the source. In January, the Vermont Legislature will vote on S.18, a bill seeking to end the sale of flavored tobacco. I am writing so that people tell their legislators that we must pass S.18.

I sometimes wonder how I ended up here. I grew up with a hatred for cigarettes. My whole life, I was told how disgusting they were, the terrible health effects they had, and how addictive the substance tobacco can be. I wanted nothing to do with it.

Around my eighth grade year at Georgia Elementary and Middle School, some friends started throwing around the term “vape.” It was described to me as a harmless smoke alternative that might have some health benefits. Fast forward to what we know now, and it just seems silly. I never indulged while at GEMS, but that’s where the seed was planted

in eighth grade.

I was in high school at South Burlington when I first used a vape. It was fruit-flavored and filled my lungs with toxic chemicals that I had no idea about because, after all, vapes were “safe.” It made me vibrate from head to toe. The best way I can describe the feeling is that your whole body feels like TV static. I wouldn’t say I liked it at first. Yet, I have an addictive personality, and much like most things that give me any sort of sensation, I’d find my way to it again.

The one thing that kept me coming back more than anything is that it tastes like candy. This was not the disgusting, makes-you-smell-bad substance that I was warned about.

I was so naive to claim that I wasn’t an “addict.” I could stop at any time, so I was okay.

Let me tell you something: if you’ve ever left your work to go to the bathroom (as so many people around me did) and use a substance to settle down, you are addicted to that substance. I was far from okay.

As part of my senior capstone, I was involved in a tobacco prevention campaign for Burlington High School Students, partnering with Burlington Partnership for a Healthy Community. The campaign BHS Elevate, hopes to prevent kids from using tobacco. Chantal Finley and I conducted interviews with University of Vermont students to create a sense of understanding between the younger audience and the students right up the road.

What we found was astonishing. Students understood how bad these tobacco products are for you. Yet, when questioned further, almost everyone we interviewed had some level of experience with vapes. At the bare minimum, they had seen the use of one from their friends.

When asked how long they had been vaping, one UVM student had this to say: “I have vaped every day since I first started going into freshman year of high school; I started with a Mango Juul Pod before cross country practice.”

Another student put it into simple terms: “Every time I do it, I can feel it in my lungs, and I’m like, ‘Oh, I need to not do this.’ Now and then, I’ll still hit a vape. But I can tell it’s not good for you.”

Other states have already ended the sale of flavored tobacco products. Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island and California all have some sort of restriction on selling flavored tobacco products. The research is out, folks, and we need to act now. In the wake of a global pandemic, young people seek new ways to cope with a forever-changing world. Let’s make sure those mechanisms to cope are healthy ones.

Join me and many others and tell the Vermont legislature to pass S.18 and prevent a

generation of Vermont kids from becoming addicted to nicotine.

Marcus Aloisi  
Burlington

## It’s time for the wealthiest to pay their fair share in taxes

To the Editor:

We can build a Vermont that works for everyone who lives here.

We can have thriving downtowns, safe roads and bridges, and housing that people can afford. Our children can learn in vibrant and supportive schools. We can protect our environment. We can care for Vermont families at every stage of life.

But first, we need to look at our tax code. That’s right—our tax code.

In recent decades, wages for many Vermont residents have not kept up with the costs of living. Meanwhile, elected officials tell us that Vermont doesn’t have the money to make crucial public investments to take care of families, infrastructure and the environment.

Yet the data show that this scarcity narrative is rhetoric, not reality. Income inequality is growing in Vermont. Our wealthiest residents are getting wealthier. Our highest income earners are earning more and getting a larger and larger share of overall income. And our current tax structure protects the wealth of a small number of residents, instead of focusing on the needs of all people in Vermont.

The solution is clear: We need to raise revenue to build a better Vermont by increasing taxes on the wealthiest Vermont residents.

It’s time to build a Vermont that’s affordable for all Vermonters, because we can’t afford a Vermont that only the wealthy can afford.

By increasing taxes on the wealthiest, we can raise substantial state revenue to ensure that our downtowns are clean and safe, our families are supported, our environment is healthy, and our economy is flourishing.

By raising revenue in a way that is fair and equitable, we can make crucial investments today, instead of deferring expenses that will multiply and cost more in the long run.

By increasing taxes on those with more than enough, we can build a better Vermont for everyone, including our wealthiest residents. This, not austerity, is the fiscally responsible strategy for our present and future.

A fair tax code is critical to building a Vermont that works for everyone who lives here. Anika Heilweil  
Burlington

(Anika Heilweil works for the Public Assets Institute. She is the campaign manager for the Fund Vermont’s Future Coalition and the Fair Share for Vermont Campaign.)



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Commentary

Consider whether Charlotte has proper governing structure

Peter Joslin  
Contributor

On March 5, 2024, Charlotters will take to the polls to make an important, informed decision about the future: whether or not to switch to a town manager from a town administrator.

Beginning this past spring and into summer, the selectboard held public hearings to assess the pros and cons of a town administrator or town manager. This included hiring a consultant for background research. At the conclusion of about six months of review, the selectboard unanimously opposed changing to a town manager.

The selectboard consists of five individuals, who, other than a very modest stipend, are volunteers. They volunteer to govern our town. They volunteer to make decisions, take the heat and receive the occasional kudo. Their expertise and backgrounds are diverse. Some are retired, some not. Some work locally, some not.

We want them to succeed. If they are effective and make informed decisions, it follows that the town will be healthy with steady hands at the tiller. Not all decisions will be the right ones, they never are. What matters most is making them! Good governance points to a vibrant, healthy town with a roadmap to the future, one that provides opportunities for the next generation to share this beautiful, bucolic little town of ours.

At the recent send-off party for Dean Bloch and the welcoming of Nate Bareham, our new town administrator, I spoke to a number of folks about the future and the increasingly complex nature of local governance. The expertise and experience necessary to create the budget, plan a long-range capital budget, manage human resources, health benefits,



and the municipal responsibilities including, roads and fire and rescue, are myriad. As much as one might crave the good old days, they are no more.

Challenges with the town budget is a recent example of the complexities faced by the selectboard and the town. The selectboard, after a failed first vote last year, committed to reduce the medical benefits for town employees by \$20,000 for fiscal year 2024. They formed a subcommittee to find these savings, and after its conclusion, the recommendation was to hire a consultant to research the town’s health benefits. At its last special meeting on the subject, Jim Faulkner said it was too late to make cuts, they would have to “kick the can down the

road” and work on the issue for the next fiscal year. Neither the selectboard nor the public were satisfied.

The selectboard has a great deal on its plate and is, more times than not, mired in the weeds. So, how might the town support them in making informed, timely decisions? I think a step in the right direction is a town manager, someone who is given the appropriate legal authority to make the day-to-day decisions and provide the necessary expertise to the selectboard so they can focus on major issues and the future.

The town manager would not be a barrier between voters and elected officials, as some have suggested, but rather a person who is available to listen, expedite and oversee routine town business.

Think about where we are as a town now, where you think we should be, and ask yourself whether or not the proper governance structure is in place to meet the goals and challenges of the future.

Report from the Legislature

How real is the 18-percent tax rate rise?

Chea Waters Evans  
State Representative

In the context of my legislative life, every time property taxes, the education fund, property tax increases, pupil weights or anything relating to that topic comes up, the person speaking or writing makes this caveat: “It’s complicated.” Or, “It’s incredibly complicated.” Or, “It’s super complicated.” In all honesty, it’s pretty

new to me as a concept, and while I’m trying my best to understand how the system works, I haven’t quite fully taken it on yet because it’s so ... complicated.

What’s not complicated is that on Dec. 1, as required by law, the state tax commissioner’s office released an education tax letter that cautioned that property tax rates could rise up to over 18 percent over the coming year. I don’t want that. And I’ve heard from enough

Charlotte, Hinesburg and Vermont residents that you all don’t want that, either, and I don’t blame you.

If you’re interested in the pupil weight system, the non-partisan Joint Fiscal Office in Montpelier has put together this PDF that explains much better than I ever could how the pupil weight system works, and how and why it’s changing. Here’s a link: <http://tinyurl.com/eha3y3nw>.

Back to the taxes that none of us are excited to pay. The dreaded 18-percent projection is based in large part on how much the state anticipates school districts will spend in the upcoming year. The Champlain Valley School District, of which we are a part, is gearing up for its budget season, and we will vote on this budget in March. I encourage you all to go to their web site and see when the school board public hearings and budget forums are held, and to take advantage of the various ways they accept input from voters. The time to shape decision making is now. If you just wait until March and vote down the budget, they’re going to cut it, but it might not be the way you want.

After school budgets are passed in the spring, and after the state can more accurately predict the fiscal year revenue and figure out the yield for the coming fiscal year, the tax rate is set. The 18-percent figure is sort of a worst-case-scenario tax rate — if everything goes basically the worst way it could go, and if the legislature does nothing to course-correct. We don’t have the power to change school budgets, but we do have the power to adjust the tax rate, and I assure you, I haven’t spoken to one legislator who’s like, “Hey, you know what I think we should do? Raise everyone’s property taxes by almost 20 percent!”

There are some tricks up our sleeves to avoid such a situation, like a reserve fund that can be used to basically buy down people’s tax rates, among others. It’s a tricky year because of inflation, and because the federal relief money from COVID is winding down at the same time kids’ needs from that time are still prevalent and sometimes acute. Also, in Charlotte, we are such overachievers that we already completed our property tax reappraisal ahead of most towns, which raised some people’s taxes.

Education funding is complex in Vermont but it’s also special — we take



Image by Karolina Grabowska of Pexels

student equity to heart and use those funds to make sure that we’re not leaving behind students with special needs, with socio-economic struggles at home, with learning differences, who live in rural areas or in places where there are no public schools at all. We collectively made that decision to equitably fund schools, which means, of course, that some communities are paying more than others, and that some are benefitting more than others.

Our school in Charlotte is consistently ranked in the top 10 schools in the state, and Hinesburg in the top 20. CVU is always in the top five. We’re lucky to be in this spot. This, I know, doesn’t take the place of worries about how you’re going to pay your heating bill or buy new boots for your kids or keep living on your fixed income as a retiree if your taxes take a sudden and unanticipated upswing. I do believe there’s a balance to be had, and that balance isn’t an 18-percent increase; that figure is one that exists based on no action by anyone. I’m confident that the legislature, the school boards, and the governor and his administration will find a way to make that Dec. 1 letter a worst-case prediction rather than an inevitability.

Please let me know how you’re feeling about this, and if you have an opinion. I know, you don’t want your taxes to go up, but really, the more people I hear from, the better an idea I have of how to represent you.

My phone is 917-887-8231 for calls and texts, and my email is [cevans@leg.state.vt.us](mailto:cevans@leg.state.vt.us). Happy holidays and let’s get after it and cause some good trouble in the new year. Thank you all so much, from the bottom of my heart, for all the support you’ve given me, even when you’re mad. I’ve so appreciated it.



# Hi! Neighbor

## Rex Forehand: Helping parents help their own children

Phyl Newbeck  
Contributor

Rex Forehand has made a career out of training psychologists, but he’s written a book that can help those in need of their services do some of their work by themselves.

This month, the fourth edition of his book, “Parenting the Strong-Willed Child: The Clinically Proven Five-Week Program for Parents of Two- to Six-Year-Olds,” became available.

The book stems from an intervention program Forehand helped develop for therapists working in a clinical setting with young children with behavioral problems. Aided by Nicholas Long, a colleague from the University of Arkansas Medical School, Forehand turned the program into one that parents could do on their own without clinical intervention. For the fourth edition of the book, the duo teamed up with a third author, Deborah Jones of the University of North Carolina. The new edition contains suggestions for parents on how they should de-stress themselves before dealing with their children and recommends that they reach out for help with their own issues.

Psychology wasn’t Forehand’s first choice for a career. An interest in individuals with developmental disabilities led him to pre-med studies, but he didn’t think that was his strength. He tried social work but found the field too nebulous for his liking. Although he is a licensed psychologist, he has always been drawn to the academic side of the field and is happy to have a role in guiding students in the profession.

Forehand’s primary interest is in family stress and how that affects children’s



Courtesy photo

A transplanted Southerner, Rex Forehand has made peace with Vermont winters.

psycho-social adjustment. It stems from some post-doctoral work he did at the Oregon Health and Science University where he worked with a woman who ran intervention programs.

“My concern has always been for children,” he said, “so if I can help parents help their own children, that’s even better.”

Forehand and his wife are from southern Alabama, and he spent 31 years teaching at the University of Georgia. Despite those Southern roots, Forehand’s wife hated the heat and whenever she saw job openings in New England, she would prod him to apply. Twenty-one years ago, he did just that, applying for a job at the University of Vermont where he taught until the end of 2022.

Forehand said his hardest adjustment to life in Vermont wasn’t the cold weather, but the fact that it gets dark so early in the winter months. “After the first year,” he

said, “we just decided to put on our pj’s and get ready for bed early.”

Forehand has served as a member of 10 different editorial boards. In addition to his teaching and writing, he spent four years as the administrator of the Vermont Biomedical Research Network which used to be known as the Vermont Genetics Network.

Administrative work isn’t new to Forehand, who was the director of an institute at the University of Georgia and served as the director of clinical training in the University of Vermont Psychology Department. The Vermont Biomedical Research Network is funded by an almost \$20 million grant, renewable every five years, with a mission of building a culture to promote biomedical research infrastructure at four-year colleges in Vermont.

Forehand is currently involved in a project to develop an on-line program

for parents of young behavior-disordered children that therapists can use. The program would be available through mental health centers in Vermont to teach those therapists how to work with families.

“I’m not a technology person, so it’s a great learning experience to be able to deal with technology and the mental health system,” Forehand said. “That keeps me alive and going.”

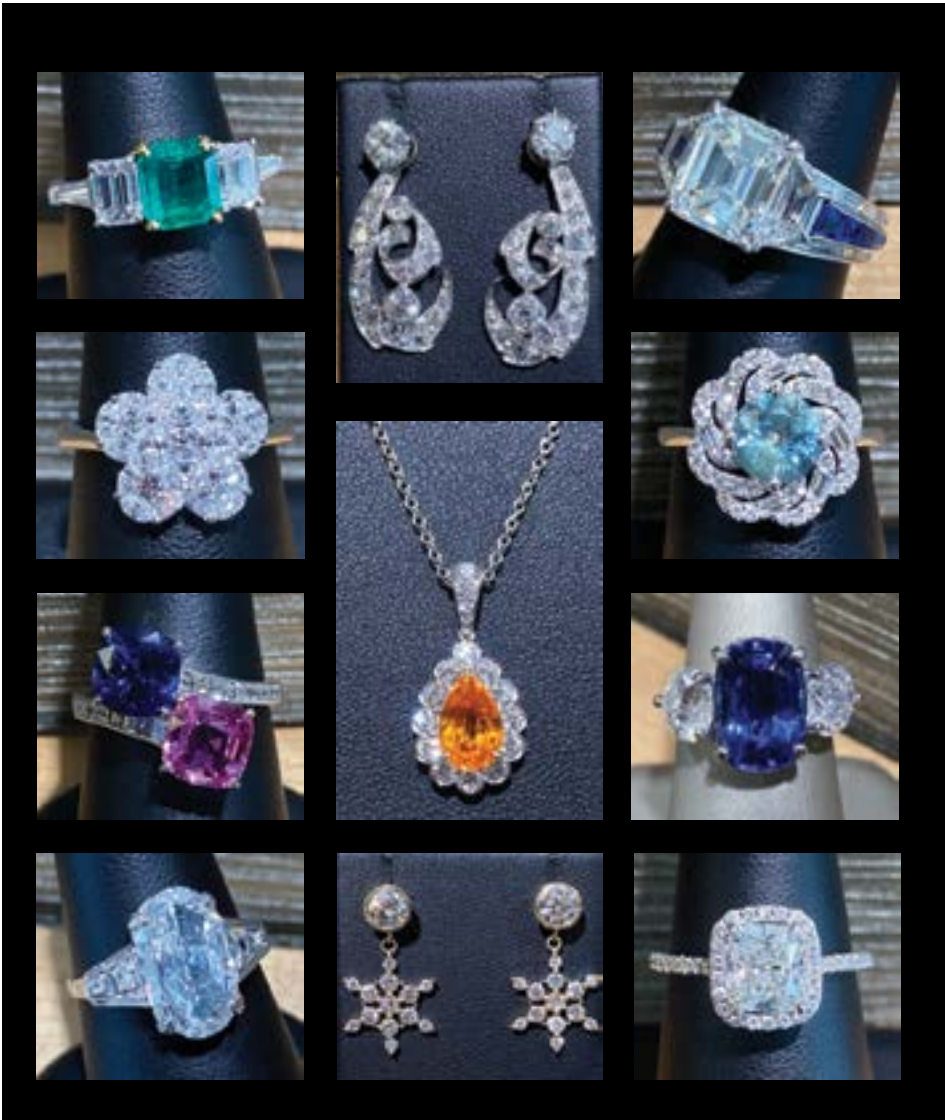
Forehand noted that sometimes professionals may change their minds about working in some of the more rural mental health centers in Vermont, and when that happens, the training has been wasted. By providing on-line training, he’s hoping to prevent that loss of talent, time and money.

“I think it’s important to reach out to mental health centers and assist them,” he said.

Although psychologists often work with people in difficult situations, Forehand said the key to not getting depressed as a professional is to always look forward. “You have to think about how you can help that family,” he said. “Getting yourself bogged down in their problems is not the way to help people.”

Not surprisingly, Forehand finds his work extremely rewarding. He feels he can have a greater influence on individuals and families by training others to go out and do that work.

“It’s a profession I’d recommend,” he said. “It’s hard to get into these days but it’s one where you feel like you’re always giving something and also getting something back.”



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# Calendar of Events

Please send event listings to [calendar@thecharlottenews.org](mailto:calendar@thecharlottenews.org) at least three weeks in advance.

### Visiting Artists and Writers Program Thursday, Dec. 14, 8-9 p.m.

The Vermont Studio Center will host Mill Building on Thursday, Dec. 14, 8 p.m. Goicolea is a N.Y.-based, multi-disciplinary artist who established himself in the late 1990s with a series of provocative self-portraits. His work ranges from photography, sculpture and video to multi-layered drawings on mylar, oil on canvas and large-scale installations. His art is held in many public collections, including the Whitney Museum of American Art, The Guggenheim, the Museum of Modern Art, the Hirshhorn Museum in D.C. and the North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh. Free. More info at [vermontstudiocenter.org/events-calendar](http://vermontstudiocenter.org/events-calendar).

### Film, blues music in Burlington Thursday, Dec. 14, 6:30 p.m.

The film “Bonnie Blue: The Life of James Cotton in the Blues” begins a night of entertainment presented by the Vermont Blues Society that culminates with a concert at 8:15 p.m. featuring blues musician James Montgomery joined by Vermont artists Dave Keller and Chad Hollister, Main Street Landing Performing Arts Center, Burlington. \$25. [vermontbluessociety.org](http://vermontbluessociety.org)

### Living history event

Saturday, Dec. 16, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Fort Ticonderoga will present an exciting one-day living history event on Dec. 16, which will bring to life Henry Knox’s epic feat as he prepared to move a massive cannon from Ticonderoga to Boston to force the British evacuation of 1776. Programming will immerse visitors



Courtesy photo

Fort Ticonderoga presents a one-day living history event on Dec. 16, which will bring to life Henry Knox’s epic feat as he prepared to move massive cannon from Ticonderoga to Boston to force the British evacuation of 1776.

in the daily life of December 1775 at Ticonderoga. Tickets for the general public can be purchased online in advance at [www.fortticonderoga.org](http://www.fortticonderoga.org) or upon arrival.

### CHARLOTTE

### Deep Midwinter: Songs from Winter’s Heart Sunday, Dec. 17, 3 p.m.

Champlain Consort and Social Band are collaborating in this program featuring music and carols of the Spanish Renaissance inspired by the wintry season. Selections, both choral and instrumental, will encompass the solemn and celebratory elements of this time of year at Charlotte

Congregational Church.

### Christmas carol concert Sunday, Dec. 17, 2 p.m.

Sing We Now Noel, a celebration of Christmas Carols and Seasonal Songs, will take place in the Saint Michael’s College Chapel. Professor William Tortolano, emeritus professor and college organist, will present the 63rd annual festive with the classic two-manual, 14-stop Casavant pipe organ in the acoustically acclaimed chapel. The audience is encouraged to participate. The concert will include carols from several countries, and will include The Little Drummer Boy, Go Tell It On the Mountain, Vermont’s carol and We Three

Kings. Free but donations welcomed.

### ‘Amahl & the Night Visitors’ Thursday (Salisbury), Dec. 21, & Friday (Williston), Dec. 22, 5:30 & 7:30 p.m.

Barn Opera’s production of ‘Amahl & the Night Visitors’ will have reduced price tickets for all performances and be performed in both Salisbury and Williston to help the production reach more Vermonters. The price of tickets is \$10. Information and tickets at <https://tinyurl.com/2uaape5z>.

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### Christmas Eve

Offering taken at all services will be used to support our partners near and far.

10 a.m. — Simple morning service with carols and a few surprises

4 p.m. — Outdoor Family Carol Sing for all in the courtyard around the Christmas tree. 6 p.m. indoor service of lessons and carols with children’s choir  
7 p.m. — Indoor service of lessons and carols

### First Sunday after Christmas

Sunday, Dec. 31, 10 a.m.  
Visit website for details. All events will also be livestreamed except the Outdoor Family Carol Sing and the 7 p.m. indoor service of lessons and carols.

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# Farming

## What Vermont advocates want to see in next Farm Bill

Alicia Wolfram  
Community News Service

When it comes to the Farm Bill, Vermonters know where their priorities lie. Agricultural, food and nutrition advocates in the state want to see increased focus on climate, protection for nutrition initiatives and stronger support for small-scale growers and dairy farmers, among other things, in the next bill.

The Farm Bill is a federal package of legislation affecting producers and consumers across the country. Renewed every five years, the bill has been expired now for over two months since its Sept. 30 end date.

While a lapse is not unheard of, some unique circumstances in Congress this year have led to a longer delay, said Maddie Kempner, policy director for the Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont. One of those has been the battle over a new speaker of the House among House Republicans.

In November, after the leaders of the House and Senate agriculture committees said they wanted to extend the current farm bill for one year, President Joe Biden signed a stopgap funding bill to keep money flowing into programs for which funding would otherwise end. In a press release, Sen. Peter Welch, D-Vt., announced his vote in favor of the extension.

“Tonight, I voted for a continuing resolution to avert a government shutdown that would have been disastrous for hardworking Vermonters and families across the country,” he wrote on Nov. 15. “This short-term funding bill will also avoid major upheaval for farmers and producers and provide certainty by ensuring important Farm Bill programs are extended for one year as we continue work to pass a bipartisan, multi-year Farm Bill.”

Welch’s position on the Senate Agriculture Committee — one of the major committees that helps write the Farm Bill — primes Vermont to play a role in shaping the next bill.

The House and Senate agriculture committees are aiming to pass the new bill between May and July, ahead of the November 2024 elections, said Kempner. The one-year extension should provide a safety net to hold programs over until then.

The extension is particularly important for newer, smaller programs that don’t have a permanent baseline — mandatory, built-in funding extending beyond the bill’s expiration date. The one-year extension is providing 19 of 21 orphan programs in the 2018 bill with \$177 million.

“One of those that we’ve been specifically concerned about is the Organic Certification Cost Share program,” said Kempner.

The program, which reimburses certified organic producers for a portion of their

“This short-term funding bill will also avoid major upheaval for farmers and producers and provide certainty by ensuring important Farm Bill programs are extended for one year as we continue work to pass a bipartisan, multi-year Farm Bill.”

— Sen. Peter Welch, D-Vt

certification fees, is especially important for smaller-scale producers, said Kempner.

On the other hand, more established programs like SNAP, or the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, do have set funding put aside to last past the bill’s expiration. The nutrition title comprises about 80 percent of the Farm Bill, with the remaining 20 percent split among other categories such as crop insurance, credit, rural development and conservation.

But adjustments to SNAP in the June Fiscal Responsibility Act — or the debt ceiling bill — such as the expansion of certain work requirements aroused worry.

“The harm that occurred to SNAP in that bill, I think, unfortunately is a bit of foreshadowing for the debate to come once the Farm Bill is more of a leading priority for Congress,” said Ivy Enoch, food security advocacy manager at Hunger Free Vermont.

Enoch stressed increased eligibility requirements, including better reconciliation of eligibility with Vermont’s high cost of living, as a nutrition priority for Vermonters.

“The federal income limit is 130 percent of the federal poverty line,” said Enoch. “Luckily, in Vermont, our eligibility requirement is set at 185 percent of the federal poverty line, which essentially means that more people in our state can qualify for this program, but that doesn’t account for the increased costs of living.”

Kempner thinks the 2018 bill had some wins as well, many of which involved the lumping of some programs into larger ones and giving them a permanent baseline status. The Farmers Market Promotion program is one example of this.

But Welch and Vermont food and farm advocates believe there is still work to be done on many fronts.

“Vermont has a long, storied tradition of agriculture and farming,” said Welch in a



Cows grazing in a Vermont pasture.

Photo by Sophie Acker

statement to Community News Service. “It’s critical that we have a bipartisan, multi-year Farm Bill that supports our farmers and producers, helps support rural communities combat climate change and strengthens the nutrition programs that families in our state and across the country rely on.”

When the Vermont Farm Bill Nutrition Coalition sent out surveys in 2022 to community members and service providers across the state asking for feedback on the bill’s nutrition programs, over 600 people responded. The coalition organized the feedback into a final set of priority recommendations, which includes protecting nutrition program funding and expanding SNAP access.

“Hundreds of folks signed on in support of our policy priorities,” said Enoch, “and I can say confidently that folks are also reaching out directly to our delegation to make sure that their voices are being heard.”

There is also a push from Northeast Organic Farming Association to branch away from big, industrial agriculture and channel some of that money towards more small-scale, organic farming.

“The vast majority of funding and the Farm Bill through the agricultural titles still really goes to support large-scale, industrial and monoculture operations,” said Kempner. “So, we’re continuing to work in the next Farm Bill cycle to try to redirect some of those resources to go to more small-scale, diversified beginning farmers and organic operations.”

The changing climate and its impact on farmers is another factor Vermonters are considering in the upcoming bill. Just this summer, Vermont farmers lost an estimated \$12.3 million from the floods, representing 30 percent of their annual income on average, according to a survey put out by the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets in August.

Kempner stressed the importance of taking into account the changing environment, especially because the bill will stay in effect for five years.

“It’s really critical for Vermont producers and all Vermonters that this Farm Bill be a climate bill,” said Kempner.

Kempner pointed to one potential inclusion in the bill: the Agriculture Resilience Act. She said the act will help pivot the agriculture system from one that’s a net emitter of greenhouse gases to one that helps mitigate climate change and make communities and farms more resilient.

Increased support for the Organic Certification Cost Share Program and ensuring people have equitable access to land and credit are also priorities Kempner hopes to see in the next bill.

“There are steps that we can take in the next Farm Bill to make land more affordable and more accessible to people trying to get into farming, while also providing ways for farmers who are looking to retire to get out of farming and have a safety net under them to do that,” said Kempner.

Welch has introduced a slew of acts ranging from the Invasive Species Prevention and Forest Restoration Act with Rep. Becca Balint, D-Vt., to the Organic Dairy Assistance, Investment and Reporting Yields Act (O DAIRY) Act with Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt. The acts are under negotiation for the upcoming Farm Bill.

“I am proud that Vermont will have a seat at the table for our next Farm Bill, and I look forward to working on this must-pass bill,” said Welch in his statement to Community News Service.

*(The Community News Service is a program in which University of Vermont students work with professional editors to provide content for local news outlets at no cost.)*



Sports

Redhawks finish the season with a passel of awards

Scotter MacMillan  
Editor

The season ended too soon for the Champlain Valley Union High football team, but that culmination marked the beginning of awards season. Although it was small consolation, it was at least some consolation to note how many of the members of the team merited awards from the Vermont Football Coaches Association for the level of their play this year. The Redhawks’ Ollie Cheer was named first team quarterback, Jacob Bose nabbed first team running back, and Brian Rutherford and Jacob Armstrong were named to the first team as wide receivers.

Also named to the first team from CVU were Josh Quad and Sean Kennedy (offensive line); Aidan Morris (kicker); Orion Yates (punter); Sean Kennedy (defensive line); Bose (inside linebacker); Yates and Dylan Terricciano (outside linebacker); and Billy Bates and Dylan Frere (defensive back). Redhawks named to the second team were Nolan Walpole (running back); Connor Simons and Wes Anair (offensive line); Connor Simons (defensive line); Lucas Almena-Lee (inside linebacker); and Chase Leonard, Calvin Steele and Anderson McEnaney (defensive back). Honorable mention went to Anderson McEnaney and Asher Vaughn (running back); George Taylor (tight end); and

Stuart Allard and Daniel Tuiqere (inside linebacker). Coach Rahn Fleming was proud of how his team came together over the season. “I think they developed a kind of esprit de corps where they truly believed they were in it together. And they went out and performed as such.” The North-South Seniors All-Star game went to the north 33-29 in a back-and-forth contest on Nov. 19 at Norwich University, and a number of Redhawks were instrumental in ensuring the win and giving the North a 12-10 lead in the annual contest. Cheer went 5 for 6 in pass completions on the game-winning drive, capped off by a 30-yard touchdown pass to Jamison Couture of Mount Abraham. Cheer notched two touchdowns and 207 yards of offense. The South was threatening late as Burr and Burton’s Jack McCoy had two opportunities with his team within 10 yards of the goal, but couldn’t seal the deal. CVU’s Steele knocked down a pass with minutes left to stop the South’s final possession.



Education

Post pandemic trends with college admissions

Margo Bartsch  
Contributor

Three years since pandemic changes were made to the college admissions criteria, the application process continues to evolve. As this article goes to press, the vast majority of colleges have not yet released their early admissions statistics. However, existing published data for the class of 2028 reveal rising demand for limited college slots. Given this formidable trend, how can an application rise to the top? There are two strategies that could differentiate the student when overall applications are rising: Early decision can capture a spot sooner, and standardized test scores can highlight academic metrics. College applications began to soar during the pandemic when most colleges became test optional. Many students thought the admissions criteria might be less stringent. During COVID, many high schools were not open to administer the SAT and ACT. The AP exams became an online format. During this time, foreign students’ applications generally decreased because of pandemic travel restrictions and limited student visas. Since then, international applications continue to rebound. To beat the increased applications, early decision (binding application to one school) or early action-restricted (non-binding application to one school) is the chance to apply early and be compared against fewer applicants. Early acceptances fill half or more available slots at many colleges.

Early applicants apply around Nov. 1 and are notified around Dec. 15. Some colleges also have an early decision-2 (binding application to one school) in applying around Jan. 1 with notification around Feb. 15. Current early applications show an increased demand for this advantage. This November, Yale University reported its second largest ever early application pool of 7,866 applicants. Yale’s typical freshman class is around 1,600 students. Last year, Yale accepted 776 early applicants, which is nearly half of its incoming class. The other early application option is called Early Action, which is non-binding. Most public universities and some private colleges offer this choice for students who are ready to apply in November. Colleges usually notify students of their decision from December through February. This December, Tulane University announced receiving a 20 percent increase in early decision and a 30 percent increase in early action applications. Furthermore, Tulane explained that they are encouraging more available spots for students “particularly from first generation or low-middle income backgrounds.” The second strategy to differentiate the college applications is to submit standardized test scores. Many students claim they are not good testers; however, practice can build familiarity with the test format and content to boost knowledge and results. Since the pandemic embraced test-

optional policies, two colleges subsequently reverted their testing policy the following year. Both Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Georgetown University reinstated standardized test requirements. They tracked a noticeable gap in the performance of admitted students with exams versus those without. The March 2023 article, “Dartmouth College is test optional for applicants during the 2023-2024 application cycle,” clarifies Dartmouth’s admissions process: “Testing is not the ultimate factor in evaluating an application. We look are every applicant and each part of their candidacy, including test scores, in the context of the available opportunities and efforts. Testing, in conjunction with your academic record and recommendations, helps us better understand your academic preparation.” Dartmouth also acknowledged the role of testing for athletic recruits: “Dartmouth will continue to follow the guidance and policies of the Ivy League regarding testing

requirements for applicants who expect to participate in the varsity athletic program.” The role of testing continued to be emphasized in the October admissions forum with Dartmouth College and Yale University. They confirmed the classroom performance deviation of admitted students with and without scores. The discussion included considering a test-suggested or test-encouraged policy in the future. In modelling the current early application increases, there likely will be increases in overall applications during the regular decision (non-binding applications) that will be submitted around Jan. 1 with decisions around April 1. With limited available slots, the college’s selectivity ranking increases when they can reject more students for relatively fewer spots. It is valuable for families to begin college planning earlier to identify the variables that can enhance their student’s college application. Competition is fierce as applications rise and the chance for acceptance falls. Being prepared to use every available opportunity to your advantage, including early applications and test scores, can help to optimize results. There are no shortcuts or guarantees for admittance to your dream school. (Margo Bartsch founded College Essay Coach, a full-service college admission business, and has been an adjunct professor in business at Champlain College and at Middlebury College.)




Charlotte Central School is No. 1

Naomi Strada  
(Condensed by Tom Scatchard)

Charlotte Central School has been named the number one middle school in Vermont. To achieve this accolade, it takes dedicated educators, caregivers and your support. We are committed to taking care of each other. We are committed to making our community and the world a better place. Requests have been made in the Charlotte Central School Newsletter to be a volunteer, a mentor or support a fundraiser. Check out some of the opportunities the school would like to offer that require community support: • Scripps Spelling Bee — contact Julie Lin (juliehl@gmail.com) • Production and parent coordination for the spring musical — contact Jen Roth (jroth@cvsdvt.org) • Lunch and recess monitors — contact Amanda Riggelman (ariggelman@cvsdvt.org) • One-on-one mentor for a student — contact Kate Rooney (krooney@cvsdvt.org)

• Substitute teachers — contact Naomi Strada (nstrada@cvsdvt.org). Pre-kindergarten lottery open The Champlain Valley School District’s early education program is accepting applications for a random pre-kindergarten lottery drawing for next school year for an opportunity to enroll your child in one of the school-based classrooms which run 10 hours a week. These prekindergarten classrooms are licensed early education programs providing play-based, developmentally appropriate environments in an inclusive setting. The curriculum is based on the Vermont early learning standards. Children who will be age 3 years or older by Sept. 1, 2024, who are not eligible for kindergarten and who live in Charlotte, are eligible to enter. (Note: Charlotte pre-K students will attend a program at another Champlain Vally School District site.) All applications must be received by Feb. 5, 2024 and are located on the CVSD early education website at https://tinyurl.com/2rm43u7j. Paper applications are




**Prekindergarten Lottery is now open for 2024-2025!**

The CVSD Early Education Program is now accepting applications for a random prekindergarten lottery drawing for the 2024-25 school year. This lottery is for an opportunity to enroll in one of our school-based classrooms which run 10 hours per week. Our school-based prekindergarten classrooms are 5 STARs, licensed early education programs that provide play-based, developmentally appropriate environments for all children in an inclusive setting. Our curriculum is based on the Vermont Early Learning Standards (VELS).

Our programs follow the CVSD school calendar. Children who will be age 3 or older by September 1, 2024, who are not eligible for kindergarten, and live in the communities of Charlotte, Hinesburg, Shelburne, St. George, and Williston are eligible to enter the lottery. Families who are selected for the lottery and choose to enroll their child in a CVSD program access their Act 166 publicly funded prekindergarten funds for the school-based program. Paper applications are available upon request.

All applications must be received by February 5, 2024, and are located on the CVSD Early Education website at: <https://tinyurl.com/CVSEarlyEd> or using this QR code.

For additional information, questions about our program, or any concerns about your child’s development, please visit our website or contact Director of Early Education, Erin Gagne at [egagne@cvsdvt.org](mailto:egagne@cvsdvt.org). Our Early Education team is also available for developmental screenings in the areas of communication, social-emotional development, motor skills, adaptive development, and cognition. More information about an Early Multi-Tiered System of Supports is also available on the website under the Support Services tab.





Outdoors

VT Fly Gals helps bring females into the fly fishing fold

Alissa Frame  
Community News Service

It could have been just another get-together full of “old men in plaid” when Jamie Eisenberg showed up at a local Trout Unlimited meeting one night in 2017. For decades, the Underhill fly fisher had not felt particularly welcomed by the male-dominated chapter of the fish-focused nonprofit. But she was lonely, looking for community around fishing.

Something was different this time. In the parking lot, the license plate of a Prius proudly proclaimed its owner was a “FLYGAL.” Eisenberg needed to meet her. She walked inside and approached the only other woman she saw.

Sure enough, she found her fly gal: Nicky Paquette, former Environmental Protection Agency pharmacologist who lives in St. Albans. The plate matched the name of a Nashville group Paquette knew, the Music City Fly Gals, and within months, the two women trekked to Tennessee to fish with them.

Experiencing their energy and connection, Eisenberg thought, “I want to do that. I want that.”

So began VT Fly Gals. It started in 2020 as a Facebook page that announced events like potlucks and fly-tying sessions, or acted as a portal for people in search of a fishing buddy.

For Eisenberg, it was a monumental step. “I was all by myself for 30 years, fly fishing,” she said. No longer would the sport have to be a solo endeavor.

In the years since, the group’s numbers have expanded to 150 women, with around 50 regularly active members who are all engaged in a much-needed conversation in fly fishing.

According to a 2020 report compiled by the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation and the Outdoor Foundation, males represented 70 percent of the sport’s participants.

Eisenberg said this is no secret in the Champlain Valley Trout Unlimited chapter, one of five across the state and the one through which she met Paquette. “They admit it. We talk about the ‘old white men’ thing, and they agree that it needs to change,” she said.

But bridging the gap across demographics has not always been simple.

“It’s not easy to break into the boys club

... it took me years to break in,” Eisenberg recalled. Her own journey through the fly fishing ranks started with “The Orvis Guide to Fly Fishing” book, which became her Bible, she said.

Eisenberg was completely self-taught before the convenience of internet searches and YouTube videos. “The first couple of years it was an absolute mess. I would get completely wrapped up in my line and lose five flies and have a blast — and catch a fish, once in a while,” she said.

Eisenberg kept at it until she honed her skill and made more connections in the angler community. Eventually she hired a local guide to help her uncover fishing spot gems in the area.

“He and I hit it off,” she said, and before long he was asking Eisenberg if she would join his team of guides. She agreed, and that’s when she really shook up the status quo of the boy’s club, she said. The other male guides “started to recognize that I wasn’t an idiot, and I could hold my own, and I actually could tie a pretty good fly,” Eisenberg said.

Now, she feels quite welcomed by men in the fly fishing community, and this past spring she joined the board of directors at Champlain Valley Trout Unlimited.

Paquette’s first exposure to fly fishing was in Maryland when she decided to join the Potomac Valley Fly Fishers. She lucked out with a club that was “open arms,” she said, its members freely sharing advice and inviting her on trips. The positive culture immediately drew her in.

She proceeded to volunteer with Casting for Recovery, a nationwide organization offering fly fishing retreats for women with breast cancer. It was another rewarding experience where she felt valued and a strong sense of camaraderie. When she retired from the EPA in 2016, Paquette set down roots in Vermont, where she sought a new community for fly fishing.

A Trout Unlimited chapter seemed like the appropriate venue to check out, being a well-known fishery and conservation organization. But she found a strikingly different atmosphere from her previous fly-fishing groups, she said.

“I found them not to be so friendly,” seeing as the demographic was mostly older men who seemed unfamiliar with women’s involvement in the sport, Paquette said. Still, she stuck with the chapter and was



Photo by Alissa Frame

Fishing on the Browns River in Jericho for a Champlain Valley Trout Unlimited meetup in October.

nominated to become secretary by the one other woman in the group at the time, who happened to be stepping down from the role.

To Eisenberg and Paquette, the universe seemed to align the night Eisenberg showed up at that Trout Unlimited meeting in 2017. It was the moment both women were waiting for: an opportunity to create community where it was lacking. The women hoped to welcome others like them into the world of fly fishing, without the intimidation or alienation that can come with being female in a male-dominated group.

VT Fly Gals, its founders thought, could be the antidote. Eisenberg made business cards that read, “VT Fly Gals,” with the Facebook page and contact information below. “I kept the business cards with me when I would go fishing, and if I found a woman on the river, I gave her a card,” Eisenberg said. This is how she attracted a majority of those involved in the group.

The promise of community is crucial because, for many women, adventuring solo outdoors comes with risks. Safety is a looming concern. As Eisenberg views it, women tend to “fish hesitantly — like, they don’t fish, because they’re scared to fish alone, and they don’t know enough.”

Being with a group of like-minded women, “people have more confidence and feel more relaxed,” Eisenberg said.

The tide is changing at Champlain Valley Trout Unlimited these days. The chapter is trying to expand its reach across wider demographics, especially after it almost collapsed during the height of the COVID pandemic.

“There has definitely been a change in the idea of having a more open attitude towards getting ladies involved in Trout Unlimited,” said Ed Collins, the president of the chapter.

“Could we do better? Absolutely. We can always do better,” he added.

A potluck at Mills Riverside Park in Jericho on one crisp, overcast afternoon this fall was one of these efforts to do better. The event brought together members of both the local Trout Unlimited chapter and the VT Fly Gals. A handful of anglers gathered under a pavilion to chat amid cups of hot cocoa, while others made their way down to the river, rods in tow.

Now there is quite a bit of overlap between Trout Unlimited and the VT Fly Gals — “groups meshing and colliding, which is really, really cool,” Eisenberg said. “Talk about dreams (coming) true ... over the last four or five years, my world has expanded, and all kinds of people are meshing and going fishing and learning and fly tying.”

Catherine Todd, who is on the board of directors for Champlain Valley Trout Unlimited and serves as the fundraising committee chair, attended the Jericho potluck event with her husband and two young daughters. She explained how there is a growing number of strong women in the Trout Unlimited chapter.

“It’s a really good opportunity, I think, for women to find something that they love and care about and to be a part of it,” Todd said.

Paquette, who is now the treasurer of Champlain Valley Trout Unlimited in addition to her continued involvement with VT Fly Gals, summed up her own relationship to the sport these days, saying, “I just love being out there in the river and connecting.”

“It’s really the outdoors that I’m after,” she added. “The peacefulness, the nature, the beauty — and the challenge.”

*(The Community News Service is a program in which University of Vermont students work with professional editors to provide content for local news outlets at no cost.)*

Let’s go Lego team



Photo by Elizabeth Hunt

The Charlotte Central School LEGO Robotics team participated in the First LEGO League Northern Regional Championships at Shelburne Community School on Saturday, Dec. 2. The team advanced to the finals at Norwich University in January.



## Sacred Hunter

# During a tough time, a Christmas gift from universe

Bradley Carleton  
Contributor

Many years ago, when I was struggling to maintain financial stability, I would nurture my spirit as often as I could by spending time outdoors doing things that made me feel like I belonged in this universe.

I would fish, hunt, forage or just sit in the winter woods and watch the snow fall around me. Solitude and quiet were my medicine.

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

I got up and walked out of the woods as the snow began piling up. The light, fluffy, happy kind of snow. The kind of snow that, as a child, made me feel joy and peace. I walked slowly home through the powdery white covering, kicking the drifts and watching them explode with all the glee I felt in my childhood. Poof! Poof! I laughed as I walked. My spirit was rebounding, and I took a deep breath.

Arriving at the house, I grabbed the keys to my old pickup with the rusted side panels and shoved it into four-wheel drive. I plowed out of the driveway and began pushing through the snow beginning to accumulate on the road. "Where to?" I thought. Let's drive down to the beach and see if any ice is forming for ice-fishing season.

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



Nature brings us all the gifts we need.

Courtesy photo

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

I pulled out of the station and headed west to Greenbush Road, then north through the West Village. I turned left at Ferry Road

and headed toward the lake — a place that always brings peace and, if I'm listening with my heart, answers to my most existential questions.

Impulsively, I turned right on Lake Road and headed toward the beach. As I crossed the covered bridge, I saw a lone drake mallard flapping his wings on the shore as he faced the north wind that was slapping the shoreline with foot-high waves.

I knew from the past that the piece of property south of the beach was not posted or restricted to hunting and was more than the required 500 feet of any occupied property. I parked my truck and watched him for a bit. He appeared to be at peace with his solitude. I considered just watching him, but after a few minutes he began letting out a series of loud quacks, and it seemed as if he was calling to me. Was he presenting himself to me? Was he offering his life to nurture mine? It sure felt that way.

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

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

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

## In the Outdoors

# Outing in Burlington can be a great way to savor season

Elizabeth Bassett  
Contributor

Join me for a pleasant outing in downtown Burlington. Really. This is not aspirational.

A few weeks ago, Mayor Miro Weinberger spoke to the Rotary of Charlotte-Shelburne-Hinesburg.

To his credit the mayor appeared shortly after the shooting of three college students of Palestinian descent. He could have made his excuses but he did not and, not surprisingly, Miro is bullish on Burlington. So, I decided to put his enthusiasm to the test.

I drove up St. Paul Street on a grey Saturday afternoon. Although it was just 3 p.m., gloom and dark had settled in. Ahead of me, looming over the town, scores of white lights twinkled in the sky. A 10-story building, the tallest in Vermont, is rising from The Pit, the blocks of walled-off and graffitied excavation that have lain dormant for years in the heart of Burlington.

Fun fact: of all the states, Vermont has the shortest tallest building.

Steel beams sparkled as did a crane somehow suspended up yon. Before long, this mixed-use edifice will house residential units, both market and affordable, commercial and retail tenants, and possibly a hotel. City Place, now stewarded by three well-established, local families in the construction business, Ireland, Farrington and Senecal, is the largest private investment ever in Burlington.

After using a machine to purchase on-street parking (know thy license plate number), I continued on foot past restaurants we know and love, still here

after the pandemic.

I strolled to City Hall Park, lured by music, flickering fire pits, and curiosity. What are those little houses? The BTV Market (<https://tinyurl.com/mryekrvw>) hosts a rotating group of 20 artists, makers and food vendors, Friday to Sunday afternoons mid-November through December 23. Shivering sellers featured jewelry, dried flowers on stationery and value-added foods like flavored vinegars in festive bottles.

As co-sponsor of the market, Burlington City Arts (BCA) opens its doors into the market space so it's easy to take in some visual art and get a little blood flowing in the fingers enroute to Church Street.

Shimmering lights dominate the pedestrian thoroughfare as trees lining the street sport tiny white lights, luring walkers toward the evergreen that towers at the top of Church Street. The pleasure of fellow travelers, one I've missed these past few Decembers, warmed my spirit if not my extremities. As Weinberger affirmed, empty storefronts are filling with new tenants, the space of Dobra Tea will soon host an Asian market, a new eatery takes over the spot vacated by local favorite Penny Cluse Café. Three other new restaurants have or soon will open. I spotted few vacancies along the four pedestrian blocks.

Mayor Weinberger did not shy from grim statistics. With the local police force down 30 percent and recruiting difficult in this economy, some bad actors carry on with impunity.

"The drug crisis unfolds across the state, with the number of overdoses in Rutland comparable to those in Burlington," he said, and educated us about Fentanyl. "Whereas

a hit of heroin lasts 8-10 hours and is pricey, Fentanyl is cheap, about a dollar a dose, but the high lasts only two hours before withdrawal begins, hence the drug paraphernalia scattered about town."

There's more but we'll return to the good news.

Cell phone data confirms that foot traffic has returned to pre-pandemic levels. Tax records indicate that gross receipts, too, are equal to those of 2019. The only segment that is down is retail, largely due to the inability of businesses to hire workers. Hotel demand exceeds the limited supply, keeping room rates high. A new hotel or

two could ease that. A record number of carts dot Church Street this year. Northfield Savings Bank has moved into the space vacated by Stephen & Burns.

"The bank has doubled down on Burlington by bringing its headquarters to Church Street," the mayor said. "It is safe to dine and shop in downtown Burlington."

We know that bad news generates clicks, but there is another side to the story. Consider a Burlington outing. Mine certainly cheered me.



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Thursday, December 14, 7 - 9 p.m.

**Planning Commission Regular Meeting**  
Thursday, December 14, 7 - 9 p.m.

**Charlotte Conservation Commission Meeting**  
Tuesday, December 19, 7 - 9 p.m.

**Development Review Board**  
Wednesday, December 20, 7 - 9 p.m.



# Gardening

## Think outside the (flower) box for gifts for gardeners

Amy Simone  
University of Vermont Extension

If you have a gardener in your life and need some help selecting a gift, read on for some ideas that should please even the choosiest of gardeners.

Most gardeners would be so pleased to receive a gift card to their favorite garden center or nursery. How will you know what that is?

Simply recall a prior conversation as your gardener carried on about a purchase of 20 new perennials at a certain nursery sale last spring. Offering a gift card to the coveted store allows the gardener to select the plants, seeds or supplies needed.

For a more personal experience, you could give a gift of an outing together to select a specialty houseplant. Local garden centers now offer citrus trees, a wider selection of orchids and some rare varieties of houseplants. These unique plants can be a bit pricier than a typical houseplant, and thus, they make a thoughtful gift.

To pursue another gift idea, simply follow the light, the reading light over the head of your gardener friends, that is, while they peruse the seed and bulb catalogues. If you are quick enough, sneak the catalogues away while they are not looking. Then simply follow the trail of earmarked pages and circled products showing you exactly what they would be happy to receive as gifts.

Gardeners tend to be patient people who enjoy the anticipation that accompanies the wait for future benefits. Therefore, offering them tickets to a regional flower show within the next few months, or a trip to a botanical garden during the upcoming season, will likely be met with much enthusiasm and anticipation.



Rare houseplants, such as a *Philodendron gloriosum* 'Zebrina,' are the perfect gift for the gardener who has everything.

Or you can simply bring the beauty of plants and gardens to them directly with a book. Your dahlia-loving friend would thoroughly enjoy pouring over the pages of a photo book with pictures of dahlia varieties, for example.

Perhaps your garden enthusiasts have expressed an interest in learning a new skill, such as seed saving, or would like to bring more native plants into their gardens. Gift them a book that can teach them the new gardening technique that they want to master or can serve as a reference guide.

Webinars and local in-person seminars also are an excellent idea for the knowledge-seeking gardener. Another option would be to sign you and your friend up for a botanically inspired workshop so that you may enjoy the experience together.

Many gardeners are so busy planting and tending their gardens that they sometimes forget the décor. A gift of a garden statue for the perennial gardener, a solitary bee house for the vegetable gardener, or a decorative stake for the houseplant gardener are just a



Photos by Amy Simone

Above: Garden sculptures and statuary, available for purchase at many nurseries and garden centers, will add beauty to a perennial gardener's flowerbeds.

Right: For the houseplant gardener, a whimsical stake adds a lovely decorative touch to any potted plant.



few ideas to add even more beauty to those lovely spaces.

Whatever the gift, your gardeners will appreciate your support of their passion for plants.

*(Amy Simone is a University of Vermont Extension master gardener from South Burlington.)*

### CHARLOTTE CENTRAL CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

available upon request.

#### First Lego league

Eight students in fourth-eighth grade and coach Tim Holcomb recently participated in the FIRST LEGO League Northern Qualifier hosted by Shelburne Community School. FIRST LEGO League teams from northern Vermont participated in the event which they prepared for by designing and building a robot and coding it to complete designated missions on a large game board utilizing only Lego. The students also had to present an innovation project to a panel of judges that helped solve a problem in the art community using a progressive technology.

The team scored well in the robot game and showcased their teamwork, innovation and dedication to the FIRST LEGO League Core Values. They qualified for State Finals on Jan. 20 at Norwich University.

#### School library news

K-4 students are celebrating Hour of Code during library visits. Coding is a natural fit in the library, as it can be a type of storytelling, including characters, settings and a sequence of events.

It also helps develop the lifelong

learning skills of critical thinking and problem-solving. Students are participating in both “unplugged” and virtual coding activities. The American Association of School Librarians’ Framework for Learners is grounded in shared foundations.

Here is how they translate to coding in the library:

- Inquire — Learners use coding to build new knowledge by inquiring, thinking critically, identifying problems and developing strategies for solving problems.
- Include — Learners demonstrate an understanding of inclusivity in the learning community. Coding requires them to think about different perspectives and possibilities in order to create a successful product.
- Collaborate — Learners work effectively with others to broaden perspectives and work toward common goals. This is seen especially with the youngest learners and how they work together to approach “unplugged” coding activities.
- Curate — Students collect, organize and share resources.
- Explore — Coding promotes reflection as part of the problem-solving process.
- Engage — Learners demonstrate safe, legal and ethical sharing of knowledge.

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# Weed’s in the Garden

## Baking cookies is a seasonal treat for the senses

Joan Weed  
Contributor

One of the best sensory treats of the holiday season is aromas of spice and citrus and chocolate baking.

Now that we’re in celebration distance, let’s turn the oven on and get making some of the traditional cookie treats from grandma and mom. It’s not too late to create some for gifts as well as family treats.

We have a tradition of baking plain old cut-out sugar cookies with the kids who visit. My collection of ancient cookie cutters adds to the fun and memories.

I’m going to offer some simple ideas that children can help with, as well as a few more complicated treats. Each one has been tested by time and Santa, who always gets an offering of cookies. And he loves eggnog. Did you know that?

The first cookie is fun because of its name as well as the hands-on sensation which children can enjoy while rolling. Aunt Alice shared.

### Snickerdoodles

- 1 cup butter, softened
- 1 1/2 cups sugar
- 2 eggs
- 2 1/4 cups flour
- 2 teaspoons cream of tartar
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/4 teaspoon salt

Preheat oven to 375 degrees.  
Beat together butter, sugar and eggs one at a time.

Sift together flour, cream of tartar, salt and baking soda. Gradually beat flour mixture into butter mixture until a soft dough is formed.

In a separate bowl prepare a mixture of 2 tablespoons sugar, 1 teaspoon cinnamon, 1 teaspoon ground cloves. Substitutions: allspice, nutmeg.

Form the dough into 1-inch balls and roll in spices. Place on ungreased cookie sheet 2 inches apart and bake for 10 minutes. Makes five dozen. Cookies will spread and crinkle while baking.

Cookie cutters needed.

### Best Ever Butter Cookies

- 1 cup unsalted butter
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 1 egg
- 2 tablespoons orange juice
- 1 tablespoon vanilla extract
- 2 1/2 cups flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder

Cream butter and sugar till light and fluffy. Add egg and beat till combined. Add juice and vanilla and gradually beat in flour and baking powder till all is absorbed. Wrap in waxed paper and chill for at least 30 minutes. May be refrigerated for a few days if necessary.



Lightly flour a board and rolling pin. Cut dough into quarters keeping unused portions wrapped. Roll one quarter to 1/4” thick and cut with various cookie cutters. Sprinkle with colored sugars. Using a spatula, remove to ungreased cookie sheet and bake at 400° for 6-10 minutes. or till crisp and lightly browned on edges. Continue with remaining dough and store in an airtight container when completely cooled.

From McCall’s Magazine

### Apricot Shortbread

- Shortbread:
- 1/3 cup soft butter
  - 1/2 cup light brown sugar, firmly packed
  - 1 cup sifted, all purpose flour
- Filling:
- 3/4 cup dried apricots
  - 1 teaspoon grated lemon peel
  - 2/3 cup granulated sugar
  - 2 teaspoons corn starch
  - 1/3 cup chopped walnuts

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Beat butter and sugar until light and fluffy. At low speed, beat in flour. Pat mixture evenly over bottom of 8x8x2-inch pan. Bake 12 minutes until light golden brown. Let cool completely on wire rack.

For the filling, place apricots in small saucepan. Add just enough water to cover and bring to boiling. Reduce heat and simmer for 15 minutes. Drain apricots reserving 3 tablespoons cooking liquid.

Chop apricots finely. Combine in a saucepan with reserved liquid, lemon peel, sugar and cornstarch. Bring to a boil and boil one minute to absorb all liquid. Let filling cool 10 minutes. Spread evenly over cooled shortbread crust. Sprinkle with chopped nuts.

The next isn’t a cookie but a must-have for the holidays and all year from Beth Merritt.

Carefully remove from microwave and stir in baking soda. Will foam up. Quickly pour onto warmed, lightly buttered baking sheet. Cool and break into pieces. Takes about 15 minutes for delicious treat.

### Moravian spice cookies

- 4 cups sifted all-purpose flour
- 3/4 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon ginger
- 1 teaspoon nutmeg
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon allspice
- 1/2 teaspoon cloves
- 1/2 cup light brown sugar
- 1/2 cup soft butter
- 1 cup light molasses

Frosting:  
1/3 cup egg whites, 3 1/4-4 cups sifted confectioner’s sugar.

Sift dry ingredients and set aside.  
In large bowl, beat sugar, butter and molasses until well combined. Using wooden spoon and hands, mix dry ingredients to combine. Form dough into a flattened ball. Wrap in waxed paper or cling wrap and refrigerate overnight. Next day, preheat oven to 375° and lightly grease cookie sheets or use parchment. Roll one quarter of dough to 1/8-inch and using cookie cutters make shapes of choice. Bake 6-8 minutes. Cool on wire rack.

Make frosting:  
Beat egg whites at medium speed with 3-3/4 cups confectioners’ sugar, adding more to thicken if needed. Cover bowl with damp cloth. Decorate by piping with a No. 4 tip for writing in pastry bag. Outline cookies or make designs of your choosing.

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# Library News

## Please help library plan how to best serve the community

Margaret Woodruff  
Director

Thanks to all in town who participated in our strategic planning survey.

The library staff hopes residents will join them for a follow-up forum on the strategic planning survey on Thursday, Jan. 18, 6:30 p.m. to discuss how the library can serve the needs of our community.

### Friends holiday craft sale Through Dec. 16

Shop local crafts and support the library at the Friends of the Library holiday craft sale through Dec. 16. There will be some past favorites available including Nan Mason’s woven potholders and collage note cards by Marcia Vogler.

### Preschool story time Fridays, 10 a.m.

This is a new time. Join Christa Duthie-Fox for a Friday morning session of stories and fun. No registration necessary. For ages 3-5 with caregiver.

### Baby time Thursday mornings, begins Jan. 4

A special time for carers and babies to learn, play and meet new friends before the library opens for regular visits. We’ll have age-appropriate toys and books to share on cozy blankets in the children’s area.

### Seed Library book study Jan. 8, 7 p.m.

“The Vegetable Gardener’s Guide to Permaculture” is for home gardeners of



every skill with any size space, who want to live in harmony with nature to produce and share an abundant food supply with minimal effort. Karen Tuininga guides us through this book and “how to transition from simple vegetable gardening to creating a holistic, edible ecosystem in your own backyard.” Copies of the book available to purchase or check out at the library circulation desk. Register at <https://bit.ly/46O6dVk>.

### Tri-Town Writer’s Studio Tuesday, Jan. 9, 6:30 p.m.

Looking for a welcoming spot to share your writing? Join the debut of the three-town Writer’s Studio, a positive atmosphere to share feedback about writing projects big and small. Geoff Gevalt of the Vermont Young Writer’s Project serves as the facilitator for this

monthly meet-up that rotates among our three neighboring libraries. Please email Margaret Woodruff at [margaret@charlottepubliclibrary.org](mailto:margaret@charlottepubliclibrary.org) to sign up.

### Cooking book club Wednesday, Jan. 24, 5:30 p.m.

Matt Jennings from Red Barn Kitchen and author of “Homegrown: Cooking from My New England Roots” explores the varieties of American cooking and culture. Select a recipe from the book that strikes your fancy. Books include “The Sioux Chef,” “The Immigrant Cookbook,” “Aloha Kitchen,” “Jubilee,” “Homegrown” and “Forgotten Drinks of Colonial America.” Then bring that dish to share with others for an evening of eating and discussion about the geographic and historical range of American cuisine. These books available at the library circulation desk. Please email Margaret Woodruff if you’re interested in attending at [margaret@charlottepubliclibrary.org](mailto:margaret@charlottepubliclibrary.org).

### Children’s programs

#### Preschool story time Tuesdays, Dec. 19 restarts Jan. 2

Join us at the Charlotte Library for preschool stories, crafts and activities. No registration required. Age 2 and over.

#### Preschool play time Wednesdays, Dec. 20 restarts Jan. 3

Play in the preschool years enables children to explore and make sense of the world around them, as well as to use and develop their imagination and creativity. Exploring the sensory table, sorting, playing with blocks or Play-Doh — these are a few of the open-ended projects planned for Wednesday morning play-based learning at the Charlotte Library. Stay tuned for details about upcoming fall programs.

### Lego free play Wednesday, Dec. 27, 10:30 a.m.

The Charlotte Library will provide the Legos, you provide the imagination. All ages welcome.

### Programs for adults

#### Mystery book group Monday, Dec. 18, 10 a.m.

In “A Death in Door County,” the next title on the Monday mystery book group’s list, Morgan Carter, owner of the Odds and Ends bookstore in Door County, Wisconsin, has a hobby. When she’s not tending the store, she’s hunting cryptids — creatures whose existence is rumored, but never proven to be real. It’s a hobby that cost her parents their lives, but one she’ll never give up on. So, when a number of bodies turn up on the shores of Lake Michigan with injuries that look like bites from a giant unknown animal, police chief Jon Flanders turns to Morgan for help. Copies available at the circulation desk.

#### Short story selections Wednesday, Dec. 20, 1 p.m.

Join library director Margaret Woodruff via Zoom at <https://tinyurl.com/9c398wyy> to share and discuss short stories old and new.

### Recurring programs

#### Book chat Wednesdays, 3 p.m.

Meet each week to discuss new books, old books and books we might have missed. Each week, Margaret Woodruff selects a theme and highlights related titles from the library collection. No registration necessary.

#### Crochet & knit night Wednesdays, 5-6:30 p.m.

Claudia Marshall is your host for a casual weekly session of crocheting and chatting, knitting and catching up. Bring your project or start a new one with yarn and needles available at the library, along with plenty of books to instruct and inspire. For teens and adults.

#### Library contact information:

Margaret Woodruff, director  
Cheryl Sloan, youth services librarian  
Susanna Kahn, tech librarian  
Phone: 802-425-3864  
Email: [info@charlottepubliclibrary.org](mailto:info@charlottepubliclibrary.org)  
The Charlotte Library Board of Trustees meets regularly on the first Thursday of the month at 6 p.m. The next meeting takes place on Thursday, Jan. 4, at 6 p.m. online and in person. Please contact the library or visit the library website at [charlottepubliclibrary.org](http://charlottepubliclibrary.org) for more information.



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## Senior Center News

# Find calm and support during hectic holiday season

Lori York  
Director

The holiday season is in full swing at the Charlotte Senior Center.

This month, there will be a special Winter Solstice Meditation with Charlie Nardoizzi and Heidi Kvasnak. There will also be an Alzheimer’s caregiver support group for those seeking support during the hectic holiday season. And please don’t forget the gift of life and consider donating blood at this month’s Red Cross Blood Drive at the senior center.

Please note that the senior center will be closed on Friday, Dec. 22, at noon and will reopen on Tuesday, Jan. 2. Age Well Grab and Go meals will be distributed on Thursday, Dec. 28, even though the senior center is closed.

### December Artist Exhibit Champlain Valley Quilt Guild of Vermont

The Champlain Valley Quilt Guild of Vermont is a non-profit organization that strives to promote an interest in the art of quilting while also providing comfort to those in the community by donating quilts to organizations, such as the Vermont Respite House, the Ronald McDonald House, Vermont Quilts of Valor and UVM Medical Center. Every year the guild has a different quilt theme challenge for its members. This year’s quilt challenge is the theme of animals.

### Alzheimer’s Caregivers Support Group Second Thursdays, Dec 14, Jan. 11, 5-6 p.m.

Are you caring for someone with Alzheimer’s? Do you know someone who is? Please join the monthly Caregiver Support Group on the second Thursday of each month from 5-6 p.m. The meetings provide a safe place for caregivers, family and friends of persons with dementia to meet and develop a mutual support system. For additional information or questions, contact Susan Cartwright at scartwrightasg@gmail.com.

### Red Cross Blood Drive Thursday, Dec. 21, 1-6 p.m.

Please consider donating blood. The Red Cross is experiencing the worst blood shortage in over a decade. Call 1-800-RED-CROSS or visit RedCrossBlood.org and enter: CHARLOTTE to schedule an appointment.

### Winter Solstice Meditation Friday, Dec. 22, 5-6 p.m.

Join Charlie Nardoizzi and Heidi Kvasnak for a candlelight, winter-solstice meditation, which will include gentle seated movement and soft chanting, to prepare your body for a time of quiet, silent meditation, ending in chant. On this auspicious evening you will practice to anchor yourself in the inner stillness and light of your being, so that you may welcome the holidays with grounded awareness. Let’s celebrate the transition from the longest night of the year to the lengthening days of light. No experience necessary. Suggested donation of \$5-\$15. Registration suggested.

### Shape-note singing Sunday, Jan. 7, 1-3 p.m.

Traditional a capella, four-part harmony sung for the joy of singing, not as a practice for performance. Search “Sacred Harp” on YouTube for examples, then come and sing. Introduction to shape notes and scales is recommended and offered 30 minutes before each first Sunday singing. Contact Kerry Cullinan at kclynxvt@gmail.com to schedule. No registration required. Free.

### Watercolor in winter Tuesdays, 9:15 a.m.-noon, Jan. 9-30

Give the gift of art. We’re entering

those winter doldrums where a painting class is just the thing to keep you busy and improve your mood. Winter scenes, interesting still lifes and more. This 4-week class will get your creative juices flowing again if you haven’t been painting for a while and will help spark some new ideas to paint for everyone. Some watercolor experience is helpful. Cost: \$160. Registration required.

### Italian for total beginners Fridays, 10-11 a.m., Jan. 12-Feb. 16

Looking for a different holiday gift idea? How about giving Italian classes to yourself or someone considering beginning the study of Italian. Join the group and explore the beauty of the Italian language and culture. For questions about whether this class is the correct level, contact Nicole Librandi at nicolelibrandi2@gmail.com. Cost: \$60. Registration required.

### Veterans assistance Tuesday Jan. 23, 10-2 p.m.

Join Bob Stock, veterans outreach specialist with the South Burlington Vet Center, at the Charlotte Senior Center. Stock will be available to veterans and their families to ensure that they are aware of the VA benefits available to them and to provide assistance with any VA issues they may be experiencing.

### Meals Menus are posted on the website at charlotteseniorcentervt.org.

### Monday lunches Lunch is served 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m., or until the food runs out. Suggested lunch donation \$5. No registration required.

### Weekly Age Well Grab & Go meals Pick up on Thursdays 10-11a.m. at the Charlotte Senior Center. Registration is required by Monday for the Thursday meal. \$5 suggested meal donation but not required. To register, call 802-425-6345 or email meals@charlotteseniorcentervt.org.

**Note:** For Christmas week, there will be an Age Well Grab & Go meal pick-up on Thursday, Dec. 28, 10-11 a.m. No late pick-ups as the senior center is closed this week.

### Weather cancellation policy When the local schools are in session, the Charlotte Senior Center follows the Champlain Valley School District for weather-related cancellations. When school is not in session and there is inclement weather, a cancellation determination will be made by 8 a.m. Cancellation notices will be posted on the senior center website and on the outgoing voice message. An email will be sent to those who have signed up to receive the email newsletter.

### Senior center info The senior center offers programs for adults 50 and older from Charlotte and surrounding communities. Priority is given to seniors, but programs are open to adults of all ages. Programs include weekly lunches, daily exercise classes and many opportunities to connect through board and card games and art and language programming.

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 programs for the upcoming week.

Lori York, director,  
lyork@charlotteseniorcentervt.org  
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Follow the senior center on Facebook or Instagram at charlotteseniorcentervt.



Photo by Lori York

Kerry Pughe participates in a boxwood table top tree workshop



Photo by Lori York

The volunteer cooking team gets into the holiday spirit for the Monday Munch.



Photo by Lori York

The volunteers from the cooking teams gathered for a holiday potluck celebration.



# Write Ingredients

## Feel free to 'quiche' and tell about it at senior center

Susan Ohanian  
Contributor

Don't miss the good food and good conversation at the last Monday Munch of the year at the Charlotte Senior Center on Dec. 18.

From quiche to upside-down cake, here's a bit of food lore that comes with the menu. Quiche, a French version of the German kuchen, "little cake," can be thought of as a savory custard or a close relative of the omelet.

Let them eat quiche. For King Charles III's choice for his celebratory coronation dish, the Buckingham Palace kitchen made quiche. In 1953, the last time a monarch was crowned, the official dish was coronation chicken (essentially, chicken salad dressed in curry-flavored mayo).

Dubbed "Quiche le reign," the monarch's choice created quite a stir. There were plenty of comments in the press and on social media, with some noting the choice seemed pretty much like what the king likes for breakfast, cheesy eggs. Before long, politics emerged. The Reform Party called the dish "foreign muck," and the Socialist Party asked whether quiche would be available at food banks.

As far as foreign muck goes, I was surprised to note that "quiche" does not appear in "The Escoffier Cook Book."

Search the New York Times and you'll get 2,739 quiche hits, offering quiche with asparagus, red peppers, crab, hot sausage, cabbage and caraway, bacon and apple, tofu and mushroom and so on. Their recipe calling for half-and-half instead of milk strikes me as over the top.

Mention quiche Lorraine, and of course, Julia Child comes to mind. As always, when demonstrating this quiche preparation in her kitchen, she reassures her audience: "You can do this." Boston public radio station WGBH maintains a Julia Child site filled with lots of sketches from her show at [wgbh.org/collections/julia-child-at-gbh](http://wgbh.org/collections/julia-child-at-gbh).

Child agreed to donate her kitchen to the Smithsonian, and in August 2002, shortly after her 90th birthday, she attended the opening of the display, copper pots and all.

My loyalty to Child goes beyond her cookbooks and those copper pots. As I related in my book, "What Happened to Recess and Why Are Our Children Struggling in Kindergarten," in the late 1990s, armed with a National Science Foundation grant, I looked at the underbelly of corporate leaders' strident criticisms about the way math was taught in



Image by Terri Cnudde from Pixabay

public schools. I started with visits to math classrooms around the country, and then I sent several hundred letters to famous people, asking them half a dozen questions about the importance of math in their own lives.

None of the editors of national newspapers, all of which had run plenty of editorials about public schools, answered. Will Shortz did reply, expressing great enthusiasm for the puzzle qualities of math.

Federal Express CEO Frederick W. Smith's reply was delivered by the U.S. Postal Service. Dave Barry reported that "for a period of approximately 15 minutes back in 1962" he knew how to do square root. At least he thinks it was square root.

Two of the loudest critics of public schools were too busy to answer. A response from Bill Gates' e-mail address expressed regrets, as did Lou Gerstner's office at IBM. Instead of replying, Federal Reserve chair Allen Greenspan's office sent a long profile that had run in Dow Jones News. Hizzoner New York City mayor Rudy Giuliani seemed glad I'd asked, sending a detailed boast about how he'd used math to solve the city's problems.

Julia Child answered all the questions (in pencil) and added several paragraphs, exclaiming, "I hated every minute of math when I was in school 75 years ago." She also noted the usefulness of math in the kitchen.

Upside-down cake has its own story. A 1983, Scrantonian Tribune headline asked, "Who invented pineapple upside-down cake?" They noted that it's been with us so long nobody seems to know the answer. Popular since the 1800s, the first American recipes appeared in newspaper in 1923.

In 1925, the Hawaiian Pineapple Company (later Dole) ran a contest, calling for recipes using pineapple. A panel of judges from the Fannie Farmer's school, Good Housekeeping and McCall's magazine rated the entries. Of the 60,000 people responding, 2,500 offered pineapple upside-down cake. Dole then ran

ads featuring some of the cakes.

The New York Times doesn't go weird in its 920 articles featuring upside-down cake, offering recipes, sticking with all manner of fruits. In food columnist Melissa Clark's words: "You can't beat a classic pineapple upside-down cake." Then she adds, "bananas are just waiting to step in."

Take time from your busy schedules to come relax over a good meal at the Charlotte Senior Center. While you're there, be sure to thank the volunteer cooks and dishwashers who have taken time from their own busy schedules to prepare this meal (and clean up afterwards).

As an alternative to all those carols flooding the airways, enjoy the number one song of Dec. 18, 1965: "Taste of Honey" by Herb Alpert and Tijuana Brass at [youtube.com/watch?v=NGT0oMbwYec](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NGT0oMbwYec).

### Monday Munch

**Dec. 18, 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.**

Quiche Lorraine, haricot vert hollandaise, pineapple upside-down cake and bananas à l'envers.

Reminder: Register for the Thursday Age Well grab & go meal.

### Age Well grab & go Thursday, Dec. 21

Macaroni and cheese, carrots, peas and mushrooms, wheat roll, oatmeal craisin white chocolate chip cookie and milk.

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