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The Charlotte News

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Photo by Lee Krohn

Still time to be heard — town manager or administrator?

John Quinney
Publisher & Board Chair

On Jan. 31, we’ll close our survey on switching from a town administrator system of government to a town manager. On Feb. 8, we’ll publish the results in The Charlotte News.

We’re grateful to the more than 160 people who have already completed the survey and added remarks and questions. If you’ve not done so, now is the time. Go to charlottenewsvt.org, take a photo of the QR code below or copy this link into your browser: <http://tinyurl.com/duchx27r>. Our goal is to receive at least 200 completed surveys by Jan. 31.

If you’re looking for more information on the town manager question, check out recent stories and commentaries in this newspaper and on our website.

Here are just a few of the comments and questions we’ve received over the past week:

- “We currently have a ‘reactive’ form of government. I’d like to see a more ‘proactive’ approach where policy and planning for the future is emphasized and supported by a knowledgeable professional.”
- “I’ve heard from both sides and seen their passion, but I haven’t heard enough from people who are neutral on this issue but well informed. I’d also like to see a before-and-after comparison of towns our size that made the change, and what benefits they’ve seen.”
- “Can the newly hired town administrator take on more responsibility to help relieve the selectboard? Let’s give the administrator model time and support.”
- “Selectboard has too much to do — town manager would be more efficient.”
- “It is not the selectboard’s fault that issues facing Charlotte seem daunting, but changing to a manager isn’t going to solve them.”
- “Change can be a good thing, and this seems timely and well considered and formulated.”
- “Whichever costs less, we should do.”

If you’ve got questions about this important town issue, plan on attending one of the public hearings scheduled by the selectboard. The first is on Tuesday, Jan. 30, the second on Monday, Feb. 5. Both meetings will be held at town hall and start at 6:30 p.m.

(John Quinney is publisher of The Charlotte News and chair of the board of directors. The opinions expressed here are his own and not necessarily those of the newspaper or the board. Neither the newspaper nor the board have taken a position on the town manager-town administrator question.)

**Town Administrator
or Town Manager?**



Take our survey

Pretty sticky



Photo by Ann Tuttle

A barn on Lake Road during a recent winter storm. Photographer Ann Tuttle likes taking pictures right after it snows because of the way snow sticks to everything.

Charlotte launches village master planning project

Scooter MacMillan
Editor

On Thursday, Jan. 11, town planner Larry Lewack was nearing the finish line of a day-long marathon of meetings with business owners about how they would like to see Charlotte’s two villages develop.

That night, as the seventh meeting of the day began, Lewack was still going relatively strong and holding up his end of the meeting, but frisky was not an adjective that would have been applied to him. Lewack said he thought they had talked to about 50 people that day as part of a process of doing “a deep dive” into finding out what residents want to do with the east and west villages.

The evening meeting began with Lewack explaining that the effort, the village master planning project, was, at least in part, a result of articles that were defeated almost three years ago.

That year on Town Meeting Day, two of 10 articles on the Australian ballot were defeated that were intended to spur development in East Charlotte Village. If passed, those articles would have increased the size of the East Charlotte Village by around 4 acres and made changes to land-use regulations, like allowing septic lines to run under roads.

The village master planning project has been made possible by around \$85,000 the town received. Lewack applied for and got around \$13,000 in state funds. Working with the Chittenden Regional Planning Commission, the town got about \$72,000 in federal funds.

The project is an attempt to find out what Charlotters of different ages and demographics care about and what they feel might be missing in the two villages. The process will continue with more opportunities for people to share what kinds of community activities and

“This village master planning project will build upon two previous studies, one that was done by consultants in East Charlotte over 10 years ago and another in West Charlotte about 20 years ago.”

— Larry Lewack

infrastructure they think is needed to foster the kind of development people want.

This village master planning project will build upon two previous studies, one that was done by consultants in East Charlotte over 10 years ago and another in West Charlotte about 20 years ago. Lewack said most of the ideas that came out of those studies didn’t go anywhere.

He said the conversations will not shy away from suggestions that turned contentious in the past, but the aim will be to keep the talk “future focused.” Already that day in previous meetings, Lewack said potentially controversial topics had been discussed like access to water systems; septic; transportation, particularly to town facilities and services; and — a topic that can be a flashpoint in

Charlotte — sidewalks.

Jolene Kao, who has owned the Old Brick Store for about a half a year, said parking is a problem. She would like it to be safer for people to walk to her store from the senior center, which she noted, “is only a couple of doors away.”

In fact, village “walkability” was mentioned several times during the meeting as a very desirable goal.

Katie Rose of Head Over Fields Farm said having a business in Charlotte is nice because the landscape is “a constant form of passive marketing.” In other words, when people drive through they tend to want to stop at farms like hers, but it’s not so nice because it’s hard to find employees with so few places for farm workers to live.

“Not having housing nearby for younger hourly workers is definitely a challenge that we see continuing,” Rose said.

Several people with farm stores talked about the challenges of having a business on Route 7. Someone was killed in a four-vehicle accident there this past summer. Those at the meeting would like to have more signs warning drivers that their business entrances are approaching.

Jane MacLean of Sweet Roots Farm, which is also on Route 7 where the old Charlotte Berry Farm was, talked about the difficulty of getting daycare, which greatly impacts her business day. She said it was a miracle she was able to get one of her children into the Charlotte Children’s Center, but she has to drive her other child 30 minutes to childcare. That translates into two hours or 50 miles of driving every workday.

Lewack talked about how many people travel through town, both on Route 7 and on Ferry Road. Mt. Philo is not only the

Thanks for Quinney’s work as chair, publisher

The Charlotte News Board of Directors — in conjunction with staff, volunteers and former board members — would like to thank John Quinney for his outstanding service to the paper and community as publisher and chair of the board since 2021. This is John’s last week in these volunteer roles, although he will remain on the board. Even avid readers of The Charlotte News may not appreciate all that John has done for the paper. He took over at a fraught time. The editor had just quit, several board members had resigned, and John, among the few survivors of this unfortunate series of events, took over as publisher and chair of the board.

Working largely behind the scenes, John centered editorial independence at the heart of the paper’s operations, adopted a code of ethics, developed a conflict-of-interest policy and clarified how we distinguish between reporting and personal commentary by those associated with the paper. John hired our first full-time editor, Scooter MacMillan, and clarified the relationship between publisher and editor.

In addition, John drew on his extensive private-sector career to place the paper on a more professional and financially secure footing. He replenished the board, established board committees to focus on key challenges and with Bill Regan, led a



John Quinney

strategic planning effort. John expanded our digital content and working with Anna Cyr, our production manager, John led the effort to improve and rebuild our website and boost the number of subscribers to our weekly email newsletter. With help from board member Claudia Marshall, he leveraged the paper’s non-profit status to boost fundraising and secure grants. John’s tenure at The Charlotte News was so successful in part because he took the

time to really listen to Charlotters about their community and the paper’s role in it. He involved a lot of townspeople, which allowed them to have a say in the paper’s evolution and win their respect for John as its head. Building on this approach, John launched a reader survey with an unprecedentedly high response rate and instituted single-issue surveys, including the one currently open on the town administrator-town manager question.

John was especially good at getting Charlotters to understand that the “free” paper that appears in their mailboxes and inboxes biweekly actually costs about \$150,000 a year to produce and relies on skilled staff and generous volunteers to get out the door. Publishing The Charlotte News is a team sport, but it is not too much of a stretch to say that there might not have been a paper to publish without John’s hard work, dedication and overriding desire to see Charlotte become an even better community through quality local journalism.

As one former board member summarized John’s tenure: “The result, in my opinion, is that The Charlotte News is in the strongest position, financially and editorially, that it’s been in during my lifetime in Charlotte.”

The Board of Directors



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.

Editorial independence

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

Code of Ethics

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.
- Minimize harm.
- Act independently.
- Be accountable and transparent.

Disclaimer

Individuals associated with The Charlotte News may engage in public discussion on issues in Charlotte, including at selectboard and other Town meetings, and on Front Porch Forum. They may also work or volunteer for organizations in Charlotte, including private businesses, the Town government, and nonprofits. When engaging in public discussions, they are expressing personal or organizational views and not necessarily the views of The Charlotte News, its staff, board of directors, or volunteers. Individuals who write opinion pieces for the paper will have their role at The Charlotte News identified, and the piece will be clearly labeled as their personal commentary.

Letters, Opinions and Obituaries

Consistent with our mission, The Charlotte News publishes letters to the editor, opinion pieces and obituaries submitted by our readers. All such materials are subject to review and approval by the editor in accordance with the standards and requirements listed on our website at charlottenewsvt.org/about.

Send submissions, questions, photos, etcetera to scooter@thecharlottenews.org

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Proposed town budget to be finalized Monday

Brett Yates
Contributor

The Charlotte Selectboard entered its meeting on Monday, Jan. 22, with the expectation that it would approve a municipal budget proposal for the next fiscal year, which begins on July 1.

But after three and half hours of small adjustments and continued debate, the evening concluded without such a vote.

Now, a special meeting will have to take place at 7 p.m. on Monday, Jan. 29, where the board will finalize a warning for Town Meeting Day. The question of what should appear on that warning — besides a budget of some kind — occupied much of the discussion on Monday, leading to a few unofficial decisions.

Town Meeting Day’s Australian ballot, it seems, will include Charlotte Volunteer Fire & Rescue’s request for a \$365,000 10-year bond to fund the purchase of a new ambulance, which, according to CVFRS president John Snow, townspeople will begin to pay for “two or three years from now.” But the board shot down a potential article that would have sought to allocate an extra \$50,000 in fiscal year 2025 to the Charlotte Trails Committee.

At the discretion of the voters, that would have added to an overall budget that, in its draft form, currently sits at \$4,260,326 — already 4.65 percent more than the budget approved last year, an increase only partially offset by a \$137,646 rise in non-tax revenues. Board members took issue with what they saw as the last-minute nature of the trails committee’s ask.

“I didn’t have any foreknowledge of this,”

“I was the No. 1 proponent of Australian ballot last year, but we got a bunch of flak for it. I don’t want us to vacillate on this.”

— Lewis Mudge
Charlotte Selectboard

Kelly Devine said. “I have no ability to see what the typical requests have been over the years, what the balance is of their fund. I haven’t seen what capital projects they have planned.”

Bill Regan, who chairs the trails committee, objected to the board’s procedural critique.

“Actually, we’ve been discussing this article since last fall, at the start of the budgetary season, within the committee and with our selectboard liaisons,” Regan said. “We were told back in the fall that we should supply this information in January, in time for it to get onto the ballot. This should not be a surprise.”

Another member of the trails committee, Jack Pilla, explained that the money would allow for continued progress on a planned trail from Mount Philo to the town beach. Currently, it ends at Ferry Road. According to Pilla, the public has expressed consistent support for the project.

“This would be the fourth article we’ve asked for over the years to build a very specific trail,” Pilla said. “We really want to put it out there for the people to make the decision.”

For now, however, it appears that the Town Meeting Day agenda won’t task voters with considering any immediate spending beyond

the town’s base budget, unless a citizen petition gathers signatures amounting to 5 percent of the local electorate. The town clerk would have to receive them by Jan. 29, which wouldn’t leave much time for door-knocking.

Even so, according to selectboard member Lewis Mudge, it’s “not too late” to try. That goes not only for the trails committee but also for the recreation commission — one of whose members, Maura O’dea-Wygmans, advocated unsuccessfully for a \$30,000 boost to its reserve fund.

O’dea-Wygmans told the board that the commission doesn’t have enough cash on hand to fulfill Charlotte’s longstanding commitment to improving accessibility at the town beach by installing a ramp. By her account, the cost of the project had doubled between the completion of the design and the disbursal of funding.

“We’re at the very end of this process,” selectboard chair Jim Faulkner replied. “Why are we talking about this now if we started in September?”

Charlotte’s town meeting will take place on Saturday, March 2. What we do know so far is that Charlotters will approve or reject the budget in the traditional fashion — from the floor at Charlotte Central School — before weighing in on additional articles by Australian ballot 7 a.m.-7 p.m. on March 5 at town hall.

That plan almost changed on Monday amid concerns over in-person turnout, as the selectboard noted complaints from residents with schedule conflicts and overlapping vacations, owing to a winter break at the local schools. Devine also cited a high COVID-19 rate.

“The difference between town meeting and Australian ballot is eight or nine hundred voters,” said Mary Mead, the town clerk and treasurer.

Devine’s motion to switch fully to an Australian ballot this March, supported by Faulkner, failed in a tie vote, with Frank Tenney and Lewis Mudge in opposition.

“I was the No. 1 proponent of Australian ballot last year, but we got a bunch of flak for it,” Mudge said. “I don’t want us to vacillate on this.”

Around Town

Congratulations

Jakob Holm of Charlotte was named to the dean’s list by the University of Wisconsin-Madison’s College of Agricultural & Life Science for the 2023 fall semester.

Justine Dee of Charlotte received her

doctorate from the University of Vermont Larner College of Medicine’s clinical and translational sciences program on Dec. 13, 2023. She is serving as chair of the department of physical therapy at Thomas Jefferson University in Philadelphia.

NEXT PUBLICATION DATES

FEB. 8

Copy Deadline: Feb. 2
Ad Deadline: Feb. 2

FEB. 22

Copy Deadline: Feb. 16
Ad Deadline: Feb. 16

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Big group shows up to forum about library’s future

Scooter MacMillan
Editor

Around 55 people showed up at the Charlotte Senior Center to discuss how they would like the library to develop and its role in the community, but much of the conversation was about issues the library can’t do much about — like sidewalks.

The community survey discussion on Thursday, Jan. 18, was part of strategic planning the Charlotte Library is engaged in. It’s the third time the library has gone through this process.

Besides sidewalks, which were also discussed at a village master planning project discussion at the senior center on the Thursday a week before, topics mentioned at the library strategic planning event included: multigenerational affordable housing; a health center; lively villages that aren’t like South Burlington; a public square where people encounter each other more often; library outreach to the underserved; commercial options in the villages like cafés, restaurants and shops; more small diversified farms; transportation options; broader and speedier digital access; more action on the tasks that are listed in the town plan; development that doesn’t add to light pollution; a gym; growth based on the needs of the community; an assisted-living facility that would make it easier for senior citizens to stay in town; broader community access to Charlotte Central School; a more accessible space for the food shelf; more assistance for migrant farm workers; a building for rec programs; a better working relationship between the residents and the town government; more childcare; more programs like the library already runs on the town green, such as performances, concerts and Halloween pumpkin carving; outdoor movie nights on the town green; more sustainability projects sponsored by the library; a newcomers or new parents group; after-school mentoring; longer times to check out online books; and events where people

can learn about all the good work happening in town.

The Charlotte Library did this type of strategic planning in 2012 and 2015, library director Margaret Woodruff said. The 2015 planning helped to spur the expansion of the building that was completed in 2020.

Christine Frieze, who was the Vermont assistant state librarian, was part of the process in 2012. Frieze, who is now the director of the Portsmouth Public Library in New Hampshire, returned to Charlotte to facilitate the process on Thursday.

Although it’s no longer “your grandmother’s library,” Frieze said, the first thing that people still think of when they hear the word “library” is books. But libraries have become about so much more than just books that there is discussion about changing the term to something more encompassing of all the things libraries do now.

“When I was in library school, there was a big argument about whether we should get rid of the L word,” she said. In France they have changed the term from “bibliothèque” to “médiathèque.”

There was a good bit of discussion about ways that the Charlotte Library could share info with the public about what it is doing. Almost all the suggestions were things the Charlotte Library is already doing. Unfortunately, it’s a pervasive phenomenon around the country that, despite all that libraries do to try to tell the public what they are doing, people still don’t seem to know.

“All of us in our field feel like we’re doing PR all the time. And yet we have people come to us and say, ‘There’s this new thing at the library. You can download a book,’” Frieze said. “Five years ago, a very educated man said to me, ‘Libraries have magazines.’”

Among all the assets the Charlotte Library provides, Jim Hyde noted that it is also an important role model for the community, noting that recently the library staff had a push to increase civility.

“The library basically sets a model of behavior, which we could all aspire to, and I



Photo by Scooter MacMillan

As part of the Charlotte Library’s strategic planing effort, around 55 residents showed up at the Charlotte Senior Center on Jan. 18 to discuss how they would like the library to evolve.

think that’s a really important function for a library to play,” Hyde said.

Although the library doesn’t have much authority over so many of the issues people brought up at the meeting, Frieze said she believes the library can help: “The library is not going to be able to fix the housing and the health care and the childcare all by itself, but there could be a role for it.”

Frieze quoted Neil Gaiman, who said, “Google will find you 50 million answers to a question, but a librarian will find you the right one.”

In a phone conversation, Woodruff said the strategic planning process is not required by the Vermont Department of Libraries, but it is strongly encouraged.

The data from the discussion and the online survey conducted in the fall will be compiled so the library can see what it can use from the information collected. The survey had been closed, but there was so much interest in it after the forum on Thursday, that Woodruff has reopened it.

You can take the survey at <http://tinyurl.com/cuu5je92>.

Frieze will meet with the library staff again to help them sort out what ideas rise to the top. Woodruff said they should have news about what they have found out in the spring.

Woodruff expects they will find two levels to the results of the survey and the forum — a sort of 30,000-foot level of the larger role of the library in the community and the very specific ideas some people talked about.

“A lot of the stuff that people were talking about, I don’t know what the library can do,” Woodruff said, but Frieze should be helpful in determining what issues the library can help with and where it should “stay in its lane.” Even on those issues, the library might be able to help.

“We’re not going to start building new houses in Charlotte, but we could help facilitate a conversation about that,” Woodruff said. “This is a neutral space where they can come and talk about things like land use or housing.”

VILLAGE PLAN

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

first state park created in Vermont, it is the state’s busiest park. He said sometimes on nice days in the summer he sees at least 100 bicyclists travel by the town hall.

A question Lewack considers a lot is: “What would it mean to you if there was a little more reason for people to stop?”

The farm stores along Route 7 rarely have bikers stop. Most of them stick to Greenbush Road and Ferry Road.

“We’re not far from Burlington, which is a hub of a lot of people. We have lots of open space. We have lots of trails. We have lots of farms that have farm stands, and I feel like Charlotte could capitalize on that,” said Jessica Sanford of Adam’s Berry Farm.

The Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) is extremely slow to make changes to a highway like Route 7, putting up the kinds of signs the group wants, warning of farm entrances with blinking lights. But, Lewack said, the agency is anxious to establish a park-and-ride facility in Charlotte. Lewack said he felt the field behind Stone’s Throw Pizza would be a good location for a park and ride.

“There are no park and rides north of Vergennes all the way up to South Burlington. So, they’re going to do it at some point in the next few years. If we have views about that, this is a good time to speak up about them,” Lewack said. “Having a park and ride may help to slow more people down and get them to stop here for a while.”

Everyone at the meeting seemed to agree with the state’s determination that Vermont is in a housing crisis and that something needs to be done to find more housing young families can afford.

Fixing the affordable housing need is a particularly tough nut to crack. As Lewack pointed out, Charlotte has both the highest incomes and the most expensive property

in Chittenden County.

Most of those at the meeting also agreed that decreasing the 5-acre lot size minimum was a way to increase affordable housing.

The bulk of the upcoming planning commission meeting on Thursday, Jan. 25, will be devoted to talking about the village survey project. All of the town’s boards and commissions have been invited to this meeting to make sure they all know what is happening, Lewack said.

And there will be more meetings with residents. The next round will be visual preference surveys, meetings where residents will be shown images of different types of buildings and asked for their feedback on what they like and don’t like for the look of Charlotte’s villages.

As the process continues there will be several community outreach opportunities and the results of these will be posted on the project website.

“Your voice is crucial in understanding how the town should, and should not, allocate resources to meet its goals,” Lewack said.

There will be poster displays and flyers at the senior center, town hall, library, the East Charlotte General Store (formerly Spear’s Corner Store) and the Old Brick Store to give as many residents as possible opportunities to find out about the project and respond.

Lewack said, ultimately, the process should result in a rewrite of the town’s zoning bylaws to fix the significant disconnect between the concepts in the town plan and the land-use regulations.

The previous studies of the Charlotte West Village in 2002 and of the East Village in 2010 produced reports, but these reports were not followed with fixes to make the proposals possible.

Lewack said, “This time we’re coupling the visionary work with a fix and flowing directly to getting that adopted, so that people can actually start to come to the town with proposals to build stuff according to the new rules within a reasonable timeframe.”

TOWN OF CHARLOTTE NOTICE FOR PUBLIC INFORMATIONAL HEARING FOR AN AUSTRALIAN BALLOT ARTICLE TO BE VOTED AT TOWN MEETING

The Selectboard of the Town of Charlotte hereby gives notice that, in accordance with 17 V.S.A. § 2645(a)(3)(a)(A) & (B), § 2645(a)(6) and 17 V.S.A. § 2641(a), it will holds two public hearings on a petitioned-for proposal to adopt a municipal charter.

The First Public Hearing will be held on Tuesday, January 30th, 2024 to discuss and take questions regarding the charter proposal. The First Public Hearing will begin at 6:30 p.m. at the Charlotte Town Hall, Located at 159 Ferry Road in the Town. While the charter proposal is made by the petition, and not by the Selectboard, Town officials will be present during the public hearing to answer questions regarding the proposal.

The Second Public Hearing will be Monday, February 5th, 2024, at 6:30 p.m. at the Charlotte Town Hall, Located at 159 Ferry Road in the Town. Town officials will again be present during the public hearing to answer questions regarding the charter proposal. Note, however, that the Selectboard does not have authority to revise a charter proposal made by petition.

After the two public hearings, the petitioned charter proposal shall be submitted to the voters to be voted on by Australian ballot on March 5, 2024, at Town Hall. A public informational hearing will precede that vote.

Please note: If you have any comments, questions or suggestions regarding the accessibility of this meeting, please contact Nathaniel Bareham, Town Administrator. Additionally, if you are unable to attend the meeting, but wish to make a comment or ask a question regarding the article please email your comment or question at least one hour in advance to Nathaniel Bareham at townadmin@townofcharlotte.com.

This public informational session will be held by online (via Zoom) and in-person. All links and information will also be posted on the Town’s website and calendar at: charlottetv.org.

- The public may participate online or by phone using the information below.
- To join meeting online (via Zoom) <http://tinyurl.com/4mmendbj>.
 - To join meeting by phone please call **1-929-205-6099** and dial the **Meeting ID** and **Passcode** below:
 - **Meeting ID:** 849 7333 1806
 - **Passcode:** 392123

For more information on participating in Selectboard meetings via Zoom, <http://tinyurl.com/4mmendbj>.

A concise summary of the substatntive provisions of the petitioned-for charter proposal follows.:

Section 3. Town Manager/Road Commissioner

The Town shall have a Town Manager form of government per Title 24 Chapter 37, with the duties per 24 V.S.A. § 1236, except for the duties of the Road Commissioner, which shall continue to be an independent and elected position.

An official copy of the charter proposal is on file for public inspection in the Town Clerk’s office. Copies shall be made available to members of the public upon request.

Report from the Legislature

Preventing overdose deaths reason for supporting H72

Chea Evans
Representative

At the risk of wading into a swamp that I don't really need to get into in the first place, I'm going to touch on property taxes quickly. Out of all the Champlain Valley School District towns, Charlotte is in the best position as far as taxes are concerned — they're going to go up, by how much we don't quite know yet, but since we did our reappraisal last year and already went through a property-tax-paying cycle, it won't be such a sharp increase for us as it will be in other towns. That said, it's not ideal. At the moment, there's a lot of scrambling to explain how and why this happened, and how it seemingly came out of the blue to surprise everyone. My guess is that Act 127, which was passed in the last biennium before

I got to the House, is going to get some tweaks and amendments, if not this year, then next year when the new biennium begins. I wish I could do more about it, but right now I feel like I'm kind of stuck — a "no" vote on the big bill for the budget at the end of the session wouldn't have any impact on the education fund numbers, and I don't think the budget adjustment bill is going to have any real effect on school budgets either. I'm quite sorry that we're in this bad situation and also feel bad that it seems like there isn't much to be done at the moment. While I'm getting myself into trouble, I might as well throw it out there that I did vote yes on H72 (legislature.vermont.gov/bill/status/2024/H.72), which was voted out of the House and sent over to the Senate last week. This is the overdose

prevention bill; some people call these safe injection sites. I've written about it briefly before, but here's why I voted yes: Overdose deaths in Vermont were the highest ever last year at 243. That's 243 too many. Data shows that most overdose deaths occur when people who are using drugs are alone. If someone is there and there's a problem, they can administer Narcan and save a life. If someone is dead, they can't start the recovery process. So, in the interest of fewer overdose deaths and a greater chance of people getting the help they need to recover, I voted yes. I know people are concerned about minors being allowed to use the overdose prevention centers. I would say to you in that case: Why do you only want the teenagers and adolescents to die from an overdose? Surely if they're struggling

with substance use and addiction, they don't feel safe at home to speak with someone about it, or they don't have anywhere else to go. Letting their parents or family members know they've been there won't help matters. If someone can reach young people before there's no hope left, it's the most important, so that's also why I voted yes. This is a pilot program, which means that it's temporary. If, when the funding is over, there's been no reduction in overdose deaths, the same number of needles on the sidewalk and the same amount of people getting into legal trouble for using drugs, then we'll try something else. This is not a solution to the drug epidemic, nor is it a cure for substance

SEE **CHEA EVANS** PAGE 8

Community Roundup

Champlain Valley Little League registration open

The Champlain Valley Little League (Charlotte-Hinesburg-Shelburne) is registering players through March 1. Register at champlainvalleyleague.org.

Spring divisions and pricing

Pee wee – Age 4 (free)
T-ball – Age 5 (\$70)
A/AA Baseball – Ages 6-8 (\$95)
AAA Baseball – Ages 9-10 (\$110)
Majors Baseball – Ages 11-12 (\$110)
Minis Softball – Ages 5-7 (\$95)
Minors Softball – Ages 8-9 (\$95)
Majors Softball – Ages 10-12 (\$110)
Please use the 2024 Little League Age

Determination website at <http://tinyurl.com/mrxa5esy> to properly find your ballplayer's correct division. If there are any questions, please reach out to us at cvllvt@gmail.com.

Summer youth basketball and baseball camps

Get ready for another year of youth basketball and baseball camps through Shelburne Parks & Rec. Below are the details for the upcoming camps: This summer, there will be three youth basketball camp sessions at Davis Park in Shelburne:
• Session 1 (7-11 years old) June 24-28, 9 a.m.-noon
• Session 2 (7-11 years old) July 15-19, 9

a.m.-noon
• Session 3 (11-14 years old) July 15-July 19, 1-4 p.m.
Note: If your child is 11 years old, they can choose to join either the younger or older group. The Little League baseball camp, which has been immensely popular over the past three summers, is designed for 8- to 12-year-olds who are Little League eligible this upcoming summer. For those entering seventh-ninth grade, there is a baseball mini-camp week at Harbor Road Field July 1-3, 9 a.m.-noon. Registration through Shelburne Park & Rec will be available in February. Due to high demand, spots tend to fill up quickly. If you'd like to receive an email notification when sign-ups are available, email nelderton2143@gmail.com, specifying the camp you are interested in.

Charlotte Library wins Rural Development fund

The Charlotte Library was one of 25 applicants awarded a Vermont Council on Rural Development Climate Catalyst Innovation Fund. The Climate Catalyst Innovation Fund award amounts range from \$500-\$4,000, are selected by an outside panel of experts and are based on demonstrating a mix of innovation, equity, replicability, collaboration, resilience, leverage and meeting climate and energy goals. The total \$82,500 of funding is intended to support projects that make a meaningful, community-scale impact. The Charlotte Library was awarded funding to install LED pedestrian crossing signs on Ferry Road at the library in West Charlotte. "To date, this fund has awarded 68 local

innovators with over \$200,000 in collective support of community-led climate and energy projects," said Laura Cavin Bailey of the Vermont Council on Rural Development. For more information contact her at laura@vtrural.org or 802-223-6091.


Rotary's annual high school speech contest on Jan. 31

The Charlotte-Shelburne-Hinesburg Rotary Club will hold the Club Round of the Rotary District 7850 high school speech contest at 7:30 a.m., Wednesday, Jan. 31, at the Shelburne United Methodist Church. This year's topic is: How can we increase hope for our schools? Students must prepare and deliver a five-minute speech, either in person or via Zoom, that relates this topic to their life, school and Rotary values. The winner of our local round will receive \$200 and can win up to \$1,750 if they are the district winner. Here are the rounds of the competition:
• Club Round 1 — \$200 Prize — Jan. 31, 7:30 a.m. at the Shelburne United Methodist Church
• Area Round 2 — \$300 Prize — TBD
• District Round 3 — Two \$500 Prizes — March 16 at Northern VT University, Lyndonville
• District Round 4 — \$750 Prize (winner) and \$500 Prize (runner-up) — April 20 at Lake Morey Inn, Fairlee. Participants for Club Round 1 must be high school-aged students who live in Charlotte, Shelburne or Hinesburg. Students must register by Jan. 29. Forms can be found on the home page of the Rotary's website under High School Speech Contest at

SEE **COMMUNITY ROUNDUP** PAGE 5

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Hi! Neighbor

Gatos helping high school seniors face the future

Phyl Newbeck
Contributor

MaryAnne Gatos knows that high school seniors have a lot to think about. She wants to help them figure out their next steps.

Gatos founded Return on Investment in 2017. She wants students to consider which course of action — college, a job or perhaps a gap year — will provide them with the greatest return on their investment.

Gatos spent 10 years at Champlain Valley High managing the Grad Challenge. That program required seniors to spend 45 hours doing research on a local project with a community mentor. At the completion of the project, they would present their results to a community panel. She founded Return on Investment so she could build upon that work.

Gatos said many students tend to gravitate toward colleges that have prestigious reputations, but those might not be the best fit. She helps students figure out what they care about, what they want to learn and which institutions offer the best chance for them to achieve that. She also helps with the application process.

For some students, the best fit is to take a year off and Gatos strongly believes in the value of a gap year.

“Research shows that students who take a gap year are more mature and more likely

to know what they want,” she said. “They change majors less, apply for internships on their own, ask their professors more questions and advocate for themselves.”

Gatos noted that a gap year is actually 15 months and can include work, courses, down time, and often travel and adventure. She wishes more people took advantage of that option.

Gatos is a firm believer in the benefits of travel. After college, she visited Central America. Following a stint in the working world, she joined the Peace Corps and lived in Nepal for almost three years. Gatos taught math and science in a village that lacked electricity and running water. Nobody else spoke English, and the village was an eight-hour walk from the main road.

In addition to teaching, Gatos facilitated the construction of a school building.

“It was a monumental experience,” she said, adding that she continues to have close friends from her Peace Corps days.

Four years ago, she returned to the village which now has running water and electricity. Villagers have cellphones and the current Peace Corps volunteer has a laptop, things which she could not have imagined during her time there 35 years ago. There was a photo on the school wall of the teachers from the time of her service; she was easy to recognize since she was the only woman.

Gatos has been to 14 countries and wants



Courtesy photo
MaryAnne Gatos enjoys helping high school seniors find their way in the world.

to visit more, but she is happy to be making her home in Charlotte. She and her husband were living in Boston, when they came to Charlotte to visit his sister for a weekend.

The couple made an offer on a house that

Monday. Gatos and her husband quit their jobs days later so they could move here.

Gatos was co-chair of a group which built the first playground at Charlotte Central School in the 1990s. She was also co-chair of the building committee for the senior center and worked on the committee to start a pottery school in Burlington. She is an active member of the Polar Pickleball community.

Back in 2008, Gatos took a comedy class with former Charlotte resident, Josie Leavitt. Although initially hesitant to perform at the end of the class, Gatos found that she enjoyed the experience and became one of the Vermont Comedy Divas.

“I did about a dozen shows, and it was really fun,” she said, but two kids and a full-time job led her to step away from the microphone.

Gatos enjoys watching the developmental changes and maturing that takes place between the ages of 16 and 26.

“I love the things young people do,” she said. “I like giving them the opportunity to find out that their quirkiness is admirable and to help them find meaningful work.”

Gatos is not invested in any particular college and is careful not to use words like dream school, accepted, denied or rejected.

“I really enjoy helping students take the tension out of an anxiety-ridden process,” she said. “I really enjoy helping people find direction.”

COMMUNITY ROUNDUP

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

rotaryclubofcsh.org. Email Amanda Vincent, at amandaroosevincent1@gmail.com with any questions.

Age Well and St. Catherine’s of Siena are offering two meals during February

Age Well and St. Catherine’s of Siena Parish in Shelburne are providing a meal to go for anyone age 60 and older.

The meal can be picked up in the parking lot at 72 Church Street 11 a.m.-noon, Tuesday, Feb. 13. These meals are available for all 60 or older. A \$5 donation is suggested. The menu is Swedish meatballs with sauce, rotini noodles, carrots, green beans, wheat roll, pineapple tidbits and milk. Make reservations by Wednesday, Feb. 7, at agewellstcath@gmail.com or 802-503-1107.

Age Well and St. Catherine are also offering a Snow Glow Luncheon on Tuesday, Feb. 20, in the St Catherine of Siena Parish Hall. The check-in time is 11:30 a.m. and the meal will be served at noon. There is a \$5 suggested donation. The menu is oven-fried chicken, red mashed potatoes with sour cream, Capri blend vegetables, wheat bread, pumpkin custard with cream and milk. You must register by Feb. 14 with Kerry Batres at

802-662-5283 or kbatres@agewellvt.org.

Girls on the Run Vermont seeks volunteer coaches

Girls on the Run Vermont needs coaches, and one of the schools in need is Charlotte Central School.

Girls on the Run is a physical activity-based, positive youth development program that inspires students in third through eighth grade to be joyful, healthy and confident. The 10-week program incorporates movement into its curriculum to empower participants to develop critical life skills, build confidence, cultivate positive connections with peers, manage their emotions and stand up for themselves and others.

Volunteer coaches help engage teams of girls in fun, interactive lessons. The spring season begins the week of March 18. Teams meet twice a week for 90 minutes and the program culminates with all teams participating in one of two noncompetitive, celebratory 5K events in Essex and Manchester.

Please visit gotrvt.org/coach for details or email info@girlsontherunvermont.org.

Connect to volunteering with the United Way

The United Way’s Volunteer Connection site is set up to help connect agencies

and volunteers. Link to <http://tinyurl.com/46s6h84e> to learn more about these volunteering opportunities and others:

- HomeShare Vermont is looking for volunteers to play an important role in making home-sharing matches. Volunteers make calls from the HomeShare office to take reference information for applicants to ensure safety, security and compatibility in home-sharing matches. Volunteers also make calls to current hosts and guests to participate in their annual Outcomes Survey. Basic computer skills required. Flexible scheduling, about 4 hours a week. Background check required. Contact Amy Jelen at 802-863-5625 or email amy@homesharevermont.org.
- National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) is seeking volunteers to serve as mental health teachers. If you are passionate about supporting those facing mental health challenges, you can become a National Alliance on Mental Illness family-to-family teacher and provide valuable resource information about mental illness and recovery to family members, partners and friends of individuals living with a mental health condition. Teachers must be family members to individuals living with mental health conditions and must teach one eight-week course per year. Training provided. Contact Lindsay Reid at 802-876-7949, ext. 102, or email program@namivt.org.

- United Way of Northwest Vermont invites volunteers to serve as foster grandparents to children in local schools and early childhood centers. Share your wisdom, help guide young students to higher academic achievement and provide the love and comfort that help set children on the path to a successful future. Training and assistance with transportation are provided. Contact Trezanra Robertson at 802-861-7823 or email trezanra@unitedwaynwvt.org.
- Green Mountain Transit has initiated a new travel training program and is looking for volunteers to serve as Travel Advisors. Ride Together is dedicated to providing community members with short-term instruction on how to ride GMT’s public transit system. Volunteers can provide either classroom or field instruction, either one-on-one or to groups, remotely or in person. Schedules and training are flexible, and volunteers receive a free bus pass to use on any Green Mountain Transit bus when fares resume in March. Contact Irene Choi at 802-540-6873, ext. 550, or email ridetogether@ridegmt.com.
- RunVermont is gearing up for its April 13 Half Marathon Unplugged event and needs volunteers, age 16 and older, to serve in a variety of capacities. For information, go to <https://runsSignup.ccom/unplugged/volunteer>.

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Commentary

The 14th Amendment and Vermont’s Thaddeus Stevens

Patryc Wiggins
Contributor

Now is the time to bring forward Vermont-reared Thaddeus Stevens — Lincoln’s sidebar Civil War strategist who stridently pressed the president to first: emancipate the slaves; and once freed: to arm them.

Known, feared, revered for his wit and wisdom, it was Congressman Stevens who scripted the phrase “40 acres and a mule.” W.E.B. DuBois wrote in his tome, “Black Reconstruction,” that Stevens was the sole member of both the House and Senate to understand the imperative economic need of the freed slaves to reproduce themselves — and the imperative political need to provision those resources and tools.

For Reconstruction, it was Thaddeus Stevens who drafted the now-in-the-news 14th Amendment. This as he also drafted the 13th and 15th amendments — the Constitution’s slave amendments. This he put forth, not as an attempt to institutionalize democracy with opaque strokes, but rather to succinctly articulate the foundational purpose of the U.S. Constitution by legally equipping its content against impostors.

In sum, Thaddeus Stevens — as the most powerful congressional leader in the history of the U.S. by what he organized and implemented during the Civil War and Reconstruction eras — leaves no room for debate about the exacting purpose of Section 3 of the 14th Amendment.

The 14th Amendment was Thaddeus Stevens’ legal sword, aimed to slay the systemic injustice of slavery as it signaled the wants of whip-lashing political impostors on the nation’s law-making body as the Civil War ended. Thaddeus Stevens’ backstory — with its not-well-enough-known, formative Vermont-rearing — substantiates and reinforces the ruling of the Colorado Supreme Court Trump decision.

A standalone figure of stunning, seminal congressional feats (ferociously opposed by many), Thaddeus Stevens minced no words, ever, relative to the workings of justice. This was his practice in a system that he early discerned as prone to economic corruption via insurrection — as the Civil War represented.

The upshot: What Thaddeus Stevens masterminded for the 14th Amendment requires our full awareness of his strategic tactics as these validate, by the content of his

political example, Colorado’s court decision.

Born with a club foot on a Danville farm, and brought to Peacham Academy by his mother after his father abandoned the family of four sons, Thaddeus Stevens early aroused public introspection about the root causes of systemic injustice — as politics and economics intertwine. In Peacham Academy’s weekly public debates he presented such topics as Toussaint L’Overture’s purpose in leading Haiti’s successful slave rebellion — as it implicated Napoleon’s France. Outspoken at both UVM and at Dartmouth where he matriculated, Thaddeus Stevens set out immediately to a border state — Pennsylvania — to read himself onto the bar. This to make laws to eliminate slavery as exemplified by his home state’s 1791 founding Constitution.

His raucous tenure in Pennsylvania’s state legislature leaves the legacy of establishing state-funded education for all students — a first policy inclusive of all those in poverty of all races. Once in Washington D.C. he organized the Joint Committee of Congress that coordinated both the Senate and the House under his direction during the Civil War. This is where Lincoln accessed his insights and how the funding for the war was

appropriated.

Thaddeus Stevens masterminded the Civil War era legislation with the reins of the Radical Republicans whose commitment was to save the Union — by extricating slavery, and the constitutional infrastructure that supported it. Thaddeus Stevens is the key figure who re-adjusted the U.S. mobile at its center-pole.

More than any other figure in U.S. political history, Thaddeus Stevens stands alone for the regulations written into the Constitution to safeguard democracy against insurrectionists. What he put in place was a straightforward legal treatise to build back the U.S. Constitution to a rule-of-law document that would prohibit, forever, the return to political leadership, via ballot-box selection, those insurrections of the then South who seized the reins to regain influence on the hill as the Civil War turned back on them.

What makes Section 3 of the 14th Amendment incontestable in its intent is Thaddeus Stevens.

(This commentary by Patryc Wiggins of Guild, N.H., first ran in VTDigger.)

It’s a great time to support your lake association

Jerremy Jones & Pat Suozzi
Contributors

Did you visit one of Vermont’s many lakes this summer?

Maybe you launched a vessel at one of the many fishing accesses around the state and were approached to have it inspected by a Greeter. You may have wondered who manages that program, and who works to make sure Vermont’s lakes and ponds are protected and remain clean and healthy.

Since nearly all of Vermont’s lakes and ponds are public waters held in trust by the state, you might think that it is the responsibility of the state. Vermont statute places this responsibility with the Agency of Natural Resources. Within the agency, the Department of Environmental Conservation, in conjunction with other agency departments, is charged with the responsibility of overseeing the state’s public waters.

However, with over 800 lakes and ponds in Vermont, it’s not possible for the relatively small Department of Environmental Conservation staff to do all that is necessary to preserve and protect the state’s public waters. For that reason, the state partners with various conservation, watershed and lake groups to help with the work necessary to monitor and protect Vermont’s water resources.

So, who is doing the work on the ground

(and in the lake) to protect Vermont’s waterbodies?

Department of Environmental Conservation staff provide training and guidance, oversight, technical assistance and standards, and management of project permitting. Department of Environmental Conservation staff scientists also conduct important research, and data collection and analysis. However, much of the “hands-on” work necessary to protect the state’s public waters falls to volunteer lake and watershed associations that partner with the state.

Let’s look at some examples of the fantastic work being done by Vermont’s lake associations and preservation groups.

The previously mentioned Greeter Program is an integral component of the Department of Environmental Conservation’s overall plan to prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species, and nearly all the greeter programs on inland lakes are managed by volunteer lake associations. Greeters inspect vessels and equipment entering and leaving lakes to ensure they are not transporting aquatic invasive species, along with educating boaters about the dangers of aquatic invasive species.

Greeter Programs are only one element in the fight against aquatic invasive species. Some 100 of the state’s lakes and ponds are already infested with some type of invasive. While the greeters are instrumental

in preventing further spread, it is equally important that those lakes already infested work to control and reduce the level of infestation to decrease the possibility of that infestation being carried to other lakes and to restore a more balanced aquatic ecosystem. The most widespread invasive in our lakes is Eurasian watermilfoil, a biological pollutant that can spread quickly, damaging aquatic habitats and reducing water quality.

The work to control, reduce and, where possible, eradicate milfoil is complicated and costly. Control methods include hand pulling, diver-assisted suction harvesting, bottom barriers and herbicide.

Unfortunately, the state provides very little funding for the prevention and control of aquatic invasive species. In 2023, the state’s grant-in-aid program only supplied up to 25 percent of a lake’s total project cost. It’s left to the volunteer lake associations to close the gap by fundraising.

All of this may sound like more than enough for volunteer lake associations to do, but what about water quality?

Once again, it’s these volunteer groups and their local partners, like Natural Resource Conservation Districts, that are implementing water quality improvement projects at their lakes and ponds.

Some of these water quality improvement programs include: water sampling, mitigating stormwater runoff carrying phosphorus into lakes, performing Vermont invasive patroller paddles looking for new introductions of aquatic invasive species and monitoring for cyanobacteria (harmful algae blooms) and other lake conditions throughout the summer.

But wait, there’s more.

These volunteer groups also carry out extensive educational activities, keeping

lake communities informed of best practices, helping lake property owners with lake-friendly landscaping to protect shorelines (Lake Wise), working to address polluted runoff from roads entering lakes and providing free boating education classes.

But it’s not all work. Many lake associations also organize community events such as boat parades, rewarding volunteer opportunities, annual meetings, educational events, ice-out contests and many more.

These associations and volunteer groups undertake so much work because they believe that we are all stewards of our natural resources, and as such, it is the responsibility of the entire community to protect, preserve and enhance the health of the state’s public waters. Working in partnership with state agencies and other conservation organizations, these volunteers are indispensable to ensuring the health of the state’s waters for future generations.

If you love Vermont’s lakes, ponds and waterways, take a minute to thank your local lake and watershed associations and the volunteers who devote countless hours of their time to preserve these precious natural resources for all of us. Please consider a donation to a lake or watershed association.

Without your support, these groups can’t continue to do this important work – and if they don’t do it, who will?

Please see an extended version of this commentary on our website: vermontlakes.org.

(Jerremy Jones lives in Poultney and is a member of the Federation of Vermont Lakes and Ponds; Pat Suozzi lives in Hinesburg and is the president of the Federation of Vermont Lakes and Ponds.)

Education

There’s both ins and outs to transferring colleges

Margo Bartsch
Contributor

With colleges beginning their second semester, now is the time that some students will consider whether to transfer.

The Common Application Transfer essay is an open-ended prompt that can help the student reflect on the reasons for wanting to transfer: Provide a statement discussing your educational path. How does continuing your education at a new institution help you achieve your future goals?

Nationally, more than a third of college students transfer before earning a degree. Top reasons to transfer include finances, location and culture. The University of Vermont reports that 15 percent of their entire student body are transfer students. Transferring to the University of Vermont requires a minimum of two semesters of full-time undergraduate courses and a 3.4 minimum GPA.

The transfer application process typically begins in January with admissions notifications around April. Most colleges accept the Common Application whose transfer components include the college transcript, honors and activities, teacher recommendations, community involvement and essays. Some colleges may ask for standardized test scores and AP results. Once admitted, students will need to confirm the amount of college credits accepted at the new school and verify their college year standing.

Each college typically has supplemental transfer questions and essays with various word counts. Many essay prompts ask for a personal statement, academic interests, reason to transfer and desire to attend the new college. Since a college student’s mindset is typically different than their high school self, it is important to consider the qualities that draw them to the new college. Ideas to write about include their interests in academic majors, abroad programs, internship opportunities and social clubs to join.

Transfer application deadlines vary for

each college. Check the websites for specific dates and requirements. For example, when requesting transcripts, some colleges charge a fee to send transcripts.

Reaching out to current college professors is important to request an engaging reference letter. Be sure to include the deadline to submit their letter. The student will need to nominate the teacher in the recommendation section of the Common Application.

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

Dear Professor, I hope you had a great winter break. I am considering transferring colleges for the fall of 2024. Since your class is one of my favorites, I am hoping that you will write me a recommendation. Your class projects (elaborate) and academic topics (highlight) have sparked my interest in my future major. I will keep in touch with updates. Thanks again! Happy Student.

In developing a transfer list, it is helpful to compare a range of priorities. In 2023, the U.S. News and Wall Street Journal rankings both revised their criteria to include a greater emphasis on college outcomes. For example, U. S. News accounts 10 percent of its rating toward graduation rate performance. Comparatively, Wall Street Journal computes 70 percent toward professional results gathered from government data and independent student surveys.

In considering colleges, if a student currently attends a small college with limited classes and social choices, they could explore a bigger environment. Conversely, if a student does not feel supported at a big university, they could consider a smaller campus for more meaningful connections with peers and professors. The goal is to focus on academic and personal growth.

Transferring colleges is a competitive process with typically lower rates of acceptance than for incoming freshmen. For example, Princeton University reports a 1-percent acceptance rate of 13 students accepted from 1,360 transfer applicants.



Adobe Stock photo

However, New York University reports nearly triple the transfer admissions rate, but focuses on students from underrepresented backgrounds and community college. College admissions typically have campus and online information sessions to answer questions.

If a student decides not to transfer colleges, they can consider how to change their current college experience for the better. For example, a student can discuss with their adviser to transfer into a different academic division such as leaving engineering to study liberal arts. Also, students can choose a new major, add a minor, join professional clubs and participate in new activities to expand their academic interests and friend groups.

The college journey has many twists and turns along the way. Considering transferring schools is a way to compare the pros and cons of alternatives, including optimizing the existing college. Taking a step back can create a giant leap forward.

(Margo Bartsch founded College Essay Coach, a full-service college admission business, and has been an adjunct professor in business at Champlain College and at Middlebury College.)

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Education

Visitors and a new musician at Charlotte Central School

Naomi Strada
(Summarized by Tom Scatchard)

Science teachers across the district have been looking for ways to integrate science into reading and writing classes while also creating a shared experience for students. In early February, Charlotte Central School will be welcoming Jason Chin to share his experiences and insights into writing and illustrating children’s books.

Chin, a local author and illustrator, is a Caldecott Medal winner who has written and illustrated a series of children’s books, including many on non-fiction science topics.

Throughout January and early February, individual classrooms will be preparing for his visit by exploring Chin’s books.

Music news

The Charlotte Central School Music Department is happy to welcome Hazel Dority to the team. She will be student teaching for the next semester with Andy Smith.

Dority is a student at the University of Vermont and is graduating with a bachelor’s in music education this spring. She is a woodwind specialist, but as a music educator, is able to play and teach all instruments. She has played in several bands around the Burlington area and has toured with bands throughout New England. She has also subbed on occasion for the Vermont Jazz Ensemble.

Dority has been passionate about music and music education since early childhood. She grew up taking piano and clarinet lessons and spent most of her free time in high school learning new instruments, arranging music to play with friends and tinkering with old clarinets.

High school students visit

Watching the students of Charlotte Central School bubble up with curiosity is very exciting. Over the last week, three separate groups of Champlain Valley High students have visited the school to share some of their own passion, wisdom and experiences. Members of the CVU

Racial Alliance Club visited third and fourth grade classes to teach about taking care of others. The chorus performed for the seventh and eighth grade chorus and talked about participating in high school music electives.

All of the Omega students watched a special concert performed by high school students just a few years older than them.

Spring theater?

The possibility of a school spring theater production is being explored. Last year, Charlotte Central School partnered with Full Circle Theater to bring to life “The Wizard of Oz” with a cast of middle schoolers. Many hope for more opportunities for Charlotte Central School students.

Thanks to a handful of parents who have reached out to offer support, Charlotte Central School will be working again with Full Circle Theater for an anticipated May production. More information will be coming, once a musical director has been identified and interest from student performers has been gauged.

Library news

Beginning this week, kindergarten-fourth grade students will be reading, discussing and voting for their favorite Red Clover picture book. The 10 Red Clover nominees were selected by a group of children’s literature experts from all around Vermont, and include books such as “Abdul’s Story,” “Luli and the Language of Tea,” “Listen: How Evelyn Glennie, a Deaf Girl, Changed Percussion,” “Berry Song and “Dragon Bones: The Fantastic Fossil Discoveries of Mary Anning,” along with five other picture books published in 2022.

Students will learn about how books are made, practice critical thinking skills and deepen understanding as they identify with the stories, thinking and experiences of others. Visit the Red Clover Book Award website at <http://tinyurl.com/2pwnyuud> to learn more about all the nominees.

CHEA EVANS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

use disorder. It’s simply one way to help, hopefully by reducing the number of people who die. We have other things to deal with, too, like improved mental health supports, better healthcare options so people can afford to get treatment, and more support for parents so that their children can grow up feeling safe and cared for. These are all reasons why I’ll continue to look for actual solutions, but in the meantime, I’d vote yes on it again.

I spoke with a group of people at the Charlotte Congregational Church the other day, and we discussed a lot of problems: unhoused people who need help, overdose deaths and substance use disorder, climate change, a housing crisis, our taxes and a zillion other things that I’d really like to solve and button up before the session ends in May, but it’s starting to seem like I

probably won’t.

Reverend Kevin Goldenbogen took a moment to ask me where I see hope in the midst of all of these crises. It was an easy question to answer, and one that made me a little misty-eyed. This is where I see the hope: People who care enough to email me and ask questions, people who respectfully disagree with me and let me know why, people in the legislature who are introducing bills — I think around 300 just in this year alone — to try and fix everything from mental health supports for elementary school students to dam repair to puppy mills and every-thing in between. I’m not immune to the politics of all of it, and I certainly have my own biases, but I also interact all day, every day with people who really do care.

If you’d like to share your thoughts, please be in touch at 917-887-8231 or cevans@leg.state.vt.us.



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Into the Woods

Managing forests for birds

Ethan Tapper
Contributor

What does it mean to manage forests for birds?

While this may seem like a simple question, it’s actually almost impossible to answer. What we call “birds” includes everything from ducks and gulls to hawks and herons, from woodpeckers to hummingbirds, from turkeys to turkey vultures.

Vermont is home to more than 80 species of breeding birds, one of the most diverse breeding bird populations in the United States. Birds are an immensely diverse group of animals with incredibly variable habitat requirements.

For this article, let’s narrow our scope to songbirds. What we call “songbirds” (known by ornithologists as passerines or “perching birds”) includes birds as big as a raven and as small as a chickadee, as common as a robin and as uncommon as a golden-winged warbler. Our songbirds include both year-round occupants and neo-tropical migrants, birds that overwinter in the tropics and migrate to Vermont to breed in the summer.

The first thing that songbirds need is food. Most songbirds are heavily dependent on insects and other arthropods, especially when feeding chicks in the spring and early summer. Our tens of thousands of species of native insects have complex relationships with many species of trees, shrubs and herbaceous plants, as well as being associated with forests of different ages and structural conditions. Managing for insects in the woods means encouraging forests with tree species diversity and structural diversity, big, old trees, a gap-filled forest canopy, dead wood, dead-standing trees (“snags”),

cavity trees (trees with holes in them) and areas of young forest. Also key to promoting insect habitat (and thus songbird habitat) is controlling threats to forest diversity, especially non-native invasive plants and deer overpopulations.

While insects are a staple of most songbirds’ diets throughout the year, another important food source is mast — seeds, nuts, fruits and berries. Neo-tropical songbirds will feed heavily on mast (especially soft mast like berries) as they prepare for migration, as will year-round occupants as they prepare for winter. Birds that spent the summer north of us will also snack on soft mast in our forests as they stop over in mid-migration, fueling up for another long night of flying south.

Another important component of songbird habitat is breeding habitat. Just as different species of songbirds utilize different canopy layers (understory, midstory, overstory) for foraging, they also do so for nesting. A forest with a diverse, multi-layered canopy may have rose-breasted grosbeaks nesting in the overstory, red-eyed vireos nesting in the midstory, black-throated blue warblers nesting in the understory and hermit thrushes nesting on the ground. Managing for structural diversity is key to providing breeding habitat for all of our songbirds.

Other important (and often under-appreciated) habitats for songbirds are big, old trees, snags, cavity trees and dead wood. Old trees feature complex bark and canopy structure, providing unique foraging habitat for many birds, especially bark-foragers like nuthatches. Both old trees and snags are important food sources for woodpeckers, which forage for the insects and insect larva that colonize rotten wood. As they forage, woodpeckers create the tree cavities that are nesting habitat for birds from owls to



Photos by Gary Sturgis

Above: Black-capped chickadee
Right: Yellowthroat

chickadees to wood ducks. As old trees, snags and cavity trees fall over, they create nesting and foraging habitat for birds like winter wrens, drumming logs for grouse and seedbeds for future generations of trees.

So, what does it mean to manage forests for birds?

We can’t answer this question without also answering a larger question: How do we manage for healthy, diverse forests that are functional and vibrant and rich with habitat for all of our native species? All of the habitat features mentioned here — species diversity, structural diversity, old trees, dead wood, snags, cavity trees — are key to improving habitat for all of our wildlife. As we manage for them, we simultaneously manage for forests that are resilient and adaptable in a changing climate, for old-growth characteristics (see more here



tinyurl.com/3523nuv8), for water quality, for carbon and much more. One of the joys of managing forests for songbirds is how by doing so we also create and sustain so many other vital things.

To learn more about managing forests for birds, check out Audubon Vermont’s “Foresters for the Birds” program.

Both specialists and generalists are critical to forest health

Ethan Tapper
Contributor

At one time or another, I expect that many of us have wondered if it is better to be a specialist or a generalist — to try to be great at one thing or to be passable at many different things.

Across deep time, Earth’s millions of species have “asked” this same question, again and again: if it is wiser to be an “expert” at exploiting a single, narrow ecological niche or to be able to exist under a wide range of different conditions. Both specialization and generalization are evolutionary strategies that can be advantageous under different circumstances, and Vermont’s forests are filled with both specialists and generalists.

Of our forest trees, sugar maple is an example of a specialist, growing almost exclusively on soils with a relatively high pH and an abundance of calcium and other minerals (what foresters call “enriched” sites). While this means that sugar maple is not well-suited to many places across our landscape, on an enriched site it is extremely competitive, often accounting for more than 75 percent of the trees. By contrast, the closely related red maple is a generalist, capable of growing in swamps and on mountain tops and almost everywhere in between. While you can find some red maple trees in almost any forest, it will rarely be more than a minor component. It is a typical generalist: a jack of all trades and a master of none.

In forests and other ecosystems, we tend to celebrate the specialists — the spring beauty miner bee, which visits only spring beauty flowers; the Dutchman’s breeches, pollinated only by queen bumblebees. Specialists are often species with unique gifts and adaptations, brilliant at accessing a specific food source or utilizing a particular life strategy. However, as Vermont’s native species face the myriad threats, stressors, changes and uncertainties of global change — climate change, non-native invasive plants, pests and pathogens,

deforestation, forest fragmentation and more, the generalists, the species that can adapt, are better positioned to survive.

Among wildlife, we know our most successful generalists well: the raccoons, skunks and opossums, the gulls and the crows. All these species are sometimes ridiculed for their “trashy” behavior. Gulls and raccoons have been nicknamed “dump ducks” and “trash pandas,” respectively, but, looked at another way, these species’ ability to exploit the abundance of resources produced and discarded by humans is extremely innovative and adaptive. A crow feeding on roadkill or a black bear eating trash from a dumpster is an example of a generalist species that has adapted to exploit an easy and ubiquitous food source.

While I hope that the previous paragraph helps vindicate and celebrate some of the generalist species that live (and cause mischief) among us, creating a world in which generalists thrive is also problematic for a variety of reasons. For example, all the generalist species mentioned above (except perhaps the gulls) are nest predators; their elevated populations around forest edges, houses and developed areas leads to decreased songbird nesting success.

White-tailed deer are another generalist species, one that has been so successful in our changing world that deer overpopulations damage habitat for tens of thousands of other species and impair the health, function and resilience of ecosystems across much of the North American continent.

In the case of red maple and sugar maple, we expect sugar maple to be one of the tree species most adversely impacted by climate change, whereas red maple is projected to be one of the most successful, largely due to its generalist nature. While it may be that our forests’ futures belong to red maple, we cannot abandon sugar maple entirely. It, and our other specialists, are vital and irreplaceable, supporting crucial natural processes and providing habitat

for entire communities of native species. In this changed and changing world, the specialists are often the species that are most under threat, which just means that they are those most in need of our help.

Whether you consider yourself a generalist or a specialist, I’m sure that you admire people that have taken the other road. In our human communities, both specialists and generalists contribute to diverse and functional societies. In forests, both specialists and generalists are vital to the health and the future of these incredible ecosystems.

(Ethan Tapper is the Chittenden County Forester for the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation (and one of Vermont’s Audubon-endorsed foresters). See what he’s been up to, check out his YouTube channel, sign up for his eNews and read articles he’s written at linktr.ee/chittendencountyforester.)



Courtesy photo

White-tailed deer is an example of a generalist species in Vermont’s forests, one expected to be increasingly well suited to our environment as our climate changes.

Weed’s in the Garden

Winter dreams of warm weather and green shoots

Joan Weed
Contributor

One thing that makes my heart pitter-patter these days is to see a handwritten envelope in the daily mail. Close to that thrill is the arrival after the holidays of the various seed and plant catalogues.

The dreaming starts again for the best garden ever. I check to see what is new and what is still offered that has been a success in the past. I say catalogues but websites and email notices have taken over print these days. I’ll mention both kinds that I am fond of.

You might think it’s way too early to be thinking of gardens but the best choices for plants and seeds happens now. It’s still early for seed starting, but you’ll want to be ready when that day comes. Also, you can order now for delivery later.

There are specialty offerings for strictly organic or native plants and seeds. I particularly love the niche garden nurseries I have gotten to know over my years of gardening. These are usually small independent providers who deal with you as a friend and not just a customer. Customer service and quality are both important. Some former small purveyors have been bought out by conglomerates over the years so my mentions will be current and used recently.

High Mowing Seeds in Wolcott has established a fine reputation for organic seeds, and I’ve watched the company grow since it had a two-page flyer. They have a close association with Sterling College and share their produce with the school, thus reserving the seeds of many offerings. They emphasize vegetables but include flowers, cover crops and herbs as well.

Prairie Moon Nursery in Minnesota offers

native seeds and plants from a climate like our own. You can choose among carefully selected collections for pollinator, shade, meadow and prairie gardens. All plants and seeds are neonicotinoid free, which means they are not harmful to pollinators.

One long-standing favorite for me is Select Seeds in Connecticut. The mother-daughter nursery offers strictly flower seeds and plants. Many are native and pollinator friendly as well.

Digging Dog Nursery in California has an interesting array of hardy plants that have filled my shade gardens with unique plants. I resisted them for awhile but now have several years of ordering behind me and approve of their offerings and quality. Good customer service.

Garden Vision Epimediums offered a small collection of special plants with emphasis on epimediums. I have also bought gentians, trilliums and uvularias from them. An intimate nursery. In doing research I learned that Karen Perkins is in the process of retiring. However, she is still offering her remaining inventory at select festivities in pop-up shops. She lists other nurseries that offer similar choices.

Sunshine Farms is located high in the hills of West Virginia. My experience with Barry Glick has been fine, though I read some not-so-kind reviews. Glick’s prices are the best for quantities, and I have gotten trilliums, yellow digitalis, uvularia and more from him. Buying groups of seven is the most economical. I tend to jump on special offerings from him rather than look at his site as a catalog. He’s quirky, and bought this way, you will know what is available now. Join his mail list to stay on top of things.

Seed Savers Exchange in Decorah, Iowa, is a very important source of seeds for



Photos by Joan Weed

Left: Unlike most trilliums, *Trillium pusillum*, or roadrunner trillium, propagates relatively rapidly.
Right: *Trillium sessile*, which means no stem because it blooms right from the leaves, is one of the pleasures of early spring.

heirloom vegetables. They do offer a small selection of flowers and grains as well. The organization is the storehouse for saved seed from generations of gardeners. Seed Savers have shared seeds from their collection with Kew Gardens in U.K. and Svalbard Global Seed Vault in Norway. The very first use of saved seeds from the Norwegian Base was to replace Aleppo pepper seeds in Syria after the devastating war. This preserving of diversity in plant and animal genetics is a gift to humanity. You can purchase offerings from Seed Savers Exchange or from their thick catalogue filled with subscribers’ offerings. You must be a member to receive the catalogue but can order a limited number of items on their website.

Cricket Hill Nursery in Connecticut specializes in peonies and some rare native fruits. They have been in business for decades and I can attest to the well-grown peonies they offer. Herbal, tree and Itoh peonies can be found here.

Baker Creek Heirloom Seed Company in Missouri has a phone book’s worth of heirlooms and a reputation that is mentioned on social media to match. I was enticed by a new offering called brown sugar tomato. See? Now aren’t you excited about diving into the various catalogues and gardening sites?

Dreaming of warm weather and green shoots, keep hoping for your best garden yet.

Put a rink on it



Photo by Ed Sulva

Craig Reynolds puts down water on Sunday morning. It has been slow getting the rink in shape this year but this week’s cold has helped a lot. While still not to the point volunteers would like, the rink is open, at least for the next few days.

Gardening

Garden helpline has opened

Debra Heleba
University of Vermont Extension

As we begin a new year, many Vermonters may have lingering questions about their garden’s performance this past year or new questions as they plan to start or improve a garden in 2024.

The University of Vermont Extension master gardener volunteer helpline can help. The helpline serves Vermonters by providing science-based information on home horticulture, integrated pest management and backyard composting.

Although the program’s Thursday morning phone-in service is closed until April 2024, the online Garden Helpline is open 24/7/365. More than 30 specially trained extension master garden volunteers from across Vermont staff the helpline to answer gardening and composting questions from the public at no charge. Volunteers also are available to provide management recommendations based on the results from soil tests conducted by the University of Vermont agricultural and environmental testing lab.

To pose a question to the Helpline, go to go.uvm.edu/gardenquestion. There,

you can submit your question (providing as much detail as possible), can upload photos and enter your contact information. Volunteers will research your question and provide answers and additional resources via email.

Anyone in Vermont can benefit from the Garden Helpline, whether a novice or an expert gardener.

Note that extension master gardener volunteers do not provide personal site visits to home gardens nor answer commercial grower questions. Commercial growers should contact the University of Vermont plant diagnostic clinic (uvm.edu/extension/pdc) to submit samples or for assistance with the identification and management of diseases, pests and weeds.

During this time of year, trained volunteers are busy fielding questions from home and community gardeners on garden planning and outdoor pruning as well as providing guidance on soil test results and troubleshooting insect and plant diseases of houseplants, among other topics. In 2023, helpline volunteers responded to more than 800 questions from the public.



Photo by Deb Heleba

University of Vermont Extension master gardener volunteers Susan Stanne, South Burlington (front), and Jane Murphy, Burlington, answer questions about gardening and backyard composting through the program’s Garden Helpline.

Growing ginger indoors in winter

Nadie VanZandt
University of Vermont Extension

Praised by foodies and lovers of Asian cuisine, ginger is known for its culinary and medicinal properties. Grated, chopped, juiced or cut into thin strips, ginger is versatile and consumed as a spice, a beverage or an accompaniment in savory dishes as well as desserts. Spicy and aromatic, ginger is known to get blood flowing, a welcome quality to keep the chill at bay in winter.

A native of southern China, ginger (*Zingiber officinale*), a member of the Zingiberaceae family, is a tropical plant that thrives in warm temperatures and humidity. Other well-known spices in the ginger family include cardamom (*Elettaria cardamomum*) and turmeric (*Curcuma longa*).

The ginger plant is characterized by thick, branched rhizomes (underground stems) with brown outer skin and a fleshy, yellow center of distinctly spicy aroma. Above ground, the rhizomes generate leafy sheaths called pseudostems (false stems) that grow up to three feet high. These pseudostems unravel into 6-12 inches long, narrow, alternate leaves.

In its natural habitat, ginger develops fragrant, pale-yellow flowers with purplish edges in a cone-shaped spike from separate shorter pseudostems. However, in our cold climates, plants are less likely to blossom.

If you like the flavor of ginger, here are

some tips to grow it in a container this winter.

The next time you visit the grocery store, purchase a fresh, firm and fleshy ginger root, preferably organic, with noticeable eyes or buds like those of a potato. Soak the rhizome overnight to rehydrate it before planting.

Meanwhile, gather the following material: a pot at least 12 inches in diameter with a drainage hole, 1 or 2 cups of gravel and a well-draining potting mix specifically formulated for indoor plants.

Place a layer of gravel at the bottom of the pot for good drainage. Fill two-thirds of the pot with potting mix, place the rhizome on the surface with its eyes pointing up and cover with one or two inches of potting mix. Be sure to keep the soil level one inch below the rim to facilitate watering.

Water lightly to keep the soil moist. Place the pot in a warm and humid location near a window and away from direct sunlight. Maintain light soil moisture when watering. Do not overwater.

Ginger grows slowly, but you should expect green shoots to appear in about a month. When the shoots are well developed, you can increase the frequency of watering, but always keep the soil slightly moist.

If you can germinate the rhizomes in February or March, you may be able to plant them in the ground after the danger of frost has passed when the soil is



Photo by Joseph Mucira/Pixabay

Ginger is a versatile and aromatic spice that can be grated, chopped, juiced or cut into thin strips to add flavor to everything from beverages to savory dishes and desserts.

reliably warm.

Because ginger rhizomes grow horizontally, they can be harvested easily. In a few months, check for new rhizomes near the edges of the pot beneath the soil surface. You can cut a piece of rhizome, fill the gap with more potting mix and let your plant continue to grow.

It is best to consume ginger fresh to preserve its taste and beneficial properties. However, it does keep well unpeeled in the refrigerator or peeled and crushed in the freezer.

Ginger is not just delicious. It encourages efficient digestion. It contains gingerol, a major natural compound reported to possess anti-inflammatory, antiviral, antitumor, antioxidant and antiemetic effects.

An exotic indoor plant, a delicious spice and an herbal medicine all-in-one, ginger is the perfect plant to grow this winter.

(Nadie VanZandt is a University of Vermont Extension master gardener from Panton.)



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Gardening

It’s important to choose right plant for your hardiness zone

Deborah J. Benoit
University of Vermont Extension

There are countless things that can go right or wrong in a garden. Some of them are obvious: too much or too little water, diseases, pests and critters that nibble on our plants. Other things that can make or break your gardening efforts are less obvious. It’s those little details that can be so very important.

If you’ve purchased perennial plants or started them from seed, you’ve likely seen notations such as “hardy to zone 5” or “USDA Zones 4a-9b” on the package or in the product description. This is vital information for gardeners because plants suitable for your U.S. Department of Agriculture plant hardiness zone are far more likely to grow successfully for you, barring unusual weather conditions.

The USDA plant hardiness zone map is based on information collected over a 30-year period from 1991-2020 from over 13,000 weather stations across the country. The map assigns locations a zone number (1a-13b) using extreme minimum winter temperature data. A lower number/letter combination indicates cooler low temperatures.

Knowing the zone for your location and for the perennial plants (including shrubs and trees) you intend to include

in your garden are key pieces of information for successful growing. Even if you already know your location’s zone number, it’s a good idea to check the newly published 2023 map before purchasing seeds or plants. The zone designation for many locations has changed since the last update in 2012 (for example, from zone 4a to 4b or from zone 4b to 5a).

You can find your location’s USDA plant hardiness zone by entering your zip code at planthardiness.ars.usda.gov.

While you are plant and seed shopping, you may see some plants labeled as “tender perennials.” These are plants that will come back year after year in an appropriate zone but which will not survive freezing conditions. Often such plants are sold or treated as annuals in colder zones such as those here in New England, or they can be brought inside before the first frost to overwinter indoors.

In addition to knowing your zone, it’s important when selecting plants and seeds to know the length of your growing season. By determining your average last and first frost dates, you can easily calculate the anticipated length of your growing season. Simply count the number of days between the last likely spring frost and the probable date of the first frost in the fall. That

is the average length of your growing season.

This is important when selecting annual vegetables and flowers for your location. Look for the number of days to maturity on seed packets.

For example, if your growing season is only 100 days long and the tomato variety you want to plant requires 120 days to harvest, you may be very disappointed in the fall when temperatures drop and a freeze puts an end to your plants before you’ve tasted a single tomato. By selecting a variety with a shorter number of days to maturity, you’re far more likely to enjoy the fruits of your garden before cold arrives in the fall.

Information concerning last frost dates (in the springtime) and first frost dates (in the fall) can be found by entering your zip code at garden.org/apps/frost-dates.

By keeping in mind what USDA plant hardiness zone your garden is in, along with the estimated length of your growing season, you’ll be able to choose the perennial plants and seeds most suitable for successful growing in your location.

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

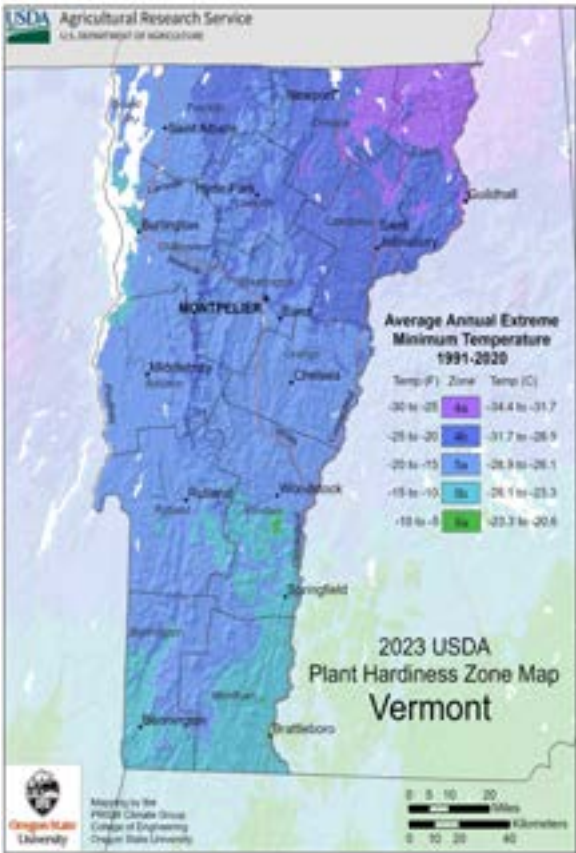


Photo by USDA Agricultural Research Service
Gardeners can use the USDA plant hardiness zone map for their state to determine their zone and select appropriate plants for their garden.

Shelburne Museum unveils exhibition lineup for this summer

Kristen Levesque
Shelburne Museum

Shelburne Museum has announced its 2024 exhibition season which opens on May 11 and runs through Oct. 20.

The upcoming season includes an immersive journey through the history of the railroad in American Art, diverse artistic expressions from contemporary artists in New England, stunning black and white circus photography from the 1970s and masterfully crafted 19th-century Vermont furniture.

Northern New England’s largest art and history museum will be open daily from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., beginning Saturday, May 11-Sunday, Oct. 20.

All Aboard: The Railroad in American Art, 1840-1955
June 22-Oct. 20

Embark on a journey through American history and explore the captivating world of trains in American visual culture during the transformative period of industrialization from 1840 to 1955.

New England Now: Strange States
May 11-Oct. 20

From Nathaniel Hawthorne to Stephen King, the depths of the psyche and the surreal have long fascinated New England



Elliot Fenander, Outdoor Tightrope Walkers, 1965–69. Negative, 1½ x 1 inches. Collection of Shelburne Museum, gift of Elliot and Phyllis Fenander.

artists. Twelve multidisciplinary artists from the region tap into a rich tapestry of mediums and techniques to create their perceptions of the ethereal grounded in topics of mythology, environmentalism, the ideals of beauty, transformation, and gender and cultural identity.

Confected, Borrowed & Blue: Transferware by Paul Scott
May 11-Oct. 20

The first in a series of “interventions” by contemporary artists features works

by British artist Paul Scott, known for his provocative reinterpretation of 19th-century transferware. Plates, platters, and jugs by Scott will be displayed alongside objects from the museum’s collection creating “segues” that spark dialogue between the old and new.

Lorna McMaster: Stewarding a Seed Collection
May 11-Oct. 20

Contemporary fiber artist Lorna McMaster explores the interdependence of pollinators,

native plants and local communities through her exquisite felted wool portraits and landscapes. Lorna McMaster: Stewarding a Seed Collection offers a poignant reflection on the delicate balance between nature and humanity, highlighting the importance of preserving our ecosystems.

A Grand Spectacle in the Great Outdoors: Elliot Fenander’s Circus Photography
May 11-Oct. 20

Transport yourself to the enchanting world of the circus with A Grand Spectacle in the Great Outdoors. Elliot Fenander’s black-and-white photography captures a rare “Blue Sky” outdoor performance by the Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. Circus in 1972, offering a unique glimpse into the magic and excitement of circus life.

Vermont Furniture at Shelburne Museum
May 11-Oct. 20

Discover the craftsmanship and artistry of Vermont furniture in this new installation showcasing some of the finest chests, chairs, tables and more from the 19th century to the present. Vermont Furniture at Shelburne Museum celebrates the rich material culture of the state and its enduring influence on interior design. For more information, visit shelburnemuseum.org/exhibitions/upcoming.



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Calendar of Events

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

Catamount Ski Trail anniversary
Thursday, Jan. 25, 6:30 p.m.

Celebrate 40 Years of Vermont’s Catamount Ski Trail on Thursday, Jan. 25, at 6:30 p.m. at the Vermont Ski and Snowboard Museum in Stowe as part of its Bench Speaker Series. Covering over 300 miles from Massachusetts to Canada, the Catamount Trail is the longest backcountry ski trail in North America. Catamount Trail founders Steve Bushey, Paul Jarris and Ben Rose will recreate their original 1984 journey and are aiming to ski end to end on the trail in February and March this winter. Admission is \$10.

‘Nuclear Now’ movie
Thursday, Jan. 25, 7 p.m.

At 7 pm on January 25, the Jericho Energy Task Force will present the movie “Nuclear Now” at the Deborah Rawson Memorial Library. Produced by director Oliver Stone, the movie explores the possibility of meeting the existential challenge of climate change through nuclear power. Stone conducted interviews with people involved in the nuclear industry in the United States, France and Russia. He argues that fear of nuclear energy was sown, in part, by coal and oil interests. Please note that the library is presenting this film to show a variety of viewpoints and does not take a position on the viability of nuclear energy. Light refreshments will be served but this is a waste-free event so please bring your own plates and mugs. Questions: lblamb@hotmail.com.

Does nature make us happier?
Thursday, Jan. 25, 7:30 p.m.

Taylor Ricketts, director of the University of Vermont’s Gund Institute for Environment, will talk on: Does being in nature make us happier? at the Shelburne Town Hall on Thursday, Jan. 25, 7:30 p.m. The talk is \$5 for Green Mountain Club members and \$8 for others. Ricketts will talk about what scientists are learning about the relationship between nature and mental health, using everything from social media to wearable technology to trailhead surveys.

Material World discussion
Thursday, Jan. 25, 6-7:30 p.m.

Join the conversation on contemporary sculpture with Material World, a panel discussion led by Burlington City Arts curatorial assistant Jacquie O’Brien featuring Texture & Response artist Karen Cygnarowicz and Vermont-based sculptors Kevin Donegan and Meg McDevitt. Panelists will delve into their experiences working with a wide range of materials and reflect on the dynamic and evolving arena of three-dimensional artwork. Come out to the center’s Lorraine B. Good Room in person or register for the free virtual option at <http://tinyurl.com/yuzrrcdz>.

Family Art Saturday
Saturday, Jan. 27, 11 a.m.-1 p.m.

Drop into the Burlington City Arts Center’s fourth floor education studio for an art-making activity inspired by the work of Texture & Response artist Karen Cygnarowicz. Come explore the fascinating textures and bright colors of fiber macro-weaving while you create and decorate your own fun and funky textile wall-hanging.

Full Moon Ski Party
Saturday, Jan. 27, 5-9 p.m.

Sleepy Hollow Ski Center in Huntington is holding its second annual Full Moon Ski Party Saturday, Jan. 27, 5-9 p.m. Skiing under the lights, live music, two bonfires, hot chocolate & smores, a free lesson 5-6 p.m., a cash bar, a taco truck and hot maple aid are among the attractions. Tickets are \$20 adults, \$10 for children, with a half-day pass or season pass. Visit skisleepyhollow.com/full-moon or call 802-434-2283 for info.

Rosemarie Fiore talk
Wednesday, Jan. 31, 8-9 p.m.

Visiting Artist Rosemarie Fiore will give an artist talk at Vermont Studio Center in the Red Mill on Wednesday, Jan. 31, 8-9 p.m., as part of the center’s Visiting Artists and Writers program. Free. More info at vermontstudiocenter.org/events-calendar.

Mad River Glen film
Friday, Feb. 2, 6-8 p.m.

The newly released film “Mad River Glen, A 75-



Courtesy photo

Sisters Lily and Chloe Holgate perform as Sibyl. They will give a family friendly concert at 1:30 p.m., Sunday, Feb. 4, at the Unitarian Church of Montpelier.

Year Fellowship of Skiers” will be shown in The Film House at Main Street Landing in Burlington on Friday, Feb. 2. The film is a trip down 75 years of history of one of the country’s most iconic ski areas with ski shots and footage. The showing is free. For more information contact melindamoultonvt@gmail.com.

Sister duo Sibyl
Sunday, Feb. 4, 1:30 p.m.

Capital City Concerts is offering a free family concert on Sunday, Feb. 4, 1:30 p.m. at the Unitarian Church of Montpelier by the talented sister act Sibyl. Conservator-trained sisters Lily and Chloe Holgate are from a family of Broadway actors and have been making music together since they were children. For more info go to capitalcityconcerts.org.

‘The Last Suspicious Holdout’ reading
Wednesday, Feb. 14, 8 p.m.

On Wednesday, Feb. 14, at 8 p.m., writer Ladee Hubbard will give a reading at the Vermont Studio Center’s Red Mill Building. Her latest work, “The Last Suspicious Holdout,” is a collection of 13 stories chronicling the lives

of a southern African American middle-class community, from 1992 through 2007. The next day, Feb. 15, at 10 a.m. Hubbard will give a talk on the craft of writing. Seating is limited, so please email writing@vermontstudiocenter.org to save a spot.

Discover Engineering
Saturday, Feb. 17, 9:30 a.m.-3 p.m.

Vermont 4-H and the University of Vermont College of Engineering and Mathematical Sciences are sponsoring Discover Engineering 9:30 a.m.-3 p.m. on Saturday, Feb. 17 on the campus. The annual free event is for fifth-10th grade students interested in engineering. It provides an opportunity for the youths to network with university engineering students, faculty and industry professionals and explore various engineering fields with hands-on, skill-building workshops.

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Library News

Still time to give input on library community survey

Margaret Woodruff
Director

Thanks to all the Charlotte folks who attended the community forum on Jan. 18. It was an informative and lively conversation.

If you missed the chance to share your thoughts, please take our community survey bit.ly/3FWUaK0 or contact Margaret Woodruff at the library.

Check out the library slideshow too at bit.ly/3SoEM03. Stay tuned for details about the resulting strategic plan for the library's next five years.

Stories and fun Fridays, 10 a.m.

Need something to do with little ones on Friday mornings?

Join a Friday morning session of stories and fun. No registration necessary. For ages 2 and over with a caregiver.

Baby time Thursday, 9:30 a.m.

A special time for caregivers 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.



Let's LEGO Saturdays, 10 a.m.-1:30 p.m.

Drop-in for LEGO free play. There will be loads of LEGO bricks along with some books and prompts for inspiration. For all ages. Please note children under 10 must be accompanied by an adult.

Special programs

Making artist books Tuesday, Jan. 30, 6:30 p.m.

Join Marcia Vogler for an introduction to handmade artist books. Through techniques including collage, printmaking, sewing, calligraphy and painting, the artist creates artwork that tells a story, relates a feeling or sends a message in book form. The interaction of materials, structure and content work together to present



work that is meant to be read and shared. Vogler will show examples of her work and discuss how ideas and self-expression are resolved through her handmade book work. Registration appreciated by emailing susanna@charlottepubliclibrary.org.

Be SMART about gun safety Tuesday, Feb. 6, 6:30 p.m.

Whether you're a gun owner, or you know someone who owns a gun, there is a role for everyone in the conversation around secure gun storage. Be SMART is a framework that parents, caretakers and community leaders can follow to help keep their communities safe. Join us to talk about the life saving impact of secure firearm storage practices.

'Keys Bags Names Words' film Wednesday, Feb. 14, 1 p.m.

Keys Bags Names Words is a quirky and inspiring film portraying stories of the personal and global impacts of Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia. The film, which will be shown at the Charlotte Senior Center, follows a cohort of young scientists and artists from around the world as they harness every aspect of creativity, humor and compassion to lead the way towards hope and resilience.

Children's programs

Preschool story time Tuesdays, 10 a.m.

Come to the Charlotte Library for preschool stories, crafts and activities. No registration required. Age 2 and over.

Preschool play time Wednesdays, 10 a.m.

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 and playing with blocks and Play-Doh are a few of the open-ended projects planned for Wednesday morning play-based learning at the Charlotte Library.

Programs for adults

Stillwater meditation Saturdays, 9 a.m. (except Feb. 24)

Poetry and meditation are offered freely and in person to the delightful community of Charlotte. You are invited for quiet



Courtesy photo

Cheryl Sloan, youth services librarian, shares pictures from a book she is reading to a group at Story Time.

reflection, contemplation and gentle meditation instruction. Respect for all beings and faiths is a foundational quality of our time together. Beginning and experienced meditators are welcome.

Thursday book group Thursday, Jan. 25, 7:30 p.m.

"The Only Woman in the Room" tells the story of a woman whose beauty almost certainly saved her from the rising Nazi party and led to marriage with an Austrian arms dealer. Underestimated in everything else, she overheard the Third Reich's plans while at her husband's side, understanding more than anyone would guess. She devised a plan to flee in disguise from their castle, and the whirlwind escape landed her in Hollywood. She became Hedy Lamarr, screen star. But she kept a secret more shocking than her heritage or her marriage: she was a scientist. And she knew a few secrets about the enemy. She had an idea that might help the country fight the Nazis — if anyone would listen to her. Copies available at the circulation desk.

Better together book club Wednesday, Jan. 31, 7 p.m.

With startling wisdom and humor in "Maybe You Should Talk to Someone," Lori Gottlieb invites us into her world, as both clinician and patient, examining

the truths and fictions we tell ourselves and others as we teeter on the tightrope between love and desire, meaning and mortality, guilt and redemption, terror and courage, hope and change. Copies available at the library circulation desk.

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.

Short story selections Wednesdays, Feb. 7 & 21, 1 p.m.

Join library director Margaret Woodruff via Zoom at <https://tinyurl.com/9c398wyy> to share and discuss short stories old and new. The group meets the first and third Wednesdays of each month.

Library contact information:

Margaret Woodruff, director
Cheryl Sloan, youth services librarian
Susanna Kahn, tech librarian
Phone: 802-425-3864
Email: 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, Feb. 1, at 6 p.m. online and in person. Contact the library or visit the library website at charlottepubliclibrary.org for more information.



Town of Charlotte MEETINGS

Visit charlottetvt.org
for more information.

Planning Commission Meeting
Thursday, Jan. 25, 7-9 p.m.

Selectboard Special Meeting
Monday, Jan. 29, 7 p.m.

**Public Informational Hearing for an
Australian Ballot Article
to be Voted at Town Meeting**
Tuesday, Jan. 30, 6:30-7:30 p.m.

Planning Commission Meeting
Thursday, Feb. 1, 7 p.m.



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Senior Center News

Senior center offers resources to help with aging in place

Lori York
Director

“Aging in place” is in the news these days. It means seniors maintaining their independence in a community that offers social connections and access to services. The benefit is that seniors can continue to live in their homes and participate in their community.

Charlotte is very fortunate to have such a community gathering place for seniors, where they can build social connections, maintain physical and mental stimulation and have access to social support through partnerships with social service agencies. The senior center partners with AgeWell, United Way, South Burlington Vet Center, AARP and the Alzheimer’s Association and other social service organizations. The resources available allow those who wish to remain in their homes in Charlotte to do so.

Community services

VT Association for the Blind & Visually Impaired Wednesday, Jan. 31, 1 p.m.

If you or someone you love is experiencing vision loss, it is still possible to read with some simple adaptations. Dan Norris, director of adult services at the Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired, shares a variety of large-print, digital and audio resources that are available to help you access print. You can access these resources through smart devices like an iPad or smartphone. Less high-tech solutions include large-print books and audiobooks that can be obtained through the ABLE library (a branch of the state library system). The Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired is a nonprofit that can also help you get magnifiers or teach you how to use smart devices to access print. Registration suggested. Free.

Alzheimer’s Caregivers Support Group Thursday, Feb. 8, 5-6 p.m.

Are you caring for someone with Alzheimer’s? Do you know someone who is? Please join us for the monthly Caregiver Support Group on the second Thursday of each month from 5:00-6:00 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 please contact Susan Cartwright: scartwrightasg@gmail.com.

AARP free tax preparation Wednesdays, March 6, 13, 20 & 27

Volunteers will prepare tax returns, provide tax assistance based on your provided information and maintain confidentiality while reviewing and preparing your tax return. Register in-person at the senior center or call 802-425-6345 to schedule an appointment to get your taxes done for free. One-hour appointments available at the senior center 1-4 p.m. Registration required. Free.

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.

Bone Builders

Tuesdays, 10:30 a.m.-11:30 a.m. & Fridays, 11 a.m.-noon.

RSVP Bone Builders, a program of United Way of Northwest Vermont, is a no-impact, weight-training program designed to prevent and even reverse the negative effects of osteoporosis in older adults. Bone Builders consists of a warm-up, balance exercises, arm and leg exercises, and a cool down with stretching. Free. No registration

required. There is paperwork to complete for the RSVP Bone Builders program.

Red Cross blood drive Thursday, Feb. 15, 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.

Upcoming Programs

Restorative yoga for deep winter renewal Friday, Jan. 26, 5:30-6:45 p.m.

Join Heidi Kvasnak as she leads you through a restorative yoga practice to discover where you are holding tension and rediscover what it feels like to be softer, more open and relaxed with ourselves. Warm up your body with slow, mindful movements followed by longer held restorative postures where you will gently be guided to drop into the support of your props, while reconnecting with the flow of your breath. Yoga props required. Registration required. Cost: \$15. Prop list will be sent upon registration.

Winter spike hikes Wednesdays, Feb. 7 & 21, 11 a.m.-1 p.m.

It’s time to get outside and enjoy some winter hikes. Weather permitting, this group will meet every other week through February. The outings will be approximately two hours with locations to be determined on trails around Charlotte and neighboring towns. Bring your own spikes or snowshoes, depending on the weather, snacks and water. The group is also looking for some trip leaders. To register or indicate your interest in leading a winter hiking trip, contact Susan Hyde at susanfosterhyde@gmail.com. Registration required. Cost: Free.

Creative Arts & Crafts Group Wednesdays, 10 a.m.-noon

Come create, experiment, share ideas, encourage others and have fun with the Creative Arts & Crafts group on Wednesday mornings. Bring whatever creative endeavor you’re working on, enjoy doing, or thinking about trying out — painting, drawing, writing, scrapbooking, coloring, origami, cardmaking, knitting — the opportunities are limitless. Any questions, call Katie Franko at 802-425-6270. Cost: Free. No registration required.

Watercolor in winter Tuesdays, Feb. 6-27, 9:15 a.m.-noon

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. Lynn Cummings will lead this four-week class to 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. Registration required. Cost: \$160.

Brain games Fridays, 2-4 p.m.

There are many ways adults can stimulate their brains to increase mental health, improve memory skills and contribute to overall well-being. Research finds that positive interaction with others and engagement in stimulating group activities sharpens cognition and increases memory ability. Join us to play various games, share laughter and enjoy one another’s company. Some games are available, but also feel free to bring your own games. Questions? Please call Lin Kalson at 608-345-9321 or email [lin.kalson7@gmail.com](mailto:linkalson7@gmail.com).



Photo by Lori York
From left, volunteers Cheryl Sloan, Sean Moran and Roberta Whitmore distribute Age Well grab & go meals on Thursday mornings.



Photo by Lori York
Ellen Zuk enjoys one of the weekly lunches provided by volunteers at the senior center.

Writing Our Way Through Wednesdays, Feb. 7-March 6, noon-2 p.m.

Join Pamela Powell as she guides you through this five-week generative writing workshop. Please bring a notebook and pen or pencil to this workshop. Writing by hand is encouraged, but using your personal laptop is also an option. Questions? Please reach out to Powell at mermaidpamela44@gmail.com or 781-646-6708. Registration required. Cost: \$100 for the five-week session.

Meals

Menus are posted on the website charlotteseniorcentervt.org.

Monday lunches

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

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
212 Ferry Road, Charlotte
802-425-6345
charlotteseniorcentervt.org

Follow the senior center on Facebook or Instagram at charlotteseniorcentervt.

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Write Ingredients

Learn about diner lingo at Grange's Little Free Library

Susan Ohanian
Contributor

Monday Munch menus at the Charlotte Senior Center for Jan. 29 and Feb. 5 are still undecided. But the volunteer cooks will soon make their choices, and you can access menus at charlotteseniorcentervt.org/lunch/meals.

Charlotte is fortunate to have a wonderful children's section at the library. Thanks to a generous donation from the Charlotte Senior Center board and generous discounts from The Flying Pig bookstore, the Little Free Library at the Grange offers a place where children can find a book to take home — and keep it if they want. Or they can bring it back and choose another one.

With food in mind, we're adding the delightful "Frank and Ernest" to the Little Free Library at the Grange. In this classic tale, that's informative as well as fun, an elephant named Frank and a bear named Ernest become the unlikely proprietors of Mrs. Miller's, where they learn the mysterious lingo of old-fashioned diners.

Ernest waits on a customer, who says, "I'll take the pancakes with maple syrup and coffee with cream and sugar."

With Frank standing at the griddle, Earnest tells him, "A stack with Vermont and a blonde with sand."

The two also serve up a hamburger with lettuce, tomato and onion and a piece of apple pie and a glass of milk. You'll have to read the book for the translation of that one. Plus, lots more.

With wonderful illustrations by Alexandra Day, this playful romp gets kids thinking about language, metaphor and word play.

Another fun addition to the Little Free Library at the Grange is "How Do You Wokka-Wokka?" by a contributor to this book project, The Flying Pig's own Elizabeth Bluemle. It advises, "Hey, let's wokka-wokka, shimmy-shake and shocka-shock! Everybody dance now in your shiny shoes and socka-socka."

Fun-filled advice for kids, and adults, too. Strut your stuff and celebrate your uniqueness: "Nobody wokkas in the same wokka way. It's a wokka-wokka party each and every wokka day."

With Vermont in mind, it seems very fitting to add "Rikki -Tikki-Tavi by Rudyard Kipling with wonderful illustrations by Jerry Pinkney. Kipling was born in Bombay and educated in Britain, calling the house there where he boarded and was treated harshly The House of Desolation. He traveled a lot and settled

for a time near Brattleboro where, from December to April, with snow up to the window sill, he worked on "The Jungle Book," which includes "Rikki-Tikki-Tavi."

Enjoy this book with children knowing that Kipling was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1907, the first English-language writer to receive it. And, at age 41, the youngest.

Remember: Experts will tell you that reading aloud to children should start at their birth. So start with "Moo, Baa, La La La!" by Sandra Boynton on day one. We've enjoyed Boynton's greeting cards for years, and now she's proving to be multi-talented. In December, the CBS Morning Show offered a fun tribute to Boynton: The Queen of Cards at <http://tinyurl.com/yc222v4j>.

I was very pleased to note that she paid tribute to her father Bob Boynton, a respected teacher and then a book publisher. He was a wonderful writing mentor to me. I used to go to National Council of Teachers of English conventions just to hang around his book booth in the convention hall, knowing that the most fascinating people at the convention hung out there. I delight in seeing his exuberance and joy exhibited in his daughter's books.

Remembering that this is a column about good food, we note that feature editor of the Yale humor magazine as well as New Yorker cartoonist and writer-illustrator of over 100 children's books, James Stevenson, offers short, fun poems in "Corn Fed." One recipe instructs: Take 3 tablespoons of mayonnaise, 1 cup of baking powder, ¾ cup of chunky salsa ... and add 10 more items, including cocoa, soy sauce and thyme. After simmering for two hours, you end up with something that cookbook recipes never admit: a concoction that "still won't taste very good."

At the Little Free Library older readers will find plenty of books, too: mysteries, graphic novels, sports, nonfiction. All ages are sure to enjoy "The Journey That Saved Curious George: The True Wartime Escape of Margret and H. A. Rey." This German-born Jewish couple fled Paris, carrying the manuscript about the curious little monkey on their bicycles. After many wonderfully illustrated adventures through Europe and South America, they end up in New Hampshire.

Tell kids you know to go find a book.

Here's where to go for good food and good conversation:

Monday Munch
11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.



Photo courtesy Charlotte Grange Facebook page.

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