

Your nonprofit community news source since 1958

The Charlotte News

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Doughnuts and mountains

Photo by Annie Quade

Esther, 3 1/2 years old, and Illene, 2 years old, love saying hello to the mountains from the stone bench at the Charlotte Town Beach. They moved to town about a month ago, and their family is loving it, their mother says. They are also loving the doughnuts from the Old Brick Store which they say are the best ever.

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Vol. 66, No.17

It's not too late to satisfy your Girl Scout cookie cravings

Scooter MacMillan
Editor

Don't worry if you have a Thin Mint dependency and are worried about finding the cookie you love. If you missed one-on-one opportunities to purchase the cookie craving you suffer from annually, don't stress out.

In addition to winter, mud, spring, summer, fall and stick, don't forget to add cookie to the list of seasons in Vermont. And you have at least a month of Girl Scout cookie season left.

You can still get your Thin Mints, Samoas or Tagalongs. Of course, you might not follow the majority in being obsessed with any of these three most popular flavors.

Maybe you're more of an individual and yearn for Adventurefuls (a brownie-inspired cookie topped with caramel crème and a bit of sea salt), Lemonades (you can probably guess what flavor this cookie is), Trefoils (the original Girl Scout shortbread cookie), Do-si-dos (a crunchy oatmeal, peanut-butter sandwich cookie), S'mores (if you don't know what this cookie is like you might want to join the Girls Scouts and go camping more) or Toffee-tasties (a cookie sweetened by toffee bits that's the one that's gluten-free).

Cindy Bradley, leader of Charlotte's Troop 30066, said now the Girl Scouts cookie-selling season switches from in-person sales to sales from booths outside of stores. You can find her Girl Scouts standing behind tables, hawking their irresistible wares at places like Walmart on Saturday, Feb. 24, 8-10 a.m. and then continuing later that day 10 a.m.-2 p.m. at Joann's. On Saturday, March 2, they will be at Walmart again 8-10 a.m., and afterward at Tractor Supply 10 a.m. - 2



Courtesy photo

Jenny Blanshine and Alexis Pearce selling cookies last year. Door-to-door and other in-person, one-on-one sales have ended for this year. Now Girl Scouts like have moved to selling at shopping centers and outside of stores.

p.m. On March 8, Troop 30066 will be selling cookies to the college crowd at the University of Vermont's Davis Center 3:30-5:30 p.m.

This is the 107th year that Girl Scouts have sold cookies in Vermont. Nearly 700,000 Girl Scouts participate in the cookie program, said Ginger Kozlowski,

communications and public relations manager of the Girl Scouts of the Green and White Mountains.

"During this highly anticipated time of the year, girls flex their entrepreneurial muscles and acquire important life skills,

SEE **GIRL SCOUTS** PAGE 2

Charlotte not alone in facing huge tax rate increases

Noah Diedrich
Community News Service

Charlotte's proposed homestead tax rate for the next fiscal year is 20 percent higher than the current rate, and that number's no outlier.

Shelburne's proposed homestead tax rate is up 18 percent, Hinesburg faces an increase of 21 percent and Vergennes proposes an increase of nearly 48 percent, according to data provided by Heather Roberts, the town clerk and treasurer for Hinesburg. Though tax rates are moving targets until budgets are voted on and final calculations are completed, the proposed numbers signal large increases for Vermont residents.

Lewis Mudge, a member of the Charlotte Selectboard, said he thinks the rise in the tax rate will come as a real shock to Charlotte residents.

"Many Charlotters are going to think it's an unsustainable tax rate, and I sympathize with them," he said. "I think this is a broader reflection of how Montpelier needs to sort out some of these education costs and how we bear the burden."

Mudge said the board can only control the municipal tax rate, which typically makes up about 12-14 percent of the tax rate.

"I think we've done a great job this year," he said. "We have kept this rate

SEE **TAX RATE** PAGE 3

Selectboard member, 'community builder' McCarren has died

Scooter MacMillan
Editor

Selectboard member, philanthropist and avid volunteer, Louise McCarren has died. She was found at her home on Popple Dungeon Road on Friday morning, Feb. 16.

The news of her passing has rocked Charlotte. The Charlotte Selectboard hastily planned a special board meeting on Tuesday evening that came after press time.

The only item on the agenda for that meeting was reflection on McCarren and her service to the community. And her service to the community was legendary.

In conversations with residents, many recalled her generosity.

In a post on social media, fellow selectboard member Lewis Mudge said McCarren was "beloved for her service, energy and sense of humor."

McCarren was running for re-election to her seat on the selectboard against challenger Natalie Kanner. Although McCarren's name will still be on the ballot because they have already been printed, it appears to be a foregone conclusion that Kanner will assume that seat.

Meredith Moses, who lived next door to McCarren and her late husband Ed Amidon for 19 years, said she was "a real community builder" and "egalitarian and gutsy."

Moses talked about how McCarren was always helping neighbors in need by bringing them food or feeding farm

animals when nearby farmers were ill.

"She was always checking on the elderly," Moses added.

Lori York, the Charlotte Senior Center director, said McCarren was one of the center's biggest advocates, stopping by daily.

"She was always looking for opportunities to help out, whether it be delivering an Age Well meal to one of our participants who was housebound, providing food for a Monday lunch or donating scholarship funds to make sure that those who needed it the most were taken care of," York said. "Louise cared deeply, and her first priority was always about how she could help others. She touched many lives and her passing leaves a hole in our community."

Several times McCarren bought half a cow from farmers, often ones who were going through hard times, which she donated to the Charlotte Food Shelf.

Her son Willy Amidon said that years ago, before his mother got involved with the Charlotte Food Shelf, she would cook muffins every Sunday to take to the food shelf in Burlington.

"One of the things everyone will tell you about is her generosity," Amidon said.

He talked about how on Christmas Eve this year, as they were leaving the hospital after visiting his father who was ill, his mother saw a woman crying in the lobby. Louise McCarren went over to comfort her and found out the woman's child had



Courtesy photo

Louise McCarren stands on the shore after a day of paddling and exploring on a multi-generational family camping trip in September 2019 on Upper Saranac Lake in the Adirondacks.

SEE **LOUISE MCCAREN** PAGE 3

GIRL SCOUTS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

like money management, team building, public speaking and decision making,” Kozlowski said. “Girl Scouts do more than sell delicious treats; they’re entrepreneurial powerhouses creating a more equitable future for themselves and the world. Every box of cookies sold provides invaluable experiences for Girl Scouts such as service projects, troop travel and summer camp.”

The members of the troop earn prizes based upon how many boxes they sell. Prizes start at selling 75 boxes, which gets them a patch, Bradley said. It goes up from there.

And wow, does it go up. When each girl has sold 5,000 boxes, the troop can choose a trip. We’re not just talking about a trip to Burlington or Plattsburgh. This year the trip would have been to Paris for seven days for just over \$400. That’s for lodging, airfare and everything.

Bradley said they won’t be able to go to Paris this year, but in the past Troop 30066 won a trip to Costa Rica. There are Girl Scout lodges in places like Mexico and Sweden.

“Every year they offer a trip of some kind, so I’m anxious to see what 2025 will offer,” she said. Needless to say, her goal is to take her girls on another trip, hopefully next year.

Bradley has been involved with Girl Scouts in Charlotte for at least 20 years. She got involved when her daughter was young, as a way to help her get over being shy. Now, scouting is a multi-generational family activity, with Bradley’s daughter helping as an adult and her granddaughters involved in scouting.



Courtesy photo

From left, Mia Paquette, Brooklynn Laclair, Colbie Curler, Marissa Laclair and Alexis Pearce fulfilling the requirements for their crazy-hat-day badge.

The Charlotte troop meets 6-7:30 p.m. on two Mondays every month. Even though the troop’s initial cookie order has been delivered, she added, “It’s never too late to get cookies.”

If you don’t see the Girl Scouts at one of their scheduled locations for sales, you can email Bradley at cahbradley@yahoo.com.

“When I see those girls stand to get their badges, they are so excited because they finally earned this badge. It just makes my heart swell,” Bradley said.



Letters to the Editor

Chea Waters Evans announces candidacy

To the Editor:

I’m almost halfway through my second year in my first term as the State Representative from Charlotte and part of Hinesburg; my district is officially called Chittenden-5, but unofficially, it’s just called home.

I’ve learned so much already, and I hope I’ve done a few things to improve our lives and our communities, and I’d love the opportunity to continue.

This is my official announcement that I’m running again this year; I know things are challenging right now (yes, the property taxes, I know, it’s awful) for many people and my hope is that I can keep trying to ease some burdens on the people in Charlotte and Hinesburg but also on all Vermonters.

I’m delighted to run into you all at the grocery store, a cocktail party, the lacrosse field, and even the orthodontist’s office, and know that you feel comfortable enough to tell me how you feel about issues or to ask me questions about the many topics that are of concern to you and your families. I truly do love it (although my kids get impatient with my constant chatting, which has always been an issue but is now Olympic level) and I’m so grateful that you trusted me with this important job. I’m going to continue to work as hard as I can to keep that trust, or earn it, or earn it back, as the case may be.

It’s been a true honor to represent you all, and I’d much appreciate your support again this biennium.

Chea Waters Evans
Charlotte

Peter Trono and Fat Cow Farm

To the Editor:

East Charlotte won the lottery when Peter Trono and his family decided to make Bingham Brook Road home. What few people know is that Peter agreed to conserve his new farm on a handshake and, with the capable help of David Miskell, did so very quickly.

His farm and family compound is a model for the more sustainable world we all seek, and he joyfully crafted it with great energy

and joy. His farm store quickly became a community hub and gathering place for longtime Charlotters and nouveau Charlotters alike.

We are all profoundly grateful for Peter’s community service, vision, encouragement and friendship.
Clark Hinsdale
Ferrisburgh

Vote for Natalie Kanner for Charlotte Selectboard

To the Editor:

I’m writing to encourage fellow Charlotters to vote for Natalie Kanner for selectboard.

Growing up in Charlotte with a mom on the selectboard, I was always somewhat aware of the ups and downs of town politics. It’s always come with challenges, successes, moments of pride and moments of frustration. My mom’s involvement, and my learning by osmosis, contributed to me becoming an active citizen today. It is important for us to support parents interested and willing to serve our town.

Now that I’m an adult Charlotte resident, raising a kid of my own, I have a new level of awareness of the commitment it takes to get involved in town politics while simultaneously working and caring for grade schoolers at home. My mom had that commitment. And so does Natalie!

At this time, I’m especially excited about Natalie’s commitment to listening, asking questions and gaining understanding about things that are new to her. I think this is very much needed on the selectboard today. Natalie’s professional experience as a social worker proves that she loves working with people, is committed to community wellness, and is dedicated to contributing respectfully to the collective good. Natalie is reliable, thoughtful and organized.

It is also crucial to me that there are selectboard members who care deeply about the natural resources and rural nature of Charlotte, and wish to preserve these amazing aspects of our town for future generations. Natalie cares deeply about both people and our environment, and I trust her to make smart decisions as our town engages in planning decisions that will impact Charlotte today and in the future.

Please join me in voting for Natalie for selectboard.

Tai Dinnan
Charlotte

Don’t dismiss Mary Mead

To the Editor:

When the petitioners submitted the charter for town manager, there were several questions that the public wanted answered.

One critical question was “what impact this charter would have on the selectboard elected clerk and treasurer, Mary Mead?” Specifically, the proposed charter states that the town manager would “do all the accounting for all the departments of the town and of the town school districts when the board of school directors so request.” The plain language of this charter is clear. This will take away Mead’s ability to handle the town’s accounting as our elected treasurer.

Why would we want to take this responsibility away from Mead? Truthfully, I don’t know the answer. Mead has been handling the town’s accounting for over 25 years. Her work is and has been exemplary. What’s more, our annual auditor’s reports more than back up her work. In my opinion, any change in our government that impacts Mead’s ability to do her job is a disservice to our town.

The petitioners have been clear, the goal of the proposed charter is to address the perceived inefficiencies of the selectboard. If that is the case, then why does this charter take away our treasurer’s right to handle the town’s accounting? What’s more, if the proposed charter can preserve the role of our elected road commissioner, why not our elected clerk/treasurer?

The fact of the matter is this: We have a highly experienced town clerk/treasurer who is working very well with our new town administrator. After working together for only two months, they managed to put forward a fiscally responsible budget before the selectboard. To throw a wrench in things now, I believe, is very irresponsible.

For these reasons, I urge you to vote no on Article 6.

James Faulkner
Charlotte
(James Faulkner is the chair of the Charlotte Selectboard.)



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.

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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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TAX RATE

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hovering at around 4 percent. Considering the challenges we've had, especially in light of the fact that we've had to outfit a new town garage, I think we've done a really responsible job vis a vis the taxpayer."

Charlotte Town Clerk and Treasurer Mary Mead declined to speak over the phone to The Charlotte News about the tax rate.

Charlotte Selectboard Chair Jim Faulkner did not respond to emails and phone messages left by The Charlotte News. Board member Frank Tenney didn't return phone calls.

The projected property tax increase is due largely to an estimated 12-percent increase in school spending, according to a letter from Vermont Department of Taxes Commissioner Craig Bolio to legislative leadership. The letter attributed that jump in school spending to four factors: the end of federal emergency

relief funds for elementary and secondary schools, a 16-percent increase in health care benefits for school employees, inflation and debt from new capital projects and renovations.

These factors, paired with Act 127, a law passed in 2022, has turned the situation into a "perfect storm," Rep. Chea Waters Evans, D-Charlotte, said.

Act 127, passed in 2022, aimed to alleviate education inequities for students who require more resources by adjusting the funding formula, according to the law. In order for the tax burden to not fall solely on the public, the law placed a 5-percent cap on homestead tax rates. If school districts exceeded that property tax cap, the law says the state education fund would make up the difference. But Waters Evans said most schools exceeded that mark, which made the cap seem useless.

H.850, a new bill passed unanimously by the House Committee on Ways and

Means Feb. 9, seeks to lower the burden of unprecedented predicted hikes in property tax rates for the 2025 fiscal year.

The bill also would allow school districts to revise their budgets and would push back their budget voting deadline to April 15.

"The general sentiment around the Statehouse in Montpelier is that we understand that something needs to be done to improve the situation," Waters Evans said. "Now we're just trying to come up with a solution as quickly as possible that will maintain a good quality education for students but also not put such a huge burden on people."

(Noah Diedrich reported this story on assignment from The Charlotte News. The Community News Service is a program in which University of Vermont students work with professional editors to provide content for local news outlets at no cost.)

“The general sentiment around the Statehouse in Montpelier is that we understand that something needs to be done to improve the situation.”

Rep. Chea Waters Evans

LOUISE MCCARREN

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just had a procedure. She didn't have any way to get home in time for Christmas. His mother gave the woman several hundred dollars, so she could get a cab to Plattsburgh.

Ed Amidon died the day after Christmas.

McCarren was born in San Mateo, Calif., in 1947. After getting her bachelor's from U.C. Berkeley, she graduated from the UCLA School of Law in 1972.

She moved to Vermont shortly thereafter with her first husband, Peter McCarren, and began practicing law. After getting a divorce, she published a book on how women could get divorced in the Green Mountain State.

In the late 1970s, she married Ed Amidon, who she met outside a courtroom where he was judge. They built their house in Charlotte in 1979, shortly after the birth of their son Willy Amidon.

"She was always a contributor," Willy Amidon said. "She was always looking for how she could help."

Moses said that when McCarren gave people food, it was always food she had bought locally, often from one of Charlotte's farms.

Thus, many of McCarren's good deeds were at least doubled in benefiting the community.

McCarren was an athlete, running in many marathons, including Burlington, New York and Boston. She participated in the Ironman World Championship, an annual triathlon in Hawaii that is generally considered to be in the top five toughest in the world.

"Her favorite was the Sugarbush Triathlon. She did it every year for about 20 years," Amidon said.

A 2003 article in Vermont Sport, celebrating the 25th Sugarbush Triathlon, mentions McCarren as one of a group of 10 outstanding athletes who had competed in the event over the years. This may be the world's only "triathlon" that involves four legs — a 5-mile run, 6-mile paddle, 8 miles of cycling and 5-kilometers of cross-country skiing at Sugarbush Resort.

Amidon said his mother was "not an idle person."

In 1981, she became chairman of the Vermont Public Service Board, an agency in the state's executive branch responsible for representing the public interest in energy, telecommunications, water and wastewater utility issues.

In a 1985 interview with Town Meeting TV, McCarren said before taking this job she had been an advocate for those with issues with state utilities. The difference between her previous position and being chair of the public service board, she said, was that an advocate can propose views that might be extreme but that can be

helpful in forcing government to examine issues that might go ignored. However, as chair, she was charged with working for positions that incorporated various sides of an issue.

That responsibility is a good description of Louise McCarren herself, a person who worked for compromises that worked for all sides.

Vermont Biz Magazine noted in an article published shortly after she was named chair of Campaign for Vermont, a nonprofit that advocates public policy changes to improve Vermont's economy, her numerous leadership positions throughout her career, including chair of the Vermont Public Service Board, commissioner of the Vermont Department of Public Service and Vermont state president for Verizon.

Willy Amidon said his mother's last job was as CEO of the Western Electric Coordinating Council. It manages the power grid for the Western U.S. For about seven years she had a home in Salt Lake City, commuting back and forth to Charlotte.

When his mother retired, she began to focus on Charlotte and threw herself into two other passions — cooking and gardening.

"She was a great cook who loved to cook," Amidon said.

Whenever town events were discussed at selectboard meetings, she would volunteer to bring cookies.

Some of Amidon's fondest memories are of wilderness paddling trips his family took in the Canadian Arctic when he was a teenager and into his 20s.

Amidon, who is an associate professor of earth and climate sciences, said, in his early years of teaching at Middlebury College, he took working trips into a remote area in Argentina, and his mother came down for a couple of those trips.

"We would work for the whole day, and she would have steak and muffins," Amidon said.

She became known as a legendary camping cook. He said, "She perfected the art of fresh bread in the wilderness."

McCarren was also known for her green thumb. Amidon said she took the master gardener course, which she didn't really need because she was already an accomplished gardener.

"She had unbelievable, 100-yard-long beds, choke full of peonies and tulips," he said. "She was a nut for gardening and was always ordering bulbs."

Moses said, when her peonies were in bloom, McCarren would have a party she called the Peony Parade, and in the fall, she would have a pumpkin party where

she handed out seeds and party prizes.

Despite all of McCarren's achievements his mother was essentially a humble person, Amidon said. "I think she would probably honestly dread being the subject of a front-page article about her death, but you know, she can handle it."

She can probably handle it like she handled so many things during a life built around a plethora of professional and personal interests.

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Commentary

Tide seems to be changing with current village planning project

Peter Joslin
Contributor

On Wednesday, Feb. 14, I was invited to attend, along with other community members, a brainstorming session with the leaders of the Charlotte East and West Village Project. Larry Lewack, town planner; Darren Schibler, senior planner at the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission; and Bob Bloch, planning commission liaison to the group, led the discussion about the future of the east and west villages of Charlotte.

In order to gather input from all interested parties, the group will continue these sessions to include those who live in the villages and the town at large, as well as engage business owners, land owners and others who have shown interest in the future of the villages. A significant goal of these meetings, as stated by Lewack, is “to build bridges” and develop consensus for future development.

The Charlotte East and West Village Project began in earnest in the fall of 2023. As stated on its “Projects FAQs” under the planning commission’s website, “The project was made possible by \$85,000 in federal and state funding the town has secured. Town planner Larry Lewack secured a \$13,000 bylaw modernization grant from the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development in late 2022. That funding leveraged an additional \$72,000 in federal funds, plus a commitment of \$12,000 for a transit options study through regional planning.” At its core, the project “is an examination of future development and multi-modal transportation in Charlotte’s villages, informed by prior planning efforts and community input.”

Mike Dunbar, one of the attendees, noted, “policy matters.” How, why and where development occurs in the villages is dictated by land-use regulations. Dunbar knows this

first hand; he developed and owns Charlotte Crossings, home to Backyard Bistro, Charlotte Work Club, The Gilded Elephant and Junapr and also owns a significant parcel at 251 Ferry road, which is in the process of development. His plans for the west village property include renovating the existing house for multi-unit, class A office space (his original plan was for mixed use, but felt the regulations were too cumbersome, so he decided on commercial only). He is committed to working with the trails committee in order to bring the trail section that is on his property to the village.

Policy translates to changes in the land-use regulations making way for potential municipal infrastructure and development. Lack of parking, sidewalks and stormwater were hot topics, as well as multi modal transportation, especially how those who don’t or can’t drive would get about in town.

When the group was asked about the number of additional houses or businesses they would like to see in the villages, senior housing, small condos and apartments were mentioned repeatedly.

Jon McGuire shared his plans for 20 senior housing units southwest of the old Sheehan house in the east village, which he is renovating for a future restaurant.

The Burns property was also mentioned as a potential location for development since it is in the heart of the west village, an ideal location for small apartments, condos and senior housing. Lack of a master plan for the Burns property was a significant topic since it accounts for 53 acres of town-owned land. A significant percentage of the parcel is

wetland forest, west of the new town garage. There is another 26-acre parcel along Greenbush Road which is not conserved, as well as the development potential north of the very modest municipal wastewater facility. Whether conserved land close to or in the

village districts should remain so was also discussed.

Current land-use regulations designate a village district and commercial village district in the east and west villages; the question is whether

they should be consolidated and simplified into a single village district. Boundaries of the villages were also discussed and whether or not they should increase in size and if they are in the right location.

Contrary to the historic settlement pattern in the villages, 5 acres is required for residential development in the village districts. This disconnect has been brought up countless times at countless meetings and is perhaps the most obvious and needed fix. It is a major obstacle to development. The 5-acre minimum also came up regarding the rural district. Is it necessary? Although we were there to discuss village development, it seemed appropriate to think broadly since the overwhelming majority of development has been, and continues to be, in the rural district.

Maura Wigmans, co-owner of Classic Home in Charlotte, has suggested to the selectboard on various occasions to consider impact fees as a means of funding future projects, such as a recreation center. To do this, Charlotte would be required by state statute to adopt a capital budget, and prior to

that, the selectboard would need to identify infrastructure needs and costs (sidewalks, wastewater, water, recreation, etc). Creating a capital budget is an issue that has come up repeatedly in discussions about the pros and cons of a town manager.

Discussion also focused on the significant role the selectboard plays in advocating and promoting new initiatives such as infrastructure in the villages. Developers, be they residents or not, need town support for projects consistent with the future vision.

These small group meetings will continue and the project is on track to have conceptual village designs presented for feedback in April of this year.

I asked Lewack about the time frame for engineering studies for municipal water and wastewater. He said Chittenden County Regional Planning estimated three to four years. More importantly, Lewack said, “It’s in our best interest to push for these applications to get submitted ASAP, once we have determined village infrastructure needs though this project.”

I have been a party to many discussions on this topic over the last 10 years; at planning commission meetings, selectboard meetings, library meetings, Community Heart and Soul, etc. There was a difference at this meeting; it is part of a larger project, gaining momentum, and by building consensus, there will be deliverables the town will weigh in on. My sense is Charlotte is in a different place, more open to contemplating the future and figuring out how to get there.

I think the tide is changing.

(Peter Joslin is a former chair of the planning commission and a member of The Charlotte News board of directors. The opinions expressed here are his own and not necessarily those of the board.)



CHARLOTTE

Vote Yes for Town Manager

Town Manager Path to the Future

Why A Town Manager?

Charlotte Town government is increasingly more complicated and costly

- Facilities oversight includes Town Garage, Library, Senior Center, Town Hall, and the Beach
- Employee costs – salaries and benefits
- Legal challenges to various decisions

Regulations are more demanding and complex requiring considerable time in preparation for meeting agendas

Selectboard members need time and expertise in preparation for meeting agendas

- Many members work full time
- Hiring consultants to address these issues is expensive

Timeliness in decision making means efficiency in governance and time for

- Policy development
- Long range planning
- Five year budgeting

Frequently asked Questions

What is the problem we are trying to solve?
Key areas of governance require expertise. Coupled with a time commitment to gain the knowledge, do the research, in addition attend meetings, we are asking a lot of our elected officials.

What is the desired outcome?
To move from a reactive approach to issues to a thoughtful focus on the future. A Town Manager can help us get there.

How can Charlotte benefit with a Town Manager?
If there were a Town Manager, then many matters could and would be handled administratively, freeing up the Selectboard to be able to focus more energy on governance, policy and bigger picture issues and challenges facing the Town.

Future TOWN MANAGER Form of Government

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graph TD
    Voters --> RoadCommissioner[Road Commissioner]
    Voters --> Library
    Voters --> Selectboard
    Voters --> Auditors
    Voters --> Lister
    Voters --> Treasurer
    Selectboard --> TownManager[Town Manager]
    TownManager --> HighwayDept[Highway Dept.]
    TownManager --> Zoning
    TownManager --> Recreation
    TownManager --> Budget
    TownManager --> Clerical
    TownManager --> TownGarage[Town Garage]
    TownManager --> SrCenter[Sr. Center]
        
```

Will a Town Manager form of governance cost more?
Not necessarily for two reasons. With the recent retirement of our long-term Town Administrator, he was at the top of the pay scale. A new Town Manager pay would be within the current pay scale. Over time the pay would increase. Also, with the background of a Town Manager there would be less need for consultants, saving money. Town Administrator and Town Manager pay data is available on Annual VLCT Survey comparing pay with other Vermont towns.

Would we lose access to the Selectboard with a Town Manager?
No. First, every Selectboard agenda provides time for public comment. Every citizen has the opportunity to add items to the agenda. Second, people will have access to their town government every day of the week, not just on days with Selectboard meetings.

*Paid for by community members leading the support for Town Manager:
Lane Morrison, Jim Hyde, Alexa Lewis, Peter Joslin, Patrice Machavern, Charles Russell*

Commentary

Eurasian watermilfoil threatens health of Vermont's lakes

Pat Suozzi
Contributor

What is Eurasian watermilfoil? Is it just a weed that might be a nuisance but isn't harmful to lakes and ponds? After all, it has been found in many lakes around the country and has been in some of Vermont's lakes for decades. Maybe it should be considered native now that it has been here for a while. But is it really just another weed that has now "naturalized"? The answer is no, and here's why.

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture at <http://tinyurl.com/4zkdp6dm>, Eurasian watermilfoil "threatens the diversity and abundance of native plants as well as the ecological balance of lakes and ponds, which in turn adversely affects recreational opportunities. If left unchecked, invasive watermilfoil will spread through a lake, or even to other lakes by transmission."

Eurasian watermilfoil is a non-native species. Some non-native species, when introduced into a new environment, won't necessarily spread uncontrollably and become a problem. Those that become invasives will thrive in the new environment and spread out of control. With no natural predators in our environment, Eurasian watermilfoil is an invasive.

Japanese knotweed and buckthorn are examples of terrestrial invasives. The Burmese python that is devastating the Everglades is another example. By outcompeting native species, these invasives overwhelm and in some cases destroy native ecosystems. The damage these land-based invasives do is easy to see while the damage an invasive like Eurasian watermilfoil does to the aquatic habitat is more difficult to see but nevertheless is there.

Eurasian watermilfoil outcompetes native aquatic plants that fish and amphibians need to thrive. This loss of aquatic habitat has reverberations throughout the ecosystem, leading to critical changes that affect not just the waterbody itself but the surrounding watershed and the humans and wildlife that depend on that water resource. Once an ecosystem is out of balance, mother nature can't just adapt. The destruction of native habitats

will continue unless something is done to stop the invasive from spreading.

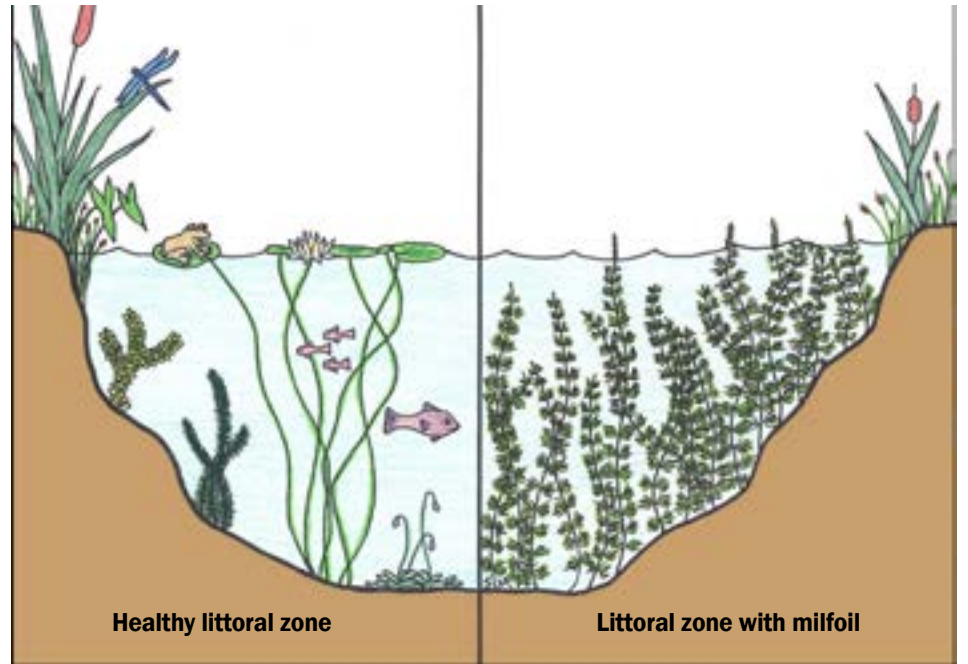
If milfoil is left alone, it grows out of control, creating dense canopies on the water's surface, robbing sunlight from native aquatic species, thereby stunting or completely suppressing their growth. Those surface mats of Eurasian watermilfoil prevent boating and swimming and start to rot, stink and foul the water. As these large infestations die back each year, they decompose on the lake bottom, adding to nutrient levels in the lake which then feed toxic cyanobacteria blooms. Such excessive amounts of rotting vegetation also can reduce the oxygen in the water, causing wildlife to die, and further damaging the aquatic ecosystem.

Aquatic plants grow in the shallower parts of lakes called the littoral zone, where light can penetrate. This is where Eurasian watermilfoil is found. It usually grows in depths to about 14 feet, but it has been found as deep as 30 feet. With Vermont's wonderfully clean and clear lakes, Eurasian watermilfoil can easily spread to those depths.

In smaller lakes where the littoral zone is a larger percentage of the lake area, it is easy to see how Eurasian watermilfoil can take over, squeezing out native aquatic plants, and destroying aquatic habitats. However, in larger and very deep lakes, like Lake Champlain, where the littoral zone is a smaller percentage of the total lake area, it can seem like Eurasian watermilfoil is not such a problem, even if it has infested much of the littoral zone. Boats can churn through it and out into the large open area where no milfoil is seen — where, in fact, no aquatic plants are seen because none grow there.

It would be a very serious mistake, however, to think that just because you don't see milfoil growing in the middle of a large lake it is not a problem. The health of a lake's littoral zone is vital to the health of that lake. A healthy Vermont lake has several dozen native aquatic plant species. Without a wide variety of native aquatic plant species, native fish, amphibians, and other wildlife will decrease and the natural ecosystem will tip out of balance.

One of the great difficulties in controlling



Eurasian watermilfoil and protecting aquatic habitats is how easily it spreads. A brittle plant, pieces break off easily and those fragments sink to the lake bottom, root, and grow quickly. Anything that disturbs these plants and causes such fragmentation — boats, swimmers, paddlers, wind or waves — will add to the spread. Even some control methods such as mechanical harvesting (essentially mowing), or hand pulling, can cause fragmentation and lead to further spread.

Is invasive Eurasian watermilfoil just another weed that can be left in Vermont's lakes? Not if you value the health of Vermont's lakes. Don't be lulled into thinking that Eurasian watermilfoil is "just a weed." As the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service points

out at <http://tinyurl.com/ytxe85jt>, "Invasive species cause tremendous harm to our environment, economy and health."

We humans introduced this and other invasives into our waterbodies, so it is our responsibility to work to control or eradicate them. Help your local lake association protect and preserve Vermont's lakes, ponds, and watersheds by working to prevent and control this insidious invasive.

To learn more about Eurasian watermilfoil, visit the Federation of Vermont Lakes and Ponds milfoil page: vermontlakes.org/eurasian-watermilfoil.

(Pat Suozzi, who lives in Hinesburg, is the president of the Federation of Vermont Lakes and Ponds.)

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Around Town

Condolences

Louise McCarren passed away at her home on Friday, Feb. 16. She was born in San Mateo, Calif., in 1947, not long after the end of World War II. Her ancestors on both sides came from long lines of early California settlers. Her father was a bomber pilot in the Pacific during World War II, once bailing out over China towards the end of the war.

As a child she enjoyed skiing and waterskiing near their family cabin at Lake Tahoe that her father built in the 1950s.

Louise attended Notre Dame high school in Burlingame, graduating from U.C. Berkeley in 1969. This was an interesting time as her brothers were serving in Vietnam, and the counter-culture revolution was unfolding in the Bay Area. She then graduated from UCLA School of Law in 1972, where she reportedly drove a motorcycle around Los Angeles.

She moved to Vermont in the early 1970s with her first husband, Peter McCarren, where they had her first son, Patrick McCarren. She began practicing law in Vermont at a time when there were not many female lawyers and was considered a trailblazer in that regard. Her first marriage ended in divorce, perhaps prompting her to publish an early guidebook on how women could obtain a divorce in Vermont.

She met her second husband Edwin Amidon in the late 1970s, outside a courtroom where he was an acting judge. Their first date to Trader Dukes at the Sheraton was supposedly a bomb, but she was taken by his sense of adventure, and they soon began whitewater canoeing

together as early members of the Vermont Canoe Cruisers club. They built a house in Charlotte in 1979, which was completed just after giving birth to their son, her second child William Amidon.

Louise's career took her into regulatory economics. She eventually became chairman of the Vermont Public Service Board under Governor Richard Snelling in the 1970s and subsequently the commissioner of the Vermont Department of Public Service. She briefly became involved in Vermont politics, unsuccessfully running for Lieutenant Governor against Howard Dean in 1988.

She served as a senior vice president for the Chittenden Bank, and during the 1990s, began consulting for utilities, eventually becoming president and CEO of NYNEX, later Verizon Vermont, in the late 1990s. By the mid-2000s, she became chief executive of the Western Electric Coordinating Council, which helps to manage the western U.S. power grid. Through the years she was known as a strong leader who could "cut to the chase" and connect with employees at all levels of an organization, while gaining national recognition for visionary thinking in regulatory environments. Over the years, she served on numerous corporate boards, including the Fletcher Allen Hospital, ISO-New England, Vermont Law School, Campaign for Vermont and the National Life Insurance Company.

Louise was an avid athlete and adventurer who was rarely idle. During the '80s and '90s she was a triathlete, once competing in the Hawaii Ironman. She shared a passion for wilderness canoeing with her husband Ed, and they worked together to launch many multi-week canoe expeditions to the Canadian Arctic on rivers such as the Coppermine, Kazan, Hood, Burnside and Noatak. She also enjoyed gardening and was known for gifting huge bouquets of flowers to everyone and anyone. In her later years, she played tennis and women's hockey

and greatly valued being a part of those communities.

Louise returned to Charlotte full time around 2013 and became involved in the life of the town. She was a frequent volunteer at the Charlotte Food Shelf and the Charlotte Senior Center and served on the selectboard for several years. She enjoyed being able to spend time with her sons and her two granddaughters, Pippa and Marley Amidon, who brought her a great deal of joy. Her final show of strength was as a steadfast caregiver to her husband Ed until his passing in late December 2023.

Louise lived a vibrant and generous life, touching the lives of countless people with her generosity. She was constantly focused on what she could do for others, providing assistance to countless friends and strangers over her life. Louise is survived by her sons Patrick McCarren and William Amidon, her granddaughters Pippa and Marley Amidon, her step-daughters Jane Amidon and Martha Amidon Ware, her brothers Michael and Tony Moroney, and her sister Mollie Moroney. She will be dearly missed by many.

John Peter Trono, 73, of Charlotte, VT, passed away unexpectedly on Friday, Feb. 2, at the University of Vermont Medical Center.

Peter was a lifelong Vermont resident. He graduated from Burlington High School in 1968 and served as captain of both the baseball and football teams. While stories of his academic prowess at Burlington High are less discussed, Peter was sure that it was well known that he especially excelled on the football field, earning All-State and Shrine team nominations his senior year. After a year at Bridgton Academy in Maine, he went on to play football at the University of Vermont where he served as team captain and was selected to the All-Yankee Conference team his senior year. He would often be seen proudly wearing a "UVM Football, Undefeated Since 1974" T-shirt.

At the conclusion of his senior year at UVM, Peter was just a handful of credits shy of eligibility for graduation. Rather than returning to school to earn those few credits, he jumped into the business world, taking over Trono Fuels and Trono Construction from his father. Nonetheless, Peter was very proud to have attained his Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Vermont in the fall of 2018, a mere 44 years later. He often joked that he was contemplating moving back into on-campus housing as he pursued those last few required credits.

Peter worked very hard over many years to turn his businesses into successful, prominent establishments. As he approached retirement age, rather than get a new set of golf clubs or look for a condo in Florida, as some men are prone to do, he decided to try his hand at beef cattle farming and started Fat Cow Farm in East Charlotte in 2010. That too has turned into a successful venture. He was most proud, however, that he was able to run his businesses with the

help of his three sons.

Peter will be remembered as a wonderful, generous man, who was revered by his many friends. He was as comfortable on the stool in the dive bar as he was in the boardroom and was as happy playing shuffleboard at the Redwood as he was playing handball with a chief justice. If you were a friend of Peter's, you were a friend for life. His sense of humor and good-hearted antics will not be forgotten anytime soon. To quote a friend, "Peter will always be a part of Burlington's history and lore and stories that he was either a part of, or the start of."

Hunting and the outdoors were among Peter's most passionate pursuits. Opening weekend of rifle season at his camp in Montgomery was among his favorite days of the year. He greatly enjoyed hunting trips to the furthest reaches of Canada in search of trophy bucks. His hunting trips often conflicted with Thanksgiving, at which point his family would send photos of a beautiful turkey dinner, with all the fixings, to which he would respond, with a photo of a bologna sandwich from the inside of a drafty tree stand somewhere in Alberta on the edge of the Northwest Territories.

Peter was predeceased by his parents John and Bertha Trono. He will be greatly missed by his wife of 28 years Wendy, his three sons, two daughters-in-law and four dearly loved grandchildren: Lucas and Genevieve (Parker and Flynn), Derek and Antonia (Trae and Mia) and Zachary. Peter also leaves brothers Paul (Diane) and Chris (Renato Salvador) Trono, as well as sisters Toni Marie Trono, Gina (Mark) Auriema, Julie Trono (Ted McCarthy) and Lisa (Tony) Perez, as well as many nieces and nephews. The family would like to acknowledge the overwhelming outpouring of support from those that knew and loved him.

A Mass of Christian Burial will be held at St. Francis Xavier Church in Winooski, VT, on Friday, Feb. 16, at noon, followed by a reception where the sharing of stories and laughs is encouraged. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to Merrymac Farm Sanctuary, 490 Lime Kiln Rd., Charlotte, VT 05445.

Congratulations

James Anair and **Wesley Simard** of Charlotte were named to the fall president's list (4.0 grade point average) at the Vermont State University.

Jacob Russell and **Janet Smith** of Charlotte were named to the dean's list (3.5 or higher grade point average) for the fall at Vermont State University.

Elizabeth Breen of Charlotte was named to the College of the Holy Cross fall dean's list.

Zachary J. Santos was named to the dean's list for the fall semester at Fairfield University.

Marissa Green and **Malcolm Ziter** of Charlotte were named to the student honor list at the Community College of Vermont this fall.

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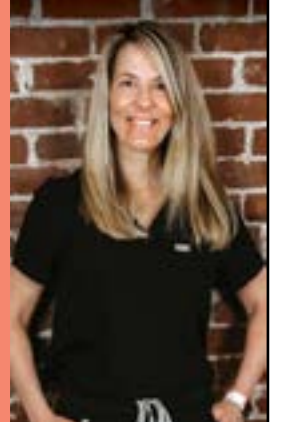


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Our Local Feast

Make warming winter curry from locally grown ingredients

Dorothy Grover-Read
Local Table

It's February, and we need something to warm us up. The gardens are frozen, most of the farm stands are closed, but we can still serve up delightful meals with the bulk of the ingredients sourced locally.

What produce do we have grown locally in Vermont right now? Roots, of course, but also fresh greens, more roots and frozen vegetables. It's not as meager as it might sound, and it will be a few months yet before we see green sprouts growing in the fields outside.

On a recent Saturday, I surveyed the results of my hunter-gathering efforts and discovered I had compiled a beautiful rainbow of produce grown in our area at Bread and Butter Farm. Yes, they were primarily root vegetables and greens, but pretty they were, and they did not have to travel across the country or world to make their way to our table.

So many possibilities. A soup perhaps, or a stew? Maybe a casserole. It was a cold day, so I decided on a flavorful curry and all the accompaniments.

From my freezer, I retrieved a pint of cherry tomatoes from my own garden, local chopped red peppers from last summer and ginger from Philo Ridge farm. I tucked several of these large rhizomes in the freezer last fall; frozen ginger grates easier than fresh, so when you find a good source, freezing is a great option, and many Vermont farmers are growing ginger now. Just grate



Photo by Dorothy Grover-Read
A warming curry, using locally grown ingredients, adds some vibrant color to the table, satisfying the eyes as well as the body.

what you need and put the rest back in the freezer.

The only ingredients in this curry that are not local are the exotic spices, chick peas and coconut milk, but I wouldn't be surprised if some enterprising Vermont farmer figured out how to grow palm trees in the near future as well.

The vegetables here are suggestions. If you like golden beets or sweet potatoes, add those; if you don't like turnips, substitute something else. Cauliflower is also lovely in this, but use what you like and can find, just try to use vegetables of many colors of the rainbow to please the eye as well as the body.

A warming winter curry

Make this vegetable curry as hot or mild as you like by adjusting the pepper and

cayenne. In a large, heavy bottom pot, heat:

2 tablespoons olive oil

Once hot, add:

1 large purple or yellow onion, sliced

Cook for five minutes or so until the onions soften and start to brown, then add:

3 cloves of garlic, minced

1 serrano or jalapeno pepper, minced

2 tablespoons finely minced or grated fresh ginger

1 teaspoon ground turmeric

2 teaspoons garam masala

1 teaspoon anise or fennel seeds

1/2 teaspoon cayenne pepper

Stir the mixture for a minute or so, until the spices bloom and fill your kitchen with tantalizing aromas. This is a step you don't want to skip, because the spices will release their aromatics better when heated in oil. Add your vegetables, which you have chopped up into similar size:

2 cups rutabaga, chopped

2 cups purple- or yellow-fleshed potatoes, chopped

1 cup carrots or parsnips, sliced into coins

2 cups daikon radish or spicy turnip,

chopped

Stir everything together well, let cook for a few minutes, then add:

1 cup water

1 pint of cherry tomatoes, fresh or frozen

1/2 cup chopped sweet pepper, fresh or frozen

Bring to a boil, cover and simmer for 20 minutes, or until the vegetables are tender.

Gently stir in:

1 can organic, unsweetened coconut milk,

light if you like

2 cups chick peas, cooked, or 1 can chick peas, no salt added, drained

Simmer on lowest heat for another 15 minutes and check seasoning, adding salt and pepper if desired. When done, top with:

Juice of one lime

Chopped cilantro or parsley

Serve this vegetable curry with jasmine or basmati rice, or naan bread if you can find it. Traditionally, a cooling cucumber raita (recipe below) is often served on the side, especially if you make the curry hot.

Raita

Raita can become watery if you don't rid the cucumbers of as much moisture as possible. To do this, salt and drain to extract that water.

Shred:

1 large English cucumber

Place in a colander and sprinkle with:

2 teaspoon salt

Let this sit for 15 to 30 minutes, then rinse and squeeze the water out. Place in a large bowl and add:

1 cup plain Greek yogurt, local of course

2 tablespoon fresh mint, minced

2 tablespoon fresh parsley or cilantro,

minced

1/2 teaspoon garam masala

1/2 teaspoon salt

Mix everything together. To serve, top with a little sweet paprika and more chopped herbs.

Food Shelf News

Consider helping food shelf meet increasing demand

Maj Eisinger
Contributor

Throughout Vermont demand at food shelves is soaring. This is attributed, in part, to higher food costs, an end to pandemic emergency allotment aids that boosted SNAP benefits, inflation, rent or mortgage costs, the opioid crisis and the effect of summer's flooding on homes and businesses.

The Vermont Food Bank notes an increase in need from the majority of the 300 organizations it serves. It was allocated \$3 million fiscal year 2024 by the state and, for fiscal year 2025, is requesting \$5

million.

Mitigation plans are in the works, and the Farm to Plate Network has recently presented a food security roadmap to the state legislature which delineates a goal to eliminate food insecurity by 2035. This roadmap strives to both increase economic development by creating jobs in Vermont's food and farm sector and improve access to healthy local foods for all Vermonters.

In addition, last year the Universal School Meals Act became law, helping to address child hunger. Our federal and state government, community and citizens continue to work together to reduce food insecurity.

Here in Charlotte, the food shelf is striving to meet increased demand and, in April, will increase the number of days on which food is distributed. The new distributions being added are scheduled for the second and fourth Saturday of each month, from 9-11 a.m. The full distribution schedule now includes: the second and fourth Wednesday of each month (4-6 p.m.) and the second and fourth Saturday of each month (9-11 a.m.).

The food shelf is entirely dependent on donations. We thank the following generous community members for their contributions: Susan Hyde, Susan Leonard and the Leonard Giving Fund, Anne Mason, Martine Richards, Richard Mintzer, Cynthia Robinson, Julian Kulski, Barry and Susan Cluff (in honor of Greg and Lynn Cluff), Margaret Berlin, Hannaford Fight Hunger Bag Program, Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish, the Cervi Family, anonymous, Horsford Gardens and Nursery, Charles and Elisabeth DesLauriers, Margaret Berlin, Maurice Harvey and Mary Mead, Christopher and Susanne Davis, Richard Pete, Lynn and Greg Cluff and Christine McBride.

We also appreciate all the cookie party participants who participated in making homemade goodies for the December holiday baskets.

Many thanks are also due to our extraordinary community bakers this month. Their efforts were amazing and our families were thrilled to have such lovely treats for Valentine's Day.

How the food shelf can help?

Food is provided at 403 Church Hill Road behind the Charlotte Congregational Church on the second and fourth Wednesday, 4-6 p.m., and second and fourth Saturday, 9-11 a.m. of each month. For emergency food, or if you cannot come to the food shelf due to COVID symptoms, please call 802-425-3252.

The food shelf also has limited utility, rent, medical, dental, school supply (including school shoes) and other emergency assistance available to residents of Charlotte and North Ferrisburgh. If you or someone you know is facing unexpected



Photo by Peggy Sharpe

These are some of the delicious baked goods donated by community bakers to the food shelf for Valentine's Day.

hardship, help is available. Simply call 802-425-3252 or fill out a request form. Request forms are available during food shelf open hours, or on our website charlotteucc.org/copy-of-charlotte-food-shelf-1.

How you can help?

Monetary donations are appreciated, tax deductible and can be addressed to: Charlotte Food Shelf, Inc., P.O. Box 83, Charlotte VT 05445. An easy, new way to donate is through the Paypal button on the website address listed above.

The following donations of non-perishables are always helpful: crackers, granola bars, small bags of snacks, paper towels, toilet paper.

We need additional volunteers for both shopping and distributions. A van or large vehicle would be useful for shopping excursions, though not required. Please email Peggy Sharpe at ckmj@comcast.net for more information if interested.

Report From the Legislature

Property taxes are going up, it's true. Here's what I know.

Chea Waters Evans
Representative

First, an important note: We recently lost two pillars of our community, and it's a heartbreak for their families and a true loss for all of us, not just on a personal level, but as a town. Peter



Trono called me to task several times over various issues and was always kind, respectful, curious and fun to talk to. I valued his opinion and will keep it in the back of my mind always as I move forward as a legislator. Louise McCarren was funny and warm, and her intellect and wisdom was evident even when she was being her quirky self. I will miss her and our talks very much; she was generous with her advice and I felt lucky to be a recipient. We were so lucky to have her looking out for us, as she always did for so many.

And now, property taxes.

I had a community conversation hour at the library on Monday night. These are usually pretty affable gatherings with a few folks in the room who care about a specific cause or want to know more about a particular bill. I wasn't surprised that Monday was all about property taxes, and that people are angry and frustrated. And you should be.

There are a lot of things wrong with how this is going down. First and foremost, the fact that it took most legislators by surprise is upsetting. I do my homework, I keep up with my

emails, I communicate regularly with my colleagues about what's happening around here, and I was still caught off-guard. I think it has to do partially with people truly not anticipating this perfect storm of catastrophic financial situations that all caught up with us at the same time. At the risk of getting myself into a little hot water, I also believe it involves a lack of communication from and between the governor and General Assembly leadership.

Our property taxes are going up. It's inevitable. That's about as much as I know right now, though, because we don't know the tax rate yet and won't until it's set by the state after all the school budget figures come in. This is business as usual, but unfortunately seems especially confusing and egregious this year because we know they're going to increase but we don't know by how much.

By the time you're reading this, there will have been several days of legislation, and the H850 bill that gets rid of the 5-percent cap and offers instead a cents discount to school districts will be working its way through the Senate. Our discount will be 17 cents per dollar on every \$100,000 of property value, based on the 17-percent disadvantage we received when new pupil weights were configured. But we don't know yet what our percentage will be. At this point, there will also have been a school board meeting and a Champlain Valley School District community forum. It's possible that the school district will rework and then rewarn our budget so we can vote on it in April, but that's up to the school board. I strongly encourage the school board to take a crack at reconfiguring

our budget so we can save some money and avoid a budget failure and all the complications that go along with that.

There are layers of fixes in the works: some are Band-Aids that will help in the short-term, like the cent discounts and whatever quick-fix revenue streams the legislature can come up with in this session and in 2025. Longer-term fixes are critical, however. This can look like school consolidation in more rural districts, or cutting staff and programs from our schools across the state, or creating a state-wide school district to remove many administrative and operating costs. It's hard to know where this all will lead or what the solutions will be, but I do know it's going to take a combination of remedies, some faster than others.

I want to be clear about a few things: first, I hear all of you. I get it. I'm not saying in any way that you shouldn't feel upset about the situation; it's stressful and upsetting. I truly don't want your taxes to go up this much. I don't want my own taxes to go up this much, either. I also don't hear people in Montpelier who think this isn't a big deal, or who think we're just going to have to deal with it. We are



going through all the options.

I also want to stress the importance of our schools. Public schools are the backbone of our community. Many years ago, we made a collective decision as Vermonters to support educating all children across the state as best we can in order to help them all thrive.

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Education

Quirky works for answering unusual college essay questions

Margo Bartsch
College Essay Coach

When asked an unusual question, it is OK to give an unusual answer. With tens of thousands of college applicants, a quirky essay prompt encourages the student to set themselves apart from the competition.

The 2023-24 college application season had an abundance of unexpected essay questions with different word counts. Four colleges rose to the top of asking uncommon prompts within a set word limit: Columbia University, Wake Forest University, University of Pennsylvania and University of Vermont.

Since the Supreme Court affirmative-action ruling last year, which eliminated the consideration of race on college and graduate school applications, essays have expanded their role in learning about a student's life experiences. Essays are a creative way for students to share their background and interests beyond the typical college application data points such as geography, family or academics.

Colleges include quirky prompts for a purpose: They are an engaging way for a student to talk directly to the admissions committee. Their responses, tone and ideas can illustrate how they will engage in the campus community. The essay topic

and writing style can create a memorable impression beyond the required Common Application's essays, recommendations and other materials.

First, Columbia University asks in 100 words to list the information sources that have contributed to the applicant's intellectual development beyond academic coursework. The essay format requires using commas or semicolons to separate each item on the list. There cannot be a thematic sentence to set the stage for the information. Rather, the way a student organizes the listing can shed insight into how they present ideas.

Colleges are building a diverse community of students. This listing can be expansive beyond books, videos and podcasts. Influences can include artistic and musical performances, museum visits and professional journals. Each student brings unique perspectives that have been shaped by outside sources throughout their life.

Second, Wake Forest requests a Top Ten List that includes writing a title. Each entry is allowed 100 characters with spaces, which are around 15 to 20 words. The selected topic introduces their passion. This informal format encourages the student to highlight an interest that sets them apart from the crowd.

A list is a quick-take approach, introduces a theme and engages the reader as additional

details unfold. In choosing the main idea and supporting points, the student shares how an activity has defined them. Colleges learn how the student dived deep into an area that could become a springboard for the future.

Third, the University of Pennsylvania asks to write a thank-you note to someone you have not thanked and want to acknowledge. In just 200 words, this is an opportunity for the student to consider who may have impacted their life with everyday occurrences or a moment that has been taken for granted.

This unique essay format illustrates how a student approaches the structure of a personal note and their unique writing style. How the applicant expresses gratitude shows the admissions committee who has inspired the student and how the writer is motivated to pass that impact forward.

Also, the prompt specifically asks the applicant to thank someone who has not been acknowledged in the past. The writer should address the time lapse and reflect on how their life has changed since those events.

The thank-you note format is an opportunity to show empathy. The message reveals how this experience was important to the writer's personal development. This thoughtful reflection can foreshadow future interactions in college.

Finally, the University of Vermont asks

the student to choose from five prompts in writing an optional 500-word essay. The fifth prompt asks them to identify one song that represents the soundtrack of their life and explain its personal relevance.

This creative prompt allows the student to share artistic symbolism and self-examination. The longer essay can elaborate how the song connects to the writer's experiences and brings perspective to the writer's outlook. Overcoming challenges or sharing happiness brings context to a student's growth.

The student's activities and interests are essay fodder. Showing imagination in choosing a topic is essential. Reflecting on past experiences can become a time capsule for the writer.

Quirky essay prompts might appear random or silly; however, this creative approach can share the student's unique voice. An unpredictable response can add further dimension that might otherwise have been overlooked in the application. Nobody wants to read a boring story.

(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.)

CVSD leaders visit Charlotte Central School to celebrate it's focus

Naomi Strada
(Summarized by Tom Scatchard)

In early February, Champlain Valley School District principals and Superintendent Sanchez visited Charlotte Central School to learn from each other and to celebrate the school's focus on collaboration, differentiated instruction and engaged learners.

Kindergarteners created crowns and crafts in honor of the 100th day of school. They imagined how they would spend \$100 and couldn't wait to show the adults all the hundreds they could find in their classroom.

In first grade, students looked at a 100 grid and shared equations they could see in the visualization of 100. Students were using "quiet think" time and revoicing the thoughts shared by their classmates.

Scientist students in fifth grade were wondering about the creation of the moon and learned about how the U.S. created a space program that allowed astronauts to visit the moon.

Wednesday, Feb. 7, was World Read Aloud day. The sixth-grade team was able to join an audience from around the country to listen to author Aaron Reynolds read "Creepy Carrots." Charlotte Central School was the only school that won the trivia question.

The Charlotte Central School community ended the week with a staff-student basketball game. Everyone was the winner in this game. Spending time cheering for teachers and classmates always builds a



Courtesy photo

Students from the Champlain Valley School District's Connecting Youth program traveled to Montpelier to support a ban on flavored tobacco.

strong community of belonging and care. The game brought back memories from many years ago watching staff and student competitions.

The Charlotte Central School basketball teams are finished with the regular season and are entering the school district tournament next week. The final games of the tournament will be played on Tuesday and Thursday, next week.

Author visits

Charlotte Central School welcomed author

and illustrator Jason Chin on Tuesday, Feb. 13. Chin spoke to students about how he became a book author and illustrator: He was inspired by a visiting illustrator to his elementary school when he was a student. He also explained how he uses curiosity and research to ask questions, make connections and create the works of art that are his picture books.

Chin told amazing stories about his travels around the world. A goal of his is to illustrate

the characters in his books in such a way that all readers can see themselves in the pages. Huge thanks to the Champlain Valley School District for supporting this visit, and for the many helping hands that went into making it happen for the students.

Champlain Valley School District budget update

At its Jan. 23 meeting, the Champlain Valley School District board approved the proposed 2024-25 budget to present to voters on Town Meeting Day. The proposed budget is now a warned article on the ballot.

Last week, the board's finance committee had a meeting to discuss the options and implications for the district and taxpayers regarding the proposed 2024-2025 budget. At the February 20th School Board meeting the full board came together to discuss the budget and work towards a decision on how to move forward.

Youth voices rise in Montpelier

Part of the goals of the Champlain Valley School District's Connecting Youth program is creating opportunities for youth empowerment and advocacy. This past week, 25 middle-school level students gathered in Montpelier in support of S.18, Vermont's bill to ban flavored-tobacco products. The students shared their stories on the Capitol steps, spoke to legislators caucusing on the floor and were an unmissable presence in the Statehouse all morning.

Education



Education leaders aren't sure bill banning smart devices in schools will improve student health

Holly Sullivan
Community News Service

Laura Derriendinger wants to protect Vermont children from social media, or as she defined it to Senate education committee members Jan. 26, “a toxic rabbit hole.”

“There are class-action lawsuits against social media companies on behalf of parents whose children have died because of direct product exposure to these different social medias,” said Derriendinger, a mother and nurse who serves as a planning commissioner and town health officer in Middletown Springs. “While these products have become a norm, what the science is telling us now is that it’s not a safe or a healthy norm, especially for our children.”

Derriendinger, along with other Rutland-area citizens, recently approached Sen. Terry Williams, R-Rutland, asking for a bill limiting digital technology in schools.

The result: Williams and other legislators introduced S.284, which would dramatically limit the use of electronic devices, digital platforms and more in all Vermont schools. The bill has drawn testimony across several committee meetings in recent weeks, including from high-profile voices such as Vermont Attorney General Charity Clark.

If passed, the bill would require schools to create policies banning student use of personal smart devices and cellphones, prohibit teachers and school officials from using social media in lessons or for announcements and allow students to opt out of using electronic devices, the internet and more.

The latter policies would be developed by districts and require schools to provide students alternative activities or instruction methods.

“They’re an amazing group of young women,” Williams explained in an interview. “Basically, one of them homeschools her children. And I said, ‘So, what’s your ask? Why do you want me to do this?’ (She said), ‘Because I’m homeschooling my children. I’d really like to get them back in the school, but I’m concerned about the presence of electronic devices in school.’”

The legislation, Williams told Community News Service, “aims to improve the environments of schools, to promote mental health and wellness.”

S.284 would require all Vermont schools to create policies prohibiting students from accessing their electronic devices during the school day. A policy might prohibit students from bringing those devices entirely, require students to keep them in a designated spot or involve putting the devices in lockers or a sealed pouch, legislative counsel Beth St. James told Senate education committee members Jan. 26.

Sen. David Weeks, R-Rutland, another of the bill’s sponsors, clarified that S.284 has exemptions for students who use their smart devices for medical purposes. “One example of a medical exemption, a student may have a diabetes monitoring app on their phone,” Weeks said via email.

S.284 also gives the option to opt out of technology use in school entirely.

The bill would require all classrooms to have non-digital learning options for their students. If a school failed to provide those accommodations — even if it would mean trying to replicate a YouTube video on paper — the school could be sued under the legislation.

Several of the proposed restrictions spurred debate, though most people testifying in committee meetings agreed with the bill’s focus on better protecting children’s data privacy.

Speaking before the committee Feb. 2, Clark, the state attorney general, said she is “supportive of the work on this bill and this bill generally.”

Clark, who said she is well-informed on social media from her office’s investigative work, detailed components of social media that can distort young people’s mental health, such as the “infinite scroll” of app feeds, “excessive push notifications” and “like counts.”

To illustrate her concerns regarding social media’s impact on wellness, Clark outlined a hypothetical: a child struggling with an eating disorder seeking out content that exacerbates their illness.

“(The algorithm) doesn’t pass a moral judgment or a health judgment on (the question of), ‘This might not be good for you,’” she told committee members. “It just keeps showing that person the very thing that they probably shouldn’t be looking at because that’s the thing they keep obsessively looking at.”

Jay Nichols, executive director of the Vermont Principals’ Association, says he understands the negative impact of social media on young minds. As he put it Feb. 2, the association is “on the front line of the negative impacts of digital addiction to social media.” However, he said it does not support S.284.

“Already, most schools have social media and cell phone access completely or significantly restricted during the school day,” he said. “Providing the mental health resources that students need when they need them is probably a better approach to addressing mental health needs in students than banning cell phones and social media from schools from our perspective.”

Nichols called the opt-out element of the bill unreasonable. He told committee members that providing paper copies of digital materials is “a huge burden to schools and is not necessary,” saying later that “it’s not appropriate to allow students to simply opt out of learning how to use technology in today’s world.”

Though the principals’ association supports the protection of children’s data and privacy, Nichols does not believe that this is the bill to do it, he said.

“To ban (online resources) would only hurt the progress of students who will be looking for jobs and pursuing higher education in our increasingly digital world,” he said.

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

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Charlotte History

History of how the town got the Charlotte Town Beach

Dan Cole
Charlotte Historical Society

An inquiry about our beach was received recently from Dick St. George posing several questions, including our inability to restrict beach access to Charlotte residents.

Let's look at the origins of the beach and surrounding park that have become an integral part of our town. The road is not where it originally was, but that's another story.

Was the land donated?

No. The beach area, with some land on the east side of the road for parking, had been leased from Richard Thurber for \$1 per year for many years with the town paying for upkeep and maintenance.

Tom Larson recalls the raft being opposite the current northernmost stairs, with a narrow dirt road access to the beach, allowing his father's tractor to drag the raft out of the lake at season's end.

The town approved ending the lease arrangement at a special town meeting held July 8, 1970, potentially expanding use of the east side of the road. Negotiations were finalized in February 1971. The town purchased 800 feet of shoreline and 6 acres of land from Mr. and Mrs. Richard Thurber for \$20,000 and 80 feet of shoreline and 12+ acres of land from Mr. and Mrs. Walter Larson for \$20,000.

To finance a portion of the \$40,000 purchase price, \$5,000 was withdrawn from a development fund established by Harry Webb of Shelburne. The selectboard pursued outside funding to avoid another capital expense on the town budget; however, there was a caveat.

The town got \$20,000 from the federal Bureau of Outdoor Recreation and \$15,000 from the state's recreational fund. Because the town accepted state and federal funds,

the beach could not be restricted to Charlotte residents but could be controlled by the town.

A committee was tasked with creating a plan to develop the beach area. An initial plan was put forward to cost about \$25,000, but stalled in 1973 when several Charlotte residents argued the proposed recreation area should be at the school. Others pushed for a new committee and plan, which threatened the arrangement with the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation due to a deadline for the funding allocation.

Several town committees got together and hammered out a more comprehensive revised multiphase plan for the beach costing \$115,386, which was approved at the 1974 town meeting.

A solicitation for bids was placed in the newspapers throughout the summer of 1976, and another request for \$39,000 in funding was made to launch the project. The town got this money with a reimbursement of \$12,580 from the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation and the Vermont Recreation Department Act; state assistance of \$8,806; and the town share of \$3,774.

The plan included a swimming dock, upgraded rafts and stairs, lifeguard facilities, beach equipment, a beach house, two tennis courts, a parking lot for 60 cars, riprap to stabilize the shoreline, planting of new trees, parking lot lights, a raised area for picnic and general usage, diversion ditches and a fenced-in children's play area with equipment.

Paul Marcotte, chair of the Charlotte Parks and Recreation Committee and experienced employee of Pizzagalli Construction, volunteered to supervise the work. As the park developed, it became apparent that it would evolve into a crucial space for our community.

It was resolved in 1981 that the park and beach honor Marine Sgt. Fred David

St. George, the only Charlotte resident to be killed in Vietnam, and arrangements were made to dedicate the renovated and expanded town park to his memory. On July 4, 1982, 250 people gathered at the area for the official ceremony.



St. George, a member of the first graduating class of Champlain Valley Union High in 1965, was killed in action on Sept. 10, 1967, in Quang Nam Province only weeks before his tour of duty would have ended.

Son of David and Ruth (Thorpe) St. George, his father had predeceased him in 1963. At the time of the Burlington Free Press article describing the dedication, his mother seemed not to have accepted his death and kept looking for him to come home. His mother died in 1973. Here is a link to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial virtual wall with his dedication at <http://tinyurl.com/2sd4er8p>. (You will notice he is listed as a Hinesburg resident because at that time rural mail delivery, before enhanced 911 addressing, gave him, and others who lived in that part of East Charlotte, a Hinesburg address.)

Sen. Patrick J. Leahy was the keynote speaker. There was an honor guard provided by the U.S. Marine Corps. The blessing and dedication of the park was made by Monsignor John Fradet.

Such memorials do not glorify war; they honor the soldiers and their families. One would be hard-pressed to get a greater denunciation of war than from most of the soldiers who fought in one; or, as



Top left: Fred St. George's senior photo from the 1965 "Janus," the Champlain Valley Union High yearbook.

Above: This memorial to Marine Sgt. Fred David St. George, Charlotte's only resident to be killed in the Vietnam War, is at the Charlotte Town Beach.

Renaissance theologian Desiderius Erasmus wrote in the 16th century: "War is delightful to those who have no experience of it."

It begs the question: Why isn't the beach area not officially identified as the "Fred St. George Memorial Park."



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Charlotte Recreation

Nicole Conley
Charlotte Recreation Center

Spring programs

Villari's Martial Arts

Most children and teens will receive some benefit from Villari's martial arts after training for just a few short months. But the real benefit comes from long-term training. There is something special that happens to a child who grows up in a Villari's martial arts school. They are simply more confident, respectful, focused, healthy, hardworking and optimistic. Cost per session: \$176. Session 3: Wednesdays, March 13–June 5, 1:45-2:45 p.m.

Youth lacrosse

Players in grades third through eighth who participate in lacrosse will need a U.S. Lacrosse membership. Visit the rec department website for more information. The registration form must be submitted with payment by March 10.

Little League baseball & softball

The Champlain Valley Little League (Charlotte-Hinesburg-Shelburne) registration closes on March 1. More information is on our website.

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)

Mini lacrosse

Mini lacrosse practices will be offered to kindergarten-second graders on Saturday mornings at Charlotte Central. Each participant will get a chance to learn more about the game while having fun. Saturdays, April 20–June 1 (No lacrosse May 25) Time: 9 a.m. Cost: \$40

Spring driver's education

The Charlotte Recreation Department will be offering a driver's education program this spring by the 802 Driving school. The driver's ed programs will be taught by Joe Barch, who has over 15 years of experience teaching in the public schools.

Class dates are listed on the website.
Time: 6:30-8:30 p.m. Location: Charlotte Central School
Fee: \$900

Afterschool tennis lessons

The program is open to first-fifth graders. Age groups will be split into the two time slots listed below.

Mondays & Wednesdays
Session 1: April 29-May 15
Session 2: May 20-June 10 (no lessons May 27) Grades 1-3 - (Monday) 3:30-4:30pm (Wed) 2:30-3:30pm Grades 3-5 (Mon) 4:30- 5:30pm (Wed) 3:30-4:30pm
Cost per session: \$85 (6 lessons)
Tuesdays & Thursdays Session 1: April 30-May 16
Session 2: May 21-June 6
Grades 1-2 ~ 3:30- 4:30pm
Grades 3-5 ~ 4:30- 5:30pm Cost per session: \$85 (6 lessons)

Safe Sitter babysitters course

Safe Sitter prepares teens to be safe when they're home alone, watching siblings or babysitting. The course offers four main content areas: safety skills, child care skills, first aid and rescue skills, and life and business skills. The lessons are filled with fun activities and role-playing exercises. Participants will practice choking rescue and diapering. Register with the town offering the program.

Grades: 6-8 Time: 9 a.m.-3 p.m.
Williston-Saturday, March 9
Charlotte-Wednesday, April 24
(Charlotte Library) Fee: \$60.

After-school spring soccer

It's time to lace up those cleats and enjoy a fun afternoon of outdoor soccer. This program will take place after school at Charlotte Central School. Please note: This program is based on volunteer coaches and might be

canceled due to lack of volunteers.

Starts week of April 29. Cost: \$40.

Summer programs and camps

Tim Serrell tennis clinic

Tim Serrell was a summer resident of Charlotte who loved tennis. When he passed away, he left money in a trust fund to provide free tennis lessons to the children of Charlotte. The program began in 1989 and has become a Charlotte summer tradition. Your child will be assigned a time once registration for the clinic is complete.

Grades: 1-8
Date: June 17-20
Time: 8:30-9:30 a.m. & 9:30-10:30 a.m. at CharlotteTown Beach
Cost: Free (please consider making a donation)

Champlain Valley track & field

Charlotte is proud to be a part of this three-town track and field program (Charlotte, Hinesburg and Williston). Children learn the basics of running, jumping, throwing and relays. There will be opportunities to compete in events with other local track and field programs, along with a state meet.

Mondays & Wednesdays
June 17-July 19
Ages: 7-14 Time: 6-7:30 p.m.
Location: Champlain Valley Union High
Cost: \$50

International soccer camp

The international soccer camp will be held the week of July 15 at Charlotte Central School. The camp staff is selected and trained in the U.K. to work in these camps.

Tiny Tykes, ages 3-5, 8-9 a.m. Resident: \$110.
Half-day program, ages 6-14, 9 a.m.-noon. Resident: \$210.
Full-day program, ages 7-15, 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Resident: \$275.

*Host a coach and receive a rebate on your registration!

Adult programs

Boater safety course

Boating safety education is required for any

motor boat operator, 12 years of age or older, born after Jan. 1, 1974. The Boat Vermont, eight-hour classroom course will enable you to get the certification that you need. Participants must be present at all classes to be eligible for certification. Ages: 12+

Dates: April 29, May 1, 6 & 8.
Time: 6-8:30 p.m.

Fee: \$10.
Where: Vermont State Police building (Williston)

Pick-up basketball

Join the basketball fanatics on Monday and Wednesday nights at 7 p.m. at Charlotte Central School. All skill levels welcome. Ages 13 (with caregiver) and up are welcome to join, register online.

Outdoor pickleball

The spring season of pickleball in Charlotte begins April 3 at the beach on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 5:30 p.m. through late fall. Register online to be placed on an e-mail distribution list.

Intro to pickleball

Join Greg Smith for free pickleball instruction on Saturday mornings at 10 a.m. at the Charlotte Town Beach courts. The outdoor season will begin the week of April 6 depending on weather. Register online to be placed on an e-mail distribution list.

Full and partial scholarships are available for all youth recreation activities. You can find additional information on all our programs on our website at charlotterec.com

Questions? Contact Nicole Conley by email recreation@townofcharlotte.com.

Charlotte Town Beach attendant

If you're looking for a fun summer job, the Charlotte Recreation Department is looking for friendly and energetic beach attendants to work at the town beach starting Memorial Day weekend.

Ages 15 and up are encouraged to apply. For the full job description please visit the rec department's website.

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Learn More

Calendar of Events

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

**Open house at the firehouse
Saturday, Feb. 24, 1-4 p.m.**

The Charlotte Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service is holding an open house on Saturday. Stop by the station anytime between 1-4 p.m. and meet the people, inspect the equipment, ask questions and have a snack. They also have a limited supply of free eclipse viewing “eyeglasses” to give to attendees. Kids are welcome with adult supervision. If you have any questions, email cpr@cvfrs.org.

**Family Art Saturday
Saturday, Feb. 24, 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 “Here Now: Art and Migration” artist Lydia Nakashima Degarrod. You and your creative crew can explore printmaking and sculptural techniques and create your own vibrant mobiles and wall hangings around themes of family and home.

**Explorer, author talk
Thursday, Feb. 29, 6:30 pm.**

Explorer, author and athlete Jan Reynolds will speak at the Vermont Ski and Snowboard Museum on Thursday, Feb. 29, at 6:30 p.m. Reynolds is a world-record setting climber and skier, Olympic athlete and award-winning author and photographer, who is highly regarded for her ability to capture stunning imagery and tell compelling stories. One of her notable feats includes a groundbreaking National Geographic-sponsored climb and ski expedition on Mustagata in Western China. During this expedition, she set the women’s world record for high-altitude skiing and achieved the highest descent from a summit alongside her male partners. Reynold’s

adventures are chronicled in her book “The Glass Summit: One Woman’s Epic Journey Breaking Through.”

**Vermont Commons School open house
Sunday, March 10, 1 p.m.**

Winter open house at Vermont Commons School to see how the school works to make learning a shared pursuit with students and teachers participating as members of a community where everyone has important contributions to make. Register to attend at vermontcommons.org/admissions/open-house-march-2024. Learn about the growth of the campus and meet faculty, students and parents.

**Shelburne Age Well Grab & Go meal
Tuesday, March 12, 11 a.m.-noon**

Age Well and St. Catherine’s of Siena Parish in Shelburne are teaming up to provide a meal to go for anyone age 60 and older on Tuesday, March 12. The meals will be available for pick up in the church’s parking lot at 72 Church Street from 11 a.m.-noon and are for all 60 or older. A \$5 donation is suggested for these nutritious and delicious meals. The menu is: beef round, boiled potatoes, cabbage and carrots in beef stock, wheat roll and butter, frosted leprechaun cake and milk. To order a meal call 802-503-1107 or email agewellstcath@gmail.com by March 6.

**Misinformation information
Wednesday, March 13, 7 p.m.**

The League of Women Voters of Vermont will sponsor a discussion on misinformation and disinformation and their possible impact on political campaigns at Montpelier’s Kellogg-Hubbard Library. The talk is both in person at the library and online at orcamedia.net. Journalist Dave Gram and M.E. Kabay, emeritus professor of computer information systems at Norwich University, will speak.

**Luncheon at St. Catherine of Siena
Wednesday, March 20, 11:30 a.m.-noon**

St. Catherine of Siena and Age Well are offering a luncheon on Wednesday, March 20, in the church’s parish hall in Shelburne. 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 beef burgundy with mushrooms and onions, wide-egg noodles, sliced carrots, green beans, dinner roll, butter, oatmeal date craisin cookie and milk. You must register by March 14. Call 802-662-5283 or email kbatres@agewellvt.org.

**‘Never Spoken Again’ video
Saturday, March 24, 2-3 p.m.**

Catch a special screening of video artworks accompanying the exhibition “Never Spoken Again,” featuring artists Laura Huertas Millan, Carlos Motta, and Francois Boucher at the Fleming Museum of Art at the University of Vermont. This will be followed by a public tour of the “Never Spoken Again” exhibition and a tour of artworks and objects from the Fleming Museum’s Founding Collections with Kristan M. Hanson.

**‘Terrestrials: life on the ground’
Friday, March 22, 7-8 p.m.**

Come to the marble court at the Fleming Museum of Art at the University of Vermont for a performance featuring three original works by professor Paul Besaw in collaboration with an amazing team of musicians and dancers.

**‘IMMACULATE DECEPTION/and then there were NUN’
Thursday-Sunday, March 14-16, 7 p.m., & March 17, 2 p.m.**

Go With The Flo Productions presents a convent comedy murder mystery written and directed by Sean Moran at the Shelburne Town Hall. Tickets at theaterengine.com or at the door.

**STEM Showcase 6.0
Saturday, March 23, 10 a.m.-12:30 p.m.**

STEM Showcase 6.0 will be at the University of Vermont 10 a.m.-12:30 p.m., March 23. The event is a fun, hands-on learning opportunity for third-ninth grade students interested in exploring science, technology and engineering. Registrations will be accepted until March 20 or the showcase is filled at go.uvm.edu/stem6. A confirmation email with address and parking information will be sent once registered.

**Solar eclipse at Shelburne Museum
Monday, April 8, 11 a.m.**

Shelburne Museum is holding viewing of the total solar eclipse on April 8. The museum grounds will be open along with the Weathervane Café, the Carousel, Round Barn and, depending on the weather conditions, some of the museum buildings. Tickets are \$25 for adults, \$23 for members, \$15 for children 3-17 and students with ID. Children under 3 are free. More info at store.shelburnemuseum.org/Events.aspx.

**Woodlands protection retreat
Friday-Sunday, May 17-19**

Maintaining and connecting habitat is important for the movement of wildlife across the landscape. Vermont Coverts: Woodlands for Wildlife will hold their 2024 Cooperator Training May 17-19 in Waterbury. This retreat will share information on improving habitat for wildlife, maintaining connected landscapes and improving forest health. This session features presentations by state and local experts in wildlife and forest management and alumni from past sessions. Visit vtcoverts.org to download an application or call 802-877-2777.

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Library News

Kids, if the snowshoe fits wear it – and enjoy winter

Margaret Woodruff
Director

The library is the perfect place to find activities for winter vacation week. Besides opportunities to embroider, watch birds, build LEGO machines and more, the library hopes to help kids enjoy the snow with its Library of Things. Child-sized snowshoes (up to 90 pounds) are available for a one-week check out.

An adult needs to sign the Library of Things user agreement and waiver. Take a look at the entire Library of Things at <https://bit.ly/49zx7lt>.

Special events

Furbearer kit display

Friday, Feb. 23-Friday, March 8

Thanks to the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department, a large variety of pelts, skulls and track sets will be on display at the library. Stop by to view and check out some books about the animals who inhabit our state: Furbearer Book List.

NASA Solar Ambassador Eclipse Program

Friday, March 1, 1 p.m.

Bridget Kimsey, a NASA Solar System Ambassador from South Burlington, will teach us about space in preparation for the 2024 total solar eclipse. This presentation is for all ages and will have hands-on activities available for the young and young at heart. Eclipse glasses will be available. Co-sponsored with Charlotte Senior Center. Registration appreciated through the Charlotte Senior Center: 802-425-3864. Need eclipse glasses? Fill

out this form to be signed up. Glasses available March 15 at the Library.

Dog Communication

Monday, March 11, 5:30 p.m.

Is a yawn always just a yawn? Why does a dog shake off even when it's not wet? Why is a growl a good thing? Is a tail wag always friendly?

This popular, long-running dog communication and safety lecture is a multi-media extravaganza of fun where the audience also gets to test their "dog reading" skills. Dog trainer Deb Helfrich demystifies dog communication, reveals some common dog-human misunderstandings and explores how we can all live safely and happily together. At the end of the presentation, the audience engages in several fun, interactive exercises to practice reading dog body language. Participants will also enjoy exclusive free access to a carefully curated online resource of supplementary learning materials.

Registration appreciated but not required at <http://tinyurl.com/32ch7cxf>.

Writer's Studio @ Pierson Library

Tuesday, March 12, 6:30 p.m.

Looking for a welcoming spot to share your writing? Join us for the third session of the ongoing, 3-town Writer's Studio, a positive atmosphere to share feedback about writing projects big and small. Geoff Gevalt of the Vermont Young Writer's Project serves as the facilitator for this monthly meet-up that rotates among our three neighboring libraries. Please email Margaret at margaret@charlottepubliclibrary.org if you're interested in joining the group.

Music for St. Patrick's Day



Saturday, March 16, 10:30 a.m. to Noon

Join Mike Walker and "beeswing" for a music session at the library to celebrate St. Patrick's Day. For all ages.

Children's Programs

Preschool Story Time

Tuesdays and Fridays, 10 a.m.

Join us at 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. We'll be exploring the sensory table, sorting, playing with blocks, play dough.....these are a few of the open ended projects planned for Wednesday morning play based learning at the Charlotte Library.

Let's LEGO

Saturdays, 10 a.m.-1:30 p.m.

Drop-in for LEGO free play. The library has 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.

Programs for adults

Stillwater meditation

Saturdays, 9 a.m. (except Feb. 24 & March 2)

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

Sustainable Charlotte book discussion

Wednesdays, March 13-April 4, 7 p.m.

In "Saving Us: A Climate Scientist's Case for Hope and Healing in a Divided World," Katharine Hayhoe argues that when it comes to changing hearts and minds, facts are only one part of the equation. We need to find shared values in order to connect our unique identities to collective action. Explore this book and discuss possibilities for our community and world. Copies available at the circulation desk. Register for Zoom link at

<https://bit.ly/49igif8>.

Mystery Book Group

Monday, March 18, 10 a.m.

In "Mr. Champion's Farewell," Mike Ripley takes up the challenge of completing an old manuscript, which became Mr. Champion's farewell. Campion himself plays the central role in this quintessentially British mystery, but there are appearances, too, from all of Margery Allingham's regular characters, from Luke to Campion's former manservant Lugg, to his wife Lady Amanda Fitton and others. The dialogue is sharp and witty, the observation keen, and the climax is thrilling and eerily atmospheric. Copies available at the circulation desk.

Better Together book club

Wednesday, March 20, 7 p.m.

"Never Enough" is the definitive book on the rise of the toxic achievement culture that's overtaking kids' and parents' lives. It offers a new framework for fighting back. Copies available at the circulation desk. The e-book and audiobook are available on Libby.

Men's Book Group

Wednesday, March 20, 7:30 p.m.

Stay tuned for title details. This is a hybrid event. Join the discussion at the library or on Zoom at <http://tinyurl.com/bde3bktn>.

Recurring programs

Book chat

Wednesdays, 3 p.m.

Meet each week to discuss new books, old books and books you 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 to share and discuss short stories old and new via Zoom at <http://tinyurl.com/4bkn8ru8>. 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 on the first Thursday of the month. The next meeting is March 7 at 6 p.m. Contact the library or visit the library website at charlottepubliclibrary.org for more information.

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

Charlotte Park and Wildlife Refuge Oversight Committee
Thursday, February 22 5- 6 p.m.

Selectboard Meeting
Monday, February 26, 6:30 p.m.

Charlotte Conservation Commission Meeting
Tuesday, February 27, 7 - 9 p.m.

Development Review Board
Wednesday, February 28, 7 p.m.

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Senior Center News

Center critical for community with half of residents over 50

Lori York
Director

According to the 2022 data from the U.S. Census Bureau, the median age in Charlotte is just over 50. This means that at least half of Charlotte's residents are eligible to participate in programming at the Charlotte Senior Center.

Senior centers play a crucial role in promoting social engagement and providing valuable services that help older adults stay healthy and remain independent. Having a gathering space for seniors becomes even more critical as we age because, in many instances, one's social networks tend to decrease.

The aging population in Charlotte highlights the importance of offering varied programming to support the diverse needs of older adults, ranging in age from 50 to 100.

Check out the programs available at the senior center; you may be surprised by who participates in activities at the senior center and the variety of opportunities offered.

Community services

AARP free tax preparation Wednesdays, March 6-27

Tax-aide volunteers will prepare tax returns, provide tax assistance 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. These tax clinics are open to all ages. One-hour appointments available at the senior center between 1-4 p.m. Registration required. Free.

Alzheimer's Caregivers Support Group Thursday, March 14, 5-6 p.m.

Are you caring for someone with Alzheimer's? Do you know someone who is? Please join the monthly Caregiver Support Group on the second Thursday of each month from 5-6 p.m. The meetings provide a safe place for caregivers, family and friends of persons with dementia to meet and develop a mutual support system. For additional information or to receive the Zoom meeting link, contact Susan Cartwright at cartwright.susan1@gmail.com.

Age Well February Meal Wednesday, Feb. 28, noon

On the fourth Wednesday of the month, Age Well will provide a sit-down meal at the senior center. This month the meal will be cheese tortellini with beef, marinara sauce, green beans, dinner roll and an orange for dessert. Registration and \$5 lunch donation required by Thursday, Feb. 25. You will need to have a completed 2024 Age Well Registration form on file.

Weekly Age Well grab & go meals

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

Bone Builders

Tuesdays, 10:30-11:30 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. Cost: Free. No registration required, but there is paperwork to complete before your first class, so please plan to arrive a bit early.

Presentations & events

'Farm & Field' by Margaret McSwain

The March artist exhibit is the series "Farm and Field," based on capturing the essence and beauty of Charlotte landscapes,

farming spaces and locally grown food.

As an oil painter, Margaret has been drawn to the pastoral scenes that surround us and the subtle differences in light and seasonal changes on the land. She is also inspired by the local farms, farm stands and the beauty of the foods grown. As a collection, this series is a visual exploration of the land, growth and the abundance that surrounds us all.

'It's not just plain vanilla' Wednesday, Feb. 28, 1 p.m.

Join Hank Kaestner for a look into the world's most popular flavor: its history, cultivation and production. Kaestner was the director of spice procurement at McCormick & Company and was responsible for acquiring spice raw materials. In 2010, he was inducted into the International Culinary Arts Hall of Fame. He is also an avid bird watcher and leads the senior center's popular birding trips. Registration appreciated. Free

Total Solar Eclipse presentation Friday, March 1, 1 p.m.

Bridget Kimsey, a NASA solar system ambassador (solarsystem.nasa.gov/solar-system-ambassadors/events) from South Burlington, will teach us about space in preparation for the 2024 total solar eclipse. This presentation is for all ages and will have hands-on activities available for the young and young at heart. Eclipse glasses will be available. Registration appreciated. Free.

Programs

Book discussion group Thursdays, March 7-28, 1-2 p.m.

In March, a new book discussion group will begin talking about the New York Times bestselling book "Lessons in Chemistry" by Bonnie Garmus. Elizabeth Zott is a gifted research chemist whose career takes a detour when she becomes the star of a beloved TV cooking show. Copies available at the library. Free, but registration required. Co-sponsored with the Charlotte Library.

Spring into meditation Wednesdays, March 6- April 10, 5-6 pm

Charlie Nardozi recently returned from a month-long retreat at a meditation center in Northern India where he spent time meditating, walking, chanting, discussing and enjoying the mountains. To share his Himalayas meditation experience with you, Charlie is offering this six-week meditation series to help shake off the winter blues and do a little spring cleaning. Each class will have a short talk on a meditation topic and then, using simple breathing techniques or a gentle chant, he will guide the class into a closed-eyes meditation. All are welcome. Come join in person at the senior center or join on Zoom. Everyone who signs up for the class will get the Zoom recordings automatically. Contact Charlie with any questions (cnardozi124@gmail.com). Cost: \$60 for the six-week series. Registration required.

Birding expedition

Wednesday, March 13, 9 a.m.

Join avid bird watcher, Hank Kaestner and learn to identify the various bird species and habitats right here in Vermont. Group size is limited to 20. Free. Registration required.

Watercolor late winter fun

Tuesdays, March 5-26, 9 a.m.-noon.

Join Lynn Cummings for a new set of subjects, materials and watercolor processes, just when everyone is getting really anxious for spring. Some watercolor experience is helpful. Registration required. Cost: \$165

Samba canasta

Tuesdays, 12 p.m., & Fridays, 12:30 p.m.

Samba is a new version of canasta that has quickly become very popular due to its variety of melds, which keeps the game interesting. If you are curious to learn how to play samba, call Sandy Armell at 802-425-3248.



Photo by Lori York

The children from the Charlotte Children's Center delivered handmade valentines to the seniors on Valentine's Day.



Photo by Lori York

From left, chefs Maxwell Campono and Shelby Bowen from The Residence at Shelburne Bay work on Valentine's luncheon for the seniors.



Photo by Lori York

The senior center hosted a screening of the Alzheimer's Documentary 'Keys Bags Names Words.'

Meals

Menus are posted on the website at charlotteseniorcentervt.org.

Monday lunches

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

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.

Write Ingredients

Delving into many incarnations of spaghetti sauce

Susan Ohanian
Contributor

Writing about Monday Munches at the Charlotte Senior Center has spurred me to acquire a lot of books about food. This week's additions include "The Emily Dickinson Cookbook: Recipes from Emily's Table Alongside the Poems that Inspire Them" and "The Trumpland Cookbook."

Showing that the recipe claim is just a gimmick, the Trump book offers "Accountability Spaghetti," with 1/16 of a two-page spread offering this advice: Cook some spaghetti, open a jar of tomato sauce and add some turmeric.

The Dickinson cookbook tells us that the kitchen was Emily's favorite room of the house and she liked making gifts of food for family, friends and the neighborhood children, even winning prizes at local fairs.

Trying to make connections, I'll note that "strawberry oatmeal" appears among Emily's recipes. I can connect it with the turmeric in "Trumpland" because of my own recent experience with morning oatmeal. I like cinnamon on my cereal, so I grabbed the container and shook. I got weird oatmeal. The little bottle I'd grabbed was turmeric, not cinnamon. Raised on the dictum: "waste not, want not," I ate the weird cereal, vowing ever after to look at food labels very, very carefully.

Actually, I find it interesting that a spice so tasty on some things is just so weird on others. Probably anticipation is key here.

You can rest assured that, whether or not the volunteer cooks at the Charlotte Senior Center put turmeric in their spaghetti sauce, they won't offer politics and can be depended on to add some pizzazz into the spaghetti they serve.

For literary spaghetti, try Agatha Christie. In "Hickory Dickory Dock," Henri Poirot "sat down ... and busied himself with keeping his moustaches out of the excellent minestrone which was served by a small active Italian manservant from a big tureen. This was followed by a piping hot dish of spaghetti and meatballs."

Poirot's experience is one of the offerings in "Recipes for Murder: 66 Dishes that Celebrate the Mysteries of Agatha Christie." Anyone willing to pay \$81.95, can delve into a structuralist approach. "Dining Room Detectives: Analyzing the Food in the Novels of Agatha Christie" offers parallel discussions of food and plot, demonstrating that Christie's plots are as predefined as a recipe for baking a cake. Or cooking spaghetti.

For a straightforward account, there's "A Short History of Spaghetti with Tomato Sauce: The unbelievable true story of the world's most beloved dish" by Massimo Motanari, professor of medieval history at the University of Bologna. He also teaches history of nutrition and is one of



Photo by Ponce Photography, Pixabay

the founders and editors of the "Food & History" journal.

My advice: Skip "Trumpland Cookbook." For those who want political satire, my two Trump books offer a lot more. I'm working on book three right now. Stay tuned.

Calvin Trillin is the author of some of the best writing about eating (and a lot more). Currently, I'm reading his new book, "The Lede: Dispatches from a Life in the Press." I mention this because I want to note that at a meeting of the National Council of Teachers of English, I ate lunch with Alice, Trillin's wife. (Yes, I have his wonderful book "Alice, Let's Eat.") She was then a professor at City College of New York. She made life easy for our little group, prone to dithering, by choosing the restaurant (Chinese) and then choosing the menu, too.

Here's the connection: When the Flying Pig Bookstore was here in Charlotte, I bumped into popular cartoonist Sandra Boynton, who, coming off the ferry from New York, couldn't drive past a bookstore. Sandy's father was a good friend and publisher of a number of my books. At the National Council of Teachers of English, he introduced me to Alice Trillin.

Meanwhile, back with spaghetti, included below is a link to a fascinating New Yorker article "The Ketchup Conundrum." We learn that, with a Harvard dissertation on psychophysics, Howard Moskowitz set up a market-and-research business. One day he got a call from the Campbell's Soup Company, the makers of Prego spaghetti sauce, then deep in competition with Ragu sauce.

Working with Campbell's, Markowitz came up with 45 varieties of spaghetti sauce, with such differences as spiciness, sweetness, tartness, saltiness, thickness, aroma, mouth feel,

cost of ingredients. Then he went on the road, asking groups of people to eat 10 small bowls of different sauces and rate each on a scale of one to 100.

At that time, there was no super-chunky on the market. Based on Moskowitz's research, Campbell's produced it and made a mint of money. These days, you can go for Prego chunky at \$1.33 a pound or black truffle pomodoro sauce at \$12.73 a pound.

This 20-year-old article (<http://tinyurl.com/5dvvh45k>) is more about ketchup than sauce, and even though I have no taste for ketchup, I found it fascinating.

Whether you'd choose Prego or Ragu — or Barilla, Bertolli, Classico, Costadina, DelGrosso, Fody, Goya, Hunt's, Michael's of Brooklyn, Mina Shaksura Moroccan, Muir Glen, Nature's Promise, Newman's Own, Tuttorosso, Hannaford Traditional or one of the 7688676 others, you'd still have more big decisions. Listing just the basil possibilities would fill a page: basil with or without salt, sugar, herbs, garlic, onions, and on and on.

Instead, leave the choices to the volunteer cooks at the Charlotte Senior Center. Just come on in and relax. Let others do the cooking (and the washing up), while you enjoy good food and good conversation.

Bon appetit!

Here's the ketchup song (<http://tinyurl.com/3hht4utd>), by three sisters from the Andalusia region of Spain. They took their name in honor of their father, a flamenco guitarist known as "El Tomate."

Of course, there's that old camp song, "On Top of Spaghetti" at <http://tinyurl.com/y2m8k8hf>.

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