

Your nonprofit community news source since 1958

The Charlotte News

Thursday, March 7, 2024 | Volume 66 Number 18



Snowy frosting

Photo by Jeannette Armell

Camel's Hump and everything between it and Philo Ridge Farm is highlighted with snow on clear, blue day.

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Vol. 66, No.18



PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

DEMOCRATIC PRIMARY BALLOT

Joseph R. Biden Jr	726
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Jason Michael Palmer.....	5
Dean Phillips	15
Cenk Uygur	3
Marianne Williamson	23
Write-in.....	27

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Ryan L. Binkley.....	2
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Write-in.....	14

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Selectboard (three-year term)	
Frank Tenney.....	1,069

Selectboard (two-year term)	
Natalie Kanner.....	954
Louise McCarren.....	218

Champlain Valley School District board (three-year term)	
Meghan E. Metzler	1,088

Town Clerk (three-year term)	
Mary A. Mead.....	1,257

Town Treasurer (three-year term)	
Mary A. Mead.....	1,233

Delinquent Tax Collector (one-year term)	
Mary A. Mead.....	1,240

Town Moderator (one-year term)	
Charlie Russell	1,170

Road Commissioner (one-year term)	
Hugh Lewis Jr.	1,303

Charlotte Library Trustee (five-year term)	
Matthew Bijur.....	1,100

Cemetery Commissioner (one-year term)	
Jessie Bradley	1,129

Auditor (three-year term)	
Alexa Lewis.....	69

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Trustee of Public Funds (one year of three-year term)	
Ruth Uphold	63

CHARLOTTE ARTICLES

ARTICLE 2: Approve the selectboard’s proposed budget for fiscal year 2024-25 of \$3,252,147?	
YES	883
NO	519

ARTICLE 3: Approve Charlotte Volunteer Fire and Rescue Services budget of \$989,087 for fiscal year 2024-25?	
YES	919
NO	491

ARTICLE 6: Approve submitting a charter to the Vermont General Assembly that would change town government to a town manager from a town administrator?	
YES	587
NO	799

SEE RESULTS PAGE 3

Charlotte voters take up sticky topics at the polls



Photo by Catherine Morrissey

Dee Hodson gives instructions to a voter at Charlotte’s Town Hall on Town Meeting Day.

Busy Anderson & Macy Isenberg
Community News Service

In the early hours and brisk temperatures Tuesday in Charlotte, residents cycled through town hall to weigh in on Town Meeting Day ballot items, including a hefty tax increase for school budgets and a contentious proposal to replace the town administrator with a town manager.

The town manager proposal, which would bring more decision-making power to the role overseeing the town’s operation, compared with the administrator position, has garnered significant attention among Charlotte residents and elected officials for the past several months. Proponents who petitioned to bring the charter change to the ballot argued that elected selectboard members are volunteers who aren’t experts in running a town, and a

manager can handle routine issues more efficiently.

“We’re in favor,” Peter Carrei said of the proposal, as he walked out of town hall with his wife, Dale. “I just think we could use someone that has a bit more professional experience in that position, and that could maybe take a little bit more off the plate of the town selectboard.”

Others were unconvinced by that argument. “I don’t think we need it yet as a town, so I voted against it,” said Evan Osler, who has lived in Charlotte for seven years, as he left the polls.

Dan MacLean, who owns Sweet Roots Farm on Route 7 and has two small children, said he would opt “to keep what we have in place currently.”

Evan Langfeldt, 45, has lived in Charlotte for more than 15 years and

SEE VOTING PAGE 2

Long-time Charlotters holding free shows at Flynn Space

Contributed

Longtime Charlotte resident Jimmy Sheldon-Dean is presenting “Trouble and Togeth-er,” a salute to some of the composers and artists that have been his musical influences over the years in a free show at the Flynn Space just days after the eclipse, April 12 and 13.

The music is all about the troubles that we all face, as individuals, as couples and as a society, and coming together in peace and love to overcome those troubles. Represented in the show will be influences from the 60s, 70s and beyond, from Moby Grape to Tom Waits, Jeff Beck to Frank Zappa, Miles Davis to Joni Mitchell, Paul Butterfield to The Youngbloods and more.

Jimmy’s Party of Nine includes Shel-don-Dean on bass and vocals, Paul Asbell on guitar, Chuck Eller on keyboards, Jeff Salis-bury on drums, Brian Johnson on percussion, special guest Grammy-nominated Michael Manring on bass, and on vocals will be the Crackwall Choir — Abby, Phoebe and Han-



Courtesy photo

Jimmy’s Party of Nine includes, from left, Jeff Salisbury (drums), Jimmy Sheldon-Dean (bass and vocals), Paul Asbell (guitar) and Chuck Eller (keyboards).

nah Sheldon-Dean, with a special plus-one, Bob Butterfield on harmonica.

Manring was cited by the San Jose Mercu-ry News as “a virtuoso electric bassist who’s almost single-handedly re-defined the outer limits of the instrument,” while The Philadel-phia Inquirer called him “the hottest bassist today.”

Asbell and Eller were the core of Kiliman-jaro, which was well known in Vermont and beyond, and they played on Paul Butterfield’s world tour for his last album.

Salisbury started out touring with the Al-bert King Blues Band as teenager.

“I saw him live at the Fillmore East in New York when I was just 17 myself. I am

incredibly lucky to work with such a great, world-renowned set of artists,” Jimmy Shel-don-Dean said. “It really is the best band I have ever worked with, and I think we may put on the best show I’ve ever heard.”

Abby and Jimmy Sheldon-Dean moved to Charlotte in 1974 and have called the same place (“Crackwall”) home since 1975.

Jimmy spent eight years on Charlotte Res-cue (“some of the most rewarding volunteer work I’ve ever done”) and did two terms as a selectboard member (“some of the most im-possible volunteer work I’ve ever done”).

Abby served five years as editor of The Charlotte News, shepherding it through its transition from 8.5 x 14-inch mimeograph to a printed newspaper.

Their daughters, Phoebe and Hannah, grew up in Charlotte and are coming home to sing with the band.

“I wanted to put together a show that would honor my influences and give me a

SEE FLYNN PAGE 3

VOTING

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

said the selectboard should remain more involved in town affairs. He has concerns about a manager becoming a “rogue” operator. “I voted no,” he said, “I think it just needs more discussion.”

Voters also considered a Champlain Valley School District budget of \$105.8 million, up from \$96 million last year, which would contribute to an estimated 20-percent increase in the property tax rate for the 2024-25 fiscal year. In its budget report, the school board blamed many cost factors outside of the district’s control.

Some Charlotte voters balked at the steep increase.

“I think that the school budget is a real challenge right now, and I think that it’s not for a lack of effort by our school board to try and fill the gaps,” said Langfeldt, whose daughter previously attended Charlotte Central School. “I think that the legislature has to take a different approach because a 20-percent increase is untenable.”

Peter and Dale Carrei said high property taxes contributed to their concerns about “being able to stay in town.”

Heather Morse, who has lived in Charlotte for eight years and identified herself as a mother of two, came to vote with her baby in a carrier. “We live in Charlotte because of how great the school is here,” Morse said as she left the polls. “I know that there’s a lot of schools really struggling to get the extra help for kids. And my son has dyslexia, and so it’s really important to me that those (programs) stay in place.”

The presidential primaries were a key driver to the polls for Charlotte voters, who expressed their enthusiasm for exercising their civic duty during volatile political times.

“Nothing really drives me more crazy than people who sit around and complain but were given the opportunity to say something or do something about it, and then don’t,” Morse said.

Dan MacLean agreed that he had a responsibility to “do my due diligence for the town and cast my vote so my voice is heard.”

Even amid disagreement on town matters, 41-year Charlotte resident Joseph Zilko said that kind of engagement is a quality residents have in common. “I always vote,” he said. “I’m a citizen.”

(Busy Anderson and Macy Isenberg 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.)



Trustee of Public Funds Moe Harvey and Charlotte resident Larry Sommers share a laugh after Larry casts his vote.



From left, poll workers Kate Mesaros, Dee Hodson and Elaine Sharrow are the front line of the voting center in Charlotte’s Town Hall.



Election day volunteer Kate Mesaros points a Charlotte voter in the right direction on Town Meeting Day.

Photos by Catherine Morrissey

Letter to the Editor

Village project promotes growth just for the sake of growth

To the Editor:

Thank you for publishing Peter Joslin’s commentary entitled “Tide seems to be changing with current village planning project.” I hadn’t realized until reading this piece that the “Charlotte East and West Village Project,” with all its pretty words about “strengthening community” and so forth, is actually a gift to the developers who are eager to bring suburban sprawl to our lovely rural community.

We are told by advocates of such sprawl that development is inevitable, and that residents of Charlotte must embrace this future. I question whether most Charlotte residents really want our rural town to turn into another South Burlington or Shelburne where all open space and farmland is rapidly being swallowed up by housing developments.

I live in the West Village, directly across from the Burns property, town-owned land on Greenbush Road, which Mr. Joslin

writes was “mentioned as a potential location for development” at a recent meeting of the Charlotte East and West Village Project. I may be accused of NIMBYism here, but I think it will be a sad day when the fields and woods of the Burns Property (which is really not “in the heart of the west village,” as Joslin claims) are replaced by the “small apartments, condos and senior housing” that he proposes.

The Burns property is not only a wetland area, it is home to Charlotte’s Village Loop Trail, as well as many species of wildlife. Where will the wildlife go when developers pave over their home? Does this land not have value as it exists in its current form, as a place for hiking and recreation for Charlotte residents, a lovely view of Pease Mountain for those passing by, a home to deer, rabbits, owls, hawks, songbirds, coyotes, foxes and more? Must every bit of open space be developed for the convenience and profit of humans?

I’m also disturbed by the suggestion that “conserved land close to or in the village districts” should lose this status. Will the

Village Project and its development-minded members have the power to remove the conserved status of land in Charlotte? How is this possible?

Next, we are told that doing away with 5-acre zoning outside the village areas is the “most obvious and needed fix” to allow even more development. Once that happens, Charlotte as we know it is gone. Is this what we want?

I love this rural community and don’t want it to turn into yet another sprawling suburb. I would like to see some sensible, small-scale development that provides affordable housing. But it is now apparent that the “Charlotte East and West Village Project” was created or is being used as a tool to push for much more development than I think most of us want for our town. Let’s not be bulldozed into selling out Charlotte.

“Growth for the sake of growth is the ideology of the cancer cell,” Edward Abbey wrote.
Elisa Fante
Charlotte



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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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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Humping it



Photo by Lee Krohn

A couple of weeks ago, Lee Krohn, retired Shelburn Town Manager, and Dean Bloch, retired Charlotte Town Administrator, hiked in the snow to the top of Camel's Hump. Krohn admitted that the town administrator beat the town manager to the top but insisted that in no way should that result be seen as premonition of how the town manager versus town administrator vote will turn out on Town Meeting Day.

FLYNN

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1



Courtesy photo

From left, the Crackwall Choir is Phoebe, Abby and Hannah Sheldon-Dean.

chance to play a lot of music that I had never had the opportunity to play in a band before,” Jimmy Sheldon-Dean said. “I think I was the only one in the group familiar with all of the material before we started, but I was lucky enough that everybody I asked said yes and was gung-ho and more than ready and able. It’s an impressive group and I think we’ve got a unique show.”

As for the theme “Trouble and Together,” Sheldon-Dean said, “It kind of self-selected as I chose the music I’m passionate about, but it’s timely, and I’m finding it really resonates with everyone.”

“The show is free because it’s about coming together, and I want to share this great music with everyone, I don’t want the price of a ticket to keep anyone away. If people want to contribute, we’d love a donation to the Humane Society,” he said.

Jimmy’s Party of Nine will present “Trouble and Together” at the Flynn Space in Burlington on April 12 and 13 at 7 p.m. The free tickets are available at www.flynnvt.org/Events/2024/4/trouble-and-together and donations may be made at the show, if desired, to the Humane Society of Chittenden County.

RESULTS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

ARTICLE 7: Approve the town issuing bonds or notes to finance purchase of a new ambulance for \$365,000 to be financed for not over 10 years?

YES 951

NO 454

CHAMPLAIN VALLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT ARTICLES

ARTICLE VII: Approve school district budge of \$105,801,185 for fiscal year 2024-25?

YES 3,391

NO 5,090

ARTICLE VIII: Approve school district borrowing not more than \$395,000 to buy three school buses?

YES 4,883

NO 3,569

ARTICLE IX: Approve school district allocating \$3,275,547 from the fund balance as revenue for the 2024-25 operating budget?

YES 5,335

NO 3,056



Photo by Busy Anderson

ARTICLE X: Approve the school district borrowing no more than \$3,500,000 for building improvements to (1) Charlotte Central School of \$1,450,000, (2) CVU of \$50,000, (3) Shelburne Community School of \$1,900,000, (4) Williston Central School of \$50,000, and (5) Allen Brook School of \$50,000.

YES 4,851

NO 3,568

Re-envisioning Charlotte’s villages — your voice counts

Larry Lewack
Charlotte Town Planner

The Charlotte East and West Villages Project kicks into high gear this month with two important opportunities for residents to influence the shape of things to come:

- An online visual preference survey, to share your likes and dislikes for what types of housing, businesses, transportation, parking, community spaces and wayfinding could enhance our two historic village centers, going forward. This survey can be accessed at this link: https://bit.ly/Villages_visual_preference_survey.
- A community design workshop will be held on Saturday, March 16, at the Charlotte Congregational Church, from 9 a.m. to noon. All are welcome.

Come use your design and community-building skills to guide plans for future development of Charlotte’s East and West Villages.

Coffee, pastries and childcare will be provided. RSVP for childcare by March 14 by email at townplanner@townofcharlotte.com.

The project steering committee welcomes your ideas, feedback and inspiration to this process. We invite every resident to be part of this exciting visioning process. To learn more, visit the project website at bit.ly/Charlotte_Villages_project. Sign up to receive project updates at bit.ly/Sign_up_for_notifications.

For more information, call Larry Lewack, town planner, at 802-425-3533 ext. 206.

Selectboard approves fix for Holmes Creek Covered Bridge

Scooter MacMillan
Editor

The selectboard heard about important repairs that are required for the Holmes Creek Covered Bridge near the Town Beach at its Feb. 26 meeting.

Town administrator Nate Bareham reported that on Feb. 15 the town had received a notice from the Vermont Department of Transportation that an inspection revealed the bridge had “structural deficiencies.”

The agency proposed two options for the town. One was to place signs saying the weight capacity for the covered bridge has been reduced from 10,000 pounds down to 6000 pounds. The other option was to keep the current weight limit by having several blocks installed that will improve the structural integrity of the bridge.

Bareham shared some photos that can be accessed at <https://tinyurl.com/3mtthph6> and a design demonstrating where the Department of Transportation would like blocks to be installed which are at <https://tinyurl.com/yttmzjtz>.

The town had 30 days to get back into compliance, which is Friday, March 15.

Bareham said the town has engaged Miles Jennes of VT Heavy Timber of Huntington to handle the work for \$6,450. At this Monday’s (March 4) meeting, Jennes reported the work would be finished by the state’s deadline.

The Department of Transportation was initially inspecting the Holmes Creek Bridge because it is considering options for ways it could help the town do a more extensive renovation of the bridge. Those options might be such things as finding funding or possibly for the department to do the work itself, Bareham said.

At this Monday’s meeting, Jennes said he thought they would be able to complete the required fixes to the bridge in a day. He said the work his company would do would not only fulfill the Department of

Transportation’s requirements, they would be “above and beyond.”

In a joking exchange with board member Lewis Mudge, Jennes said he could actually finish before March 15, since that is the Ides of March, a date that was unlucky for at least one leader.

It was a coincidence that he got the call from Charlotte while he was in the process of compiling a report on three town bridges, Jennes sad. Of the three, the Holmes Creek Bridge is the most critically in need of work.

Frank Tenney said the Dorset Street Bridge is also on the Department of Transportation’s list of bridges that it is researching for ways to help the town get repaired, more extensively than just the patch selectboard approved in May last year.

The town posted the vacancy on the selectboard caused by the passing of Louise McCarren within 10 days, as it was required to do by state statute. On this Monday, selectboard members agreed that the statute was unclear about how soon someone needed to be appointed to fill a vacant position.

Chair Jim Faulkner said, if they appointed someone on Monday night, it would have been for a term of around 22-23 hours until the results of Town Meeting Day voting are tallied. Nicole Kanner was the only candidate for the seat McCarren had held.

“To me there wasn’t enough time between posting, getting applicants and choosing in order to get things done before the election,” Tenney said. “I agree with Jim. I don’t think it would be prudent to appoint somebody to a term that’s going to be ending.”

And, as board member Kelly Devine pointed out, whoever might have been appointed wouldn’t even have been sworn in before the election.

NEXT PUBLICATION DATES

MARCH 21
Copy Deadline: March 15
Ad Deadline: March 15

APRIL 4
Copy Deadline: March 29
Ad Deadline: March 29

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Report from the Legislature

Taking quick breather before Legislature’s session ends

Chea Waters Evans
Representative

It’s town meeting, so the Legislature is off for the week. This is a good time for me to answer emails and phone calls. I try really hard to get back to people right away, but sometimes things fall through the cracks and for that I apologize. I’m going to spend the week making sure I’m all caught up.

I’m writing this the day before election day, so I don’t know how the school budget vote came out, so there’s nothing new or different happening on that front at the moment.

Last week, we passed the Budget Adjustment Act, also known as the BAA. This is the midfiscal-year bill that adjusts and balances the current budget, also known as the Big Bill, which is the last thing we pass at the end of the session in May.

The Budget Adjustment Act takes into account any unexpected circumstances over the past six months and also adjusts for money that wasn’t needed where we anticipated it would be. This year, a huge chunk of money (yes, that’s an official budgeting term) went to aid for communities affected by last year’s

flooding: \$23.5 million from the state general fund and \$30 million required in matching funds to receive money from the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Last year, the Big Bill faced some resistance from lawmakers who were concerned about the state ending a motel and hotel program that provided housing for unhoused Vermonters. This time around, the Budget Adjustment Act includes an \$80-per-night cap on payments to motel and hotel owners from the state. This will manage the expenses of the program and alleviate issues that arose last year from some owners charging more than they should have, and the state just paying those rates because they didn’t really have other options.

Though we’re off this week, there’s still a lot of work to be done behind the scenes. The two weeks we’re back lead up to crossover, which is the date on which all bills need to be out of their chamber — voted out of either the House or Senate — and sent over to the other. If a bill doesn’t make it out of a committee and onto the floor by then, it’s dead. (Unless it’s a committee bill, which is created by an entire committee and not just one person or group of people, or a town charter, which can be

sent through at any time.)

This year is the second year of the biennium, which means that any bills that don’t make it through will have to be reintroduced in the next biennium. Some bills take years, and multiple bienniums, to pass, and some are reintroduced many times and never go any further.

One bill we’re anticipating from the Senate, S.55, tackles the future of open meeting laws and how town meetings will be held in the future. During COVID, exceptions were made to open meeting law requirements, particularly the ones relating to mandating a physical location of a meeting, because, if you remember, we weren’t allowed to go anywhere near each other. We extended those exceptions last year, but those temporary rules expire in July.

Charlotte has held an Australian ballot vote since those temporary laws were created. This year, again, there is no physical town meeting. Fun fact: Charlotte can’t hold an Australian ballot vote to decide if we want to switch from a town meeting voting format to Australian ballot voting format — the vote has to be held in the manner in which the town usually

votes, which in Charlotte’s case is through a town meeting. So, there will be at least one more town meeting in our future. I’m sure the coming year will be full of debates and conversations about how to preserve this beloved tradition while getting the maximum number of voters to the ballot.

A hot topic in the Senate bill is whether towns should be required to hold hybrid meetings. I think it’s worked wonderfully in Charlotte. So many people can log in who normally wouldn’t have been able to due to health concerns, kids’ bedtimes, work or time constraints and many other reasons. It’s really increased participation and engagement, which is terrific. The hesitation to require it by law is that some towns don’t have reliable broadband access (we’re working on that, too) and that it will require towns to spend money they might not have. I hope that no matter how it turns out, we keep holding hybrid meetings.

Feel free to be in touch any time at 917-887-8231 or cevans@leg.state.vt.us. I’ll hold another constituent meeting in Charlotte in the near future and hope to head over to Hinesburg soon as well.

Community Roundup

Call to artists: Teach art courses in Horsford’s spectacular landscape

Horsford Gardens and Nursery welcomes artists to teach custom classes and workshops in its beautiful outdoor setting. The nursery is free of charge to use and artists receive all portions of their self-determined class cost.

In its fifth year, Art in the Garden is a summer-long program that features a variety of artists and art media. Artists can offer participants single sessions or multiple sessions over time. Classes or workshops are surrounded by a variety of plants, maintained display gardens and nursery growing fields. There are plenty of mature trees, ever-blooming gardens and historic structures to inspire art workshops.

Courses should be conducive and flexible to working in the outdoors. There are shaded, wooded and sunny lawn areas for groups to work in nature. Selected artists will schedule, promote and run their classes independently from Horsford’s. Horsford’s promotes the Art in the Garden workshop calendar on its website and in nursery communication.

Examples of concepts of workshops, but by no means limited to the following, are botanical illustration, watercolor painting, photography, basket weaving, clay hand-building, poetry, cartoon and comic drawing, oil painting, woodblock print, plein air painting.

March 15 deadline for spring SCHIP grant applications

The spring deadline for SCHIP grant applications is Friday, March 15.

Since SCHIP began making grants, many non-profits have used their awarded funds to continue their mission to improve the lives of our neighbors and strengthen our communities.

Grants range from a few hundred to several thousand dollars. In addition to the standard grant process for grants up to \$3,000, a major grant category of up to \$15,000 has been added to fund seed money for self-sustaining projects.

Applicant requirements:

- Be a 501c(3) or submit the application through such an organization.
- Projects must serve residents of Shelburne, Charlotte or Hinesburg.
- Funds may not be applied to annual operating budgets or permanent staffing.
- Major grants also require a detailed business plan.
- The grant deadlines are March 15-Sept. 15.

For specific requirements and to obtain an application go to schipstreasure.org/apply-for-a-grant.

Vermont’s Greenest Building Awards competition open for submissions

Vermont Green Building Network’s 12th annual Vermont’s Greenest Building awards competition is open for submissions.

This statewide competition recognizes exemplary residential and commercial buildings that excel in green building strategies — including water, health, transportation and affordability — and meet the highest standard of demonstrated energy performance.

Submissions are due on Friday, March 15, 5 p.m. Winners of the awards will be announced at Vermont Green Building Network’s annual Vermont Green Building Celebration, which will take place in the spring at a date to be announced.

For more information and application materials, visit vtgreenbuildingnetwork.org/awards, email vermontgbn@gmail.com or call Jenna Antonino DiMare at 802-735-2192.

Lake Champlain Chamber opens applications for Leadership Champlain Class of 2025

Leadership Champlain, the Lake Champlain Chamber’s flagship workforce development program, is accepting applications for the class of 2025. Established in 1988, Leadership Champlain is a professional development and community engagement program with a mission to foster growth and leadership in professionals who will serve the local community now and in the future. The application deadline is April 14.

“Whether you aspire to a seat on the local Planning Commission or a more traditional climb up the corporate ladder, this program

gives participants a backstage pass to how our state works and who the decision makers are,” said Alex Bunten, director of workforce and education. “We are very proud of where our 1,200-plus alumni community have landed and the impact they’ve made in our community.”

September to June every year, Leadership Champlain participants take part in retreats, full-day seminars, service projects, leader interviews, discussion groups and community tours. Participants meet monthly to explore critical community issues, examine themselves as leaders, and build relationships of trust and understanding.

Leadership Champlain is typically a 36-person cohort and the application process is competitive. The ideal applicant for Leadership Champlain is someone who: exhibits a position of, or potential for, leadership in their employment or volunteer organization; demonstrates a strong interest in and commitment to the community; aspires to utilize leadership skills for the long-term benefit of the community; and has obvious potential for personal growth and impacting change.

Tuition for the 2024-25 program is \$2,400 for chamber members and \$3,100 for non-members. Tuition assistance is available on a limited, needs basis. See the application for further details.

To find out more about the program, or to apply, visit leadershipchamplain.org. Email Alex Bunten with questions at alex@vermont.org.

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Agriculture

Census of Agriculture captures changes in Vermont farming

Vern Grubinger
University of Vermont Extension

The first Census of Agriculture was conducted in 1840, when Vermont produced 3.7 million pounds of wool from 1.7 million sheep and just \$1.4 million of milk. Since then, data collected at regular intervals has documented ongoing, often dramatic, changes in farming.

The most recent census, taken in 2022, was just released. The 475-page Vermont report describes the products, land and people that comprise our farm community, which now produces just 72,813 pounds of wool from 17,888 sheep and \$599 million of milk.

Vermont has 6,537 farms, down 4 percent from 2017. We have 1,173,890 acres of farmland, but we lost 19,547 acres since 2017, presumably to development. These declines are attributable in part to the loss of 313 dairy farms over the same five years, a drop of 37 percent.

The number of milk cows declined less, by 18 percent, to 105,514. The fluid milk produced by our remaining 528 cow dairies accounts for 58 percent of all agricultural sales in Vermont. Furthermore, there are 265,275 forage acres, 110,962 pasture acres and 74,800 corn silage acres, most of which feed cows. These data show how important dairy is to our agricultural economy and landscape.

Looking back 20 years, to the 2002 census, we had 6,571 farms, about the same as today, but 1,508 were dairies. So nearly a thousand farms have shifted from dairy to other products, making agriculture more diverse.

We now have 744 farms selling vegetables and 471 farms selling berries. There are 507 farms in the greenhouse and



nursery business, 441 orchards and 266 farms selling Christmas trees.

We have 1,345 farms with laying hens, 222 farms selling broilers and 123 grow turkeys. There are 1,526 farms with beef cows, 1,012 farms with horses, 419 farms with goats and 300 farms with pigs.

Vermont leads the nation in maple production. Our 1,433 sugarmakers produced 3.1 million gallons of syrup worth \$112 million from 8.5 million taps. That's a big increase from 2 million gallons worth \$58 million from 5.9 million taps in 2017.

Most farms in Vermont, and across the country, are small. The census requires only \$1,000 in annual agricultural sales to qualify as a farm. Over half of Vermont's farms sell less than \$10,000 of products a year, and only 19 percent of farms report sales over \$100,000.

The average sales per farm is \$159,373, but only 43 percent of farms report net gains. Our agriculture may be diverse, but it is also consolidated. Just 3 percent of our farms account for two-thirds of all agricultural sales.

Importantly, farms provide more value than just the food they produce, or the money they make. Vermont has 1,461 farms with solar panels, generating renewable energy. We have 797 farms with 143,774 acres under conservation easement,

protecting farmland for the future.

Our 323 farms engaged in agritourism attract visitors from near and far. And we gain a modicum of food self-reliance from 1,639 farms that sell \$42 million of products direct to consumers, and 1,066 farms that sell \$101 million of products to retail stores and institutions. Together they account for 14 percent of all farm sales.

Vermont's agriculture is growing. Sales of farm products now exceed one billion dollars, up by 32 percent since 2017. We have 12,470 farmers (41 percent are women), about the same as five years ago, but their average age increased from 55.9 to

57.7 years old. During that time, we lost 1.6 percent of our farmland.

We could lower the average age of farmers by attracting and supporting more new farmers. We could slow the loss of farmland with more land conservation and forward-looking land use policies. And we can improve farmers' income by buying more of their products.

For more information see nass.usda.gov/AgCensus.

(Vern Grubinger is vegetable and berry specialist for the University of Vermont Extension.)

Blue sky



Photos by Jeannette Armell

Belted Galloway cattle enjoy a blue-sky day and its amazing clouds at Philo Ridge Farm.

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Hi! Neighbor

Katie Webster has mastered many forms of culinary art

Phyl Newbeck
Contributor

Katie Webster’s blog, Healthy Seasonal Recipes, combines two of her strongest talents: recipe development and photography. She has spent two decades being creative in the kitchen on both fronts.

Webster started her career at Eating Well magazine, developing and testing recipes. She began to freelance when her children were born and in 2009, she started her blog.

“I started it as a side hustle,” she said. “It was an alternative way to build my brand as a recipe developer.”

Prior to COVID, a lot of Webster’s energy went into freelance work. She had a portfolio of clients for whom she’d create recipes on a regular basis. Once COVID hit, she could no longer work with her team, and it became difficult to do all the work on her own. “Demand remained because people wanted to cook,” she said, “but I couldn’t keep up with it. Besides, my blog was taking off. Running a content site became more and more profitable.”

When she lived in Richmond, Webster fell in love with sugaring. The family’s backyard operation grew to include a sugarhouse and they bottled the sweet stuff and sold it to friends and on-line. Webster’s love for that process and for cooking with Vermont’s liquid gold led her to write “Maple: 100 Sweet and Savory Recipes” in 2015.

Webster loves all kinds of food but said that if she was going to write another cookbook, the subject would be soup.

“I love making soup,” she said, “but soup is also a fantastic way of teaching someone how to cook.”

Webster speculates that she could teach at least eight different classes on cooking soup. She also believes it’s a great way to create healthy food and is a relaxing way to spend time in the kitchen.

Although Webster just moved to Charlotte in December, she has strong ties here. Her grandparents lived in the house across the street from her, and her parents met in Charlotte. As a child, she spent her summers at the family’s Charlotte camp and her sister has lived here for years.

“I kind of think of Charlotte as the center of the universe,” she said.

One impetus for the move was falling in love with Cedar Farm.

“It is a house I had always admired as a child,” she said. “I mean, what little girl wouldn’t want their own Rapunzel tower? My husband is a builder, and we love home improvement projects so buying and renovating a historic home really appealed to us.”

In addition to preparing recipes, Webster’s blog requires photographing food. She was an art major at Skidmore College where she focused on photography. Her grandfather had been a photographer, and she got her first camera from him. Her mother was a painter.

Eventually Webster concluded that it wasn’t easy to make money in the art world, so she went to culinary school. She helped with photo shoots at Eating Well and discovered that she had a knack for food styling. That gave her a head start when she started her blog, although she had to adjust to using a digital camera instead of film.

“The elements of a beautiful image are the same,” she said. “Photography is my favorite part of what I do. I love the creativity, having a vision and spending time creating images that make people feel really inspired to cook something that’s good for them.”

Webster notes that photographing freshly cooked food can be a challenge, and for some meals, she has to have everything ready in advance. Cheese, in particular, has a very short window so Webster arranges everything prior to cooking so the moment the dish comes out of the oven, she’s ready to snap the picture.

Webster’s website has grown, and she is gratified to have readers from all over the world. Every Saturday morning, she sends out a menu plan for what she describes as easy weeknight meals.

Her specialty — finding ways for busy people to incorporate seasonal ingredients — was discovered serendipitously. In 2015, she was busy writing her cookbook and didn’t have much time for her blog, so she wrote a simple recipe for cucumber salad. It turned out to be the most popular



Photo by Katie Webster
Katie Webster is at home in front of the stove and behind the camera.

thing she had ever published. Webster has gained quite a following for her weekly recipes and the number of people opening her emails has been going up. “My mission,” she said, “is to help busy people find simple solution-based recipes for making healthy meals using seasonal ingredients.”

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Yoyo weather



Photo by Lee Krohn

The weather has been a rollercoaster lately with temperatures up and down. It was over 60 degrees on Mount Philo on Tuesday, Feb. 27, and at the Charlotte Town Beach it got to 65 degrees. Wednesday was about the same during the day, but it was down below 20 degrees that night. Thursday was just below freezing during the day and that night below 15 degrees. Then Friday was relatively warm, over 42.

TOWN OF CHARLOTTE REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

The Town of Charlotte is seeking land maintenance request for proposals for:

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- (2) Brush-hogging.
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Sealed proposals are due no later than March 11, 2024 by 4:00 PM. Please note, the Town cannot accept proposals submitted by e-mail. All proposals must be submitted either by mail or by hand to the Charlotte Town Hall. Details for each request, and how to submit a proposal, can be found at the Town’s website (charlottetv.org/jobs).

Any questions should be directed to Nate Bareham, Town Administrator, at (802)-425-3701 ext. 205, or townadmin@townofcharlotte.com.

Sports

CVU girls hoops back in familiar territory — title game

Scooter MacMillan
Editor

“The best offense is a good defense,” an old sports cliché goes. The Champlain Valley Union High girls basketball team proved on Sunday night that sometimes old sports clichés still ring true.

The Redhawks shutdown Rutland’s offense on Sunday night, March 3, with an overpowering defense to take a 46-20 win that put the team back in the state title game at 7 p.m., tonight at UVM’s Patrick Gym.

Tonight’s title game is a rematch against St. Johnsbury, a contest the Redhawks won last year to take the state championship. It is also an opportunity for CVU to get a measure of revenge for the one game it lost this year. At the beginning of February, St. Johnsbury prevailed over the Redhawks by one point, 52-51, in Hinesburg. This came after CVU had beaten the Hilltoppers in St. Johnsbury 58-47 at the beginning of January.

Against Rutland in the semifinal, the Redhawks got really good up-tempo play from senior Elise Berger, who would push the ball up the middle of the floor, get into the lane, drawing two, sometime three defenders. Berger then often kicked the ball back out to guards Zoey McNabb and Merrill Jacobs for 3-pointers.

This is not a type of play that coach Ute Otley usually allows, but in Berger she has a unique talent. Previously, it has been a hallmark of CVU girls basketball that they don’t shoot threes quickly in transition.

But that has changed with Berger’s skill set.

“We haven’t had a point guard that gets in the lane like that and draws so much attention. Most teams can’t guard her with one person,” Otley said. “She’s just too big and too strong.”

The coach was pleased with the way Berger pushed the tempo against Rutland, particularly in the second half.

So, Otley has given her team the green light to hit the type of fast transition outside shots that have traditionally been taboo.

And it worked well for the Redhawks. Otley noted that it helped because it is “really disheartening when a team is scrambling to get back and your opponent is knocking down threes before you can mount any sort of defense.”

The Redhawks have focused on defense this season, the coach said, and when her players have lost that focus and been seduced into too much concern with scoring, they’ve had close games — their first matchups against Mount Mansfield and Burlington and their only loss to St. Johnsbury.

“I feel like these last five or six games the kids are really refocused,” Otley said. “You know, ‘Defense wins championships.’”

CVU altered its defenses to keep Rutland off balance and contain high-scoring guard Anna Moser. In their game during the regular season, a close 47-43 win, Moser had 23 points. On Sunday, the Redhawks held her to just 7.

Otley credited Nina Zimakas’ defense for being instrumental in keeping Moser at bay.

“If you can really make the other team uncomfortable with your defense, I just think your chances of winning go up dramatically,”



Photo by Amy Vaughan

Elise Berger takes a shot against Rutland in a state semifinal matchup on Sunday.

she said.

Your chances of winning also go up if you win the turnover battle. CVU had seven turnovers for the game, while forcing Rutland to cough up the ball 22 times.

“It’s hard to win games when you turn it over more than 15 times,” Otley said.

At the half, CVU was up 21-14. Then,

they cranked the defense up in the second half, only allowing Rutland to score 6 points.

Otley, of Charlotte by the way, is in her 13th season as CVU’s head girls basketball coach. Wednesday’s game will be the 10th time she’s taken the Redhawks to the state title match. And she had won six of those contests before tonight’s game.



Photo by Amy Vaughan

CVU’S Lauren Vaughan jumps for control of the ball.

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Education

Pinewood Derby



Photo by Regina Cocco
Louis Nelson, a member of Cub Scout Troop 678 and a fifth grader at Charlotte Central School, took third place on Feb. 17 in the Pinewood Derby.

Lucy Palmer, Matilda McCracken advancing to state spelling bee

Leigh Cullen & Dahlia Herrington
Contributors

The annual Charlotte Central School spelling bee took place at 8:30 a.m. on Feb. 21, with the second-eighth grade students watching.
Chea Waters Evans, a Democratic Chittenden-5 representative, attended Charlotte Central School as a child and loves to help with our school spelling bees. She was one of the judges for the spelling bee, along with Margaret Woodruff, director of the Charlotte Library, and Superintendent Rene Sanchez. Larson Berkey and Julie Lin also assisted the judges.
Thirty-two third-eighth grade students participated. There were 15 rounds, and by the ninth round, there were only five

contestants left.
The final three competitors were Matilda McCracken, Lucy Palmer and Annie Palmer.
Annie got third place and her final word was “lymphoma.”
Matilda got second place, and her final word was “conciliatory.”
Lucy won first place by correctly spelling “turquoise.”
Matilda McCracken and Lucy Palmer will advance to the statewide spelling bee.
(Leigh Cullen and Dahlia Herrington are Charlotte Central School students.)

Photo by Genevieve Trono
Lucy Palmer won the Charlotte Central School spelling bee on Feb. 21 after spelling ‘turquoise’ correctly.



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Naomi Strada
(Summarized by Tom Scatchard)

In mid-February a team of experts talked about how they support the social and mental health needs of Charlotte Central School students. They discussed how they work to give children the instruction and support to feel successful academically, socially, emotionally and behaviorally.
Betsy Lloyd works with students and staff. During the week, she comes into classes to provide instruction with whole classes or small groups to develop strong pro-social relationships. She also does



The Charlotte News file photo.

small lunch bunches, hosts snack groups and responds to acute emotional needs of students.
Amy Sayre is the student assistance program counselor. Sayre teaches a wellness class to fifth-eighth grade students and is the parent-in coordinator for the school district, a role which supports all parents.
Gabby Clow is a school services clinician. Clow’s caseload is intentionally limited so she can support the diverse needs students and families may experience.
As the district behavior system director, Evan Sivo supports all of the kindergarten-eighth schools in the district. He assists the Charlotte Central School team in layering support where behavior patterns spike, and he helps teams brainstorm ways to meet the developmental needs of students.

Diversity, equity and inclusion team

The Champlain Valley School District’s diversity, equity and inclusion team is celebrating diversity and

connecting with the diverse cultures of the school community at in-person events where participants will learn the history of the various communities in Vermont. There will be shared cultural experiences, including art, food and conversations about educational experiences. At each gathering various groups, community members and stakeholders will present about their lives, work and contributions to our state.
The next diversity, equity and inclusion event takes place on March 15 from 6-8 p.m. at Williston Central School where attendees will be learning about the Somali community in Vermont. This event takes place during Ramadan. Come experience a traditional break-the-fast meal.

Planning for spring theater production

Sixth-eighth grade students met with theater director and leader of Full Circle Theater to plan for Charlotte Central School’s spring production. Students who enjoy spending time with others, accessing their creativity and participating in a memorable experience are encouraged to engage. More information about the play, the tryout materials and the timeline leading up to the production will be emailed soon.



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Stronger Together

Charlotte Grange celebrates Charlotte with online auction

Tai Dinnan
Charlotte Grange

The Charlotte Grange’s mission is to honor our agrarian roots and build a resilient future for all. We think Charlotte is special, and we want to be part of contributing to and growing community connections, helping fellow Charlotters in need, advocating for and raising awareness about Charlotte farmers and makers, encouraging civic engagement, bringing the arts and music to more Charlotters, and more broadly: Celebrating Charlotte.

This spring, we are putting the desire to celebrate Charlotte front and center with our online auction. Our biennial fundraiser is unique because it has a 100 percent local focus. All items are donated by Charlotte-owned businesses and Charlotte residents. And gosh, does our town have a lot of generous, entrepreneurial and creative folks.

By focusing on Charlotte-owned businesses and residents, our auction not only raises enough money to keep the lights on at the Grange Hall for two years, but it also helps raise awareness for all the amazing items and services being created



Photo by Myra Handy
Myra Handy knitted a cozy ear-flap hat.



Photo by Tai Dinnan
Bud Shriner donated a bowl to this year’s online auction.



Courtesy photo
Sweet Roots Farm has donated a \$75 gift certificate.



Courtesy photo
Kendra Ward has donated a 75-minute acupunctue session for the Grange to auction online.



Courtesy photo
Nick Carter has donated two hours of live music to Grange’s online auction.

and offered in our town. One of the most fun aspects of browsing the auction items is finding out about our huge variety of local entrepreneurs and what they’re up to.

Our “Celebrating Charlotte!” auction happens completely online and runs March 15-24. During that window of time, anyone can log in at auctria.events/grange to view and bid on more than 100 items.

The Charlotte Grange is deeply grateful to all the individuals and businesses who

donated items and services. We thank in advance all the folks who choose to participate in the auction and bid on items. We hope you enjoy the items you win. This is truly a community effort. We are honored and inspired by the fact that so many

Charlotters support our organization and its efforts. And in turn, our cup is filled by the work we do to build community and enrich our town.

(Tai Dinnan is president of Charlotte Grange — charlottegrange.org.)

Fire and rescue visit



Photos by Lee Krohn

Left to right: Medical duty crew and training officer Kay Della Grotta demonstrates heavy rescue hydraulic extrication equipment at Saturday’s open house. Carter models a fire helmet for her father Robert Caldwell at the Charlotte Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service’s open house 1-4 p.m. last Saturday, Feb. 24. Duty crew C.J Webber explains Engine 2’s firefighting capabilities.

An open house was held at the Charlotte Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service building to give the Charlotte community an opportunity to visit and view the equipment, some of which, like the ropes rescue gear, was available for the public

to try. There was a narrated walk-through of the ambulance and a step into fire and rescue’s fast-response rescue boat.

Some who attended were interested in learning more about the department’s budget, needs and operations.

Nine volunteers and duty crew were present and 23 visitors attended. Three visitors explored volunteer opportunities with the Charlotte Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service, and one applied.

Weed’s In The Garden

Suggestions for keeping explosion of spring color going

Joan Weed
Contributor

Now is the time when we anxiously await the first colors announcing spring in the garden.

It seems to take forever, but then, once those first ephemerals show, blooms appear like gangbusters. Next are flowering bulbs, then viburnums, lilacs, peonies, roses, baptisia, fruit trees and other shrubs.

We drink in the aromas and adore the welcome sight of colors. After this exciting flush comes the summer solstice. And then comes what I refer to as the lull. It takes some careful planning to make sure the show continues till autumn and our glorious foliage. I propose to offer some tried-and-true perennial suggestions to have in your garden to keep the show going.

You might notice a lot of pink, lavender, blue and soft yellow in the early months, but after is the time for the hot weather and the hot colors to take the stage. Lilies and daylilies in scarlet, orange and yellow. Golden coreopsis and rudbeckia, purple campanula and platycodon, deep red monarda, scarlet astrantias and bright pink cone flowers. White appears in the color scheme too, thank goodness, to tone down the excitement. I count on feverfew, which is a self-sowing perennial much like a small daisy but in clusters. Goose-necked loosestrife is a sculpturally interesting bloom which must be carefully monitored lest it take over but oh such fun.

Phlox paniculata will fill in here also. My

favorite is David in pure white and less subject to the dreaded mildew. A clever hint is to use the Chelsea chop on the stems. This is named because it occurs near the Chelsea Flower Show in the U.K.

You should lop off the top third or so of each stem including any buds in early June. They will soon recover but be less lanky and the blooms should double. This technique is useful for asters and chrysanthemums as well. Stop cutting back by the Fourth of July. Phlox comes in other fuchsia and lavender shades.

Jacob Cline is my favorite monarda in brilliant red. It’s also a favorite of the ruby-throated hummingbirds. It is striking here, next to the fluffy white goat’s beard sprays which are very reliable. Mine are over 30 years old.

Rudbeckia goldsturm is a tried-and-true summer visitor. It is tidy and reliable, a nice edger in clumps. And please don’t forget coneflowers in white or pink. They bloom for much of the summer and the finches will thank you for the seed treats. Save cutting back till spring.

Nepeta or catmint is a low-growing, lavender, fragrant herb that responds well to cut backs and a quick recovery. Use it to edge beds. Bees love it.

We all love clematis. My favorites of the genus are the small bell-shaped ones. Olgae



Coreopsis



Monarda ‘Jacob Cline’ Astrantia



Verbascum chaixii



Campanula

is a cultivar of soft blue and not a vining type. I support it in a tutor. Rogouchi is a striking purple, bell-shaped viner which blooms till frost. Plant it near the back door to amaze you every time you come in or out. Perle d’azure was a favorite of the English gardener Christopher Lloyd. It’s a pale blue vigorous climber in. Let it climb up your lilacs or provide a structure.

Coreopsis has a pale-yellow cultivar called moonbeam and also the deeper golden zagreb. With deadheading they will keep blooming for several weeks The rosea variety, though lovely, has proven to be more difficult for me to grow. Perhaps your green thumb will work better.

Astrantia hadspen blood is a well-known and popular scarlet variety. The pin-cushion type flowers are interesting, too. My most successful variety is a nearly white cultivar with just a hint of pink.

Speaking of pincushion flowers, knautia macedonica is a bright red see-through type with wiry stems that mixes well in the border. One is reminded of scabiosas.

Verbascum chaixii comes in white or often reverts to yellow. These spikes add interest to the perennial beds and easily self-sow. Some

evening primroses (oenothera) add reliable color to your summer border. Long-lived and easily controlled by weeding.

Hostas can get overlooked but most bloom right now. I love the pure white blooms of aphrodite or guacamole. These are both plantaginea, heavily fragrant and are some of the last to bloom. The leaves are plain glossy green with no variegation.

These mid-summer blooms are good for fabulous bouquets also.

In 2008,Timber Press published a wonderful guide to timing blooms in the garden. It’s called “When Perennials Bloom.” It’s by Tomasz Anisko, curator of plants at Longwood Gardens. Each perennial entry has a small graph showing bloom times. I was easily able to verify my own perceptions of when things show in my garden. I’ve chosen the above for their mid-summer heartiness. I hope they give you some ideas in this planning stage of your gardens.

In The Outdoors

Birds — reminding us of what is possible; and a “green” VT welcome

Elizabeth Bassett
Contributor

If you would like a ray of sunshine in these dark days, mark your calendar: March 20, 6:30 p.m. at the Pierson Library in Shelburne. Trish O’Kane will discuss her new book, “Birding to Change the World: A Memoir.” The event is co-sponsored by the Flying Pig Bookstore, Green Mountain Audubon Society and the Pierson Library.

O’Kane is a senior lecturer at the University of Vermont’s Rubenstein School for the Environment and Natural Resources but that is not how she spent the early years of her career. A journalist and human rights activist, O’Kane worked in Central America, documenting and writing about social and economic injustices. It was only when she moved to New Orleans, shortly before Hurricane Katrina, that her world changed.

The day before Katrina struck, O’Kane

walked her dogs along a levee that protected her below-sea-level neighborhood from Lake Pontchartrain. Until it didn’t. Admittedly clueless about birds at the time, she noticed an avian cacophony of chirping, calling and shrieking. Years later O’Kane would understand that a huge and rapid drop in barometric pressure had triggered this avian news network (ANN, as scientists call it). Birds were making hurricane preparations ahead of the storm while O’Kane and her fiancé were still prevaricating about whether to evacuate.

After Katrina destroyed much of New Orleans, including O’Kane’s entire neighborhood, she began to notice birds, the first survivors to return and reemerge after the storm. She admired their resilience and determination to carry on. Daily visits to New Orleans’ Audubon Park to watch the birds cemented O’Kane’s determination to focus her future on environmental education.

She eventually migrated to Vermont, but not before earning a doctorate in environmental science at the University of Wisconsin.

O’Kane now teaches a popular course at UVM, “Birding to Change the World,” which includes outdoor environmental education, exercise, mentorship and birding. O’Kane’s students mentor children at Burlington’s Flynn Elementary School. Every week the college students and their mentees explore the outdoors together.

O’Kane’s message: Birds remind us of what is possible. Children who know and love the outdoors will care for it and advocate for it. Too many kids spend their lives indoors in front of screens. She hopes that this outdoor mentoring program will inspire others. “This is not rocket science,” O’Kane says.

Vermont’s “green” welcome center

How often do we speed along the interstate, destination-driven and on the clock? On your next northbound trip on I-89 from central Vermont, budget a few minutes to visit the Sharon Welcome Center — both inside and out.

Before going indoors, explore the Vermont Vietnam Veterans Memorial that honors the 7,000 Vermonters who served in that War. Stone walls create a circular amphitheater at the first Vietnam Veterans’ Memorial in the country to be dedicated, on Oct. 30, 1982, two weeks before “The Wall” in Washington, D.C.

After visiting the memorial, it’s time to

warm (or cool in summer) both body and soul. Along the walkway to the center, an exhibit honors Vermont veterans lost in recent wars in the Middle East, including Charlotte’s Alan Bean who died in Iraq in 2004 at the age of 22.

Indoors, wood and geothermal heat warm a room filled with Vermont artistry and information. Want to learn more about Vermont maple sugarhouses, cheesemakers, breweries, farmers’ markets, hunting fishing, bicycling or skiing? Perhaps music, theaters, museums, shopping and dining are of interest. Staff can help with all of this and more.

Enjoy a sit in a Vermont Folk Rocker and wish you owned one. Or perhaps a cup of coffee. Then walk into the bright octagonal greenhouse, home to the “Living Machine,” which purifies waste water generated on site. The recycled water, tinted bright blue lest you be confused, flushes toilets in the restrooms.

With expansive views to Central Vermont’s hills and mountains, the greenhouse hosts large tanks filled with banana trees, butterfly ginger, lilies, water parsley and a cast of microorganisms as they work their magic on waste water. The air is warm and moist. The entire Welcome Center is heated and cooled by 24 geothermal wells, each 420 feet deep, even melting snow and ice on walkways.

You will remember a respite at the Sharon Welcome Center long after you have forgotten what time you got home.

Sacred Hunter

Warm March means switching from yellowbellies to bullpout

Bradley Carleton
Contributor

March is such an in-between kind of month. The last ice of a strange winter is peeling away from the shorelines. Ironically, ice fishing is usually best in March. Except this year.

My last venture onto the ice was on Lake Carmi two weeks ago. My fishing partner, Trevor Coles of Manchester, N.H., is interning at the University of Vermont Medical Center until they assign him his first pediatric residency. We pulled up 28 nice yellowbellies (perch) all over 9 inches with some stretching out to 12 inches.

It’s painful for me to admit, because it is one of my favorite seasons, but nature has its own rhythm, so we just move on to the next great thing.

The Vermont tradition of bullpout fishing begins to tug on my heartstrings. (I like calling them “bullpout” or “hornpout” instead of their proper moniker “bullhead” because it’s a colloquialism taught to me by my wife’s uncle, Marvin Thomas of Shelburne, a seventh-generation Vermonter.)

I am already thinking about sitting on the muddy banks of the confluence of Otter and Dead creeks. Locals call it “Donovans” after the campsite by that name on the other side of Panton Road in Vergennes. Once the ice is out of the river, the bullpout begin to swim upstream to spawn.

They are a member of the catfish family and come in brown, white and yellow colorations, with nasty spikes on their dorsal and pectoral fins. Only an angler who has experienced the pain of dorsal spikes penetrating the mushy flesh of the thumb has learned to handle them properly. Nonetheless, they are delectable as table fare. I like to fry them in vegetable oil after rubbing the fillets with Cajun spices. They are identical in flavor to their larger cousins but are far more tender.

Another name for this fish is “mudcat,” a derogatory moniker that originates with the fish’s love of wriggling in the mud. Thus, the bait, usually a piece of large crawler or a chunk of chicken liver, is lying dormant in the mud, held down from the current by a two-ounce sinker. The bullpout approaches the bait by using its sense of smell and typically ingests the bait and hook in a slovenly fashion, swallowing the entire contraption.

I am frequently lost in a daydream, comfortably melted into my folding chair, hot coffee in my right hand, a maple donut in my left. My medium-weight rod leans on an old “Y” branch stuck in the mud. The line hangs off the tip of the rod in a gentle bow, with just enough tension to recognize a tug from the bottom of the river.

’Pout fishers watch their lines with tremendous concentration, looking for the slightest tug that straightens out the monofilament. When the line moves, the butt of the rod is lifted, gently at first, then quickly and assertively to set the hook. The battle is not typically a hard fight, but a larger fish will create a good wake as it spins side over side into the shoreline.

This is where it gets a little dicey. Remember those nasty spikes? Well, the only way to pick up one of these cats is to put the belly of the fish into your palm and rest your thumb under one of the pectoral fins and the forefinger under the other, supporting the weight of the fish by the spikes resting above the first knuckle of the finger and thumb. I often use my middle finger to squeeze the belly and my remaining two fingers to brace the lower belly. Unless you are an expert, under no conditions should one attempt to pick up a bullpout by the back, because the dorsal fin spike can easily penetrate the fatty tissue between the thumb and forefinger. And it hurts! Trust me!

Once the fish is in hand, removing the hook is another lesson entirely. I have watched the old timers remove it by putting



Courtesy photo
Marvin Thomas of Shelburne with a nice 'pout.

a stick down the throat and twirling it around the line then yanking it out, hook and line together. It’s ugly, but it works. (I have never seen a catch-and-release bullpout angler.)

When the run begins, it’s not too difficult to fill a bucket half full of these delicious mudcats. Some people disdain them, calling them filthy and disgusting, but I think it’s because they haven’t eaten them when they are cooked properly.

I am deep in reverie of the world around me, cool north wind bracing my face, the smell of the swamp turning over the detritus of winter. The geese are flying overhead, the whistling wings of mallards and the woo-eek of wood ducks squealing as they fly in to find last year’s nesting box cause me to find such gratitude for the arriving spring. From deep in my state of mindfulness I find my version of nirvana. It is my happy place. Outdoors. And all that that implies. Rain. Cold. Snow flurries. Scorching sun. These are the things I will miss when it is my turn to graduate to the next level.

I am rudely awakened by my lovely wife whispering, “Wake up! Your line is jumping!”

“Holy Cow! That’s a nice one!” I say as I raise the rod quickly to set the hook.

Up and down the slough, all the fishermen turn to watch. My wife lovingly tells me, “Do you have to be so loud and attract everyone’s attention?”

I can’t help myself. I was born that way. I am the old man who has never grown old because I am thrilled by everything that the Great Spirit offers.

I reel in the old ’pout, and as it spins in the water as ’pout do when they’re caught, I can see the big yellow underside and the size of the fish. It is a good 14 inches. Suddenly, my wife’s admonition makes sense. Several fishers around me begin to inch closer to my spot.

One young man asks, “Do you mind if I fish beside you? I’m not having any luck.”

Geez! How can I say “no” to a polite kid who is looking longingly at the fish in our bucket.

“Heck, Kid. You can have my spot. I’ve gotta go home and till the garden. Tell you what. I really don’t want to clean all these fish. Would you mind taking a few off my hands?”

The smile on his face looks like it’s going to tear his chubby little cheeks off his jaws. “Let’s head home, Katie. We’ve caught enough to fill our bellies for weeks.”

On the way home, we’ll call “Uncle Marv” and tell him we’re making a delivery to his doorstep in about half an hour.

(Bradley Carleton is executive director of Sacred Hunter.org, a privately owned limited liability corporation that seeks to educate the public on the spiritual connection of man to nature through hunting, fishing and foraging.)

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Calendar of Events

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

**Resurrecting ski areas talk
Thursday, March 7, 6:30 p.m.**

Vermont Ski and Snowboard Museum presents Lost & Found, How Independent Ski Areas Around Vermont Are Being Resurrected on Thursday, March 7, 6:30 p.m. at the Vermont Ski and Snowboard Museum in Stowe. Vermont was once home to more than 175 ski areas. Today, most of those areas are gone but some have been brought back to life in various forms. Lisa Lynn, editor of Vermont Ski + Ride and Vermont Sports will moderate the discussion that will include Steve Wood of Ascutney, William Beattie of the Dutch Hill Alliance of Skiers and Hikers, Diana Todd of Hogback Mountain and Geoff Hatheway of Magic Mountain. Doors will open at 6 p.m. and guests are invited to enjoy the exhibits and socialize. Admission is \$10.

**July flood impacts talk
Thursday, March 7, 6:30 p.m.**

Matthew Vaughan of the Patrick Leahy Lake Champlain Basin Program will talk on Exploring Water Quality Impacts of the July 2023 Storm in the Lake Champlain Basin with an overview of the storm’s impacts, insights from water quality monitoring from during and after the storm, and historical context for this extreme event. The free program that is part of the Love the Lake

speaker series begins at 6:30 p.m. in the Lake Champlain Basin Program Office, 54 West Shore Road, Grand Isle, just north of the Grand Isle ferry entrance. For more info call 802-372-3213 or email mreilly@lcbp.org. Join virtually at <https://tinyurl.com/msntdaax>. Pre-registration is required for Zoom only.

**‘Poet’s Choice’ premiere
Fridays-Sundays, March 8-17**

The Valley Players will present the world premiere of the play “Poet’s Choice” by Mary Pratt, Fridays through Sundays, March 8-17, at the Valley Players Theater, 4254 Main Street (Rt. 100), Waitsfield. The play is the 2023 winner of the Valley Players’ Playwright Award and is directed by Doug Bergstein (Waitsfield). Show times are Fridays and Saturdays at 7:30 p.m. and Sundays at 2 p.m. Tickets are \$18 for evening shows and \$14 for matinees and are available at theaterengine.com. More information at valleyplayers.com.

**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 the Kellogg-Hubbard Library in Montpelier. The talk is both in person at the library at 135 Main Street and online at orcamedia.net. Journalist Dave Gram and M.E. Kabay, emeritus professor of computer information systems at Norwich University, will speak.

**38th Rotary All-Star Hockey Classic
Saturday, March 16, 4 & 6 p.m.**

The 38th Rotary All-Star Hockey Classic is Saturday, March 16, at the Essex Skating Facility in Essex. Men and women in their

senior years are selected from high schools across Vermont to participate. The women’s game starts at 4 p.m. and the men’s game 6 p.m. Tickets are \$10 which includes admission to both games and can be purchased at <https://tinyurl.com/tzb36vuy>. Both games can also be livestreamed at <https://tinyurl.com/4wfyrvw3>. Proceeds are used to support local food pantries, provide winter coats for children in need, fund scholarships for local students and support health and environmental initiatives. Call Jason Ruwet at 802-876-7147 for more information. A number of CVU students are on the rosters of both men’s and women’s allstar teams and Redhawks’ men’s coach J.P. Benoit is one of the coaches.

**Vermont Touring Group
Saturday, March 16, 7 p.m.**

The Young Tradition Vermont Touring Group will perform at the Starksboro Village Meeting House on Saturday, March 16, at 7 p.m., after a day of village events including a chili cook-off competition and the annual Sugar on Snow Party. The Touring Group program will feature a diverse program of traditional Québécois music, from traditional call and response singing, to energetic reels and arrangements full of lovely harmonies. The Touring Group is an ensemble of teenage musicians, singers and dancers from Vermont, Massachusetts and Québec. A program of Vermont Folklife, the

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On Books

Brave and contrary women in wartime

Katherine Arthaud
Contributor

My mother’s mother died in the 1980s and I really wish I had listened better when she told me things about her life. I loved her so much, and I definitely paid attention when she spoke to me. I mean, I didn’t ignore her, but I have forgotten a lot of details as, it seems, have my sisters.

What I do seem to recall is that she was some kind of nurse who took care of soldiers during the war. It must have been World War I; she was born in 1898. I remember her going into some detail about lancing a boil, which was disgusting and horrifying and riveting enough that my 7-year-old mind really listened up and stored it in a sacred drawer in my memory bank.

But when I asked my sister, she said that she isn’t sure it was soldiers our grandmother was caring for and doesn’t remember anything about lancing boils. She thinks it was victims of the 1919 flu epidemic that my grandmother was reminiscing about and recalls her saying that she herself never got the flu, despite a good deal of exposure to many infected patients. As for World War I, my sister thinks she may have mentioned “some duties involving air raid warnings, like going out, blowing a whistle or something.” So much for oral history.

The reason I am suddenly so curious about all this is that I have been on a spate of reading historical fiction, specifically work that highlights the contributions and adventures of women during World War I and II. It all started for me when my tennis friend Kathy told me about this Facebook group she is a part of called “Historical Fiction Book Lovers.” I think it was there that I saw a book called “The Alice Network” by Kate Quinn that had hundreds of likes and comments, and something about it intrigued me so I ordered it.

But let me digress a moment to say that you might be surprised by what constitutes historical fiction. As they say, the hoop you have to jump through is bigger than you think, when it comes to this category. For instance, “Lessons in Chemistry” is considered historical fiction, as it takes place in the 1950s. “All the Light We Cannot See” and “A Gentleman in Moscow” are also considered historical fiction. Same with “Lady Tan’s Circle of Women,” which I reviewed recently for this paper, and even Jacqueline Susann’s “Valley of the Dolls.” So many books I have

read and loved are considered historical fiction, and I never really thought about it. “Moloka’i” by Alan Brennert about a child who, at age 6, is discovered to have leprosy, “the separating sickness,” and is condemned to live on the island of Moloka’i in the leper colony there, is also historical fiction. (I loved that book.)

As I write, I am thinking my sister’s and my understanding of my grandmother’s early nursing career likely falls into the category of historical fiction, as our memories are so darned fuzzy and who knows what is true. Anyway, “The Alice Network” is a really good story. A really good book. The writing isn’t fancy or especially “literary,” but it’s solid and enjoyable. I found the characters to be engaging, unique and extremely well developed. I finished the book about three weeks ago and find myself still thinking of some of them as though they are rather good friends I spent some time with a while back, which to me is pretty good evidence they were well written, well conjured.

The novel opens in May 1947 in Southampton, England, with the line: “The first person I met in England was a hallucination.” Good beginning, eh? This “hallucination” proves to be a driving force in the plot and personal mission of the narrator, Charlie St. Clair, who is, at the beginning of the story, traveling with her mother to Switzerland for an appointment in Vevey to take care of a pesky little inconvenience no one wants to talk about that is three months along and growing.

Says Charlie, “1947 was hell for any girl who would rather work calculator problems than read Vogue, any girl who would rather listen to Edith Piaf than Artie Shaw, and any girl with an empty ring finger but a rounding belly.”

I don’t want to spoil the story, so I’ll just say that things don’t really go according to Mrs. St. Clair’s plan, which was all about taking care of the “Little Problem” in Vevey and then, after the “Appointment,” hopping to Paris for a bit of clothes shopping before getting Charlie back to school in the fall with a chic new look and no one the wiser. However, Charlie, obsessed with finding her dear and long-lost cousin Rose, who disappeared in Nazi-occupied France before the war began, and who everyone but Charlie believes has died, cuts loose from Mummy and has herself an amazing adventure.

When Charlie encounters Eve Gardiner, an eccentric and mostly drunken recluse living

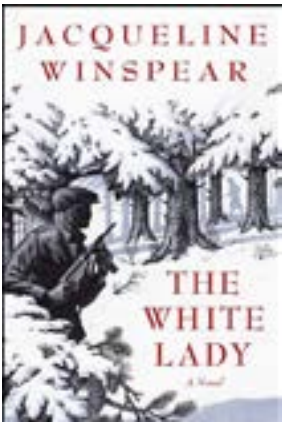
in London, the novel switches to a dual narrative, swinging back and forth between events that occurred beginning in 1915, when Eve was a British spy, and 1947, when we initially meet our narrator Charlie.

Eve had been part of the Alice Network, a group of mostly female spies working against the Germans in France. Her story involves code names and collaborators, profiteers and recruiters, deception, seducers and all kinds of adventure and intrigue, all based on but not limited to historical fact, on the World War I spy ring called the Alice Network, which was active during the war in Belgium and German-occupied France. Apparently, several of the characters are based on actual historical figures.

I found this novel to be an excellent read, lively, entertaining and eye opening. I was not aware so many women were involved in World War I and had no idea about this spy program and all that it entailed. All that these brave women sacrificed to serve their countries and protect their families, loved ones and communities. An exciting, gripping, extremely satisfying read. Highly recommend. And you might want to check out that Facebook group if you have a yen for fiction based on fact, on things that happened in the past.

An author whose work I have enjoyed that I also learned from the “Historical Fiction Book Lovers” page is Jacqueline Winspear’s famous Maisie Dobbs series, about psychologist, investigator and nurse, Maisie Dobbs. This series is comprised of 19 volumes and has won many awards, including New York Times Notable Book for the Year, the Agatha Award for Best First Novel and so on. “The White Lady,” published in 2023, is not part of that, or any series. It is apparently a story that had been on the author’s mind since childhood days. “There came a point,” she says, “when I just had to begin writing, because the main character ... began taking up a lot of space in my mind.”

This main character, Elinor White, we meet in 1947 Britain. World War II was over by then, but, as Winspear writes, “Many of the privations of wartime were not as bad as those of the peace that followed.” There was rationing and jewelry store raids, shoplifting, traumatized soldiers returning from battle and a lot of organized crime. “It is this world that Elinor White has to navigate,” writes



Winspear, “when she leaves a hard-won quiet country life to go to the aid of a young couple and their child.”

We learn early in the novel that Elinor White is not merely some nice, reclusive older woman, as her neighbors assume, but a former resistance operative and highly trained killer. Though she aspires to a life of peace and anonymity in her “grace-and-favor” house, her affection and concern for the family next door, especially the little girl Susie, and her determination to protect them from the husband’s violent family bring her smack dab into the middle of the London world of organized crime, as well as encounters with colleagues from her own past.

I loved this book. Many on the “Historical Fiction Book Lovers” page commented that they didn’t like it as much as the Maisie Dobbs series, but I found it to be very well written and quite a page turner. It has a bit of an old-fashioned, gentle feel. Pleasant to read. Exciting but soothing. Simple but artfully told. And offering a glimpse into a world that was once very real with a focus (like “The Alice Network”) on a courageous, skilled female character who played an important part in the war.

As for my grandmother, maybe someday I will write a book about her. But as I believe I mentioned above, it would be largely fiction, due to my sisters’ and my poor listening and retention skills. But it could be a doozy. I could begin it with the lancing of a boil. Or maybe better, with a trigger warning. Wait for it.

But in the meantime, do consider taking these two excellent books about brave women in wartime on a whirl. I think you will enjoy immersing yourself, as I did, in their loves, their fears, their battles, their relationships, their intelligence, their incredible strength and ingenuity, and their inspired and inspiring contrariness.

CALENDAR

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12

Touring Group nurtures youth involvement in traditional music and dance. The Starksboro Village Meeting House is at 2875 Route 116 in Starksboro. For more information go to vtfolklife.org/touring-group.

Hinesburg Artist Series

Sunday, March 17, 2 & 4:30 p.m.

The Hinesburg Artist Series will present its 25th anniversary St. Patrick’s Day concert on Sunday, March 17, at 2 and 4:30 p.m. The South County Chorus and Hinesburg Artist Series Orchestra will perform with guest artists soprano Cristina Escobedo, tenor Cameron Brownell, and soloists Gary Moreau, baritone, and Jiwon Lee, cellist, under the direction of Rufus Patrick. Performances will be at 2 p.m. and again at 4:30 p.m. on Sunday, March 17, at St. Jude Catholic Church in Hinesburg. Tickets for the concert are \$25 (free for children under 12) and available at the door or at hinesburgartistseries.org.

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.

Writer reading

Wednesday, March 20, 8 p.m.

On Wednesday, March 20, 8 p.m., visiting writer Rowan Ricardo Phillips will give a reading at the Red Mill at the Vermont Studio Center. Phillips is an acclaimed, multi-award-winning poet, author, screenwriter, journalist and translator. He is a regular contributor to The New York Times Magazine, president of the board of the New York Institute of the Humanities and poetry editor of The New Republic. At 10 a.m. on March 21, Phillips will give a craft talk. Limited seating is available, email writing@vermontstudiocenter.org to secure your spot and for more information.

‘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.

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.

‘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, curator of collections and exhibitions, and Margaret Tamulonis, manager of collections and exhibitions.

Artist talk

Wednesday, March 27, 8 p.m.

On Wednesday, March 27, visiting artist Mildred Beltre’ will give an artist talk at the Red Mill at the Vermont Studio Center. Beltré, is a Brooklyn-based artist, mother and educator working in print, drawing and participatory politically engaged practice to explore facets of social change. Beltré is the co-founder of the Brooklyn Hi-Art! Machine, an ongoing socially engaged collaborative art project in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, that addresses gentrification and community building through art-making.

Library News

Library event will teach you how to ‘read’ your dog

Margaret Woodruff
Director

At the Dog Communication presentation this Monday, March 11, at 5:30 p.m. you can learn the answer to questions like: Is a yawn always just a yawn? Why does a dog shake off even when it is 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 multimedia 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 live safely and happily together. At the end of the presentation, the audience engages in several interactive exercises to practice reading dog body language.

Participants will also enjoy free access to a carefully curated online resource of supplementary learning materials. Registration appreciated but not required at <https://tinyurl.com/32ch7cxf>.

Special events

Vermont furbearers exhibit Thursday, March 7

One last day to visit the furbearers exhibit which ends today, Thursday, March 7. Explore animal pelts, scat, skulls and track casts on loan from Vermont Fish & Wildlife in the children’s area.

Writer’s Studio Tuesday, March 12, 6:30 p.m.

Looking for a welcoming spot to share your writing? Join us for the third session of the three-town Writer’s Studio, a positive atmosphere to share feedback about writing projects big and small.

Geoff Gevalt of the Vermont Young Writer’s Project facilitates this monthly meetup that rotates among our three neighboring libraries. Email margaret@charlottepubliclibrary.org if you’re interested in joining the group.

Pollinator potential Thursday, March 14, 7 p.m.

Join Julie Parker-Dickerson, local pollinator enthusiast and leader of the Pollinator Pathways project in Charlotte, to find out about simple ways you can create or enhance pollinator habitat, especially with annual and perennial plants that bloom from early spring into late fall, attracting pollinators to your flower and vegetable gardens throughout the growing season. Time for discussion and your own pollinator stories. Registration appreciated, but not required at <https://tinyurl.com/yewc6fdz>.

St. Patrick’s Day music Saturday, March 16, 10:30 a.m.-noon

Join Mike Walker and Beeswing for an

informal music session at the library to celebrate St. Patrick’s Day. For all ages.

‘Beaverland’ book talk Tuesday, March 26, 5:30 p.m.

Allaire Diamond, Vermont Land Trust ecologist, leads a discussion of “Beaverland: How One Weird Rodent Made America.” Discover how the beaver story has played out in Vermont and learn more about the book. Copies of the book available at the circulation desk.

Children’s programs

Preschool story time Tuesdays & 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! We’ll have loads of LEGO bricks out 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.

Senior center book discussion Thursdays in March, 1 p.m.

Maybe you’ve read the book “Lessons in Chemistry” or seen the TV show? The Charlotte Senior Center sponsors a discussion of this New York Times bestseller. Elizabeth Zott is a gifted research chemist whose career takes a detour when she becomes the star of a beloved TV cooking show. Register through the Charlotte Senior Center at 802-425-3864. This program takes place at the senior center at 212 Ferry Road. Copies available at the Charlotte Library.



Photos by Susanna Kahn

More than 20 people showed up Monday, Feb. 26, to hear Rep. Chea Waters Evans field questions which seemed to focus exclusively around taxes. Many hands were raised and many expressed frustration with the potential for very high taxes.

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. Campion’s Farewell,” Mike Ripley takes up the challenge of completing an old manuscript, which became Mr. Campion’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.

Men’s book group Wednesday, March 20, 7:30 p.m.

Join the discussion of “American By Day” in person or on Zoom at <https://tinyurl.com/2u4dm6jc>. It’s a gripping and timely novel that follows Sigrid, the dry-witted detective from Derek B. Miller’s best-selling debut “Norwegian by Night,” from Oslo to the United States on a quest to find her missing brother. 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>.

Short story selections Wednesdays, March 20 & Wednesday, April 3, 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.

Senior Center News

Senior center is an antidote to ‘epidemic’ of isolation

Lori York
Director

In 2023, the Surgeon General labeled loneliness and isolation an epidemic. This epidemic impacts seniors with approximately 1 in 4 older adults experiencing social isolation.

Senior centers play a critical role in addressing this epidemic by cultivating social connections. At the Charlotte Senior Center there is a wide variety of programming to support the varied needs of seniors age 50 and older. Programming includes lectures and presentations, weekly exercise classes and outdoor activities, board and card games, art programs and meals as ways to connect with others.

There are three upcoming presentations to check out. “Hiking the Long Trail” with Charlotte resident Carrie Fenn, HomeShareVT to learn about whether home sharing is an option and a presentation by the Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired to learn about the wide range of video and audio options available to help navigate vision loss.

Community services

AARP free tax preparation Wednesdays, March 20 & 27

Tax-aide volunteers will prepare tax returns, provide tax assistance based on your provided information or documents and maintain confidentiality while reviewing and preparing it. 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 1-4 p.m. Registration required.

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. Attend by Zoom or in person. For more information or to receive the Zoom meeting link, please email cartwright.susan1@gmail.com.

Age Well March luncheon Wednesday, March 27, 12 p.m.

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 with a wheat dinner roll and an orange for dessert. Registration required by Thursday, Feb. 25. \$5 lunch donation. You will also need to have a completed 2024 Age Well Registration form on file.

Weekly Age Well Grab & Go meals Thursdays, 10-11 a.m.

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

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

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

Presentations & events

March artist exhibit

The series “Farm and Field” by Margaret McSwain is 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.

HomeShareVT Thursday, March 14, 1 p.m.

Join Ric Cengali to find out more about HomeShareVT and whether home sharing is right for you. HomeShare Vermont is all about people helping each other. Each compatible home-sharing match arranged is unique and based upon the needs, interests and lifestyles of the individuals involved. There is a comprehensive screening that assures a great pool to select from, but it is always up to people in the program to decide who they want to live with. Light refreshments provided. Free. Registration appreciated.

VT Association for the Blind & Visually Impaired Thursday, March 21, 1 p.m.

If you or someone you love is experiencing vision loss, it is still possible to enjoy reading with some simple adaptations. Dan Norris, director of adult services at the Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired will share both high-tech and no-tech solutions to help navigate vision loss. The association is a nonprofit that can also help you to get magnifiers or teach you how to use smart devices to access print. Free. Registration appreciated.

Hiking the Long Trail Thursday, March 28, 1 p.m.

Can you imagine hiking 280 miles in 19 days? Have you ever been curious about hiking the Long Trail and what’s involved? Join Charlotte resident Carrie Fenn as she talks about her adventure in 2023 hiking the entire Long Trail solo. She will discuss how she prepared for the hike, the planning involved and how it all went. Free. Registration appreciated.

Programs

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. Free. Registration required.

Backgammon league Tuesdays, 6-8:30 p.m., & Saturdays, 2-4 p.m.

Backgammon is a tactical table game with a 5,000-year history. The group welcomes players at all levels. Email jonathanhart1@gmail.com with questions. Cost: \$3

Brain games Fridays, 2-4 p.m.

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

Pilates fitness Tuesdays & Thursdays, 8:30-9:30 a.m.

This pilates class is for folks 55+ and is designed to be challenging yet safe. It includes upper-body strength work with hand weights and mat exercises. The group will work core muscles to improve balance, strength and posture. Cost: \$8 a class. No registration required.

Samba-canasta Tuesdays, noon, & 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



Photo by Lori York

Seniors focus on the game of Shanghai Mahjong at the Charlotte Senior Center.



Photo by Lori York

A full house showed up for Hank Kaestner’s presentation about the history, cultivation and production of vanilla.

interesting. If you are curious to learn how to play samba, call Sandy Armell at 802-425-3248.

Gentle hiking group Thursday, March 28, 9 a.m.

Enjoy the beauty of nature. Come walk at a gentle pace with other seniors. The group will meet each month for a congenial non-strenuous walk. Location to be determined based on conditions of the local walks. Meet at 9 a.m. in the parking lot at Charlotte Senior Center. Call Penny Burman at 916-753-7279 with questions. Registration required. Free.

Watercolor — late winter fun Tuesdays, March 19-April 9, 9 a.m.-noon

Join Lynn Cummings for a new set of subjects, materials and watercolor processes, just when you are getting really anxious for spring. The group will have fun exploring colorful topics in a supportive environment. Some watercolor experience is helpful. Registration required. Cost: \$165

Meals

Menus are posted on the website at charlotteseniorcentervt.org.

Monday lunches

Served weekly 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.

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Follow the senior center on Facebook or Instagram at charlotteseniorcentervt.

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Write Ingredients

Think international for dining at the senior center

Susan Ohanian
Contributor

Martius, the first month of the Roman calendar, was named for Mars, the god of war, and evolved into our March. In that beloved, coming-of-age-story “Anne of Green Gables,” it was still winter on Prince Edward’s Island when Anne Shirley’s birthday arrived every March.

Note: On March 11, 1888, in the Great Blizzard of 1888, a 50-inch snowfall paralyzed much of the East Coast. On Oct. 1, 1888, the first issue of the National Geographic Society magazine described this storm, with pictures.

For Emily Dickinson, March was not about war or winter. She notes that March brings a light like no other time of year, a color “that science cannot overtake/but human nature feels”:

“Dear March — Come in”

Oh, March, come right upstairs with me.
I have so much to tell.

Read the rest of her poem, and you’ll see what she says about April at poets.org/poem/dear-march-come-1320.

Meanwhile, volunteer cooks at the Charlotte Senior Center echo Dickinson and call out, “Come in!”

They also have “so much” to offer: all that good food combined with good conversation at Monday Munch.

For the next two meals, think international, with menus offering Irish, Greek and Mexican fare.

John Evelyn, seventeenth century founding Fellow of the Royal Society, was credited with involvement in two major innovations, the icehouse and the pressure cooker. He was also a great gardener and the author of a “A Discourse on Forest Trees.” He is best known for his diaries. In addition to describing Oliver Cromwell’s career and the execution of Charles I, he wrote quite a lot about salads.

In his 1699 book, “Acetaria: A Discourse on Sallets,” Evelyn tried to encourage his readers to eat fresh salad greens. Historians note that he did not meet with much success. But he persevered, writing that “roots, stalks, leaves, buds, flowers and fruits can be boiled, baked, pickled or otherwise disguised by skillful cooks.” He gives specific details on growing, preparing and eating a wide variety of plant life.

Rest assured: salads at Monday Munch at the Charlotte Senior Center need no disguise. Munches on March 11 and 18 definitely put a different spin on the phrase “salad days.” First recorded by Shakespeare in 1606, he based the phrase on the notion of “green,” meaning a time



Adobe Stock photo

of youthful inexperience.

Inexperience is the last word you’d apply to the cooks at the Charlotte Senior Center, so let’s just start with a nod to their offerings of greenest green and Irish flag salads at March meals.

While greenest of green offers visions of great green lushness, Irish flag actually offers green plus orange and white.

Pleasing and patriotic, this salad, served in honor of St. Patrick’s Day, offers “hats off” to the national flag of Ireland. Frequently referred to as “the tricolor,” this flag’s vertical bands of green, white and orange represent Irish nationalism, the Protestant minority and lasting peace between the two.

Although the flag had been used for some time, it was officially presented to the public in 1916 and in 1937 formally confirmed by the new constitution of Ireland. The salad in its honor features greens, orange fruit and white cheese.

So do follow Emily Dickinson’s call to “come in” to discover just what orange items await you, as well as what constitutes the “greenest” of greens.

And that’s not all. In addition to those salads, come enjoy Mexican chicken soup and lemony chicken with spinach and potato stew.

The Mexican chicken soup comes with the enthusiasm of none other than the Barefoot Contessa, and the lemony chicken with spinach and potato stew received five-star ratings from cooks who tried the recipe at New York Times Cooking.

Plus, you’ll have your share of the ever-popular homemade desserts.

Monday Munch

Monday, March 11, 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Mexican chicken soup, the greenest green salad and homemade dessert.

Monday Munch

Monday, March 18, 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Lemony Greek chicken with spinach and

potato stew, Irish flag salad and homemade dessert.

Reminder about Age Well offerings:

You need to register by Monday for the Thursday Grab & Go Meals. Email at meals@charlotteseniorcentervt.org or phone 802-425-6345.

On Monday, March 11, you can register for Age Well restaurant tickets with Kerry Batres.

Age Well restaurant tickets

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

Stop by the Charlotte Senior Center to talk with our Age Well representative about the restaurant ticket program that can be used for meals at participating restaurants.

And now, to draw on a couple of popular Irish good wishes:

- May your heart be light and happy, may your smile be big and wide and may your pockets always have a coin or two inside.

- May the wind always be at your back.

Finally, enjoy “While Irish Eyes Are Smiling” at youtube.com/watch?v=OFdn5YBrqOg.

Note: “Goldilocks and Just One Bear,” just acquired from The Flying Pig, turns out to be too large for the Little Free Library at the Grange. If you know a child age 3-10 who knows the original tale about Goldilocks’ encounter with the three bears and might enjoy an update, contact me for the book.

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