

# The Charlotte News

May 16, 2024

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## Sunspots show off

Scooter MacMillan  
Editor

The past year has been crazy with storms. After having floods, early freezes and every kind of storm you can imagine, we experienced a geomagnetic storm this past weekend.

From Friday-Sunday, May 10-12, people looking north from a vantage point with a minimum of light pollution before and after midnight were treated to the aurora borealis.

People in all 50 states were able to see the lightshow.

In Charlotte, the town beach proved to be a good place to watch the celestial light show.

According to National Public Radio, the aurora borealis has been caused by the largest geomagnetic storm in years hitting the Earth's atmosphere.

A sunspot is sending charged

particles toward the Earth. When they hit the atmosphere, they are heated and the show begins. Social media is also heated by the sunspot castoffs.

The more active the geomagnetic field, the brighter the aurora and the farther it travels from the poles.

"The level of geomagnetic activity is indicated by the planetary K index or Kp. The Kp index ranges from 0 to 9," the National Oceanic And Atmospheric Administration's space weather prediction center website says.

As the Kp range goes up the aurora becomes brighter and moves further from the poles. When the Kp range is 6 to 7, the aurora may move far enough from the poles and be bright enough to be seen from the northern edge of the United States.

Wu said the Kp range on Friday was 9. The highest it has been in at least 20 years.



Just before midnight on Friday, Louisa Schibli took this picture of John Brawley, owner of Sweet Sound Aquaculture shrimp farm at Nordic Farms, contemplating the night sky making a spectacle of itself.

Cecelia Wu caught this photo when the aurora borealis was the brightest it has been in more than 20 years.

## Holmes Creek Covered Bridge renovation raises questions

Scooter MacMillan  
Editor

The town of Charlotte is facing some big decisions about renovating the Holmes Creek Covered Bridge.

At the selectboard's May 6 meeting, it heard a group of residents concerned about the historic structure and from representatives of Hoyle Tanner, an engineering firm consulting on the bridge who presented several options for rehabilitating it.

Todd Sumner, Hoyle Tanner's project manager for this work, said the bridge was built in 1870 and listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1974. Although the most recent rehabilitation of the bridge was in 1993, he said they were sure there was other work done on the bridge over the years for which records haven't been found.

The bridge is 41 feet long and has a horizontal clearance of 12 feet. The vertical clearance is 8 feet 10 inches, even though a sign is there that says the vertical clearance is 8 feet 3 inches. The smaller size claimed by that sign gives the bridge a 7-inch buffer, Sumner said.

The Holmes Creek Bridge has a 3-ton weight limit.

In November, Hoyle Tanner gathered information for its proposals for the bridge and at the time recommended that the town take care of some critical intermediate repairs. Those repairs were time critical and were taken care of quickly.

Josif Bicja, technical lead for the project, went over photos of different parts of the bridge. While much of the bridge is in satisfactory condition, or rated 5 on a 9-point scale, there are a number of support beams that are below satisfactory and rated in fair condition.

A good bit of damage has been caused by vehicles, most likely box trucks, constantly hitting those members of the bridge structure over the years.

Although the engineering consultant presented a number of options for the bridge renovation, Bicja said, "the number one goal of the project is to preserve the historic fabric as much as we can."

Kelly LaVigne, a bridge engineer

## CVU principal to become interim superintendent

Scooter MacMillan  
Editor

On an early May morning as the school day began, principal Adam Bunting was standing outside the Champlain Valley Union High building waving to arriving students.

He can often be seen walking the halls and grounds of the school, greeting students and stopping to talk about their successes or, if they appear upset, to check in with them and see if there is anything he can do to make things better.

Interacting with students is clearly something he enjoys doing. Anyone who has attended a CVU graduation can attest that Bunting

is a hugger. It appeared that during COVID, one of the hardest things for him to do was refrain from hugging the recently graduated.

With the last day of school coming the second week in June, it may be something he won't be getting to enjoy as often.

Bunting will be moving to the school district's central office, to take over as interim superintendent from Rene Sanchez on July 1.

The Champlain Valley School District board voted to accept Sanchez's resignation in March. He said he was resigning to pursue a new opportunity, but didn't say what that opportunity is.

Bunting has been principal at Champlain Valley Union High

since 2015. He was named Vermont Principal of the Year in 2018.

He earned a bachelor's in English at Connecticut College and a master's in education in school leadership at Harvard.

A graduate of CVU, Vermont's largest high school, Bunting's first classroom job was teaching English at CVU.

During his time as principal, Bunting "has led collaborative teams to envision, design, and implement personalized, proficiency-based learning for CVU's 1,300 students," a release



Courtesy photo

Adam Bunting to take over as interim superintendent on July 1, after being principal at CVU since 2015.

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## BUNTING

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from the school district said.

The school district would like to have an interim principal at CVU by the end of the school year. The search for a permanent superintendent should begin in the fall.

For now, Bunting has only applied for the position of interim superintendent which is just for a year, when it is hoped that a permanent superintendent will have been hired.

He was noncommittal about whether he was interested in applying for the permanent superintendent position.

CVSD board chair Meghan Metzler of Charlotte said that if Bunting decided to apply for the permanent superintendent position he would be considered. The board plans to go through a full search, soliciting community input, gathering other information and nominating several candidates.

She said the board hopes to find a candidate who doesn't just reflect what she wants in a superintendent but what the whole board and the community want.

"We want a clear leader who thinks about students, who thinks about student needs, understands the challenging landscape that we're in and is ready to help lead our district towards our strategic plan and our vision," Metzler said.

## Turtle awareness



Photo by Lee Krohn

Through mid-June, there's a good chance of seeing turtles crossing area roads. Please be aware and slow down. If you decide to move a turtle, you should move it across the road in the direction it is heading. Don't move a turtle to the side of the road you think they should be on. Turtles know where they are going. They can be headed towards water to mate, or they can be headed towards land to nest. After handling a turtle, be sure to wash your hands to guard against salmonella.

## New housing incentives bring opportunities

Larry Lewack  
Charlotte Town Planner

With housing prices at an all-time high, rental vacancy rate below 3 percent, few properties on the market and interest rates stuck at 7-9 percent, everybody's talking about the housing crisis.

But did you know that the terms for what housing can be built in Vermont have recently changed? And that major public funding is now available to homeowners to renovate existing rentals and build new housing?

To be sure, not everyone can build new residential units on their property. However, if you're ready to take that long-delayed housing dream off the shelf, read on.

In 2023, the Vermont Legislature adopted Act 47, the Housing Opportunities Made for Everyone (HOME) Act. This ground-breaking

change in state statute outlawed single-family zoning in Vermont. It mandated that all communities allow for higher-density housing in areas served by public water and sewer capacity, and it reduced on-site parking requirements. It also provides significant financial incentives to property owners to upgrade existing rental housing and to build new accessory dwelling units. While not all these changes are relevant in Charlotte today, here are two that matter now:

- Duplexes are now a permitted use across most of town. With the exception of Thompson's Point, the conservation district and flood-hazard zones, any residential property in town that now allows single-unit dwellings can legally have a duplex if they have adequate septic capacity to serve the total number of bedrooms. Such renovations require only a zoning permit.

- Accessory dwellings are now allowed across most of town: Any property with a permitted single-unit dwelling can now add an accessory dwelling unit that's up to 1,500 square feet, with just a zoning permit, assuming adequate septic capacity, and that the house is not within one of the zoning districts listed above.

Here's what's new as of March 2024: The state of Vermont has rolled out the second round of grant funding to property owners to build new accessory dwelling units, and to renovate existing rental housing. The Vermont Housing Improvement Program provides individual five-year grants or 10-year forgivable loans to cover up to 80 percent of the cost for these building projects:

- Rehabilitate existing vacant rental units
- Repairs affecting multiple rental units, such as replacing the roof of a multi-family property

- Develop a new accessory dwelling unit on an owner-occupied property
- Create new units within an existing structure
- Create a new structure with five or fewer residential units
- Complete repairs necessary for code compliance in occupied units.

Based on the type of project, property owners are eligible to receive up to:

- \$30,000 per unit for rehab of efficiency, one- and two-bedroom units
- \$50,000 per unit for rehab of three or more bedroom units, renovations impacting multiple units, creating new units or creating accessory dwelling units.

Of course, there are some strings attached to this funding. They include:

- Program match — All participants are required to provide a 20 percent match of the award. e.g., a participant who receives an award of \$50,000 will be required to provide a \$10,000 match.
- Fair market rent — Participating property owners are required to sign a rental covenant agreeing to charge at or below HUD fair market rent for the length of the agreement (five or 10 years).

To find out more, see [accd.vermont.gov/vhip](http://accd.vermont.gov/vhip), email [vhip@getahome.org](mailto:vhip@getahome.org) or call 802-810-8217. It's also a good idea to call the planning and zoning office at 802-425-3533 ext. 2, if you have questions or to schedule an appointment to discuss your project ideas.



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To engage and inform Charlotte and nearby communities by:

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- Providing a home for stories from our neighbors and friends.
- Reporting on how other towns have addressed challenges similar to our own.

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## HOLMES BRIDGE

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for Hoyle Tanner, said they had looked at rehabilitating the bridge to a 5-ton, 12-ton or 20-ton capacity. The higher the capacity of the rehabilitated bridge, the less of the historical structure can be preserved.

There are a number of things and costs for the town to consider in its decision about how it wants to rehabilitate the bridge besides initial construction costs, including fire protection; the traffic, public safety, environmental and property impacts on the surrounding area; extending the service life of the bridge; and getting public input, LaVigne said.

Constructing a one-lane temporary bridge for traffic while the historic bridge renovation takes place is not very feasible and expensive, she said.

The detour during construction would be relatively convenient and short, LaVigne said. "That's our recommendation, but I believe ultimately, it's up to the town."

The firm will have to coordinate its work with the National Historic Preservation Act, the State Historic Preservation Office and the Historic Covered Bridge Preservation Committee. The work will need to minimize the impact on natural resources like the flora and fauna in the area. While the work is not anticipated to require any permanent property easements there is a likelihood that it will require some temporary easement for construction access.

The consultants couldn't give a firm commitment to how long the bridge will need to be closed because that depends on factors like how large a weight limit the town decides it wants for the renovated bridge, but LaVigne said the bridge would probably be closed four-six months.

Although some work on repairing and replacing wooden members can be done during the cold, a good bit of the construction will have to be done during the warmer months. It's likely the bridge could be closed for a large part of an April-November timeframe.

Mike Russell, who lives nearby on Lake Road, said, although he loves driving through the bridge, he would willingly give that up to preserve the historic bridge. "I've thought for years that the right

answer for this bridge is to restrict it to pedestrian and bicycle use only," Russell said.

Because preserving the historic structure is a primary objective of the project and the bridge was built before modern vehicles, he supports prohibiting vehicles.

Greg Smith suggested adding a wooden bridge for pedestrians and cyclists to the covered bridge

Judith Ehrlich, the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) historic preservation officer, said they try to limit big changes to historic structures like a walkway attached to the covered bridge. She said she would probably recommend a separate bridge, but that would require such things as separate footings and abutments that would increase the price.

"When we're rehabilitating something historic, the goal is to try to retain as much original material as possible," said Ehrlich. "When we need to make a change, we try to keep it subtle."

One of the consultants said the bridge renovation will be almost completely federally funded. The town will owe between 2.5 and 10 percent for design and "right-of-way" costs, but they did not know if the funding was contingent upon the bridge remaining open to vehicles. They will have to check on that.

Currently, Charlotte Fire and Rescue doesn't drive its ambulance through the bridge. Russell said it's not much difference in distance if responding to an incident from the fire house.

However, Patrice Machavern pointed out it does make a difference in some situations, for example when a rescue team from Shelburne has responded to a call on the north side of the bridge, and as it finishes up, gets a call to render mutual aid to Charlotte for a call that is on the southern side of the bridge.

Machavern also said that if the bridge was limited to pedestrians and cyclists, it might lead to people parking on the south side of the bridge and walking across to get to the town beach. She said people who live on that side would not be happy with a big increase in parking in their neighborhood.

Eventually, the discussion wound down with the board deciding to see if there



File photo by Jeannette Armell

The Holmes Creek Covered Bridge dressed for Christmas.

was interest among residents in having another meeting to have the opportunity for opinions or questions about the bridge rehabilitation.

### Rec director resigns

After an executive session toward the end of the meeting, the board reconvened

in open meeting and reluctantly accepted the resignation of recreation director Nicole Conley at the end of May. And then began a discussion about how they would go about finding someone to take over that position.

  
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## Report from the Legislature

# The legislative session is over, but the work continues

Chea Waters Evans  
Charlotte Representative

You all may recall that I was the lead sponsor on an animal welfare bill, H.626, for most of the session. I actually got involved with it at the end of last session, so I put in about a year; I worked with a lot of other people, though, some who have been working on this concept for two decades.



It got stuck in the House appropriations committee and almost died, and then it was revived by a rule suspension a couple weeks later, which was exciting, but by the time it made its way through the various Senate committees who needed to hear it, I thought we were going to run out of time. I am not, it turns out, the woman of steel I thought I was — I have to admit I was definitely emotionally invested in the situation.

And then on the final day of the session, after back and forth for months and nervously picking off all of my nail polish and eating my emotions for a week in the form of Cheez-

Its and chocolate chip cookies in the snack pile in Room 10, it made it through. So now the governor has to sign it (fingers crossed, it's a really good bill) and then it's done.

This is one bill out of a zillion. It wasn't the most high-stakes in the building, it wasn't the biggest priority for my caucus or anyone else's caucus, and it still had a roller-coaster journey. This is the nature, apparently, of making laws, and of the last few weeks of a biennium.

We did pass a yield bill that makes an honest attempt to lower taxes, so the average property tax raise (this is average, not ours, just average around the state) will be about 13 percent. Ours will probably be a little lower, because once the common level of appraisal is figured out, we should come in under average. I do realize that this is still not okay. I think over the next couple years, hopefully by 2026, we will have a solid plan in place to address all the things that got us here in the first place.

We did find \$25 million in the general fund budget to buy down property taxes for this year, which helped; we've done this in previous years, too. I think it was necessary this year to address the fact that

all the Vermonters shouldn't be paying for a mess that we created, but the reality is that we are paying for it, just in a lot of other ways. I hope to continue being part of this conversation with you all as we move forward, and will bring your thoughts and concerns to the people who are making these decisions.

We passed a budget that will come in not too much higher than the governor's proposed budget; I'm assuming he's going to veto the budget as well as the yield bill, and we're due back in Montpelier mid-June for a veto session. I believe we have the votes needed (two thirds of both chambers) to override them, but it's never a done deal until it happens.

H687 was the Act 250 bill that morphed into an Act 250/housing bill, which actually makes sense if you consider how intertwined development and conservation are — or at least should be. The bill seems a little frightening to us in our sort-of rural communities in Chittenden County with all the talk of developing in town and city centers. But the development zones created by this bill are only applicable if a town decides to create those zoning districts, and

that's a question Charlotte and Hinesburg will get to answer on their own. No one is forcing a town to add housing units or change their zoning or get municipal water and sewer; these are options if we want them, but it's not mandatory.

It seems like within the greater context of the conversations both towns are currently having regarding development and village centers, this will provide both some reassurance for those who are worried about development in important environmental zones and allow an easier path for development in areas where it's allowed. This seems to strike a good balance. I know here in Charlotte, some aren't too keen on more housing, but those working on our Town Plan will have further guidance. Don't worry — we're not going to have an apartment complex springing up in the East Village.

I don't mean this lightly: it was an honor and a privilege to serve in Montpelier representing all of you, and I'm so grateful that you put your trust in me. Thank you.

If anyone wants me to write about a specific bill or issue or something else that came out of the legislature this biennium, I'd love to hear from you at 917-887-8231.

## Commentary

# 'Improved' common level of appraisal won't change taxes

Jack Hoffman  
Contributor

The 1973 oil embargo prompted many energy-saving ideas — real and imaginary. Daylight savings was extended year-round, which was spoofed in a cartoon of President Richard Nixon demonstrating an energy-saving blanket. He was shown cutting a strip from one end of the blanket and sewing it back on to the other end.

The current plan to reform the notorious CLA — common level of appraisal — looks a lot like Nixon's blanket. It doesn't actually change how things work, it just makes them look a little better to the public. The latest version of the yield bill now in the Senate changes the way the common level of appraisal is calculated but doesn't actually change the way the CLA works or affects tax bills.

The common level of appraisal is misunderstood to begin with. It affects school tax rates at the town level, but not school tax bills. The CLA is part of the process to ensure fairness in the property tax system. For taxes to be fair, property needs to be evaluated against a uniform standard — a "common level of appraisal." Townwide reappraisals of individual property are expensive, so they are done periodically. But each year the state determines the aggregate fair market value of each town. Based on those values, the Legislature determines the tax rates — known as "equalized tax rates" — that will generate the revenue needed to help fund public education.

But because towns reappraise property at different times, the official assessed or "listed" values on the Grand List are typically less than fair market values. The CLA is the mechanism to adjust for the gap between

the two values: it is the ratio of the listed value to the fair market value. In a town with a 90 percent CLA, the total listed value of property is 90 percent of the state-calculated fair market value. If property values go up between reappraisals, the CLA goes down. The lower the CLA, the bigger the gap between the assessed value and fair market value.

So when the state sets tax rates for the year, they're setting a lower rate because they're assuming a higher property value than the town listed amount. That means the town tax rate is higher than the rate set by the state, but it's applied to a lower value, resulting in the same bill.

The CLA requires a little math, and it can be confusing, but it's become a bugaboo because it's so often used as a scapegoat. Many factors affect town tax rates: changes in per-pupil spending, changes in other revenue

sources, changes in property values. But it's so much easier to blame the CLA.

Even though the CLA is not well understood, the Legislature seems to have concluded that voters don't like it when they think their CLA is too low, when there is too big of a gap between the listed value and fair market value. So they have devised a formula that will increase all of the CLAs and change equalized tax rates, but leave town tax rates unchanged.

In the end, tax bills won't change with the redefinition of the CLA. The only difference will be that the CLA will appear to be higher — just as Nixon's blanket appeared to be bigger.

(Jack Hoffman is senior analyst at Public Assets Institute ([www.publicassets.org](http://www.publicassets.org)), a non-partisan, non-profit organization based in Montpelier. He is a resident of Marshfield currently living in France.)



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# Community Roundup

## Hinesburg student artwork to be exhibited at Shelburne Museum

Shelburne Museum is hosting an exhibition of artwork created by students at Hinesburg Community School, the culmination of an innovative new program with the Olivia & Leslie Foundation that teaches kindergarten and first-grade students critical thinking and cognitive skills while developing their social and emotional core.

The exhibition, which is on view May 17-19 at Shelburne Museum, showcases works created earlier this year by the students in the Olivia and Leslie Art + Math Program, an afterschool science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics or STEAM program. Artwork from Shelburne Museum's collection figured prominently in the curriculum that integrates mathematical concepts such as spatial relationships, geometry and symmetry into a carefully designed arts program that enables young children to build creative confidence.

The after-school program was developed by Maker Prep, a Princeton, N.J., firm devoted to supporting computer science and arts education, with the Olivia & Leslie Foundation and Shelburne Museum.

The driving force behind the initiative is Shelburne Museum trustee Chris Kuenne, founder of the Olivia & Leslie Foundation, which honors the creative legacies of Kuenne's daughter, Olivia, who died in an accident in 1997 at the age of 5, and his late wife, Leslie, who died of ovarian cancer in 2019.

## Help keep emergency rooms ready by giving blood or platelets

While no one can predict when an accident might happen, donors can help keep hospitals stocked with blood products and ready to go the moment a patient needs them. That's why, during Trauma Awareness Month in May, the American Red Cross asks donors of all blood types to make an appointment to give now and help save lives this month.

Thanks to Sport Clips Haircuts, all who come to donate through May 31 will get a coupon for a free haircut by email. Plus, those who come to give through May 19 will be automatically entered for a chance to win a trip for two and VIP racing experience to the 2024 NASCAR Cup Series and Xfinity Races at Darlington Raceway Labor Day weekend.

Those who come to give through May 19 will also get a bonus \$10 e-gift card to a merchant of choice. Visit [RedCrossBlood.org/racetogive](https://www.redcrossblood.org/racetogive) for more details on all offers.

Here are some upcoming opportunities to donate blood in Chittenden County:

- **Burlington**  
May 16, 8:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m., Cathedral of St. Paul Church, 2 Cherry St.
- **Essex Junction**  
May 22, 1 p.m.-6 p.m., Covenant Community Church, 1 Whitcomb Meadows Lane
- May 25, 9 a.m.-1:30 p.m., The Essex Resort & Spa - The Mansion, 70 Essex Way
- **Hinesburg**  
May 17, 12:30 p.m.-5 p.m., St. Jude's Parish Hall, 10759 Rte. 116
- **Shelburne**  
May 21, noon-5 p.m., St. Catherine of Siena, 72 Church St.
- **South Burlington**  
May 25, 8 a.m.-2 p.m., Lowes, 189 Hannafords Drive

- May 30, 12:30 p.m.-5 p.m., South Burlington Public Library, 180 Market St.
- **Williston**  
May 16, noon-5 p.m., CrossPoint Church, 237 Commerce St.
- **Winooski**  
May 17, noon-5 p.m., Winooski Senior Center, 123 Barlow St.

## Fourth summer of Lewis Creek Association fighting invasive species

Aquatic invasive plant species have long threatened the health and populations of native plants in the Lewis Creek watershed. By forming dense mats of vegetation, aquatic invasive plant species impede the activities of recreational boaters, swimmers and anglers, while degrading ecosystems and wildlife habitats.

Terrestrial non-native invasive plants also create hazards by altering erosion patterns, out-competing native species and impacting water quality. Management of all invasive species can be difficult because they are easily spread via seeds, roots, fragments, animals and by humans.

Bristol Pond and Monkton Pond, popular destinations for anglers, recreational boaters and wildlife enthusiasts, both contain aquatic invasive plant species. As of 2023, there were three known aquatic invasive species in Bristol Pond — European frogbit, Eurasian watermilfoil and brittle naiad, and three aquatic invasive species in Monkton Pond — Eurasian watermilfoil, banded mystery snail and Chinese mystery snail. If left unmanaged, these invasive species could spread throughout the rest of the watershed and the state. To prevent further spread, Lewis Creek Association, a local non-profit watershed group, will be launching their fourth summer of the boat launch steward program at Bristol and Monkton ponds beginning in June.

The association's boat launch steward program, funded by a grant from the Lake Champlain Basin Program, was created to educate the public about aquatic invasive plant species concerns within the Lewis Creek watershed. At Bristol and Monkton Ponds, the boat launch stewards greet boaters as they arrive at the ponds and offer to inspect their boats for aquatic invasive species, while also collecting data on where the boat has been and how many aquatic organisms they encountered.

They educate boat owners on how to prevent the spread of aquatic invasive plant species, which includes cleaning, draining and drying your boat and other equipment that has been in the water, before moving to a different water body. This could even include swimsuits and life jackets, which could carry small, microscopic organisms like the fishhook waterflea, which was recently found in Lake Champlain.

In addition to staffing the ponds on the weekends, the stewards will also take on the task of manually removing Japanese knotweed at a site along Lewis Creek in North Ferrisburgh. Japanese knotweed is a particularly tough plant to remove; it spreads primarily by its roots or rhizomes, which can break off during a flood then resprout and form a new colony downstream. A prior grant to Lewis Creek Association documented the presence of knotweed populations in the Lewis Creek watershed, but distribution is patchy and it has not yet spread prevalently across streambanks (unlike in many other Vermont watersheds where it covers nearly

every square foot available).

Lewis Creek Association is demonstrating a non-chemical removal method to the public at a site in North Ferrisburgh, where stewards will be present weekly to lead removal efforts and to display these methods to the public. Everyone is invited to help if they wish. Lewis Creek Association is partnering with Mike Bald of Got Weeds? to guide this work and demonstrate effective methods for knotweed removal without herbicides. You can also get involved in a project that uses community science to help us understand the distribution of knotweed in the watershed using iNaturalist. Lewis Creek Association would love to have your involvement in one or both portions of the project. If you're interested in learning more, sign up at [bit.ly/lca-knotweed](https://bit.ly/lca-knotweed) or reach out to Kate Kelly, program manager for Lewis Creek Association, at [lewiscreekorg@gmail.com](mailto:lewiscreekorg@gmail.com) or 802-488-5203.

Since 2020, Lewis Creek Association's boat launch stewards have been the first line of defense against invasive species within the Lewis Creek watershed. At Bristol and Monkton Ponds, stewards have interacted with over 2,000 boats and intercepted 676 boats that had aquatic plants on them launching into the ponds.

## Green Mountain Power awarded for resiliency work

Green Mountain Power was honored for its resiliency work benefitting all customers, earning Power Player of the Year for

Resiliency by the Smart Electric Power Alliance, a national non-profit dedicated to accelerating the electric power industry's transformation to a clean energy future through education, research, standards and collaboration. The Smart Electric Power Alliance Power Player Awards recognize national excellence and leadership in energy innovation and encourage practical solutions towards a clean, resilient, cost-effective energy system benefitting all.

Green Mountain Power was honored for a suite of projects launched in 2023 that increase resiliency and cost savings for customers while also increasing equity at the same time:

- Lifting the enrollment cap (<https://tinyurl.com/2kex62k7>) on its industry-leading home energy storage programs with signups and installations more than doubling since then.
- The Resilient Neighborhood pilot program (<https://tinyurl.com/48cav5m5>) with 155 all-electric and fully storm resilient homes in South Burlington.
- Green Mountain Power's 2030 Zero Outages Initiative (<https://tinyurl.com/2s3patzd>), a data driven plan using a three-pronged approach of undergrounding lines, storm hardening above-ground lines and bringing energy storage to all — creating layers of resiliency across Vermont to deliver a zero outage experience for customers by 2030.

## Hi! Neighbor

# MacLeans are building on a Charlotte legacy farm

Phyl Newbeck  
Contributor

Jane MacLean knows that taking over a legacy business can be difficult. Residents of Charlotte and beyond have spent the last four decades enjoying the produce of the Charlotte Berry Farm and she hopes they will appreciate the work she and her husband Dan have done to transform the property into the Sweet Roots Farm and Market.

MacLean and her husband took over the farm in the spring of 2021. The Vermont Land Trust had purchased the property that winter and leased it to the couple through the Farmland Access Program. The MacLeans have a long-term lease with the opportunity to purchase the land later.

The couple has lived on and off in Vermont for the last 20 years. “We went to Green Mountain College,” MacLean said, “but we bopped around the world after that.”

They started a micro-farm in Maine in 2013 but left when they outgrew the space and moved to Charlotte in 2017.

This will be the fourth year for MacLean at the farm, and she’s happy to report that they have transitioned to fully organic.

“That was a big undertaking, because the farm had been managed by many people in many different ways,” she said. “It’s similar to buying an old house. There are systems that you might not have put into place, but

we’re trying to utilize the resources we have and improve as much as we can.”

MacLean has also added vegetables to the farm’s output. “We have vegetables from A to Z,” MacLean said, “arugula to zucchini.”

The farm also grows a wide variety of greens, tomatoes, cucumbers, squash, pumpkins and root vegetables.

“We wanted to make the farm more dynamic,” she said, “and that’s one of the reasons we changed the name.”

Blueberries are still the main crop, but they also have strawberries, black and red raspberries, and blackberries. They don’t have enough covered infrastructure for winter crops, so they consider themselves a three-season farm.

Sweet Roots Farm has three different kinds of CSAs. Their fall traditional boxed CSA has vegetables and often fruit or frozen blueberries. The Customer Choice CSA is for those who pay upfront. They get a gift card for the amount paid (with a minimum of \$100) and get to purchase produce with that card for the duration of the season. An additional incentive, based on the amount spent, is added to the card.

MacLean considers the Community Pick CSA to be the heart of the farm. “It’s an opportunity for us to encourage community members to participate in the harvest along with us,” she said.

Community Pick members commit to picking 50 pounds of blueberries. They get to keep half with the other half going to the farm. The farm has 5 acres of blueberries, and the Community Pick allows Sweet Roots Farm and Market to make up for any gaps in their labor pool since the berries tend to ripen at the same time.

The Community Pick CSA is so popular that it is capped at 45 families.

In addition to the CSAs, Sweet Roots has a farm store which will be open from mid to late May until Thanksgiving. The store carries a variety of local products including cheese, milk, butter, eggs, a variety of frozen meat, frozen prepared food like bean burgers, ice cream, fermented food, honey, maple syrup and beverages.

They also carry wellness items like teas and syrups and local artisanal products. “We like to highlight the incredible producers who are members of our greater community,” MacLean said.

Staffing at Sweet Roots fluctuates during the year with roughly 10 during the height of the season. “We have a great field crew,” said MacLean, noting that several employees stay from early spring to late fall.

“Taking on a legacy business is complicated physically, socially and emotionally for the community,” MacLean said. Not all community members appreciate the changes, but she hopes those people grow to understand them and see the farm as way to make the community more vibrant. As part of that goal, Sweet Roots donates excess vegetables to the Vermont Food Bank and designates one section of blueberries for the



Photo by Daniel Schechner

Jane and Dan MacLean have transformed the Charlotte Berry Farm into Sweet Roots Farm and Market.

non-profit’s gleaners. Last year that group harvested over 300 pounds.

“What’s most enjoyable,” MacLean said, “is that we are working on creating a better future for our community. We are feeding families. We try to introduce programs like the Community Pick CSA and build partnerships like the one with the Vermont Food Bank because we want to make nutritious food accessible to as many people as we can.”

## Around Town

### Congratulations

**Isa Kaplan** of Charlotte, a member of the class of 2024 majoring in electrical and computer engineering at Worcester Polytechnic Institute, recently completed a senior thesis that is required of all graduating seniors as part of the university’s distinctive project-based educational experience. The project, Symbiotic Multi-Agent Construction (SMAC) 5.0, was her major qualifying project.

**Anna McGrade** of Charlotte will represent the United States in taekwondo at the Pan American University Games in Cali, Colombia, this November.

McGrade is captain of the Cornell taekwondo team that swept the University of Vermont at a tournament on March 30, where Cornell was also named Eastern Collegiate Taekwondo Conference Division 1 champions and McGrade was named Division 1 women’s MVP.

She had previously been selected for the Eastern Collegiate Taekwondo Conference 2024 sparring all-star team.

The Pan American games, also known as the International University Sports Federation America Games, are held every two years.

McGrade is a 2020 graduate of Champlain Valley Union High and was a member of the Open Water Rowing team

which won the Northeast Regional Youth Open Water Rowing Championship in 2019 and 2020.

When she matriculated to Cornell during the pandemic, team sports had been canceled so she joined cardio kick-boxing, which was led by the taekwondo coach, launching her into a new sport.

After graduating from Cornell in May, she will train in Charlotte and other locations in the months leading up to the Pan American University games.

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## Our Local Feast

# We have asparagus, let's make some mayonnaise

Dorothy Grover-Read  
Contributor

The farmers markets and stands are opening up, and our season of ever-changing harvests begins anew. We have lots of local greens and sprouts, radishes, bok choy and herbs aplenty. Enough to make lovely salads, especially if you top it off with some beautiful locally grown mushrooms and call it a meal.

One of the things we look forward to the most is that first bite of newly picked asparagus. It's like a gift from the heavens, and it is always best to eat when grown in our own area. I've learned disappointment is likely to follow if I'm tempted to buy corn on the cob or blueberries in the middle of winter. It's just not the same.

We might only have these delightful sprouts for a month, but oh what a month it is!

We'll eat these beautiful spears raw right from the patch, grill them, broil them, boil them, pop them in stir-fries and turn them into soup.

All that will happen as the season progresses, but the very first bunch is simply served — quickly steamed or grilled with just a touch of salt or a little dip of homemade mayonnaise. Nothing better.

Homemade mayonnaise is so much more delicious than the jarred, and it's also healthier, having less saturated fat per serving (less than 2 grams) and absolutely no preservatives or additives. Of course, it only keeps for a few days, so plan its use carefully.

Although it may sound daunting, it is really one of the simplest things to make, whether or not you have a food processor. You just have to follow a couple rules. First of all, everything should be at room temperature. Second, the drizzling of the oil into the mayonnaise must be done very slowly, a few drops at a time at first. But even so, it doesn't take that long to make, and the results are worth it.

Another thing to remember is that you need a neutral oil: organic canola or grapeseed work well here. This is not the place for your beautiful fruity olive oil. Learn from my foolishness. My first attempt at mayonnaise making, I used a lovely imported extra-virgin olive oil, not a cheap ingredient, and the result was quite harsh.

I have used local organic eggs for this and any raw preparation such as Caesar dressing. I know and trust my local farms, and the incidence of salmonella-contaminated eggs is quite low, like one in tens of thousands. However, if you have any concerns about using raw eggs, or if you are pregnant, please use readily available pasteurized eggs, or pasteurize them yourself. There are many easy instructions online.

### Asparagus with chive mayonnaise

If you don't have an asparagus bed in your own yard, we will soon have an ample supply at the farm stands and farmers markets. Choose a bunch with stalks that are firm and plump, with the tips closed tightly. Avoid any with yellowish or open tips.

Store your asparagus in the refrigerator. If you are not using it the same day, pop the spears in a vase or canning jar with a little water in the bottom, and keep refrigerated for



Photos by Dorothy Grover-Read

Left: Thick and rich, this homemade mayonnaise begins with fresh local eggs from chickens that roam and feed on beta-carotene rich grass. It's easier to make than you think.

Right: A platter of fresh, local asparagus will steal the show, especially if you serve it with your own homemade mayonnaise.

a day or two.

Prepare your asparagus by snapping off the tough end where it naturally wants to break. When you buy local asparagus, you won't have uniform spears, so it's best to treat each individually.

If you are steaming, start checking after 5 minutes if you have some small stalks, and don't be afraid to take them out when they are done even if the rest are not quite ready.

To grill, brush with a bit of olive oil and keep a close eye as these cook fast. An average stalk will take about 3 minutes per side, but check at 2.

### For the chive mayonnaise, have everything at room temperature.

2 egg yolks  
2 tablespoons lemon juice  
1 rounded tsp. French mustard  
Salt and freshly ground pepper  
1 ¼ or slightly more, cups of neutral oil  
2 tablespoons freshly snipped chives, minced  
coarse salt to garnish

In a food processor, or with a stick blender, whirl the egg yolks, lemon juice, mustard and a couple of tablespoons of the oil for about 20 seconds, until well blended. Very slowly drizzle the first quarter cup of oil by little drops, very gradually increasing. As the mayonnaise thickens, you can pour in a little faster. Many food processors have a little hole in the insert to the feeding tube, and after the first quarter of a cup, it dispenses the oil just right. The mayonnaise will start to thicken all at once, completely changing texture and making a thick, gloppy sound.

Once thick, turn out what you need for the meal into a small bowl and mix in the chives and thin the sauce to desired consistency using a bit more lemon juice.

To make the mayo by hand, use a large bowl and a big whisk and proceed as above. It takes a bit more time, but is actually a quite satisfying a task, and you get to use that giant balloon whisk.

There are countless things you can add to this delightful mayonnaise. Roasted garlic

to make flavorful aioli is a standard, as is a squeeze of sriracha.

Other great additions include horseradish, scallions, tarragon, smoked paprika, chopped hard-boiled egg, curry paste, dill pickle relish, capers, and my favorite, pesto. So many possibilities, let your imagination run wild.



# As much as things change ...

## A look at the origin of land-use planning in Charlotte

*“Mrs. Field commented that there appeared to be a certain amount of confusion among the townspeople regarding just what the planning commission was up to.” — Charlotte Planning Commission minutes, June 11, 1968*

Charles Russell  
Contributor

Fifty-five years ago, Charlotte’s newly formed planning commission began the thoughtful work that over the next few decades helped stem the rapid growth that started in Chittenden County in the early 1960s.

By the end of its first year, the commission had created a town plan that was succinct, forward-thinking and surprisingly relevant today. I discovered the original town plan while looking for old regulations in the planning & zoning office at town hall. In a binder labeled “Zoning Regs 1966-1987” was an original copy of the first Comprehensive Town Plan from March 1969 that was mailed out to:

“BOX HOLDERS  
RESIDENTS OF CHARLOTTE ONLY  
ONE TO EACH FAMILY.”

This folded-up 17x22-inch document included eight pages of text on one side and a colored map on the other showing what might be possible and desirable for the future of the town. This mailing was in preparation for the public hearing that the year-old planning commission held that year.

Curious about how this amazing document came to be, I went through the planning commission meeting minutes from May 1968 until the plan’s approval by the selectboard the following spring to find out exactly what they had been up to. Suffice it to say there was a lot going on.

From the planning commission minutes:

### • Atomic power plant

“In reply to a letter sent by Tom Schermerhorn to some 40 townspeople asking for comments on planning, there appeared to be certain reservations regarding the proposed atomic power plant both from an aesthetic and a pollution point of view. Those replying also emphasized the need for a general master plan.

“The committee then turned to the matter of the proposed atomic power plant. It was pointed out that under Charlotte’s zoning

ordinance, there are no restrictions on such construction except as to size and bulk of the plant. Some potential problems cited were cooling of discharge water, ecology, contamination, and radiation fallout in case of accident.” — May 14, 1968

### • West-side water system

The Planning Commission discussed a proposed gift by Harry Webb — to the west-side fire district — of a water main from the Shelburne town line, south on Greenbush Road past the Mack Farm, then heading west to what is now Aurora Farms (then Webb’s farm) and on to Point Bay Marina. It would also go west from the Old Brick Store to just over the railroad and east from the store to Mount Philo Road.

This water system was never built but imagine if it had been. At the same meeting, “Mary Field asked whether it might not work to the disadvantage of the town as a whole.” — July 9, 1968

### • Questionnaire

The commission sent out 550 questionnaires to learn about the demographics, desires and shopping habits

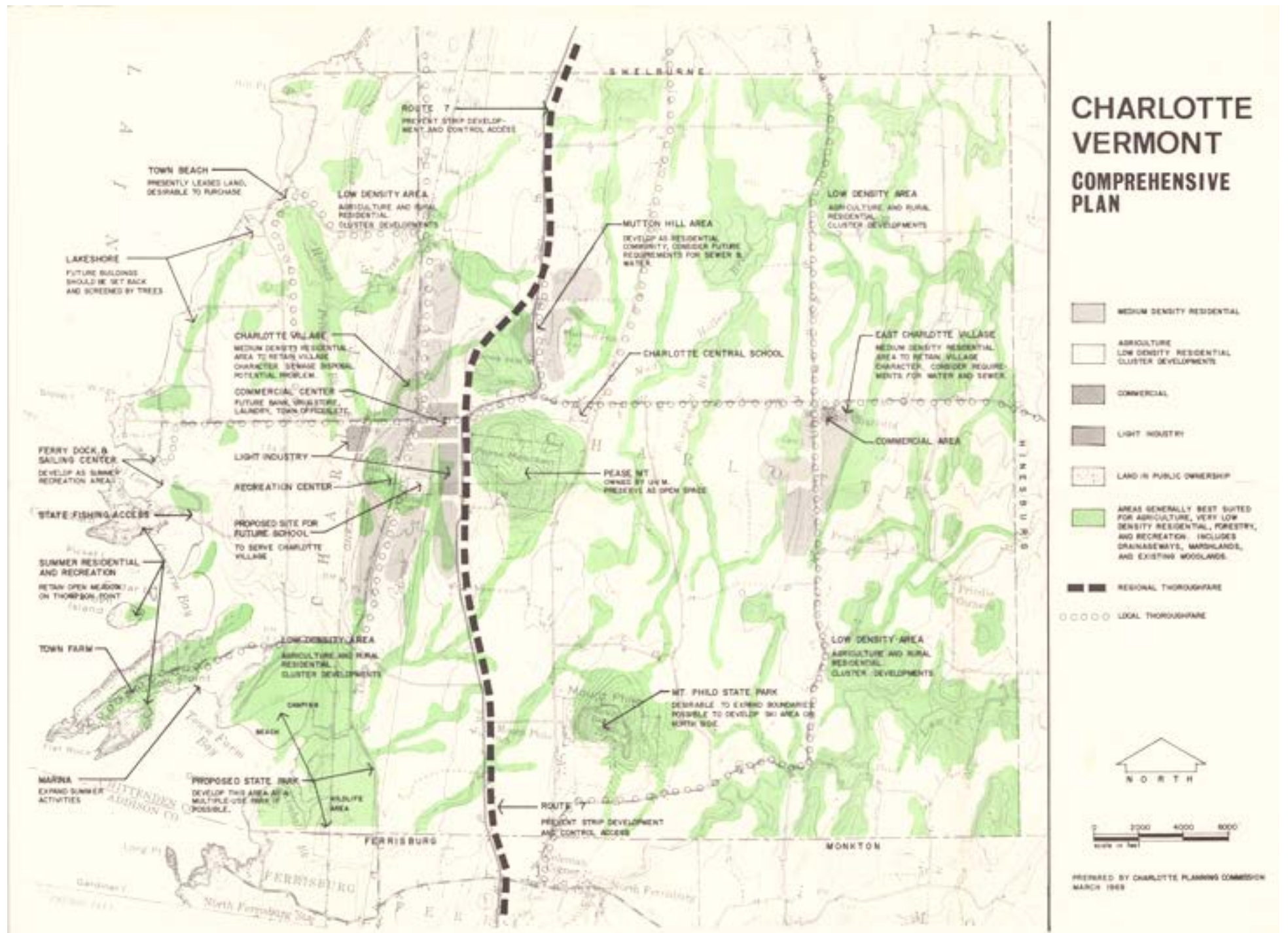
of the townspeople. Amazingly, half the recipients responded.

The other side with the map includes the text from six-page town plan. For a cleaned up and easier to read version, see <https://tinyurl.com/28au2hys>.

A “Charlotte Today” section of the plan reports that Charlotte had grown very slowly from its founding as a town until 1960: “The population in 1800 was approximately 659 people, in 1900 it had reached 1,254. From 1900 until 1950 the town’s population had declined to 1215. By 1960, Charlotte had 1,271 residents.”

“There is mounting evidence that what Vermont has to offer, and especially what Charlotte has to offer as a place to live and work, is in ever-increasing demand and that people are willing to pay higher prices to live here than they would normally pay to live somewhere else,” the plan concludes. “It is the preservation of these great natural advantages that will continue to make others put a higher value on what we have to offer.”

SEE **LAND-USE** PAGE 9





## LAND-USE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

### • The map

You will see on the map that it was the desire in 1969 to have any growth happen in either the east or west village — depending on the availability of water and septic — and in the Mutton Hill area. Sound familiar?

Commerce was discouraged on Route 7 at the north and south ends of town. Cluster development was to be the way in the rural areas. The green patches were to be lightly developed if at all.

At the March 21, 1969, public hearing someone asked: “What about all those green blobs?”

The answer: “We are hopeful that by depicting these areas as proposed town parks and forest, people in the long run will be inspired to sell or donate land to the town.” Think of all the land that has been conserved since.

The most surprising item on the map? The possible ski area on the north side of Mount

Philo. Krasnow Skiway?

### • Planning today

Understanding the history of planning in Charlotte is important for putting into context the planning commission’s effort today to gauge the pulse of the town, plan the villages, update the land-use regulations and update the town plan.

The pressures felt by the 1969 planning commission are clear when looking at the population growth trend at the time and over the ensuing five decades. The goal was to prevent the significant growth that was happening north of town from happening in Charlotte. The population trend over this period demonstrates the success.

Put another way, there were on average 76 people per year moving into Charlotte in the 70’s. That number is now about 16 per year.

The 1969 planning commissioners said it best in their one-page introduction to their plan: “It was apparent that if we did not plan for ourselves someone else would plan for

Year	Population	Population Increase	% Increase
1940	1,082		
1950	1,215	133	12.30%
1960	1,271	56	4.60%
1970	1,802	531	42%
1980	2,561	759	42%
1990	3,148	587	23%
2000	3,569	421	13%
2010	3,754	185	5.20%
2020	3,912	158	4.20%

us; or, perhaps worse, no one would do any planning at all, and the growing urban and suburban sprawl at our borders would just move on through our area without restraint or

thoughtful direction.”  
(Charles Russell is chair of the development review board.)

## Education

# There is more to student jobs than meets the eye

Margo Bartsch  
Contributor

“Working at the Taco Stand, a fast-food Mexican restaurant, on busy Friday nights prepared me for deadlines in the newsroom,” said Scooter MacMillan, editor of The Charlotte News.

Service industry jobs demand that workers are not on their phones all day. Interacting with bosses, co-workers and customers can help build people skills, financial accountability and time management.

The Bureau of Labor statistics reported that 175,000 jobs were added this April with some of the strongest gains in the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors. This is an opportunity for high school and college students to consider summer jobs that are not preprofessional internships or remote work.

First, people skills need to be developed as students have grown up spending more time on screens during and after the pandemic. Online interactions can blunt nonverbal communication. There is less opportunity to see the importance of eye contact as a form of expression and encourage random conversations outside of scheduled meetings.

Working at restaurants and supermarkets are natural places to develop people skills. Taking a job at a local pizzeria, market or national sandwich chain can push a student outside of their comfort zone in working with managers, staff and customers. Each day is different in developing problem-solving skills and navigating the work environment.

For example, a student worked as a part-time bartender while attending college in New York City to earn money and pay back student loans. When interviewing for an investment banking job, the recruiter asked about how they identified people who had too much to drink and how they communicated with them to stop serving alcohol. This was a test to see how they manage difficult situations to keep calm, follow a process and stop the problem from escalating.

Second, financial accountability is achieved in having a job. The worker earns

wages while being responsible for specific tasks. Workers learn the importance of having a positive attitude and interacting with others to make the work environment more enjoyable and productive. Employers can recognize top workers with extra hours to make more money and bonuses as a reward.

Workers can develop their money skills by paying bills, making purchases and saving for the future. There is a sense of pride when being able to afford a special purchase from the money earned.

Also, employers value the worker’s commitment to the team and interactions with customers. Businesses appreciate the employee’s contribution to hitting the company’s financial objectives.

Job responsibilities create social interactions that can be highlighted in college application essays. For example, the University of Michigan asks to describe in 300 words a community the student belongs to and their place in it. Sharing about the workplace highlights how the student accepts responsibility, values teamwork and is recognized by bosses.

Finally, time management is not a given. This February, Zippia Recruiting conducted research showing that 82 percent of workers are not effective in managing their time. This results in spending half of their time on less valuable activities.

LinkedIn explains how employer performance reviews identify employee time management issues. Missing deadlines, submitting incomplete projects and asking for extensions show a lack of productivity and quality of work. These are also criteria for how high school and college teachers evaluate students on assignments and for recommendations.

Work can foster time management by being on time (or early) and ready to add more duties. To be considered for promotion, it is important to be dependable to team members, productive to supervisors and approachable to customers.

For example, a high school student working part time at a national restaurant chain noticed a full-time worker who



Adobe stock image

continually arrived late to work and was exhausted on the job. The manager later fired that person. Without that extra employee, the student stayed late to help the manager close the business.

By stepping up, the manager soon promoted the student for additional responsibilities and hours. This extra effort was recognized by authorizing the student to transfer to the Washington, D.C., location to continue working while attending college.

Having a job can make a student more poised for success in high school, college and beyond. Everyday work can build character and responsibility. Communication skills are formed while interacting with multifaceted people and unpredictable situations.

On-the-job experiences can create lessons that make insightful essays and conversations. There is more to working than just the task at hand.

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

## Local Church Services



### Charlotte Congregational Church, UCC

403 Church Hill Road, 425-3176  
Regular Sunday service: 9:30 a.m.

### Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Catholic Church

Spear Street, 425-2637  
Sister parish: St. Jude’s, Hinesburg  
Regular schedule of masses:  
Saturday, 4:30 p.m.,  
at St. Jude’s, Hinesburg  
Sunday, 8 a.m. and 11 a.m.,  
at Our Lady of Mount Carmel  
Sunday, 9:30 a.m.,  
at St. Jude’s, Hinesburg



## Education

# Charlotte Central School spends week honoring staff

Naomi Strada  
(Summarized by Tom Scatchard)

May 6-10, national Teacher Appreciation Week, was celebrated at Charlotte Central School and across the Champlain Valley School District. The school's PTO and administration organized many events to honor all the members of the school community.

Monday, May 6, the administrative assistants (Naomi Strada, Cindy LaWare and Kathie Wagner) who keep the school running each day were celebrated.

Tuesday, May 7, was National Teachers' Day, honoring classroom teachers, special educators and essential arts educators.

Wednesday, May 8, celebrated National School Nurse Day, along with school counselors and bus drivers.

Thursday, May 9, was a day to honor support staff, custodians and the behavior system team.

Friday, May 10, was a day to show appreciation for the cafeteria crew on National School Lunch Hero Day.

At the end of the week, the school administration planned a game show with

prizes and treats each day. There were creative ideas and special privileges for many of the prizes, including gifts and gift cards from local businesses. The acknowledgements showered on the staff during the week not only brought joy, it helped energize the school through the final weeks of school.

### Little things

In addition to celebrating the day-to-day work of the staff at Charlotte Central School, it's worth thinking about the little things happening behind the scenes:

- The custodian dug through the compost bins twice this week to search for the retainers of two different students
- An educator created a space for a student to make a bracelet so he could donate it to the Staff Game Show
- A bus driver drove double routes to cover for a colleague who was sick
- The retired educators who returned to the classroom to share their expertise of Charlotte's history
- The teachers who juggle their current class of students in order to visit younger students in daycare centers to build a

strong connection before they come to CCS.

- The administrators at each door, greeting students and families as the day begins
- Educators teaching for lifelong learning and how to stay curious.

The school administration expressed its deep appreciation for all of the public school employees who show up every day, unconditionally caring for each other and their students, and who believe in their role as stewards of the future.

### Arbor Day

Charlotte Central School celebrated Arbor Day with an assembly led by the first grade. Those students shared facts about Arbor Day as well as important things trees provide for the world. They even shared a few tree riddles.

In addition, a special thank you was extended to Charlie Proutt of Horsford Garden & Nursery for the donation of a bur oak tree for the school grounds. Proutt has been donating trees for many years to Charlotte Central School and the school community is very grateful for his generosity.

He also led the tree-planting ceremony

where kindergarten students, with the assistance of the seventh and eighth grade Student Council Ambassadors, finished planting the tree. The kindergarten students will get to watch the bur oak tree grow over the years, and one day, as eighth graders will be able to help a future kindergarten plant their own tree.

### Upcoming school events

**Monday, May 20, 6:30-7:30 p.m.** — Spring Concert, fifth-eighth grade band and chorus, Multi-Purpose Room, Note: This is a change in date.

**Thursday, May 23, 7 p.m.** — Champlain Valley School District Jazz Festival (Charlotte Central School Jazz Band will be performing), CVU auditorium.

**Wednesday, June 5, 12:20-1 p.m.** — Discover Jazz Fest (Charlotte Central School Jazz Band will be performing), Church Street, Burlington.

**Thursday, June 6, 5:30-6:35 p.m.** — Charlotte Central School Band and Chorus perform national anthem at Lake Monsters game, Centennial Field, Burlington.

## Commentary

# The magical, mythical equalized pupil is expensive shell game

Tom Evslin  
Contributor

The Vermont Legislature is playing an expensive shell game — and planning worse. The “equalized pupil” is the shell under which the pea is hidden.

There are only two ways to avoid gargantuan property tax increases — raise other taxes and create new taxes to support education. But there are many claimants for new revenue, and few people want to pay new taxes just so they will have a slightly smaller increase in property taxes.

Reduce spending on education. Legislators say they can't because school budgets are set locally. However, the odds are stacked by statute against local thrift.

Because of the way education funding currently works, all the gain of an extra dollar spent is local and the pain of paying that extra dollar is spread statewide. The pain of a dollar saved is local and the gain is statewide. How can a responsible local school board ever cut a program?

How do we change incentives so school districts become thrifty?

We can't go back to having each district use its own tax base to pay for whatever education it wants to provide. In 1997 the Vermont Supreme Court ruled:

“We decide that the current system for funding public education in Vermont, with its substantial dependence on local property taxes and resultant wide disparities in revenues available to local school districts, deprives children of an

equal educational opportunity in violation of the Vermont Constitution.”

It's acceptable that it is a state responsibility to give every student an opportunity for a good education. Let's assume that those dollars will largely come from property taxes and be assessed (as they are now) so the burden is apportioned strictly by the value of individual real estate. A half-million-dollar residence pays the same rate for education no matter what district it's in.

A suggestion, which preserves some local control, is that the legislature determine the cost per student for a quality education and give that amount to each district. A district that wants to spend more must raise the extra money locally.

If you don't listen closely, it sounds like many legislators are proposing exactly this. But most are not. You have to look for the fine print: it's the word “equalized” before the word “pupil.” This little modifier makes all the difference.

What's an equalized pupil?

Vermont has 84,000 actual students; it has 132,100 equalized pupils! Stowe and Winooski have about the same number of actual students; Winooski has almost twice as many equalized pupils. The concept of equalized pupil was introduced to account for the higher cost of educating a high schooler than a kindergartener. Then small adjustments were added for poverty and students for whom English is a second language. With Act 127, whose implementation caused this year's chaos, the Legislature made these weightings into a hidden welfare system. They declared that it costs more than twice as much to educate a student from a family below 185 percent of the Federal Poverty Level

as a wealthier student and that it costs 2.5 times as much if a student is not a native English speaker. One actual student from a poor immigrant family counts as 4.52 equalized pupils when doling out funds from the statewide pool.

If the cost for a good education in Vermont is \$20,000 per actual student and each district receives this much per actual student, and must tax itself to spend more, no student is denied the chance of a good education, and each district has an incentive to save, but none have an incentive to spend less (they would not be allowed to put unspent money to other town uses). Stowe would receive \$15,400,000 for 770 students and Winooski \$15,720,000 for 786 students.

However, that's not what will happen if the money is allocated per equalized pupil. \$20,000 per actual student is \$1.68 billion statewide. The legislature would divide the \$1.68 billion by 132,100 equalized pupils and declare a cost of \$12,718 per equalized pupil. Stowe then gets \$12,921,488 for 1016 equalized pupils and Winooski gets \$25,715,796 for 2022 equalized pupils. Stowe receives only \$16,781 per actual student and must tax itself to reach the \$20,000/student cost of a decent education. Worse, most legislative proposals and current state law (temporarily suspended) penalize districts which elect to spend more than the declared statewide cost per student. Meanwhile Winooski has \$32,717 to spend on each one of its actual students and no incentive at all to be frugal nor any requirement to deliver good results with



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# Sports

## Lone stumble, but Redhawks baseball still ranked No. 1

Scooter MacMillan  
Editor

The Champlain Valley Redhawks are still soaring through the season. Despite one setback against South Burlington, the 7-1 team is still ranked No. 1, just above No. 2 Mount Anthony (11-0).

Even with the loss, head baseball coach Nicky Elderton is liking how things are progressing for his team.

After knocking off Burlington in a home game this past Saturday, May 11, Elderton wasn't perturbed by the lone blemish on the Redhawks' season. In his view the loss may be a good thing.

"You learn more from your losses than you do from the wins," the coach said. And he was pleased how his team had played at South Burlington. The Redhawks were in the game until the end.

A couple of plays here and there, and the result could have been different. Elderton is confident of his players' ability to learn from their mistakes.

### CVU 8, Mt. Mansfield 1

The Redhawks traveled to Mt. Mansfield for a tilt on May 2.

Russell Willoughby helped put CVU on the board in the first inning when he singled home Travis Stroh, but Mt. Mansfield responded in the bottom of the first inning when a drive to center field brought a run home and tied the game up at 1-1.

The Redhawks added runs in the third and sixth innings to go up 3-1 when first

Riley McDade and then Aaron LaRose scored off Cougar errors.

In the seventh inning, CVU's offense came alive, in part helped by the Redhawks' aggressive base running. With no outs, Stephen Rickert and Orion Yates pulled off a double steal and then both scored on a Mount Mansfield error.

Travis Stroh hit a hard ground ball for a triple that resulted in another Mount Mansfield error scoring LaRose and putting the Redhawks comfortably ahead at 6-1.

Stroh added a run when he scored on a ground out by McDade.

Willoughby added a run on a wild pitch to make it 8-1. The offense was shared pretty equitably, with six different players scoring for CVU.

### CVU 4, Essex 0

It was another away game for CVU on Saturday, May 4. This is something the Redhawks seem OK with, since at this point they had played only one game at home.

Willoughby knocked in Stroh in the first and again in the third inning to put the Redhawks in the driver's seat with a 2-0 lead.

A Mitchell Niarchos' bunt scored Calvin Steele to make the score 3-0 in the fourth.

Willoughby hit a sacrifice grounder in the seventh that scored Elise Berger for the final score of 4-0.

Rickert pitched seven innings of shutout ball, giving up four hits, walking

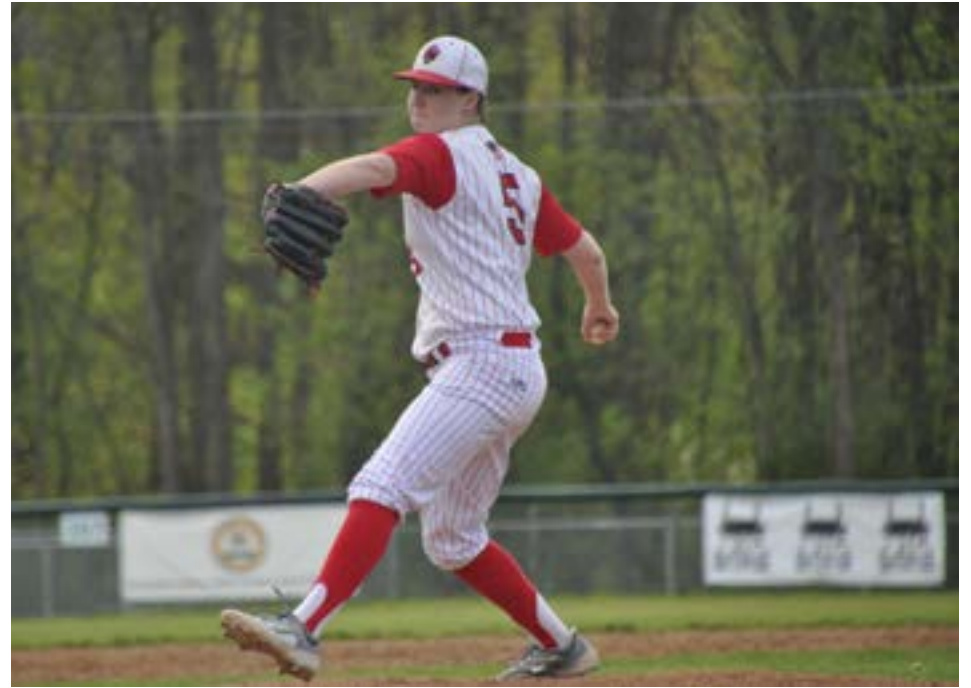


Photo by Judy Stoh

Elise Berger's curve has had good movement so far this year. She has been placing the ball well, not giving batters many chances to hit.

one and striking out eight.

### South Burlington 7, CVU 1

Stroh put the Redhawks on the board first on Tuesday, May 7, with a solo home run to centerfield.

A CVU error helped the Wolves tie the game up at 1-1 in the bottom half of the first inning.

In the bottom of the fourth inning,

South Burlington took a 3-1 lead, an advantage they wouldn't relinquish for the rest of the game.

The Wolves added four runs in the fifth off a homer and a drive to center that drove in two runs.

South Burlington's Nick Kelly earned

SEE **BASEBALL** PAGE 14

## PUPIL


CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

this windfall.

It's hard to feel sorry for Stowe (where I live); but, the education tax is already levied on a statewide basis. Stowe has more valuable property than Winooski and will and should contribute much more to the statewide fund. But, if property taxes are higher in Stowe per dollar of assessed valuation because Stowe must make up for a shortfall in educational funding, it means that someone in Stowe in a \$500,000 house pays more than someone in Winooski in a house with the same value.

It does cost somewhat more to educate students for whom English is a second language. It arguably costs more to educate students living in poverty. If state education dollars are allocated per actual rather than per equalized student, it may be necessary to make some extra allocation to districts with many such students, but that should be by honest appropriation rather than the shell game of the equalized pupil, and outcomes must be monitored to make sure extra money results in better-educated students.

*(Tom Evslin, of Stowe, is a retired high-tech entrepreneur. He served as transportation secretary for Gov. Richard Snelling and stimulus czar for Gov. Jim Douglas.)*



**The Town of Charlotte  
TOWN MEETINGS  
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**Charlotte Park and Wildlife Oversight  
Committee Meeting**  
Thursday, May 16, 5 p.m.

**Planning Commission Meeting**  
Thursday, May 16, 7 p.m.

**Regular Selectboard Meeting**  
Monday, May 20, 6:30 p.m.

**Development Review Board**  
Wednesday, May 22, 7 p.m.

**Memorial Day - Town Hall Closed**  
May 7, all day

**Charlotte Conservation  
Commission Meeting**  
Tuesday, May 28, 7 p.m.



## An efting newt



Jim Squires, a recently returned Saint Simons Island, Ga., snowbird, said he was pleased to find this red eft in the woods behind his Charlotte home. This is the animal's adolescent phase. It will live as a land animal for two-three years, then it will travel to a body of water where it will become an aquatic adult newt.



Courtesy photo

A child plays in the Mo Willems Exhibit at the Children's Museum of Pittsburgh.

## Mo Willems exhibit coming to ECHO, Leahy Center

Nicole Bova  
ECHO, Leahy Center

The Pigeon Comes to Burlington: A Mo Willems Exhibit makes its debut at 10 a.m., Saturday, May 25, at ECHO, Leahy Center for Lake Champlain.

Co-organized by Children's Museum of Pittsburgh and The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art, the exhibit is inspired by the art and characters of the beloved children's book author and illustrator Mo Willems.

Many familiar characters will be featured, including best friend duo Elephant and Piggie, faithful companion Knuffle Bunny and The Pigeon, the wily city bird best known for his antics in "Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus!"

Activities will give visitors the opportunity to make art that is inspired by Mo Willems and to learn about the rich social and emotional lives of the author's characters.

The exhibit will also feature prints of illustrations, including sketches and other preliminary materials, by Willems.

In this play-and-learn exhibit, visitors can:

- Have a hilarious conversation in the voices of Elephant Gerald and Piggie at a double-sided phone booth.
- Make Elephant and Piggie dance with old-time animation.
- Put on a wearable bus and take a drive around the exhibit.
- Spin the laundromat washing machine and uncover Knuffle Bunny and other surprises.
- Dress up Naked Mole Rat and send him down the runway for a one-of-a-kind fashion show.
- Stack lightweight blocks to create their own terrible monster or funny friend.
- Launch foam hot dogs at The Pigeon and play the plinko game to give the

Duckling a cookie.

- Try out art techniques that Mo uses for his own books.

"Mo Willems has captured the hearts and imaginations of so many avid readers — both young and old," said Ted Lawson, ECHO's executive director. "We are so excited to bring Willems' characters and stories to life here at ECHO for our Vermont community."

The Pigeon Comes to Burlington! A Mo Willems Exhibit will be on display at ECHO from Saturday, May 25, through Sunday, Jan. 5, 2025.

ECHO is open seven days a week 10 a.m.-5 p.m. For more information, call 802-864-1848 or visit [echovermont.org](http://echovermont.org).

Willems is an author, illustrator, animator, playwright and the inaugural Kennedy Center Education artist-in-residence, where he collaborates in creating fun new stuff involving classical music, opera, comedy concerts, dance, painting and digital works with the National Symphony Orchestra, Ben Folds, Yo-Yo Ma and others.

Willems is best known for his No. 1 New York Times bestselling picture books, which have been awarded three Caldecott Honors ("Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus!," "Knuffle Bunny," "Knuffle Bunny Too"), two Theodor Geisel Medals and five Geisel Honors (The Elephant & Piggie series).

Willems' art has been exhibited around the world, including major solo retrospectives at the High Museum (Atlanta) and the New-York Historical Society (NYC). Over the last decade, Willems has become the most produced playwright of theater for young audiences in America, having written or co-written four musicals based on his books.

He began his career as a writer and animator on PBS' Sesame Street, where he garnered six Emmy Awards for writing.

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# Calendar

## Sensory friendly museum Friday, May 17, 8:30 a.m.

Monthly sensory friendly mornings begin at Shelburne Museum Friday, May 17, 8:30 a.m. These are early hours reserved for visitors of all ages with varying social and sensory-processing needs. "Know Before You Go" materials, limited numbers of noise-cancelling head-phones, fidget toys and a break room will be available for visitor use. It's free but registration is required at: <https://tinyurl.com/vdrh4vux> or by calling 802-985-0924. Every month, May through October, the community is welcomed into the museum before regular opening hours to view special exhibitions at the Pizzagalli Center for Art and Education in a light-and-sound adjusted environment. Created in consultation with Inclusive Arts Vermont, this program for children, teens and adults is designed to offer a positive museum-going experience for visitors with varying sensory processing.

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

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

## 'Thomas Jefferson's Virginia' Sunday, May 19, 2 p.m.

Laura Macaluso will talk about Thomas Jefferson's associations with Virginia at the Ethan Allen Homestead Museum. In the beauty of the Blue Ridge Mountains, Jefferson was inspired to write his only book, "Notes on the State of Virginia." Few are associated with a place as Jefferson is with the state. Macaluso will take you on a tour of his state. Free but donations will be accepted.

## Luncheon in Shelburne

### Wednesday, May 22, 11:30 a.m.

St. Catherine of Siena and Age Well are offering a luncheon for anyone 60 or older in the St Catherine of Siena Parish Hall, 72 Church Street 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 stuffed chicken breast, mashed potatoes, sliced carrots, dinner roll, pumpkin cookie and milk. You must register by May 16. Email [kbatres@agewellvt.org](mailto:kbatres@agewellvt.org) or call 802-662-5283 to make reservations.



Vermont Eats, Thursday, June 6, 5:30 p.m. This year the dinner will feature Burlington's Lost Mural Project and will take place at the Ohavi Zedek Synagogue. Read more below.

## Music with the Museum Thursday, May 30, 6 p.m.

Rokeby Museum will hold Music with the Museum, an evening of food and music from The Meat Packers at the Ferrisburgh Town Community Center on May 30. The event will include a silent auction to raise funds for Rokeby Museum's educational programming, sharing the stories of the people who lived and worked at Rokeby. Get tickets at [rokeby.org/music-with-the-museum](http://rokeby.org/music-with-the-museum). If you can't attend, please consider supporting the museum with a donation at [rokeby.org/support](http://rokeby.org/support).

## Early Birder morning walks Sundays, June 2, 9, 16, 23 & 30, 7-8:30 a.m.

Spring and early summer mornings are terrific for birding. Who's singing, calling, nesting or flying around the Birds of Vermont Museum? Discover birds on an early morning ramble in the museum's forest and meadows. Walks are led by experienced birders familiar with Vermont birds. Bring binoculars and good walking shoes. Boots are definitely in order. Don't forget bug spray and tick repellent. Park at 900 Sherman Hollow Road, in the museum parking lot. Suggested donation: \$10-\$15. Register at [sevendaystickets.com/organizations/birds-of-vermont-museum](http://sevendaystickets.com/organizations/birds-of-vermont-museum).

## Vermont Eats

### Thursday, June 6, 5:30 p.m.

The Vermont Historical Society and The Lost Mural project are teaming up for Vermont Eats, a fundraising dinner that puts a focus on the food of Vermont's immigrant communities. Last year was a dinner in Barre featuring that city's Italian heritage. This year the dinner will feature Burlington's Lost Mural Project and will take place at the Ohavi Zedek Synagogue. The dinner will examine the city's Jewish immigrants who formed a close-knit community in the 19th and early 20th centuries centered on a trio of synagogues in what's now the Old North End and was known as "Burlington's Little Jerusalem." Proceeds will benefit the Vermont Historical Society and the Lost Mural Project. Tickets cost \$50 and are on sale on the Vermont Historical

minutes starting at 6 p.m. This is a great way for novices to try their race legs. Faster racers, who are ranked Category 1, 2 or 3, race for 45 minutes starting at 6:45 p.m. Practice criteriums are different from other races in that cyclists ride for a specified time and are scored on how many laps they complete. The entry fee is \$10 and \$5 for juniors and full-time college students. No race license is needed. Registration opens at 5:30 p.m. and closes 10 minutes before the start of the race. For information email [andre.sturm@earthlink.net](mailto:andre.sturm@earthlink.net).

## Bird monitoring walk Saturdays, June 29 & July 27, 7:30 a.m.

Join the monthly monitoring walk to record birds on the Birds of Vermont Museum's property. Please bring your own binoculars and dress for the weather. Free, suggested donation \$5-\$15. Register at [sevendaystickets.com/organizations/birds-of-vermont-museum](http://sevendaystickets.com/organizations/birds-of-vermont-museum).

## Butterfly and bug walk Saturday, July 6, 10 a.m.-noon

Beetles, butterflies and so much more. Join Vermont Entomological Society naturalists and entomologists for an exploratory stroll on the Birds of Vermont Museum grounds. Bring magnifying glasses and an insect net if you have one. Binoculars can be helpful. Do bring your water bottle and dress for outdoors. Pack a lunch and picnic after the walk. Register at [sevendaystickets.com/organizations/birds-of-vermont-museum](http://sevendaystickets.com/organizations/birds-of-vermont-museum). Free but donations welcome.

Society's website at [vermonthistory.org/vt-eats](http://vermonthistory.org/vt-eats).

## Tag and book sale

### Saturday, June 8, 9 a.m.-3 p.m.

There will be a tag and book sale at Wake Robin at 200 Wake Robin Drive in Shelburne on June 8, rain or shine. Cash or check preferred. No pets allowed. Info: [wakerobin.com](http://wakerobin.com).

## Covered bridge meeting

### Saturday, June 8, 10 a.m.-3 p.m.

Vermont Covered Bridge Society is holding its spring meeting for members and interested covered-bridge enthusiasts at the Charlotte Senior Center. Vermont Covered Bridge Society bi-annual meetings move around Vermont and are held in towns where covered bridges are located. Charlotte is home to three covered bridges: Holmes Creek, Quinlan and Sequin. For more info: [vermontbridges.org](http://vermontbridges.org). At the end of the meeting around 2:30, there will be a caravan tour of the town's three covered bridges.

## Criterium practice

### Tuesdays, June 18 & July 9, 6 p.m.

The Green Mountain Bicycle Club will sponsor practice criteriums at Watertown Hill in Colchester on Tuesdays, June 18 and July 9. Those with lower or no ranking ride for 35

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# Environment

## Many volunteer to green up Charlotte for 54th time

Scooter MacMillan  
Editor

Photos by Scooter MacMillan

Trash talk on a basketball court is way different than trash talk on Green Up Day.

On May 4, Charlotte celebrated Vermont's 54th Green Up Day, and all the trash talk in the Charlotte Central School parking lot involved a lot of smiling and cooperation. Heated competition was at a minimum.

Some years ago, this reporter interviewed a young girl in Hinesburg who affirmed that Green Up Day was her favorite holiday.

Everyone on this Saturday seemed intoxicated by the observance, saturated with the thrill of community-driven initiatives promoting environmental sustainability and cleaning up the town's roads.

The state's first official Green Up Day was held in 1970. Kim Findlay, one of the co-chairs of the town's annual participation in the de-littering holiday, said she could remember picking up trash on the second Green Up Day when she was a student at Charlotte Central School.

She and Ken Spencer have been co-chairing for six or seven years. They simultaneously offered to chair the greening up several years ago. Rather than flipping a coin or doing rock-paper-scissors, they decided it would be more fun to do it together.

As in years past, Sustainable Charlotte held its annual electronics recycling collection at the school in conjunction with the effort to clean town roads, where just across the parking lot a steady stream of volunteers were delivering green bags full of the litter they had picked up.

Good Point Recycling supplied a truck for unwanted electronics to be hauled back to its recycling center in Middlebury. It doesn't cost Charlotte anything. The company makes its money off the devices it repairs and resells.

"They are just an amazing business. They try to make sure that almost nothing goes into the landfill," said Ruah Swennerfelt who was working a two-hour shift with husband Louis Cox.

Cox said over the years he has gotten a turntable and a complete sound system from recycling.

"We've got a really good recycled sound system," Swennerfelt said.

And they listen to music from records on a turntable. For Cox, records have never gone out of style.

The couple have been helping to reclaim electronics on Green Up Day for at least 10 years.

Vermont has the highest recycling of appliances per capita of any state in the country, according to the Good Point Recycling website.

Spencer was sitting on the pavement at the trash pickup table, marking in red town roads that had been claimed by trash pickeruppers. Almost all of Charlotte's byways, major and minor, were marked.

"Except for a few spots on Route 7 and Spear Street, just about every road was cleaned up," Findlay said after Saturday.



From left, Mary Ellen Hebert, Elizabeth Bassett, Kim Findlay and Carol Koerner great volunteers seeking green bags for cleaning up trash from Charlotte roads.



Dex Timmons celebrates Green Up Day, by pitching in to clean up the road in front of his school, Charlotte Central School.



Ken Spencer marks off the roads that people have committed to cleaning up.



Louis Cox collects electronic devices for recycling, sponsored by Sustainable Charlotte.

### BASEBALL

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

the win, pitching a complete game and only giving up five hits. LaRose took the loss for CVU with four and one-third innings on the mound, giving up all the runs and seven hits, while striking out five and walking two.

Berger pitched an inning and two-thirds, giving up one hit, while striking out three.

#### CVU 6, Burlington 0

No residue from the previous South Burlington loss was evident four days later when Champlain Valley got back on the winning track, defeating the Seahorses, this past Saturday, May 11.

The Redhawks jumped out to an early lead in the first inning. Both Willoughby and Berger hit sacrifice flies in the initial frame, both of which knocked in two runs apiece.

In the bottom of the second inning, Steele hit a double that drove in McDade and Stroh and put the Redhawks ahead 6-0.

Berger gave up three walks the first inning.

"The first inning was a little rough but then I settled down," Berger said after the game, a masterful understatement.

She didn't walk another batter and finished with five innings of one-hit ball, striking out nine.

Nunziata came on for two innings of relief pitching. The freshman acquitted

himself in style, walking one, striking out three and giving up no hits.

The Redhawks were set to face Mt. Mansfield at home in Hinesburg 4:30 p.m. on Wednesday, a rematch of the game CVU won a week earlier away. The results of that game were not ready by press time.

Berger was also not alarmed by the loss at South Burlington, regarding it as a checkpoint for the team and looking forward to the rematch, the Redhawks' penultimate game of the regular season, this time at CVU.

"That'll be a good time for another checkpoint, to see how we've progressed," she said.



## Environment

# Hinesburg residents try tree planting for Green Up Day

Jacob Miller-Arsenault  
Community News Service

Lush green fields and rolling farmlands frame the drive into Hinesburg on Route 116, which was strangely devoid of Green Up Dayers on an overcast but temperate morning last Saturday.

That might've been because residents were busy with another environmentally friendly project downtown.

On the Hinesburg Town Common behind the police and fire stations, a band of volunteers put on a tree-care workshop received by perhaps two dozen attendees throughout the day.

The workshop demonstrated the “three Ps,” said organizer Andrea Morgante, longtime town government participant and noted greenthumb: planting, pruning and procurement. The hope is to train volunteers who will take an active role in planting and caring for the 50-plus trees set to occupy the green space over the next two years.

Morgante was one of the people who helped Hinesburg get a \$30,000 state grant in January to fund that work.

It's only the first step in a detailed plan to revamp the area, which has existed since the mid-2000s, with amenities like a playground, gazebo and expanded parking.

“The idea of having a pavilion or a grandstand, having live music, local bands, that's what brings a community together,” said arborist and workshop volunteer Nick Kierstead, who lives in Hinesburg with his wife and 1-year-old daughter. “It's good to emphasize how much impact a gathering space in Hinesburg could have. People want to gather, and we don't have a space to do that.”

Kierstead delighted audiences by scaling a sprawling ash tree on the northeast corner of the common, handsaw strapped to his shin and a helmet on his head, and revving his chainsaw at the top to provide the town with some “free pruning.” The sight made sense given his background working for a power company in Colorado and Montana. He and other workers would drop into remote areas and clear vegetation from power lines.

Teetering on a bough 30 feet above the ground, Kierstead described the importance of context when pruning trees. “I wouldn't prune this tree like a forest tree and vice

versa,” he said, explaining how a tree like the one he was standing on would tend to grow straight up like an arrow, with a narrower canopy, when in a dense forest. Without competition from other trees, the one on the common had developed a chaotic spread of limbs.

Master gardener Marie Ambusk instructed visitors on proper pruning practices. To say trees are her passion would be an understatement; the word is stamped across the license plate of her white Toyota SUV. She snipped away at the pesky low-hanging branches of one young honey locust tree.

“The worst time to prune a tree is right now because the tree is waking up (from the winter), and it is very stressful to wake up,” Ambusk said. “The worst time is when the buds are opening.”

Ambusk fielded questions about technique from onlookers as the brush pile mounted behind her. There are a lot of rules when it comes to pruning trees, she said, such as not removing more than a third of the tree's growth in a single growing season. Cuts should be made just outside the spot where a branch meets the trunk, or branch collar, and end in the smallest possible circle. Precision is vital: Cuts too far outside the branch collar result in stubs, while flush cuts damage the branch collar and open the tree up to rot and decay.

Volunteers were apprehensive, then, when Ambusk asked if they would like to try pruning. She tried to assuage their fears by admitting, “At a certain point, it becomes a little subjective what you're doing.”

Xander Patterson, a 61-year-old Hinesburg resident, made a couple of cuts to the tree while his 2-year-old dog Louie tramped between the legs of observers. He came because he was curious about the plans for the area and wanted to support the community. “I'm very glad the town is doing this whether I use it much or not,” he said.

Sara Lovitz, who lives right across the street, brought along her kids: Zeke, 8, and Gabe, 5. She's excited to see the development of the lot, she said, and anticipates being part of the team dedicated to the upkeep of the trees. She wants to encourage her kids to do the same.

As the event stretched on, more visitors arrived, no doubt drawn in part by a table sporting Vermont cider donuts. Cyclists



Photo by Marie Ambusk

Andrea Morgante, center, poses with Sara Lovitz and her kids during the workshop.

stopped to chat with their neighbors and dogs chased tennis balls across the lawn as Ambusk and Morgante demonstrated how to plant ball-and-burlap trees.

*(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.)*



# Farming

## Nonprofit farming shifts focus to culture, community

Natalie Bankmann  
Community News Service

Inside the 1700s Barn House at Clemmons Family Farm, visitors won't find plows and animals feeding but posters of African American artwork lining the walls and comfortable couches welcoming visitors for gatherings.

Lydia Clemmons, whose parents bought the Charlotte farm 61 years ago, decided in 2019 to convert the operation to a nonprofit organization focused not on farming but on its status and history as one of the few agricultural working sites in Vermont — and the nation — founded by Black owners. The nonprofit, Clemmons Family Farm Inc., first took over the land and property and leased space back to the organization to serve as a multicultural community center hosting events, exhibits and educational activities. Many black artists and historians have gathered for the past five years at Clemmons farm, seen as a safe place to discuss Black history and culture in Vermont.

"It's rare to hear, 'Come and I'll tell you

what jambalaya is and teach you about the blues' in Vermont," Clemmons said of the farm's mission today.

In December, Clemmons Family Farm Inc. officially purchased the farm operation itself. Overseen by a board of directors, Lydia Clemmons serves as president and executive director of the 501(c)3, or tax-exempt, entity.

Recently, the farm hired two staff members to develop a curriculum for students meant to expand children's knowledge of Black culture beyond the painful narrative that many schools provide.

Both the Clemmons Farm and Philo Ridge Farm, another agricultural landmark in Charlotte, shifted to nonprofit status last year. In November, Philo Ridge shuttered its on-farm market and restaurant, announcing that it would pivot from selling goods for profit to using the land for education and community-building.

As agricultural land slowly dissipates in Vermont and farm businesses become difficult to uphold, Vermonters are watching the image of a barn on every rolling hill and the soundtrack of far-off moos fade. Owners of farms like Clemmons and Philo Ridge are turning to nonprofit models to preserve the agricultural landscape, so cows always have a patch of fresh Vermont grass to munch and vegetables have plenty of space to grow.

According to the Vermont Agency of Agriculture's 2022 agriculture census, the amount of farmland throughout Vermont has decreased by 19,000 acres in the last five years, amounting to a 4 percent decrease in Vermont farms. Nonprofit status means farms are tax-exempt and can receive grant money from the state and federal government and charitable foundations, easing the pressures of depending on economic viability to keep a farm farm operation going.

"Our agricultural land is more at risk than ever before," said Abbey Spires, director of the agriculture development division for the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, adding that last year, the downward trend continued.

Development and infrastructure projects continued to encroach on farmland, and the crucial summer growing season was damaged from July flooding, Spires said.

"It is really hard to hold on to land," Clemmons said, "Many farmers are forced to make the choice to sell their land or consider



Clemmons Family Farm

Photo contributed

switching to a nonprofit model."

On its website, Clemmons Family Farm describes itself as one of the 0.4 percent of farms in America with Black ownership. Lydia Clemmons' parents, Jackson and Lydia Clemmons, now both over 100 years old, purchased their Charlotte land in 1962 and always had a goal to bring the community together and educate the region on African American culture. The impetus for the nonprofit shift came from that foundation, Clemmons said.

Philo Ridge Farm owners Peter Swift and Diana McCargo announced in November that they planned to transition to a nonprofit that would allow them to sustain the farm and use it to study ways to "continue to support the future of food and agriculture in Vermont," according to the owners' email newsletter to farm customers.

A public relations representative for the farm declined a request for an interview with the owners earlier this month and said they had no new information. "Right now, the farm is operating as a working farm with a limited staff, raising animals and grazing the land," emailed Morgan Whitehouse, the owners' spokesperson, who is based in Charlotte.

On the farm's website, the Philo Ridge owners wrote that a change to nonprofit farming will allow them to "pursue new opportunities in farming, science, research

and education" and a long-term goal of expanding their research on regenerative agriculture to help other farmers.

The concept of nonprofit farm ownership isn't new in Vermont. One of the most prominent and successful, Shelburne Farms, formed as a nonprofit in 1972 and took over the Chittenden County property that the Webb family had owned for generations in 1986. The tax-exempt operation highlights agriculture as an educational tool to teach the value of society staying connected to nature.

Spires, of the state agency, said she has seen little research on how an increase in nonprofit farms affects communities, but she believes both the businesses and their communities can benefit. On the business side, she said, a nonprofit board management structure provides a variety of perspectives on operations.

"Farms have become increasingly complex," she said. "It is valuable as a nonprofit to have shared decision making."

Nonprofit farms often collaborate with other farmers to support the larger agricultural community, more than for-profit farms typically do as competitors, Spires said. While many nonprofit farms maintain their land but do not sell goods for revenue, they can work with other farmers in the sale and upkeep of crops.

Clemmons Family Farm has lent its farmland for free since the owners stopped selling their own crops in the 1980s. This way, other local farmers can profit from their fields.

"It's important to keep the land in use," said Clemmons, explaining that the soil could lose nutrients if it sits idle. This collaboration allows the land to stay preserved for agriculture and gives local farmers a way to expand and stay viable.

Farming has value beyond being an economic enterprise, Spires said. As a nonprofit, a farm provides a foundation for new knowledge about sustainability and agriculture techniques. When operated sustainably, Spires said, farms can improve soil health and productivity.

Nonprofit farms, Clemmons said, aren't just about farming. They're also cultural touchstones.

"Opening as a nonprofit can be a way to preserve the land," she said, "and keep traditions going."

### Charlotte Property Transfers April 2024

**April 1** Jan W Cannon to Chiara & Sheila Hollender, 19 Garen Rd. with dwelling 2.66 acres \$595,000

**April 1** Philip Lassalle to Laurey C Mauck Revocable Trust 2088 Spear Street with dwelling 2.34 acres \$535,000

**April 8** Beth S. Merritt TRE Bath S. Merritt Revocable Trust to Michael A.Champ Collette N. Khajehali 2086 Hinesburg Rd. with dwelling 2.3 acres \$650,000

**April 10** Jane J. Tingley to Joseph J. Aube & Julie Ann E. Franklin 2087 Dorset Street with dwelling 7.0 acres \$252,596.70

**April 22** Carol Y. Conard TRE Carol Y Conard Trust to MARBRYK Gen 2 LLC 260 North Shore Seasonal dwelling 0 acres \$695,000

**April 22** Peter Richardson Revocable Trust Peter & Nancy Richardson Trustees to Scott Kirkwood Katherine Clavelle 1410 Church Hill Rd. with dwelling 1.27 acres \$800,000

**April 22** Jeffrey N. & Malia M. Stout to Brian S & Kimberly L Forbes 335 Upper Meadow Lane with dwelling 2.43 acres \$1,200,000

**April 22** Marilyn Boyle Family Trust to Carol Y Conard Trust 62 North Shore Rd. Seasonal cottage NA \$610,000

*This information was supplied by  
Jay Strausser of Four Seasons  
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# Gardening

## Picking crabapples for spring flowers

Bonnie Kirn Donahue  
University of Vermont Extension

Flowering crabapples in full bloom are one of the major signs that spring has arrived, and that summer is not too far behind.

Crabapples (*Malus* spp.) are great trees for tough, urban conditions. They can tolerate salty soil and occasional drought. Their small size makes some varieties appropriate for planting under overhead utility lines. These long-lasting bloomers also are important sources of food for pollinators, like bees, flies and wasps.

There are countless varieties of crabapples, all with different canopy shapes, sizes, blossom colors and bloom time. These common, flowering trees can be susceptible to a wide variety of pests and diseases, including scab, fire blight, aphids, mildew and cedar-apple rust. If you have noticed these in your area, you may want to select species that were developed with some resistance.

Harvest gold 'hargozam' (*Malus* x 'hargozam') is a unique variety that has golden fruit and white flowers. It grows about 22 feet tall and 18 feet wide with a columnar to vase form. This variety blooms slightly later than other white-flowered varieties. It has shown some disease resistance to scab and fire blight resistance and good resistance to cedar-apple rust and mildew.

Japanese flowering crabapple (*Malus floribunda*) is a popular cultivar that has been around for many years, with a broad, dense form. This crabapple has bright pink buds



Photo by Bonnie Donahue

A popular flowering landscape tree, crabapples come in a number of varieties featuring different canopy shapes, sizes, blossom colors and bloom time.

that contrast against white flowers, giving the crabapple in bloom a two-toned look in the spring. It has shown good scab resistance, has yellow-red fruit and grows 20 feet high by 25-30 feet wide.

The 'Adams' crabapple (*Malus* 'Adams') has buds and flowers in deep shades of pink with foliage that is green, tinted with red.

'Adams' grows 20 feet tall and wide with a round form. Fruit is red and lasts into the winter.

Since there are so many varieties, when shopping for crabapples, there are a few parameters that you should keep in mind before visiting your local nursery or greenhouse. First, consider the mature size



Photo by Bonnie Donahue

The delicate and beautiful blooms of crabapples herald the arrival of spring and warmer weather.

(height and width) of the tree. Next, think about the color of bloom or fruit that you'd like to have. This will help narrow down the options.

Finally, consider the form of the tree. Some crabapples have more upright or vase shapes with branches that reach toward the sky, while others grow more horizontally with branches that stretch to the side. Additionally, there are crabapples that grow with more rounded forms. Some also have densely branched canopies, while others are more open.

For more information on crabapple cultivars, check out the Cornell University woody plants database ([woodyplants.cals.cornell.edu](http://woodyplants.cals.cornell.edu)) or books at your local library.

Here's to a spring filled with flowers.

*(Bonnie Kirn Donahue is a University of Vermont Extension master gardener and landscape architect from central Vermont.)*

## Are dandelions friends or foes? Delicacies or weeds?

Deborah J. Benoit  
University of Vermont Extension

It's that time of year again. Sunny yellow blossoms pop up all over the landscape, bringing smiles to children's faces — and frowns to those who favor manicured lawns. Love 'em, hate 'em or don't pay them much attention, there's a lot to be said about dandelions (*Taraxacum officinale*).

Its common name comes from the French "dent de lion," meaning lion's teeth, a reference to the appearance of its leaves. Native to Eurasia, dandelions were introduced to North America in the 1600s by colonists who grew them for medicine and food.

Dandelions return year after year, producing the familiar yellow flowers from spring into summer. Popular advice says to let them continue to grow in spring as an early nectar source. Indeed, if there's little else in bloom in the area, dandelions will provide a welcome food source for bees and other insects, and their seeds will provide food as well as nesting material for birds.

Historically, people have consumed dandelions as both food and drink. The tender young leaves or a sprinkling of petals make a tasty addition to salads. More mature leaves can be eaten like spinach, boiled or steamed.

You've probably heard of dandelion wine, but did you know roasted dandelion root can be steeped and served as a coffee substitute? The roots, leaves and flowers are edible and can be used to brew an herbal tea. You can find more information at [go.uvm.edu/](http://go.uvm.edu/)

dandelions.

A word of caution: If you do decide to nibble on a dandelion flower, make a salad with dandelion leaves or brew a cup of dandelion tea, harvest only from areas that are free of contaminants, such as road salts, pesticides or lawn treatments, be sure to rinse them well and be certain you've positively identified the plant.

Dandelions contain Vitamin C and beta carotene (an antioxidant that the body converts to vitamin A) and other important vitamins and minerals. They've historically played a part in folk medicine, and some people have used dandelions as health remedies. However, you should always consult with your doctor before trying any such remedy.

Once their flowers pass, dandelions produce a round head of seeds adorned with white fluff that flies easily on the breeze or a puff of breath. Those seedheads have amused children of all ages, but if you're concerned about a dandelion invasion, be sure to remove the flowers before they go to seed or you may find a field of dandelions in bloom next spring.

There are a number of ways to deal with unwanted dandelions in your garden. They have a long taproot, so trying to pull them by hand can be a chore. If you don't remove the entire root, the plant can grow back.

Fortunately, there are a variety of tools that work well to remove dandelions. They include specialty hand weeders and long-handled, clawed weeders, which remove



Photo by Scooter MacMillan

While most people think of dandelions as a weed, they have many benefits, including as an early nectar source for bees and other insects as well as a good source of Vitamin C, beta carotene and other important vitamins and minerals when consumed in salads, tea or other foods and drink.

dandelions with a simple twist.

If you opt to use an herbicide for removal, be sure to select one intended for dandelions and apply according to the label's directions.

If you don't see the need for a pristine, monoculture carpet of green for your lawn, let dandelions grow and simply mow them with the grass. Why? Because those long taproots that make them so difficult to remove benefit

your lawn by aerating compacted soil.

The next time you see a dandelion's yellow flower, remember, it's so much more than just a weed.

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



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# Gardening

## Making dyes from garden

Nadie VanZandt  
University of Vermont Extension

Are you looking for a fun gardening project to do with your children? Showing them how to grow flowers to make dyes will prove to be a fun and memorable experience this summer, giving them a sense of accomplishment while fostering in them an appreciation for land and nature.

Making colors from plants has several advantages beyond keeping your children entertained. Natural dyes are safe to handle, and the plants they are derived from are easy to grow, sustainable and renewable. In addition, these plants will increase biodiversity, attract pollinators and provide companion planting to your garden.

A plant's roots, leaves or flowers can be used as a source of dye, and success in making natural dyes begins with a list of plants and the colors they produce. Although natural dyes are not as vibrant as synthetic dyes, you can get good results by choosing to grow plants that yield strong colors. In addition, a limited palette is plenty to create rich combinations of colors.

Select seeds of fast-growing plants, such as annuals which are ideal for direct sowing. These seeds will grow fast in warm weather and help your children stay interested throughout the process.

Good choices for orange pigments are orange marigolds or cosmos. Blues can be extracted from black hollyhocks or blue cornflowers. For purple, choose purple pincushions. Green can come from various kinds of foliage. For example, sorrel and spinach produce a rich, dark green dye bath.

Choose a sunny spot that ideally receives four to six hours of sunlight. Prepare the soil as you would your vegetable garden with an addition of rich compost and ensure good drainage. Seeds sown in raised beds

or directly in the ground will grow better than in pots, which tend to require more maintenance. Follow the directions on the seed packets.

Be sure to grow enough plants to yield many flowers for a decent batch of dye. As a general rule, you can use one part plant material to two parts water (by volume) to yield a strong dye, but feel free to experiment with other proportions.

The process of making dyes involves using the stove, so be sure to always supervise this activity when children are present.

Place the flowers or leaves in a pot of water and simmer for at least one hour. Once you are satisfied with the color, your dye is ready to be used. Next, strain and discard the plant material.

Be aware that natural dyes will only dye natural fibers such as those derived from animal protein, like silk and wool, and those from cellulose-based fibers, like linen, cotton, bamboo and hemp. Natural dyes will not work with synthetic fabrics.

You may need to pretreat the fabric with a fixative called a mordant to ensure the pigments bind to the fabric. Although there are several options available, you can use vinegar as a mordant.

Presoak the fabric in a pot of four parts water and one part vinegar, and simmer on the stove for one hour. Then rinse the pretreated fabric with cold water but don't let it dry. Submerge it in a bath of dye and continue simmering on the stove. Stir the pot to ensure an even color. Remove the fabric when you are satisfied with the color, stretch it to remove wrinkles, and then hang it to dry.

Another creative suggestion is to use your homemade dyes as paint on cold-pressed watercolor paper, which is made from cellulose pulp, or as paint on the fabrics listed above. The resulting paintings should be kept away from sunlight to prevent fading.



Photo by Hartono Subagio/Pixabay

Above: Natural dyes can be made from many easy-to-grow garden flowers, including orange marigolds, which produce a lovely orange dye for use in dyeing both natural and cellulose-based fibers.



Photo by Kathas Fotos/Pixabay

Right: Black hollyhocks are among the black and deep blue flowers that can be simmered in a pot of water to produce blue dyes.

Making dyes from your backyard is a perfect way to introduce your children to gardening, nature exploration, concepts of science and experiments as well as a healthy way to enjoy summertime while making keepsake crafts.

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

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## In the Outdoors

# Shelburne Farms practices resilience as climate changes

Elizabeth Bassett  
Contributor

I'm guessing you've noticed that our weather is different from decades past. Last summer? Horrors. This winter? Crushing for those who enjoy or are in the business of winter sports and recreation. December? Devastating for locations flooded once or twice in 2023.

In response, resilience is a word we often hear. Some towns in Vermont fared better than expected last July because of rebuilding decisions made after Hurricane Irene in 2011. That's resilience.

Since my wheelhouse is the natural world, not culverts or houses moved from floodplains, I'm looking at ways to adapt and be resilient in the nonbuilt environment. Shelburne Farms' mission statement includes this: inspire and cultivate learning for a sustainable future. Shelburne Farms is walking the walk.

At the Market Garden, which supplies food to the Inn and beyond, Josh Carter says, "When growing outdoors, you are subject to the will of Mother Nature."

Carter is adapting in three major ways: improving soil health, growing more crops under the protection of tunnels (unheated hoop structures with plastic cover) and growing a diversity of crops over the entire season.

Gardeners till the soil shallower and less frequently. When not growing cash crops, they plant cover crops of winter rye, hairy vetch, clover, ryegrass, buckwheat and oats. Farm-made compost improves the soil's fertility, biology and structure. They rotate crops to prevent build-up of pests and diseases. It takes some planning, but these are all things we can do at home.

While tunnels offer more control and extend the growing season, they cost money and offer challenges that may not tempt a home gardener.

"We sow successions of many crops like beets, carrots, lettuce, kale, cucumbers, zucchini, beans," Carter says.

"This gives us better odds of being successful when the climate does not provide the best growing conditions. If one crop does not do well, like seeding carrots before a hot dry spell in July, another crop may be thriving under these conditions, like tomatoes and watermelons."

Dairy manager Sam Dixon said, "Two or three years ago, I changed my thinking about how to do my job. We used to schedule work based on seasonal patterns or traditions. I realized that wasn't doable anymore. Things were too unpredictable."

The 2023 season was a good example of that.

"The first cut of hay used to happen around Memorial Day," Dixon said. "But

all our equipment was ready on May 11, and the grass was, too. We made 1,300 bales of nice hay by the first of June, before it started raining. Every farmer who waited got caught and couldn't make hay."

The challenges of 2023 continued.

"Normally, you don't spread a lot of manure in April. You wait until after the first cut. But in 2023, April was really dry," Dixon said. He spread some manure early and felt lucky because the summer was so wet. It became impossible to get into the saturated fields, and the manure pits would have been overflowing.

Dixon summarizes: plan, watch the weather and respond quickly when conditions are right.

Shelburne Farms woodlands manager Dana Bishop said, "A lot of our trees are resilient to various weather events because they're native. They've been here for a long time and they've been through it."

Over a long lifetime, trees endure droughts, early and late frosts, and wet feet. But multiple stresses, like drought or non-stop rain combined with disease or pests, can be costly.

"A lot of our forest stands are very mature and have a closed canopy, so there's not much sunlight on the forest floor," Bishop said.

There are not many pole-sized oaks and hickories ready to take over at Shelburne Farms. Currently, oaks and hickories are among the most resilient and climate-adaptive native species.

With warmer winters, foresters need to be ready early for sugaring.

"If you tap early, the tap holes will start closing in six to eight weeks, so you'll get less sap flow later in the season," Bishop said.

"That early schedule also means we have to rethink the seasonality of our jobs. Typically, we are cutting firewood and doing stand work in December or January, not sugaring.

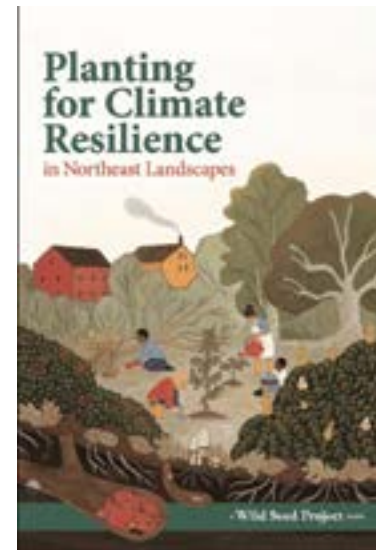
"My job marches with the seasons and those seasons are changing. We haven't quite changed our march yet."

Of course, it's not just Shelburne Farms that is thinking of climate resiliency. Wild Seed, a Maine non-profit educating and

providing native seeds and plants, has a new 2024 publication, *Planting for Climate Resilience in Northeast Landscapes* at [wildseedproject.net](http://wildseedproject.net).

From Wild Seed: "Our 2024 guide celebrates the adaptive capacity of plants, which, when returned to the places where they once thrived, support resilient communities of diverse life. We may not be able to garden our way out of the climate crisis, but what we do at home matters."

Amen.





## On Books

# Birthday twins, shrapnel and seeing angels everywhere

Katherine Arthaud  
Contributor

Alan Taylor is an American television and film director. I've never met the man and had never heard of him until just now. The reason I've brought him up at all is he is my birthday twin. Which means not just that he was born on the same day I was born (which is also true of Julia Louis-Dreyfus, Orlando Bloom and Shonda Rhimes), but born the very same Tuesday in the very same year. Which makes him, at the time of this writing, 65 years, 3 months and 26 days old. Just like me. Birthday twins.

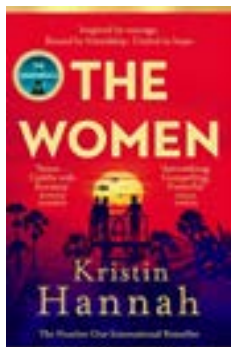
Chic, popular podcaster Alix Summer in Lisa Jewell's recent novel, "None of This is True," is at a pub cheerfully celebrating her 45th birthday with a gaggle of friends when she unwittingly stumbles onto her birthday twin, Josie, who is also out celebrating her 45th birthday with her husband at the same pub. Their meeting seems serendipitous, sure, but not particularly significant. Yet, the rendezvous proves life-changing for both celebrants and a catalyst for this fast-paced, gripping psychological thriller which I could not put down for two seconds to save my life.



Full of twists and turns, truth, lies and questions, it kept me going, and grounded, and pleasantly distracted for the many miles I traveled back and forth to Tufts Small Animal Hospital last month after my little dog was attacked by coyotes. (He is doing well, thank heavens.)

Jewell, author of a slew of novels which I fully intend to read one by one, does a great job providing readers with a scintillating, page-turning plot while ably developing characters who, unlike many in this genre, are in no way one-dimensional or cliché. Full of surprises and intrigue, passion, deception and obsession, I highly recommend this book for those of you who are looking for a good escape from the "real" world. An enthralling contemporary yarn — well-narrated and produced on Audible. I loved it.

Another gripping read is "The Women" by Kristin Hannah, a coming-of-age story about a young American nursing student who joins the Army Nurse Corps and ends up on the other side of the world as a combat nurse in Vietnam. This book doesn't sugarcoat the chaos and horror of war, nor does it gloss over the shock, pain and betrayal experienced by veterans when they returned home to a country that wanted to forget that the war ever happened.



Delia Owens, author of "Where the Crawdads Sing," writes, "Hannah tackles one of the most cruel and despicable wars of the last century. ... 'The Women'

reveals the powerful contributions and horrific sacrifices of the American military nurses who served in a war whose agencies refused to acknowledge that they were even there. ... The heroine, Frances McGrath, stirs a deep, overdue compassion and tears for every single soldier — and especially the forgotten women who sacrificed so much. Never has a novel of war metamorphosed so profoundly into a story of the human heart."

Hannah dedicates the novel to "the courageous women who served in Vietnam" — "most of them nurses and many of them raised on proudly told family stories of World War II heroism" — who "heeded their country's call to arms and went to war. In too many instances, they came home to a country that didn't care about their service and a world that didn't want to hear about their experiences; their post-war struggles and their stories were too often forgotten or marginalized."

This book was captivating. Kristin Hannah, masterful storyteller and a big favorite of historical fiction-lovers everywhere, has a powerful gift in her ability to engage readers in extremely difficult subject matter while adding just enough light, warmth, passion, romance and family relationships, for better and for worse, to keep us interested and enthralled.

"The Women" begins in California on a twilight evening in 1966 at the McGrath estate, "a world unto itself, protected and private": "The Tudor-style home's mullioned windows glowed jewel-like amid the lush, landscaped grounds. Palm fronds swayed overhead; candles floated on the surface of the pool and golden lanterns hung from the branches of a large California live oak. Black-clad servers moved among the well-dressed crowd, carrying silver trays full of champagne, while a jazz trio played softly in the corner."

This was the world of 20-year-old Frances, "the very portrait of a well-bred young lady, smiling and serene," any "untoward emotions ... contained and concealed, borne in silence."

That this is where the novel begins is especially eye opening in light of where our heroine ends up: in a makeshift operating room in a sagging, wind-lashed tent with wounded soldiers who are barely conscious, moaning for help, riddled with shrapnel, missing limbs and in some cases even entire faces; too many to tend to, too many to save; electricity flickering on and off; "the constant whine and thump of shells" rattling the IVs in their holders ... all against the backdrop of the growing question from the American media back at home: "What in the hell is going on in Vietnam?"

Everyone I know who has read this book has loved it. Highly recommend.

Last but not least, I want to give a shout-out to Lorna Byrne's autobiography, "Angels in my Hair: The True Story of a Modern-Day Irish Mystic," which begins, "When I was 2 years old the doctor told my mother I was 'retarded.'"

But Lorna Byrne was not retarded. Far from it. Different, maybe, but not retarded.

Byrne, at a very young age, saw angels. "I was a late talker," she writes, "but I had been conversing with angels from very early on."

"When I see an angel," she writes, "I want to stop and stare; I feel like I am in the presence of a tremendous power. ... The angels I see don't always have wings ... occasionally they are like flames of fire, and yet they have shape and solidity. ... Their eyes are not like human eyes; they are so alive, so full of life and light and love. It's as if they contain the essence of life itself — their essence fills you completely."



This book is surprisingly engaging; simply told, honest, straightforward, profoundly moving and strangely comforting. I learned much from the author's humility and her acceptance of the things she had no means to change. Sharing her story took a great deal of courage, as Ireland was a difficult place to be different — any slight departure from the "norm" frowned upon and rejected. Yet Byrne doesn't miss the kindness and the holiness of her life, because of these angels.

One thing noteworthy for me was the way angels told Byrne that "even though they have been gathered from all over," Americans, though they are not perfect and have their own wounds to heal, may be "a new race" and "the gateway to humanity's future."

Another thing that stood out for me was a passage wherein one of Byrne's childhood friends asks Byrne to tell her about God, and though the author feels uncomfortable with this — as no doubt you would, too, if you grew up in that place at that time, where to speak of anything beyond the practical and mundane could get you committed — she complies: "Do you see the finch, that beautiful finch with all those golden colors

and yellows and blues? That bird is like God. Really look at that bird and see its beauty and perfection. You are like the bird; you are beautiful, because you are like God. If that bird falls and hurts itself it won't feel all the pain of that fall, because God will feel 99 percent of it. God feels everything that happens to each and every bird and it is the same with us — when something happens that would hurt us, we feel a fraction of it. God feels the rest and takes it away."

"I know these weren't my words," Byrne says. "I was too young for words of wisdom like this — they were words I was given by God or the angels."

There is much to love about this book. Illuminating, optimistic, loving and potentially transformative, as you, too, says Byrne, can learn to connect with your angels. She gives us 12 ways to do so at the book's end. Highly recommend for those with an open mind and a desire to read an authentic, heart-opening story of a brilliant light in a world that for many years could only see her as less than.

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# Plant free seeds to show support of Ukraine

Margaret Woodruff  
Director

We sprinkle many special days and dates throughout our year and May is no exception. There are two that stand out with special significance at the library.

First of all, May is National Youth Traffic Safety Day. The library is celebrating that with the news that the crosswalk on Ferry Road between the library and the Charlotte Children's Center will receive a significant upgrade. Thanks to grants from the American Library Association Libraries and the Vermont Council on Rural Development, a button-activated blinking crossing light will be installed to allow for safer pedestrian crossings on Ferry Road.

May 22 is the International Day for Biological Diversity, which reminds us of the importance of growing the magical presence of biodiversity in our backyards, local farms and communities. Help support biodiversity by including some of the Seed Library selections in your garden and drawing inspiration from the library's pollinator garden. A huge thank you to Linda Hamilton and Karen Tuininga for caring and maintaining both of these important projects.

You can also find a variety of resources on the library shelves to help you along the

way in its biodiversity collection.

Also, pick up a packet of free sunflower seeds at the Charlotte Library and support the community-action group Vermont Plants Sunflowers for Ukraine. The group inspires the planting of sunflowers throughout the state with the idea that every seed planted is "a statement of solidarity."

"Come late summer and fall, our message of multi-colored sunflowers splashed against our blue Vermont sky will give us all hope and inspiration for positive action," the group's website says.

More information available at [vtsunflowers4ukraine.org](https://vtsunflowers4ukraine.org).

## 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 and playing with blocks and play-doh.

These are a few of the open-ended projects planned for Wednesday morning play-based learning at the Charlotte Library.

### Babytime Thursdays, 9:30 a.m.

Babytime is an unstructured hour at the library for parents, caregivers and babies so they can play and chat during the dark winter months. Explore books and toys and general conversation every Thursday morning in the young children's area. Ages birth to 18 months.

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

Drop-in for LEGO free play. There will be 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.

Poetry and meditation are offered freely and in person to the Charlotte community. Come 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.

### Men's book discussion Wednesday, May 22, 7:30 p.m.

Are trees social beings? In "The Hidden Life of Trees" forester and author Peter Wohlleben convincingly makes the case that the forest is a social network. He draws on scientific discoveries to describe how trees are like human families: tree parents live together with their children, communicate with them, support them as they grow, share nutrients with those who are sick or struggling and even warn each other of impending dangers. Copies available at the circulation desk. Join the discussion in person or on Zoom at <https://tinyurl.com/bde3bktn>.

### Better Together book club Wednesday, May 22, 7 p.m.

You're invited to join this group that



discusses books related to parenthood. On May 22, the group will discuss "Flight of the Puffin." Books are available at the desk and on Libby. Registration appreciated, but not required at [susanna@charlottepubliclibrary.org](mailto:susanna@charlottepubliclibrary.org).

## Recurring programs

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

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

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

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

### Short story selections Wednesdays, June 5 & 19, 1 p.m.

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

## Library contact information:

Margaret Woodruff, director  
Cheryl Sloan, youth services librarian  
Susanna Kahn, tech librarian  
Phone: 802-425-3864  
Email: [info@charlottepubliclibrary.org](mailto:info@charlottepubliclibrary.org)

For the latest information about programs, books and activity kits, sign up for the newsletter at <https://tinyurl.com/n5usd25r>.

The Charlotte Library Board of Trustees meets regularly on the first Thursday of the month at 6 p.m. The next meeting takes place on Thursday, June 6, at 6 p.m. Please contact the library or visit the library website ([charlottepubliclibrary.org](http://charlottepubliclibrary.org)) for more information.

## It Takes A Village: Parenting Wellness Consulting and Psychotherapy, PLC

Raising children is not easy, even with lots of support. At this new private practice in Richmond, we believe that it takes a village to raise a child, but we are really passionate about the idea that it takes a village to raise a parent. We offer outpatient consultation and short-term psychological support for expecting, new, and seasoned parents who may be feeling stuck, overwhelmed, or not sure where to start. We strive to help parents identify what may be missing in their village and then help you identify what you need to feel better supported in your parenting journey. *It Takes A Village* may be especially appealing if you are a parent who is experiencing perinatal mental health symptoms or stress, not yet sure about pursuing therapy for yourself, or who has a child with chronic illness or medical and psychiatric needs.

Dr. Aubrey Carpenter is a licensed clinical psychologist who spent over a decade working as a pediatric psychologist in various hospitals and health systems. She is well versed in the many causes of parenting stress, particularly when your child is struggling. She also aims to provide same-week appointments as space allows, so that parents can receive timely support when they need it most. Read more here!

[www.ittakesavillagevermont.com](http://www.ittakesavillagevermont.com) | 802-448-0336 | [aubreycarpenterphd@gmail.com](mailto:aubreycarpenterphd@gmail.com)

## 2024 Parent Workshop Summer Series

Join Aubrey Carpenter, PhD for several upcoming parent workshops as part of her summer series sponsored by *It Takes A Village*. Each event will present recent data supporting best parenting practices on each chosen theme, as well as discussion and educational resources to bring home. NA drinks and dessert will be served.

**May 30, 2024:** Supporting Teens With Smartphone Use

**June 26, 2024:** Raising An Athlete in Today's Sports Culture

**July 24, 2024:** Preparing For and Navigating the 4th Trimester: An Event for Expecting and New Moms AND Dads (newborns welcome!) - FREE event! With co-speaker Lucy Chapin, NP, CNM of *Mad River Birth and Wellness*

**August 28, 2024:** Coping With The Back-to-School Scaries

**September 25, 2024:** Antiracist Parenting, with co-speaker Kate Littlefield, LCMHC, of *Through to THRIVE*

\$15/person or \$25/couple (except 7/24, which is free).

Questions: [aubreycarpenterphd@gmail.com](mailto:aubreycarpenterphd@gmail.com)

RSVP: [www.ittakesavillagevermont.com/events](http://www.ittakesavillagevermont.com/events)





# Senior Center News

## Repopulate your garden at senior center plant sale

Lori York  
Director

Don't forget the senior center's annual plant sale. It's a perfect time to stock up on annuals and perennials, while catching up with neighbors.

With the warmer weather, how about joining the gentle walking group or brushing up on language skills in preparation for a planned trip?

The women's kayak group is looking for volunteers to help lead the trips. This is a great opportunity to volunteer while spending time out on the water.

### Annual plant sale Saturday, May 25, 9 a.m.-noon

Stop by the Senior Center's annual Plant Sale and stock up on a great selection of annuals and perennials at great prices. Rain or shine. If you're dividing perennials in your garden, pot (and label) a few to donate to the sale. Drop off plants at the Center any time between Friday, May 17, and Friday, May 24. Need help digging? Please call 802-425-6345 and leave your name, address and phone number. A team member will call to arrange a time to dig your plants. The group will be digging plants through May 22. Questions? Email Polly at ppolly62@ymail.com.

### Shape-note singing Sunday, May 26, 12:30-2:30 p.m.

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

### Exercise activities

#### Women's kayak trips

It is time to plan the kayak trip season. The kayak trips will start in June. The organizers are looking for some volunteers to lead or co-lead some of the kayak trips. Interested in learning more, please email Susan Hyde at susanfosterhyde@gmail.com.

#### Walking and gentle hiking group Thursday, May 23, 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 of the Charlotte Senior Center. Questions? Call Penny Burman at 916-753-7279. Free, but registration appreciated.

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

This pilates class, for folks 55 and over, is designed to be challenging and safe. Phyllis Bartling leads the class through upper-body strength work with hand weights and mat exercises with the focus on working core muscles to improve balance, strength and posture. Cost: \$10 a class. No registration required.

#### Yoga strength-building practice Wednesdays, 11 a.m.-noon

Join Heidi Kvasnak for an integrative practice that builds strength and stability while

maintaining a sense of ease and spaciousness in both body and mind. The class will practice longer-held postures that strengthen muscles, bones and core, as well as breath-led flowing movement, including sun salutations. Prerequisite: Must be able to easily get down to and up from the floor with or without props. Cost: \$10/class. No registration required.

### Languages

#### French conversation Mondays, 2:30-3:30 p.m.

Parlez-vous français? This is an intermediate group of French speakers who meet weekly for French conversation. As the group grows, there may be opportunities to split according to skill levels. Questions? Email Roberta Whitmore at robertawhitmore27@gmail.com. Free. No registration required.

#### German conversation Tuesdays, 3-4 p.m.

Möchtest du dein Deutsch üben? Come join this group to meet other German speakers and practice your German. No agenda, just a casual conversation. All experience levels are welcome. Questions? Email Dan York at dyork@Lodestar2.com. Free. No registration required.

#### Spanish conversation Tuesdays, 10-11 a.m.

¿Hablas español? This group meets weekly. At each session one member of the group will announce the topic of conversation for the following week. Come join the group for conversation in Spanish. Questions? Email Bernice Wesseling at bernice.wesseling@uvm.edu. Free. No registration required.

### Games

#### Backgammon league Tuesdays, 6-8:30 p.m.

Backgammon is a tactical table game with a 5,000-year history. The group welcomes players at all levels. If you have questions, please contact Jonathan at jonathanhart1@gmail.com. Cost: \$3. No registration required.

#### Brain games Fridays, 2-4 p.m.

There are many ways adults can stimulate their brains to increase mental health, improve memory skills and contribute to overall well-being. Research finds that positive interaction with others and engagement in stimulating group activities sharpens cognition and increases memory ability. Join us to play various games, share laughter and enjoy one another's company. Some games are available, but also feel free to bring your own. Free. No registration required.

#### Duplicate bridge Mondays, 12:30-4 p.m.

This group plays an intermediate level of duplicate bridge using the basic American Contract Bridge League conventions. Names are drawn for partners, and friendly games ensue. Those unfamiliar with duplicate bridge are welcome and paired with an experienced player to help for a few weeks of open dialogue training. The group is always looking for new players who have basic bridge knowledge. Cost: \$3. No registration required.

#### Samba canasta



Volunteers are busy getting ready for the annual senior center plant sale 9 a.m.-noon, Saturday, May 25. Photo by Lori York



Volunteers Carol Geske (left) and Sue Foley share some laughter as they prep for the Monday lunch. Photo by Lori York

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

Samba is a new version of canasta that has quickly become very popular due to its variety of melds, which keeps the game interesting. If you are curious to learn how to play samba, call Sandy Armell at 802-425-3248. Free. No registration required.

### Meals

Menus are posted on the website: charlotteseniorcentervt.org.

#### Monday lunches

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

#### Weekly Age Well Grab & Go meals

Pick up 10-11a.m. on Thursdays 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.

### Senior center info:

The senior center offers programs for adults 50 and older from Charlotte and surrounding communities. Priority is given to seniors, but programs are open to adults of all ages. Programs include weekly lunches, daily exercise classes and many opportunities to connect through board and card games and art and language programming. Interested in receiving a weekly reminder about what is happening? Sign up for the email newsletters at charlotteseniorcentervt.org. The "Week Ahead" email is sent out on Friday mornings with activities, lunch menus and special programs for the upcoming week.

Lori York, director, lyork@charlotteseniorcentervt.org  
Tracy Brown, coordinator, tbrown@charlotteseniorcentervt.org  
212 Ferry Road, Charlotte, 802-425-6345  
charlotteseniorcentervt.org



## Write Ingredients

# Journey into the soul of chicken soup at senior center

Susan Ohanian  
Contributor

The senior center's Monday Munch on May 20 (11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.) features chicken noodle soup, green salad and homemade dessert.

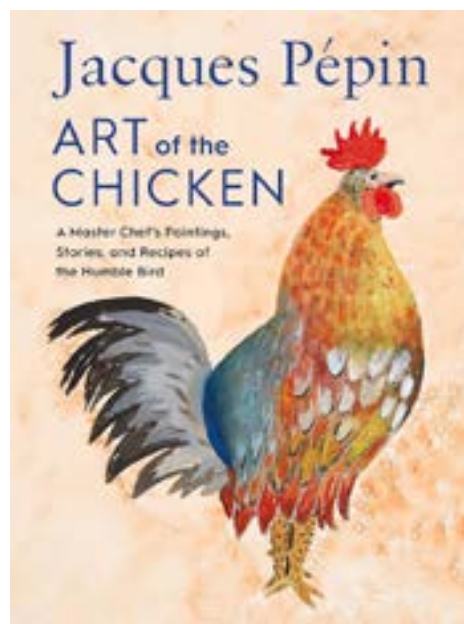
Jacques Pépin's beautiful book, "Art of the Chicken: A Master Chef's Paintings, Stories, and Recipes of the Humble Bird," answers the question: "Which came first, the chicken or the egg?"

Not surprisingly, Pépin does not offer a recipe for chicken noodle soup, though he pays tribute to the fact that many good soups start with great chicken broth.

In college, I took several wonderful history classes from an Armenian professor who was very proud of his heritage. Years later, he somehow learned I'd married an Armenian and sent me a letter, welcoming me into the fold. He also sent me one of his cookbooks, complete with his notes: "Dinner at Omar Khayyam's."

Not surprisingly, this book does not contain a recipe for chicken noodle soup, but there is a recipe for making harissa, a traditional Armenian chicken dish which starts out as a soup and becomes a thick porridge.

Known for helping the Armenians of Musa Ler (in modern day Turkey) survive the resistance of 1915, harissa production involves quite a workout. First, pearl barley



or bulghur must soak overnight. Then, a rooster is boiled. After a few more steps, the resulting mixture is beaten with a wooden spoon.

"After a long, long beating, when you are all worn out," the result should look like well-cooked oatmeal mush. The recipe concludes, "You will find it well worth all the effort."

Here is the *raison d'être*: "The extremely long cooking process is an essential part of the harissa tradition. Like other ritual

dishes, the time taken for preparation is part of its cherished value."

Maurice Sendak fans know his book about chicken soup through every month of the year: "Sipping once, sipping twice, sipping chicken soup with rice."

Here's Carole King singing an animated version ([youtu.be/r9VvII6sHJw](https://youtu.be/r9VvII6sHJw)).

If you want to put your middle-schooler — or your spouse, or your neighbor — in stitches, give them a copy of Daniel Pinkwater's "Hoboken Chicken Emergency." There's a copy waiting for some lucky reader in the Little Free Library for Kids at the Grange at 2858 Spear Street.

In 1934, the Campbell Soup Company introduced Campbell's Noodle with Chicken Soup. "Noodle with Chicken" became "Chicken Noodle" after a radio announcer misread an ad, and that name stuck. Today, the Campbell Soup Company produces a variety of chicken soups too numerous to list, but I will mention that Campbell's Chicken Noodle played a symbolic role in my life.

From age 2, I was part of a research study at University of California Hospital, San Francisco to see if juvenile diabetics on a strict diet could do OK without insulin. On test days, we were fed, our fingers jabbed so blood could be tested, fed again, fingers jabbed. All day long.

Family legend revolved around the time that Mom witnessed me, age 4, in line for the jab from an intern who was ticked off at 7 a.m. for having to fill in for the lab technician. His rough jab technique made some kids cry. When it was my turn for the jab, I said, "Is this your first time at this? You aren't very good at it."

When I went to school, my mother told the staff that I knew what I could and could not eat, and I was in charge. Period. She left a can of Campbell's Chicken Noodle at the school cafeteria in case I decided the main course didn't work with my diet.

That put me on alert for a when-all-else-fails-have-chicken-soup moment. As an adult, like the cooks at the Charlotte

Senior Center, I cook my own soup. No Campbell's.

In The New York Times, the venerable John Hodgman said he loves all soups "apart from the crime of Manhattan clam chowder."

When a reader asked Hodgman about her husband putting banana peel in their soup, he advised, "You deserve to eat food in your own home without fear it's been laced with compost."

Alas, Judge Hodgman has not offered an opinion on chicken soup, but 2,630 other entries in the paper of record offer plenty of variety. There, you will find chicken soup with sesame, ginger, coconut, miso, escarole, pickled cabbage, avocado, green plantains, ginseng, jalapeño, chickpeas, poblano, prunes and lots more.

As far back as 60 A.D., therapeutic recommendations for chicken soup were recorded by Pedacius Dioscorides, an army surgeon under the emperor Nero. In the 12th century, in his pharmacopeia *De Materia Medica*, the theologian and physician Moses Maimonides wrote that chicken soup "is recommended as an excellent food as well as medication."

Nuclear intelligence expert Arnold Kramish was severely burned when a uranium enrichment device exploded near him in the Philadelphia Navy Yard. He attributed his unlikely survival to a large jar of chicken soup that his mother carried on a three-day train ride from her home in Denver to his bedside in the Philadelphia naval hospital. "When she arrived, she pushed the guards away, charged into my room, raised my oxygen tent and fed me the well-matured chicken soup."

When he died decades later, his tale of his mother delivering that healing chicken soup was recounted in his New York Times obituary. This seems like a good last word on the topic.

NOTE: If you feel a need to see the 65-foot hot dog (mustard, no catsup) in Times Square, get there by June 13. See it at <https://tinyurl.com/yc7tz76a>.

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