

The Charlotte News

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Charlotte Selectboard endorses Declaration of Inclusion

Scooter MacMillan
Editor

And then there were 160.

On Monday night, Jan. 13, Charlotte joined 159 of Vermont's towns in endorsing the state's Declaration of Inclusion. This means that almost 80 percent of state residents live in towns that have adopted the declaration.

The discussion on the issue began with chair Jim Faulkner reading the declaration and then making a motion to accept it, which was seconded by Natalie Kanner.

The declaration says:

"The town of Charlotte condemns racism and welcomes all persons, regardless of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, age, disability, or socioeconomic status, and wants everyone to feel safe and welcome in our community.

"As a town, we formally condemn all discrimination in all of its forms, commit to fair and equal treatment of everyone in our community, and will strive to ensure all of our actions, policies and operating procedures reflect this commitment.

"The town of Charlotte has and will continue to be a place where individuals can live freely and express their opinions."

Board members Kelly Devine and Frank Tenney said they wanted the issue to be decided by residents on Town Meeting Day, rather than by the selectboard.

Fellow board member Lewis Mudge argued for adding political affiliation to the list of groups which the town condemns discriminating against. Personally, Mudge said, he supported the declaration as it is, but he had heard from people who felt bullied because of their political affiliation



Photo by Scooter MacMillan

A large group showed up for the Monday, Jan. 13, selectboard, most of whom were there because of the Declaration of Inclusion that was on the agenda.

and who thought the selectboard should add this to the declaration.

The town is not doing anything wrong in regards to diversity, equity and inclusion, said board member Natalie Kanner, but the declaration had been drafted to address issues confronting "marginalized populations." Although a case might be made that political affiliation might marginalize people, she said, "My recommendation is that we stick to the language that was brought before us."

Faulkner agreed with Kanner that Charlotte should not change the language of the declaration.

"It is what it is. If we want to modify

it in the future, we have the ability to do that," Faulkner said, adding that passing the declaration as it is, is a way "to get over the hump" where the debate is now.

Passing the declaration has taken longer than expected because the board wanted to make sure it would not create any financial obligation to the town, he said. The town's lawyers have confirmed it won't cost the town.

"We are not interested at all in burdening the taxpayers with another program," Faulkner said.

Although it is important for people to know that the town condemns discrimination on the basis of party

affiliation, Kanner said she feels that is a separate issue. Passing the declaration is a way of saying the town stands in alliance with other towns who have adopted the resolution as it stands.

The board began by proposing to limit its discussion to the board itself and not for more than five minutes. Ultimately, its discussion lasted well past five minutes, but the public was not allowed to comment.

The subject of opening the discussion up to the public was breached. Faulkner said that, according to the selectboard's rules of procedure, it had the right to decide whether or not to open up the discussion to public comments. He, Kanner and Kenney were skeptical that they would hear anything that they hadn't already heard about the issue.

"I don't think we're going to find any ground rules that are going to satisfy the group," Devine added. "We're getting a lot of nonverbal feedback from the audience."

INCLUSION continued on page 3

Coach Fleming steps down, but not away, from CVU football

Scooter MacMillan
Editor

A little more than two months after celebrating what may be the greatest season in the history of Vermont high school football, team members got news that tempered some of their jubilation.

Coach Rahn Fleming gathered members of the team before school on Jan. 15 to tell them he was stepping down as head football coach.

Fleming left that meeting and promptly sent out an email to team parents, saying he had gotten news from his doctor that precipitated this decision.

In his email, Fleming said he had hit a wall of "genetic predisposition" he described as "a kind of cumulative medical trifecta: cholesterol, blood pressure and atherosclerosis," that are all known as "silent killers."

"I'm told that without immediate and conscientious response, I walk a path that could potentially lead to embolism, including possible stroke or heart attack," Fleming said.

Upon getting his diagnosis, Fleming said his first thought was, "no one needs that disruption on the sideline half way through the third quarter," not to mention the trauma that having a coach collapse during a game would cause.

Fleming was quick to emphasize that there is no immediate cause for alarm

FLEMING continued on page 2

New majority leader: 'We need to be listening to everyone'

Julia Streger
Community New Service

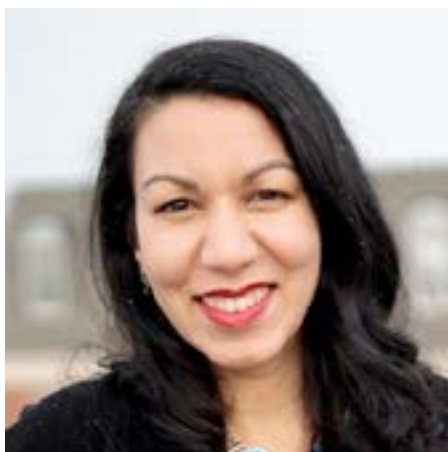
The new leader of Vermont's state Senate says Democrats understand the frustration of voters and are ready to tackle the skyrocketing cost of living.

"Vermonters are holding everything they can together by their fingernails," said Sen. Kesha Ram Hinsdale, D-Burlington-Southeast.

Ram Hinsdale will serve as Vermont Senate Majority Leader starting Jan. 8, after beating incumbent Majority Leader Alison Clarkson, D-Windsor, in a close contest.

Ram Hinsdale will lead a diminished Democratic majority of 17-13 in the Senate. In fact, Vermont had the biggest swing toward Republicans in the Legislature of any state, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures (<https://tinyurl.com/4attkh39>).

The election results show that, although Vermonters are socially liberal, they are financially hurting, she said.



Courtesy photo

Sen. Kesha Ram Hinsdale

"When I look at the counties that swung red, they are the same places that never recovered economically from the recession when I started in the legislature," she said. Skyrocketing costs for housing, health

care and property taxes are the major issues driving voters, she said, part of the greater malady of unaffordability in the state.

She says these issues can't be dealt with in isolation. Vermonters are asking legislators to think in a more interconnected way, Ram Hinsdale said.

"We have some challenges that look like the rest of the country, but we also have some very unique challenges here in Vermont," she said.

Her involvement in Vermont politics dates back to 2006, when she kicked off a rally at the University of Vermont for Sen. Bernie Sanders. She stressed the issues of student debt and climate change.

Then-Sen. Barack Obama, who Sanders invited to the event, noted Ram Hinsdale's potential in politics.

"If you don't behave yourself, we're going to run Kesha for the Senate instead of you," Obama joked to Sanders.

In 2008, she was elected to serve in the

RAM HINSDALE continued on page 2

RAM HINSDALE

Continued from page 1

Vermont House of Representatives. one of the youngest state lawmakers in the country. Ram Hinsdale took office during the Great Recession, a time when many Vermonters, especially young people, struggled to make ends meet. She strived to find common ground with her colleagues while articulating the struggles that millennials faced.

During her tenure in public service, Ram Hinsdale has championed climate justice. She identifies as a climate immigrant, moving from her native Los Angeles to Burlington for a better quality of life.

After serving in the legislature for over a decade, Ram Hinsdale has a seat at the head of the table, as the Chair of the Senate Committee on Economic Development and new majority leader.

“There’s never been a woman who’s chaired the Senate Economic Development Committee, let alone a young woman of color with two young kids,” she said.

As a working mom of two children under 2, she seeks to represent stressed-out parents and plans to address the problem of affordability among struggling families. Chief among them is housing.

“There’s a reason that we use the phrase ‘it hits home.’ There’s nothing more personal than where people live and what surrounds them” she said.

“We need people to be able to live with dignity close to where they work, rather than have to commute miles and miles to get to their job and live a quality life,” she said.

She says she is dedicated to creating affordable housing in places like Charlotte. Vermont consistently has some of the worst housing shortages in the nation. Its rental vacancy rate is only 3.5 percent compared to a national average of 6.9 percent, according to 2022 numbers from the Vermont Housing Finance Agency.

Because of her work on housing issues, Ram Hinsdale has faced conflict of interest allegations. (Her husband, Jacob Hinsdale, manages his family’s property business.) A complaint with the Vermont Senate Ethics Committee was dismissed last spring.

“I would ask that people judge me by my record and my experience,” Ram Hinsdale said.

She says she looks at the challenges of the next legislative session with clear-eyed optimism.

“We really have to be reaching all corners of the state and listening to everyone to make sure that the solutions we come up with actually work for everyone,” she said.

(Via Community News Service, a University of Vermont journalism internship for The Charlotte News.)

FLEMING

Continued from page 1

about his health; he is just taking steps to ensure he can experience all that life can offer, namely grandchildren. He was also emphatic about encouraging others to get regular medical checkups. He said he wouldn’t have known about his medical condition down if he hadn’t had consistent physicals.

“Please, get your physicals; find out what you need; learn what you need to know. It’s like having a good, solid game plan,” he said.

After six years at the helm for the Redhawks, Fleming said he is giving up the steering wheel but still plans to be around for the ride. He is considering not just the quantity of years he has remaining, but also the quality of those years.

At 65, he doesn’t have grandchildren — yet, if grandchildren are in his future, Fleming said, he doesn’t want to be watching them from an armchair; he wants to be on the floor engaged in the “romp and stomp and play.”

Fleming, who is the coordinator of CVU’s learning center, has been at the school since 1999. Shortly after coming on board, he began coaching middle school players on the Buccaneers, the feeder team of CVU Redhawk football.

He was able to coach his sons on the Buccaneers, and then later with the Redhawks.

“Really, my coaching career in its earliest years just followed in the footsteps of my boys,” Fleming said.

He worked his way up from Redhawks’ assistant coach to become head coach in 2019. In his six years as head coach, CVU played in the state finals three times, winning the title this year and in 2022.

This year, the Redhawks didn’t lose a game, defeating Rutland 41-14 to take the Vermont championship and outscoring its opponents by 400 points (462-62).

Fleming said he has been considering this decision since the football season ended. He took his time because he didn’t want his resignation after a perfect season to be a knee-jerk reaction, he wanted the decision to be reflective after a lot of thought.

He doesn’t know who will be head coach next season, but he plans to still be involved with the program, possibly even on the sidelines. He will continue to oversee the fitness center and weight training.

“Everyone knows Father Time is undefeated. Well, I’m takin’ that son-of-a-gun to overtime,” many have heard the coach declare, particularly anyone involved with the fitness center.

Overtime is still Fleming’s intention, he said, “It’ll just require a little mid-third quarter adjustment in my personal gameplan.”

Fleming majored in comparative world



File photo

Rahn Fleming in his element, working with young people.

religions at Dartmouth where he played defensive back before being moved to inside linebacker and outside linebacker. He described his playing assignment as essentially being a utility infielder on the defensive side of the ball, filling in for players who needed to be spelled.

One of his favorite assignments was as a wedge breaker on kickoffs, running down the field to break through lines of blockers to get at the ball carrier. As a young man, he loved running fast and knocking people over.

“I never missed a kickoff,” Fleming said. “I loved that assignment.”

He earned his master’s in counseling psychology. “I’ve been a big fan of humans for a long time, both in the macro and the micro.”

And lot of humans associated with CVU have been fans of Fleming. It is rare that you interview him after a game that you aren’t repeatedly interrupted by people alone and in groups stopping by to tell him how much they love him, how much he has changed their lives. And giving him a hug.

Hugs are another thing that Fleming is a big fan of. “I think of hugs as nature’s way of reminding us that give and take are equal when given the chance,” he said. “You give as much as you get when you’re given a hug.”

“The response from literally decades worth of players and parents has been overwhelming,” he said. This response has had the coach repeatedly weeping without even trying to hide it.

He signed his message to parents and caregivers, “Still on the journey — just not driving the boat.

Fleming said he doesn’t know if he will have an official football title at CVU next year, but that he will be involved in some way: “I’ll never be more than a heartbeat away from Redhawk football. Never.”



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To engage and inform Charlotte and nearby communities by:

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- Reporting on how other towns have addressed challenges similar to our own.

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Around Town

Congratulations

Mercedes Murphy of Charlotte was named to the Tennessee State University dean’s list for the fall semester.

Report from the Legislature

Big decisions, lots of pros and cons on the horizon

Chea Waters Evans
Representative

It was only a few months, but it seems like forever. I'm back and ready to represent.

First of all, thank you for re-electing me as your state representative. I know no one ran against me, but I still appreciate the support, and please know I don't take it for granted — these aren't easy times, and I know it's a privilege and an honor to serve my community in this way.

We started back in the State House last week, and I'm still in seat number 2 on the House floor, and still on the Government Operations and Military Affairs Committee. I'm pleased to share that I was appointed ranking member of my committee for this biennium. We have a nice bipartisan mix at the top of the table, with a Democrat as chair and a Republican as vice chair, which will be helpful in maintaining a moderate balance as we address some delicate issues.

One of our first orders of business is resolving an issue in Bennington where a small number of voters were sent the wrong ballots; the legislature has constitutional authority to decide what happens with this election. It's really interesting and also really serious. It's also just the nerdy kind of stuff I like to work on.

In more important matters for Charlotters and Hinesburgers: Last week, I was watching football at my friends' house, and I said, "Did you hear the good news? Property taxes are going down a few percent this year." To which my friend said, "Yeah, but they're still higher than they were."

Point taken.



As I write this, we don't know what Governor Scott's big education reform plan is. I'm hoping it's a good one. He's going to let us know on Wednesday what he proposes as a good solution for education finance reform and creating a sustainable and affordable system that will pay for students' needs and also not break the backs of taxpayers.

I have some questions for all of you, and please let me know if you see me around town or feel free to send an email or text or give me a call.

What do you think about a foundation formula for school funding?

In this model, school districts across the state would receive equivalent amounts of money, and any supplemental costs would be paid for on a more community-based level, with school districts voting separately for any amounts above that base level. The main pro: It will be less expensive for taxpayers. The main con: It might go against our initial Act 60 sentiment, which is to provide equal education opportunities for all Vermont students.

How do you feel about local control?

We have a strong tradition in this state of maintaining local control over most aspects of our civic lives. We are one of a small handful of states that have individual school district budgets and teacher contracts, and we are one of maybe two states that don't have a substantial county system of government. We go straight from local control to state control, without a stop in between. The main pro: We get to decide what we want as a town. The main con: It can be expensive.

What do you think about the proposed Charlotte town charter?

Its purpose is to override a law that was passed last year to allow municipalities to approve land-use regulations without a town vote. I'm fully supportive of using the democratic process to represent the will of the voters, although to be honest, as I've said in public meetings, I don't

Repairs on target



Photo by David Speidel

Work continues on repairs to Spear Street. Those involved say the project will be finished by its April deadline.

think the Legislature as a whole is going to be too excited to roll back laws we just passed less than a year ago. Pros: It would bring back local control across the board. Cons: It would make it more difficult for planning and zoning committees to do their work.

What do you think about the Affordable Heat Act?

There's no specific legislation that would take the study to the next level, but the reports are pretty clear that this might not be the best option for Vermonters. I'm conflicted. Pros: I recognize the need to fight climate change. (We shelled out a lot of money for a flooded private road in my neighborhood last year.) Cons: The system we proposed might be too expensive for too little impact for Vermonters.

These are issues coming up really soon, and I'd love to get your input before I have to vote or advocate for our community. I can be reached at cevans@leg.state.vt.us or 917-887-8231. Or you can find me in the grocery store.

INCLUSION

Continued from page 1

Kanner said the board could pass the declaration and later could modify it, possibly adding political affiliation.

When the vote was taken, four of the five selectboard members voted for the motion with Frank Tenney abstaining.

Although some, in what was a large audience for a selectboard meeting, didn't support the declaration, the enthusiastic applause after the motion was approved seemed to indicate a sizeable majority did support it.

Supporters of the declaration had been circulating a petition to have the issue put before voters on Town Meeting Day, but they said this was a backup measure. They had hoped the selectboard would do what it did and pass the declaration itself.

The supporters had collected twice the number of signatures they needed.

Memorial decked out



Photo by Lee Krohn

The World War I Memorial in the parking lot of the Old Brick Store whose garden design changes with the seasons is decked out in patriotic boughs and ribbons.

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Commentary

Time always right to do right

Pete Macia
Contributor

On the eve of another Martin Luther King, Jr Day, I found myself reflecting on our recent debates over the Vermont Declaration of Inclusion.

I’ve heard that some who opposed the statement feel as if they were drowned out of the conversation or unwelcome to speak at all.

I don’t read every Front Porch Forum update, but I haven’t seen anything that should scare anyone from speaking their mind. And I absolutely do not view this issue as one of political affiliation.

In my posts, I have always relied on facts and statistics more than my own experiences, but today I’m changing that.

I live in east Charlotte and work in west, so there is no divide for me.

I’m almost 50, born into Jimmy Carter’s America.

I grew up on Army posts, mostly in the South.

One of these had an actual moated fort where African Americans who escaped captivity were allowed to join Union regiments (led by white officers) during the Civil War and Jefferson Davis was later imprisoned.

In 1994, a sign was placed just steps outside this fort to commemorate the landing place of the first Africans to arrive in North America as enslaved forced labor in 1619.

On these Army posts, my friends were kids of all skin tones and ethnicities, all socioeconomic backgrounds. However, when we went home, most of the white kids went home to officers’ quarters, while most of the other kids’ fathers were enlisted soldiers. This remains the situation in the Army 40 years later.

I played baseball and soccer with kids who grew up on farms outside of Little Rock, Arkansas, and other kids in the suburbs of DC who grew up in Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador.

After school I was a manual laborer for many years with guys who had come to the U.S. from Jamaica, Nicaragua, Mexico and Viet Nam, amongst other places, and sent every spare penny of their paychecks to family back home. I worked with men who had been incarcerated, men and women with disabilities from dangerous working conditions, people who were recovering from addiction.

I worked with women who cooked in boarding school kitchens so they could send their own kids to college. I worked with women on overnight shifts who went straight home to wake their kids up for breakfast before taking them to school.

I worked with kids who were brilliant but effectively homeless and living on and off the streets.

When I moved from manual labor to mental labor, I worked with people of color who had worked their asses off to reach a level just below a white guy who was handed a job because he was chummy with the bosses. Those same people were always the first to be let go when there was even

**“We must help time
and realize that the
time is always right to
do right.”**

— Martin Luther King, Jr

the vaguest suggestion that profits might go down.

I’ve interviewed countless marginalized people about their lives and experiences in America and around the world.

My own family includes people who came here as immigrants and have worked 360 days a year for 30 years to achieve the “American dream,” people who have been abandoned because they were crippled by multiple sclerosis, people who suffer from mental illness, people who survive off Section 8 and welfare.

My friends include basically every other type of person who might feel recognized by this declaration, and by god, if you’re reading the declaration and do not recognize yourself or someone you love in it, then I beg you to reflect on how lucky you are. Or maybe just read it again.

Now I live in Vermont, the first sovereign state in the world to abolish slavery (as the Vermont Republic in 1777), home to the first institution of higher learning for women in the United States, its first African American college graduate (who became the first African American to serve in a state legislature), the first woman lieutenant governor, the first state in the US to legalize same-sex civil unions and gay marriage, and the first state to enshrine the right to abortion in its state constitution. A sanctuary state.

I live half a mile from land that was owned by free African Americans in 1800, just 16 years after the first permanent settlers arrived in Charlotte and 6 miles from a former safe house on the Underground Railroad.

So, you Vermonters have been performing inclusivity and virtue signaling long before I got here. I’m sure that, come Monday morning, “I Have a Dream” quotes will be flying around DC, and I’m also sure they won’t be quoting the lines that formed the core message of that speech (<https://tinyurl.com/ykuv7wsx>).

But for our purposes, there’s one more fitting. Two years after his “Dream” speech and just a few months after his famous march in Selma, King delivered a speech to Oberlin College titled, “Remaining Awake Through a Great Revolution” (<https://tinyurl.com/mryhwhaf>).

“Let nobody give you the impression that only time will solve the problem. That is a myth,” King told the young graduates. “We must help time and realize that the time is always right to do right.”

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Letters to the Editor

Inclusion more than declaration, it requires intentional efforts

To The Editor:

“A democratic society and system of government, while among the grandest of human concepts, are among the most difficult to implement. ... We should never forget that in the long run, democracy is judged by the way that the majority treats the minority.”
— *Pierre Elliott Trudeau*

Unlike what I see in some of today’s politicians, equal treatment of the individual in law and policy is something that Pierre Trudeau grasped and argued for during his tenure as Prime Minister of Canada.

On Monday, Jan. 13, I believe that Charlotte became the 161st of 247 towns and cities (home to nearly 80 percent of the state’s population) to adopt the Vermont Declaration of Inclusion.

What does this mean for our town?
Inclusion is much more than a mere declaration. Inclusion, if we are sincere about the missive, involves active, intentional and ongoing efforts to create environments wherein all individuals (versus groups) belong and feel respected and valued. Inclusion means making accommodations of varying needs and perspectives. In the ideology of an inclusive town, no individual should be left unheard, no individual should be left behind, no person should experience any form of exclusionary rhetoric.

“Diversity is fact
Equity is a choice
Inclusion is an action
Belonging is an outcome”
— *Arthur Chan*
If Charlotte wishes to make intentions of

this declaration real, adoption is just a step.
The declaration alone is not enough to be able to claim any ground on the matter. The next part is what the town does to make its declaration real. Some implementation pieces are simple and some pieces can become more complex and costly as time goes on.

A little bit of research reveals that towns across Vermont which have adopted the declaration have hired consultants to administer, assess and implement bias training and examine ordinances and job descriptions and websites, etc. Towns established committees, some partnering with non-profit, state and private agencies to continue the work. Towns are doing what they believe is necessary to implement relevant actions and programs for the declaration that they formally adopted.

Michael Ignatieff, the Canadian human rights scholar, defines the ideal inclusive state as “a community of equal rights-bearing citizens united in patriotic attachment to a shared set of political practices and values.”

I have no sense if the town of Charlotte is going to make its declaration real, or not. Maybe we simply increased our awareness of the intersectional complexities that shape our town, our state and our entire country. Perhaps, as some sincerely believe, we are already the inclusive community we intend to be through this declaration. As one Ford F150 truck in Charlotte boldly and permanently declares on its tailgate, “#2 Love Thy Neighbor as Thyself - MATT 22:39 – They Aren’t the Ten Suggestions.” Now that is a beautiful example of active, intentional and ongoing effort broadcasting a values-based

commitment to inclusion.

Robert Caldwell
Charlotte

Thank you to Charlotte Central School mentors

To the Editor:

“A mentor is someone who allows you to see the hope inside yourself,” Oprah Winfrey said.

January is National Mentoring Month, and I want to recognize the dedication of some amazing volunteer mentors with the Charlotte Central School’s Connecting Youth Mentoring Program. Charlotte Central School is fortunate to have more than 20 dedicated adult mentors who spend about an hour a week with a student. These mentors embrace the power of relationships and recognize that one person can change a young person’s life. They are empowered to make a difference. Our mentors have seen growth, boosted the trajectories of young lives and made the community stronger.

Mentoring takes place on school grounds, during school hours with students in fifth-eighth grades. The mentoring room is an inviting place filled with all sorts of games, crafts and sports equipment. Many mentoring pairs enjoy baking and cooking in the kitchen.

Mentors bring a sense of shared fun, new experiences and great listening skills. The mentors provide encouragement and options for expanding a young person’s regard for themselves and their world. By sharing yourself with your mentee, you help to inspire them in creating a meaningful future for themselves. Some mentoring pairs have been meeting for years while others started this month. It’s never too late to join our team and begin a meaningful relationship with a great student. Many mentors have said that they feel they gain more from the friendship than the students they mentor.

If you are interested in applying to be a mentor at Charlotte Central School or learning more, please contact krooney@cvsdvt.org or 802-425-6682.

If you’re interested in working with high school students, the mentoring program at Champlain Valley Union High is also seeking mentors. Contact Alison Duback at aduback@cvsdvt.org for more information.

Kate Rooney
Essex

(Rooney is mentoring coordinator at Charlotte Central School.)

The brief and loving life of a Christmas tree

To the Editor:

One month ago, mid-December, we drove to the parking lot where trees were standing in neat rows, awaiting new homes. Like puppies in a pound hopefully watching the critical gaze of possible owners. Choose me! Choose me! They called. We pulled them out, shook off snow, argued about height and girth. Let’s get a small one. No, bigger, we have to fill that corner. We haggled and found the right puppy, bundled it and brought it home.

Our tree fit splendidly this year and blossomed in the living room with ancient decorations, memories of decades past, specimens of family art and creations dangling with glee from its branches. It brought a unique scent and sight of hope and a refuge from these brutal human times outside the window and our cocooned community. It held space for three weeks, welcoming family and friends as if a new family member, radiating a unique recognition of seasonal peace and refuge. Christmas, birthdays, holidays and quiet nights rolled past. Cold outside, warm within.

Then one day, as if driven by an unspoken instinct or signal, we looked up and agreed it was time. The tree neither requested nor received a requiem, just a nod of appreciation for a brief life well lived. Unceremoniously, it was stripped of its tokens of the season, naked on a Saturday morning and carried to a resting spot outside. Today a man with a truck and trailer, aided by his young son, came and scooped up the shedding remains. In gratitude, we gave a \$15 donation to the boy’s school music program. Then it was over, the closing hymn for a ritual that began last month, last year. A lifetime ago.

I loved our tree, as I do all our trees, and its journey toward a chipper somewhere makes me melancholy. It lived a bright, if brief, life in our home and transformed our living room into a different place, a service of love for which I feel appreciation as I sit in this treeless space on a mid-January morning. There is worry in the world, fear of tyrants and undeserved grief. But our tree etched a small place in our family history that lives hopefully in memory, leaving behind the gift of its balsam scent.

Thomas Powell
South Burlington

LETTERS continued on page 7

LETTERS

Continued from page 6

Headline didn’t do bathhouse story justice

To the Editor:

We have heard it before — headlines make (or break) the news. We all know that Fox News runs one headline and NPR runs a different headline — same story, different result. The same thing could be said of The Charlotte News — the optics can change as a result of the headline.

What if the headline read: “Recreation commission demonstrates need for major renovations to bathhouse” instead of “Recreation commission wants new bathhouse”?

The story could then go on to explain that the existing almost 50-year-old bathhouse requires many repairs including a new roof and would highlight that the existing bathhouse does not meet the Americans with Disabilities Act requirements for wheelchair and mobility-impaired access. This article could explain that the recreation commission plans to pay for the majority of these major renovations with grants, donations and major gifts, and that the cost to taxpayers would be a maximum of \$40,000 per year (\$10 per resident) or \$200,000 over five years.

The article might also illustrate that the Charlotte Beach-Fred St. George Fields generates over \$40,000 income annually which the recreation commission is asking to have reinvested in the town’s recreational facilities.

The article might point out that over 20,000 visitors came to enjoy the Charlotte Beach-Fred St. George Fields this past year, but some visitors cannot access the beach because there is no ramp. The article might emphasize that the recreation commission would like to add a ramp to the beach and provide an ADA bathroom facility for the enjoyment of all community members. Perhaps then the article would garner more support for the project and the knee-jerk reaction to facilities improvements would not be “but my taxes are going to go up” and “we don’t need to be Shelburne.”

Maura Wygmans
Charlotte

(Wygman is a member of the recreation commission.)

Legislature wrestles questions without easy solutions

To the Editor:

Here we go, the Vermont State Legislature is back in session. In addition to being sworn in, we should have to take the Hippocratic oath, to first do no harm.

The voters have spoken by throwing out many lawmakers that would seek to do harm to working Vermonters. It is time for the Legislature to work together and make changes that will control property tax rates and foster a better education system, rein in health care costs, promote public safety and fix the Global Warming Solutions Act to align it with reality. These are the issues Republicans ran on, and the people of Vermont clearly agree.

Controlling property taxes is going to take a whole system overhaul. We need to make cuts in some areas like bloated administration and look to compromise on local control. School consolidation is also going to be on the table and must come from the top down rather than pitting neighbor against neighbor to strike a balance. The Secretary of Education has been

working closely with the administration to come up with a bold new plan. It will be up to the Legislature to get elements of this plan passed.

Rising health care costs are crushing everyone in the state. We need more competition in the market place and a complete overhaul of the Green Mountain Care Board. The board is completely dysfunctional and is not bringing health care costs into check. How can we penalize hospitals that are turning a profit by eliminating beds? What is the impact of an out-of-control state Medicaid system on the overall cost of health care? And how do we serve an aging population that is largely rural? These are the questions that the Legislature will grapple with during this session and there are not a lot of easy answers.

Public safety is of the utmost concern; the catch and release policies that have been pushed are clearly not working. We are continually re-releasing dangerous offenders with no accountability. We must hold offenders accountable for their behavior or they will continue to re-offend. Harsher penalties and a repeal of “Raise the Age” are on the table. It is clear that criminals have taken advantage of Vermont’s lax laws on youthful offenders which has promoted the use of youth in the commission of crimes. Raising the age is having the opposite effect on children by leading criminal syndicates to target young people for smuggling, distributing and selling drugs.

Revising and repealing portions of the Global Warming Solutions Act must be done immediately. The clock is ticking on the unrealistic benchmarks that were included in this legislation. We will not be able to meet the ludicrous reductions in carbon output that we prescribed in this poor legislation and we have opened ourselves up to lawsuits when that does not happen. Auto dealerships will not be able to procure enough EV’s to meet the requirements, and folks will be forced to buy 2-year-old EVs 20 percent or more over market value. Home heating fuel must not be taxed at an additional \$4 per gallon, and expensive carbon credits can not be traded as a commodity.

Making progress on these issues means that the Legislature needs to work together and work with the Governor’s office. Democrats seemed poised to do this, as they are eagerly waiting for the Governor’s plan for education funding, as they have none and created the mess we are in. They have co-opted the Republican message of affordability, and now they must step up to work with and listen to us. The issues we Republicans ran on are the issues that the people of Vermont found to be the most important. We Republicans look forward to rolling up our sleeves and getting to work and sincerely hope that we will be listened to in 2025 and 2026. Democrats still have the majority and Republicans can’t advance logical policies without their approval.

Gina Galfetti
Barre Town

(Galfetti is a Republican member of the state House of Representatives.)

Land-use acronym battle of YIMBYs, NIMBYs and SIMBYs

To the Editor:

These three acronyms have one common theme: land use and development. IMBY stands for in my back yard), so YIMBYs are those who say “yes” to land development but not necessarily in their own backyard but

more likely in your backyard.

They are typically supported by land speculators and real estate developers and “growth is good” politicians. They support “smart growth,” infill development, but not limits on development. They are here today and gone tomorrow, off to their next profit potential endeavor. They paint those not for development in a derogatory manner as NIMBYs.

NIMBYs value the status quo and often do oppose development for many reasons associated with “no.” Sometimes they win by opposing a nuclear power station on Lake Champlain; sometimes they lose by having to suffer under excessive noise from F-35 fighters in their backyard. Often they want to preserve what they have, be it a landscape, viewscape or soundscape as they wish to stay in and preserve their community. They are not profit driven but also do not want their home investment devalued or neighborhood degraded by inappropriate development.

SIMBYs seek sustainability and sufficiency in their backyard. They value land for the long term to supply them with energy for the gut and energy and materials for the household. For this they ideally need access to gardens, meadows and a woodlot. They realize that their needs cannot be satisfied in a densely developed village or city but could be satisfied in a low-density village. They would not support downzoning to a point where expensive water and sewer infrastructure will be needed. They wish to be prepared for a future that may see globalization collapse, and the need for more local economies to rise again.

Development generally takes land that is ecologically mature and degrades it with hardscape, destroying the soil and its ability to absorb stormwater while leaving less land for other lifeforms. How do we help meet the 30x30 goal of saving 30 percent of land for biodiversity as well as the our global warming solution goals when the Vermont Chamber of Commerce has a goal of increasing Vermont’s population by 25 percent in the next decade?

So, who will the new town plan support? Will it open up Charlotte to the YIMBY supporters, or will it support the status quo for future developments? Will it recognize ecological limits? Do Charlotte residents have a vision for their land’s future? Why not find out? If the selectboard and the planning commission would really want a better answer, I suggest they create a citizens assembly to find out.

A citizens assembly for our town would select a group of residents by lottery to deliberate on important public questions. The group’s members would form a more representative cross-section of the public and would be provided with time, resources and a broad range of viewpoints to learn deeply about an issue. Through skilled facilitation, the assembly members would weigh trade-offs and work to find common ground on a shared set of recommendations. Citizens assemblies can be more representative and deliberative than public engagement, polls, legislatures or ballot initiatives. Citizens assemblies have generally been successful worldwide. Let’s give it a try, Charlotte.

Wolfger Schneider
Charlotte

Outdoors

Putney Mountain reports ‘best year ever’ for sightings

Kate Kampner
Community News Service

Theresa Armata remembers the scene atop Putney Mountain the first time she came to join her local hawk-watching crew in 2010.

“There were these people sitting in chairs staring at the sky,” she said. “And so on my next day off, I came again, and again.”

She’s been an official counter for the Putney Mountain Hawkwatch ever since, one of several making sure the tallies of raptor sightings are accurate. Their work, the group says, shows 2024 has been a banner year.

The group, which heads out from late August to mid-November, reported a total of 19,428 raptors — about 16,200 counts being broad-winged hawks, a common North American species. In a typical year volunteers would see about 7,000 total raptors.

This was the group’s “best year ever,” said John Anderson, a volunteer since 1996.

Every day members of the group sit on its namesake summit and count the species that fly by. At the end of each day they report their numbers, which are recorded on hawkcount.org, a database used by the Hawk Migration Association of North America.

What accounted for the jump in sightings this year?

“It’s a weather thing,” Anderson said. “It’s just the big weather patterns we don’t quite fully understand. Little variations can make a huge difference.”

When broad-winged hawks migrate, they tend to gather in thermals — bubbles of warm, rising air that help carry them on their flight. The birds look for other hawks to know where a thermal might be — a lot of them is a good sign, causing a mass of birds to gravitate.

Anderson said the Putney Mountain group once saw some 800 broad-wings in what likely was a thermal. “At a distance they look like swarms of gnats,” he said. “The sky is full of specks.”

The volunteers use a variety of binoculars and spotting scopes, the same methods they’ve been using since the group formed in 1974. The group had right around 40 volunteers this year, Anderson said, ranging from people who had two visits or fewer to those who came out most days of the week.

“You can find a million interested people, but it takes a lot of patience and a lot of time commitment,” he said.

Candace Hess has had a lifelong love for birdwatching and joined the Hawkwatch in 2013.

“It’s just really rewarding to see so many birds and to see what happens in the different years that have high numbers and the comparisons,” she said.

Hess is interested not only in what is happening on the Putney summit but also in the bigger picture of the birds — their overall health, how the populations are fluctuating and the conversations happening about their overall decline.

“What happened to us this season just falls in that whole mix for me,” she said.

She listed 2017, 2018 and 2021 as other outstanding years, but no other year has matched the prevailing number of 2024.



Photo courtesy Putney Mountain Hawkwatch

A kettle of broad-winged hawks in September.

Armata said that “we never really know” when it comes to the why factor. She said the weather systems she saw at the beginning of the season looked promising.

“I kind of had a feeling that we might have a pretty good year,” she said, when she saw a big pressure system start to settle repeatedly with no northwest winds. “But (I) never expected what actually happened in September with our broad-wing hawk count.”

Along with Hess and Anderson, Armata is one of the few group members who is an official counter, the people who make the entries into the database and make the final decisions when there’s a dispute over numbers or species identification.

Armata lives in Bennington and drives an hour and a half to the summit on the days she counts from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. and even beyond. “It’s just an awesome sight of nature,” she said, “especially in September to see the huge mass of birds just coming over you.”

Soon, Armata will be awarded the Community Scientist Lifetime Achievement Award from the Vermont Center for Ecostudies for her work as a volunteer.

“You meet so many interesting people,” Armata said. “It’s a wonderful way to spend the day.”

When Kent McFarland, co-founder of the Vermont Center for Ecostudies, wants to get a more complete sense of how the hawks are faring, he turns to the North American Breeding Bird Survey, a long-term monitoring database that tracks North America bird populations during June. The database provides numbers the Hawkwatch doesn’t get during its off-season.

The overall trends of the database suggest that broad-wing hawks are increasing in the region, McFarland said. The data also shows increased sightings of other species such as the black vulture and turkey vultures.

“Clearly the reason they had a record count was that wild broad-winged count right there,” McFarland said. “I think this starts to tell the story a little bit.”

(Via Community News Service, a University of Vermont journalism internship.)

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Weed’s in the Garden

Spoon salads are healthy, affordable, tasty, adaptable

Joan Weed
Contributor

I think about nutrition a lot. Foods I eat must be healthy, affordable, easily available and enjoyable.

As we age, we tend to fill up quicker and have more sensitive taste buds and challenges cutting or picking up food with utensils. Recently I heard a phrase I’d never thought of before — spoon salads.

The ideas this brought forth seemed perfect for someone my age. A bowl of fresh fruit or vegetables, a protein source, interesting textures and a sauce or dressing to bind them all together. I realized I already had many spoon salads in my repertoire.

A few could be tweaked to make them even more appealing or balanced. The availability of certain ingredients with our wonderful farm stands makes it even more convenient to achieve my goals.

We traditionally think of leafy greens when it comes to salads, but taking the idea to a broader creation, there are no limits. Whole grains, eggs, fish or meats, sausages, beans, pasta, crunchy root vegetables, fruits, alliums, cheese, nuts and, of course, the aforementioned leafy greens.

I thought about various salads I have made over the years and a couple I’ve been introduced to more recently. I’m going to share a few. Luckily salads do not have to be measured precisely and are easy to adapt to what’s on hand or appealing. Experimentation is encouraged.

Dressings can be astringent or creamy or as simple as a kiss of olive oil and vinegar or lemon. The important thing about making a delicious dressing is the balance of sweet or savory and remembering to season for bringing out the brightness of the foods.

My practice is to only offer recipes that I have made myself. Some are original and some are borrowed from others. I always note when I copy. Realistically, salads don’t need “recipes.” Add what you like, experiment.



Purple power slaw

Three-week cole slaw

- 3 pounds of finely shredded cabbage
- 1 finely chopped green pepper
- 1 finely chopped onion
- 1 1/2 cups of sugar
- 1 cup cider vinegar
- 1 cup of vegetable oil
- 1 tablespoon celery seed
- 1 tablespoon salt
- good grind of pepper

In a saucepan, bring liquids, sugar and spices to a boil. Pour over freshly grated or chopped vegetables.

Cover and store in the refrigerator. Best to let marinate a few hours before serving. This really does keep well, although I have never kept it for three weeks.

I add celery, and today I had an orange pepper instead of green; go nuts. I only made a portion of the recipe; just divide. You can’t really go wrong if you keep tasting. This cole slaw has been served at the Charlotte Senior Center Volunteer Dinner for several years after I introduced it.



Roasted beets with maple and feta

Eating Well’s purple power slaw

This is delicious with the dressing included. Keeps well, too. Vegetarian and gluten free.

Produce

- 4 cups of purple cabbage
- 1 carrot, large purple (if you can find one)
- 4 tablespoons of fresh cilantro
- 1 small purple daikon
- 1 clove garlic
- 1 tablespoon of fresh, minced ginger
- 4 tablespoons of scallions

Condiments

- 1 tablespoon of honey
- 1 1/2 tablespoons of reduced-sodium tamari or soy sauce

Baking & spices

- 1/4 teaspoon of salt
- 1 tablespoon of toasted sesame seeds

Oils & vinegars

- 2 tablespoons of cider vinegar
- 1/4 cup of sesame oil

Whisk oil, vinegar, tamari (or soy sauce), honey, ginger, garlic and salt in a large bowl.

Add cabbage, carrot, daikon and three tablespoons each of cilantro and scallions.

I can attest that this is a delicious dressing, and you’ll want to make this salad often. Substitute regular carrots and daikon if purple isn’t available.

Waldorf salad

Wash four apples of your choice. Dice, including skins and place in a bowl.

Add a stalk of chopped celery, 1/4 cup of raisins or dried cranberries, cherries (rehydrate if necessary).

Roughly chop 1/2 cup of toasted walnuts and add to the mix.

In a jar place 1/2 cup mayonnaise, adding enough milk and shake to make pourable.

Pour over fruits and vegetables and let marinate for an hour or so before serving. Alternately, add apple cider vinegar to the mayonnaise to loosen.

Roasted beets with maple and feta

Roast or boil three large beets. When cool enough to handle, rub off skins and dice to 1/2-inch pieces.

In a jar pour 3 tablespoons rice or white wine vinegar and 1/4 cup of olive oil. Add 3 tablespoons of maple syrup, salt to taste, 1/2 teaspoon of Dijon mustard.

Shake vigorously to emulsify. Pour over beets.

Add 1/4 cup of roughly chopped toasted walnuts and 1/2 cup of feta pieces. Mix gently and serve.

Black bean salad

(two servings)

- 15-ounce can black beans rinsed and drained
- 2/3 cup chopped red bell pepper
- 1/2 cup chopped sweet yellow onion
- 6-ounce jar of marinated artichoke hearts
- 2 tablespoons of fresh mild salsa
- bunch of fresh arugula
- 2 ounces of crumbled, soft mild goat cheese (such as Montrachet)

Combine beans, bell pepper and onion in medium bowl. Stir in artichoke hearts with marinade. Add salsa. Season with salt and pepper.

Arrange arugula on two plates. Spoon bean salad atop arugula. Sprinkle goat cheese on top and serve.

Kathy’s pasta salad

- 7 ounces corkscrew macaroni
- 1 1/2 cups cubed provolone cheese
- 6 ounces of cubed salami (have deli cut thick slices to cube)
- 1 cup thinly sliced cauliflower
- 1 cup thinly sliced zucchini
- 1/2 cup chopped red pepper
- 1 small chopped onion
- 1/2 cup sliced black olives
- 1/4 cup shredded Parmesan cheese
- 2 small diced tomatoes

Dressing

- 1/2 cup olive oil
- 1/4 cup balsamic red wine vinegar
- 2 teaspoons minced garlic
- 1 inch of anchovy paste from tube
- 2 teaspoons dried basil
- 1 teaspoon of oregano
- 1 teaspoon of black pepper

Mix dressing one day ahead, shake and refrigerate.

Cook pasta according to directions and drain. Rinse to cool.

Toss pasta with all ingredients except tomatoes. Add the dressing saving a bit in jar. Refrigerate salad four to 24 hours. Before serving, toss with diced tomatoes and remaining dressing. Sprinkle with more Parmesan cheese.

This is just a small sampling of salads to eat with a spoon. You may find some of your own. A few of these would be good for carry-in suppers too. Hope you enjoy them.

Education

February a good time to consider West Coast colleges

Margo Bartsch
Contributor

With February break around the corner, it is the perfect excuse to combine West Coast ski trips with college visits. Consider touring the University of Utah in Salt Lake City, known as Silicon Slopes, and the University of Washington, in the heart of Seattle's Silicon Canal. In developing the college list, these colleges highlight the three "L's": learning, living, launching.

Last March, I visited the University of Utah, 30 miles from Park City (Epic season pass) and the University of Washington, 30 miles from the Summit at Snoqualmie (Ikon season pass). Both state universities have expansive academic programs, outdoor lifestyles, and booming internship and job markets.

Departing from Burlington, with a stopover in Chicago, it is an eight-hour flight to Salt Lake City. From the skies, the Wasatch Range is huge, and the Great Salt Lake is majestic. Utah is known as Silicon Slopes for hosting the 2002 Olympic Games held in Park City and Deer Valley. This July, The Wall Street Journal reported that Utah's tech sector was the hottest U.S. job maker in 2023.

Leaving Utah, Seattle is just a two-and-a-half-hour direct flight, where you can see Mt. Rainier and Puget Sound from the airplane's window. Seattle is known as Silicon Canal, located on the Lake Washington Ship Canal. Seattle is also referred to as Silicon Sound for Puget Sound. The headquarters of Amazon, Microsoft and Starbucks are in the Seattle



A "W" sculpture welcomes visitors to the University of Washington's gated campus and the U District shopping and cafes.

Photos by Margo Bartsch

metropolitan area.

Starting at the University of Utah, there are 22,000 undergraduate students. The top majors are psychology (research and clinical), communication, biology, computer science and nursing. It competes in the Big 12 Conference, and 65 percent of its students are from in-state.

Learning opportunities include joining professional clubs. For example, joining the Blockchain Club includes networking events and guest speakers. Club activities include working on teams to develop and interact with secure networks in

sharing data information and transport cryptocurrencies. Students collaborate on project competitions and participate in hack-a-thons. These are all experiences to add to the student's resume and LinkedIn accomplishments.

Living experiences include enjoying outdoor fun and making friends with One Love Ski and Snowboard Club for students at all skills and levels. Students receive season pass discounts, participate in events with local brands, attend ski trips out west and enjoy wax nights, tailgates and community outreach.

Opportunities to launch your career include attending networking fairs and expos. Internships and jobs opportunities include STEM, data science and artificial intelligence, accounting, business, finance, sales, social and environmental impact, social and behavioral science, humanities, cultural and social transformation, architecture, design and planning, and fashion. LinkedIn lists 114 summer internships in Salt Lake City across all these industries with both big and small companies.

Continuing my campus visits at the

University of Washington, there are 30,000 undergraduates and a recent member of the Big 10 Conference. The top majors include computer and information science, social sciences, biology, business and engineering. In-state students represent 77 percent of the student body.

The University of Washington's gated campus is within the city of Seattle. It includes the contemporary Henry Art Gallery and the Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture. Waterside Husky Stadium is located along University Way, known as The Ave, with many cafes and shops.

Socializing with friends is a short walk to the U District of stores and restaurants. The local community partners with the University of Washington to schedule street fairs and festivals. There are artisan vendors, craft beers, bubble tea and ethnic foods. Also, the famous Pike Place Market is only 4 miles away from campus.

For the great outdoors, the Husky Snow Club and Husky Winter Sports Club are connected to The Summit at Snoqualmie. Also, the UWild Outdoors Club includes renting gear, climbing the Craggs, paddling at the Waterfront and kayaking at Portage Bay. There is even a peaks and professors hiking club to explore the Pacific Northwest with your professors.

Launching professional exposures is supported by the career and internship center that offers weekly activities for career development. Events include resume and cover letter writing with AI-Jobscan, interview preparation, building your LinkedIn profile, biotech alumni panel, pre-health panel, environmental fair and the law, government and policy career connections.

College is a time to form community. Learning can extend beyond the classroom and into the natural and professional environments. Launch your career and have fun living it.

(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.)

Collecting for change



Courtesy photo

From left, students Vivien Nelson, Calista Lasek, Hayward Herlihy, Ben Vincent, Lena Ingalls and Leola Guterres stand with plastic that Charlotte Central School has been collecting. "It is great seeing the hard work of collecting all the plastic, packaging it up and knowing that we have a goal and are making a change," Vincent said.



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Education

Musical director needed for sixth-eighth grade musical

Naomi Strada
(Summarized by Tom Scatchard)

Recently the Charlotte Central School administration learned that the theater company the school had partnered with in the past, and which had committed to producing this year’s show, has had to step back and will no longer be able to take on this year’s production.

Principal Tim O’Leary has been working to find new options, and he’s found a promising lead for a director and choreographer, who could work with the students starting in mid-April, with performances tentatively planned for June 6 and 7.

Charlotte Central School is reaching out to the community for a music director to complete the team. If Charlotters know someone who might be interested, please don’t hesitate to reach out to them or contact the school directly. Principal O’Leary is confident that the Charlotte community can navigate this challenge.

Plastic recycling challenge

The school wants to thank everyone who has participated in the plastic recycling

challenge. A special shoutout goes to Tim Neilson from Conant Metal and Light in Burlington for his generous plastic drop-offs, as well as to all the other community members who have contributed.

The student council members have shown incredible dedication by collecting, weighing and preparing the plastic for delivery each week. Additionally, thanks goes to the school’s sustainability committee members for their efforts in delivering the plastic.

So far, the school has collected an impressive 737 pounds of plastic. With the challenge running until Wednesday, May 15, Charlotte Central School is working toward the goal of 1,000 pounds to earn a composite bench through the NexTrex Plastic Challenge.

Pre-kindergarten lottery open

The district’s early education program is accepting applications for a random prekindergarten lottery drawing for the 2025-26 school year. This lottery is for an opportunity to enroll in one of the school-based classrooms. The classes run four partial days a week. These school-based pre-K classrooms are licensed early

education programs providing play-based, developmentally appropriate environments for all children in an inclusive setting.

The programs follow the Champlain Valley School District calendar. Children who will be age 3 or older by Sept. 1, 2025, are not eligible for kindergarten and live in the communities of Charlotte, Hinesburg, Shelburne, St. George or Williston are eligible to enter the lottery.

Families who are selected for the lottery and choose to enroll their child in a Champlain Valley School District program may access their Act 166-funded pre-K funds for the program.

All application forms must be received by Feb. 7 and are located on the CVSD Early Education website at <https://tinyurl.com/29zbft9x>. Paper applications are available upon request. For additional information, questions about the program or concerns about a child’s development, visit the website or contact director of early education Erin Gagne at egagne@cvsdvt.org. The early education team is also available for developmental screenings in the areas of communication, social-emotional development, motor skills, adaptive development and cognition.

Connecting Youth marks 25 years

January marks National Mentoring Month, and the Champlain Valley School District is celebrating 25 years of Connecting Youth’s mentoring program. The program, founded in 2000, has paired thousands of mentors with local students, providing support during pivotal moments in their lives.

This year, Connecting Youth Mentoring serves 184 fifth-twelfth graders across the district.

“These interactions help students regulate emotions, feel safe and seen, practice effective communication, make good choices and benefit from the guidance of well-trained, compassionate mentors,” says Tony Moulton, the district’s director of wellness & prevention.

Studies consistently show that youth with mentors are more likely to graduate, pursue higher education and become active, engaged citizens in their communities.

As Champlain Valley School District celebrates this milestone year for Connecting Youth, community members are invited to join in recognizing the value of mentorship by contacting Kate Rooney at krooney@cvsdvt.org or 802-425-6682.

Hi! Neighbor

O’Leary, new principal, all about making connections

Phyl Newbeck
Contributor

At a summer camp after his first year of college, Tim O’Leary had a transformative experience. Working with kids who had individualized education plans changed his career trajectory and put him on a path to public education. This month, he started a new job as principal of Charlotte Central School.

Upon returning to the University of Vermont, O’Leary switched his major from biology to English with a self-designed minor in special education. He later obtained a Master of Arts in English from the Bread Loaf School of English at Middlebury College.

O’Leary’s initial goal was to teach humanities at the middle and high school level. His first job was at Middlebury High School where he spent half his time as a traditional English teacher and the other half as what was then called a reading teacher, working with the school’s biology teachers and their 10th grade classes.

Eventually, he began teaching at-risk students. He moved into a job helping teachers use on-line tools in their classrooms at nine schools in the Addison Central School District. O’Leary might get in his car after co-teaching kindergarten in Bridport and drive to Middlebury High School to work with honors juniors and seniors.

After two years, O’Leary decided to concentrate on one school at a time and was hired by Shelburne Community School. When the pandemic hit, he got a call from the director of curriculum at the Champlain Valley School District, asking him to build a virtual community. In the span of three



Photo by Tim O’Leary

Tim O’Leary on the first day of school this year.

weeks, O’Leary helped create and direct a virtual learning academy for 400 students, which wasn’t on his “career bingo card,” he said.

O’Leary’s next position was instructional coach and curriculum leader at Shelburne Community School. He received a Rowland Fellowship to create a more robust computer science curriculum across the district.

In June of 2024, O’Leary was hired by Charlotte Central School. He enjoys how the school works cooperatively with the district administration. He likes the monthly assemblies which are attended by the entire student body and teaching staff. He believes

those events help the older kids learn to interact with their younger colleagues.

O’Leary also appreciates the weekly staff meetings.

“Staff at Charlotte Central School are teachers, not middle school or elementary school teachers,” he said. “It’s lovely to see that unity and cohesion across the range of grades, functioning as a single community. That’s what drew me here and keeps me here and evolving.”

O’Leary’s work extends beyond Vermont. For the last 10 years he has been running What’s the Story?, a national program where middle and high school students consider

social issues that are important to them and put together a short documentary films.

A good deal of the program is virtual in places like South Carolina, Georgia, Maine, New Mexico, Kentucky and Sharon, Vermont. Every month there is a three-hour Zoom meeting on a Saturday, and the entire group gets together over the summer, courtesy of grants O’Leary has obtained.

O’Leary describes the filmmaking program as a hobby. He also enjoys working with his hands and built his home in Ripton, despite not having a background in carpentry. He has two middle-school daughters, and the family enjoys season passes at the Middlebury Snow Bowl.

O’Leary is entering his third year as Ripton’s town moderator. Last year, he brought that experience into the classroom to conduct a mock town meeting with his Shelburne students, a concept which he hopes to replicate at Charlotte Central School.

“There are a lot of great things that have happened and are happening at CCS,” O’Leary said. “My job is to figure out how to sustain those things and leverage meaningful change in ways that are exciting, authentic and connected to the community. What I’ve heard from Day 1 is people want to figure out ways to bridge connections between the school and the community.”

O’Leary is excited that one of those connections will be with The Charlotte News. The school has a journalism club, and he is hoping to hone their skills.

“Making connections brings me hope and joy,” O’Leary said. “There is a machinery of public education with budgets and schedules. We need to figure out how to do those things and still make space and design for joy.”

Calendar

Send your events two weeks in advance to news@thecharlottenews.org.

Lost Ski Areas stories
Thursday, Jan. 23, 6:30 p.m.

Did you know that at one time there were five ski areas in both Waterbury and Stowe, two in Morrisville, and one each in Hyde Park, Johnson, Jeffersonville, and Cambridge? Or that the second rope tow in Vermont was built in Cambridge? Over the decades, Vermont has lost 185 ski areas, leaving only 20 remaining today. Join the Vermont Ski and Snowboard Museum’s monthly Red Bench series on Thursday, Jan. 23, as ski historian Brian Lindner and “Searching for Vermont’s Lost Ski Areas” exhibit curator Poppy Gall share the stories of 15 lost ski areas. This discussion is held in conjunction with the museum’s new exhibit, Searching for Vermont’s Lost Ski Areas — Part 2, which highlights all known “lost” ski areas in Vermont; those now defunct as well as “lost and found” areas that have been revived after years of closure. Part 2 includes new discoveries and a handful of ski areas that were planned but never opened. To learn more about the exhibit or to share information about a Vermont lost ski area, visit vtssm.org. Doors to the museum at 1 South Main Street, Stowe, open at 6 p.m., and guests are invited to explore the exhibits and socialize. The discussion begins at 6:30 p.m. Admission is \$10.

Student art exhibition
Friday, Jan. 24, 5 p.m.
Burlington City Arts is opening Becoming/Vermont, a student art exhibition with a reception on Friday, Jan. 24 at 5 p.m. The exhibition runs through Saturday, Feb. 1. Becoming/Vermont features approximately 40 works by teen artists from the greater Burlington area.

Paint & sip Ferrisburgh
Friday, Jan. 24, 6:30-8:30 p.m.
A paint & sip will be held at the Ferrisburgh Town Hall with artist Jackie Rivers as a fundraiser by the Friends of the Union Meeting Hall. The \$35 fee goes to help restore the historic town hall. The fee includes light refreshments and all the materials you’ll need to create a unique masterpiece to take home. Advance registration and payment are required at <https://tinyurl.com/y9es8c37>. Questions: unionmeetinghall@gmail.com.

January bird monitoring walk
Saturday, Jan. 25, 8-9 a.m.
All birds (current, experienced, newbie and would-be) are welcome to join the Birds of Vermont Museum’s monthly monitoring walk outdoors on the museum’s trails in forest and meadow. Most fun for adults, older children. Bringing binoculars, dressing for the weather, tick repellent and water bottles are recommended. It is free but a \$10-\$15 donation is suggested. Register at <https://tinyurl.com/msh67zfh>.

Free Ice Fishing Day
Saturday, Jan. 25
Free Ice Fishing Day is a day when anyone, resident or nonresident, may fish legal Vermont waters without a fishing license.



Courtesy photo

This photo is part of the exhibit Vermont Female Farmers which will be at the Fleming Museum of Art Feb. 4-May 17.

The Free Ice Fishing Festival is the same day. At the Ice Fishing Festival learn ice fishing basics, from tip-ups to filleting fish. Tom’s Bait and Tackle is donating all bait for the day. The festival will be held at Silver Lake State Park, 20 State Park Beach Road, Barnard, from 11 a.m.-3 p.m. Fish and Wildlife staff and volunteers will teach the basics of ice fishing. Be sure to dress warmly in layers and wear winter boots. Yaktraxs or ice cleats are also a great idea for traction. For more information, contact Corey Hart (corey.hart@vermont.gov) by email or call 802-505-5562.

Culomba concert
Saturday, Jan. 25, 3 p.m.
Capital City Concerts presents Culomba on Saturday Jan. 25, 3 p.m. at the Unitarian Church of Montpelier, a family concert with pay-as-you-can admission. The professional vocal ensemble, Culomba, brings its rich harmonies and eclectic folk traditions through music spanning American folk, Georgian, Corsican, Balkan and the Renaissance. To learn more, go to capitalcityconcerts.org.

Week for artists in Johnson
Friday, Jan. 31
The Vermont Studio Center at vermontstudiocenter.org is accepting applications through Jan. 31 for Vermont Week, May 5-12. Vermont Week at the Vermont Studio Center provides fully funded residencies for 30 Vermont artists and writers, which includes private accommodations, private studio space, daily meals and access to Johnson Village amenities. Vermont Week will culminate with an open studios celebration 2-4 p.m., Sunday, May 11.

Open house reception
5-7 p.m., Wednesday, Feb. 5
The University of Vermont’s Fleming Museum of Art is holding an open house reception of Feb. 5. It should be an evening of great art, sparkling conversations, featured exhibition, complimentary snacks and parking. It will also be an opportunity to experience Belonging, a new installation of art from

the museum’s collections.

Farmer’s Night
Wednesday, Feb. 5, 7:30 p.m.
Join the Vermont State House for a special Farmers Night presentation with Kenneth Cadow, author of “Gather,” the Vermont Reads selection for 2024-25 and a National Book Award Finalist. Cadow will read from his book and talk about the themes of rural life, resilience, class differences, addiction and recovery, housing and food insecurity, a deep relationship to the land, and the power of community. This event is free and will be hosted at the Vermont State House in Montpelier.

Shelburne Age Well luncheon
Tuesday, Feb. 11, 11:30 a.m.
St. Catherine of Siena and Age Well are offering lunch on Feb. 11 for anyone 60 or older in the St. Catherine of Siena Parish Hall at 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 wheat spaghetti with meatballs, marinara sauce and parmesan cheese, spinach, wheat roll, Mandarin oranges in orange Jell-o and milk. Deadline to register at 802-662-5283 or mbongiorno@agewellvt.org is Feb. 5.

Resilient farming conference
Thursday, Feb. 13, 9 a.m.
Field crop growers looking to enhance their operations using cover crops and no-till practices will benefit from attending the 2025 No-Till and Cover Crop Conference on Feb. 13. The annual conference features speakers from several states and Canada who will talk about ways to help farmers build resiliency into their farming. It will be held at the DoubleTree by Hilton in South Burlington from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. with registration at 8 a.m. The conference fee is \$75, \$50 for students. It includes lunch with Canadian farmers describing agronomic innovations, projects and trials of Quebec farmers. Registrations will be accepted until Feb. 7 at go.uvm.edu/2025ntcc. Certified crop advisor and water quality and custom applicator

credits are available.

Organic farming conference
Saturday & Sunday, Feb. 15 & 16
The Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont has opened registration for its 43rd annual winter conference Feb. 15 and 16 at the University of Vermont. The conference brings together hundreds of farmers, homesteaders, gardeners, land stewards, educators, students, producers, policy-makers and activists to share knowledge on topics related to food and farming. The conference opens on Saturday, Feb. 15, with over 40 workshops and panel discussions, an exhibitors’ fair, roundtable discussions, film screenings, a children’s conference and more. Sunday is dedicated to day-long intensive workshops, where attendees will take a deep dive into one of four topics: no-till vegetable production, seed-saving practices, growing organic flowers and maple sugaring in a changing environment. Registration is offered at a sliding scale of \$0-\$320 dollars. Full event details at nofavt.org/conference.

Shelburne Age Well luncheon
Tuesday, Feb. 18, 11:30 a.m.
St. Catherine of Siena and Age Well are also offering lunch on Feb. 18 for anyone 60 or older in the St. Catherine of Siena Parish Hall at 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. Swedish meatballs with sauce, rotini noodles, sliced carrots, green beans, wheat dinner roll, pineapple tidbits and milk. Register at 802-662-5283 or mbongiorno@agewellvt.org by Feb. 12.

Youth Engineering Day
Saturday, Feb. 22, 9:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m.
A free day-long event, hosted by Vermont 4-H and the University of Vermont College of Engineering and Mathematical Sciences, will expose young people to different engineering fields and career opportunities. Discover Engineering Day will take place on Feb. 22, 9:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. on the campus. Fifth-grade students through seniors are invited to participate to learn about engineering, build skills through hands-on workshops and network with college students, professors and industry professionals. The deadline to register is Feb. 17 at 5 p.m. Register go.uvm.edu/2025. Location and parking details will be emailed to registrants. Lunch will be provided. The event kicks off with an engineering scavenger hunt involving interactive exhibits showcasing various types of engineering and career pathways. Afternoon workshops will focus on topics including Python programming, robotics, bridge design, cartilage construction, lift and force and renewable energy.

Wassail celebration
Sunday, Feb. 23, 3-6 p.m.
As the days begin to lengthen with the coming of spring, Champlain Orchards is inviting the community to join the orchard in the blessing of the trees with food, drink, songs, dancing and a bonfire. If the weather permits, come early to cross-country ski, snowshoe or sled.

Library News

Roses are red, library has Valentine’s workshops for you

Margaret Woodruff
Director

The library has two options for romantics looking forward to Valentine’s Day.

On the next two Wednesdays, Jan. 29 & Feb. 5, 2-3:30 p.m., come by the Charlotte Library to create a work of art or two for special Valentines in this two-part wild-card workshop. Book artists Marcia Vogler and Rebecca Lindy Coll share the secrets of creating beautiful and unique Valentines.

For fifth grade and up. Let the library know if you would like to join the Valentining at info@charlottepubliclibrary.org.

If Feb. 14 is creeping up on you, stop by the library between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. to create some Valentines with Gelli print and other craft techniques. For all ages. Children 10 and under must be accompanied by an adult.

Programs for kids

Monthly Babytime Saturday, Feb. 1, 10 a.m.

You’re invited to an unstructured hour for parents, caregivers, and babies to play, explore books, and chat in the young children’s area. Ages birth to 18 months.

Preschool story time Tuesdays, 10 a.m.

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

After-school book club Tuesdays, 3 p.m.

Do you enjoy reading and talking about books? Ride the bus to the Charlotte Library and enjoy an afternoon of book sharing and crafts every Tuesday after school. Grades 1-3, registration required. Contact Cheryl at youth@charlottepubliclibrary.org.

Preschool free play 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. Explore the sensory table, sorting, playing with blocks, playdoh — 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.

You’re invited to an unstructured hour for parents, caregivers and babies to play, explore books and chat 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. We’ll have loads of Lego bricks out, along with some books and prompts for inspiration. For all ages. Please note: Children under 10 must be accompanied by an adult.

Programs for adults

Stillwater meditation Saturdays, 9 a.m.

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.

Get some permaculture Mondays, Jan. 6-Feb. 3, 7 p.m.

Join master gardener Karen Tuininga for a five-week book study with “The Vegetable Gardener’s Guide to Permaculture: Creating an Edible Ecosystem.” Register at <https://tinyurl.com/bdesfbfn> to let us know you’ll be attending. Copies of the book available at the library circulation desk.

Sunday afternoon music jam Sunday, Jan. 26, 1-3 p.m.

A “jam” is sharing a tune or song of your choice going around in a circle of people. Participants may join in but no pressure to perform. Sit in or sit out. Share or pass. Any age or ability. Guitar, ukulele, mandolin, banjo, fiddle, bass, keyboard, harmonica, hand drums ... anything goes. Questions: Sallie Mack 802-425-6212 or salliemack@gmavt.net.

Craft your closet Tuesdays, Feb. 4-18, 5:30 p.m.

Snag in a favorite sweater? Tear in your best trousers? Chrissy Bedard brings her sewing savvy to the library for a three-part series on clothes mending. She’ll share the basic clothes mending essentials and provide hands-on guidance for you to mend and make new. Email margaret@charlottepubliclibrary.org to let us know you’re coming.

Candidates Night at senior center Tuesday, Feb. 11, 6:30 p.m.

Ask questions and share concerns with the candidates on this year’s ballot at this hybrid at the senior center and on Zoom at <https://tinyurl.com/takfjvmw>. Learn more about each candidate, their priorities, reasons for running and points of view. Candidate questions can be emailed to charlottegrangevt@gmail.com or posed during the event.

Poetry at the Grange Thursday, Feb. 13, 1 p.m.

Poets, poetry lovers and those with an interest in poetry are invited to gather at the historic Charlotte Grange. Bring a few of your favorite poems or your own poetry to read or recite or just come to listen. Enjoy a discussion with fellow enthusiasts over tea and cookies. We would love to know if you’re coming. RSVP appreciated but not necessary: abigailkilley@me.com.

Short story selections Wednesdays, Jan. 15 & Feb. 19, 1 p.m.

Join library Director Margaret Woodruff to share and discuss short stories old and new on Zoom. The group meets on the third Wednesday of each month. Story selections are sent out by email the Friday before the meeting date. Contact margaret@charlottepubliclibrary.org if you’d like to join the group.

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, library director 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.

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

Library contact information:

Margaret Woodruff, director
Cheryl Sloan, youth services librarian
Susanna Kahn, tech librarian
Phone: 802-425-3864

Email: info@charlottepubliclibrary.org

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 the first Thursday of each month at 6 p.m., except the month of August or otherwise rescheduled following the Opening Meeting Law. The next scheduled board meeting is Thursday, Feb. 5, at 6 p.m. Contact the library or visit the library website (charlottepubliclibrary.org) for more information.

Senior Center News

Winter good time to try something new or volunteering

Lori York
Director

Winter is the perfect time to try something new, whether it's joining an exercise class or exploring a creative pursuit. The senior center offers a variety of ways to connect, from attending Monday lunch to enjoying a friendly game of cards or board games.

Another wonderful way to build community is by volunteering. With opportunities ranging from hosting and assisting the cooking teams to leading programs, there's a place for everyone to get involved. Consider giving your time at the senior center; volunteering makes a difference.

Programs

CVSD budget discussion Friday, Feb. 7, 12-1 p.m.

We invite all community members to listen, learn and share thoughts and concerns about the Champlain Valley School District and its budget. As a group of families dedicated to the success of the school district, we are here to listen, learn and take meaningful action. Your input is essential to shaping a strong future for our schools. Special guests include Champlain Valley School District Board Chair Meghan Metzler and Representative Chea Evans.

February art exhibit

The February art exhibit will feature a diverse collection of works from several artists from the Wake Robin community, showcasing a variety of artistic mediums.

Acrylic collage Saturdays, Feb. 8 & 15, 9 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

In this class, we'll explore the art of creating unique, multi-layered papers using Gelli plates, acrylic paints, stencils and various texture-making tools. These one-of-a-kind papers will then serve as the foundation for crafting custom collages in the following session, which you can personalize with additional embellishments if desired. The papers can also be repurposed to create Valentines or other greeting cards. Cost: \$105. Please register by February 4 to allow time for gathering the necessary materials. A supply list will be provided upon registration. Some materials will be supplied by the instructor, while others will need to be purchased by participants. To register, call 802-425-6345.

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. Come play various games, share laughter and enjoy one another's company. Some games are available, but also feel free to bring your own games. Free. No registration required.

Flower arranging Monday, Feb. 10, 3:30-4:30 p.m.

Discover the art of flower arranging with Diane Boucher in this hands-on, one-hour class. You'll learn essential techniques and tips for creating stunning arrangements

using seasonal flowers provided by Trader Joe's. Depending on availability, you may even have the chance to take home multiple beautiful arrangements. Please bring your own vases and let your creativity bloom. Cost: \$25. Registration and payment required by Friday, Feb. 7, by calling 802-425-6345.

Italian for beginners Fridays, Feb. 14-28, March 21 & 28 & April 4, 10-11 a.m.

Are you interested in beginning your study of Italian? This class is for those who want to start with the basics. We'll explore the beauty of the Italian language and culture through conversation, reading, writing, singing and humor. For questions about whether this class is the correct level, contact Nicole Librandi at nicolelibrandi2@gmail.com. Cost: \$60. Registration and payment required by Monday, Feb. 10.

Photo discussion group Sunday, Feb. 9, 2-4 p.m.

Join us for our monthly photo discussion group, where photographers of all skill levels are welcome to share their work, ideas and experiences. Bring a photo and a story to share with the group. This is a great chance to engage in creative dialogue, get feedback and explore the impact of your images in a supportive and collaborative environment. For questions or more information, please contact Emily Cross at ecross@ecrossphoto.com. Cost: by donation. No registration required.

Craft night Thursday, Feb. 6, 4:30-6:30 p.m.

Join students from the Champlain Valley Union High service club for fun and creative crafts on Feb. 6 at the Charlotte Senior Center from 4:30-6:30 p.m. Whether you're into making paper snowflakes, crafting valentines or joining Gail Martin as she teaches how to fold origami hearts and tea bag holders, there's something for everyone. Service club students will guide you through each project. Come enjoy an evening of crafting, conversation and creativity — perfect for celebrating the season. All materials provided. Free. Registration is required.

Shanghai mahjong Tuesdays, 12:45-3:45 p.m.

New or experienced in the Shanghai style of mahjong, you are welcome to join this informal get-together. For questions email Nan Mason: anne.mason@uvm.edu. Free. No registration required.

Snowy winter landscape Thursday, Jan. 30, 12:30-2 p.m.

Bring a friend and enjoy a relaxing afternoon sipping coffee and painting with acrylic paints on canvas. Unlike traditional paint & sips, this "coffee & canvas" will allow you to explore and create your own unique painting. But don't worry — there will be plenty of inspiration from paintings of landscapes with lots of instruction. No prior painting experience needed. All materials included. Cost: \$30. Registration at 802-425-6345 required by Jan. 23.

Watercolor Tuesdays, Feb. 11, 18 & 25, 9 a.m.-noon

In this watercolor class, we'll explore techniques such as painting whites, understanding the importance of negative space and shadows and how to use strong



Photo by Lori York

Jeanne Foerster, from Ferrisburgh, volunteers regularly at the Charlotte Senior Center, greeting participants as the reception area host.

composition in both winter landscapes and still life. Engaging exercises will make learning these concepts fun and accessible, all in a supportive and upbeat atmosphere. Cost: \$125. Please register by February 4 to allow time to gather the necessary supplies. To register, call 802-425-6345.

Exercise

Yoga dance Fridays, 12:30-1:30 p.m.

Let Your Yoga Dance incorporates basic dance-like movements to music, guided by the body's energy system (chakras). It is a safe, compassionate, gentle movement practice, allowing for individual expression and nonjudgemental acceptance. This class is appropriate for all levels of fitness and abilities. Everyone can "let their yoga dance." Cost: \$10 a class. No registration required. A free introductory class will be held 1 p.m., Friday, Jan. 24, for those interested in finding out more.

Tai chi Thursdays, 9:45-10:45 a.m.

The Yang international short form is the most popular form of tai chi practice. It consists of slow continuous soft circular movements which are coordinated with breathing. Regular practice helps to improve balance, mind-body connection, mental awareness, flexibility, stability, coordination and overall health. When practiced in the company of others, it is both uplifting and energizing. Taught by a certified instructor who has studied with the founder of the Tai Chi for Arthritis Association. Email questions to belizahammer@hotmail.com. \$10 a class. No registration required.

Bone Builders Tuesdays, 10:30 a.m.-11:30 a.m., Wednesdays, 1:30 p.m.-2:30 p.m. & Fridays, 11 a.m.-noon

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

stretching. Free. No registration required, but there is paperwork to complete for the RSVP Bone Builders program.

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

Join Phyllis Bartling in this pilates class, geared to folks 55+. This class is challenging and includes upper-body strength work with hand weights and mat exercises while working on core muscles to improve balance, strength and posture. \$10 a class. No registration required.

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

Heidi Kvasnak leads an integrative practice that builds strength and stability while maintaining a sense of ease and spaciousness in both body and mind. The group 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. \$10 a class. 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.

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. Interested in receiving a weekly reminder about what is happening? Sign up for the email newsletters at charlotteseniorcentervt.org. The "Week Ahead" email is sent out on Friday mornings with activities, lunch menus and special programs for the upcoming week. Lori York, director, lyork@charlotteseniorcentervt.org 212 Ferry Road, Charlotte 802-425-6345 charlotteseniorcentervt.org

Write Ingredients

Limitless possibilities for coleslaw at senior center

Susan Ohanian
Contributor

Monday Munch,
Jan. 27, 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Chicken pot pie soup, coleslaw, biscuits and dessert.

Monday Munch, Feb. 3

To be announced. (See charlotteseniorcentervt.org.)

“Cooking: A Cook’s Dictionary” by Henry Beard & Roy McKie describes cabbage as a soggy, foul-smelling vegetable. A little goes a long way. Figure about one pound of cabbage for 70 people, if they’re hearty eaters.

Fear not! Coleslaw served at the Charlotte Senior Center is uncooked and crisp.

Coleslaw comes to us from the Dutch term koolsla or cabbage salad. When it’s on the menu, raw cabbage seems to be the only thing you can be sure of.

Besides cabbage, you might find all manner of additives: bell peppers, shredded carrots, onions (red and white), grated cheese, apples, pineapple, cranberries, pickles, pears, broccoli, bacon, ham, celery seed, dill, lime juice, buttermilk, red wine vinegar, peanuts, fried almonds, walnuts, raisins, mango, peaches, horseradish, curry, jalapeño pepper, jicama, Korean chili paste, Green Goddess dressing, ginger, garlic, sesame seeds, turmeric, soy sauce, garlic, cilantro, bean sprouts, mint leaves, parsley, fish sauce, mayonnaise, ketchup, mustard and, as Elizabeth Zott would say in “Lessons in Chemistry,” CH₃COOH (or vinegar).

Your coleslaw preferences probably depend on where you live and where you’ve traveled. Here’s some possibilities:

- A New York Times article, “Favorite New York City Sandwiches,” lists roast beef sandwich with Swiss cheese, Russian dressing and coleslaw.

- In Agatha Christie’s “The Pale Horse,” a nice banana and bacon sandwich is favored. In “Where the Sidewalk Ends,” Shel Silverstein writes about a peanut butter sandwich and gives the recipe for a hippopotamus sandwich. No coleslaw in these favorites.

- In 2024, hot slaw, containing jalapeño chilies and mustard, was named the first



Adobe stock photo

official state food of Tennessee.

- Surprise. Surprise. Hawaiian coleslaw includes crushed pineapple.

- “Yankee” notes that New England church supper coleslaw has diced green pepper, celery and shredded carrot. Cherry tomatoes are optional.

- For “true New England flavor,” Haydn S. Pearson’s “Country Flavor Cookbook” recommends evaporated milk and equal parts sugar and cider vinegar in coleslaw dressing.

- German slaw uses red cabbage, a bit of sugar and vinegar. It is cooked, then eaten hot or cold.

- Insalata russa (Italian-style coleslaw) may use Italian dressing instead of mayonnaise and may contain potatoes, carrots, eggs, peas, pickles or fennel and capers. Or ...

- Poland’s salatka z kapusty has shredded carrot, grated apple, dill seed, garlic powder and lemon juice.

- India’s slaw favors chopped tomatoes, peanuts, cilantro, turmeric, lemon juice and sugar. Mustard seeds are put in hot oil & poured over the cabbage mix.

- Chinese coleslaw — napa cabbage,

shredded carrots, green onions, water chestnuts, sesame seeds, oil.

- Moroccan slaw (according to Texas Monthly) — red cabbage, pomegranate vinegar, honey, mustard, Harissa paste, julienned celery root, golden raisins, lemon juice, mint.

- Kimchi — When I visited schools in Korea, we ate this traditional Korean side dish made of fermented napa cabbage and Korean radish, at every meal, even once for breakfast.

For making your own slaw, The New York Times suggests that grilling or ember-roasting the cabbage will make slaw the star of the meal. You start by roasting the cabbage until charred or “even burned, on all sides.”

Safety alert: The newspaper of record warns not to put charred cabbage on a wooden or plastic tray in case “a live ember or two has clung to the outside leaves.” And use a pastry brush to sweep away excess ash.

Forget the criminal-suspect dangers of holding a smoking gun, as in the Sherlock Holmes story, “The Adventure of the Gloria Scott.” In your kitchen, a hand-held electric smoker, often called a smoking gun,

eliminates the dangers of grilling cabbage — and those loose embers and ash.

“The Secret Life of Groceries” by Benjamin Lorr devotes a chunk of text to slawsa, coleslaw plus salsa “jammed together in a bottle.” Slawsa seems to have originated with a family in Chattanooga, Tenn., their “riff on chow chow, an almost vanished southern relish that borrowed from Chinese rail workers, Indian chutneys and French-Canadian slaws.” Getting it to supermarkets involved one woman’s determination, grit, optimism and heartbreak.

Although cabbage idioms aren’t complementary (“cabbagehead” and “don’t fall off the cabbage truck”), cabbage music can be upbeat. Notable versions of the folksong “Boil Them Cabbage Down” (also “Bile ‘Em Cabbage Down”) have been performed by such artists as Pete Seeger, Ruby Jane Smith and the Smothers Brothers.

Wynston Marsalis introduces Mark O’Connor performing the song, noting it’s “one of the earliest African-American fiddle tunes.” Midway, he joins in on trumpet: <https://tinyurl.com/3c6r5dz3>.

The University of Utah Singers add some fancy footwork while singing the song: <https://tinyurl.com/v9n2wx4>.

Here are the beginning lyrics to Louis Jordan’s “Cole Slaw (Sorghum Switch)”:
In Arkansas

They serve you cole slaw
Chopped up finer than a bale o’ straw
When you crunch and gnaw
A bunch o’ cole slaw
Keeps you chewin’ like a cross cut saw
Exercise your jaw
By eatin’ cole slaw
Best o’ goodness that you ever saw.

Alas, Arch Diner near Canarsie Pier in Brooklyn, where you could eat coleslaw 24 hours a day, has closed, but needless to say, it’s a whole lot easier to go to Monday Munch at the Charlotte Senior Center, 212 Ferry Road, to enjoy a good crunch with the friendly people there.

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