

# The Charlotte News

February 6, 2025

Your nonprofit community news source since 1958

Vol. 67, No. 16

## Gratitude for John Quinney and welcome to Susan McCullough

Bill Regan  
Board of Directors

On Jan. 23, John Quinney stepped down from The Charlotte News board of directors, marking five years of selfless service to the newspaper. He had ceased volunteering as board chair and publisher a year ago but continued to serve on the board and to lead our fundraising efforts, which set a record in 2024. Thanks to all who donated and our grant partners!

Quinney exemplifies the kind of community service on which Charlotte depends. As I have mentioned in these pages before, the slogan that “Charlotte runs on volunteers” is both true and insufficient to capture the hard work and sacrifice from people like him across our community.

Without these volunteers, the town would lack so much of what comes to mind when residents think about the best of Charlotte, including this newspaper (which appears at no cost in our mailboxes every two weeks), concerts and the summer party at the town beach, hearty meals and social connection at the senior center, parks and trails, and music on the town green, courtesy of the Charlotte Grange, to name just a few.

John Quinney deserves Charlotters’ thanks and gratitude for almost single-handedly keeping the paper afloat after a tumultuous period and for professionalizing the paper’s operations. The latter includes hiring The Charlotte News’s first fulltime editor, launching a new website and putting in place board policies on ethics and conflicts of interest. It is no exaggeration to say that without his efforts, you probably would not be reading these words today.

He also deserves a well-earned respite from the paper. Keen observers around town may have noticed that he bought a pickup truck (and is selling his beloved Prius) so he can tow a camper on trips around the country. No doubt he and Colleen, his spouse, will spend even more time visiting children and grandchildren in warmer climes. John once described himself to me as a “serial entrepreneur.” It would not surprise me to see him jumping into a

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Photos by Cecelia Wu

This Sunday, Feb. 2, when Charlotte woke up to a minus 6-degree temperature and the surface of Lake Champlain was a relatively warm 32 degrees, it created a steam-fog effect. Above, a group of residents was not deterred. They go swimming at least three times a week for 5-10 minutes. Because their extremities get achy cold, they wear shoes, socks, hats and mittens to ... keep warm?



## Two important voting opportunities this March

Scooter MacMillan  
Editor

This March, Charlotte residents may find exercising their rights as voters confusing, and that’s probably a profound understatement.

Voting will take place on two different days with two different ways of voting in two different places.

On Saturday, March 1, at 9 a.m., residents are encouraged to attend a more traditional Vermont-type of town meeting with voters deciding some town issues via voice vote from the floor of a gathering at

the Charlotte Central School’s multi-purpose room. This is the location, but not the date, where voters for years have expressed their will on town concerns in Charlotte.

On March 4, from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., on the first Tuesday in March and the traditional day for Town Meeting Day in Vermont, residents are encouraged to come to the Charlotte Town Hall to cast their votes on other issues and candidates for town offices that will be decided via Australian, or secret, ballot.

### Voting on March 1

The March 1 voice voting

will be on nine articles and other issues that might be raised from the floor by residents. This ability to bring up issues for discussion and a voice vote at town meeting is unique to New England, giving individuals a way to introduce a topic for consideration that might have profound impact on a town.

Article 1, of the nine articles to be considered on this day, is basic boilerplate whereby each year residents vote to give themselves the right to vote upon town issues. That’s right: It is a vote on whether to vote.

Article 2 is also standard. Each year, residents vote to give the town the right to collect taxes to

pay for the expenses contained in that year’s budget.

Article 3 is also an issue that is voted on each year, but the text of this article changes depending on each year’s proposed budget. This year Charlotte voters are being asked to approve expenses of \$4,265,990 for the budget for the fiscal year that runs from July 1, 2025, to June 30, 2026.

The selectboard and town clerk Mary Mead expect that more than \$2.5 million to pay for expenses will come from taxes and more than \$1.7 million will come from other revenue sources the town collects.

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# Devine and Herlihy contend for two-year selectboard seat

**Krohn runs for three-year seat unopposed since Faulkner not running for reelection**

Scooter MacMillan  
Editor

As Town Meeting Day approaches on March 4 and voters are considering how they will mark their ballots, probably one of the most important decisions they need to make is how they will vote in one contested race for the selectboard.

There are two open positions for selectboard terms that end this spring — a three-year term that has been held by Jim Faulkner, who has also served as chair of the body, and a two-year term that has been held by Kelly Devine.

Faulkner has decided not to run for reelection. Lee Krohn, a Charlotte resident who retired two years ago as Shelburne town manager, is running for this seat. Unless someone else runs for the seat as a write-in candidate, Krohn will run unopposed.

If elected, this does not mean Krohn will necessarily serve as selectboard chair. Each year, in the selectboard's first meeting after Town Meeting Day, the board votes on which of its five members they would like to serve as their chair for the following year.

J.D. Herlihy has qualified to be on the ballot, running against Devine, who is running for reelection.

Devine, executive director of the Burlington Business Association, won the two-year seat in 2023, coming onto the selectboard as it prepared for the retirement of town administrator Dean Bloch.

Besides Bloch's retirement and the hiring of Nate Bareham as the new town



Jim Faulkner



Lee Krohn



Kelly Devine



J.D. Herlihy

administrator, Devine feels a lot has happened in her term, like the failure of the budget last year and the need to repair Spear Street from last summer's damage, that has required the board's immediate attention, keeping it from other goals.

"A big thing for me is to have a capital plan for the town," Devine said. "With these other crises, we haven't had time to do it."

The town owns a lot of really important assets, such as town hall, the fire department building, the garage, the library, the town beach, the ice skating rink, conservation lands, the town beach, Thompson's Point infrastructure and new sewer and water infrastructure. She believes it is important to have a capital plan for this infrastructure.

She was surprised to learn that the bathhouse at the town beach, which was built in the 1980s, is not accessible. "That's not OK with me," Devine said.

She has been working with town administrator Nate Bareham to develop a town capital plan by looking at what other towns are doing for capital planning.

"All of us in Charlotte, who own homes and have our own water and septic, know that you could be in crisis quickly if you're not prepared, and then you end up spending more," Devine said.

She said dozens of people have asked her to run for reelection.

Likewise, JD Herlihy said that 30-50

people had encouraged him to run for this two-year seat.

Herlihy recently stepped down from the development review board to seek appointment to the planning commission, but withdrew his name for consideration because he realized it was going to be difficult to attend meetings in the middle of the week.

The development review board's regular meetings are on Wednesdays. The planning commission's regular meetings are on Thursdays, and it recently changed its rules to discourage remote participation, Herlihy said.

The selectboard's regular meetings are on Mondays, and members often participate remotely.

Then in January, he began to seriously consider running for the selectboard after he was approached by a number of people asking him to run.

His background as a molecular biologist gives him an analytical approach.

Herlihy has worked in sales and business development for scientific companies, which has helped him develop skills to communicate with people from a variety of backgrounds, like academics, research, pharma and biotech companies.

"I spend a lot of time listening to customers and listening to their needs and trying to find solutions to those needs,"

**CANDIDATES** continued on page 3

## BOARD

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new project someday with all the passion and private-sector experience he has brought to The Charlotte News.

Our sadness at John Quinney's departure is balanced by our joy at Susan McCullough's joining the board in April. She is a development professional, who helped with the paper's 2024 fundraising efforts. Over the course of her career, McCullough has supported a wide range of nonprofits in Washington, D.C., and beyond and is excited to be able to contribute to the paper.



John Quinney



Susan McCullough

"I've always had a keen interest in journalism. Now more than ever, being active in my home town and supporting local journalism are both deeply meaningful

to me," she said.

Susan McCullough and her spouse, Jay Carpenter, live in her parents' former home in Charlotte and they have a daughter who attends Champlain Valley Union High. (There is a wonderful article on Carpenter, the former sculptor-in-residence at Washington's National Cathedral, in a previous edition of the paper (<https://tinyurl.com/ym6z43we>).

We are thrilled to have Susan McCullough as part of The Charlotte News.

Finally, I want to take this occasion to reiterate the newspaper's interest in hearing from you, our readers. Please reach out to our editor, Scooter MacMillan ([scooter@thecharlottenews.org](mailto:scooter@thecharlottenews.org)), with feedback on our coverage, ideas for articles and letters to the editor. We also welcome photos and written contributions. We have an energetic ad manager in Susie Therrien, who would love to work with you to advertise your business to our community.

And feel free to contact me or any board member at any time with your ideas for making The Charlotte News ever more central to the life of this community. You can find our email addresses on the "about" page of our website ([charlottenews.org/about](http://charlottenews.org/about)) and in each edition of the newspaper itself.

(Bill Regan is chair of The Charlotte News board of directors.)



### Mission Statement

To engage and inform Charlotte and nearby communities by:

- Publishing rigorous, in-depth reporting on town affairs.
- Providing a home for stories from our neighbors and friends.
- Reporting on how other towns have addressed challenges similar to our own.

### Editorial independence

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

### Code of Ethics

The Charlotte News has adopted the Society of Professional Journalists Code of Ethics as the touchstone to guide newsroom practices. The Society of Professional Journalists Code of Ethics is built on four principles:

- Seek truth and report it.
- Minimize harm.
- Act independently.
- Be accountable and transparent.

### Disclaimer

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

### Letters, Opinions and Obituaries

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

**Send submissions, questions, photos, etc. to [scooter@thecharlottenews.org](mailto:scooter@thecharlottenews.org).**

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## NEXT PUBLICATION DATES

<b>FEB. 20</b> Copy Deadline: Feb. 14	<b>MARCH 20</b> Copy Deadline: Feb. 28
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# Report from the Legislature

## Education and accountability on the legislative docket

Chea Waters Evans  
Representative

One day, maybe I'll update you all on something that's not taxes or education spending, but for now, it's still the hottest topic in state government. Since we don't know too much yet, I'll give you a brief overview of the new education plan and my thoughts, and then I'll fill you in on a government accountability bill I've been working on.

The governor is driving the school bus for education and property tax reform right now. Secretary of Education Zoie Saunders unveiled their big plan in front of the House and Senate a couple weeks ago, which you can watch here: <https://tinyurl.com/3hxdmn2n>.

The plan is called "Stronger Schools, Stronger Students."

When the plan was initially presented, there weren't many details. Like none, really. Since then, we've gotten some, but it's still not clear how it's going to play out for students in Charlotte, Hinesburg and at Champlain Valley Union and the Champlain Valley School District. I'm all for anything that reduces our property taxes and improves education outcomes and opportunities for the young folks. But I'm still not quite sure how those numbers are going to work out well, especially for us.

One of the most significant changes transitions the state from more than 90

school districts into five. The largest one would be ours, the Champlain Valley Region, which would extend from southern Chittenden County all the way up to the Canadian border. There would be a little more than 34,000 students in our district; the next largest would have just over 14,000.

I'm not sure why there's such a huge difference. I suspect it's an effort to avoid having a school district that's made up solely of Chittenden County students, although the disproportionate numbers could present some logistical issues and end up costing us more than the rest of the state. I'm hopeful that there will be another attempt at configuring the school districts in a fair and impartial way so that they're all more equal in size and no one area is disadvantaged.

My main concern with the whole plan is that the administration estimates it will save about \$184 million a year. That's not nothing; it's around 9 percent of our

yearly state expenditure on education. What we don't know, though, is if that's going to extend to that amount of savings in our property taxes. We don't even know if that's even a real number. We have no way of predicting how much health insurance and other costs will rise; I'm not sure if it's factored in all the money that we need to fund school construction and PCB mitigation, especially if schools are consolidating and will need infrastructure work. We just don't know.

The governor and the secretary of education have indicated that this plan will take two years to implement. This seems fast. In the meantime, I don't anticipate much further property tax relief, and to be honest, I don't know how we can get legislation through in the next four months that will give this plan the careful consideration and time it needs. I'm hopeful that a compromise will be reached, but it's hard to imagine that we can completely revamp the whole kit and

kaboodle in such a short period of time. I worry we're going to make a bigger mess in the interest of expediency.

Before I move on, I want to acknowledge the hard work, dedication and willingness to pivot and adapt that our school board members have shown. It's a volunteer job that gets little reward, takes up lots of time and has been particularly difficult in the last five years. I'm so appreciative.

I don't introduce a lot of bills. Some legislators are prolific in that way, but I'm a less-is-more kind of gal, so I only introduced one this session, but it's a hefty one. I'm the lead sponsor along with representatives Lucy Boyden from Cambridge and Rey Garofano from Essex. It's a government accountability bill, H67 ([legislature.vermont.gov/bill/status/2026/H.67](https://legislature.vermont.gov/bill/status/2026/H.67)), and it takes a systematic approach to looking at government programs to make sure they're doing two things: achieving the goals they set out to achieve and not costing more money than they should. There are systems in place to do some of this work, but oftentimes we'll create a program or commission or working group or study committee, fund it through the general fund budget, and then not ever come back to take a good look at whether or not it's accomplishing what it's supposed to.

Thank you for your feedback after my last column; it's so valuable to me and always welcome at 917-887-8231 or [cevas@leg.state.vt.us](mailto:cevas@leg.state.vt.us).



### VOTING

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Article 4 asks voters to approve \$62,000 of the money raised by property taxes to be delegated to the town trails reserve fund.

Article 5 asks for voters to authorize the selectboard to delegate \$5,000 from the budget to maintenance of the town's recreation trails.

Article 6 is a request from the recreation department for voters to authorize the town to allocate \$40,000 from the property taxes collected to a capital fund for the building of a new bathhouse at the Charlotte Town Beach.

Article 7 is an opportunity for voters to decide whether they would prefer for the budget to be voted on by Australian ballot rather than by voice vote.

Since the pandemic, Charlotte's budget has been approved by Australian ballot. Vermont towns like Charlotte, that approve their budgets by voice vote, were granted the power to suspend the necessity of meeting in large groups to vote in order to minimize the risk of spreading the coronavirus.

Now that the risk of infection has subsided, the voice vote required by town statute is back in effect, but some have argued this gives a small group of town voters the right to decide on the budget. Because more people participate in Australian ballot decisions than participate in community meetings to voice vote, the change has been proposed in hopes of increasing the number of residents

participating in the decision about the significant issue of the budget.

Article 8 is an article that would change all voting on Charlotte issues to being decided by Australian ballot.

Article 9 is another boilerplate issue. This one gives those residents who have gathered for in-person voice voting at Charlotte Central School the authority to consider other issues that might be raised from the floor.

#### Voting on March 4

Article 10 is the portion of the Australian ballot where voters will vote for candidates for open positions in the municipal government.

Article 11 is a provision asking residents to approve a charter for Charlotte that would give residents the authority to vote on changes to town land-use regulations.

In July, the legislature passed a provision that gave Vermont selectboards the authority to approve changes to land-use regulations. Article 11 would restore this authority to Charlotte voters and was compelled by a petition drive that collected enough signatures requiring a vote requesting a town charter on this issue.

There was a hearing on this article, the first of two required by state statute, 30 minutes before the regular selectboard meeting on Monday, Jan. 27. Another hearing was held this Monday, Feb. 3, but was soon adjourned because of almost no attendance. At the Jan. 27 hearing, Charlotte's representative Chea Waters Evans explained the process for submitting

charter requests to the legislature.

If voters approve this article, Evans said, the next step is for the municipal charter proposal to go to the House Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs, which she is a member of. If that committee approves Charlotte's charter, it would go before both houses of the Legislature. If it is approved by both of those bodies, the charter proposal would then go before the Governor for him to approve or not.

Evans said she felt the legislature might be reluctant to make this change to a statute that was passed so recently and that could cause confusion if other towns jumped on this bandwagon.

Karen Frost spoke at the hearing about her decision to circulate the petition. She attended planning commission meetings and stood outside the general election asking people how they felt about the issue.

"It was pretty overwhelming that people feel that they want to retain local control," Frost said.

There will be a third public hearing on Feb. 24, required by state law whenever there is an Australian ballot vote scheduled, for reviewing any items about which residents have questions or concerns. Among issues to be considered by Australian ballot are the election of people who are running for municipal office, so at the Feb. 24 hearing residents will have an opportunity to ask candidates questions.

### CANDIDATES

Continued from page 2

Herlihy said. He feels like listening to customers is very much like listening to the needs of residents and finding solutions for them.

Krohn said he was "nudged" to run by Charlotte residents who appreciated his expertise and experience in municipal government and some who even baked cookies to sweeten the deal.

He has worked in public service on municipal, regional and state levels for 35 years.

Some people run for office because they have one specific, single issue they hope to accomplish, Krohn said, but for him a really successful term would be one in which residents feel they have been heard and respected.

His hope is to help foster "a calmer, more cooperative, more collaborative working relationship on the board and with committees."

"If voters will have me on the board, I'll do my best to help steer things in a very positive, productive direction," he said.

Assuming that things go as expected and he is elected to the three-year term, Krohn said he recognizes that, in Faulkner, he will be replacing a hard worker on the selectboard.

"He does his homework," Krohn said. "My understanding is he meets with Nate before every meeting. That's a really important thing to do."

Candidates for other town positions are also running unopposed.



## Charlotte Property Transfers September - December 2024

### September

**Sept. 3** Katherine Marie Manchester to Champlain Housing Trust, Inc., 10 Camel View Lane Condo \$215,000

**Sept. 3** Champlain Housing Trust, Inc. To Jacob P. Decatur 10 Camel View Lane Condo \$440,000

**Sept. 25** Matthew S. & Kathryn B. Jennings to David A. Gerhardt & Lya Gilmore, 197 Pease Mtn. Rd. 5.5 acres with dwelling \$1,650,000

### October

**Oct. 2** John R. Thibault to Olina H Arms, 1322 Prindle Rd. 10.35 acres with dwelling \$925,000

**Oct. 3** Braxton Robison to Chea Evans 552 Converse Bay Rd. 6.29 acres with dwelling \$1,255,000

**Oct. 7** Supernova 2023 LLC to Benjamin B. & Mara G. Stone 1669 Mt. Philo Rd. .45 acres with dwelling \$870,000

**Oct. 7** Samuel J. Stanley to Dana M. & Gertrude K. Ward 3527 Mt. Philo Rd. 16.10 acres with dwelling \$800,000

**Oct. 9** Richard Webbe Revocable Trust to Marcel & Kiri Iovu 6765 Spear St. 11.6 acres with dwelling \$575,000

**Oct. 17** Janet Pye Revocable Trust to Samuel & Elizabeth Perzanowski 426 Mutton Hill Rd. 5.50 acres with dwelling \$950,000

**Oct. 18** John Hanley & Laura Obregon to Andrew Fontanez & Mary Coyle 990 Orchard Rd. 6.6 acres with dwelling \$815,000

**Oct. 21** Albert S. & Kathleen Toto III to Curtis J. & Lynn M. Alperter 2757 Greenbush Rd. 1.85 acres with dwelling \$1,700,000

**Oct. 29** Kevin P. Burget & Rebecca Foster, Trustees of Burget Foster Living Trust to Christina Asquith 177 Ten Stones Circle .50 acres with dwelling \$935,000

### November

**Nov. 1** Gregory Bright & Kathleen Quinn to Matthew Morris Kent & Laurel Jenkins 981 Church Hill Rd. .55 acres with dwelling \$495,000

**Nov. 12** Stephane & Veronique Hardy to Liam O'Farrell & Mary Jo Sleeper 435 Dorset St. 10.32 acres with dwelling \$2,795,000

**Nov. 18** James & Lynn Williams to Paul & Sabine Budnitz 710 Hinesburg Rd. 12.32 acres with dwelling \$1,759,000

**Nov. 18** Andrew D. Fromm IRR Trust & Laurie A. Bomba TRE to Jennifer K Joshua U Bagnato 202 McNeil Cove Rd. 2.90 acres with dwelling \$4,300,000

**Nov. 20** Robert Decker & Jennifer Grace to Riley Houser & Jessica Ingalls 1441 Prindle Rd. 7.90 acres with dwelling \$660,000

### December

**Dec. 5** Timothy D. McCullough to Jay H. Carpenter & Susan McCullough 340 Pease Mountain Rd. with dwelling 5.9 acres \$900,000

**Dec. 9** Bean's Mobile home Inc. to David & Hilary Mack 3781 Greenbush Rd. 0 acres with mobile home \$104,750

**Dec. 9** David O. & Catherine L. Cone to Alexander & Tiffany Elias N/A 351 Lane's Lane seasonal cottage \$525,000

**Dec. 23** UVM State Ag College to Walter Breck Orchard Rd. Lot 1 10.18 acres \$392,500

**Dec. 23** Joanne M Wallis to Paul Michael & Linda K. Townsend 307 Stockbridge Rd. 3.44 acres 1,049,000

**Dec. 23** Joshua & Jennifer Bagnato to James Levins IV & Merima Ruhotini 1102 Dorset St. with dwelling 10.8 acres \$1,570,000

### Condolences

**Jane Akin** passed away peacefully in her home in Greensboro, Vermont, on Jan. 10, 2025. Born in Hoboken, New Jersey, to the late Howard C. and Madeline H. Anderson. Jane graduated from East Orange High School in 1966 and attended Wheeling West Virginia College.



Jane was an academic and professional success, applying her talents and passion to careers at Gardenway, Lane Press and Charlotte Central School, where she brought laughter and care to children for 14 years.

Jane is survived by her husband David and three children, Seth, Jordan and Catherine, all of whom will continue to be inspired by her remarkable strength of heart.

Jane and David raised their family in Charlotte, Vt., for over 40 years before moving to Greensboro in 2023. She was a dedicated wife, mother, daughter, sister and friend.

A kind and compassionate person, Jane was known for her generosity and fierce advocacy for those she loved. Her vivacious nature was clearly beheld by anyone lucky enough to find themselves in her beautiful gardens or kitchen. Her family and friends will remember Jane for her timeless style, sharp intellect, wit and unwavering support.

Jane will be welcomed back to the earth by her family at a future date when her beloved flowers bloom.

We ask that you remember her for the way her life was lived and for the profound impact it had on the lives of those who had the pleasure of knowing her and loving her. You are invited to please share your memories and messages at <https://www.online-tribute.com/JaneAkin>.

**Donna Marie Liebert (DeSiato)**, a loving wife, mother, grandmother, friend, colleague and astute businesswomen in the areas of management, finance, accounting, human resources and information technology, of Charlotte and Englewood, Fla., died from cancer on Jan. 9. Liebert (1955–2025) passed away at age 69 at the McClure Miller Respite House in Colchester, Vt.



Donna was born in Philadelphia, Penn., to Perry and Mary DeSiato. She attended Springfield High School in Springfield Township, Penn., later earning a degree in fine arts from Montgomery County Community College in Blue Bell, Penn.

She held several professional positions before and after raising her two sons, including accounts payables and receivables, assistant accountant, payroll manager, accounting manager and controller and chief financial officer. During the years she stayed home to raise her sons, she worked part time as a township tax collector and treasurer, she also opened and operated a secondhand shop for children's clothes, accessories and toys called My Kids Closet.

Her most recent positions were with KSV Agency in Burlington, a strategy, marketing and creative agency. When she first walked through the KSV doors in 2000

as a temporary accounting manager, she never envisioned a 24-year career where she managed accounting, human resources, facilities and information technology, eventually becoming the chief financial officer. She retired from KSV Agency in April of 2024.

Donna met her husband Greg in 1984 while they both worked at Netsch Incorporated in Lionville, Penn., marrying in 1986. Their first date came about after Donna slipped a note in Greg's paycheck envelope inviting him to share a drink or dinner if he were interested. He was, and they spent the next 40 years together. Greg, Donna and their sons made their home in Pennsylvania until 2000, when Greg's job relocated them to Vermont. One of her dreams was to have a home in Florida where she could bask in the sun, dig her feet in the sand and dip her toes in the ocean. This dream came true when she and Greg purchased a home in Englewood, Fla., a few years ago.

A wonderful and loving mother to two sons, Ryan and Derek, she doted over them as children, teenagers, young men and eventually as husbands and fathers. Her sons and their wives blessed her with three grandchildren, twins Maxwell and Reya, and Riley. She so loved these three precious little human beings.

Donna had great love for furry friends, treating them like family members. She nurtured and cared for Rusty, a shih tzu that lived to 16 years of age, and then Milo, a miniature poodle now 14 years of age. Milo was at her side as usual when she passed away.

Although she received a degree in fine art and was always an artist at heart, she chose to work in finance and accounting, as she knew those business so well and always felt she would do better in those fields as opposed to starting over teaching art or running a studio.

Donna was preceded in death by her father Perry DeSiato and is survived by her mother Mary DeSiato of Horsham, Penn., brother Perry DeSiato (Maria) of Austin, Texas, sisters Nancy Jones (Steve) of Lower Gwynedd, Penn., and Jean Nowack (Edward) of Chalfont, Penn., along with her sons Ryan Liebert (wife Bethany, son Maxwell and daughter Reya) of Hinesburg, Vt., and Derek Liebert (wife Leah and daughter Riley) of Oakdale, Penn., and sisters in-law Sandy Liebert of Edgewood, New Mexico, Trish O'Grady of Rifle, Colo., Valerie Liebert of Perrysburg, Ohio, and Joyce Roberts (Edward) of Englewood, Fla.

Donna chose to be cremated; therefore, a celebration of her life will be held on Feb. 8, 2025, at 11 a.m. at Stephen Gregory and Son located at 472 Meadowland Drive, Suite 7, South Burlington, followed by a luncheon at Ridgewood Estates Clubhouse located near 1 Concord Green, South Burlington.

### Congratulations

**Sophie Pidgeon** of Charlotte was named to the dean's list for the fall semester at the University of New England.

**Crawford Phillips** of Charlotte was named to the University of Rhode Island's fall dean's list.

**James Anair** and **Samuel Zinner** of Charlotte were named to the Vermont State University dean's list for the fall semester.

**Angela Fortin** of Charlotte was named to the fall dean's list at Quinnipiac University.

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# A Valentine's wish inspired by former president Carter

Scooter MacMillan  
 Editor

In early June of 2017, I climbed into a U-Haul truck with my cat, my shih tzu and all of my belongings, or at least the belongings that had made the cut after a radical downsizing, and headed north to Burlington. As I passed the city limits of Columbus on my drive from southwest Georgia to northeast Vermont, it dawned on me that I had never been to Jimmy Carter's Sunday school class.

I had lived in a town that was less than an hour's drive from Carter's church in Plains, Ga., where people could attend his Sunday school class almost every week.

Going to the former president's Sunday school class was something many of my friends and neighbors had done. I had always meant to attend, but for almost 17 years I had put it off.

I never met Carter, but I came close many times, and many of my friends have stories about the experience. People of all sorts of religious leanings, and none, have told me how inspiring his Sunday school class was.

For the last 12 years of my life in that city, jokingly referred to as being on Georgia's west coast, since it's on the Chattahoochee River, the border between the Peach State and Alabama, I was the marketing director of the Springer Opera House, the State Theatre of Georgia.

Now, here, ensconced in another town on another state's west coast, I found myself reflecting on Carter's impact on my home state and the nation after his death at the end of December. I've heard so many wonderful firsthand stories about the 39th president, some humorous, some profound, many of them warm and inspiring. I've never heard a story about Carter being angry or rude, nothing but warm and welcoming.

Every year, in addition to six productions on our main stage theatre and four productions in our second space where shows that benefited from a smaller, more intimate hall, the Springer produced four children's theatre plays. A few years after the publishing of "The Little Baby Snoogle-Fleejer," a children's book he wrote and daughter Amy illustrated, based on bedtime stories Carter had told his children when he was at home on leave from the Navy, our theatre's assistant director decided to adapt the story for the stage.

The adaptation happened with Carter's blessing. The assistant and managing

directors drove up to Atlanta to the Carter Center to discuss the project with him. As they were ushered into an office, meeting the former president and shaking hands, the managing director thought to compliment him on an award he had recently received.

"Congratulations on the Nobel Prize," our managing director said, then added as he realized, "I'll never have the opportunity to say that to someone again."

The opening night of "The Little Baby Snoogle-Fleejer" was a special performance the public wasn't allowed to attend. Because of security concerns, the performance was reserved for the Carter family, secret service agents and a select group of invited guests. During the intermission, while Rosalynn was elsewhere, the managing director was talking with Carter, who told him his wife didn't really like the Springer.

Of course, our managing director was horrified, appalled, and his mind raced, considering what he and the theatre might have done and what we could do to heal her aggrieved feelings.

As it turned out, the slight had not come from the theatre, but from Carter himself.

For folks from Plains, Columbus was the big town. When the Carters were adolescents, and for many decades after, the classy thing for young men to do was to take their dates out to eat in the big town, followed by a play at the Springer.

Although Jimmy first met Rosalynn just days after she was born and he was 3, their relationship started later. His mother was a nurse who helped deliver Rosalynn. During childhood, his sister was good friends with her, but Jimmy and Rosalynn didn't start dating until the summer before his senior year at the Naval Academy.

They had known each other for years before the sparks ignited, but once the romance was kindled it quickly heated up.

Still, as fledgling romances often do, their relationship had its up and downs. As many young couples do, they went through a period when they decided that they didn't need to break up, but they should see other people.

The former president told our managing director that he had made the mistake of believing that they actually were supposed to date other people. But Rosalynn didn't see it that way.

After they worked out whatever issue they were going through and reunited as a committed couple, exclusive to each other, she learned that during their relationship hiatus, Jimmy Carter had taken another



Photo by Christopher Oquendo

'The Little Baby Snoogle-Fleejer' in a production at Atlanta's Alliance Theater in 2005.

girl to Columbus to a play at the Springer.

After four children, a term as Georgia governor and as president, all sorts of amazing experiences in Washington and internationally, building more than 4,000 homes for Habitat for Humanity and more than 77 years of marriage, Rosalynn Carter was still bothered that her boyfriend had a date with another girl.

Which is exactly as it should be. The staff at the Springer went from being aghast at what the theatre possibly had done to upset her, to thrilled to work at a place that sparked such passion.

With Valentine's just days away, it's timely to wish for everyone a relationship where the romance still smolders so intensely after almost eight decades.



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# Letters to the Editor

## Take the steps to restore town voting on land-use regulations

To the Editor:

Step one is accomplished, we gathered more than enough signatures to get on the Australian ballot. But there are challenging steps ahead, one at a time.

Step two, critical for the charter to have any hope of moving forward in Montpelier, is to demonstrate strong support from a majority of Charlotte voters on March 4. Absentee ballots will be available. I've been told legislators read letters to the editors and Front Porch Forum posts. Showing a history of support in writing is important and helpful when seeking change, so is talking to your friends and neighbors and encouraging them to vote yes.

Our land-use regulations are key to the character of Charlotte. The selectboard already holds the power to influence land-use regulation changes by appointing members to the development review board and planning commission. Now they also have the power to make these regulation changes without a town vote.

This charter is not about closing the doors to Charlotte. It is about retaining and growing civic engagement. It's about building on the values and years of hard work and commitment by many that have resulted in the feeling you get, heading south from Burlington or Shelburne, when you think, "Ah, I'm home," and retaining the ability to continue this work, to solve the issues facing our town by more of us, not fewer.

Please show your support for growing civic engagement around Charlotte's future. vote yes for the charter by Australian ballot on March 4, in person or by absentee ballot. One step at a time.

Karen Frost  
Charlotte

## Seeking support from voters for three-year selectboard seat

To the Editor:

Please allow me to introduce myself as a candidate for the three-year seat on our Charlotte Selectboard.

For those who may not know me, please find below brief aspects of my background:

- 24+ years with the town of Manchester, including planning director, zoning administrator, tree warden, interim town manager, service officer, grant writer and construction project manager.

- 4+ years with the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission, involving emergency management and varied assistance to local communities.

- 5 years as Shelburne Town Manager.

- Former chair of Putney Planning Commission

- Founding member and longtime president of Manchester Community Land Trust

- Volunteer firefighter with Manchester and Shelburne fire departments

- Longtime volunteer photographer for local newspapers and nonprofits such as Girls on the Run, Dragonheart Festival, Run Vermont, Vermont City Marathon, Richard Tom Foundation and Sail Beyond Cancer.

In seeking this opportunity to serve Charlotte, I hope to bring a calm, collaborative approach to board dynamics, staff relations and community conversations; a cooperative, appreciative approach to interactions with our volunteer committees; and an efficient, effective approach to governance that prioritizes big picture policy issues facing our town.

I care deeply about community and the importance of working toward the common good. Yet, to borrow from an old folk song, "It's all such a delicate balance." We must be willing to listen to each other, analyze issues and concerns and then make the best decisions that we can, based on the best available information at that point in time.

I hope you will entrust me with your vote and have confidence in my ability to help govern our community with the best of intentions.

Lee Krohn  
Charlotte

## We can have abundant housing and a healthy environment

To the Editor:

Vermont can both grow housing and protect our natural resources. The state faces an array of complex challenges, from escalating housing and healthcare costs to climate change-related flooding events. Yet, there is reason for optimism.

Thanks to recent legislative action and persistent community advocacy, Vermont is turning a corner in how we plan for a healthier, more sustainable future by breaking down entrenched silos and adopting a holistic, collaborative approach to housing development and community planning.

The key to success will be not succumbing

to the "zero-sum" mentality that too often pits progress in one area against another. This outdated way of thinking suggests that solutions to one problem, such as affordability, must come at the expense of environmental stewardship. The reality is that the choices we make about where and how we grow our communities are interconnected and influence our local economy, our environment and, ultimately, our quality of life and ability to thrive.

In 2024, Vermont took a critical step forward with the passage of Act 181, a landmark law designed to spur well-planned housing development and protect critical natural resources by aligning local and regional land-use planning with state incentives and regulations, breaking down the siloed approach to land use that has hampered progress for too long.

We need to let this law work as intended to ensure the full housing development and conservation benefits come to fruition. Over the next year, there will be several working groups, reports and planning processes to flesh out the details of Act 181, which will require all of us to remain diligent to make certain the right questions are being asked and answered, and all perspectives are being incorporated. This law was passed due to diverse stakeholders and legislative leaders working together to find common ground and compromise; we must continue this work together with shared goals that prioritize sustainable growth, affordable housing and a healthy environment.

When it comes to securing a future that is affordable, accessible and healthy for all, location matters more than ever. Expanding development into the periphery of our communities unnecessarily increases household costs while further eroding our fragile public infrastructure, access to jobs and services, intact farms and forests, and accelerating the very climate risks we are trying to reduce.

Take, for example, the state's aging and flood-prone infrastructure. Long driveways, steep gravel roads and an over-reliance on private vehicles are becoming unsustainable in an age of frequent climate-related storms and rising costs. The transportation sector remains the largest source of greenhouse gas emissions in Vermont, contributing significantly to both water pollution and climate change. A lack of transportation options means more traffic congestion,

higher household costs and increased road maintenance expenses. As these costs rise, Vermonters who already face financial hardship find themselves further burdened by the inefficiencies of sprawling, low-density development.

According to a 2024 report from the Center for Biological Diversity, "U.S. sprawl development increases per capita infrastructure costs by 50 percent, pulling public funds away from existing neighborhoods, harming communities and wildlife and endangering our collective future."

As we plan to accommodate new, affordable and flood-safe housing, we should follow the model set by our historic town centers, which cover our infrastructure costs and then some, often subsidizing other, less economically productive areas. By investing in and ensuring local zoning allows for compact community centers, we maximize municipal infrastructure and taxpayer dollars. These strategies also provide for more housing and mobility options, allowing families to keep more money in their pockets, older adults to age in place and opening up access to employment, health care and social connection.

Housing and transportation must go hand in hand if we are to build and maintain thriving communities that are both affordable and resilient. Transportation is the second-highest cost for Vermont families, particularly for those in rural areas. To build a truly sustainable future, Vermont must prioritize a transportation and housing system that serves all residents by investing in our towns' ability to offer public transit, bike-friendly infrastructure and walkable neighborhoods.

Looking to the 2025 legislative session, I am optimistic that Vermont's leaders will seize this opportunity to build on the progress made in recent years, rather than taking us backwards to rehash the same issues over and over again. Act 181 set in motion a more integrated, holistic approach to housing development and community planning. Now, it's up to us to do the work to implement this law as intended and move Vermont toward more sustainable housing and vibrant communities.

Kati Gallagher  
Waterbury

(Gallagher is program director of Sustainable Communities.)



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## Commentary

# Overcomplicated or simple, the message must still deliver

Elaine Haney  
Contributor

Since the November election, many Vermont Democrats have been reflecting on the results and lessons learned. To some, a significant problem was messaging.

A funny thing about Democrats is that we often can't stop explaining everything. "If only we could explain [insert idea/program/policy here] in a way that people could really understand, they would vote for it." We anguish over this and develop all sorts of complicated messaging. My experience has been that if it's too complicated to explain, people aren't going to take the time to understand it.

Democrats also tend to have a hard time seeing the forest for the trees. When we hear voters' concerns about an issue, we say, "Yes, but have you considered ...?" We want to show voters we care about their concerns, but we also want to show them that we are doing lots of other good things. Voters respond, "Yes, but none of those good things directly address my concerns. Also, they're too expensive."

We saw this on the national level. Across the country Democratic candidates would acknowledge that inflation was still a problem but then explain all the other ways the economy was strong. That may have been true, but it was not what voters wanted to hear. They wanted to hear that Democrats would deal with the thing they most cared about. They heard Democrats telling them they shouldn't care about that so much.

Then there's the issue of what we say versus what we do. Vermont Democrats acknowledged that the costs of flood recovery and inflation were crushing family budgets and small businesses. They agreed that the property tax situation was pushing family finances to a breaking point. But what Vermonters heard was lots of explaining that amounted to: "it's complicated." What they saw was a stopgap, expensive fix for the

immediate problem of property taxes and a continued focus on the Affordable Heat Act and other initiatives that Democrats know voters see as too expensive.

Making the situation even more challenging is the fact that we're dealing with complex problems we have little control over. For the most part, inflation is not something that can be controlled on a state level. Flood recovery is largely dependent on federal funding and states are at the mercy of FEMA and insurance companies. And Vermont's property tax formula is so complicated that very few understand it, and it will take years to design and implement a less complex and more fair system.

But not all voters know these things. Many are too busy living their own lives, trying to pay their own bills and not thinking deeply about the larger forces at play that make our lives difficult. Which brings me back to messaging.

Democratic losses in November were largely due to simple messaging targeted at Vermonters' biggest concern: affordability. This led voters to blame Democrats for last year's double-digit property tax increase. They saw legislative priorities like the Affordable Heat Act, the recently enacted child care contribution and increased Department of Motor Vehicle fees as unaffordable and voted out Democrats who supported them.

They voted in Republicans who shared Governor Scott's simple message that Vermont just isn't affordable anymore and joined him in blaming the Democratic supermajority for it. The Republican message was so simple that, even though they had no solutions to offer, voters bought into it because they desperately want change — so much so that Democrats lost more seats in our state legislature than anywhere else in the country.

The ball is in Governor Scott's court now. The enormous pressures Vermont is facing in addition to unsustainable property tax

increases — things like housing, addiction, healthcare, infrastructure — haven't gotten better in the last eight years. Governing by just saying no to ideas proposed by Democrats clearly hasn't made life in Vermont more affordable for anyone.

That's the flip side of simple messaging — it's appealing on its surface, but often there's no there there.

Where does that leave Democrats? There's still a Democratic majority in both the House and Senate. But voters have sent a clear message of their own that affordability is their priority and they expect results.

Democrats cannot ignore the effectiveness of a simple message. But while we tend to

overcomplicate our own messaging, we must not take the Republican approach of using a simple message as a shield to hide a lack of solutions. We should not take advantage of voters' fears to win races. Democrats have a great track record of delivering strong programs that help Vermonters. It's our job to make that clear to voters.

Elaine Haney  
Essex Junction

*(Elaine Haney is one of Vermont's Democratic National Committee members. She is also an Essex Junction city councilor and the executive director of Emerge Vermont.)*

## Sharing concerns



Photo by Meg Berlin

A group of Charlotte residents met with Rep. Chea Waters Evans to discuss the upcoming session of the Legislature and talk about the issues they care about.

## Vermont Historical Society launches local history initiative

Andrew Liptak  
Vermont Historical Society

In the leadup to the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution, the Vermont Historical Society will build a statewide, place-based learning opportunity for Vermont students called All in Vermont: Put Your History on the Map. This project is a call to study Vermont's inhabitants, notable events, industry, movements and culture that demonstrate the state's continued evolution since the American Revolution.

The All in Vermont project will provide opportunities for educators, students and local historians to join forces in centering local history education in classrooms across the state. The Vermont Historical Society is in the process of creating two guides, one for educators and another for local historical societies, which will work in tandem to support student research.

Students will uncover the histories that make their homes unique and share their findings on an interactive map housed on both the Vermont Historical Society and the Vermont History Explorer websites ([vermonthistoryexplorer.org](http://vermonthistoryexplorer.org)). The goal is to have all 252 towns and cities represented by the end of the 250th commemoration in 2026.

Studying local history helps students connect with their communities and foster a deeper understanding of the world around them. Local history offers valuable insights into how the past shapes the present, allowing students to better understand the traditions, cultures and values that influenced their lives. It can also instill a sense of pride and identity, as students gain awareness of the contributions made by those from their own community.

For more information about the project or how to get involved, contact outreach.educator@vermonthistory.org.



# Winter wonderland

Photos by Lee Krohn



Photo by Cecelia Wu









## Commentary

# Rodgers hopes to be a ‘bridge’ as lieutenant governor

Ekaterina Raikhovski  
Community News Service

Grandchildren running around his 1840s farmhouse isn't the only thing keeping John Rodgers' hands full these days. There's the masonry business the West Glover 59-year-old has helmed for the last two decades, the hemp farm he's managed for the last few years, and he even works plowing snow from driveways.

Now the former Northeast Kingdom legislator has added another commitment to the list: serving as Vermont's next lieutenant governor.

Following a race this fall decided by about 6,000 votes, according to state records, incumbent Lt. Gov. David Zuckerman conceded to Rodgers on Nov. 7 and paved the way for the Democrat-turned-Republican to re-enter politics after losing his Statehouse seat in 2020.

Rodgers' election as lieutenant governor was something of a surprising achievement for someone who, early in his career, was hesitant about getting involved in politics.

"I had young kids, my own business, and it's just really hard to justify taking the amount of time off my business during construction season to campaign because it's a money-losing proposition," he said. "But they convinced me that there was no time like the present, and I went for it."

As a Democrat, Rodgers first sought



Photo courtesy Frank Janik  
John Rodgers

a seat in the Orleans-Caledonia 1 House district in 2000 and lost by about 130 votes. But two years later he edged out one of the incumbents by 16 votes and won a seat in the Vermont House. He'd keep his spot in office until 2010 — when he lost by fewer than

five votes — before serving eight years as a senator for the Essex-Orleans district.

The 2020 election threw a wrench into his winning streak. Rodgers missed the deadline to file his paperwork for the Democratic primary, forcing him to run as an independent instead after nearly two decades representing the party. He'd ultimately finish fifth out of five candidates that year.

"I think there's too many people who vote for a D and R and don't really know who the candidate is," Rodgers said. "I really underestimated how badly that hurt me."

These days, he is hopeful his political ambiguity and past experience will help him navigate his new role. "I'm a Vermonter first, and you are part of a party, but you shouldn't let it dictate who you are and who you work with," he said. "I see my role as lieutenant governor as being nonpartisan. I'm elected to work for all Vermonters."

While Rodgers grew up in a Democratic family and had consistent electoral success running as a Democrat in the Kingdom, he switched parties ahead of the 2024 election and ran on the Republican ticket.

"The Democratic Party had shifted way too far to the left, and they don't appear to understand blue-collar Vermonters," he said.

A self-proclaimed Yankee, Rodgers said he felt the party had moved away from him and other working class Vermonters, finding that many moderate Republicans still represented the communities he hails from.

The role of lieutenant governor is one that may be inconspicuous to many Vermonters. The official duties of the position entail running the Senate, voting only as a tiebreaker and sitting on the three-person panel that decides committee assignments in the chamber.

But the statewide platform of the position has Rodgers excited to jump into the role.

"We want to get out in the communities and have town hall meetings where people can say these are the issues we're facing and these are the ideas we have," he said. "This is what we would like to see and be able to bring that back to the Legislature."

Former gubernatorial candidate James Ehlers, an outspoken water activist who Rodgers recently tapped to serve as his special advisor, emphasized the hands-on effort with Vermonters taken on by Rodgers during his campaign.

"John worked to get every single one of those votes, and when I say worked, that means he spent the hours in the car and on the phone. He didn't have to work at who he is," said Ehlers, adding that the "dirt under his fingernails is real, and that willingness to get hands dirty is absolutely what is going to be necessary to ensure that the voice of working Vermonters and those downstream is heard."

Gov. Phil Scott endorsed Rodgers during

the campaign. Amanda Wheeler, his press secretary, said in a statement that Scott hopes to have a good working relationship with his future counterpart, even if the role is mostly ceremonial.

"The governor and lieutenant governor-elect have known each other for many years during their time serving as legislators," Wheeler said.

Rodgers came into the race feeling the odds this election season were stacked against him.

He was a Republican in a year when Vermonters would reject the party's presidential candidate by a nearly 2-to-1 margin. It was his first time running as a statewide candidate as well — and against a Progressive/Democratic incumbent in Zuckerman. The last time someone became lieutenant governor by defeating the incumbent in a general election was 1815, according to VTDigger.

"It gives me hope that there are still enough people out there that are willing to think about the person, and that's what I've always tried to get people to do when there's good people in both parties," he said.

Rodgers said he is hopeful that, once in office, he will be able to show Vermonters that he's the right man for the job no matter what letter sits beside his name on the ballot.

"That really provides me with a huge amount of excitement to do that, go out and do the work on the ground and meet people, discuss issues and do everything I can to help Vermont be a place where everybody can afford to live," he said.

The position has always been attractive to Rodgers, but he felt he couldn't take the jump from senator to lieutenant governor due to financial constraints. That's too large a factor affecting who serves in Montpelier, he said.

"We need a better cross section of the Vermont population in that building if we want a true representative government," he said.

Why'd he decide to run this year?

"I just felt like the stakes were different, with what happened over the last two years and the cost of living here," Rodgers said. "I felt like it was time to step up and give it a shot for the big stage and see if I could help turn things around."

Looking forward to the Legislature convening early in January, Rodgers spoke about how he plans to manage his new role alongside his existing responsibilities.

"You grow up on a farm, and there's just always something to do," he said, "so you just put one foot in front of the other and just keep getting things done."

*(Via Community News Service, a University of Vermont journalism internship, on assignment for the Winooski News.)*

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# Hi! Neighbor

## Jamie Valyou brings a career of firefighting to Charlotte

Phyl Newbeck  
Contributor

Jamie Valyou was on a path toward work as an accountant when a classmate at Burlington Technical Center needed a lift. That good deed led to a career in firefighting and his current position as director of emergency services for Charlotte Volunteer Fire and Rescue.

On the bus coming home from the tech center, one of Valyou's classmates, a volunteer for the Underhill Jericho Fire Department, was paged to help put out a grass fire. His classmate didn't have a car, so Valyou drove him to the fire station to pick up his gear and then to the scene of the blaze.

Uninspired by his accounting studies, Valyou watched the crew at work and was inspired. He subsequently applied to the Underhill Jericho department and was hired for their junior program.

"It changed my life," Valyou said. "I took the basic firefighter classes and very quickly I knew it was something I wanted to do."

Valyou found a college in New Hampshire that offered a degree in fire science and got a live-in position with a nearby fire department.

Associate's degree in hand, Valyou

focused on getting a job in Burlington, and at the age of 21, he was hired by the department. He spent 10 years as a firefighter, eight as a lieutenant, five as a captain and then two years as battalion chief. During that time, he continued to take classes. "I never stopped learning," he said.

After more than 26 years in Burlington, Valyou was eligible to retire and was ready for a change. "I had progressed through all the ranks," he said. "I was fulfilled with what I was doing, but I was at what I thought was the end of the road in that organization."

He feels still fairly young at 47 and still has the passion for fire and emergency medical service.

After seeing the posting for the Charlotte position, Valyou decided to investigate. He had not had any professional interaction with the Charlotte force, so he drove around town, stopping at locations like town hall, the senior center, the post office, the marina and Spear's Corner Store asking about Charlotte Volunteer Fire and Rescue.

Valyou decided to apply, recognizing there had been no chief for about a year and some significant turnover before that. As a battalion chief and shift commander in Burlington, Valyou had been in charge



Photo by Ryan Donnelly

Jamie Valyou is happy to be at the helm of fire and rescue in Charlotte.

of 27 fire fighters, which is roughly the size of the Charlotte force.

"I had a great experience meeting people during the interview process," Valyou said. "It was very comfortable and welcoming."

Although Burlington gets just under 11,000 calls a year and Charlotte averages 600-800, Valyou felt that he had something to offer. The lower volume gives him time to focus on areas of improvement.

Valyou and his wife of 22 years have three sons whose sporting events take up much of his spare time. He also enjoys hiking, snowshoeing and hunting. He recently closed a pressure-washing business he had run for 24 years.

Valyou hopes to help Charlotte fire and rescue department grow. He notes that in the past, the two parts of the organization were separate entities.

"I really want to bring those two together as one unified well-oiled machine that is working cohesively together," he said. "They have improved over the years, but there is still a little bit of separation."

Valyou also hopes to update some outdated policies and standard operating guidelines.

Valyou said there are a number of things that Charlotte Fire and Rescue can be proud of. He describes the squad as a very proactive organization, filled with mostly young people whose "energy is very addictive."

Valyou has been impressed by the staff he is overseeing: "Charlotte Fire and Rescue is full of people who want to be here, want to learn, want to be a part of something bigger than themselves, want to help the community, and grow as one."

### Chillin' out



Photo by Judith Fayre

From left, Lynn Wolfe, Anya, Alden and Mary-Claire Walsh in an igloo they constructed from blocks they froze in small baking tins with food coloring over several nights. The construction crew celebrated with neighbors at Champlain Valley Cohousing on Saturday night with a fire-and-ice party with hot soup, s'mores and, of course, hot chocolate.

## Is it time to add something to your wardrobe?



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## Food Shelf News

# Partners critical for food shelf to help food insecure

Katherine Arthaud  
Contributor

First of all, a little bit about the Vermont Foodbank.

The Vermont Foodbank, headquartered in Barre, is the state's largest hunger-relief organization, committed to helping Vermonters access nourishing food through a network of more than 300 community partners, which include food shelves, meal sites, senior centers, after-school programs, schools and hospitals.

Vermont Foodbank provides approximately 12 million pounds of food annually to people throughout the state of Vermont. Its vision for our state is that everyone has equitable access to enough nourishing food every day; takes action to eliminate hunger and poverty; and has what they need to thrive.

The way it works is, the foodbank secures large quantities of food from grocery stores, local Vermont farms and food producers, small food retailers, nationwide food producers and federal food sources, then sorts and distributes food to local pantries and meal programs. Because food banks buy products at discounted prices, they're able to sell food more cheaply.

Buying from the foodbank enables our food shelf, along with other food pantries and meal programs, to turn donated dollars into additional meals and food.

The foodbank does not distribute food directly to individuals, but rather, to its network partners, of which there are over 200 around the state. There are 280 food shelves or pantries, senior centers, shelters and school programs in Vermont that help feed as many as 86,000 Vermonters, though the foodbank estimates that there are hundreds of thousands of Vermonters, including children, seniors and working families, who are unable to put enough food on the table.

And now, a little bit about our wonderful high-school student volunteers.

The Champlain Valley Union High School Volunteer Outreach Club has



Photo by Katherine Arthaud

After-hours visitor demonstrates why the food shelf can no longer accept food outside of regular distribution times.

been a great help to the Charlotte Food Shelf for several years. Amy Wardwell, longtime social studies teacher and current interim Snelling House director, is faculty advisor of the Volunteer Outreach Club. She said that Peggy Sharpe, director of the Charlotte Food Shelf, initially reached out to her just after COVID to see if any students might be interested in helping with holiday baskets.

Since then, CVU students have been regular helpers at the food shelf. The food shelf now has four student volunteers, who help with grocery shopping and milk pick-ups.

Recently, one told how he was sent to pick up 26 bags of flour from a local grocery store and received some funny looks as he wheeled his cart down the aisle. Student volunteers are given a card to buy supplementary products from

grocery stores the food shelf has special connections with.

While the seniors and the junior pick up groceries and milk, one regular student volunteer helps on Wednesday afternoons, sorting food and other items and putting together boxes at the church, and on Saturday mornings when boxes and bags are picked up by customers.

For the holidays, had six to eight students who helped put together bags for distribution and a number who returned to help with pick-ups. We are exploring having one or two more student volunteers coming regularly going forward.

The students who volunteer at the food shelf need to be reliable, Amy explained, and must have an understating of confidentiality, as it isn't easy for everyone to access the services of a food shelf. Compassion and mindfulness

are important qualities in our student volunteers, who thankfully have always been thoughtful, respectful, appropriate and helpful.

The CVU Volunteer Outreach Club has about 60 members, 35 of whom attend meetings regularly. High school students are busy people, Amy said. They have a lot going on. Other volunteer efforts include the Polar Express, the March 21 Spectrum Sleep Out, the May COTS Walk, various events held by the Shelburne Rotary Club (such as pie breakfasts), CVU's incoming students day, spring and fall clothing swaps, local craft fairs and more.

Students are always looking for volunteer opportunities, Amy said, so if you need volunteers, you might want to ask; they might be available.

So, thank you, Vermont Foodbank. And thank you, CVU student volunteers. And thank you, also, David and Kim Ziegelman, Eleanor and Mark Capeless, Timothy and Mary Volk, Walter Gates, Joseph and Jennifer Dickerman, Charles and Elisabeth Deslauriers, Horsford Gardens and Nursery, Barry and Susan Cluff, the town of Charlotte, Maurice (Moe) Harvey and Mary Mead, Kathleen Nolan, John and Anne Murray, for your generous donations. A belated but heartfelt thank you, also, to Lisa Phelps and SCHIPS, for the monetary donations for hats and mittens for kids.

We couldn't do it without these incredible partners. We are so grateful.

Charlotte Food Shelf is a non-profit striving to provide nutritious food for residents of Charlotte and North Ferrisburgh on the second and fourth Wednesdays (4-6 p.m.) and Saturdays (9-11 a.m.) of each month, unless otherwise noted.

The food shelf provides the following types of assistance based on available funds: emergency heating assistance (fuel and electric), children's assistance program (non-marking sneakers for PE at school and winter clothing) and emergency assistance grants. For applications for grant assistance, forms are available at the food shelf and on the website.

If you would like to donate to the Charlotte Food Shelf, your donation will help us support our neighbors in need. Giving online is easy and safe through PayPal or your credit or debit card. If you prefer check, make checks payable to Charlotte Food Shelf and mail to: P.O. Box 83, Charlotte, VT 05445. For more information, call 802-425-2402.

The Charlotte Food Shelf is a nonprofit tax-exempt organization. Gifts are tax deductible within the guidelines of U.S. law.

The food shelf is accepting non-perishable items. Please bring items to the food shelf during regular distribution times.

The Food Shelf welcomes volunteers to assist with food distribution, food shopping and special projects throughout the year. For more information email [ckmj@comcast.net](mailto:ckmj@comcast.net).



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## Commentary

# Statewide education officials balk at school district size plan

Noah Diedrich  
Community News Service

In the years following the COVID pandemic, the Lamoille South Supervisory Union has faced an equally novel problem: helping kids readjust to school.

“There was a distinct minority of students who had some very, very marked needs,” said Dave Bickford, school board chair for the Elmore-Morristown district, one of two that make up the supervisory union. “Social-emotional needs that transcended the special education designation.”

It’s taken a few years to diagnose and remedy the problem, and only in the past year have officials in Lamoille South seen noticeable improvements — progress Bickford attributes to the close working relationship between the supervisory union’s central office and school administrations.

It’s that type of collaboration Bickford fears will be lost under Gov. Phil Scott’s Education Transformation Proposal, which, among other things, seeks to eliminate supervisory unions as a concept and consolidate the state’s 119 school districts into just five. Education officials across the state are uncertain of what they see as a plan that sidesteps solutions to affordability and school governance.

Amanda Wheeler, the governor’s press secretary, did not respond to several attempts this week to seek comment by phone and email.

The proposal comes at a period in Vermont politics when education funding dominates the conversation. Due to a multitude of factors like the growing needs of students following the pandemic and dwindling federal funds, property taxes have soared in recent years.

As safeguards to ensure a degree of local input, Scott is calling for the creation of local school advisory councils, which his proposal states will “promote high levels of community engagement.”

“Having fewer school districts that oversee more students improves efficiency, promotes resource sharing, and supports equitable decision-making for students from many communities,” the proposal says.

But Bickford said he sees the proposal as being more about the economy than good

outcomes for students.

“I can’t imagine how his plan really benefits kids,” Bickford said. “In addition to the academics, their needs are social and emotional and structural, and I don’t see the plan, as he has sort of outlined it, being able to supply that kind of support.”

Bickford, who has 30 years of experience as a teacher, principal and school board chair, doesn’t see close cooperation between administrations and schools being able to exist within the new proposal.

“I worked in a school district in New Jersey where we had, Lord, maybe 20 schools,” he said. “The bigger you get, the more bureaucratic the organization becomes in order to manage and address needs, and the less personalized attention is given down to the level of the classroom.”

Bickford’s own supervisory union, Lamoille South, would become part of a district that stretches over 60 miles top to bottom.

Lisa Rudd, superintendent of Grand Isle Supervisory Union, said the widely held notion among her colleagues is that the current iteration of the governor’s plan — the one with just five districts — is something of a bargaining tactic.

“I think the general sort of feeling about this document is that it was shock value to propose something a bit more moderate,” she said.

Rudd said her apprehension with the proposal does not mean that she opposes the effort to rejig the current system. In fact, she said her colleagues hold a general sense that something needs to change.

Take her own situation. Grand Isle has three different school districts within one supervisory union. That means Rudd has to work with four separate boards, a task she said is like running four businesses.

“We really should be one school district, and I think there’s community (members) that feel that way too,” Rudd said. “So, I don’t think change is the issue here.”

For Rudd and other district officials across the state, the connection between district consolidation and affordability for Vermonters is not readily apparent.

Rudd thinks it’s misleading to suggest that the saving of money is somehow going to miraculously improve student outcomes.



Photo by Catherine Morrissey

Winooski student Lucille works on a leaf that will become part of a larger mural.

“Putting it in the context of what’s happening nationally, it’s pretty disturbing,” she said.

A September 2024 report prepared for the Legislative Joint Fiscal Office suggested that Vermont could save \$400 million by completely revamping its education system. But Bickford said he does not yet understand how the plan aims to make education funding more affordable.

“I just don’t see how aggregating people is going to provide that kind of savings,” he said. “We’re still going to have to have principals. We’re going to have to have coordinators of programs, because they don’t just happen. They don’t fall full grown from the head of Zeus.”

Keri Bristow, chair of the Mountain Views School District board of directors, agreed that what’s missing from the proposal is how exactly it aims to save money.

“Just removing superintendents in every school district — you’re still going to have assistant superintendents to do the paperwork that’s required by the state to oversee the staff, make sure things are running the way they should and all of those things that they have to do now,” she said.

Bill Yates, board chair of Windham Southeast Supervisory Union, said that, while he thinks the current supervisory union system is flawed, the supervisory

unions are too small for full efficiency, and Scott’s proposal puts forth a district configuration that is much too broad.

“That geographic area is just way too large for any sort of reasonable governance,” Yates said. “It’s just not feasible to have 15 districts within a supervisory union. It can’t work that way to supervise all the things that a supervisory union is legally required to do these days.”

One of those responsibilities is special education, Yates said. Under Scott’s proposal, a single special education director would be responsible for each supervisory union, which would cover large swaths of geographic area and many school districts.

Yates sees an obvious solution to the supervisory union problem: school construction.

“I think Gov. Scott, in this proposal, put the cart before the horse,” Yates said. “To have consolidation, you have to have construction.”

Within Windham County, Yates said there are multiple supervisory unions, districts and schools he thinks are close enough to provide a more efficient method of education.

And building regional high schools could improve educational opportunities and avoid transportation discrepancies between students, he said.

With the proposal as it stands, Yates said if smaller schools close, it could mean students have to spend more time going to and from school every day.

“Some of these elementary kids already have an hour, and so if you start closing schools, you’re going to have these young kids on a bus for two or three hours just to get to school,” he said.

All in all, Yates said he supports the idea of making the education system more efficient and economical, just not by the current approach.

“It’s such an unfunctional proposal, but I think reworking the supervisory union structure right now is probably a good idea,” he said. “I think there’s something to be had with that, but there has to be some sort of dialogue and investigation study before it’s done.”

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# It was a busy January at Charlotte Central School

Naomi Strada  
(Summarized by Tom Scatchard)

January is an exciting month at Charlotte Central School as the school transitions into the second half of the school year. Here are several big events of the new year:

- Kindergarten-fourth grade students wrapped up the first semester with report cards that went home Jan. 31.
- Fifth-eighth grade students are diving into the middle of their second trimester.
- All kindergarten-eighth grade students are re-engaging with district-identified common assessments to check on proficiency and make meaningful connections to classroom learning.
- The seventh and eighth grade Winter Ball was held on Friday, Jan. 31.
- At the recent Mathcounts competition, school mathletes participated in the district MathCounts event. Two of those mathletes will compete at the regional competition at the University of Vermont this month.



Photo contributed

The Charlotte Central School FIRST Lego team competes at the state finals at Global Foundries in Essex.

## Spring musical update

The school administration is thrilled to announce that a couple of people have stepped forward to take on the three positions for the sixth-eighth grade spring musical — musical director, choreographer and music director.

Sixth-eighth students received an email with a link to a survey to gauge interest. The performances will be later than usual in the year to accommodate a variety of

schedules. Performances will be the weekend of June 7-8, with the eighth-grade graduation scheduled for the following Thursday, June 12.

## Spelling bee update

Can you spell “anticipation”? The school spelling bee will be held Tuesday, Feb. 18. Parent volunteers will begin spelling club on Mondays and Fridays in the cafeteria for third-eighth grades. Spellers of any level can

participate. Parents can download the study words for free from the Scripps website ([spellingbee.com](http://spellingbee.com)).

The top three spellers will be invited to the Vermont State Spelling Bee on March 24 at St. Michael’s College.

## Access classes taking registrations

Taking an ACCESS class at Champlain Valley Union High is a great way to connect with like-minded community members while exploring new passions, discovering new hobbies and enjoying a judgment-free, fun-filled evening. The semester runs from February to June and opens with 160 classes for a variety of interests and ages.

Visit the website ([cvsvt.ce.eleyo.com](http://cvsvt.ce.eleyo.com)) to view classes website and register online, sign-up for the newsletter or follow on Instagram (@accessvuv).

New classes are added monthly. Register early to reserve a spot as popular classes fill quickly.

## High school chorus visits

On Tuesday, Jan. 29, the Champlain Valley Union High chorus visited Charlotte Central School to give an interactive concert to sixth-eighth grade chorus students.

The singers enjoyed standing beside high school students and joining in for vocal improvisation exercises as well as unison and harmony singing. The students also had time to ask questions about life as a high school student in general.

## FIRST Lego League season wraps up

The weekend of Jan. 25, the Charlotte Central School Lego Hawks ended their season at the FIRST Lego League Vermont state finals at Global Foundries in Essex. The Lego Hawks represented themselves well with their Innovation Project which outlined ideas to reduce pollution in Lake Champlain. The team also competed in three robot games during the day.

# Shelburne Museum announces this year’s exhibition schedule

Leslie Wright  
Contributor

Shelburne Museum has announced its exhibition schedule for 2025, offering artistic experiences exploring the intersections of art, history and culture.

This year’s exhibitions include works by contemporary Indigenous artists, designers and textile and ceramic artists. Opening on May 10, the museum will present six exhibitions, each showcasing a rich tapestry of creativity, running through Oct. 26.

## Sound, Art & Ink: Higher Ground Gig Posters

May 10-Oct. 26

Shelburne Museum celebrates a creative collaboration among an independent music venue, a visionary design studio and a corps of dedicated printmakers that memorialized the musical moments that shaped lives and nurtured nostalgia through that ephemeral medium — the gig poster. Sound, Art & Ink highlights 27 years of collaboration that chronicles Vermont’s musical and artistic legacy.

## Herd: Karen Petersen’s Bronze Horses

May 10-Oct. 26

Herd transforms the museum’s grounds into a pasture for Karen Petersen’s striking equine sculptures. Stripping away details like manes, tails and ears, Petersen distills the horse’s form to its essence, revealing primal yet elegant and powerful shapes.

Her decades-long exploration of the horse captures a balance of power, sensitivity and grace. Inspired by ancient myths and modern aesthetics, Petersen’s mastery of bronze brings the spirit of the horse to life in ways that transcend mere representation.



Photo by Andy Duback

Karen Petersen, *The Dreamer*, 2006. Bronze, 28 x 43 x 12 inches

## Dahlov Ipcar: The Possibilities of Pattern

May 10-Oct. 26

Explore the rich imagination of Vermont-born artist Dahlov Ipcar. Best known as an author and illustrator of children’s books, Ipcar’s talents extended into textiles, including needlepoints, hooked rugs and soft sculptures of real and fantastical creatures.

This exhibition offers a rare look at her textile creations, showcasing how she translated her bold, whimsical aesthetic into a variety of mediums.

## Blueprint of a Collection: Cyanotype Photography

May 10-Oct. 26

David Sokosh reimagines objects from Shelburne Museum’s collection through the 19th-century cyanotype process. Known for its vivid blue tones, the medium highlights Sokosh’s ability to create works ranging from documentary photographs to experimental compositions on unexpected surfaces like quilts and hatboxes.

This immersive exhibition invites viewers

to consider American material culture in new ways, blending historical and contemporary perspectives.

## Porcelain Love Letters: The Art of Mara Superior

May 10-Oct. 26

This will be a retrospective of Mara Superior’s porcelain art. Originally trained as a painter, Superior found her true medium in porcelain, combining intricate painted imagery with sculptural forms to explore themes of art history, environmentalism and domesticity.

Her pieces, often described as love letters to the world, invite audiences to engage with their timeless beauty and layered meanings.

## Making a Noise: Indigenous Sound Art

June 21-Oct. 26

Artists Kite (Oglala Lakota), Marie Watt (Seneca, German-Scot ancestry) and Nanibah Chacon (Diné and Xicana) merge sound and textile design to create thought-provoking, interactive works.

These pieces explore relationships between humans and the nonhuman world — plants, animals and objects that serve as ancestors and shape our lives. The exhibition amplifies connections between tradition and contemporary expression.

For more information about the exhibitions and events, please visit our website at [www.shelburnemuseum.org](http://www.shelburnemuseum.org).



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## Sacred Hunter

# When it's cold enough for playing hooky with real hooks

Bradley Carleton  
Contributor

Some people say I'm a bit crazy, but I'll argue that passion is frequently misunderstood as such.

Take, for example, today. I had to drive my lovely bride to the Plattsburgh airport to fly down to Florida to see her mother. The day started at 5 a.m. Normally, I wouldn't crawl out of bed at that time of day for anything other than some wonderful outdoor adventure. Now, most of us are aware of this year's winter being a bit colder than we've experienced for a long time.

When I was 15 years old and living in a suburb of Pittsburgh, Pa., I dreamt of living in Vermont. I love the cold, but no one around me did.

Come November, everyone would start complaining about the weather for the next four months, whilst I, in my juvenile rebellious stage, would get dropped off at school, go in the front door, walk through the halls past my homeroom and out the backdoor, where my equally rebellious friend, Ronny, would meet me with his car loaded with our ski equipment. Then we would drive two and half hours north to a small mountain in Erie, Pa., ski all day and be home in time for supper. If there was snow on the ground within 100 miles, I was not going to sit in an overheated classroom with a bunch of whiners.

At 16, I announced that I wanted to finish high school in Vermont. I was thinking about this today, because after dropping my wife off at the airport, I headed back through the Islands in search of "good ice." Just like I had in my childhood, I had packed the trunk of the car the night before with all my ice-fishing equipment.

I arrived at a bay that had been

recommended for catching sunfish. I rationalized that I was doing this for my wife because they are one of the few fish she can eat from Lake Champlain.

Upon arrival at the bay, I saw at least a dozen other piscatorial delinquents a half mile offshore. Several of them had driven trucks and cars to their location in the bay so I knew the ice must be thick enough for me, even though I weigh about as much as the front bumper of a Volkswagen beetle.

I bundled myself up in the access area, donning my flotation bibs and coat. I pulled my favorite camouflage fleece balaclava around my neck and over my baseball hat, then pulled the hood of my jacket over them both. I attached my ice creepers to my insulated boots and grabbed my jet sled with the cordless drill auger, my backpack with hot coffee and tackle, my hiking poles, and off I went.

As I crunched through the snow and ground the heels of the crampons into the dark black patches of clear ice, I became aware of the wind. It was coming from the southeast and was pushing 20-25 mph, whipping a snowy froth over my suit. I took out my phone to check the temperature — 16 degrees with a wind chill of minus 10. And here I was half a mile from shore and grinning like the town idiot.

I augured a hole in the clear black ice and watched in amazement as my auger kept digging deeper and deeper until the entire spiraling shaft disappeared under the solid surface. It was a bit of a struggle to retrieve it, as I plunged the hole to get the ice chips out.

I looked down at the hole and used my scoop to catch the errant ice chips to remove them. With my hand on the handle of the scoop, I couldn't reach the bottom of the hole. Without a measuring device, it had to be at least 20 inches

thick. This left me to wonder "how much water is actually under all this ice?" I sat down on my pickle bucket with the padded seat and dropped a 3-pound monofilament line with a tiny bibbit (i.e., micro lure) with a couple of live spikes on the hook. For the uninitiated, "spikes" are maggots that are stored in small plastic tins with sawdust, and the fish love them.

The line dropped down to the bottom and went slack. About 9 feet. Reeling up just one half a turn on the reel, I set the line taut.

I began moving the rod tip up and down gently and in a short motion just above the bottom. I watched the tip carefully. The wind was moving it in small vibrations from side to side. Then, an almost imperceptible tug downward.

I waited patiently. Another tug and then a heavier one. I raised my rod and the tip bent toward the icy hole with gusto. I began reeling it up, wondering what kind of fish it might be. Soon, it came up through the hole and at that very moment, the sun came out from behind me and lit up the magnificent colors on the small but precious being. I looked at it in wonder and gratitude.

I stayed another hour and caught a dozen small yellow perch, returning them all to grow another year and then began the long pull back to the access. As I was walking through the snow drifts and over the sheer black ice patches, the wind was blowing snow on my face. The frigid air wrapped itself around me. Inside my heavily insulated flotation suit, I was incredibly cozy and warm.

I thought of my childhood friends back in Beaver, Pa., and started to laugh aloud. A powerful grin arced across my face as I



Photo by Bradley Carleton

A sunfish makes the cold seem comfortable.

thought, "They must think I'm crazy, but I love this!"

I am where I am meant to be, and although I can't claim to be a "real Vermonter" (it takes seven or more generations for that honor to be given to any family), I am crazy enough to be one.

*(Bradley Carleton is executive director of Sacred Hunter.org, a privately owned limited liability corporation that seeks to educate the public on the spiritual connection of man to nature through hunting, fishing and foraging. His writing may be followed on sacredhunter.substack.com.)*

### Auto mating?



Lee Krohn found porcupine quills on his car, which was parked at the Charlotte Park and Wildlife Refuge, but no evidence that this alleged culprit, who was nearby, had actually climbed on his vehicle.





## Our Local Feast

# Potatoes work well as star of the meal or backup singer

Dorothy Grover-Read  
Contributor

When I was a kid, many of us grew up on potatoes. They appeared on our plates most evenings in some form or another because they were also my dad's favorite. We enjoyed them mashed, boiled, fried, baked, twice-baked, puréed, roasted and scalloped. Potatoes were part of just about every soup, stew, casserole or pot pie. They were always there, and we loved them.

Of course, potatoes were not just part of healthy dinners. French fries and potato chips were ever present as well. Even now, they are my favorite cheat food, but I seldom add them to the grocery basket since I cannot eat just one or two chips.

We've all cooked and eaten potatoes every way possible, and I have only met two kinds I didn't like. (Hint: One was canned, the other mashed in a blender to a gluey mass. I shudder.)

Potatoes remain one of my top three deserted-island foods because they are tasty, versatile and happy as the star or backup singer.

Sad are the times when low-carb diets shun them, putting them on the black list of starchy vegetables to avoid like the plague. But they offer us more than just their starch and comfort. There's a powerhouse of nutrition encased in these humble little spuds.

First, they have no fat. None, saturated or otherwise. Nutrient dense, an average potato has around 100 calories, 26 grams of carbs, 2 grams of fiber and 3 grams of protein. It is a great source of vitamins C (25 percent of your daily needs), B6 and minerals — potassium (four times that of a banana), iron and calcium. They are filled with antioxidants. Additionally, the deeper the potato color, the higher the mineral content, so keep that in mind when purchasing. Blue potatoes are your friend.

The potato itself is a superstar and doesn't need to be doused in sour cream, butter or gravy to shine, and frankly these toppings are also the source of much of their bad reputation. But a few healthier ingredients that enhance the flavor are always welcome because, undressed, they can be on the bland side. Luckily, even in produce-challenged February in the north, we still have access to lots of local root vegetables, and we'll make use of them here.

Most of us have had roasted potatoes of some sort. They are simple to toss in the oven on any weeknight and always a crowd pleaser, especially if you smash them halfway through cooking for more crispy surface area. Garlic, lemon and rosemary are a favorite flavor combo that works on lots of foods, so refreshing and delightful, and potatoes are a perfect canvas for this trio.

The potatoes I found at a farm stand recently were a quirky little calico variety I'd not seen before. They are small and waxy with a lovely yellow flesh. You can use any smallish potato you like. Fingerlings would be really tasty; red bliss are perfect as well.

Don't like carrots? How about rutabaga or Chioggia beets? Turnips, parsnips, butternut squash, even winter radishes could all add their personality to the dish. Or use just potatoes and onion and call it a day.

Swap out a yellow onion or even a leek if



Calico potatoes are a little different, but you can use any type of waxy potato here that will hold its shape after smashing lightly. The red bliss variety is a good replacement.

you don't care for purple onions, and adjust the garlic and herbs to your own desire. All these, the garlic too, are locally available and not shipped from other climates and continents, so their carbon footprint is tiny.

The lemons? Well, we don't grow them here, but neither can we produce chocolate and coffee, and one wouldn't want to be without these staples. So, we can gladly trade our apples in season for citrus in return, and all the other treats from warmer places. After all, fair is fair.

What's your favorite way to eat a potato? Can you stop eating potato chips after only one?

### Roasted and smashed garlic and lemon potatoes

Preheat your oven to 450 degrees (425 convection) and place a rimmed baking sheet on the middle rack to heat up. Yes, you can also do this in an air fryer, just follow the directions for roasted potatoes.

#### Assemble your vegetables:

- 1 pound (500 grams) small firm potato such as calico or red bliss
- 6 ounces (180 grams) carrots
- 1 purple onion
- 4-6 cloves garlic
- 1 tablespoon fresh rosemary
- the same of fresh parsley.

Scrub potatoes and pierce each once with a sharp knife. Chop your carrots, slice your onion, mince your garlic, rosemary and parsley. Now you are ready to roast.

Once the oven is hot, carefully remove the pan, drizzle with a couple of tablespoons of olive oil and place vegetables in separate sections (depending on their size, they may cook at different times), making sure all sides are coated with the oil, and everything is in a single layer. Season with salt and pepper and roast for about 20-25 minutes depending on the size of your potatoes. You want them to be mostly cooked at this point.

Remove the sheet from the oven and, with the bottom of a heavy glass or measuring cup, gently squash down the potatoes, keeping them mostly intact but the outer skins cracked. If they don't squash easily, return to the oven to cook a few more minutes.

Combine the garlic and rosemary (hold off on the parsley) and a bit more olive oil and sprinkle on top of the vegetables. Return the pan to the oven and roast another 10 to 15



Photos by Dorothy Grover-Read

Roasted and smashed potatoes are filled with flavor, especially if you add a bit of garlic, lemon and herbs.



After the first phase of cooking, gently squash down the potatoes to reveal more surface area to crisp up in the oven. Add the rosemary, olive oil and garlic, and you're almost there.

minutes, removing the onions sooner if they start to brown too much.

Once everything is nicely browned and where you want them, and the house smells like potato heaven, remove from the oven and add:

zest of a fresh lemon

2 tablespoons of fresh lemon juice

Mix well and add the reserved parsley, perhaps a bit more olive oil. Taste for salt and pepper. Plate up, making sure to add all the crispy bits of potato and garlic from the sheet pan.

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## Gardening

# Browsing seed and plant catalogs a constructive escape

Deborah J. Benoit  
University of Vermont Extension

It begins in December. By January, seed and plant catalogs arrive at your mailbox (or email) almost daily. Browsing through their pages provides a welcome escape from the garden-deprived days of winter.

These catalogs contain a wealth of information to help grow a successful garden. The trick is having some basic knowledge about your location to help you choose the best plants.

First, determine your United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Plant Hardiness Zone. You'll want to choose perennial plants that are labeled for your zone. You can find your USDA Hardiness

Zone here: [planthardiness.ars.usda.gov](http://planthardiness.ars.usda.gov).

You'll also want to know your anticipated last frost date in the spring (when the danger of frost has likely passed) and first anticipated frost date in the fall. The autumn date is useful to estimate how long your garden likely will last before a killing frost puts an end to its productivity. You can find the average last and first frost dates for your location here: [garden.org/apps/frost-dates](http://garden.org/apps/frost-dates).

The number of days between the last frost date (spring) and the first frost date (fall) is the length of your growing season. Keep that in mind when selecting vegetable crops. If the "days to maturity" is longer than your growing season, cold weather could put an end to your garden before it's ready to harvest.

A catalog listing will tell you the plant's name and the variety being offered (e.g., Cornflower 'Emperor William'), the plant's size at maturity (important when planning the number of plants you'll need), light requirements, what you'll receive (i.e., seeds or a plant) and the price. If ordering seeds, the listing will often state the approximate number of seeds in a packet.

The description should also provide the plant's botanical name. A plant may be known by different common names (e.g., Cornflower is also known as bachelor's button.), or the same common name may refer to entirely different plants. The botanical name identifies a specific plant.

It also lets you go beyond the catalog description and research plant care, potential pests and diseases and other specifics before you decide to add it to your garden.

In addition, listings may include whether a plant is an heirloom variety or a native, if it's drought tolerant, scented or suitable for cut flowers. You may also learn whether it will attract pollinators such as bees, hummingbirds and butterflies or if it's deer resistant.

Catalogs often use symbols to indicate useful information such as appropriate growing conditions (full sun, part shade,



Photo by Claudette Gallant/Public Domain Pictures

For more than a century, seed and plant catalogs have provided gardeners with information on plant varieties, growing requirements and other useful details, allowing them to purchase the vegetables, fruits and flowers that will do the best for their plant hardiness zone and growing conditions.

full shade). Look for a key to what those symbols mean in the general information section of the catalog or as a footnote at the bottom of the page.

You may find additional information regarding the hardiness of annuals and perennials helpful when deciding which plants to select for your garden. A "hardy annual" would likely resist a light frost without damage, lasting until a hard freeze. A "half-hardy annual" would likely sustain damage from a frost and a "tender annual" would succumb to temperatures approaching freezing.

Plants labeled "tender perennial" aren't frost tolerant and are often treated as annuals in colder climates. They'd need to be overwintered indoors and moved back outside after danger of frost has passed in

the spring.

Whether you're planning to start seeds this spring or are patiently awaiting delivery of plants once spring arrives, catalogs can be a great way to get a head start on the gardening season.

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

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**Charlotte News**



## Gardening

# Growing citrus trees as houseplants can brighten home

Amy Simone  
University of Vermont Extension

Imagine having sunny orange, bright yellow and luscious green fruit growing in your home, especially during this gray, cold time of year. While we do not associate citrus plants with our northeast climate, there are several varieties that can be grown as indoor-outdoor houseplants.

Native to Southeast Asia, citrus plants have been cultivated for over 4,000 years. Their fruit is actually a type of berry with a leathery rind called a hesperidium. They are found in tropical and subtropical regions that offer them warmth, lots of humidity and sandy, slightly acidic soil.

Consistently hot temperatures are needed for citrus fruits to produce sugar, something that our climate cannot offer them. Therefore, sour citrus fruits such as lemon, limes and small orange varieties like Satsuma and calamondin are among those best suited to growing as houseplants.

In their natural environments, citrus trees can grow to a height of 20 feet, which is certainly not manageable as a houseplant. Thankfully, there are dwarf varieties like tangerine (Satsuma orange), lemon (ponderosa or meyer), kumquat (fortunella species), citron and calamondin orange. These will reach a more reasonable height of 3 to 5 feet.

Plant your citrus in a well-draining pot filled with cactus or citrus soil mix or use regular potting mix amended with perlite.



Photos by Amy Simone

While insects will pollinate fragrant citrus flowers if plants are outdoors, indoors they require human help to collect pollen from one flower and rub it on another.

Fertilize with a high-nitrogen fertilizer formulated for acid-loving plants, and only while the plants are actively growing and flowering, generally from April through October.

In the winter, place your citrus plant in a sunny south-facing window away from cold drafts and ensure that it receives at least six hours of direct sun per day. Supplement with artificial light if needed. Wipe the leaves periodically to remove dust. Group several houseplants together to create more humidity or run a humidifier near your citrus plant.

As temperatures consistently reach above 50 degrees Fahrenheit in the spring, move your citrus plant outdoors gradually, protecting it from direct sun at first. After a few days, place it in full sun and pay



A Calamondin orange tree, a dwarf citrus variety, will bear small, golden-orange fruit so is a good choice to grow indoors as a houseplant.

attention to its watering needs, which will be more frequent than when it was indoors.

Depending on your citrus variety, you may get flowers only in the spring or from spring to fall. Dwarf citrus varieties are mostly all self-fertile, meaning that you do not need a second plant for pollination to occur.

You do, however, need insects to pollinate the flowers. If your citrus plant is indoors during flowering, you get to play pollinator. Use a clean, dry paintbrush or cotton swab to collect pollen from one flower and rub it on another.

In the fall, acclimate your citrus gradually to move back indoors before the outside temperatures go below 40 degrees Fahrenheit.

Don't be alarmed if your citrus plant



Citrus fruit may take several months to fully ripen, with lemons and limes needing six to nine months, and oranges up to a year.

sheds some of its baby fruit. Potted plants cannot support that much fruit and will naturally shed the extra. However, fruit drop is also associated with temperature extremes, so take care to avoid those.

Dropped leaves are the plant's response to overwatering. Flower drop will occur if the soil becomes too dry.

Most importantly, add a little patience to your citrus-care routine, as young plants may take years to flower and produce fruit. Lemons and limes can take six to nine months to ripen, and oranges can take up to a year. Those colorful and delicious fruit cheering up your home will be worth it.

*(Amy Simone is a University of Vermont Extension master gardener from South Burlington.)*

## Use frigid winter time for planning a new garden bed

Deborah J. Benoit  
University of Vermont Extension

The middle of winter with snow covering brick-hard, frozen ground may seem like an odd time to plan a new garden bed, but it's the best time. If you make decisions now, you'll be ready when the weather warms and the ground is workable.

Putting in a new garden bed takes a lot of effort, and nothing is as frustrating as forgetting something you'll need to proceed. Taking the time now to consider what you want to do will also give you the time to determine what supplies you'll need to make the project a success.

After you've done a bit of mid-winter daydreaming and maybe made a wish list of plants you want in your garden this year, it's time to plan. Look at the available space in your yard and select a spot.

Keep in mind not only the amount of sunlight your new garden bed will receive, but also how far it is from a water source. At least until plants are established, you'll want to be sure they are well watered. That could mean toting water.

Taking measurements and using graph paper will enable you to draw your new bed to scale, but even a rough sketch with estimated measurements can provide a head start on garden renovations when spring arrives.

Will you be planting in the ground? If you're planning to build a raised bed,

determine the materials needed as well as the amount of soil mix to fill it. Make sure you have the necessary tools at hand.

If the area is currently lawn or weeds, how do you plan to clear it? You could dig up what's growing there. You could cover it with newspaper or cardboard and mulch using a sheet mulching technique (see <https://go.uvm.edu/spring-garden>), or you could smother it with a tarp (see <https://go.uvm.edu/garden-tarping>).

Will you want to fence in the area to keep unwanted critters away from the plants? Now is a great time to check out options, compare prices and find pre-season bargains.

If you haven't already, decide what it is that you want to grow. Will the bed be decorative or productive? Flowers? Vegetables? Annuals? Perennials? If your chosen plants will need support (such as tomato cages or a trellis), check out available options.

Make a plant wish list if you haven't already. Browse through seed catalogs and garden books. Select plants that will thrive in the new bed's growing conditions. Have fun considering the possibilities.

With your wish list in hand, choose plants that will fit the location such as available light, height and size. Keep in mind the amount of space the mature plant will occupy. Place taller plants to the rear or north side of the bed so they don't block light from shorter plants.

Get out that pencil and paper, maybe a packet of colored markers, and make a rough sketch of the garden bed. Start placing plants in your sketch using a simple symbol. Rearrange or replace plants as your design evolves. You've got plenty of time to make your final choices.

On a lazy Sunday afternoon when the weather outside is less than welcoming, grab a garden catalog or hop online

to peruse seed and plant sources for inspiration. Get to work planning a new garden bed. When spring arrives, you'll have plans in hand, ready to go.

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

### CHARLOTTE TOWN MEETINGS AND AGENDAS

Visit [charlottetv.org](http://charlottetv.org) for more information

**Planning Commission Meeting**  
Thursday, Feb. 6, 7 p.m.

**Regular Selectboard Meeting**  
Monday, Feb. 10, 6:30 p.m.

**Energy Committee Meeting**  
Tuesday, Feb. 11, 7 p.m.

**Recreation Commission Special Meeting at Town Beach Bathhouse**  
Wednesday, Feb. 19, 4 p.m.



**Planning Commission Meeting**  
Thursday, Feb. 20, 7 p.m.

**Regular Selectboard Meeting**  
Monday, Feb. 24, 6:30 p.m.

**Conservation Commission Meeting**  
Tuesday, Feb. 25, 7 p.m.

**Development Review Board Meeting**  
Wednesday, Feb. 26, at 7 p.m.

# Community Roundup

## Disaster Recovery Fund & Vermont Community Foundation merging

The Vermont Disaster Recovery Fund is closing and merging its operations with the Vermont Community Foundation, which will continue the fund's mission to provide disaster assistance to individuals.

The Vermont Disaster Recovery Fund, created in 2011 following Tropical Storm Irene, provides financial help to disaster survivors after they have exhausted other sources of assistance, such as from FEMA, homeowner and flood insurance, and grants from local and regional disaster funds.

The fund distributed \$6 million in individual assistance following Irene and \$1.6 million so far to survivors of the 2023 flooding.

"Since the very beginning our focus has been on streamlining disaster recovery assistance for individuals," said Chris Graff, the Vermont Disaster Recovery Fund chair. "We believe we can simplify the process even more by consolidating our work with the broad disaster recovery initiatives of the Vermont Community Foundation."

In 2023, the Vermont Community Foundation launched the VT Flood Response & Recovery Fund, which has provided \$13 million for business recovery, farm aid, rebuilding public structures, as well as repairs to homes, apartments and mobile homes.

"The impact and legacy of the Vermont Disaster Recovery Fund are almost indescribable," said Dan Smith, president and CEO of the Vermont Community Foundation. "At its core, it's a reflection of the fact that Vermont is still a place where people look out for one another, especially in a crisis."

Vermont Disaster Recovery Fund treasurer Mike Yantachka thanked the individuals, foundations and organizations that have donated to the fund. He said donations from individuals in the past two years have ranged from \$1 to \$34,000.

The Champlain Valley Union High School boy's volleyball team raised \$3,000, the second year the team has done so, Yantachka said.

## Saint Michael's College's new financial aid initiative

Saint Michael's College students entering the school in the fall of 2025 or continuing students maintaining a GPA of 3.2 from families with an income of \$100,000 or less

are eligible to receive a financial aid package that covers the full cost of tuition.

Saint Michael's College's new financial aid initiative fortifies the college's mission of making its deeply engaging, student-centered education more affordable, the school said in a release.

The St. Mike's Community Commitment is intended to simplify the financial aid process, making a Saint Michael's education more accessible to students from every socioeconomic background.

"This initiative enables talented students from all backgrounds to obtain a first-rate education. By reducing ambiguity around the cost of attendance for their families, we are empowering more students to set ambitious goals," Saint Michael's College President Richard Plumb said.

Generous merit awards and need-based aid will continue to be available to all families who qualify, including those who may not be eligible for this new program.

"We've been committed to equity and access and will continue this commitment for current and future students," said Brigid Lawler, Saint Michael's Vice President for Enrollment Management. "The St. Mike's Community Commitment will provide more clarity for students and families who want a better sense of the aid they will receive early in the process."

For more information on the St. Mike's Community Commitment, visit <https://tinyurl.com/2zd3z52>.

## League of Women Voters taking scholarship applications

The League of Women Voters of Vermont Education Fund is accepting applications for its Winona Smith Scholarship program. Created in 1998 to honor the legacy of League leader Winona Smith, the scholarship is awarded annually to Vermont high school seniors who embody the qualities Smith displayed of civic participation and community service.

Three \$2,000 scholarships will be awarded to students who demonstrate financial need, scholastic achievement and come highly recommended by their teacher. Applications, due on April 30, must be completed online at [bit.ly/LWVScholarshipDetails](http://bit.ly/LWVScholarshipDetails).

Students need to submit two essays (300-500 words), one on issues concerning voting rights and the other on the impact

of a recent civic, national or world event. A letter of recommendation from a teacher is also required at [bit.ly/LWVTeacherRec](http://bit.ly/LWVTeacherRec). Scholarship recipients will be announced on June 1.

Questions can be directed to scholarship coordinator Audrey Grant at [lwvofvt.edfund@gmail.com](mailto:lwvofvt.edfund@gmail.com).

## Dragonheart Vermont expanding access for breast cancer survivors

Dragonheart Vermont, a local 501(c)(3) non-profit dragon boating organization supporting breast cancer survivors, is offering introductory memberships at a reduced cost, making the program more accessible to breast cancer survivors.

Starting in January 2025, Dragonheart Vermont will offer new members that are breast cancer survivors an introductory rate of just \$100 (a \$200 savings). Dragonheart Vermont is a community volunteer non-profit organization which strives to strengthen and empower breast cancer survivors and supporters through the challenging sport of dragon boating. You can find our members practicing at Burlington's Waterfront most days in the warmer months.

"By offering introductory membership rates for breast cancer survivors, Dragonheart Vermont hopes to attract breast cancer survivors and others to 'try on' the organization and realize the benefits it provides not only to members as well as the rewards of contributing to the greater community," said the new executive director, Kyle Opuszynski. "Our members value health, fitness, and camaraderie, and we help foster a better life for those living with and beyond a breast cancer diagnosis."

Over the past 20 years, Dragonheart Vermont has raised and distributed well over \$1 million dollars to various organizations providing support to people coping with cancer. Much of this funding is raised through Dragonheart Vermont's annual Lake Champlain Dragon Boat Festival which is organized and run by its members. Members also participate in other community-oriented activities, like donating to Troy's Toy Drive this holiday season, participating in Greenup Day, senior center visits, dinners at the Hope Lodge and, this year, members weekly contributed to multiple area food banks and pantries throughout the summer as a way to mark the organization's 20th anniversary.

The Lake Champlain Dragon Boat Festival is the club's signature fundraiser and will be returning to the Burlington Waterfront on Aug. 3. Each year Dragonheart Vermont chooses local non-profits as our Pledge Partners. This year, Dragonheart Vermont is proud to support Sail Beyond Cancer, which provides free therapeutic sailboat rides for families facing cancer and Mahana Magic, which offers children of families battling cancer an opportunity to write and publish their own books during a life-changing weeklong camp, as well as Dragonheart Vermont.

Dragonheart Vermont welcomes donations year-round from our generous community members: <https://dragonheartvermont.org/donate/>.

## Vermont educators can enroll free in course in personal finance

Middle and high school educators in Vermont can increase their financial literacy

and personal finance teaching skills by attending a free, online, asynchronous graduate-level course that will be available for 20 participants March 3-April 25.

"Teachers who complete the training will have the confidence, skills and curriculum tools to be successful personal finance educators," says John Pelletier, director of the Center for Financial Literacy, which is offering the course through its Financial Literacy Academy.

Pelletier says the three-credit financial literacy course will cover saving and investing, credit reports and scores, credit cards and debt, managing risk, income and careers.

He notes that there is tremendous national momentum in personal finance education, as the center projects that 26 states (not including Vermont) will have a standalone personal finance course graduation requirement for public high school students by 2031 (this is an increase from the 23 states identified in the center's December 2023 High School Report Card).

"That means that 57 per cent of public high school graduates in our nation will have taken this course as a graduation mandate in the class of 2031," Pelletier says.

"Qualified personal finance teachers are needed to meet these standards," Pelletier said.

Twenty scholarships are available to Vermont educators only. You can apply at <https://tinyurl.com/r2mtvdds>. The deadline to apply is Feb. 20, and you will be notified of your status by Feb. 25. Scholarships will be awarded on a rolling admissions basis. For registration questions contact: [cfl@champlain.edu](mailto:cfl@champlain.edu).

For more information: [jpelletier@champlain.edu](mailto:jpelletier@champlain.edu) or 802-860-2744.

## Juliette Gordon Low quarter celebrates Girl Scout founder

Girl Scouts of the USA unveiled the design for the United States Mint's Juliette Gordon Low quarter, part of the final year of the American Women Quarters Program. The design captures the legacy of Juliette Gordon Low, who founded the Girl Scout Movement, which continues to empower girls to blaze their own trails more than 100 years later.

The design includes symbols that honor the history of the Girl Scout movement, including:

- The iconic trefoil, a design that Low patented, and that Girl Scouts continues to use as its official logo, which is featured prominently on its hat, lapels, belt buckle and pin.

- An original uniform from the 1920s. "This new quarter honoring our founder, Juliette Gordon Low, is a reminder to all Girl Scouts, especially our members in New Hampshire and Vermont, that our organization honors and encourages female leadership," said Patricia K. Mellor, CEO of Girl Scouts of the Green and White Mountains.

The Juliette Gordon Low quarter will be released into circulation in March. The coins will be produced in limited quantities for a limited time. Collectors' editions will be available for purchase from the United States Mint.

To join Girl Scouts or volunteer, visit [girlscouts.org/join](http://girlscouts.org/join). To donate to Girl Scouts, visit [girlscouts.org/support](http://girlscouts.org/support). Sign up to receive News from Girl Scouts at [girlscouts.org/](http://girlscouts.org/)



# Calendar

Send your events two weeks in advance to [news@thecharlottenews.org](mailto:news@thecharlottenews.org).

## 'Wake Up, Gloucester'

**Fridays-Sundays, Feb. 7-16**

The Valley Players will present the world premiere of "Wake Up, Gloucester," by Jeanne Beckwith, at the Valley Players Theater, 4254 Main Street, Waitsfield, 7 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays and 2 p.m. Sundays. This fully-staged reading (while reading scripts, actors appear in costume with full staging and a complete set) will be directed by Doug Bergstein. The play takes place in 1939 and deals with the lives, hopes, loves and fears of a group who come together at a tavern in Gloucester, Mass., and there just might be a sea serpent off the coast. Tickets are \$14 and available from [valleyplayers.com](http://valleyplayers.com).

## 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](mailto:mbongiorno@agewellvt.org) is Feb. 5.

## Candidate's Night

**Tuesday, Feb. 11, 6:30-8 p.m.**

The 2025 Candidate's Night will be a hybrid event presented by the Charlotte Grange at the Charlotte Senior Center and online. Learn more about each candidate, their priorities, reasons for running, and points of views. Questions for the candidates can be emailed to [charlottegrangevt@gmail.com](mailto:charlottegrangevt@gmail.com) or posed during the event.

## 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. 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](http://go.uvm.edu/2025ntcc). Certified crop advisor and water quality and custom applicator credits are available.

## Poetry at the Grange

**Thursday, Feb. 13, 1-2:30 p.m.**

Poets, poetry lovers, and those interested 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 discussion with fellow enthusiasts over tea and cookies. Shelburne's poet laureate, Amy Allen, will kick off this event by sharing a few of her poems and thoughts about



Photo by Doug Bergstein

Danielle Dukette and Victor Guadago have a chat in 'Wake Up, Gloucester,' making its world premiere at the Valley Players Theater, Feb. 7-16.

poetry. RSVP appreciated but not necessary at [abigailkilley@me.com](mailto:abigailkilley@me.com).

## Burlington City Arts spring exhibitions

**Friday, Feb. 14, 5 p.m.**

Burlington City Arts opens its spring exhibitions with an opening reception at 5 p.m. On the first floor, Bunny Harvey: Worlds Within Worlds features landscape paintings of Vermont-based artist Bunny Harvey. Focusing on large-scale oil paintings and more intimately scaled works on paper, Harvey's semi-abstract paintings are inspired by the rural landscape of central Vermont and the urban environs of New York or Rome. In the Roth Gallery on the second floor, artist Stéphanie Morissette explores the conflicting relationship between humans, nature and technology in Speculative Future. Using insightful observation and dark humor, the artist imagines a future where biological specimens and mechanical technology have merged to create a new, hybrid species of birds and flying creatures.

## Fire & Rescue open house

**Saturday, Feb. 15, 1-4 p.m.**

Learn more about becoming a volunteer firefighter and the services provided by Charlotte Volunteer Fire & Rescue Services at an open house at the station, 170 Ferry Road. Kids are welcome. Look at the equipment and ask questions. More info at [chief@cvfrs.org](http://chief@cvfrs.org).

## 'A Stranger in the Kingdom'

**Saturday, Feb. 15, 7 p.m.**

Jay Craven's award-winning 1997 film, "A Stranger in the Kingdom," based on the novel by Howard Frank Mosher, will be shown in the Ferrisburgh Town Hall with Q&A with Craven after. The film was inspired by true events surrounding the infamous 1968 "Irasburg Affair." Tickets are available at [unionmeetinghall.org/programming-and-events](http://unionmeetinghall.org/programming-and-events). Advance purchase is recommended. Questions: [unionmeetinghall@gmail.com](mailto:unionmeetinghall@gmail.com).

## 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. Full event details at [nofavt.org/conference](http://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. The deadline to register at 802-662-5283 or [mbongiorno@agewellvt.org](mailto:mbongiorno@agewellvt.org) is 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](http://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.

## Project Wild workshop

**Tuesday, Feb. 25, 5-8 p.m.**

Kindergarten-12th grade teachers and other science educators in Vermont interested in ways to connect students with science and nature can sign up for a free Project Wild workshop and training on Feb. 25. The Vermont Agency of Natural Resources Department of Fish and Wildlife is sponsoring the workshop at University of Vermont Extension office in Morrisville. It will involve both indoor and outdoor activities, so participants should dress appropriately. Register at 802-656-7562 or [holly.ferris@uvm.edu](mailto:holly.ferris@uvm.edu). Registration deadline is Feb. 14.

## Vermont Flower Show

**Friday-Sunday, March 7-9**

The 2025 Vermont Flower Show at the Champlain Valley Expo will celebrate gardening through the ages and how to learn from the past in cultivating our gardens for the future. At this year's show you will stroll through fields of tulips, experience an English cottage garden and a tea house garden. You will take a walk back in time through Medieval, Islamic and Victory gardens. The show is Friday, March 7, 10 a.m.-6 p.m.; Saturday, March 8, 10 a.m.-6 p.m.; and Sunday March 9, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Daily admission is \$28 (\$26 until Dec. 31) for adults, \$23 (\$21 until Dec. 31) for seniors (60+) and college students, \$10 (\$8 until Dec. 31) for students (ages 5-17) and free for children 4 and under. Tickets can be purchased at [vnlavt.org/event/the-vermont-flower-show](http://vnlavt.org/event/the-vermont-flower-show). Free parking.

## Woodland Legacy Planning Workshop

**Friday, March 21, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.**

Discover strategies to ensure your land remains intact and supports your goals at What's Next for Your Woods? A Legacy Planning Workshop. This full-day workshop will be held at the St. Albans Town Hall Co-hosted by Vermont Coverts: Woodlands for Wildlife and the Vermont Woodlands Association, this workshop brings together experienced estate planning professionals and landowners who have navigated the woodland succession process. Through a mix of presentations, panel discussions and breakout sessions, participants will gain insights into the planning steps and explore key topics tailored to their specific interests. A registration fee of \$30 per person, or \$50 per couple, covers all sessions and lunch. Register at <https://tinyurl.com/yjf35k4k>. For more info: [laura@vtcoverts.org](mailto:laura@vtcoverts.org).



# Celebrate Love Your Library month at Charlotte Library

Margaret Woodruff  
Director

Share the love with DIY Valentines. Share your opinions and ideas in our new library suggestion box.

Town meeting and town government are hot topics this month. Don't miss the Candidates Night event at the Charlotte Senior Center on Tuesday, Feb. 11. Town meeting takes place on Saturday, March 1, for all voting on budget items related to the town.

## Programs for kids

### 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.

### Valentines DIY Friday, Feb. 7, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.

Drop in to create some Valentines with Gelli print and other craft techniques. For all ages. Children 10 and under must be accompanied by an adult.

### Craft your closet Tuesdays, Feb. 11 & 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. Learn more about each candidate, their priorities, reasons for running and points of views. Questions for the candidates can be emailed to charlottegrangevt@gmail.com or posed during the event. Zoom at <https://tinyurl.com/takfjmw>.

### How to make the most of the grid Thursday, Feb. 13, 5:30 p.m.

What are the various areas in the home to electrify? What are the costs, savings and incentives associated with each place in your home? Join Alex Levin from the Vermont Energy Education Program and members of the Charlotte Energy Committee to talk about home electrification. You'll go home with ideas and insight to get started.

### Better Together Book Club Wednesday, Feb. 19, 7 p.m.

Join this group to discuss books related to parenthood. "Lula Dean's Little Library of Banned Books" by Kirsten Miller tells the story of when Lula Dean, trying to rid public libraries of "pornographic" books, starts her own lending library in front of her home, and the daughter of Lula's arch nemesis sneaks in nightly, secretly filling it with banned books wrapped in "wholesome" dust jackets, changing the lives of those who borrow them in unexpected ways.

### Short story selections Wednesday, Feb. 19, 1 p.m.

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

### Houseplant Healthcare 101 Thursday, Feb. 20, 5:30-6:30 p.m.

Join us to learn from master gardener Judy Mirro. She'll share the tips and tricks for keeping your houseplants happy and hearty during these cold months.

### Tea and movie Friday, Feb. 21, 2 p.m.

Join us for the showing of a movie based on a Jane Austen novel of the same name. Enjoy tea, homemade cookies and the good company of Jane Austen's characters and fans.

### Sunday afternoon music jam Sunday, Feb. 23, 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,



Photo by Susanna Kahn

Wildcard Wednesday group makes Gelli prints for Valentines Day.

banjo, fiddle, bass, keyboard, harmonica, hand drums ... anything goes. Questions: Sallie Mack 802-425-6212 or [salliemack@gmavt.net](mailto:salliemack@gmavt.net).

### Mystery book group Monday, Feb. 24, 10 a.m.

Once again, the game's afoot in "The House of Silk." It's London, 1890. 221B Baker St. A fine art dealer named Edmund Carstairs visits Sherlock Holmes and Dr. John Watson to sher for their help. He is being menaced by a strange man in a flat cap, a wanted criminal who seems to have followed him all the way from America. In the days that follow, his home is robbed, his family is threatened. And then the first murder takes place. Holmes and Watson find themselves being drawn ever deeper into an international conspiracy connected to the teeming criminal underworld. Copies available at the circulation desk.

### Book discussion Wednesdays, Feb. 26-March 26, 7 p.m.

Conservation Commission and Sustainable Charlotte are hosting a discussion of "How to be Animal" by Melanie Challenger. Blending nature writing, history and moral philosophy, the book is both a fascinating reappraisal of what it means to be human and a robust defense of all that is rewarding about being an animal. Also on Zoom register at <https://tinyurl.com/3ypdzre2>. Copies available at the library circulation desk.

### Men's book group Wednesday, Feb. 26, 7:30 p.m.

"All the Beauty in the World" is a fascinating, revelatory portrait of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and its treasures by a former New Yorker staffer who spent a decade as a museum guard. Copies available

at the circulation desk. The men's book discussion group meets monthly. Join at the library or on Zoom at <https://tinyurl.com/4dsa85xk>.

## 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](mailto:info@charlottepubliclibrary.org)

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

The Charlotte Library Board of Trustees meets 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](http://charlottepubliclibrary.org)) for more information.



# Senior Center News

## Many ways to engage with community at senior center

Lori York  
Director

This month at the Charlotte Senior Center, there are plenty of ways to connect and engage with the community.

Get involved in the conversation about the upcoming Champlain Valley School District budget, meet local candidates at the Grange Candidates Night, explore creative crafts at the Senior Craft Night with Champlain Valley Union High's Volunteer Club and discover practical housing solutions at the HomeShare Vermont presentation.

### Programs

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

Residents are invited to listen, learn and share thoughts about the Champlain Valley School District and its budget. Your input is essential to shaping a strong future for our schools. Guests will include school district board chair Meghan Metzler and representative Chea Waters Evans.

#### Charlotte Grange candidates night Tuesday, Feb. 11, 6:30 p.m.

Ask questions and share concerns with the candidates on this year's ballot. Learn more about each candidate, their priorities, reasons for running and points of view. Questions for the candidates can be emailed to Tai Dinnan at charlottegrangevt@gmail.com or posed during the event. Attend in person at the senior center or join by Zoom at [bit.ly/candidates2025](https://bit.ly/candidates2025) or go to [charlottepubliclibrary.org/calendar](https://charlottepubliclibrary.org/calendar).

#### HomeShare Vermont presentation Wednesday, Feb. 12, 12:30-1:30 p.m.

Housing costs in Vermont are on the rise. Are you looking for ways to reduce your housing expenses? Join Ric Cengeri to learn about HomeShare Vermont and discover if home sharing might be the right solution for you. HomeShare Vermont is built on the idea of people helping people. Every home-sharing match is unique, thoughtfully tailored to the needs, interests and lifestyles of the individuals involved. The program includes a thorough screening process, ensuring a strong pool of potential housemates, but ultimately, the decision about who to live with is in your hands. Don't miss this opportunity to explore a cost-effective living arrangement that might work for you. Free. Registration suggested at 802-425-6345.

#### Alzheimer's caregivers support group Wednesday, Feb. 12, 3-4 p.m.

Are you caring for someone with Alzheimer's? Do you know someone who is? Please join us for our monthly caregivers support group on the second Wednesday of each month 3-4 p.m. The meetings provide a safe place for caregivers, family and friends of persons with dementia to meet and develop a mutual support system. Note the earlier time during the winter months. For more info: [louisefairbank67@gmail.com](mailto:louisefairbank67@gmail.com). Free. No registration required.

#### February 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.

#### 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](mailto:nicolelibrandi2@gmail.com). Cost: \$60. Registration and payment required by Monday, Feb. 10.

#### 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.

#### 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](mailto:ecross@ecrossphoto.com). Cost: by donation. No registration required.

#### 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 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



Photo by Lila Webster

Students from the Champlain Valley High Senior Service Club practice origami hearts in preparation for the craft night they will be hosting at the Charlotte Senior Center

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.

#### 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](mailto:belizahammer@hotmail.com). \$10 a class. No registration required.

#### Bone Builders Mondays, 9:45-10:45 a.m., Tuesdays, 10:30-11:30 a.m., & Wednesdays, 1:30-2:30 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](https://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](https://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,  
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212 Ferry Road, Charlotte  
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Follow the senior center on Facebook or Instagram at [charlotteseniorcentervt.org](https://charlotteseniorcentervt.org).



## Write Ingredients

# So many days and ways to celebrate food in February

Susan Ohanian  
Contributor

The menus for the next couple of Monday Munches are:

- **Monday, Feb. 10** — Italian wedding soup, Italian salad (greens, tomatoes, zucchini, cucumber, peppers, artichokes and cheese) and maple syrup granola bars.

- **Monday Feb. 17** — baked spaghetti with meat sauce, coleslaw, garlic bread and Ruth's Congo bars.

People seem determined to conquer February doldrums by celebrating food. From National Baked Alaska Day on Feb. 1 and Frog Legs Day on Feb. 29 — with National Pork Rind Appreciation Day and days celebrating pizza, fettuccini Alfredo, clam chowder, brownies, gumdrops, cabbage, carrot cake, ice cream, cherry pie, bagels and lox, tortellini, pancakes, Jell-O, and oatmeal in between — February's theme seems to be "Let's eat!"

Here are two other special February days of note:

- Feb. 9: Read in the Bathtub Day
- Feb. 14: International Book Giving Day

The newest addition to the Little Free Library at the Charlotte Grange, 2858 Spear Street, is a reminder that reading to and with children should start as early as possible. Sandra Boynton's "Doggies: A Counting and Barking Book" is sure to get a toddler repeating woof! yap yap! arf arf arf! bow wow wow wow! over and over — with great pleasure.

A new addition for primary graders, "Boiled Bugs for Breakfast and Other Tasty Poems" by Jack Prelutsky, will produce giggles and guffaws. These two volumes join a great variety of books for older children.

Children of every age enjoy, and profit from, hearing books read aloud. Teaching grades 7-9, I devoted one entire period each week to reading aloud. The mother of an eighth grader notorious for her many fights set foot in the school for the first time to find out if I had any more books like the ones her daughter was bringing home. Mom wanted to read them, too.



Photo by Misa S of Pexels

Then, finding myself assigned to a group of 22 third graders clumped together as the rotten readers, children with the lowest marks on standardized tests, I shocked my colleagues who expressed concern I was "taking time from skills training" by reading aloud to those kids for an hour every day.

Every day.

Parents in that working-class neighborhood were stunned. For the first time their kids, who had loudly proclaimed a dislike of books, began talking enthusiastically about them. Parents searched for "those special books" at the library and bookstores because kids wanted to hear "those stories" again and again. By late spring, those "rotten readers" scored at grade level and above on standardized tests.

Look at the beautiful Grange Hall and that wonderful Little Free Library out in front, carefully designed by Stuart Robinson as part of his Eagle Scout project. Take a look and then celebrate International Book Giving Day by taking a child to this library, where books are available for kids from 8 days to 18 years. And thank the senior center board of

directors, the Flying Pig Bookstore and Cindi Robinson for their ongoing contributions to this worthy effort.

Speaking of books, The Washington Post ran a poll about which adults read and where they get their books (<https://tinyurl.com/4h8aunw5>). Bonus data: This article also includes titles of books readers were least likely to finish.

Since the fourth Thursday in February is National Chili Day, now might be a good time to read about chili hot enough to strip paint, a chili gastromasochists have likened to molten lava. The New Yorker titles this article (<https://tinyurl.com/38mhnwys>) about culinary extremists and exhibitionists "Fire Eaters."

I enjoy a tasty bowl of chili, but when a writer describes people finding "near-death experiences in a bowl of guacamole," I say it's infinitely better to read about it than try to eat it.

Whatever food you choose, remember this: You can celebrate Feb. 9 by reading in the bathtub.

Presidents Day, Feb. 17 this year, now

honors all presidents, so think of Thomas Jefferson's great legacy, the rare and unusual vegetables grown at Monticello (<https://tinyurl.com/yzfxcdse>), including asparagus bean, sea kale, tomatoes, rutabaga, lima beans, okra, potato pumpkins, winter melons, tree onion, peanuts, "sprout kale," serpentine cucumbers, cauliflower, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, orach, endive, chick peas, cayenne, "esculent rhubarb," black salsify, sesame and eggplant.

There's a long history of first ladies distributing produce grown on White House grounds. During the Civil War, first lady Mary Todd Lincoln regularly visited local hospitals to distribute strawberries and other fresh fruits to wounded Union soldiers. During World War II, first lady Eleanor Roosevelt planted a Victory Garden, encouraging Americans to grow their own food to supplement food shortages during the war.

Michelle Obama declared that the White House kitchen garden, which she directed to be planted on the lower South Lawn in 2009, "has been one of the greatest things I've done in my life so far." Continuing a long tradition of growing vegetables and fruits on the White House grounds, this garden has supplied the White House kitchen with about 2,000 pounds of fruits, vegetables and herbs each year.

Meals aside, the current president gets one thing right: Continue to fill our school classrooms with our history. Be sure to celebrate the sonnet Emma Lazarus wrote in 1883 to raise money for the construction of the pedestal for the Statue of Liberty. In 1903, her poem, including these words, was cast onto a bronze plaque and mounted inside the pedestal's lower level:

"Give me your tired, your poor,

Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,

The wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,

I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"

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