

The Charlotte News

March 20, 2025

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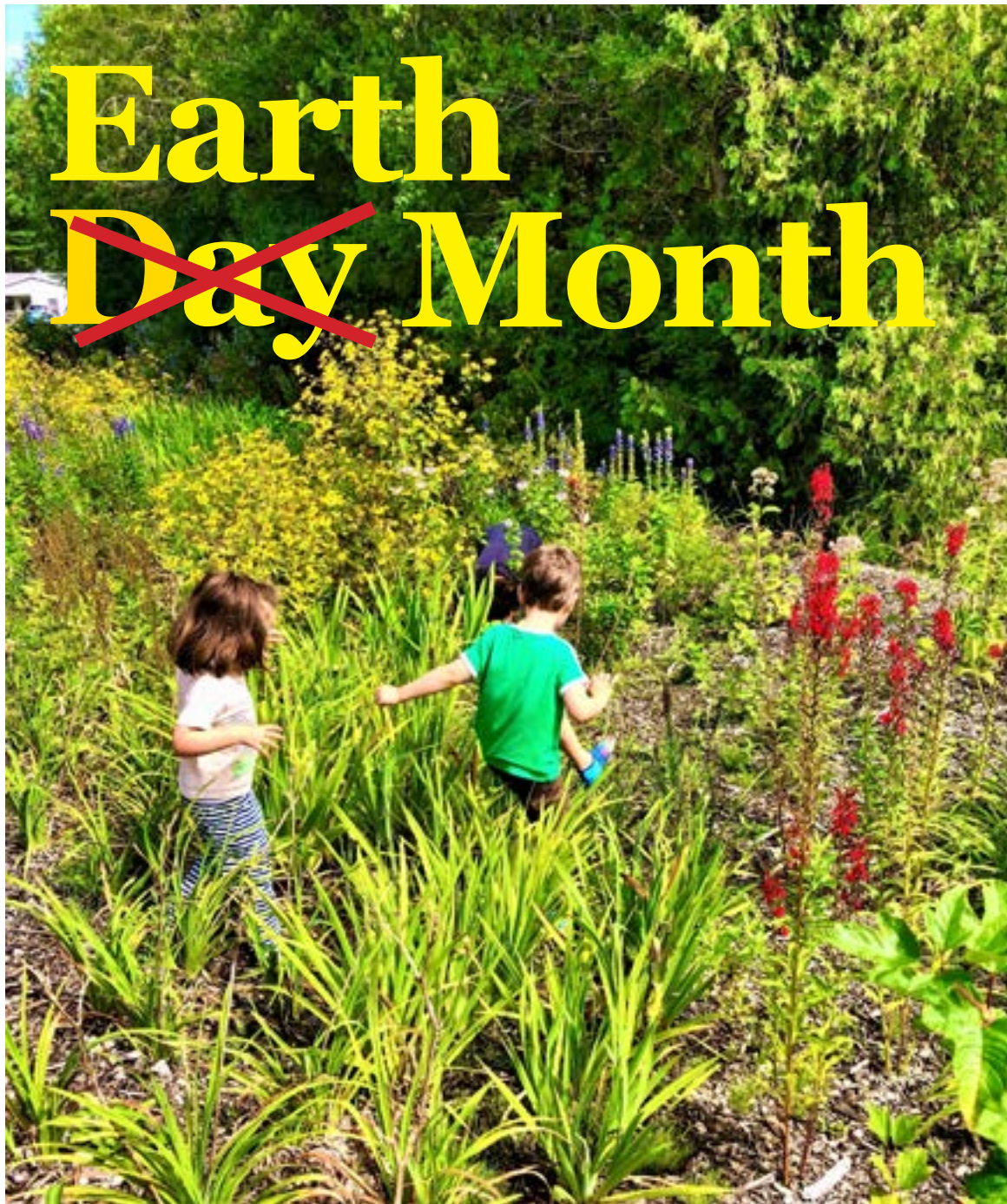


Photo by Myra Handy

Ellery Haulenbeek and Lior Webster explore a rain garden. Besides being good for the environment, rain gardens can teach even our youngest about protecting our water and our Earth.

Charlotte to celebrate the Earth for whole month of April

Alexa Lewis
Contributor

As spring awakens from winter in April, much of the world is getting ready to celebrate Earth Day, but one day is not enough for Charlotte.

On April 22, 1970, the first Earth Day was celebrated in the United States by an estimated 20 million people calling for environmental reform. Fifty-five years later, Earth Day is a global celebration in more than 190 countries with over a billion people exalting the planet and the need to protect it.

However, in Charlotte a coalition of organizations decided last year that one day is not enough, so here, this year again, the earth will be celebrated for all of April, with the month designated as Earth Month. The whole month will be chock full of activities and events with something for everyone — contests, speakers,

demonstrations, walks and more.

While fully recognizing all the negative trends and challenges, from climate change to pollinators disappearing to invasives moving in, organizers are sponsoring a month of celebrating the beauty of Charlotte and the many positive local actions being taken.

Kids will compete to draw pictures of their favorite trees, volunteers will plant trees and shrubs and wake up the town's pollinator gardens.

There's a Repair Café for mending and renewing "stuff" and a demonstration of how to prune trees to promote their health and vitality.

If you want to go for a walk to revel in the glory of being outdoors in Charlotte, there will be an opportunity to climb Pease Mountain with the Charlotte Trails

EARTH MONTH continued on page 2

Weed thrives on Greenbush Road

Scooter MacMillan
Editor

Thank goodness Charlotte doesn't have a police department. When Joan Weed visited the home in 1996 where she now lives on Greenbush Road, she had to flee.

If there had been police stationed nearby, Weed might have been caught.

Weed had driven by the house several times and noticed a for-sale sign out front. She was beguiled.

Weed has been married three times and divorced twice; every time to Dick Weed. Before they remarried for the third time, she made it clear that if he wanted to marry her again, this time they would live in Vermont.

The Weeds were from Connecticut, and both of their roots went back to the 1600s in that state. He agreed, although it wasn't an easy decision.

"Our families were 11 generations in Connecticut, so, it was a big upheaval," Joan Weed said.

She had been flirting with the house for a while, driving by and stopping to walk around

the outside when the owners weren't home. She loved the garden. That was a big selling point for the columnist, who writes a monthly column for The Charlotte News on gardening and cooking.

Joan Weed had a real estate agent take her to see the house, but again the owner wasn't home. Before they left, the real estate agent peered through the windows at the front door. He could see brochures on a table just inside. Having a key for the lock box hanging from the door handle, he said he would just slip inside grab a brochure for her.

He hadn't counted on the burglar alarm which went off. Weed and the real estate agent dashed to the car and beat a hasty retreat.

Later, Joan and Dick Weed revisited the house on Greenbush together, when the owner was home, and they could see the inside. They were immediately captivated.

"It was like love at first sight," she said.

Everything was in bloom when the Weeds moved in on

JOAN WEED continued on page 3

Selectboard reorganization starts a bit disorganized

Scooter MacMillan
Editor

March 10 was the first regularly scheduled meeting of the Charlotte Selectboard after the election, and one of the first items of business was reorganization, but the reorganization began a bit unexpectedly.

As the first step towards reorganization, board member Lewis Mudge nominated Frank Tenney to be this year's selectboard chair, noting that he has been elected three times, been vice chair since 2019 "and probably sat in on more town meetings than the rest of us combined."

But Mudge's nomination was met with silence, before Tenney seconded Mudge's nomination, saying, "I'll second it because

I'm willing to do it."

The ensuing vote was three nays with Mudge casting a lone yes vote for Tenney and with Tenney abstaining because he doesn't think someone should vote for themselves.

Then, Natalie Kanner nominated Lee Krohn, who is one of the two new members of the board along with JD Herlihy.

The vote which followed was 2-2, with Herlihy and Kanner voting for Krohn, Mudge and Tenney voting nay, and Krohn initially following Tenney's lead by abstaining and declining to vote for himself.

With the board at an impasse, Kanner said she understood how voting for oneself may be personally discomfoting, but it doesn't violate a rule or

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SELECTBOARD

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selectboard procedure. She urged one of the two candidates for chair to vote for themselves in a revote.

However, as Tenney pointed out, if he voted for himself, the vote would still be 3-2 against him.

When a revote was taken for Krohn, Herlihy and Kanner quickly voted aye again. After another silence, Krohn eventually voted for himself, breaking the tie.

With Krohn taking over to lead the meeting as chair, Kanner cast a motion nominating Tenney as vice chair.

That vote was confirmed with four aye votes and Tenney abstaining, once again declining to vote for himself.

The board voted to change the starting time for regular selectboard meetings from 6:30 p.m. to 7 p.m., so the next scheduled meeting is 7 p.m., March 24.

Even before the selectboard reorganization, another issue was raised — the deteriorating condition of the Dorset Street bridge over the LaPlatte River. The board had to confront an issue with a hole in this bridge almost two years ago. That problem was patched with a large 1-inch-thick steel plate that covered a portion of the bridge and was paved over. The weight limit was also lowered to 15 tons.

The selectboard allocated not more than \$23,000 for that patch job on the bridge. This patch job will be tens of thousands of dollars, said Mudge.

At the March 10 meeting, road commissioner Junior Lewis suggested lowering the weight limit even more because of three significant potholes that are



Photo by Scooter MacMillan

Despite patches over the years to the Dorset Bridge, originally built in 1939 and reconstructed in 1960, it is showing major signs of deterioration.

about 2 feet by 3 feet and which have rebar showing.

Lewis said he did put cold patch, which is a temporary fix, over the holes.

“I just want the selectboard to know that the cold patch does nothing for the strength of the bridge,” Lewis said. “It’s just cosmetic. It makes it look good, but it’s not good.”

Fixing these holes this time would take

more than one steel sheet, or at least one very large sheet, he said.

From below, the bridge structure is filled with cracks and there are icicles underneath the potholes, which Lewis said he took as an indication that water is seeping through.

In response to a question from Kanner about what the big or medium fixes of the

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EARTH MONTH

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Committee and the Chittenden County Forester or to take a walk in the Charlotte Park and Wildlife Refuge with the Burlington arborist Vincent “VJ” Comai.

A beaver walk is planned. There are also opportunities to hear experts speak about the health of our water, the birds of our region and the plants in our gardens. The new Chittenden County Forester and the trails committee will lead a Tree Identification walk on Pease mountain.

This will be a month of participation; folks can meet the committee members that volunteer in our town, have one-on-one conversations and give back, a little or a lot, to the places they love.

This year the coalition will formally kick off the month’s celebration at 9 a.m., Saturday, April 5, at the library with oodles of information about local Charlotte organizations, a talk by nationally recognized garden writer, speaker and radio and television personality Charlie Nardozzi; fun activities; as well as more info on the month’s events and opportunities for participation for longer-term volunteer roles available throughout the Charlotte community.

More information about Earth Month and the various events can be found on the Charlotte Public Library website at charlottepubliclibrary.org.

The Coalition sponsoring the event

includes the Charlotte Public Library, Charlotte Energy Committee, Lewis Creek Association, Sustainable Charlotte, Rutter Family Tree Fund, Pollinator Pathways, Charlotte Grange, Charlotte Land Trust, Charlotte Park and Wildlife Refuge, Charlotte Trails Committee, and Charlotte Conservation Commission.

Earth Month calendar:

Tree Art Contest – submissions due by Tuesday, April 1, 5 p.m., at the Charlotte Library. Sponsored by the Grange

Pease Mountain update

Wednesday, April 2, 7 p.m., Charlotte Library
Sponsored by the trails committee

Earth Month Kick-Off

Saturday, April 5, 9 a.m.-noon, Charlotte Library
Events will include a pruning demonstration at 9 a.m., exhibit tables, a talk by Charlie Nardozzi at 11 a.m.

Bird Diva

Wednesday, April 9, 7 p.m., Charlotte Senior Center

Hank Kaestner

Friday, April 11, 7 p.m., Charlotte Library

Tree Art Award presentation

Saturday, April 12, 4 p.m., Charlotte Grange

Water Matters! Lewis Creek Association

Tuesday, April 14, 7 p.m., Charlotte Library

Book Talk: ‘The Serviceberry’

Wednesday, April 15, 7 p.m., Charlotte Library

Charlotte Walks

Friday, April 18, 8:30 a.m., Williams Woods Natural Area

Beaver talk & walk

Saturday, April 19, 1 p.m., Charlotte Library

Dark Sky Vermont

Monday, April 21, 7 p.m., Charlotte Library

Pollinator Pathways planting days

Monday-Friday, April 21-25, various gardens around town

Film: ‘Wrenched’

Tuesday, April 22, 7 p.m., Charlotte Library

Arbor Day tree planting

Friday, April 25, 10 a.m., behind Charlotte Town Hall

Repair Café

Saturday, April 26, 10 a.m.-2 p.m., Congregational Church

Trees on Pease Walk

Saturday, April 26, 2 p.m., Pease Mountain

These events are happening all month:

- **Flower seed bombs craft**
Charlotte Library & Charlotte Central School
- **Tempistry Knitting project**
Charlotte Library



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.

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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.

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

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

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JOAN WEED

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Aug. 1, 1996, but in particular, the Clethra. She remembers the date of the move because, at the first of August every year, the Clethra, or summer sweet, blooms in her garden and “perfumes the whole neighborhood.”

Later, after they had bought the house and were settling in, the owners visited to show the Weeds how a couple of things there worked.

During their conversation, the old owners mentioned how, one time when they were out, their burglar alarm had gone off. They never could figure out what had caused it.

Joan Weed didn’t say anything. “I almost clapped my hand over my mouth because it would be just like Dick to tell them who it was,” she said.

Charlotte residents talk about Joan Weed’s deep knowledge of plants, how to tend them and their Latin and common names.

Members of the Charlotte Congregational Church, who have been working on plans for building the church’s Sanctuary and Memorial Garden, appreciate her expertise as a member of the team overseeing the design of the outdoor area which will extend the church’s worship space beyond the walls of the historic church, a space for meditation or commemorative services.

“She has an encyclopedic knowledge of gardening and plants,” said team member Jim Hyde.

Dave Speidel, another team member, talked about what an asset she has been in helping select plants and in working with the landscape architect.

“As an amateur, I’m always impressed with her deep knowledge of the specific varieties that grow well in Vermont. She even knows the scientific species nomenclature of many,” Speidel said. “Maybe it’s because she’s a gardener, but she always has a sunny attitude about life in general.”

Sunny is an apt description of Joan Weed. It is a tribute to her positive nature that she has been able to remain so optimistic in the face of a number of family losses over the years.

In her immediate family, husband Dick Weed died in December 2017. Julie, one of her two daughters, died this past year.

She came from a family with seven kids where money was tight and had to drop out of the University of Connecticut after two years because of finances.

But Joan Weed has maintained a warm and welcoming approach to living. “I can’t remember a time when I heard Joan say a bad word about anybody,” Hyde said. “If she had any bad thoughts, I’m sure she’d find an elegant way to express them.”

Hyde added that she is such a wonderful storyteller “and has led a life that has given her lots of material. I could listen to her stories for hours.”

The Weeds were married for the first time in 1959, then were divorced after 25 years. After the divorce, Joan took her first adult job with a company that owned a string of weekly newspapers around New Haven, Conn. She worked there for 11 years as an ad builder, a legal proofreader



A table in Joan Weed’s garden room is filled with poetry, cooking and gardening books she’s reading and samples of the Valentines she’s been painting for her grandchildren for 33 years.

and eventually in classifieds, until she had to quit because she was going to have two patients to take care of.

The Weeds’ oldest of three children, daughter Julie, was born with only one kidney, and it had never worked well. In 1989, Dick Weed gave one of his kidneys to their daughter. In those days before kidney transplants were done by minimally invasive or laparoscopic surgery, both the donor and recipient were cut from stomach to back. So, both daughter and father were confined to bed for months.

Shortly before the operations, the Weeds had remarried. When they divorced for a second time after several years, Joan moved to Vermont, partly to be close to her second daughter and first grandchild, partly because she had dreamed of living here for years. On a drive home from a vacation in the Green Mountain State, she had begun to fantasize about living here.

That kidney lasted for nine years, then Joan gave her daughter a kidney which lasted for more than 25 years.

Despite just having two years of college education, Joan Weed is well educated. Her family may have been poor, but they were avid readers. Her first high school job was in a library, and she read almost everything she could get her hands on. She read by shelves, polishing off one shelf before moving on to another.

“I read the shelves of books that hadn’t been touched in years. They were covered with dust,” Joan said.

She read books of poetry and plays, and not just current plays, but old obscure plays that mainly theater scholars read.

Over the years, she took lots of different classes in different kinds of art — oil and watercolor painting, calligraphy, exploring what she refers to as her “different enthusiasms through the years.”

“Once I had moved to Vermont, I decided that I had better focus,” Joan Weed said.

It occurred to her that she had been a gardener for years, and she had taken so many art classes. She decided she should



Photos by Scooter MacMillan

Gardening and cooking columnist Joan Weed sits in her garden room, so called because it’s filled with windows looking out onto the garden, the source of much of the inspiration for her regular column in The Charlotte News.

direct her efforts toward botanical painting.

“I actually belonged to the American Society of Botanical Artists,” Weed said. Her walls are adorned with many of the watercolors she has done of flowers.

And she studied to be a master gardener with the University of Vermont Extension after her move.

Although her professional career lasted 11 years, she has volunteered for decades, a proclivity that continued when she and her husband settled in Charlotte. She was the first volunteer at the library after it was built. She lasted in that role for more than a decade and through three library directors. Then she moved to the senior center and was a luncheon cook for the Monday Munches for quite a few years.

Now, her time in her garden is limited by a body ensnared by age. Although she still will get down on her knees to weed, getting back up becomes more of a hurdle with each passing year. She relies on garden helpers, and more and more serves as garden supervisor.

And as a garden writer. She had been friends with Melissa O’Brien, a former editor of The Charlotte News, for a couple of years. They had bonded when O’Brien posted on Front Porch Forum that her daughter was turning 8, and the only thing she wanted for her birthday was a real wooden toboggan.

It just so happened that Weed was going through a phase of getting rid of things. One of the things in her garage that she was looking to unload was an old toboggan.

In 2019, a couple of months after Dick Weed died, O’Brien asked her if she would like to write a column for the newspaper.

“That sounds just like the perfect thing to be doing right now,” Joan Weed said. “I love doing it. It was the perfect antidote at the right moment.”

She loves her home and her neighborhood, even though it wasn’t where they had meant to live. Joan and Dick Weed were looking elsewhere for a house to buy together. A small college town in Vermont seemed like just the thing

to the couple at that time, but then a home a few houses down from the Old Brick Store intervened.

“It was the house that found us,” Joan Weed said. “We wanted to live in Middlebury. We thought a college town would be nice.”

But, gardening on Greenbush, what could be nicer?



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APRIL 17
Copy Deadline:
April 11

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April 11

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SELECTBOARD

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bridge might be, Lewis said the big fix would be to replace the whole bridge.

According to state records, the almost 90-foot bridge over the LaPlatte River was originally built in 1939 and reconstructed in 1960.

Around 15 years ago, the town contracted with someone for what might be considered a medium fix, where they chiseled out the bad cement and replaced it.

Town administrator Nate Bareham said he has reached out to the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission and the Vermont Agency of Transportation (Vtrans) to see what short- and long-term funding is available, but since it was the Friday before the Monday selectboard meeting, those inquiries hadn't gone anywhere yet.

"The design of the bridge was terrible," Tenney said. "There is no support directly under the tires."

He said there are supports on the outside of the bridge underneath the guard rails and a support column underneath the middle, but none where vehicles' tires actually travel.

"Where the tires go is where all these

holes are," Tenney said.

Without major alterations or completely rebuilding the bridge, it is almost guaranteed to continue deteriorating.

Lewis recommended lowering the bridge weight limit to 7 tons, which is the weight limit for the town's covered bridges.

When his conventional school bus is completely loaded, Tenney said, it can weigh around 16 tons and carry around 77 younger students and maybe 52 high school students. The school district owns some buses that are even larger and carry more students. However, there are usually less than a dozen students on buses crossing the Dorset Street bridge.

Tenney said he would have to check to see how much his bus weighed when empty, but he suspected it would be close to the 7-ton limit, maybe even over.

Lewis said it would probably take two weeks to get out temporary signs with a lower weight limit for the bridge.

"Meanwhile, maybe we could get somebody from the state bridge inspection to take a look at the bridge, maybe somebody who knows more about bridges than I do," Lewis said.

A motion to lower the weight limit on the Dorset Street bridge from 15 tons to 7 tons passed unanimously.



Photo by Scooter MacMillan

The newly configured selectboard is, from left, JD Herlihy, Lee Krohn, Frank Tenney, Natalie Kanner and Lewis Mudge.



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Letters to the Editor

Remember, without nature man will not survive

To the Editor:

It is no surprise that the environment here in Vermont and around the world is changing faster than most people realize. Here in Charlotte we have the ability to help the town with climate resiliency. It all has to do with beavers.

At one time in America there were tens of millions of beavers, but from the 1600s to the 1800s most of them were killed for fur. But let's not go back but forward to a Charlotte that embraces the beavers.

During last year's storm that blew out a big portion of East Thompsons Point Road, a beaver dam behind my barn on Thorp Brook took the deluge head on and did not break. The lodge was destroyed, but the dam held back the flow and slowed it down.

It is time to help the beavers make all the streams in the town resilient to the storms and floods. Sure, they take up some room, but they also enhance the landscape, bringing with them aquatic brethren, nesting areas for birds and reptiles, food for all animals and slow the flow of water through the landscape. Even the state of Vermont is getting in on it.

On April 19, during Earth Month, the Charlotte Library will hold a talk on beavers with Bob Hyams at 1 p.m., and a beaver walk will happen after as well with yours truly. Good times!

I know some people are opposed to beavers, but they are a valuable resource that can help clean up the lake and provide numerous benefits. And to the local farmers, the size of the dam can be managed through beaver deceivers, and there is even grant funding to help.

Let's take this time to embrace nature for everyone's benefit.

Pete Demick
Charlotte

Week that ends March 23 highlights coyote benefits

To the Editor:

The week of March 17-23 is Coyote Awareness Week. Coyotes are sometimes maligned and misunderstood. Yet, many Vermonters coexist with coyotes in our rural state where many backyards are in forest habitat for coyotes and other wildlife.

According to the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department, the Eastern coyote first appeared in Vermont in the 1940s, and they play an important role in the ecosystem. While coyotes have only been recorded in Vermont since the 1940s, they have a long history of living alongside humans, even in our urban environments. According to the New York Times bestselling book "Coyote America," coyotes lived in the Aztec city of Tenochtitlan, in what is now Mexico City. In fact, a suburb of the Aztec Capital was called Coyoacan, or "place of the coyotes."

In Vermont, we've honored the coyote not by naming a suburb but by naming a basketball team. This year marks the first season of the Barre-based Coyotes, a minor league team under the American Basketball Association. The team's name

is a reflection of the close presence of coyotes in the lives of Vermonters today.

Coyotes benefit our ecosystem by helping to control rodent populations and limiting disease transmission. Vermonters also report that coyotes make them feel closer to nature and enjoy hearing coyotes yip and howl as they establish territory and bond with family.

A 2024 study in the journal Conservation Science and Practice showed that some Vermonters expressed concern that coyotes negatively impact Vermont's deer population. However, the study details that, according to the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department and scientific studies, this is a misunderstanding, and coyotes do not threaten Vermont's deer population.

Animal Wellness Action Vermont, which works to prevent cruelty to animals, is one of several Vermont organizations celebrating Coyote Awareness Week. As the organization's state director, I've heard some Vermonters express a desire to kill as many coyotes as possible. I'm hopeful that with more education and a growing group of people who enjoy viewing wildlife, more people can enjoy sharing the landscape with coyotes instead of viewing them as enemies. Personally, I feel lucky to live in a beautiful setting in the woods, and I'm happy to share this space with coyotes and other wildlife.

Cassie Burdyslaw
Warren

(Cassie Burdyslaw is Vermont state director for Animal Wellness Action and the Center for a Humane Economy, which have members throughout Vermont.)

Outdated regulations, lack of providers challenge eye care

To the Editor:

I didn't always know I wanted to be an optometrist. My first career was as an audio engineer. But I did know I wanted to do something fulfilling and stable. While I grew up familiar with optometry, watching my grandfather work at his optometry practice, it wasn't until my mid-20s that I decided to pursue a degree in the field.

I completed my education, including advanced studies in anterior segment disease and a residency in ocular disease, at the Pennsylvania College of Optometry. Residency is optional for optometrists, but I wanted to gain additional experience — often equated to four or five years in general practice — by working alongside some of the best professionals in the field.

After graduating in 2018 and completing my residency in 2019, I worked in an ophthalmology practice in the Washington, D.C., area, where I learned the value of collaborative care between optometrists and ophthalmologists.

I also witnessed the challenges created by restrictive state laws.

Entering the workforce, Vermont stood out as a place where my skills were needed. I was attracted to the quality of life here, but what ultimately convinced me was the overwhelming shortage of optometric care, particularly for routine and disease management services, and in

LETTERS

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rural areas lacking access.

Like D.C., Vermont's scope of practice laws currently prevent optometrists from performing certain procedures they are fully trained to do, forcing patients to wait for long periods of time between appointments or travel out of the state for care.

In my practice, I often see a common post-cataract surgery condition called posterior capsular opacification, which can be treated with a quick, low-risk laser procedure. In states where optometrists are allowed to work under a full scope, this procedure can be easily performed in the office when it is identified.

In Vermont, patients might wait weeks or months for an available ophthalmologist.

The same is true for administering steroid injections to treat small lumps and bumps. Optometrists are trained to perform these procedures, yet we must refer our patients out because of outdated regulations.

The proposed optometric scope expansion bill is not about pushing boundaries or patient convenience. It's about creating more access to vital healthcare services by allowing optometrists to provide their patients a full spectrum of care to better serve their communities.

Long wait times have a significant impact on elderly patients, those on Medicaid and people in rural areas who already struggle with accessing health care.

Expanding the optometric scope would allow patients to receive timely care while reducing the burden on overextended ophthalmologists, who could then focus on more complex surgeries like retinal repairs, corneal transplants and cataract surgery.

Beyond patient care, expanding Vermont's optometric scope would likely have a positive economic impact on Vermont. The state would become a more

attractive place for optometrists to live and work, creating job opportunities and encouraging young professionals to settle here.

It would also minimize the need to refer patients outside the state's borders for care.

When I moved to Vermont, I knew I would be limited in my work due to state laws. But it is frustrating to see patients suffer unnecessarily because of outdated regulations.

Healthcare policy should be based on education and evidence — not arbitrary restrictions.

By expanding the optometric scope, Vermont has an opportunity to improve patient care, reduce wait times and welcome more optometric professionals.

The time to act is now.

Alexander Van Dyck
Montpelier

(Alexander Van Dyck practices optometry in Williston.)

Remember Vermont's Medal of Honor recipients on March 25

To the Editor:

As a veteran, when I hear the words "Medal of Honor" I think of those military men and women who have gone far beyond their expectations of duty, many giving their lives to save their fellow comrades or shipmates. Vermont has had a number of Medal of Honor recipients, 66 to be exact, that were born or enlisted in Vermont, with the honor being credited to Vermont.

Dating from the Civil War when the Medal of Honor was established, Vermont holds some unique recipients, like Willie Johnston, only 13 years of age from Salem, now part of Derby, who remains the youngest individual to receive the Medal of Honor. The first submariner and only enlisted submariner, Henry Breault of Grand Isle, was presented the Medal of Honor by Pres. Calvin Coolidge, also from

Vermont.

Time slowly washes away the heroic feats of the remaining Vermont recipients from the memory of the public consciousness. In 1991, Pres. George Bush signed the law establishing March 25 as Medal of Honor Day. On March 25, 1863, the first Medal of Honor was awarded, so that date should remind us of the valor, bravery and courage the recipients displayed while in harm's way.

Over 40 million men and women have served in the U.S. military. Just over 3,500 have been awarded the Medal of Honor. The list of Vermonters who have received the Medal of Honor is too long to list here; I encourage you to visit the website at <https://tinyurl.com/45mej6u8> to learn more about those fellow veterans and Vermonters and give a moment of pause to honor their service to our state and country.

For information on the Medal of Honor, its history and recipients, visit cmohs.org.

Every day, America's service members selflessly put their lives on the line to keep us safe and free. Please take a moment to let our troops know how much we appreciate their service and sacrifice.

On March 25 at approximately 10 a.m. there will be a Legislature resolution to honor the Vermont Medal of Honor recipients. All veterans able to attend this reading are encouraged to attend at the State House in Montpelier.

Bill Mattoon
Springfield

(Bill Mattoon is commander of the Green Mountain Base of the National

Organization of United States Submarine Veterans.)

Thanks for overwhelming support of school district budget

To the Editor:

On behalf of the school board and administration, we write with gratitude for your overwhelming support of the Champlain Valley School District's fiscal year 2026 budget. On Town Meeting Day, 4,494 people, or 70 percent of voters, cast ballots in favor of next year's school budget. The "yes" votes were among the highest ever recorded in CVSD's history as a consolidated district.

These figures demonstrate two things: significant community support for our schools and the hard work of those who support and educate our 3,700 students every single day. With this budget, the school district will continue to innovate and provide a high-quality educational journey for students that honors identity, forges connection, develops proficiency and fosters direction.

While the district and school board are thrilled with the outcome of Tuesday's vote, we also recognize that this budget reflects the challenges affecting our entire state. As we've shared throughout this process, the fiscal year 2026 budget's cost containment measures require the reduction of nearly 40 staff, faculty and administrative positions. These reductions

LETTERS continued on page 6

Three-car crash



Photo by Robert Caldwell

Charlotte Fire and Rescue, Shelburne Fire, Shelburne Police and Vermont State Police responded to a three-car motor vehicle crash around 5 p.m., Sunday, March 16, at 1508 Ethan Allen Highway in Charlotte. One person was transported to the University of Vermont Medical Center.

LETTERS

Continued from page 5

directly affect our students, colleagues and community.

The Champlain Valley School District has long been known as an educationally progressive organization that benefits from a community that recognizes the vital importance of public education. Tuesday's vote underscores that commitment to education, our students and the work of our educators.

Thank you for your support of our schools,

Meghan Metzler, board chair
Adam Bunting, superintendent

Access to government records more important than ever

To the Editor:

As the days are getting longer and snow is melting it is fitting that this is Sunshine Week — an annual celebration of government records and information as the cornerstone of government accountability and transparency.

A government “of the people, by the people and for the people,” as President Abraham Lincoln famously stated in his Gettysburg address, means people must have access to authentic and reliable records and information. Without this, we're in the dark. As we face an increasingly complex landscape of disinformation and misinformation, access to authentic, reliable and trustworthy government records and information is

more important than ever.

Sunshine Week coincides with a poignant time in our history. It is alarming that our fundamental rights as Americans are currently under threat from an unprecedented dismantling of the federal agencies and unauthorized destruction of federal records and information. Both are critical for ensuring government accountability and transparency, fiduciary responsibility to taxpayers and the public's right to know. The effectiveness of all government programs and services relies on authentic and reliable information. Further, the public's trust in these programs and services relies on transparency, accountability and civic engagement.

Yet, authentic and reliable records and information are being removed from Federal websites, despite being an efficient and cost-effective way to provide publicly available information and actively engage Americans in the Federal programs and services they rely on. Federal civil servants responsible for the management, technologies and use of Federal records and information are being fired or have “voluntarily” resigned or retired. Those recently affected include employees at the National Archives and Records Administration, United States Digital Service, 18F (a digital services team within the General Services Administration) and key Federal agencies dedicated to data collection and research. All told, the recent and ongoing loss of institutional and expert knowledge is staggering.

For Sunshine Week 2025, it is crucial to shed light on Vermont's laws for a transparent and open government. The state of Vermont's commitment to manage and safeguard its local and state government records and information, especially from unauthorized destruction, was established by state law in 1937. Following the Watergate scandal of 1972 and subsequent Congressional action to further ensure government accountability and transparency, while also balancing individual rights to personal privacy, state legislatures, including the Vermont General Assembly, shored up state laws to require the same. Today, government accountability and transparency are governed by what is called the Vermont Public Records Act (1 V.S.A. §§ 315 – 320) and its importance cannot be overstated: access to authentic and reliable government records and information is a fundamental right.

The Secretary of State's office, through the Vermont State Archives and Records Administration fulfills a relatively simple, yet essential, role in the Vermont Public Records Act. It is charged with supporting Vermont government in systematically managing its records and information “to provide ready access to vital information, to promote the efficient and economical operation of government and to preserve their legal, administrative and informational value.” (1 V.S.A. § 317a). The archives, records and information professionals at Vermont State Archives and Records Administration rise to this challenge without fanfare.

The baseline the Vermont State Archives and Records Administration sets for Vermont public agencies is compliance with all six parts of the Vermont Public

Records Act – policy, access, exemptions, management, procedure and enforcement – and with the specific laws and rules that govern each individual agency's records and information. This work is done in collaboration with managers, technologists, legal counsel and other agency stakeholders. The outcomes are effective policies and procedures for managing and safeguarding Vermont records and information and publicly available documentation of what types of records and information are created or received by each public agency. Full transparency. Full accountability.

Why is this important? Full transparency and accountability of what records and information are created or received and the requirements relating to their management are critically important, especially for legal certainty of their authenticity, reliability and trustworthiness. Government programs and services depend on them and the public does too. We, as a nation, stand to suffer profoundly if our nation's freedom of information, public records and right to know laws falter for any American.

The Secretary of State's office is doing and will continue to do, everything in its power to ensure that the public's access to authentic, reliable and trustworthy government records and information is neither disrupted nor prevented. This includes preserving Vermont's rights to a transparent and open Federal government as well.

Tanya Marshall
Williston

(Marshall is the Vermont State archivist and chief records officer and director of the Vermont State Archives and Records Administration, a division of the Vermont Secretary of State.)

Lingering snow



Photo by Bill Fraser-Harris

Good fences may make good neighbors, but good fences also make good views. This is the view looking west off Garen Road.

Rhino Foods founder works to be state's best employer

Scooter MacMillan
Editor

Considering the current administration's targeting of refugees, Ted Castle, founder of Rhino Foods, came to the Men's Breakfast at the Charlotte Senior Center with a refreshing message last Friday.

It wasn't all upbeat, but Castle's talk on March 14 had a good bit of optimism when it came to the issue of refugees.

After graduating in the 1970s from the University of Vermont, where he played hockey, Castle played professionally in Italy and Sweden. He returned to the States and was an assistant coach for a few years at UVM. He was stunned when head coach Jim Cross left, and he wasn't chosen to take over.

He started a company selling Chessie's Frozen Custard and Chesters ice cream sandwiches, which evolved into Rhino Foods. Now, Rhino makes inclusions, which doesn't have anything to do with diversity, equity and inclusion, except that Castle and his company are committed to being inclusive.

Inclusions in this sense are chunks of cookie dough or baked brownies that Ben & Jerry's uses in its ice cream.

Since 1996, Castle said that 35 percent of their employees have been New Americans or refugees. Initially, Rhino Foods had lots of employees from Bosnia, then Croatia and Africa. Now, it's getting lots of employees from Nepal and Afghanistan.

"We wanted to be the best employer for New Americans in the state because we knew that was a competitive advantage for us,"



Photo by Scooter MacMillan

Ted Castle talks to attendees at the senior center's Men's Breakfast for March.

Castle said. "It takes a lot of work to get good at this. And you're never good at it, because it's always changing."

Instead of concentrating on the bottom line, he said what excites him about business is having his business be "a force for good."

Thirty years ago, Rhino instituted "open book management," so everybody in the company knows if it is making or losing money and what the sales are.

"The only thing we keep private is what you personally make," Castle said.

Another thing that they have done to keep employees and help them succeed is something they call "employee exchange." There was a time when Rhino had 50 people and knew a temporary downturn was coming for at least three months when they would only need 30 employees.

The company went to its employees to find

a solution. They suggested the company could lend the employees to other companies like Ben & Jerry's, Lake Champlain Chocolates, Gardner's Supply and Vermont Teddy Bear. In effect, Rhino Foods became a temp agency.

When it came time to send employees to another company the first time, they asked for volunteers, but no one raised their hand. Then, they said they wanted to send their best employees to the other companies temporarily and the response was huge.

Castle said they wanted their best employees to go so that they would represent Rhino well, and so that they bring back ideas Rhino could incorporate into its procedures.

Realizing that most employees don't have even \$500 dollars in a savings account to help if they have a financial emergency, like having their car break down or making a mistake on their income tax, Rhino started a program it calls "income advance." Employees can get a \$1,500 loan with no questions asked and no credit check.

Their paychecks are debited \$50 a week. After the loan is repaid if they don't stop "income advance," money is still deducted that becomes a savings account which some have used to build up money for a down payment on a home.

Ninety-seven percent of the employees who borrowed money through the program continued with it into becoming a savings account, he said.

"I would say our biggest thing right now with the current administration would be our fear for our employees," Castle said.

Report from the Legislature

Much, including education funding, still unsettled in Legislature

Chea Waters Evans
Representative

We're about halfway through the legislative session, and we still don't have a solid plan for education funding. We're unclear about when and how losing federal funds will impact Vermonters, and there's a battle in the State House over the Budget Adjustment Act because certain people think it's OK to put children and pregnant women out on the streets.

My dear friend often quotes her grandmother, who, when asked, would say, "I'm fine. F-I-N-E. Fine!" even if her hair was on fire or her cat had just died.

This is how I feel about the past couple weeks at work. We're fine! Everything is fine! Have several people, including myself, made Titanic references? Sure. But we're plugging away and hoping to resolve some things shortly.

So, education funding and the new system are still very much unknown. There are senators unveiling plans and the education committees are working away at going through the governor's bill and coming up with alternatives or taking testimony on how those processes would affect Vermont kids. It's taking a long time. As it should. I don't think any of us want to rush through this — it's huge and complicated with a lot of moving parts, and any hasty decision-making could have major impacts on our kids. And in my opinion, the kids and their education should be at the top of the priority list, and

anything that comes after that is secondary.

The Budget Adjustment Act, which we call the BAA, is the mid-year spending adjustment bill where we adjust expenses and budget asks. For instance, interestingly enough, the Department of Liquor and Lottery is making less than anticipated, so they needed more money from somewhere else to make sure they can meet their budgetary needs for the year. Fun fact: Since cannabis was legalized, the Department of Liquor and Lottery income is lower, because often in states where cannabis is legal, people drink less.

The one sticking point for the governor is the hotel/motel program. It's not a great program (I've discussed it in this column before), but it's what we have at the moment. As it stands, on April 1, over 400 people will be homeless, including 161 children. The administration doesn't want to continue these programs, and wants to cut the \$1.8 million in funding and vetoed the Budget Adjustment Act because of that.

That amount of money is minuscule compared to the entire budget. Homeless kids sleeping in tents, pregnant women, people with disabilities. You're not living in a motel because everything is going great for you, so why we have to start saving money by kicking kids out of their beds is beyond me. I'm hoping he will come around soon. Feel free to let him know how you feel.

One last little check-in: The town charter passed here in Charlotte, and the next step is to bring it to legislative counsel (our

lawyers) and they will draft a bill that creates the charter for the town of Charlotte. The next part is the tricky part. I will present it to my committee and explain to them why Charlotters wanted it and needed it, and it will likely go nowhere.

As much as I would like to tell everyone what to do and make them do it, I don't think it's going to get very far at this point. The HOMES Act, the law that we are trying to partially exempt ourselves from, just went into effect a couple months ago, and I don't believe that anyone in my committee or in

the Legislature is going to feel comfortable exempting one town from a fairly major provision of that bill because we don't want to have to comply. Saying yes to us would mean we'd have to say yes to everyone, and then that would negate the point of the law in the first place.

I understand why it's important to people, and I will do my very best to advocate for you all, but the reality is that this will probably sit there on the wall for a while.

If you have any questions: cevans@leg.state.vt.us or 917-887-8231.

University of Vermont Health Network Board lacks accountability

Bill Schubart
Contributor

Vermont's VTHC911 coalition is exploring the drivers behind Vermont's soaring health-care costs. Newsletters to date have focused on the high operating costs of the University of Vermont Medical Center compared to other academic medical centers in our region and across the country.

National data shows that non-patient care labor costs are among the highest in the country, including the costs of labor for administration and management. Our key question today is why the governing boards of the University of Vermont Medical Center and the University of Vermont Health Network allow this to happen. How did we get to the point where our nonprofit academic medical center stands out as one of the most expensive and least cost-effective centers in the nation?

Contrary to some assumptions, the University of Vermont Health Network isn't a hospital. Chartered as a nonprofit, it's a business acquisition, aggregation and integration network of six nonprofit hospitals in Vermont and New York and two home health agencies.

Nonprofits by statute are driven by mission not by profitability, although maintaining a positive fund balance through earnings and philanthropy are critical to their survival.

A review of the slate of University of Vermont Health Network trustees indicates a mix of current and retired medical professionals as well as some engaged community leaders. Of the 21 trustees, five are compensated by the healthcare institutions they represent, creating possible conflicts-of-interest, so conflict-management is critical when it comes to voting on issues that impact the trustee's own healthcare facility.

In general, it's unusual for highly compensated employees to serve on the boards that oversee their operations.



Adobe Stock photo

Two common exceptions are hospitals and universities, where the knowledge and experience of doctors, researchers and professors may be needed to better inform institutional decision-making. These individuals, like a president if they serve on the board, are subject to rigorous conflict oversight and must abstain if the discussion and vote relates to their authority or compensation.

And as a former chair of Fletcher Allen Healthcare, I'd like to see more community advocates on University of Vermont Health Network's board, especially those representing the interests of ones who are underserved in the system, such as advocates for expanded mental health and substance abuse disorder treatment and Vermonters without shelter or adequate nutrition, both of which are known to be "moral determinants of health."

University of Vermont Health Network's stated mission is: "The University of Vermont Health Network improves the lives of our patients by delivering outstanding care cost-effectively, as close to patients' homes as possible." This alludes to geographic access but ignores timely access — a well-documented and ongoing failure — as is their failure to deliver "cost-effective" access.

In what publicly-available reporting do the trustees of University of Vermont Health Network hold their current leadership

accountable for delivery on its mission, which by all national measures related to cost and access is among the worst in the country?

And what explains, in spite of a recent "quality" downgrade by Medicare for excess readmissions and an unacceptable rate of hospital-acquired infections (infrastructure hygiene), the University of Vermont Health Network board's decision to award its president a \$480,000 performance bonus and lesser performance bonuses to the rest of management — some \$3 million in all? How much of the clinical care that Dr. Sunny Eappen chose to cut could have been supported by these bonuses awarded for negative performance?

Meanwhile the governing boards of the six nonprofit hospitals in Vermont and New York owned by University of Vermont Health Network apparently have no clearly-articulated governing authority. Their budgets and various network reports are simply handed to them for approval. Inexplicably, Eappen, the president of the University of Vermont Health Network, also serves on the boards of all the owned Vermont hospitals.

I've spoken personally with two board members of the University of Vermont Health Network-owned hospitals, and they say they have no idea what their actual role is as it relates to matters of board governance. Each assumes their

role is "advisory." This is not accountable governance. Under both state and federal statutes, trustees have specific legal, financial and reporting responsibilities with which they must stay current.

Nonprofit governance, in fact, is remarkably elegant in its simplicity, but if trustees don't understand and exercise their responsibilities, they undermine their own organization — an all-too-common situation that negatively impacts Vermont healthcare.

A fundamental board responsibility is to search for, hire, remunerate and annually review the performance of the executive director (and dismiss them if need be). The board must also engage in preemptive succession planning.

Management accountability is articulated in the executive director's job description and signed off on by both parties. An accurate job description is the key document to which the president is held accountable.

Strategic and operating plans originate from management and are presented to the board for discussion, amendment and approval. These plans then become the basis for accountability and the president's annual performance review.

Core board responsibilities are to oversee and ensure:

- Delivery on mission — by ensuring that strategic and current-year operating plans are fulfilled.
- Ethical and legal integrity — review and approve published employee guidelines especially with regard to equal opportunity, diversity and conditions that can lead to "moral injury."
- Financial integrity — monitor balance sheet trends and strength, approve annual budget and periodically review reports of performance against budget.
- An annual 360-degree performance review of the president that includes anonymous feedback from staff, trustees, stakeholders and the community. This is measured against an annual performance self-assessment submitted by the executive director.

Although most nonprofit failures are traceable to bad governance, in my experience, the single most common board failure results from not having conducted a thorough and honest performance evaluation of their president.

When an organization flounders, blame usually falls on the leader, but they are chosen, overseen and remunerated by the board. So, when a nonprofit fails, look to the board for an explanation. Trustees are both accountable and liable. By all measures of mission — quality, access — and affordability — the University of Vermont Health Network is failing abysmally, and we are the losers. Do trustees see this?

The vitality of our healthcare systems is intrinsic to all our wellbeing. And it's imperative that we have a commonly shared understanding of accountability and governance.

(Bill Schubart, former board chair of Fletcher Allen Healthcare and board member of VHC911.org, is an adviser to The Charlotte News.)

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Food Shelf News

Springing forward with Charlotte Food Shelf upgrade

Peggy Sharpe and Mike Yantachka
Contributors

The food shelf is happy to announce that Peter Fenn, owner of Fenn and Company, has volunteered to do our food shelf upgrade project. Fenn is a talented builder and contractor who has been operating his business in Charlotte since 1990.

The project will be done in April with all the new equipment and supplies purchased through grant money from the Food Bank and all work completed by volunteers.

We are extremely grateful for his generosity in sharing his time and talents to helping us get this done.

Most people in Charlotte probably know that there is a food shelf in town that helps provide food to residents in need. But if you asked them where it is, who administers it and how it works, you'd probably get a blank stare. I will attempt to provide some insight about how the Charlotte Food Shelf operates behind the scenes with the help of many volunteers.

The Charlotte Food Shelf is an

all-volunteer, nonprofit charitable organization with a board of directors that oversees its operation. It operates out of the basement of the Charlotte Congregational Church vestry through the generosity and blessing of the church's parish council. There are about 40 volunteers that work to buy food and supplies, pick up, deliver, stock all the purchases, distribute food and basic supplies to over 30 families and individuals from Charlotte and North Ferrisburgh and perform many other necessary support functions like writing this article and sending thank-you notes.

Besides food, children's clothing, backpacks and sneakers are made available. In addition, assistance is provided for other things like utilities and emergency expenses for bills.

The food shelf purchases food and supplies from the Vermont Food Bank, Costco and Hannaford, as well as from local farms. It always welcomes donations of food and money.

Each month the food shelf receives a delivery from the Vermont Foodbank, which provides food shelves across the

state with produce. On the Tuesday before a distribution, an order is placed online with Costco, and volunteers pick up and deliver the order to the distribution location where other volunteers unload, sort and shelve the items.

For items unavailable at Costco, volunteer shoppers purchase other supplies at Hannaford. The Wednesday and Saturday distributions are staffed with four to six volunteers who welcome clients, help them shop and carry their wares to their vehicles.

Organization is key to making the operations work smoothly, of course, and there are tasks that are handled by members of the board of directors.

Volunteer recruitment and scheduling is one of these important tasks. Keeping track of the type and quantity of the goods going in and out is also a time-consuming job handled by board members as well as writing grants and fundraising efforts.

The finances are tracked and handled by the treasurer who is assisted by other volunteers. So, running a local food shelf really takes a village. We welcome you to become part of our team.

Call 802-425-2402 or email at ckmj@comcast.net to get involved.

Our schedule:

- Wednesdays 4-6 p.m. and Saturdays 9-11 a.m. (second and fourth of the month, unless otherwise noted)
- Wednesday, April 9
- Saturday, April 12.

The food shelf will be closed the week of April 20 for renovations, and there will be no food distributions on April 23 and April 26.

For applications for grant assistance, forms are available at the food shelf and on the website. Applicants must reside in Charlotte or North Ferrisburgh.

If you would like to donate to the Charlotte Food Shelf, you can use your PayPal account or your credit or debit card. If you prefer to donate via check, you can make checks payable to Charlotte



Food Shelf, Inc. and mail to: P.O. Box 83, Charlotte, VT 05445. For more information, call 802-425-2402.

A convenient way to support the food shelf is to sign up for monthly donations through PayPal, which will allow you to spread your donations out over the year.

The Charlotte Food Shelf is a nonprofit tax-exempt organization. Gifts

are tax deductible within the guidelines. You can also make a contribution using the QR code or by going to <https://tinyurl.com/2e8yz2zz>.



Cows with no beefs



Photo by Elizabeth Hunt

With most of the snow melted, a herd of happy cows graze on Lake Road.

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Charlotte events, people or places. We want to publish your photos. Email them to: news@TheCharlotteNews.org



The Charlotte News

Hi! Neighbor

McColgin defending the underdog, teaching meditation

Phyl Newbeck
Contributor

David McColgin has spent his entire career representing criminal defendants. Convinced that our country sends too many people to jail for too long, he has devoted his life to doing what he can to keep people out of prison or have them serve shorter sentences.

After taking a criminal law clinic at New York University Law School, McColgin discovered that most criminal law was based on constitutional law which meant that defense work was really defending constitutional rights.

“I found that defending the underdog against the awesome power of the state was the work I wanted to be doing,” he said.

After six years as a public defender for Legal Aid in New York City, McColgin moved to Philadelphia where he worked for 25 years, eventually becoming the head of the Appeals Unit for the Federal Defender Office before leaving urban life behind. McColgin’s husband had attended the School for International Training in Brattleboro and McColgin had always harbored a desire to move to Vermont.

“I wanted to get out of the big city, and we were looking for a progressive rural state with mountains and snow where I could continue doing defense work,” McColgin said. “Vermont was the only state that fit all those criteria.”

McColgin worked as a staff attorney in the Vermont Federal Public Defender Office from 2012 to 2022. He is partially retired but still does court-appointed appellate work for the Second Circuit Court of Appeals. He is also the defense counsel at Federal Recovery Court in



Photo by David McColgin

David McColgin and his husband Eloy Guzman on top of Mount Philo.

Rutland.

The Recovery Court appeals to McColgin because he is interested in alternatives to incarceration. People who participate in the Recovery Court for a year are spared a prison sentence if they graduate successfully.

“It’s a way of promoting recovery and keeping people out of prison,” he said. “Studies show that putting people in prison doesn’t help with recovery. The highest rate of overdoses is people who have just been released from prison.”

In the 1980s, McColgin became interested in meditation and yoga.

“I was looking for something that would be good for my health,” he said. “I had a lot of stress from being a public defender in Philly.”

Eventually he discovered the Art of Living Foundation and was hooked. McColgin described Art of Living as a breathing meditation that brings about a deep meditative state.

“Breath is energizing and cleansing,” he said. “It works on emotional, physical, mental and spiritual levels and produces a cleansing, revitalizing feeling.”

McColgin organized Art of Living courses and then went through a two-year teacher training process. He teaches the practice on-line and in person at individual homes and the Ten Stones Common House.

McColgin moved to Charlotte in 2013.

“I like being in a small rural community and having mountains and the lake nearby and living on the side of Mount Philo,” he said.

McColgin grew up downhill skiing, but since moving to Vermont he has gravitated towards backcountry skiing with alpine touring gear, often spending his time at Camel’s Hump Nordic Center, the Bolton backcountry and on the Camel’s Hump Challenge Trail.

“Once I moved up here, I realized this is where I should have always been living,” he said. “I love the fact that we have six distinct seasons including stick and mud seasons. I love seeing dramatic changes from season to season.”

McColgin appreciates the fact that he can see the Milky Way at night and enjoys taking moonlight hikes up Camel’s Hump.

Lately, McColgin has gotten involved in Third Act Vermont, an organization founded three years ago by Bill McKibben to harness the energy, wisdom and time of people 60 and older. He was part of the divestment action team which tried to get the Vermont Pension Investment Commission to divest from fossil fuels. While that didn’t happen, the commission did agree to develop a decarbonization plan. McColgin is now a co-facilitator for the coordinating committee and was pleased to be part of a successful lobbying day at the State House which combined 50 Third Act seniors and 15 students from the University of Vermont.

McColgin is also on the board of Therapeutic Works which provides transition and stabilization for people coming out of prison; either from finishing a sentence or being released on bail. The organization helps provide therapy and assistance for housing, getting medication and other requirements for reintegrating into society.

Although McColgin notes that defense work can be frustrating, he has never regretted his career choice. He says that what has kept him motivated is the inspiration he gets from his clients and his desire to make sure they are not defined by the worst day of their lives.

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Education

Moments of student kindness highlighted by principal

Naomi Strada
(Summarized by Tom Scatchard)

This week in the Charlotte Central School newsletter, principal Tim O’Leary wrote about the small but powerful moments of kindness, sincerity and inclusion that happen frequently at the school. When he asked staff members to share examples of kindness they have seen from their students, many examples were given, including the following:

- A first-grade student helped a friend who was stuck on an activity by giving them a clue rather than the answer. This small act of kindness allowed their classmate to experience the pride of solving the problem independently.
- A second-grade student noticed a peer who was alone during ease-in time and invited them to color together, fostering an inclusive and caring classroom environment.
- In another second-grade moment, a student showed kindness by offering a classmate an open seat at morning circle, ensuring everyone felt welcome.
- A fourth-grade student checked in on a friend who was having a tough day, showing kindness and sincerity in making sure they felt supported.

- When a fifth-grade student’s locker organizer collapsed and their belongings scattered, another student immediately stopped what they were doing and helped pick everything up - before being asked.

- A sixth-grade student has been taking time each day to check in with a classmate who struggles socially. They make sure their friend is included in group work, games and conversations, helping them feel seen and valued.

- An eighth-grade student showed incredible kindness and concern for a peer’s well-being when they took the time to speak with the school counselor and an administrator last week.

These are just a few examples of the kindness and empathy shown by students at Charlotte Central School.

School variety show

The school variety show is back on Thursday, March 27, 6:30-8 p.m., in the Multi-Purpose Room. Whether you’re a singer, dancer, comedian or have a hidden talent, you will be able to take the stage.

Positions are available for a master of ceremonies, backstage crew and adult volunteers to help make this event unforgettable. Don’t miss your chance to be part of the action. It’s going to be an

epic celebration of talent, creativity and community.

For all the details about registration, volunteer sign-up, audition dates, practice sessions and more, visit charlottecentral.wixsite.com/ccspto/event-details/variety-show.

Administrative positions posted

Tim O’Leary and Beth Slater, Charlotte Central School’s current principal and assistant principal, plan to apply for the school’s administrative positions that have been posted for hire for the 2025-26 school year and beyond.

Shortly after O’Leary and Slater stepped into their roles in January, the Champlain Valley School District leadership informed them that these positions would be posted for hire as part of the district’s standard process to ensure a full, open and thorough hiring process. O’Leary informed staff about this in advance and said that both he and Slater intend to apply.

Safe drinking water

All of Charlotte Central School’s drinking water sources used by students and staff have been tested as safe from lead. As required of every Vermont school by Act 66, the school recently had the taps tested

and those labeled as “hallway drinking fountain” are all at the lowest rating.

A handful of taps — none of which are used for drinking or cooking — tested above Vermont’s action level. These taps have been labeled as non-drinking water and will be replaced with new fixtures and filters, which is standard practice in Vermont schools.

Discussions about technology use

The school community recently had a conversation about technology use and community expectations.

After several students spoke up with concern about a video posted by one of their peers on TikTok, a team of Charlotte Central School and Champlain Valley School District leaders reviewed the video and determined there was no threat to individuals or the school.

The Charlotte Central School community saw this as an opportunity to have a wider conversation about digital responsibility and how to navigate online content in ways that align with school values. These discussions help students develop awareness and confidence in making responsible choices.

Charlotte Central School restarts student newspaper

(Note: The Charlotte News is collaborating with some of David Baird’s Charlotte Central School students who have been writing for the school’s newspaper. We share with you some of their work here. Some of these stories are a good bit out of date, but they have done such a good job and worked so hard that we’ve decided to include them.)

Haiku Of the Month

Annie Palmer and Lucinda Smith

A haiku is a type of poem, a haiku has three lines — five syllables in the first line, seven syllables in the second line and five syllables in the third line. We wrote one for you:

Are you excited,
well I hope you are because,
the newspaper’s back!

History of Charlotte Central School newspaper

In November 2023, the Charlotte Central School student council met. They came up with lots of great ideas about how to improve our school, but they were really excited about the idea of a school newspaper.

When they met again the next week, they decided to name it the CCS Press. The first addition took four months to write, and in February 2024, the first edition came out.

“It’s really fun, and I enjoy reading it when it comes out,” said Nyantout Dau, one of the original writers for the CCS Press.

Annie Palmer said, “I think it’s a good experience.”

Mount Philo and its history

Jocelyn Jacobs and Riley Kruger

Have you ever wondered what was there before Mount Philo?

Mount Philo is Vermont’s oldest state park, the mountain’s history is more amazing than its natural beauty. It is the land history of Vermont. The formation of the Champlain thrust fault happened nearly 500 million years ago and helped shape Champlain Valley. Mount Philo is a shaped down part of the leading edge of the thrust fault.

Mount Philo was Vermont’s first state park. Mount Philo has views of Lake Champlain and the Adirondack mountains.

From the late 19th century to 1924, Mount Philo was a popular spot for people at the Mount Philo Inn. The park is a beautiful place to be during the morning, afternoon and golden hour. Crews built the road, the picnic area, the ranger cabin and the campsite. The only way to get into Mount Philo was a carriage road. There was a wooden tower to see people as they walked into Mount Philo.

It was donated to the state of Vermont for the recreational use of the beautiful piece of land.

Mount Philo is an amazing place to view the migrating birds and to see the awesome Lake Champlain.

Mount Philo sits on top of the Champlain thrust fault from the Middle Ordovician age. It is made up of weathered sedimentary rocks. The rocks that hold up Mount Philo were originally settled in during the Cambrian on a submersive margin on a warm shallow aquatic shelf sitting along the east coast of Laurentia.

The land that Mount Philo is on now is 237 acres. Also, the park features hiking trails that lead from the base to the summit of the beautiful mountain. We think that taking care of the environment is important so do your part and keep Vermont green and peaceful.

The history of Philo Ridge Farm

Amelia Akselrod

For all of you who have not been to the amazing Philo Ridge Farm, this is a place that is located at 2766 Mt Philo Road in Charlotte. Philo Ridge Farm is a non-profit organization that sells organic things such as cow hides, honey, frozen beef and lamb. I believe that Philo Ridge has some deep

history behind it so I’m going to find it specially for you.

According to the Philo Ridge Farm, Indigenous peoples lived in this area from as early as 9000 B.C.

By the time European people started to live there in the 1600s, Indigenous western Abenaki tribes were settled in villages throughout the valley. The western Abenaki had a varying and rich food economy that included hunting, fishing, gardening and foraging.

Hunters brought in moose, deer and smaller local animals using snares, traps and bows and arrows. Walleyed pike, black

EDUCATION continued on page 12

EDUCATION

Continued from page 11

bass and sturgeon were caught by canoe. The tribes grew multiple varieties of maize (corn), summer and winter squashes, and kidney, pinto and navy beans near their villages.

They crafted elm baskets for collecting birch and maple saps for sugar. They also tended and gathered wild raspberries, blueberries, elderberries, hazelnuts, black walnuts, acorns, mushrooms, grapes and medicinal plants throughout their territory.

The Abenaki first came in contact with European settlers in the sixteenth century. As French and English land expanded in the seventeenth century, the Abenaki population in Vermont, once 10,000 strong, was devastated by violence and disease.

In the fewer than 30 years between 1762, when the town of Charlotte was put on the maps, and 1791, when Vermont became the 14th state in the Union, the nonindigenous population of Vermont jumped from 300 to 85,000.

Rapid settlement continued over the next century. Merino sheep were introduced to Vermont in 1811, and their wool soon became a major source of income for regional farmers.

In the late 1840s, wool prices fell and many Vermont farms progressed to more high-paying dairy farming. Milk was made into cheese and butter and shipped by railroad to out-of-state markets.

After the refrigerated railroad car was invented in 1910, Vermont began shipping fluid milk in large quantities to Boston and New York. On the back of this new distribution channel, the dairy farming industry grew to define the Vermont landscape.

Charlotte Central School sports report

Matilda McCracken

Girls A-Team — four wins, nine losses

The girls A-Team started out the season with an unfortunate loss to Williston. However, they came back and beat Hinesburg on Thursday, Dec. 19. Shortly after returning from Winter Break, they played at home, losing to Waldorf.

Seventh grader Colbie Curler said she has been playing basketball for a year and a half and that this year is “very different because last year I was on B-Team with different people. Now I’m with eighth graders and a different coach.”

She said one tip she would give someone just starting is: “Just give it your best. You’re not going to be perfect the first time you try but just keep trying.”

Girls B-Team — three wins, seven losses

The girls B-Team kicked off its season playing away in Williston on Tuesday, Dec. 17. Unfortunately, they lost 36-3.

Two days later, though, they played Hinesburg at home and won. It was a big celebration, considering the previous season they had not won a single game.

“This season, it’s a lot easier because last year when I was in fifth grade we were a lot smaller and playing against seventh and eighth graders who were a lot bigger than us. When we play against other schools, we don’t win a lot, but we have won about three this year, which is more than last year,” said Mia Paquette, a sixth grader on the girls B-Team.

Paquette went on to say she has been playing for two years. A tip she would give beginners is: “Try to get open on your person and make sure you know the plays and get the help you need at practice.”



Philo Ridge Farm

Photo by Lee Krohn

Boys A-Team — five wins, seven losses

The boys A-Team started the season with a home game against Williston on Tuesday, Dec. 17. They unfortunately lost, and that was the case for their next game against Hinesburg on Thursday, Dec. 19.

The boys A-Team made a comeback and won against Waldorf on Jan. 7. They also won against Camel’s Hump and Vergennes.

Boys B-Team — six wins, five losses

The boys B-Team won both of its games against Williston and Hinesburg before December Break. This was a great wrap up of 2024, and a great start to their season.

Caleb Looft, a sixth grader on the Boys B-Team has been playing for four years,

said, “I would say it’s definitely more competitive than other seasons.

His tip was: “Practicing on just getting to the rim and not shooting a lot of deep-range shots. If you’re underneath the rim just put it up.”

Compared to other seasons, he said, “We’re pretty good. We just need to move a little more on offense. I still get nervous before games. I mean you never know if you’re going to win or lose, and it’s always stressful.”

Mathcounts competition at Charlotte Central School

Annie Palmer

On Jan. 17, four students from Charlotte Central School participated in the Champlain Valley School District’s Mathcounts competition. Mathcounts is an after-school program. Its purpose is to get students in sixth-eighth grade excited about math.

The competitions have four rounds. Each competition begins with the sprint round, where each student has 40 minutes to complete as many of 30 problems as they can.

The second round is the target round. In the target round each student gets eight problems split into four pairs, and students have six minutes to complete each pair.

The third round is the team round where students have 20 minutes to solve 10 problems as a team.

The last round is the countdown round. Only the top 10 competitors compete in this round. In this round a problem will be read, as a 45-minute timer starts. Two students at a time will try to hit the buzzer first with the correct answer.

“I think Mathcounts is a really fun experience, and it makes me better at math. My favorite part of the CVSD Mathcounts competition was the sprint round. I think a lot of people are really hesitant to do it because they don’t like math, but you don’t have to be good at math to do Mathcounts. When you do Mathcounts, there is nothing that’s forcing you to go to the competitions, and if you want to quit, you can quit. But I think if you tried it, you might actually find it’s something you really like,” said Matilda McCracken, a sixth-grade student.

Spring floes



So daylight saving time came and now the spring ice break up as seen from ferry docks.

Photo by Lee Krohn

Education

Proposed cut to universal free school meals raises ire

Noah Diedrich
Community News Service

In the face of skyrocketing property taxes across the state, Gov. Phil Scott is looking for new ways to economize Vermont's education spending.

The statewide average property tax bill increased nearly 14 percent last year, triggering calls for cost control and an uncharacteristic red wave in November's election that saw the Vermont GOP pick up enough seats to undo the Democratic supermajority.

Now Scott is setting his sights on programs where he believes the state can afford to cut costs.

His latest target is the \$18 million universal school meal program, a measure he allowed to become law in 2022 that provides free school meals for kids regardless of income.

However, some school nutrition professionals and supporters of Vermont agriculture are pushing back.

Kayla Strom, program manager for Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont, said that not only would ending free school meals for all eliminate an important resource for students, but it could damage another program that stimulates Vermont's agricultural economy and adds nutritional value to the meals themselves.

"If universal school meals were to go away, all the systems that have been put in place — with distributors, with food service directors, with local farms — are at risk because food service directors will need to totally redo how they're operating their meal programs," she said.

The local foods incentive program reimburses schools for the slice of local food they serve to kids. In the first year of membership, schools receive a 15-cents-per-plate reimbursement. After the base year, the grant requires that they reach local purchasing requirements of 15 percent, 20 percent or 25 percent.

If they hit those targets, schools receive a corresponding cent reimbursement. If a lunchroom sources 25 percent of its food purchases locally, then the state reimburses them 25 cents for each lunch they served.

The program has doubled in participation among schools in the last year with 12 districts reaching local purchasing targets, Strom said. "Schools are buying more Vermont products than ever."

Amanda Wheeler, the governor's press secretary, said in an email that the current financial landscape in Vermont is not sustainable for taxpayers, and that Scott's plans to revamp the education system aim to improve student outcomes under a system Vermont residents can afford.

She did not answer questions regarding the effect cutting universal school meals would have on local food partnerships.

"The governor is proposing to roll back universal school meals because the program is regressive. We should not be asking lower income families to pay for meals for more affluent families," Wheeler said.

Scott's proposal to axe the free meals program wouldn't affect all students — children from low-income families would still receive free meals subsidized by the



A cow at Kane's Scenic River Farm in St. Albans.

Photo by Catherine Morrissey

“The governor is proposing to roll back universal school meals because the program is regressive. We should not be asking lower income families to pay for meals for more affluent families,”

— Amanda Wheeler, governor's press secretary

federal government.

Families who need financial assistance will still receive it, Wheeler emphasized.

It would be a mistake to cut universal meals, Strom countered. The program brings increased revenue to Vermont farmers and reduces paperwork at schools so food service directors have more time to focus on procuring local foods and cultivating relationships with local farms and suppliers, Strom said.

The universal meals program also helps create a steady market for farmers. School nutrition programs plan their meals months, if not a year, in advance, and some serve year-round, Strom said. This is great for producers, who can depend on their steady patronage.

"Schools are a really stable market," Strom said. "A lot of school nutrition professionals joke that a school cafeteria is the biggest restaurant in town."

Buying more food locally means that more meals can be made from scratch, which in turn means an increase in nutritional value, Strom said. A burger made from local ground beef is preferable to a hot dog, which is highly processed.

"When you're working with local products, you're working with a lot less ingredients," Strom said. "You're also able to control a lot more of all those smaller ingredients that are showing up on a kid's plate."

Karyl Kent, treasurer of the School

again and more packaged foods, processed foods," Kent said.

No matter what happens with free school meals, scratch meals aren't going anywhere in Harwood Unified School District, said Erika Dolan, the district's school food and nutrition co-director.

The central Vermont district was already purchasing 14 percent of its food locally before the program was put into place, Dolan said. Under universal school meals, Harwood Unified was able to raise that portion to 22 percent thanks to the increased revenue.

If the program were to be cut, the district's local purchases would be stymied but not terminated altogether.

"We're going to lose money, so we're definitely going to do less, but we're not necessarily going to switch to all pre-made foods," she said. "Maybe we will not be able to offer as many options, like, you know, a salad bar."

However, some argue that the need for education reform is too dire to pick and choose which programs to keep. Rep. Jim Harrison, R-Rutland, said he wants to bring down the state's overhead — and it's all on the table.

"The reality is, if we're going to tackle school reform, we can't let the perfect be the enemy of the good," he said. "We desperately need to reduce the costs of education, and I'm open to any and all suggestions to improve education quality and at the same time reduce education costs."

On Feb. 12, John Buck, proprietor of Buck Family Maple Syrup, testified in front of the House Committee on Agriculture, Food Resiliency and Forestry in favor of the local incentive program.

Buck's maple syrup is sold to local schools like Washington Village School or to larger local food suppliers like the Abbey Group.

"This program has a huge cultural benefit to Vermont and Vermonters," he said in his testimony. "It helps to keep the rural culture of Vermont alive."

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

Arts & Entertainment

Two vital new books about Vermont and Vermonters

Bill Schubart
Contributor

Two books that look at the past and future of Vermont through two different lenses have just hit bookstores.

They are Will Patten's "Rescuing Capitalism: Vermont Shows the Way" and Roger Allbee's "Turning the Soil: 250 Years of Vermont Agriculture." Their coincident publication brings readers two in-depth looks at Vermont; Patten's from the perspective of 50 years of Vermont business entrepreneurs and the distinctive values that have guided their business decisions, and Allbee's from the perspective of 250 years of agriculture — Vermont's working people and landscape. Although each has its own focus, they both offer the reader incisive views of what has made and still makes Vermont unique.

Will Patten, who grew up in Shrewsbury and now lives in Hinesburg, himself a serial entrepreneur, extols the virtues of capitalism in its purest form and its unique ability to generate wealth for those who add value. From a time when the church owned all knowledge and the king owned all material wealth, capitalism, an invention of 18th century Enlightenment thinkers, gave birth over centuries to a productive middle class that created and thrived on its own wealth.

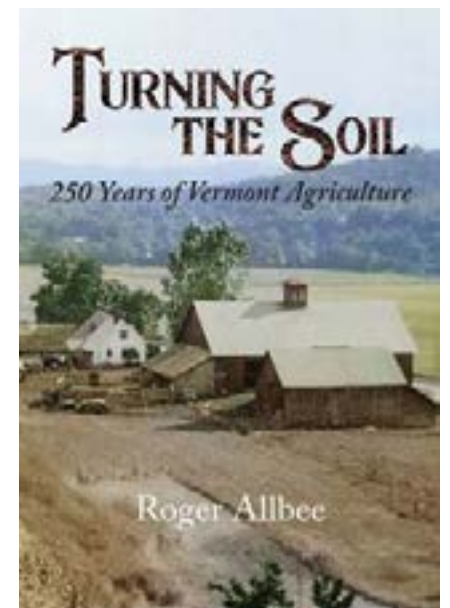
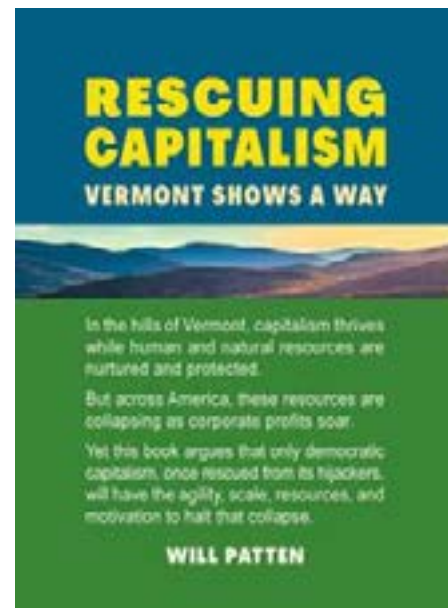
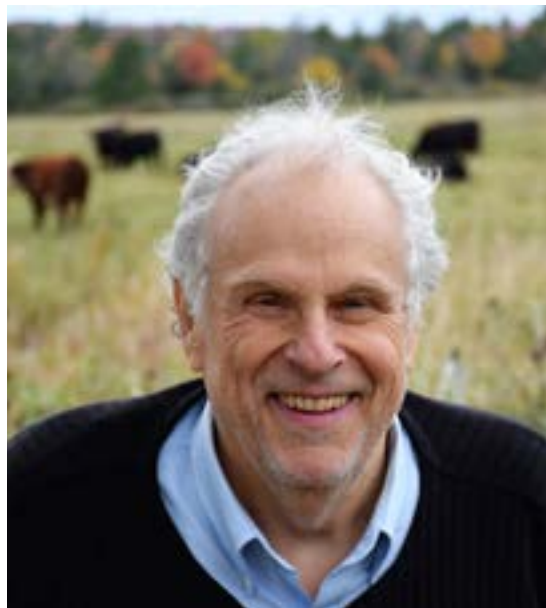
Ever since the Reagan era and its self-serving promotion of "trickle-down economics" by the University of Chicago economist Milton Friedman, who stated that leadership's sole obligation is to enrich its shareholders, the key metrics of a healthy nation in which the good of the individual and that of the public are in balance have deteriorated.

Capitalism itself has become a divisive battleground between business interests inveighing against regulation and taxation and the working class who create the value. This has led to the demonization of the very economic theory that enabled millions to rise out of penury by being compensated fairly for the value they add.

Patten presents us with a multicolored palette of Vermont companies whose leaders chose to see capitalism differently, balancing shareholder interests with those of their employees, their communities and the environment. Patten offers readers a middle ground in a country desperately polarized and unable to speak across ideological lines, as well as a panorama of Vermont values that embraced capitalism at its best.

Roger Allbee's beautiful book gives us a 250-year overview of Vermonters working on and living off their land, from the arrival of new settlers from Massachusetts and Connecticut, seeking land of their own by way of the New Hampshire grants and then defending their new land from tax predators in New York and New Hampshire until, under the leadership of the notorious Allen brothers, the short-lived Republic of Vermont was formed.

Allbee then leads us through the continuing challenges wrought by changing market tastes, competition from pioneer settlers populating the western prairies, emerging agricultural and transportation technologies up to today and the emergence



of regenerative farming by Vermont's many young farmers.

The continuing thread in this finely researched book, like Patten's book, is the embrace of hard work in the face of endless challenges wrought by change and the deep connection between Vermonters and their working landscape. But unlike most historical perspectives, the two native Vermont authors make clear how the past continually informs the future initiative of rugged Vermont farmers and business entrepreneurs.

The concurrent publication of these two fine books not only lays out Vermonters' capacity to live not just off the land but to live with the land amid the 250 communities that dot Vermont.

As both books make clear, Vermonters have chosen to take seriously our Vermont motto: freedom and unity.

I urge you to read both books. Even though each looks at Vermont through a different lens, they share a similar message about Vermont and its hardy inhabitants' intuitive ability to learn from and be guided by their past.

(Bill Schubart, author of Lila & Theron, is an adviser to The Charlotte News.)

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Canine chillin'



Photo by Melanie Goodman

Willow Ruby Herlihy watches the vehicular interactions at the corner of Greenbush and Ferry Roads from her perch atop a large pile of snow.

Weed's in the Garden

Look for spring when primroses, or Primula, bloom

Joan Weed
Contributor

Among the many sought after signs of spring, a not so common one is the budding and blooming of primroses. The genus is called Primula in its Latin name.

In England, the chatter about the primrose is noisy, and you'll find mentions of them in poetry and theatre. Although not native to North America, it has been introduced and hybridized into many forms. Japan and the Himalayan regions are where most of the introductions emanate. The Primulas I am speaking of are a different plant than evening primroses. That genus is officially *Oenothera*. They bloom in high summer.

Spring primroses bloom here in April and May, and the candelabra forms tend to bloom in late June. Plants love diffused light and moist woodland soil and can often be found near vernal pools or along stream banks. They don't like wet feet, nor do they like very dry conditions. They will go dormant in summer's dry heat. Grown in woodland gardens with high canopies on trees, they are most successful. They are hardy in zones 2-9.

While the species blooms are yellow clusters, the hybridized versions come in many colors and bloom forms. Petals can be scalloped, clustered, saw-toothed or even bell-like. They come in various shades of red, pink, pure white, lavender



Primroses come in a variety of colors and petal shapes.

and purple.

The candelabra form of primrose is named that because the stems with clusters stretch so that blooms will show above other nearby plants. They will tolerate standing water more than the shorter versions. If you have ever visited North Hill, the home of Joe Eck and the late Wayne Winterrowd, you might remember their marvelous stand of candelabra

primulas right as you enter their gardens. Every color imaginable makes this welcoming display.

One that I have grown successfully is dawn ansell, a pure white double-flowered variety. I have grown other nameless varieties and all bring joy. One local source for purchase is Red Wagon Plants in Hinesburg. There are sure to be other retailers, but here they are particular



Photos by Joan Weed

favorites.

Primulas should be divided in spring or fall every few years to retain vigor.

They can be deadheaded to produce more blooms but it's always a race until the surrounding garden plants grow up to shade them. Soon they will go dormant. They may disappear completely, but be sure to look for them again the next spring.

Community Roundup

Nominations sought for Dairy Farm of the Year

Do you know of an outstanding dairy farm deserving of recognition? Consider nominating it for the 2025 Vermont Dairy Farm of the Year award. Nominations will be accepted until May 1.

Each year, University of Vermont Extension and the Vermont Dairy Industry Association honor one Vermont farm that demonstrates a strong commitment to dairying through its sound management practices, attention to herd health, quality milk production, sustainable land stewardship, innovative ideas and overall excellence, among other criteria. The award is presented in cooperation with the New England Green Pastures Program, which also recognizes an exemplary dairy operation in each of the other New England states.

To nominate a farm for this award, go to go.uvm.edu/vdfy. Nomination forms and information on past winners, including Scotch Burn Farm, the 2024 winner, can be found at this link.

Agricultural organizations, dairy co-ops, agribusinesses, farmers and individuals are invited to submit nominations. Farmers also may self-nominate, and any previous nominees that did not win this award may be nominated again.

The winner will be announced this summer and featured in the press and on "Across the Fence," the University of



Vermont Extension's dairy farm, home and community show on WCAX-TV. The Vermont winner, along with those from the other New England states, also will be honored at a special awards banquet at Eastern States Exposition in West Springfield, Mass., in September.

For questions or to request a paper copy of the nomination form, contact Peggy Manahan at 800-639-2130 or peggy.manahan@uvm.edu.

Celebrate Red Cross Giving Day with financial or blood donations

The American Red Cross of Northern New England is issuing a call to help ensure no one faces a disaster alone by donating on Red Cross Giving Day, March 26.

During the first 50 days of 2025, Red Cross volunteers responded to more big disasters across the U.S. than calendar days. Since January, seven Red Cross volunteers from Vermont have deployed to help communities recovering from



disasters like the Los Angeles area wildfires and flooding in Kentucky.

And that's on top of everyday crises like home fires that have upended lives here in Vermont. Our local disaster-action teams have responded to 27 home fires since the start of the year, assisting nearly 100 Vermonters. Meanwhile, more Red Cross blood donations have gone uncollected so far this year due to weather than throughout all of 2024.

"This year's disasters have set a whirlwind pace, displacing thousands of people from their homes across the country and disrupting the nation's blood supply for patients," said Stephanie Couturier of the Red Cross of Northern New England. "As we enter spring disaster season, families are relying on us to come together as a community and support them when help can't wait during future crises."

Visit redcross.org today to make a financial donation or to schedule an appointment to give blood or platelets in this month.

Donations will be part of Red Cross

Giving Day, which aims to rally 30,000 individuals to help people affected by disasters big and small. A gift of any size makes a difference. For example, a donation of \$3 can provide a comfort kit with supplies like a toothbrush, comb and shampoo, and a gift of \$11 can provide a nutritious meal, snack and drink.

For those who are able, any donor who gives \$140 or more in March will receive a choice of a Red Cross monopack or a pair of socks as a thank-you for their support. Donors can make their gift and claim their thank-you by visiting redcross.org any time during March.

To help overcome the significant weather impact on blood donations, the Red Cross also urges the public to give blood or platelets by making an appointment today at RedCrossBlood.org, on the Red Cross Blood Donor App or by calling 1-800-RED CROSS. People of all blood types are needed now to help avoid further strain to the blood supply.

The Red Cross is expanding its health offerings by performing free A1C testing (commonly used to screen for prediabetes and diabetes) on successful blood, platelet and plasma donations in March. Additionally, all who come to give blood, platelets or plasma through March 31 will receive a \$10 Amazon.com gift card by email. See redcrossblood.org/march for details on both offers.

Gardening

Grow herbs indoors to add flavor and fragrance to home

Deborah J. Benoit
University of Vermont Extension

Winter weather may be on the wane, but it will still be a while before we can get outdoors and work in the soil. Even so, there's no reason not to enjoy fresh, homegrown herbs.

Herbs grown indoors don't care what the temperature is outside, whether there's rain or snow or what season it is. Your indoor herb garden can be a pot of basil on a sunny windowsill or a collection of your favorite herbs grown under lights.

What herbs do you want to grow? Oregano (*Origanum vulgare*)? Sage (*Salvia officinalis*)? Basil (*Ocimum basilicum*)? Consider those you use most.

Perennial herbs such as sage, oregano or thyme (*Thymus vulgaris*) can live for years and can be grown indoors or outside in your garden. Tender perennials such as rosemary (*Salvia Rosmarinus*, formerly *Rosemarinus officinalis*), can be grown indoors year-round or moved outside during warm weather. Annual herbs such as basil or biennials like parsley (*Petroselinum crispum*) will need to be replaced each year.

You could even grow catnip (*Nepeta cataria*) for your feline friends. It (and other herbs) can be used to brew a relaxing cup of tea. This member of the mint family can be grown in a sunny window in a hanging basket to keep it out of kitty's reach.

Once you've decided what herbs you want to grow, decide how you'll meet their basic needs. Most herbs need plenty of light. Do you have a window that receives direct sun for six to eight hours a day? If not, grow lights can help provide the light needed for healthy, productive plants. You can learn more about grow lights at go.uvm.edu/grow-lights.

If you're relying on a sunny window, turn the pot every few days to prevent one-sided growth.



Photo by Monika/Pixabay

An indoor herb garden can be as simple as a pot of basil on a sunny windowsill or a collection of favorite herbs grown under lights.

Be sure to check the watering and fertilizing needs of individual herbs. Some will grow best if you keep the soil slightly moist, while others do better if you allow the soil to dry between watering. Avoid overwatering.

If the air in your home is dry, your indoor herb garden may need additional humidity. If you're only growing a few herbs, mist the plants regularly. Alternatively, multiple plants can be placed on a layer of pebbles in a shallow tray filled with water. Keep the water below the top of the pebbles. As the water evaporates, it will raise the humidity around the plants.

Purchasing plants can provide instant satisfaction, but starting from seed will allow you a wider variety of choices.

If you grow herbs from seed, you'll need a container and potting soil. Follow recommendations for planting on the seed packet and cover the container with a plastic bag to increase humidity until the seeds sprout. For more information on starting seeds, see go.uvm.edu/seed-



Photo by sixteenmilesout/Unsplash

With proper light, water and care, an indoor herb garden will provide plenty of fresh, homegrown herbs in winter and year-round.

starting.

If you have the room, a plant stand can provide a convenient home for a variety of herbs. If your available space is limited, consider a tabletop grow light to create a kitchen counter herb garden. What could be handier than fresh herbs within easy reach when you're cooking?

Another alternative is an all-in-one tabletop unit that combines a grow light and a hydroponic growing system. It provides an easy way to start seeds and grow herbs without the need for soil. Maintenance includes refreshing the water and adding a recommended fertilizer according to the system's instructions.

Whether you choose to grow a plant stand full of herbs or a single pot of rosemary, herbs will add fragrance and flavor to your indoor garden.

If you have questions about herbs or other gardening topics, contact the University of Vermont master gardener helpline at go.uvm.edu/gardenquestion.

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

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Gardening

Using a plant stand for indoor gardening

Deborah J. Benoit
University of Vermont Extension

Each winter, gardeners bid farewell to their outdoor growing spaces and turn their attention to other ways to occupy their days. Magazines and seed catalogs provide inspiration, but there's nothing like gardening indoors to satisfy your inner gardener.

Plant stands with grow lights are a convenient way to bring your garden inside. They provide a place to gather plants together when you lack space, available windows or sufficient light. With your plants in one place, it's easy to monitor their health and be sure they're receiving sufficient humidity (a common problem with the dry air inside during winter).

Plant stands can be plain or fancy. Some are made of wood and can be embellished to create a piece of furniture that would look good in any room. A homemade plant stand can be assembled from purchased components such as a wire shelving unit and some grow lights.

Wire shelves may appear more utilitarian but add a clean look to your indoor garden and aid in air circulation, which is necessary for plant health. Purchased plant stands make setup quick and eliminate the need to select separate grow lights.

If you'll be using multiple grow lights, be sure the power strip they're plugged into is away from dripping or splashing water. Consider adding a timer to turn lights on and off for consistent hours of light.

For best results, lights should be positioned close to the top of plants but not touch foliage. A short chain between the light fixture and a hook attaching it to the plant stand make adjustments easy. If the light is in a fixed position, you can always add a book or similar object below plants to move them closer to the light.

To learn more about choosing and using grow lights see go.uvm.edu/grow-lights.

Some indoor gardeners display flowering houseplants such as African violets (*Saintpaulia*) or Cape primrose (*Streptocarpus*) on plant stands. Others

may need a place for tender perennials saved from last year's garden. Plant stands can also serve as a propagation or seed-starting station.

If you're overwintering outdoor plants, particularly those needing "full sun," a plant stand can make sure they receive sufficient light to survive the cold season in good health.

These stands also provide a great place to root cuttings from plants such as coleus (*Plectranthus scutellarioides*) or herbs like basil (*Ocimum basilicum*) and rosemary (*Rosemarinus officinalis*). Information on rooting cuttings can be found at <https://go.uvm.edu/perennials>.

Many herbs grow well in pots, and a plant stand can provide the light they'll need to provide you with fresh herbs through the winter and into the warm weather months. When choosing which herbs to grow, consider their mature size and whether your plant stand will comfortably accommodate them.

This time of year, one of the best uses for a plant stand is for starting seeds for the upcoming gardening season. Providing sufficient light will help prevent spindly, leggy seedlings. From germination to potting up those baby plants, you'll be able to easily monitor their progress.

When it's time to move your indoor garden outdoors, remember that the sun is much brighter than a grow light and can damage plants grown indoors. Be sure to introduce plants to outdoor conditions by slowly increasing their exposure each day over the course of a week or two.

For information on seed starting, see go.uvm.edu/seed-starting.

It doesn't matter if you buy a plant stand complete with state-of-the-art grow lights or build one yourself. A plant stand can keep your inner gardener content through the long winter months and help provide a head start on the upcoming 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.)



Photos by Deborah J. Benoit

Plant stands are an ideal way to group plants together when space, available windows or sufficient light is lacking, making it easy to monitor the plants' health and ensure that they are getting sufficient humidity.



One of the best uses for a plant stand is for starting seeds for the upcoming gardening season.

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The Charlotte News

Calendar

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

CHARLOTTE

Charlotte Walks

Friday, March 21, 8:30-10 a.m.

The Charlotte Grange invites you to this month's Charlotte Walks on the Town Link Trail from the town ball fields behind Sweet Roots Farm. Sweet Roots Farm is at 4702 Ethan Allen Highway (Route 7), directly across from Higbee Road. Head up the driveway and keep to the left to get to the parking area at the ball fields. Charlotte Walks is a great way to get more familiar with Charlotte's public trails and to meet and chat with other Charlotters. Walks usually last about an hour and are led at a comfortable adult walking pace. Each month's location will be posted on the Grange events calendar: charlottegrange.org/events. Questions? Email kknh.nh@gmail.com.

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

'Cresta Alta' documentary

Friday, March 21, 7 p.m.

The expedition-based, climate-change documentary film "Cresta Alta," chronicling a journey to Alaska, Iceland, Chile and Peru to document glaciological research expeditions and sustainability, will be shown at the Ferrisburgh Town



Photo by Sally Wadhams

Grange member Abby Killey welcomes participants to the inaugural Poetry at the Grange event.

Hall. Also, the documentary "Northward," which tells of the socially-conscious, Colorado band Salem touring while backcountry snowboarding in Alaska. The screenings will be followed by a discussion with producer and director, Todd Anders Johnson. Tickets are \$15 in advance and available at unionmeetinghall.org/programming-and-events.

Cabin Fever Follies

Friday, March 21, 7:30 p.m.

The Valley Players will present the 37th annual Cabin Fever Follies at the Valley Players Theater, 4254 Main Street, in Waitsfield. In case of cancellation due to weather, the "snow date" is Saturday, March 22. Singing, fiddling, banjo playing, improv comedy, clowning, poetry, storytelling and magic are just some of the acts scheduled to be presented. There will be limited table seating (tables of 10) for pre-show dining (doors open at 6:30 p.m.) and individual seating on risers. The event is BYOB. For tickets or information go to valleyplayers.com or call 802-583-1674.

Tournesol

Saturday, March 22, 12:30-2 p.m.

Tournesol returns for its second year on Saturday, March 22, 12:30-2 p.m., with French-inspired jazz and swing tunes at Bixby Library in Vergennes. Tournesol's six-piece ensemble, featuring violin, accordion and vocals, transports listeners to the 1940s and 50s with classics by Django Reinhardt, Edith Piaf and soothing bossa nova rhythms.

The Seen and the Unseen reception

Saturday, March 22, 2-4 p.m.

Photographer Jeffrey Pascoe's upcoming show The Seen and the Unseen which will be on view through April 2 at Frog Hollow Craft Gallery in Burlington. There will be an artist reception on March 22 from 2-4 p.m. Pascoe's photos capture the ephemeral beauty of frost, not only as a visual spectacle but also as a meditation on the unseen forces that shape our natural world. This collection of striking photographs delves into the ways light is refracted by the intricate crystalline structures of frost, revealing the often hidden, unpredictable artistry of nature.

All-Star Hockey Classic

Saturday, March 22, 4 & 6 p.m.

The Rotary Club of Essex is holding the 39th Rotary All-Star Hockey Classic Saturday, March 22, at the Essex Skating Facility in Essex. High school seniors, both men and women, are selected from Vermont high schools to participate, including Champlain Valley Union High. The women's game starts at 4 p.m. and the men's at 6 p.m. Tickets are \$10 and the price includes admission to both games. Tickets can be purchased at <https://tinyurl.com/yscrb3b9>. Proceeds are used by the Rotary to support local food pantries, provide winter coats for children in need, fund scholarships for local students and support health and environmental initiatives locally and internationally. Call Tim Carpenter at 802-318-0030 for more information.

March bird monitoring walk

Saturday, March 29, 8-9 a.m.

Join the monthly monitoring walk to record birds at the Birds of Vermont Museum trails, forest and meadow. Bring

your own binoculars; dress for weather. Tick repellent and a water bottle are recommended. Free, but suggested donation is \$5-\$15. Register at <https://tinyurl.com/mstcnwfh> or call 802 434-2167.

'Her Favorite Things'

Sunday, March 30, 3 p.m.

Capital City Concerts presents "Her Favorite Things," on Sunday, March 30, 3 p.m. at the Unitarian Church of Montpelier. Capital City Concerts founder flutist Karen Kevra and pianist Jeffrey Chappell will weave highlights of Capital City Concerts' history with music of J.S. Bach, Louis Moyse, Camille Saint-Saëns, Cécile Chaminade and Frédéric Chopin. The concert will open with a massed performance by a flute choir of Palestrina's "Dona Nobis Pacem" round. The festivities will continue after the concert with cake provided by Montpelier's Birchgrove Baking. Tickets (\$15 students-\$30 adults) will be available at the door or in advance. To order tickets and learn more, go to capitalcityconcerts.org.

'As You Like It' auditions

Sunday, March 30, 4 p.m. & Tuesday, April 1, 6 p.m.

Auditions for the Valley Players summer production of "As You Like It" by William Shakespeare will be held on Sunday, March 30, and Tuesday, April 1. This tale of love, loss and disguise will run June 26-July 13. This romantic comedy set in a forest where characters discover love, identity and forgiveness, weaving together comedic misunderstandings, philosophical musings and a love triangle. Roles are for actors ages 17 and up. Actors are encouraged to audition for any role. Questions: valleyplayers@madriverr.com.

CHARLOTTE

Poetry at the Grange

Thursday, April 10, 1-2:30 p.m.

Poetry at the Grange is planned for every second Thursday, 1-2:30 p.m. at the Grange, 2848 Spear St. in Charlotte. RSVPs are encouraged but not required: abigailkilley@me.com. Each month a local poet is invited to share about themselves and recite several poems. Participants are then invited to recite their own poetry, read poetry of their choosing or just listen. Prizes are offered to those who can recite their poems from memory. Join for hot tea and homemade cookies. On April 10, guest poet will be Jack Mayer, a Vermont writer and retired pediatrician. His first practice was on the Canadian border where he began writing poems about his practice and hiking Vermont's Long Trail. A cancer researcher at Columbia University, he returned to Vermont as a primary care pediatrician in Middlebury, retiring in 2021. As a writer, he participated in the Bread Loaf Writers' Conference twice for fiction and once for poetry. He has written two books, "Life in a Jar: The Irena Sendler Project" and "Before the Court of Heaven," and two

CALENDAR continued on page 21

CHARLOTTE TOWN MEETINGS AND AGENDAS

Visit charlottevt.org for more information

Planning Commission Meeting

Thursday, March 20, 7 p.m.

Selectboard Meeting

Monday, March 24, 7 p.m.

Conservation Commission Meeting

Tuesday, March 25, 7 p.m.

Development Review Board Meeting

Wednesday, March 26, 7 p.m.



Planning Commission Meeting

Thursday, April 3, 7 p.m.

Charlotte Energy Committee Meeting

Tuesday, April 8, 7 p.m.

Development Review Board Meeting

Wednesday, April 9, 7 p.m.

Regular Selectboard Meeting

Monday, April 14, 7 p.m.

Calendar

CALENDAR

Continued from page 20

poetry collections, "Poems from the Wilderness," which won the Proverse Prize, and "Entanglements: Physics, Love and Wilderness Dreams," reflecting his interest in the physics and metaphysics of cosmology and the primacy of relationships. More information at charlottegrange.org/events.

CHARLOTTE

Favorite Tree art show

Saturday, April 12, 4 p.m.

As part of Charlotte's Earth Month in April, the Charlotte Grange and the Charlotte Library invited kindergarten-eighth grade students to celebrate by creating tree art and companion stories. Come to the Grange Hall, 2848 Spear St., for a celebration and art show that will showcase all of the wonderful entries. Entry deadline is April 1 at 5 p.m. Pick up the rules and an entry form at the Charlotte Library, or download from the Grange website at charlottegrange.org. Completed entries can be dropped off March 15-April 1 at the library. Questions? Email sallyw@aol.com.

Kids clothing drive

Sunday-Monday, April 13-21

Please consider donating outgrown kids' and teens' clothes, outerwear and footwear to the Charlotte Grange's Hand-Me-Downs project. We are also accepting donations of large reusable shopping bags to use in re-distributing the clothing. There will be a large sealed bin on the porch at the Grange Hall (2858 Spear St.) for anyone who may want to drop donations off at other times during these dates. The Charlotte Hand-Me-Downs project is a program of the Charlotte Grange. Every spring and fall local families donate clothes their children have outgrown. Volunteers organize them for the Charlotte Food Shelf to give. See charlottegrange.org/events for in-person drop-off times.

CHARLOTTE

Charlotte Walks

Friday, April 18, 8:30-9:30 a.m.

The Grange's Charlotte Walks is the third Friday of the month. Meet at 8:30 a.m. at a different Charlotte trailhead for a morning walk. Walks usually last about an hour and are led at a comfortable adult walking pace. Each month's location will be posted on the Grange events calendar: charlottegrange.org/events. Questions? Email kknh.nh@gmail.com.

Atlantic Crossing

Saturday, April 19, 12:30-2 p.m.

Atlantic Crossing showcases the rich legacy of traditional New England music at the Bixby Library in Vergennes on Saturday, April 19. From foot-stomping reels to soulful ballads, Atlantic Crossing brings Vermont's rich musical traditions to life.



File photo

The Grange will be collecting worn flags from our Charlotte cemeteries and taking them to the Vergennes American Legion to be 'retired' in a Flag Day ceremony there. Drop off your flag at the Grange May 24-31 in the covered bin in front.

'Plastic People' film **April 24, 6:30 p.m.**

The Jericho Energy Task Force is celebrating Earth Week with a showing of the movie "Plastic People" at the Deborah Rawson Memorial Library on April 24 at 6:30 p.m. This award-winning feature documentary investigates our addiction to plastic and the growing threat of microplastics on human health. Plastic breaks down into microplastics become a permanent part of the environment. Author and science journalist Ziya Tong visited scientists around the world and underwent experiments in her home, on her food and her body in a call to action to rethink our relationship with plastic. "Plastic People" was named one of the best documentaries of 2024 by Variety Magazine. Light refreshments will be served but bring your own mugs and plates. For more information email catherine.mcmains@gmail.com.

April bird monitoring walk

Saturday, April 26, 7:30-9 a.m.

Join the monthly monitoring walk to record birds at the Birds of Vermont Museum trails, forest and meadow. Bring your own binoculars; dress for weather. Tick repellent and a water bottle are recommended. Free, but suggested donation is \$5-\$15. Register at <https://tinyurl.com/mstcnwfh> or call 802 434-2167. This walk is also a good way to celebrate National Go birding Day, which is this day (daysoftheyear.com/days/go-birding-day).

CHARLOTTE

Food drive for farmworkers

Thursday-Thursday, May 1-15

The Charlotte Grange is gathering non-perishable food items in support of local underserved farmworkers. Bins will be on the front porch of the Grange

Hall (2848 Spear St.) during this two-week period, as well as several other places around in the area. The food drive is looking for these specific items: spaghetti (1-pound boxes), dried black beans (1-pound bags), canned black beans (16-ounce cans, preferably Goya brand), dried lentils (1-pound bags), white rice (1-pound bags), Goya yellow rice (7-ounce boxes), Maseca yellow corn flour (4-pound bags), apple or cranberry juice (64-ounce containers) and vegetable oil (48-ounce containers). Also: Goya Adobo All Purpose Seasoning, Goya Sazonador Total Seasoning, and Goya Sazon Culantro y Achiote Seasoning packets. To learn more email sallyw@aol.com or visit charlottegrange.org/events.

CHARLOTTE

Poetry at the Grange

Thursday, May 8, 1-2:30 p.m.

Poetry at the Grange is planned for every second Thursday, 1-2:30 p.m. at the Grange, 2848 Spear St. in Charlotte. RSVPs are encouraged but not required at abigailkilley@me.com. Each month a local poet is invited to recite several

poems. Participants are also invited to recite their own poetry, read poetry of their choosing or just listen. Prizes are offered to those who can recite their poems from memory. For more information visit charlottegrange.org/events.

CHARLOTTE

Charlotte Walks

Friday, May 16, 8:30-9:30 a.m.

The Grange's Charlotte Walks is the third Friday of the month. Meet at 8:30 a.m. at a different Charlotte trailhead for a morning walk. Walks usually last about an hour and are led at a comfortable adult walking pace. Each month's location will be posted on the Grange events calendar: charlottegrange.org/events. Questions? Email kknh.nh@gmail.com.

CHARLOTTE

Worn flag collection

Saturday-Saturday, May 24-31

Weather and the sun inevitably result in a worn-out flag. If your flag is tattered or soiled and it's time for a new one, the Charlotte Grange can help you make sure your old flag is taken care of properly. On Memorial Day, the Grange will be collecting worn flags from our Charlotte cemeteries and taking them to the Vergennes American Legion to be "retired" in a Flag Day ceremony there. If you have a flag to dispose of, please bring it to the Charlotte Memorial Day event on Monday, May 26, at 9 a.m. at the Grandview Cemetery, 403 Church Hill Road, or drop off your flag at the Grange May 24-31 in the covered bin in front. To learn more email sallyw@aol.com or visit charlottegrange.org/events.

CHARLOTTE

Memorial Day gathering

Monday, May 26, 9-10 a.m.

On Memorial Day morning gather at Grandview Cemetery, 403 Church Hill Road., Charlotte. After a short ceremony, interested folks will help place flags on the graves of those who served or died in military service. All are welcome to join the ceremony, to place flags or both. To volunteer email kknh.nh@gmail.com or visit charlottegrange.org/events.



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Library News

Nardozzi sharing gardening tips as part of Earth Month

Margaret Woodruff
Director

The library is one of many town organizations that is putting on events celebrating our planet as Charlotte engages in Earth Month, instead of just Earth Day, during April.

The month will be filled with experiences to celebrate the Earth. Although the celebration will have started on April 1, the official kickoff is at the library 9 a.m.-noon, Saturday, April 5.

At 11 a.m., Charlie Nardozzi will talk about edible landscapes and native planting. Nardozzi is a nationally recognized garden writer, speaker, radio and television personality. He is a garden coach and consultant who can be seen on “In The Garden” tips on WCAX-Channel 3 and heard on All Things Gardening on Vermont Public on Vermont Public Radio.

Young Artists are Invited to Create Tree Art

The Charlotte Grange and the Charlotte Library are inviting students to create tree art and companion stories, featuring their favorite tree in our town. The “My Favorite Tree in Charlotte” contest is designed for all Charlotte students (Grades K-8 at Charlotte Central School, private schools, and home-schoolers).

Today - April 1: Create your entry! Complete Guidelines and Entry Blanks can be picked up at the Charlotte Library’s circulation desk, or downloaded at the Grange’s website: <https://www.charlottegrange.org/my-favorite-tree>

March 15 - April 1: Submit your entry! Drop-off is in the entry box inside the Charlotte Library. All entries must be received there by April 1 @ 5 PM.

April 12 @ 4 PM: Celebration & Art Show (for all entries) at the Charlotte Grange Hall, located at 2858 Spear St., Charlotte. Questions? Contact Sally: sallyw@aol.com

Programs for kids

Ramadan craft

Ramadan depends on the lunar cycle and starts with the sighting of the young moon and ends with a new moon. It takes place in the ninth month of the Islamic calendar when the first sliver of the crescent moon appears. Ramadan will come to an end with Eid Al-Fitr, called ‘the Festival of Breaking the Fast’. The Islamic calendar is *lunar*, not *solar*, so Ramadan begins on a different date each year. In 2025, Ramadan is Feb. 28- March 29. Ramadan is a quiet, reflective time of worship, prayer, helping others and spending time with loved ones, embracing acts of kindness. Stop in to make a Ramadan craft.

My Favorite Tree art contest

Kindergartners-eight graders are encouraged to celebrate Charlotte’s Earth Month. Information and entry forms are available on the library website and at the circulation desk. Presented in partnership with the Charlotte Grange.



Monthly Babytime

Saturday, April 5, 10 a.m.

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

Preschool story time

Tuesdays, 10 a.m.

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

After-school book club

Tuesdays, 3 p.m.

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

‘How to Be Animal’

Wednesdays, Feb. 26-March 26, 7 p.m.

Cosponsored by the Charlotte Library, the Conservation Commission and Sustainable Charlotte is hosting a book discussion of “How to be Animal” by Melanie Challenger on Zoom. 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 rich and rewarding about being an animal. Register at <https://tinyurl.com/mb2j56wa>. Copies available at the library circulation desk.

How to Make the Most of the Grid

Thursday, March 20, 5:30 p.m.

How do insulation and air sealing help save energy and money while keeping our homes warmer? This workshop will help educate participants on examples of heat transfer in the home. This workshop also connects participants with ongoing weatherization initiatives in Vermont. Presented by VEEP in partnership with the Charlotte Energy & Climate Action Committee.

Thursday book group

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

The Thursday book group will discuss “Grandma Gatewood’s Walk.” In 1955, Emma “Grandma” Gatewood told her children that she was “going for a hike in the woods.” Little did they know that this hike would be the entire 2,190-mile Appalachian Trail, the longest hiking-only footpath in the world. Though hiking the entire Appalachian Trail is already an impressive feat, Gatewood’s trip was even more remarkable because she was 67 years old, a mother of 11, a grandmother of 23 and a survivor of more than 30 years of domestic abuse. When she summited Katahdin on Sept. 25, 1955, she became the first woman ever to complete the entire trail alone in one season. Copies available at the circulation desk; ebook and audiobook available on Hoopla.

Tea and Jane Austen movie

Friday, March 21, 2 p.m.

You are cordially invited to Afternoon Tea & a Movie with Jane Austen. Join us to watch a favorite Jane Austen film and enjoy afternoon refreshments.

Planting for biodiversity

Thursday, March 27, 7 p.m.

Julie Parker Dickerson will share her community gardening knowledge of trees, shrubs, herbaceous perennials and annuals and how they all play a role in supporting pollinators and wildlife. Learn about your local Charlotte Pollinator Pathway

and how you can grow your garden with biodiversity. Participants will discuss ways to start gardens from scratch and work with established gardens to increase pollinators as well as consider plant selection and maintenance. Participants will get a photographic tour of the many public gardens from East Charlotte and Monkton that support biodiversity.

Sunday afternoon music jam

Sunday, March 30, 1-3 p.m.

A “jam” is sharing a tune or song around the circle of music lovers. Participants may join in, but there’s no pressure to perform. Any age or ability is welcomed in a supportive, non-judgmental environment. Guitars, ukuleles, mandolins, banjo, fiddle, bass, keyboard, harmonicas, hand drums — anything goes. For questions or comments, contact Sallie Mack: 802.425.6212 or salliemack@gmavt.net.

Pease Mountain update

Wednesday, April 2, 7 p.m.

Representatives from the University of Vermont will talk about the school’s natural area at the top of Pease Mountain. Luben Dimov, from the Rubenstein School of Environment and Natural Resources, will discuss his forest inventory plots, the tree species that occur on the site and forest ecology. Lori Anderson, natural areas coordinator and stewardship specialist, will talk about the history and future of the area and work on capturing animal diversity with wildlife cameras.

Recurring programs

Book chat

Wednesdays, 3 p.m.

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

Crochet & knit night

Wednesdays, 5-6:30 p.m.

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

Library contact information:

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

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

The Charlotte Library Board of Trustees meets the first Thursday of each month at 6 p.m., unless rescheduled following the Opening Meeting Law. The next scheduled board meeting is this Thursday, April 2, at 6 p.m. Contact the library or visit the library website (charlottepubliclibrary.org) for more information.

Senior Center News

Don't miss events on Alzheimer's, funeral planning

Lori York
Director

This month at the Charlotte Senior Center, visitors can enjoy a new art exhibit featuring landscape paintings by Lillian Kennedy.

In early April, an AARP Smart Drive course will be offered, and there will be a workshop on helping to reconnect with your authentic self.

Additionally, don't miss The Final Gift: A Guide to Planning Your Funeral and Leaving a Lasting Legacy presentation or the "Matter of Mind: My Alzheimer's" film screening.

Programs

Shape-Note Singing

Sunday, March 23, 12:30-2:30 p.m.

Traditional a Capella, four-part harmony sung for the joy of singing...not as a practice for performance. Search "Sacred Harp" on YouTube for examples, then come and sing with us. Introduction to shape notes and scales is recommended and offered 30 minutes before each fourth Sunday singing. The first hour will be Sacred Harp singing and the second hour will be singing from an alternate Shape-Note book. Books will be provided. Free. No registration required. For questions or to schedule your introduction to shape-notes and scales, please contact Kerry Cullinan at kclynxvt@gmail.com.

"The Final Gift: A Guide to Planning Your Funeral and Leaving a Lasting Legacy"

Wednesday, March 26, 12:30 p.m.

Join Michele Ambrosino, a third-generation funeral director with Ready Funeral Home in Burlington, for a comprehensive session on funeral pre-arrangements, pre-payments, and assisted planning. Michele will cover the benefits of pre-planning, explore the various options available, and help you make informed decisions that will support you and your loved ones during a difficult time. Free. To register, call 802-425-6345.

Death Cafe

Wednesday, March 26, 2-3:30 p.m.

Join us for the monthly Death Cafe as we come together in human fellowship to celebrate life by voicing concerns and sharing questions, ideas and stories around death and dying. These are not always easy conversations, but when we share, heart to heart, we build community and experience a special joy that enhances our lives. Looking forward to sharing the journey and building community together. Free. Registration required. Questions? contact Polly: ppolly62@ymail.com. To register, call 802-425-6345. Cost: Free. Registration required.

Matter of Mind: My Alzheimer's film screening

Tuesday, April 8, 1 p.m.

Join us for a showing of this PBS Independent Lens film exploring how Alzheimer's disease transforms the lives of three families who confront the challenges of becoming primary caregivers. Presented in partnership with the Alzheimer's Association, Charlotte Library and in conjunction with PBS Independent Lens. Please note that the film will be shown at the Charlotte Library. Free. To register, call the senior center at 802-425-6345 or <https://bit.ly/4h1P1AA>

"Free Yourself From What's Running Your Life" workshop

Wednesdays, April 9-30, 10-11:30 a.m.

Ready to reconnect with your authentic self? Join this transformative four-week workshop to overcome negative programming, awaken your true essence and begin living the life you were meant to. Experience inner peace, true joy and the freedom of full self-expression. Led by Jim Koehneke, spiritual director, author and 30-year student of Spiritual Psychology. www.GuideYouToJoy.com \$60 for the 4-week workshop. Registration and payment required by April 7. To register, call 802-425-6345.

AARP Smart Driver course

Saturday, April 12, 11-4 p.m.

The AARP Smart Driver course is designed for older drivers. It will help refresh your driving skills and may even help you save on your auto insurance. Bring your lunch. Registration required. It's \$20 for AARP members and \$25 for non-members. Checks should be made out to AARP. To register, call 802-425-6345.

Art

A Brush with Nature

The senior center's March exhibit is A Brush with Nature featuring paintings by Lillian Kennedy. Kennedy, focuses on landscape art with works in corporate and private collections worldwide. Her notable murals include a 54-foot scene at Tavern on the Green, exhibits at the Bronx Zoo and Sunset Park Courthouse in New York.

Arts & crafts group

Wednesdays, 10 a.m.-noon

Come create, experiment, share ideas, encourage others and have fun with the creative arts & crafts group on Wednesday mornings. Bring whatever creative endeavor you're working on, enjoy doing, or thinking about trying out—painting, drawing, writing, scrapbooking, coloring, origami, cardmaking, knitting—the opportunities are limitless. Free. No registration required. For questions, email Katie Franko at kfranko@gmavt.net.

Exercise

Yoga dance

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

Let Your Yoga Dance incorporates basic dance-like movements to music, guided by the body's energy system (chakras). It is a safe, compassionate, gentle movement practice, allowing for individual expression and nonjudgemental acceptance. This class is appropriate for all levels of fitness and abilities. Everyone can "let their yoga dance." Cost: \$10 a class. No registration required.

Tai chi

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

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



Photos by Lori York

Helen Oetjen serves up apple cheesecake tarts that she baked for Monday Munch.



Phil Hamel working on a painting project during the Friday morning arts group at the senior center.

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.

Meals

Menus are posted on the website: charlotteseniorcentervt.org.

Monday lunches

Served weekly. Lunch is served 11:30

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

Senior center info:

The senior center offers programs for adults 50 and older from Charlotte and surrounding communities. Priority is given to seniors, but programs are open to adults of all ages. Interested in receiving a weekly reminder about what is happening? Sign up for the email newsletters at charlotteseniorcentervt.org. The "Week Ahead" email is sent out on Friday mornings with activities, lunch menus and special programs for the upcoming week.

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

Write Ingredients

Senior center's Monday Munch has avocado but no pi

Susan Ohanian
Contributor

OK, you missed Pi Day at the Charlotte Senior Center. Since 3, 1 and 4 are the first three significant figures of π , March 14 is the day chosen to celebrating Archimedes' constant. So, no Pi at upcoming Monday Munches, but brownies and cream puffs with ice cream for sure aren't to be sneezed at.

Following an eye-catching headline, "Why America Now Eats a Crazy Number of Avocados," The Wall Street Journal (<https://tinyurl.com/47tykks3>) notes three "dazzling creations have swept the nation in the 21st century, Facebook and the I phone — and the avocado."

I use neither Facebook nor the I phone, but Holy Guacamole! I may not quite be in the camp of the many people now substituting the avocado for that fruit in the old adage "an apple a day keeps the doctor away," but note: People in the U.S. consume 9 pounds of avocados each year.

Nine pounds.

Avocados require quite specific cultivation conditions, and one area with ideal conditions is the Michoacán, Mexico. As The Wall Street Journal notes, "What Michigan is for cars, Michoacán is for los aguacates."

Tancitaro, a municipality of about 30,000 people in Michoacán, is known as Mexico's avocado capital. Because the avocado industry is quite lucrative, organized crime targets Tancitaro. Both BBC and NPR have run articles on avocado protection squads — trained officers wearing bulletproof vests — to protect the avocados and the people who pick them.

Residents of Charlotte might find it either amusing or astounding that, in one of those "eye of the beholder" moments, NPR termed this municipality of 30,000 as "a small farming town."

In the early 2000s, with federal help, California avocado growers rebranded



Photo by Juraj Varga from Pixabay

avocados as a superfood. Growers lobbied Congress to establish a federal program, collecting 2.5 cents for every pound of fresh Hass avocados sold in the U.S., whether they were grown domestically or imported. That fee funded marketing campaigns rebranding the avocados as a superfood offering health benefits. Sales turbocharged across the country.

David Fairchild (1869-1954), an employee of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, didn't need a marketing campaign to term the avocado "a food without rival among the fruits, the veritable fruit of paradise."

Fairchild traveled the world, bringing back seeds or cuttings from over 200,000 kinds of fruits, vegetables and grains. After research due diligence, his department distributed new crops to farmers. A Smithsonian Magazine article (<https://tinyurl.com/yvzte32f>) "America's First 'Food Spy' Traveled the World Hunting for Exotic Crops" said, "The next time you devour an overpriced slice of avocado

toast, munch on some kale or serve yourself some quinoa, you're sampling just a few of the crops that Fairchild introduced to the American public."

Writer Daniel Stone credits Fairchild with introducing innumerable exotic plants: kale from Croatia, mangoes from India, hops from Bavaria, peaches from China, avocados from Chile and pomegranates from Malta. We can also thank him for soybeans, pistachios, mangos, nectarines, dates and flowering cherries.

Avocados came up briefly in Andy Borowitz's recent online conversation (<https://tinyurl.com/4mdkjude>) with Paul Krugman. In this absorbing exchange, a critical question came up: "Who's going to pick those avocados?" Krugman emphasized, "These are the people who feed us."

The online Merriam-Webster Dictionary not only defines words but reaches beyond the definition with provocative information. It tells us that the etymology of the word "avocado" is a modification of Spanish

"aguacate," from the Nahuatl āhuacatl word for testicle. It's first known use was in 1696.

Some other words or phrases introduced that year include alligator pear, attic, burlap, cosmogony, explosive, Julian calendar, liver pudding, peppermint, potbelly, prickly pear and snake in the grass.

Words that rhyme with avocado include adelantado, bravado, desperado, incommunicado, machado and mikado.

Now, you're all set to write an avocado poem. While enjoying tasty soups and tempting desserts at the Charlotte Senior Center, you can share your poem with the friendly group of people there.

Monday Munch,
March 24, 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Mulligatawny soup, green salad, rolls and ice cream with mini cream puffs.

March 31, 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Festive tortellini soup (with sausage), green salad, bread and brownies with vanilla ice cream.

Good food for young minds is always available at the Little Free Library for Kids, outside the Charlotte Grange at 2858 Spear Street. There, children of all ages, from babies through teens, will find an ever-changing collection of alluring books to entertain, delight and astound.

Invite a child to go choose a book to take home. This effort is supported by the senior center board of directors and The Flying Pig Bookstore.

Important note: Nobel Prize in Economics recipient Paul Krugman's interest in economics began with the pleasure he found in Isaac Asimov's "Foundation" novels.

I note with great sadness the passing of Joan Braun, a valued member of my senior center cooking team. We were one of the first teams to populate the kitchen. It wasn't as easy as pie, but we enjoyed busy, laugh-filled (occasionally scary) times together. That spirit is still omnipresent in the kitchen. Every Monday.

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