

# The Charlotte News

March 6, 2025

Your nonprofit community news source since 1958

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## Charlotte chooses to keep voice voting

**Large turnout at Saturday town meeting votes to keep 236-year tradition of direct democracy**

Caitlyn Schaefer and Izzy Senior  
Community News Service

Charlotte residents rejected two proposals to switch from in-person voting to a secret ballot at its annual town meeting Saturday.

Residents voted 151 to 101 against Article 7, which would have required the town budget be approved by the so-called Australian ballot.

By a voice vote, they also rejected Article 8, which would have allowed residents to vote on all public questions by Australian ballot.

“The wisdom of democracy is not in the ballot,” said Charlotte resident Amos Baehr. “The wisdom of democracy is in the deliberation.”

The vote contradicts a trend away from traditional Town Meeting Day voting and toward secret ballots, especially in larger towns and cities in Vermont.

A recent analysis by the University of Vermont’s Center for Community News, which runs Community News Service, shows fewer towns are voting in person on their budgets, from 72 percent of towns before the pandemic to 63 percent this year.

Instead, Charlotte residents chose to keep their 236-year-old Town Meeting Day tradition at a town meeting that had more than 300



Photo by Scooter MacMillan

More than 300 people showed up for Charlotte’s first in-person town meeting since COVID. Extra chairs had to be brought in. The meeting started 30 minutes late, delayed by the need to get so many people confirmed as registered town voters.

attendees, a bigger crowd than usual in recent years.

Father-daughter residents Dan and Emily Raabe illustrate both sides of the debate.

Dan Raabe was in favor of the Australian ballot because he said it would allow broader

participation.

“It excludes 80 percent, 85 percent of the people in town from making these decisions,” he said of the traditional meeting style.

**VOTING** continued on page 3

## Talking the talk, walking the walk of sustainability

Caitlyn Schaefer  
Community News Service

For three decades, Ruah Swennerfelt and Louis Cox have lived largely off-grid on their homestead in Charlotte.

Their homesteading endeavor is a throwback to the farming history of the town. It stems from an idea they both shared even before meeting one another — to live sustainably.

As the town becomes increasingly suburban, they remain steadfast in their commitment to homesteading. Through the nonprofit they co-founded, Sustainable Charlotte, they connect a community of like-minded people.

Their homestead is just over the historic Seguin Covered Bridge. They’ve been building and updating their home for the past 30 years.

Over time, they have equipped it with solar panels, a large canister for collecting rainwater and a sizable garden in their backyard. With these, they are able to live mainly off-grid and grow a wide variety of their own fruits and vegetables.

Swennerfelt, born in Sweden, was living in Boston before moving to Burlington to work for then-Mayor Bernie Sanders. She later moved to Charlotte after being invited to build and create a community on some

“My journey is really about being rooted to place.”

— Ruah Swennerfelt

friends’ land.

Cox moved often as a child as a part of a Navy family. He was living in Missouri when he met Swennerfelt through the Quaker Earthcare Witness program and moved to Charlotte to be with her.

Cox says he realized that the way in which the planet is being used is just not sustainable. This drove him to become an environmental activist and, eventually, a homesteader.

“There is no safe place and therefore, if you want to save the world, you’ve gotta be out there with everybody else trying to save the world,” Cox said.

“Both Louis and I, before we knew each other, had a commitment to living rightly on the planet,” Swennerfelt said.

Swennerfelt’s commitment to homesteading comes from a deeply personal and spiritual connection to nature and the



Photo courtesy of Ruah Swennerfelt.

Ruah Swennerfelt and Louis Cox with their great-grandchildren.

land around her.

“My journey is really about being rooted to place,” she said. “It comes from this place that’s deep inside that says that these birds we count, they’re my kin. The trees out here,

**SUSTAINABLE** continued on page 2

## Voting Results from Tuesday’s voting

### CANDIDATES FOR TOWN OFFICES

#### Selectboard, two-year term

(vote for not more than one)

Kelly Devine.....260

JD Herlihy.....786

Write-in.....7

#### Selectboard, three-year term

(vote for not more than one)

Lee Krohn.....933

Write-in.....17

#### Auditor, three-year term

(vote for not more than one)

Richard Mintzer.....889

Write-in.....5

#### Cemetery Commissioner, three-year term

(vote for not more than one)

Jessie R. Bradley .....950

Write-in.....2

#### Cemetery Commissioner, two years of three-year term

(vote for not more than one)

Peter Demick .....911

Write-in.....7

#### Cemetery Commissioner, one year of three-year term

(vote for not more than one)

Lisa Hauenstein .....895

Write-in.....1

#### Charlotte Library Trustee, five-year term

(vote for not more than one)

Hylah Patton .....913

Write-in.....3

#### Delinquent Tax Collector, one-year term

(vote for not more than one)

Mary A. Mead.....988

Write-in.....6

#### Road Commissioner, one-year term

(vote for not more than one)

Hugh Lewis Jr.....1040

Write-in.....2

#### Town Moderator, one-year term

(vote for not more than one)

Charlie Russell.....883

Write-in.....20

#### Trustee of Public Funds, three-year term

(vote for not more than one)

Ruth Uphold .....902

Write-in.....0

**VOTE RESULTS** continued on page 3



# Selectboard's last meeting in current form

Scooter MacMillan  
Editor

The selectboard's meeting on Feb. 24 was a quiet affair. There was a minimum of contentious issues and not much in the way of public comment.

The meeting was preceded by a public informational meeting about the articles voters would decide at town meeting. Only one person showed up in person for this hearing.

When the regular meeting started, attendance hovered around 10 people on line and 10 in town hall. The meeting was a bit of a long goodbye. The complexion of the board will have changed when next it meets.

One definite change is that chair Jim Faulkner will be gone. He is not running for reelection, so Lee Krohn is running unopposed for that three-year term.

Faulkner and Krohn met in the crowd before Saturday's in-person town meeting began at Charlotte Central School. Krohn, who retired as town manager of Shelburne and should be familiar with how much work serving on a selectboard requires, thanked Faulkner for his service on Charlotte's selectboard.

And Faulkner thanked Krohn for running for the selectboard. Faulkner said he was ready to work on other things after serving on the board.

Incumbent Kelly Devine was facing challenger J.D. Herlihy in the contest for a two-year term on the selectboard.

The board's next meeting is Monday,

March 10. This meeting, its first since the March 4 election for town offices, will be its annual reorganization meeting when board members vote on the chair and vice-chair, so the next chair definitely will be new.

Vice-chair Frank Tenney may or may not be selected to repeat as vice-chair.

Town moderator and member of the development review board Charlie Russell took advantage of the public comment portion of the selectboard meeting last Tuesday to thank Faulkner for his service to the town.

In reply, Faulkner joked that when he started on the selectboard his hair was brown instead of gray.

Others commented toward the end of the meeting on how hard Faulkner has worked. He always seemed to be hard at work at least 30 minutes before every meeting started. Usually, it has been just him and town administrator Nate Bareham in town hall that early, discussing the agenda and planning for the meeting ahead.

One of the most significant things to happen at the Feb. 24 meeting was the board approved a contract with GreenEdge Energy Solutions of South Burlington to look at the town's current energy consumption with the possibility of increasing the town's use of alternative energy systems.

The project is divided into three portions



or "milestones." The first is all the selectboard has approved currently, with the possibility of continuing into the next two phases.

The cost of the first milestone is \$4,000. After the first milestone the town can stop the project.

"There will be communication back and forth between the consultant and the selectboard throughout this process," Bareham said.

The first milestone will be an audit of the town's current energy consumption and where that energy comes from. It would suggest redesigns that could make the town's energy use more efficient and renewable.

The work would also study the feasibility of locating solar generating systems on five town properties.

The vote approving the contract was 4-1 with Faulkner casting the lone nay vote.



## Mission Statement

To engage and inform Charlotte and nearby communities by:

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

## Editorial independence

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

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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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## SUSTAINABLE

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they're my kin, and that nature isn't out there. It's inside me."

Sustainable Charlotte hosts a wide range of events for the community, including twice-annual repair cafés, where volunteers (including Cox himself) repair household items.

It's completely free. Sustainable Charlotte asks that, if possible, attendees bring food or make a monetary donation to the Charlotte Food Shelf.

Volunteers from Sustainable Charlotte also provide and install custom-fit window inserts for homes in the community, collect electronics on Green Up Day and host book clubs, talks and films.

Sustainable Charlotte connects Cox and Swennerfelt with a community that gives them meaning. Along with the hard work that is homesteading, helping people in this community keeps them healthy — physically, mentally and emotionally.

"There's not some end goal here," Swennerfelt said. "It's a journey of respecting this beautiful planet that we live on and doing our best."

To learn more, visit [sustainablecharlottetv.org](http://sustainablecharlottetv.org).

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

# Charlotte votes to advocate for continuing support for Ukraine

Scooter MacMillan  
Editor

Among other things that were passed at Saturday's in-person town meeting was a resolution urging the United States to continue providing military and financial aid to Ukraine.

In his advisory motion for a town resolution, former state representative Mike Yantachka noted that "the support of the United States for Ukraine is under serious reconsideration" after that country has fought for three years against Russia's violent invasion. The motion also asked for copies of the resolution to be sent to Vermont's Congressional delegation and the president.

The voice vote on Yantachka's resolution passed overwhelmingly. The vote sounded like there was only one voice opposed.

Shelburne also passed this resolution 60-8.

Articles 7 and 8, which would have switched Charlotte to doing all its voting by Australian ballot, were the only articles defeated. This defeat will continue the tradition of voice voting for the budget and some other issues.

Among the other articles passed were a town budget for fiscal year 2026 with

expenses of \$4,265,990 with more than \$2.5 million in revenue to pay for this spending coming from taxes and more than \$1.7 million coming from other money the town collects.

Voters also approved \$62,000 to be delegated to the town trails fund, \$5,000 to trails maintenance and \$40,000 to pay for a study of a project for the recreation department to renovate or build a bathhouse at the town beach.

At the end of the town meeting, representative Chea Waters Evans was given the opportunity to tell residents about how things are going in Montpelier.

Evans said she had new appreciation for the usually slow and frustratingly deliberate process of state government when legislators were given a 149-page bill close to the end of the legislative session, a bill "that's going to change everything about how we fund education." She said it's not enough time to figure out what is proposed in this lengthy and significant education bill.

Evans also said that her support for funding school lunches will never waver because for too many students, some even from Charlotte, school lunch may be their only meal of the day.



# Report from the Legislature

## Need to find better way for town meeting

Chea Waters Evan  
Representative



I was talking to a colleague in the State House last week, and she commented on how I'm always smiling, and another colleague who was standing there with us said, "She's smiling, but she doesn't take any shit."

I just wanted you all to know that that's the energy I'm bringing to work on your behalf: smiling and not putting up with any baloney. (This is also, by the way, how I approach parenting teenage boys and also dating as a 50-year-old.)

It was lovely to see people at town meeting on Saturday. I know some are upset that the switch to Australian ballot voting didn't go through, and I know that some are relieved. I have mixed feelings on the issue: The more people who vote, the more our collective decisions reflect the will of people in town. But town meeting is such a nice tradition, and the ability to work on our budget as a community is special and empowering.

So maybe we challenge ourselves, before next year, to come up with a better way to do it. How can we get more people active and interested in town issues? How can we get more people to participate in selectboard meetings, on voting day, and on all the various committees and boards that keep our

town running? How do we help people feel like they have a voice, and that their opinions matter?

There are wonderful people at the Grange, and who work on recreation, at the library and in the PTO and the senior center and at our churches, who strive daily to maintain connections and create new ones amongst our neighbors. I urge you to find a place where you feel comfortable, get involved, stay connected, and maybe we can all work together to come up with a good solution that keeps town meeting but makes sure that everyone can vote. I'm happy to help any way I can.

We're on break from the legislature this week — conveniently scheduled for working parents the week after school break — so there's a small reprieve from the chaos, but we'll be back at it next Tuesday for crossover week, where everyone tries to cram their bills through at the last minute and we're eating trail mix for dinner at 9 p.m., and my feet hurt because I'm too vain to wear comfortable shoes.

So far, I have a 100-percent success rate with legislation for which I've been the lead sponsor, mostly because I only had one bill — setting up an animal welfare department last biennium. I hope to continue my record, but I'm really stepping it up this year, and I'm the lead sponsor for two bills.

H67 is a bill relating to government accountability and oversight, and I'm sure many of you remember from my reporter

days how obsessed I am with transparency and accountability. This bill creates a Government Accountability Committee that's made up of legislators from all political parties and both sides of the chamber. The committee will have the responsibility to identify programs, commissions, departments or other government initiatives that might not be accomplishing what they're supposed to. The hope is that, by identifying programs that are missing the mark on their intended purpose or their financial goals, we'll be able to save time and, more importantly money, by reporting whether or not they should keep going or maybe just go away.

H244 is a bill that compels the state, in not all but in certain advertising and marketing efforts, to spend our money on Vermont ad and marketing agencies, and advertise mostly with local news outlets. A robust local news presence is shown to keep municipal budgets lower, increase voter participation, increase public trust in government, and as a bonus, this legislation will funnel much-needed funds to local outlets instead of giving it to big tech companies like Meta and Google. I love local news and I love voter participation and I'm confident that this, like the accountability bill, will move forward with bipartisan support. You know, because I'm always smiling at people, so hopefully they'll all be cool with my bills.

Thank you all so much for your continued engagement and please be in touch at [cevans@leg.state.vt.us](mailto:cevans@leg.state.vt.us) or 917-887-8231.

### VOTE RESULTS

Continued from page 1

#### TOWN ARTICLES

**Article 11** asked residents to approve a charter for Charlotte giving residents, instead of the selectboard, the authority to vote on changes to town land-use regulations.  
IN FAVOR ..... 694  
AGAINST..... 335

#### CHAMPLAIN VALLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT BALLOT

**Article VII** asked school district voters to approve the school board spending \$102,724,062 to run the district school for the next fiscal year. The district estimates the proposed budget will result in spending \$15,535 per pupil, which is an 3.3 percent increase in per-pupil spending from this year.  
YES..... 4494  
NO..... 1843

**Article VIII** asked if district voters will authorize the school board to allocate its current fund balance of \$1,747,254 as revenue for future budgets.  
YES..... 5155  
NO..... 1148

### VOTING

Continued from page 1

Emily Raabe, on the other hand, voted against the Australian ballot and for keeping the Town Meeting Day tradition of voice voting. To give residents more opportunities to participate, she said she'd prefer a hybrid model, rather than scrapping the tradition entirely.

"The only disappointment I have is that right now, it is black and white, either Australian ballot or town meeting," she said.

These articles were put into motion with the goal to include more residents in the voting process. Many Charlotters have trouble setting aside a day for the lengthy traditional meeting or can't even get to the meeting at all.

Cecily Wallman-Stokes, a Charlotte resident and mother of two, spoke on behalf of her husband, who had to leave early to watch their children.

"As my husband was leaving, he said 'Please speak up for this,' so I'm doing it," Wallman-Stokes said.

Brandon Tieso, 27, was a strong advocate for keeping the town meeting and rejecting the Australian ballot.

"This is a great reflection of our town. It's a great cross-section of our town. And I trust the people who showed up today," Tieso said.

Charlotte briefly did vote on town issues via Australian ballot, during the pandemic. Saturday's meeting marked the return of in-person voting, the first time since COVID shut down large gatherings.



Photo by Caitlyn Schaefer

Father-daughter duo Emily and Dan Raabe found themselves on opposite sides of Saturday's debate.

Articles 7 and 8 would have returned things to that pandemic way of business. By law, the people at the town meeting are the only ones who can vote to change to an Australian ballot.

When it came time to decide on Article 7, the voice vote was declared inconclusive. Then, a standing vote appeared to show the defeat of Article 7, but residents called for a paper ballot to make sure.

The proposal to switch to ballot voting on the budget failed, 151 to 101.

Seeing the way the wind was blowing, several residents got up and left. A diminished

crowd skipped the debate on Article 8 and rejected it by a voice vote.

Emily Raabe said the experience of civil debate she and her father experienced shows the continued value of the Town Meeting Day tradition.

"I said to my dad, the fact that we both got up, spoke our minds and sat back down is, unfortunately for him, a perfect argument for Town Meeting Day," she said.

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



### NEXT PUBLICATION DATES

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# Town Meeting Day



Photos by Lee Krohn

Back right, town moderator Charlie Russell watches as residents vote by paper ballot on Article 7, which would have switched the town to permanently voting on the town budget items by Australian ballot. Ultimately, this paper-ballot vote defeated, 151-101, voting by Australian, or secret paper ballot, in the future — unless it is a situation like this when the result of a voice vote is inconclusive.



A canine got an education in direct democracy.



A dad shows his daughter how decisions are made at a town meeting.



Janet and Mike Yantachka follow the proceedings. Toward the end of town meeting, Mike Yantachka introduced an advisory motion for the town to pass a resolution condemning Russia's invasion of Ukraine and support for Ukraine. This resolution passed, sounding like there was only one dissenting voice.



Photos by Scooter MacMillan

Current selectboard member Natalie Kanner and former board member Matt Krasnow smile, despite having to wait in a long line to check in for the meeting, probably happy about the turnout to participate in the town's direct democracy.



From left, Tai Dinnan and Linda Hamilton represent the Grange with a model of the Grange Hall, one of a number of organizations with table displays in the hallway outside the meeting room at Charlotte Central School.



Photo by Meg Berlin

Left, Moe Harvey helps distribute mics so people can be heard when they speak on issues at town meeting.



# Knotweed removal effort seems successful

Kate Kelly  
Contributor

Non-native invasive plant species have long threatened the health of ecosystems, wildlife habitat and populations of native plants in the Lewis Creek watershed. Management can be difficult because they are easily spread via seeds, roots, fragments, animals and humans.

Japanese knotweed is a particularly tough plant to remove. It was introduced from East Asia in the late 1800s, planted as an ornamental and for erosion control (but ironically, can actually increase streambank erosion).

It spreads primarily by its roots or rhizomes, which can break off during a flood then resprout and form a new colony downstream. In 2024, the Lewis Creek Association recruited community members to begin a long-term project controlling knotweed without herbicides in the watershed.

In 2024, Lewis Creek Association and volunteers controlled three populations of Japanese knotweed along Lewis Creek near Old Hollow Road in North Ferrisburgh, while educating the public about how to perform non-chemical knotweed control on riparian properties. Two Lewis Creek Association knotweed-removal technicians, supervised by consultant Michael Bald of Got Weeds?, implemented non-chemical control work at the demonstration site over 16 weeks, with the help of 15 volunteers.

Almost weekly volunteer knotweed

removal and education sessions were offered on site. A management plan for knotweed removal at the demonstration site in North Ferrisburgh and two other sites in Starksboro was developed.

Lewis Creek Association also mapped knotweed in a portion of the Lewis Creek watershed using community science tools (iNaturalist). The Lewis Creek Association website now has educational materials about knotweed, the resulting map of knotweed distribution and directions that detail how to participate in our iNaturalist project.

In the future, the association plans to continue a long-term knotweed removal project in North Ferrisburgh and expand the removal-demonstration sites to include sites in Starksboro. It will also be continuing our iNaturalist project and needs your help because there are many knotweed patches that haven't yet been mapped.

If you see knotweed growing in the Lewis Creek watershed, please snap a photo and upload it to iNaturalist and join the mailing list, so you know when our knotweed removal



Photo by Sara Lovitz

One of the Lewis Creek Association's knotweed technicians maps knotweed in the Lewis Creek watershed.

demonstration days will be held in 2025. You can learn more and sign up at [lewisecreek.org/knotweed-removal-project](https://lewisecreek.org/knotweed-removal-project).

## Letter to the Editor

### An obsession with efficiency, except in healthcare

To the Editor:

America's current obsession with efficiency is absurd when you look at American healthcare. It is the epitome of inefficiency and it accounts for more than 17 percent of national GDP [<https://www.cms.gov/data-research/statistics-trends-and-reports/national-health-expenditure-data/historical>]. In Vermont, our 2019 healthcare cost of \$6.5 billion (<https://tinyurl.com/53euvwp9>) accounted for roughly 18.5 percent of Vermont's 2019 GDP of \$35 billion (Table 3 at <https://tinyurl.com/snbmasuz>) and is a major driver of ever-increasing school budgets.

There is nothing efficient about a healthcare system that pays for healthcare through hundreds of different private insurers, administering thousands of different insurance contracts, in addition to many different state and federal government programs that each have their own eligibility requirements.

Our journey to healthcare essentially involves countless trains traveling many different tracks. Passengers rarely know how much the journey will cost before they embark, or exactly when and where they will be forced to cough up some portion of the price. Nor do they know for sure what awaits them until they arrive at the destination. They nervously travel from one payment station to the next, coughing up premiums, deductibles, co-pays or the entire price if their ailment isn't "covered" by their insurance.

All along the journey, money changes hands for the cost of the train crews, the tracks and train cars, the fuel, the train stations, the ticket sellers — money pays for the trip, not the healthcare at the destination.

You can't hope to make the system itself more efficient by addressing the operation of a single train, or even a single train station. We all need to ride the same train, at the same price, to the same healthcare destination. Yes, that means single payer.

Lee Russ  
Bennington

*(Lee Russ is a retired legal editor who has written about insurance and health care, both in his work and since retiring.)*

# Stopping by Grange on snowy afternoon for poetry

Sally Wadhams  
Contributor

The new Poetry at the Grange program got off to a great start despite the wintry weather on Thursday, Feb. 13. Nine poetry enthusiasts and poet-curious participants convened in the Grange's cozy upper chambers, utilizing that historic space and stage for the first time in many years.

Amy Allen, Shelburne's Poet Laureate, inaugurated the program by describing her trajectory into writing and poetry and providing insights into the challenging world of publishing. The poems brought out the complexity of experiences related to the sometimes wrenching aspects of family relations.

Follow-up poems provided by and read by the participants were surprisingly connected in a poignant show of synchronicity.

Poetry at the Grange will continue throughout the year, every second Thursday, 1-2:30 p.m., at the Grange Hall in East Charlotte. Each month a local poet will be 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 will be offered to those who can recite their poems from memory. All Charlotters and residents from neighboring communities are invited to attend.

On March 13, the guest poet will be Bethany Breitland. Born in northern Indiana, her people are cult members,



Photos by Sally Wadhams

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

Below: Shelburne poet laureate Amy Allen shares her work at the Poetry at the Grange event in February.

truckers, doctors, child-mothers and business tycoons. She has lived, studied and taught on the West Coast, in the South and New England.

Breitland earned her undergrad degree from Pepperdine University and her Master of Fine Arts from Vermont College. As an educator and activist, she has worked for over 20 years for women's rights and the LGBTQ community. She has been nominated for the Pushcart Prize and a recipient of various poetry prizes.



## Around Town

### Congratulations

At the Addison County 4-H Foods Day on Feb. 22, **Harper Raymond** of Charlotte won first place in the kindergarten-second grade section competing in the appetizers division.

**Finnegan Mittelstadt** of Charlotte was named to the dean's list for the fall at the University of Minnesota Duluth.



## Hi! Neighbor

# Hanley helps Charlotte and Chittenden County plan

Phyl Newbeck  
Contributor

Dana Hanley has spent her career making sure that land-use decisions are made wisely. She has done it for municipalities, regional entities and non-profit organizations.

For the last three years, Hanley has served as Charlotte's representative on the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission. She described her position there as looking out for Charlotte on a wide variety of issues.

"I was drawn to it because I love the regional level," she said. "It's not as political as the state or municipal level, and it concentrates a lot on policy."

At the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission, Hanley serves on the Long-Range Planning Committee which is currently updating the county's Environment, Community, Opportunity and Sustainability plan.

"That has proven to be quite the task," Hanley said.

The plan includes a number of variables including the agricultural and energy economies. She finds the emphasis on policy to be more appealing than working in the regulatory field. For Hanley, one of the most interesting parts of being on the commission is its work in transportation.

"I'm always looking for road projects that affect Charlotte," she said, citing as an example, \$65,000 which the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission has for municipal emergency management projects. Hanley has approached Charlotte's town manager and emergency management coordinator to see if there are any projects which might benefit from those funds.

Hanley moved to Vermont when she attended Bennington College. Although she left for graduate school at Georgetown, she returned in 1982 and moved to Charlotte five years later.

She worked for Act 250 for 10 years in the 1990s, and while she enjoyed the work, she admitted that working in the regulatory field involved some degree of stress.

Hanley spent three years as the associate director of the Vermont Forum

on Sprawl which later merged with the Vermont Natural Resources Council. The organization developed policies and plans that encouraged building in designated growth areas in the form of compact development surrounded by open countryside. From there, she moved to a position as director of planning and zoning in Shelburne.

For 14 years, Hanley was the planning director in Essex and during that time she wrote and implemented their Town Plan. In 2009, she was named Outstanding Professional Planner by the Vermont Planners Association and the 2009 Professional Planner of the Year by the Northern New England Chapter of the American Planning Association.

Part of the Essex job involved applications for development which were reviewed by the planning commission.

"That was a really interesting job," she said. "Essex saw a lot of growth."

From there, she moved to the Addison County Economic Development Corporation, which has a mission of helping small and medium-sized businesses grow and thrive.

"We applied for state and federal grants for development in places the county had designated for growth," she said. "It was wonderful to see the other side of the coin."

Hanley noted that the Scott administration is trying to make development easier by eliminating Act 250 restrictions in areas where towns support growth through their municipal plans. She believes there will be pressure on towns to build in those growth centers but recognizes that there may still be opposition.

In the mid-1990s, Hanley was the executive director of the Charlotte Land Trust, and she rejoined the organization as a board member in 2021.

"This is the busiest we've ever been," she said. "We try to focus on projects that protect wildlife corridors, open space and water resources and they're coming at us fast and furious. It's a lot of work for a bunch of volunteers."

Hanley is semi-retired, but she offers her expertise to the town on projects that can



Photo by Faith Ingulsrud

Dana Hanley wrapped up for winter.

benefit from her assistance, like the West Village Wastewater Committee.

"I try to serve on boards and get involved in activities that involve land use," she said.

In the late 1980s she served on the Charlotte Conservation Commission, followed by five years on the Planning Commission. She believes her professional and volunteer work in land conservation and planning on the regional and municipal levels are all tied together.

"How land is used affects all of us, and we can't have willy-nilly development all over the place," Hanley said. "We need zoning regulations and town plans that direct where we focus our growth and where we have open space."

Hanley believes open space is important for both wildlife corridors and recreation planning.

"It's all part of a big puzzle, and we all have different roles within it," she said.

## 'Directory of Volunteer Opportunities in Charlotte' is out

From a release

If it's been said once, it's probably been said way more than a thousand times: Charlotte runs on volunteers.

The Charlotte Grange has produced a directory of volunteer opportunities in Charlotte, and it's available in both printed form and at [charlottegrange.org/volunteer](http://charlottegrange.org/volunteer).

The directory was created to help connect the Charlotte community with volunteer opportunities.

"We hope Charlotters find something that catches their eye, aligns with their interests and directs them to an organization, committee or board," the Grange said in a release.

The volunteer directory includes a diverse range of volunteering possibilities.

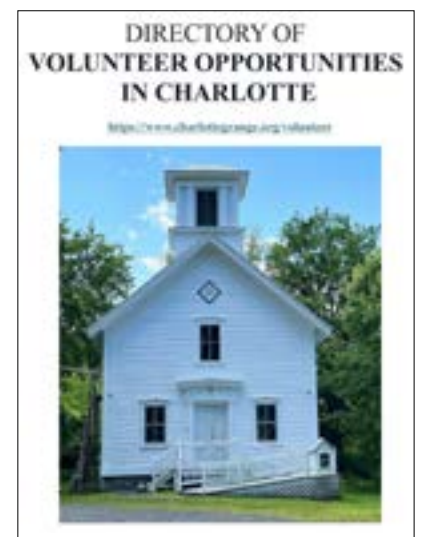
**"We hope the directory builds community and long-lasting connections and helps to support the great work you're already doing."**

The directory is now online on the Charlotte Grange's website, but there's also the opportunity to print a copy at [charlottegrange.org/volunteer](http://charlottegrange.org/volunteer). And the Grange has printed hard copies for the Charlotte Library, Charlotte Senior Center, town offices and the Grange that will be delivered soon.

"We hope the directory builds community and long-lasting connections and helps to support the great work you're

already doing," the release said.

Included among town nonprofit organizations that are always looking for and welcoming volunteers is The Charlotte News. Listed in the blurb of volunteer opportunities are writing, photographing and someone to collect and curate items for the newspaper's community calendar, but, like most of the other nonprofit town organizations, there are lots more possibilities than these. If you're curious,



email [scooter@thecharlottenews.org](mailto:scooter@thecharlottenews.org) to see how we can find a volunteer opportunity that works for and interests you.



# Lawmakers look for more time on broadband bills

Sam Hartnett  
Community News Service

As Vermont closes in on every home having high-speed internet access, some legislators have wondered if the state needs better consumer protections on the broadband marketplace.

Two House bills have been introduced that would bar service providers from deceptive business practices and require them to offer cheap broadband plans, both in the House Committee on Energy and Digital Infrastructure. But lawmakers say they need more time with the proposals — which have faced opposition from the industry and scrutiny from some state offices.

“Our committee will not be voting on (either bill) before the important mid-session ‘crossover’ date on March 14,” said Rep. Kathleen James, D-Manchester, the committee chair.

H.11, a bill sponsored by Rep. Laura Sibilila, I-Dover, aims to increase transparency between telecom providers and customers. The bill includes a complaint system, regulations on disconnections during emergencies and a statewide commitment to net neutrality, among other measures.

The bill is about getting Vermonters connected in a fair and transparent way, Sibilila said, in a rural state with little competition among wireless companies.

The second bill, H.121, would require telecom providers to offer affordable broadband plans to low-income Vermonters across several price tiers and require companies to provide reports and data on their offerings. It was introduced by Rep. Chris Morrow, D-Weston.

Telecom companies believe the bills could hamper Vermont’s goal of universal broadband, and some administration officials say they have enough industry sway to go without the legislation.

Two representatives of the trade association for the wireless industry opposed both bills in testimony to the House committee Feb. 14. The association, CTIA, represents internet providers like AT&T and Verizon. It disagreed with H.11’s additional regulations and cited an 11 percent drop in wireless service prices



Spools of fiberoptic cable.

Photo courtesy New NY Broadband Program

since 2017 while other consumer costs rose.

The Department of Public Service’s telecom director Hunter Thompson told legislators during a Feb. 13 committee meeting that the department already uses relationships with broadband providers to exercise “soft power” to resolve consumer complaints. Thompson explained that while the department is not opposed to the bill, it already does the work the legislation would codify.

The attorney general’s office weighed in on H.11, too, on Feb. 14. Todd Daloz, director of policy and legislative affairs, said broadband-related complaints are largely handled by the Department of Public Service.

“We do see the department as being a better avenue for this regulation,” said Daloz in testimony that day. Still, the director said it’s important for there to be transparency around public funds subsidizing telecom providers.

James, the committee chair, said legislators want to hear more testimony

throughout the session before acting.

Pandemic-era broadband programs brought plenty of money into the state to get Vermonters connected, but as those programs end, the legislators behind the bills worry about affordability.

“We need to work on lowering/eliminating the digital divide. We will keep at it,” Morrow, H.121’s sponsor, said over email. The possibility of a vote this session aside, Morrow said the testimony taken on the bill has been informative.

The Vermont Community Broadband Board has not taken a stance on the bill, citing a “rural affordability conundrum.” Broadband providers will charge other rural customers more in order to provide cheaper service for low-income Vermonters if required by law, board members said in testimony to the House committee.

Jeremy Crandall, one of the two lobbyists representing telecom companies, called the bill “an artificial price mandate on private companies that serve your constituents” in testimony Feb. 14.

Vermont’s topography, combined with its sparse population, often makes expanding to rural areas unprofitable for telecom providers.

The number of addresses without at least 25 megabits per second download speeds and 3 megabits per second upload speeds — up until 2024, the federal definition of broadband — continues to decrease.

In 2021, over 61,000 addresses weren’t served by 25/3 internet speeds, according to state data. By 2024, that number had dropped to about 20,200.

State officials want to see all addresses reach the 100/100 mark. Projects funded by the state’s broadband expansion loan program must provide those speeds.

A driving factor in network expansion in recent years has been growing communication union districts, multi-town municipal organizations that aim to provide universal broadband service across several communities. Similar to water or sewer districts, the communication union districts build infrastructure but in the form of broadband. Towns elect delegates to a governing board that holds open meetings, and profits from operations go back into expanding the network.

The unions formed from 2015 state law after persistent gaps in high-speed internet access in Vermont and concerns that cable companies wouldn’t build broadband in rural areas — because it just wasn’t profitable. What would become the first communication union district — the East Central Vermont Telecommunications District, which does business as ECFiber — formed back in 2008 and slowly built out to cover over 24,000 homes today.

Increases in funding for broadband efforts brought on by the pandemic allowed other districts to follow ECFiber’s footsteps.

“It’s a great Vermont story,” F. X. Flinn, chair of the ECFiber district, told House members in an introductory meeting at the start of the year. “We’re bringing a lot of people into the state, we’re keeping a lot of people in the state, who otherwise wouldn’t be able to work from home, to live in these rural communities.”

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



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# Debate on Middlebury gender-affirming care draws protests

Camila Van Order González  
Community News Service

It was about 20 minutes in when a lone trumpet sounded through Middlebury College's Wilson Hall Feb. 20.

"Hey, man, you're not helping," Gary Winslett, the political science professor who coordinated the evening's controversial event, told the trumpeter from the stage. "You're not helping your cause, bro."

"It's embarrassing for me, as a trans person, that you're doing this," said one of the speakers, Brianna Wu, executive director at the progressive RebellionPAC and former congressional candidate. "Can you please stop and let the adults have a discussion?"

For a few more minutes the trumpeter interrupted the event, blasting their horn — and a harmonica — until they were shuffled out. The moment encapsulated the energy on campus surrounding the event: a debate between Wu and Leor Sapir, a writer and fellow at the conservative Manhattan Institute think tank, on medical gender transition for children and adolescents.

Wu, a former video game developer, is known for her role 10 years ago as a target of Gamergate, a much-written-about controversy over media ethics that dovetailed with a harassment campaign against several women. These days, along with her political work, she regularly attends debates with online figures, many of whom identify as right-wing.

Sapir has written extensively about what he calls "gender medicine" and in an interview said his talks are frequently cancelled last minute. The college's event page for the talk, sponsored by the Alexander Hamilton Forum, called Wu and Sapir "two highly respected commentators."

The trumpeter was among many on and off campus who expressed disappointment about the debate. Protesters described the



Photo by Camila Van Order González

From left, Middlebury professor Gary Winslett and speakers Brianna Wu and Leor Sapir on stage during a debate at the college Feb. 20.

event as anti-trans and the speakers as unqualified to weigh in on medicine. Both Wu and Sapir question the ethics and effects of gender-affirming medicine for youth.

Along with protesters attending the event, reactions from the campus and broader community included a mass call-in urging to cancel, a simultaneous panel on campus involving health care professionals in firm disagreement with the speakers, a conga line outside McCullough Student Center and a dance party that played tracks from SOPHIE, Charli XCX and Nicky Da B.

The poster invitation for the latter read: "Gender affirming care saves lives and that isn't a question. However, we pose a new one: — TO DANCE OR NOT TO DANCE — Join us in a display of queer joy!!"

The hoopla from outside the hall seeped its way in. The crowd laughed at times during Sapir's presentation, or when Wu offered to introduce Sapir to "super-hot trans women." But it went quiet when Wu discussed her life before she came out at age 27.

"When I was so young, I felt something so intensely broken in me," Wu said. "It was all I could ever think about. I would sit there and weep in my bedroom and pray that Jesus would let me wake up as a girl ... It was puberty and having desperate crushes on the boys in my class but feeling horrified because the thought of them wanting me for a body I was ashamed of — it just made me want to die."

The central question of the debate was: Exactly how much access should young people have to medical transition?

Wu's position was that minors should have hormone treatment "gate-kept" from them until they've passed the early stages of puberty.

"I had to go make actual girl friends in the real world and figure out how girls socialize with each other," she said, arguing that removing barriers to gender-affirming care would "cheat trans people" out of those experiences.

Sapir expressed concern about physical and mental health side effects of

gender transition, citing data associating osteoporosis and breast cancer with different types of hormone therapies. He bemoaned the difficulty in sifting apart "future transsexuals" from "proto-gay boys" and claimed that even if it was possible to do so, no clinician would.

"How do we know which boys are going to grow up to be adjusted gay adults," asked Sapir as Wu chuckled, "and which boys are going to grow up to be people like you?"

"Thank you for asking," Wu said.

She engaged with the students who protested her, even tried to give advice to the trumpeter. After the event, she beamed at people with questions for her.

"Are those your real eyelashes?" she asked a Community News Service reporter, before paying a compliment.

While she and the reporter chatted, Wu let a fan of hers borrow her phone to text another commentator.

Wu said she values discourse.

"I just want to say, when we were driving up here in the car together," she said at one point on stage, gesturing to herself and Sapir, "we agreed on a lot. We disagreed (too), as you clearly saw. I think if we can have real conversations about this, we can have better policies."

Sapir took to social media after the debate in response to posts criticizing Middlebury students. He defended their right to disrupt the event, though he considered it "very childish."

Last week's event ended more quietly than a 2017 talk by Charles Murray, whose writings on race and intelligence have drawn far-reaching criticism and condemnation.

Co-sponsored by the Middlebury political science department and held soon after President Donald Trump's first inauguration, the event faced protests that became national news.

Students successfully disrupted that talk, and it had to be relocated. After confrontations between students, faculty, Murray and campus police escalated to violence, more than 100 Middlebury professors signed a document condemning disruption of speakers and outlining their belief in free inquiry in education.

Winslett, the professor who organized the more recent event, was still a year away from joining the faculty when the episode with Murray played out. But he was motivated by the same sort of principles as the faculty members who signed the statement.

"The progressive orthodoxy on our campus is not really matched by what's out there in society," Winslett said. "So I wanted to give my students the ability to hear from other viewpoints."

In the leadup to the event, Middlebury's Department of Gender, Sexuality and Feminist Studies released a statement on the Trump administration's executive order to recognize two sexes, male and female. The department said it was reaffirming its "commitment to our core values of academic inquiry and community."

"Gender is a field of inquiry, one where questions are asked, evidence is weighed and power is analyzed," the statement read. "It is not a place to debate the existence of minoritized groups. Instead, we should ask why it is possible to deny the existence of trans and non-binary people at this time."

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## Commentary

# It's not too late for a team approach to education reform

Elaine Haney  
Contributor

March Madness is almost here and that got me thinking. Just like in basketball, success in government comes from a tight team, strong players, good communication, trust in leadership, and a common goal.

I'm a big fan of the team approach to solving complex problems. While it's natural to want to hand off a problem to a single player, they can't carry the whole team. It takes teamwork to craft strong, durable solutions. But it's never easy, and it takes time.

Reforming education in Vermont is a complex problem that demands a team approach. Most Vermonters agree that our common goal is to fix our broken education system and make it more affordable. Our coach is the Governor and our team captain is the Legislature. We've got a deep bench of talent and expertise. But the game plan is flawed.

Teams will often go back and watch footage of earlier games to see where they can improve. Similarly, our Agency of Education, a key player, commissioned reports on topics including pupil weighting, special education, and spending levels. Having accurate, recent, and comprehensive data about the problem being solved is crucial.

Equally important is a deep bench of stakeholders with expertise and experience. Last year's Commission on the Future of Public Education in Vermont, whose charge was to "make recommendations for a statewide vision for Vermont's public education system," should have provided that. They could have been a key player, but they didn't come off the bench.

The Governor's current education reform proposal is his game plan. But how do you win a game if you play only part of the bench? How do you build trust and accountability on a team if you exclude most of the members?

The Commission was composed of an alphabet soup of education stakeholders: the State Board of Education, the Vermont Principals Association, the Vermont NEA, and many more. Commission membership came from all kinds of schools, and from teachers and school leadership, all of whom represented Vermont children and families—the stakeholders of our education system.

But for some reason (time constraints?),



Pexels Photo by Alex P

the Commission did not provide any suggestions for improving Vermont's education system. Their report includes just two recommendations: to affirm the purpose of the Commission's existence, and to ensure substantive community engagement.

This means the Governor's sweeping education system reform proposal is based primarily on studies and has very little input from the actual stakeholders who use and benefit from that system: Vermonters. It's hard to get team commitment when most of the team isn't able to contribute. The less commitment, the harder and messier the execution.

Another crucial aspect of a strong game plan and successful team is timing. It may seem like progress means getting to the goal as quickly as possible. But when you rush to the basket, that's often when the ball gets dropped, shots are missed, and fouls are called. Pacing, building momentum, time outs, and patience are required to win. In this case, the urgency of the property tax situation and the need for reform are being used to rush to the most expedient fix possible.

The Governor provided an enormous draft bill—which doesn't even address the biggest driver of education budget increases, health insurance—for lawmakers to review, debate, amend, and act on almost halfway through the legislative session, right before the weeklong Town Meeting Day recess. There has been talk of extending the session, but even that

check out The Vermont Political Observer.)

Education reform will not be achieved with a last second shot from half court. We must take a team approach to this crucial conversation. Limiting ourselves to the broad strokes of a wide-ranging plan discussed mainly between the Governor and Legislature leaves out stakeholders and draws unforced errors—with the end result that Vermonters will continue seeing unsustainable education tax increases and no plan to address them. A more thoughtful, concentrated effort may take longer, but will get us to our common goal.

The Town Meeting week break is happening now. If this were a basketball game, it would be halftime. The coach would help the team reset, adjust the plan, and move forward with renewed focus on the original goal.

Put us in, Coach. Bring the whole team together. Let's roll up our sleeves and play the long game. Let's be honest about the challenges and make difficult decisions based on data and expertise and experience, together. Let's be willing to acknowledge reality and have the courage to take risks. The stakes have never been higher and Team Vermont needs the win.

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



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## Education

# With AI taking entry-level jobs, critical-thinking key

Margo Bartsch  
Contributor

AI could eliminate 56 percent of entry-level jobs within five years.

This news headline can make your heart miss a beat. The forecast disrupts the definition of work and upends our sense of the process of building a career.

Business executives believe that 47 percent of their workforce will be unprepared for the future of work and 87 percent of organizations will struggle to find talent with AI skills, according to the edX 2023 AI Survey, the for-profit online education platform founded by Harvard University and Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Forbes reported in October that 65 percent of employers are using AI to screen and reject candidates. AI is imbedded in the hiring process in the following areas: 83 percent resume review, 69 percent candidate assessment analysis, 47 percent social media and personal website scans, and 19 percent interviewing. AI can be tailored to profile job candidates in matching work skills and fit with the organization's culture.

This January, Fast Company profiled the Future of Jobs Report from the World Economic Forum highlighting the most in-demand skills. The phrase, "skill instability" illustrates how 39 percent of existing skills will be obsolete within the next five years. With AI automating many everyday work tasks, 41 percent of employers are intending to downsize their work force.

Yet, there is hope! The World Economic Forum report explains that the human skills of critical thinking and creative problem solving are increasingly essential in this transformational economy. The character traits of resilience, flexibility and agility are most valued, according to the WEF survey of



Pexels photo by Cottonbro Studio

seven out of ten companies.

How can a high school or college student be ready for this new world of work that will greet them by the time they graduate? It is important to develop AI literacy skills (upskills) with free online classes from LinkedIn, Coursera and Elements for AI, according to Reach Capital, an early-stage investor in learning, health and work industries. These credentials can all be listed on the student's resume and LinkedIn profile.

LinkedIn featured a McKinsey Consulting study from June, 2023 reporting 60 to 70 percent of a worker's tasks can be automated by AI in the future. Currently, around 25 percent of "total work time" consists of using AI for natural language-related work, such as software engineering, research and development, and marketing and sales.

However, these jobs still need people who have engaged-communication styles, empathy in responding to a range of circumstances and critical thinking skills to work alongside AI.

In addition, building experiences with human interaction and problem solving is critical for adding value to group projects and clear communication, both written and verbal. Last year, the National Association of Colleges and Employers surveyed 255 employers identifying three top "competencies" for today's job candidates: communication, teamwork and critical thinking.

For example, AI is quickly spreading into the fields of accounting and computer science. Pushing out of your comfort zone to take classes in English and Sociology or volunteering on a political campaign can

expand knowledge and experiences.

For high school students, participating in drama performances, such as Rice Stunt Nite (nearly 100-year tradition of original skits) or CVU Performing Arts (band, choral music, drama), provides hands-on interactions with many moving pieces and skillsets needed to bring a huge production together on a timeline. Working as a team to power through challenges using creativity and accountability are applicable to the workplace.

Also, joining high school activity competitions develops teamwork and initiative. CVU's Engineering and Robotics Club and Rice's Model United Nations and Debate Club all foster experiential learning to extend classroom topics into real-world experiences.

Many popular high school clubs that students enjoy can be continued into college. For example, the Women in Business club at CVU is also active at various colleges. The mission of the George Washington University Women in Business is to "bring together students from all majors, career interests and aspirations to achieve personal and professional success ... seeking to provide opportunities for mentorship, networking, leadership and community engagement."

AI is not a substitute for human ingenuity and teamwork. Instead, people need to develop new skills to build upon core expertise.

With giant shifts in the workforce, social engagement is a differentiator that can help students avoid being outpaced by AI. People created technology and must learn to work alongside it, rather than being replaced by it.

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

## School celebrates individuality during Spirit Week

Naomi Strada  
(Summarized by Tom Scatchard)

Charlotte Central School celebrated Spirit Week the week of Feb. 17.

Tuesday's theme was "Celebrate that we are all unique and different," encouraging students to wear mismatched or inside-out clothing to symbolize individuality. The student council organized the meaningful and engaging week.

Beyond Spirit Week, the school was buzzing with activity:

- Monday — Another snow day to enjoy winter's beauty.
- Tuesday — The annual spelling bee and the eighth-grade science fair — two showcases of student learning and skill.
- Wednesday — Third graders visited the Flynn Theater for the show "New Orleans Songbook" performed by Jazz at Lincoln Center.
- Thursday — A meeting for sixth-eighth graders interested in the spring musical. The day wrapped up with a student-staff basketball game, complete with a student pep band, fans and a fantastic atmosphere.
- Tuesday & Thursday — The school basketball teams capped off their seasons with strong performances in the Champlain Valley School District tournament.

• Friday — Second-grade classrooms had a morning writing celebration.

### Spring musical

A cast family informational night for all interested sixth-eighth grade students and caregivers is set for Tuesday, March 11.

This year's production is "Willy Wonka Jr." with performances planned on June 5-7. Directors are Angela Pollock and Monica Littlefield.

The informational meeting is for those students interested in either an on-stage role or backstage work. Information will be shared at this meeting about auditions, rehearsals and expectations for students and caregivers.

### Spelling bee

On Tuesday, Feb. 18, the school had 36 second-eighth graders participating in the annual school spelling bee.

The competition was both fierce and friendly. After 15 rounds, the winning word was tegular (relating to or resembling tile) spelled by school spelling champion, Lucy Palmer.

Annie Palmer came in second and Leslie Mudge came in third. All three of the winning spellers will participate in the Vermont State Spelling Bee at St. Michael's College on March 24.

### Successful science fair

The annual eighth-grade science fair was a success with students spending five weeks in science class creating, designing and testing.

Each student chose a topic that interested them from sport and music to chemistry and physics, then create a measurable test.

The project culminated in a classic science fair with traditional trifold presentations. The eighth graders shared their projects with younger students, and then with parents and caregivers afterschool.

### Variety show

On Thursday March 27, the Charlotte Central School Variety Show, hosted by the PTO, will be held at 6:30 p.m. in the Multi-Purpose Room.

Singers, dancers, comedians and those with a hidden talent will be taking the stage for an epic celebration of talent, creativity and community.

### Month of thanks by Lucinda Smith

(from the CCS Press, the student newspaper, put out by the student council).

As you might know, November is the month of thanks. In the month of November, Thanksgiving happens. Thanksgiving is a



Photo by Lewis Mudge

From left, Leslie Mudge (third place), pronouncer Chea Waters Evans, Lucy Palmer (first place) and Annie Palmer (second place) after the school's annual spelling bee.

day where you celebrate thanks by saying or doing something for someone to show gratitude.

Some ways to show gratitude are by opening a door or just saying thanks. And



## Education

# Bill targets food dyes feared unhealthy in school meals

Noah Diedrich  
Community News Service

Artificial dyes found in processed and pre-packaged foods sold in schools are the target of a recent bill in the Vermont Senate.

The bill, introduced by Sen. Ginny Lyons, D-Chittenden-Southeast, is modeled after California's 2024 School Food Safety Act. While California's bill goes a bit farther, banning food items that exceed set amounts of sugar and fat from being sold in lunchrooms, both pieces of legislation set their sights on dyes added to food such as Red 40, Blue 1 and Yellow 5.

S. 26 would bar schools from serving food and beverages with any amount of the dyes.

Recent research suggests the six manmade dyes covered in the bill may have unpalatable upshots, including inattention and hyperactivity in kids.

"This makes a whole lot of sense to eliminate those food dyes that have significant health consequences, and especially for kids," Lyons said.

Lindsey Hedges, public information officer for the Vermont Agency of Education, said in an email that many food manufacturers are already taking steps to remove the dyes from their products due to California's recent bill.

"We do not think that Vermont school meals programs would have difficulty finding products that met the restrictions if the bill were to pass," Hedges said.

The agency conducts routine reviews of about 30 schools per year, examining their lunch menus, ingredient labels and recipes. Hedges said those assessments rarely find food dyes in the meals themselves, which are typically cooked from scratch.

Rather, items with the dyes are mostly found in vending machines, school stores or through a la carte options, she said.

To be sold in schools, foods must meet certain nutrition requirements, and food manufacturers often make versions of their products to be sold to schools, formulated with child nutrition in mind, Hedges said.

"These items are subject to minimum nutritional standards set by the federal Smart Snack requirements," she said, referring to a common name for a set of Obama-era rules. "With California's recent ban, we are no longer seeing food dyes in many of these products."

Some local school nutrition directors are not so sure. Karyl Kent, treasurer and former president for the School Nutrition Association of Vermont, said her organization is in full support of Lyons' measure.

"We really encourage that our legislators are bringing this up and voicing concern for our safety in school foods and for the health of our kids," Kent said.



A school lunch line.

Photo by Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets

Pre-packaged and processed food options contain more artificial food dyes than any ingredient in school lunches, Kent said. Think Gatorade, Doritos or M&M's.

Kent believes Vermont is at the forefront of an effort that encourages school districts to collaborate with local agriculture markets. As a plus, that dynamic helps cafeterias to divorce themselves from food and drink that contain dyes that can harm children.

"We're kind of on the leading edge of the local foods movement," she said. "So naturally, we're looking to move away from those types of products."

Two state programs help promote that emphasis on local foods: the 2023 universal school meals act and the Local Foods Incentive Grant, created by a 2021 law. One benefit of the grant, Kent said, is that schools can rely less on vending machines, which are installed to bring in more revenue for the school.

Since schools can make that revenue through reimbursements for sourcing meal ingredients locally, they can shed their a la carte options as a result, Kent said.

"With the increase in participation in universal school meals and because of our scratch cooking, we've increased our revenue from our reimbursements," she said. "So, we rely less on these outside sales."

Kent, who is also the nutrition director for Mount Mansfield Unified Union School District, said her district sources from farms in New Haven and Huntington to make nutritiously diverse meals like jerk chicken or to provide ingredients for panini bars.

"The more we can move towards scratch cooking, the better we are," she said.

Kent previously worked in the Lamoille North Supervisory Union, which she said

eliminated a la carte sales completely.

"It wasn't equitable, and it was more labor for us," she said. After the change, "we did not rely on that revenue anymore," she said.

Lamoille North isn't a unique case — Essex-Westford School District also quashed a la carte sales and Kent is currently working toward the same in Mount Mansfield Unified, she said.

"We're working on cleaning up our food system, making it more local and healthier for

kids," Kent said.

The proposal in the Legislature arrived after the Food and Drug Administration enacted a ban on Red 3 in food on Jan. 15. The dye is used in candy, cakes and other sweet treats to give the products a bright, cherry-red hue — and had been banned for use in cosmetics for decades because research linked it to cancer in rats.

The federal ban came as Robert F. Kennedy Jr., a critic of dyes in foods, was confirmed by the U.S. Senate as health secretary, overseeing the department that houses the FDA.

Lyons, the bill sponsor, said she worries about Kennedy's recent confirmation as the nation's new top health official because he is a noted vaccine skeptic who lacks any medical background.

"It's time for all of us to be very, very aware of what we can do to prevent chronic illness and do that as far upstream as we can get," she said. "We've got to keep an eye on our own kids in our own state."

Despite his mistrust of some accepted medical practices, Kennedy has signaled his support for further research into food additives and aligning the federal ingredient standards with those of the European Union.

In Vermont, though, S.26 has so far taken a backseat this biennium, Lyons said.

"Obviously, everyone is preoccupied with property taxes," she said. "A bill like this takes second row."

## EDUCATION

Continued from page 10

at the end of the day, you have a big festive meal with the people you care about.

We interviewed some third graders on what they thought about the month of thanks and ways they show thanks to people they care about.

Our first question was: How do you show thanks to someone you care about?

Juniper: Helping my parents by bringing in the groceries.

Campbell: I open the door for my mom.

Harlow: I hug the people I care about.

Calvin: I say thank you.

Our second question was: What or who is someone or something you care about?

Juniper: I care about my best friend

Harlow.

Campbell: I care about my dog Lucky.

Harlow: I care about my best friend

Juniper.

Calvin: I care about my parents and cousins.

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# Community Roundup

## Green Up Day celebrates 55 years first Saturday in May

For 55 years, the first Saturday in May (May 3 this year), Green Up Day, has been all about gathering family and neighbors outside to clean up litter and debris from roadsides and waterways. Green Up Day is a much-loved tradition that continues to make Vermont's landscapes clean and instills a sense of community care from the smallest of hands to the oldest of hearts.

Green Up Vermont is the private nonprofit behind Green Up Day that works year-round to ensure stewardship for Vermont's environment and teaches about waste reduction habits to remove trash altogether.

"With two consecutive years of catastrophic flooding here in Vermont and with massive climate events in other areas of the country, we simply can't turn a blind eye to our climate," said Kate Alberghini of Green Up Vermont. "Studies show that litter and microplastics cause climate damage. Together, simply by picking up trash and changing a few habits, we can edit the direction of our climate, but we must work together."

Together, Vermonters accomplish big things, including a Guinness World Records title last Green Up Day for the most pledges to pick up trash in 24 hours.

## Deadline of SCHIP spring grant applications fast approaching

The deadline for SCHIP's spring 2025 grant application is March 15.

SCHIP (Shelburne, Charlotte and Hinesburg Interfaith Projects) is the nonprofit upscale resale shop in the heart of Shelburne Village. It was founded in 2003 by a group of dedicated local men and women who shared a common goal — to support projects and causes that positively impact our neighbors' lives. Over the years, the nonprofit has raised close to \$1 million dollars through the resale of locally donated, gently used clothing, houseware, art and jewelry.

The profits are returned to the community through grants awarded twice a year to eligible organizations, individual entrepreneurs and associations to fund projects serving Shelburne, Hinesburg and Charlotte residents. In 2024, SCHIP awarded over \$80,000, the highest annual total yet, to 31 local non-profits and organizations.

In the past, most of the grants were capped at \$3,000, but the organization has removed the \$3,000 limit, recognizing that some projects may require additional funds to become successful.

To be eligible, the applicant must have 501c(3) status or submit the application



through such an organization. The funded project must serve residents of Shelburne, Hinesburg and Charlotte.

Grants have previously supported community organizations, such as rescue squads, farmers' coalitions, police departments, daycare centers, refugee support services, food shelves, senior support organizations, schools, nonprofit resale shops and disability services networks.

To learn more, visit [theschip.org](http://theschip.org). Email [grants@theschip.org](mailto:grants@theschip.org) with questions.

## Registration open to participate in Girls on the Run Vermont

Girls on the Run Vermont's registration for its spring program is open.

Girls on the Run is a physical activity-based, positive youth-development program that inspires students in third-eighth grades to be joyful, healthy and confident. The 10-week program incorporates movement to empower participants to develop critical life skills, build confidence, cultivate positive connections with peers, manage emotions and stand up for themselves and others. Volunteer coaches utilize a research-based curriculum to engage teams of girls in fun, interactive lessons that foster the social, emotional and physical wellbeing of participants.

The spring season begins the week of March 17 statewide. Teams meet twice a week for 90 minutes and the program culminates with all teams participating in one of two noncompetitive, celebratory 5K events in Essex at the Champlain Valley Expo (May 31) and at the Manchester Recreation Fields (June 7). These events bring together family, friends and community members to celebrate the participants' growth throughout the season.

The program fee for the spring 2025 season is \$130 and financial aid is available to those who need it. The program fee includes registration and activities for the end of season 5K event, a program t-shirt, personal journal to use throughout the season, cinch sack, water bottle and more.

Information about the program and registration can be found on the Girls on the Run Vermont's website at [gotrvt.org](http://gotrvt.org). Register at <https://tinyurl.com/mvf928hp>.

## Red Cross offers free A1C testing for blood donors in March

The American Red Cross is helping to bridge access to health care for blood donors by providing free A1C testing, commonly used to screen for diabetes and prediabetes, on all successful blood, platelet and plasma donations in March.

One-third of people lack access to regular primary care in the U.S., where

diabetes affects 1 in 10 people and nearly a quarter of those living with it have been undiagnosed, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The free A1C screening aims to help address this gap by empowering blood donors with valuable information to maintain their health and well-being. This new offering is among the longtime work of the Red Cross to support the health of communities, which also includes disaster relief efforts such as basic disaster health and mental health services among other assistance.

Visit [RedCrossBlood.org](http://RedCrossBlood.org), use the Red Cross Blood Donor App or call 1-800-RED CROSS to book a time to give in March and learn more about your health. 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](http://RedCrossBlood.org/March) for details on both offers.

You can also make a financial donation at [redcross.org/GivingDay](http://redcross.org/GivingDay) on March 26 to support people in need of disaster services such as emergency shelter, food, relief supplies, basic health care, emotional support and financial assistance. Both efforts are part of Red Cross Month activities in March.

The Red Cross is also helping to support the health of communities by installing free smoke alarms and sharing home fire safety information with families in at-risk communities through its Sound the Alarm events. Home fires claim seven lives every day in the United States, but having working smoke alarms can cut the risk of death by half.

Here in Vermont, the Red Cross responded to nearly 100 home fires in 2024, assisting 325 Vermonters. Residents needing smoke alarms can visit [redcross.org/EndHomesFiresNNE](http://redcross.org/EndHomesFiresNNE) or call 800-464-6692 (Option 4) to schedule a free installation. A member of the Red Cross team will follow-up to schedule your appointment.

## Lake Champlain Basin Program reissues RFP for support and capacity building

The Patrick Leahy Lake Champlain Basin Program seeks proposals for projects that will support increased organizational capacity and long-term effectiveness of watershed organizations working in the Lake Champlain watershed.

Funding requests of up to \$20,000 will be considered. Approximately \$250,000 is available to support awarded projects under this Request for Proposals. The Lake Champlain Basin Program anticipates supporting multiple projects through this funding opportunity.

This request for proposals is being re-issued to align with the recent executive orders and to allow for all potential projects to be proposed that are in direct support of the ongoing efforts to preserve and advance water quality initiatives across the Lake Champlain Basin.

This grant opportunity will support watershed organizations in the early stages of their development or assist established organizations in strengthening their capacity. Funding is not intended to support the development of new programming; this funding can be requested through other Lake Champlain Basin Program grant programs.

Proposals are due at noon on March 20. Awarded projects will begin work in May 2025. More information, including grant guidelines and applications, is available on the Lake Champlain Basin Program's website at [lcbp.org/grants](http://lcbp.org/grants).





## Food Shelf News

# Through good news, bad news, food shelf carrying on

Katherine Arthaud  
Contributor

First, the good news. The food shelf is excited to announce that it has been awarded a Vermonters Feeding Vermonters grant again this year, allowing us to partner with local producers to provide fresh fruit, vegetables and meat for our families throughout the summer. This is especially important in this time of funding freezes by the current administration, the uncertainty of the continuation of existing programs and potential funding decreases for food programs.

In addition, the food shelf received a Vermont Fresh grant which will give additional support to our Capacity grant for our upgrade of the food shelf. To date we have purchased a new commercial refrigerator and a new dolly. We expect to do the major improvements in April. These will include painting and the removal and replacement of all existing shelving, along with additional shelving to provide a more organized, user-friendly space.

So, that is the good news. The not-so-good news has to do with the recent funding freezes and how they have been affecting individuals and organizations in this country.

Just two weeks into his term as president, Donald Trump illegally froze \$3 trillion in essential federal support for families, states, Tribes and businesses. Despite challenges from the courts, the administration has doubled down and ignored federal judges' orders to unfreeze these funds. As a result, millions of Americans are in a bad spot, with access to vital (and in some cases lifesaving)

funds already approved by Congress suddenly cut off or suspended.

In response, Vermont nonprofits have been initiating legal actions to challenge the federal funding freeze, to protect essential services and support for food-insecure populations.

Sen. Bernie Sanders has been blasting the current administration's order to freeze all federal loans and grants, which he says constitutes "a dangerous move towards authoritarianism in America."

The order, which was scheduled to begin Feb. 24, was issued in a memo from Trump's acting head of the Office of Management and Budget. The directive instructs all federal agencies to "temporarily pause all activities related to obligations or disbursement of all federal financial assistance." The memo did not specify which groups or programs would be affected but said that the freeze would not apply to Social Security or Medicare.

Sanders joined other Senate Democrats in denouncing the order, saying in a statement that the freeze would have a "devastating impact on the health and wellbeing of millions of children, seniors on fixed incomes and the most vulnerable people in our country." Beyond being a dangerous move towards authoritarianism, it is, he said, blatantly unconstitutional. "Our founding fathers explicitly gave Congress the power of the purse. Under our system of checks and balances, no president has the right to choose which laws to follow and which laws to ignore."

Vermont is one of 23 states initiating legal action against the funding freeze. As of Feb. 25, the freeze has been temporarily

halted due to legal challenges. However, the situation remains fluid. Vermont officials continue to monitor developments to ensure that critical programs and services are not adversely affected.

As discussed previously, our food shelf gets much of our food, along with some grants, from the Vermont Foodbank. As the foodbank receives both state and federal support, any freeze on their funding would affect us also. Furthermore, our families rely on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP (formerly known as Food Stamps), for support to purchase food. And SNAP is federally funded. The school lunch program (free and reduced) is also federally funded.

There is danger that the House Agriculture Committee will be asked to cut programs in its jurisdiction by up to \$230 billion, with the money expected to come largely or entirely from SNAP. The problem is, substantial cuts to SNAP would have serious negative impacts on households with low incomes, not only in Vermont but in every state, adding greatly to food insecurity.

Charlotte Food Shelf director Peggy Sharpe said, "These 'safety net' programs and others are at real risk of being cut by this current administration's budget. They are the essential supports that keep many of these families afloat."

All that being said, please rest assured that we will do our best to, as they say, keep calm and carry on. We continue to be so very, very grateful for all the community support. We couldn't do this without you. Please know that you are making a big difference to our community and our neighbors in need.



A giant thank you to all who have donated to the food shelf with money or time: Sara Margo for her contribution in memory of Claire Houghton, and Ann Castle (from the Charlotte Coop Buying Club). Also, Meg Berlin, Jennifer Hunt, Donna Fraser-Leary, Cecily Stokes-Prindle, Jocelyn Schermerhorn and John Henry Siedlecki.

#### Schedule:

- Wednesdays 4-6 p.m. and Saturdays 9-11 a.m. (second and fourth of the month, unless otherwise noted)
- Wednesday, March 12 and 26
- Saturday, March 15 and 29.

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

Applicants must reside in Charlotte or North Ferrisburgh.

If you would like to donate to the Charlotte Food Shelf, your donation will help us support our neighbors in need. Giving online is easy and safe through PayPal. 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 of U.S. law.

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

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

## Rare snow

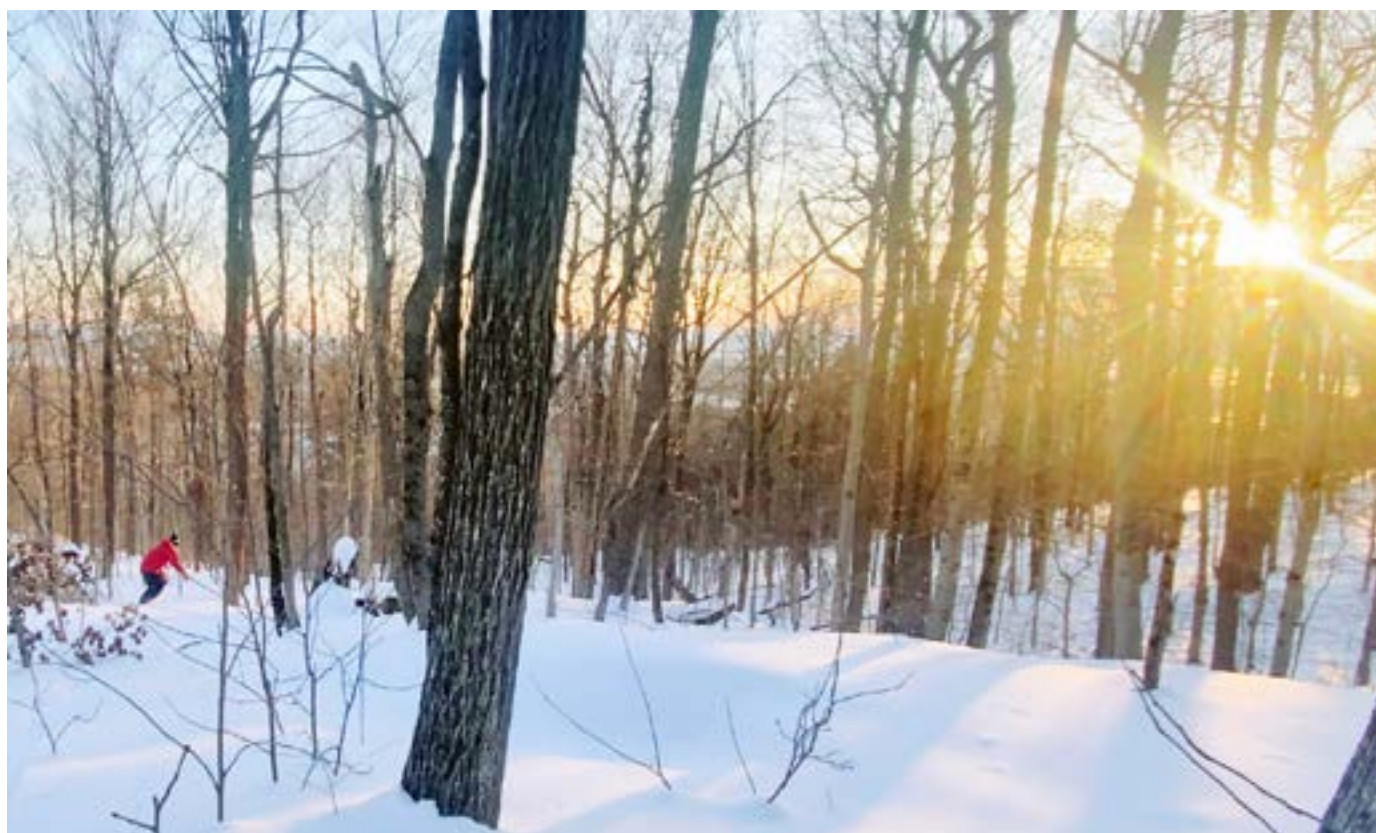


Photo by Caroline Patten

More snow than recent years has made the woods on Mt. Philo good for powder surfing or snowboarding without bindings. Also sometimes called powder surfing, it requires a special board designed to be controlled only by the rider's feet and balance.



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## Gardening

# Get ready for spring by hosting a garden party

Andrea Knepper  
University of Vermont Extension

By this time of the year, it may seem like winter will never end. Many of us are eager to start gardening knowing that spring is right around the corner. While we can't make the calendar pages turn more quickly, we can get ready for the upcoming gardening season while having some fun with friends and neighbors by hosting a garden party.

Hosting a garden-themed gathering is a great way to start planning for the upcoming garden season, swap seeds, exchange houseplant cuttings and share favorite recipes using garden delicacies. Consider inviting all the green-thumbed friends in your life for a couple of hours of sharing, networking and fun.

### Plan your event

Make your guest list, including family, friends and neighbors. Many public libraries have spaces that can be reserved for gatherings if you are not able to host in your own home. If you are using a public space, consider posting your event so more people may be able to join in the fun.

### Organize your seeds to swap

Sort through your seed collection and set aside extras to share. Double check to make sure they are in good condition and likely viable. If you are not sharing the whole seed packet, clearly label an envelope with all the critical information such as plant variety, planting, growing and harvest information.

### Organize a seed catalog order

Costs can add up when ordering gardening seeds and supplies. Bring seed catalogs and organize a group order to share larger packets of seeds and cut down on shipping costs. Even if no orders are placed, it is fun to see catalogs from new seed companies and all the different plant varieties available.

### Exchange houseplant cuttings

A number of houseplants are easy to propagate from cuttings. Some of the easiest to propagate in water are pothos, philodendron, Christmas cactus, pilea (Chinese money plant), geranium and spider plant. Snip a stem off any of these plants just below a node and place it in water. Within a couple of weeks, roots will form and the cutting will be ready to plant.

### Share gardening know-how

A gathering of gardeners can be a tremendous resource. Brainstorm solutions for issues experienced in the garden, share tips and tricks and discuss successful pest control strategies. If you get stuck, you can submit your questions to the University of Vermont Extension Master Gardener Helpline at [go.uvm.edu/gardenquestion](http://go.uvm.edu/gardenquestion).

Recommend that your guests bring their garden journal if they keep one. There might be some new ideas to jot down.

### Garden delights

A fun way to engage guests and lighten the responsibilities of the host is to organize a potluck. Ask your attendees to bring a snack or appetizer to share, preferably using ingredients that can be grown in the garden. Have copies of the recipe available to take home. Maybe there are seeds to share for the produce as well.

A winter garden party is more than a fun gathering. It's a way to strengthen your gardening network, share knowledge and build excitement for the upcoming gardening season.

You will be sure to leave with new ideas and inspiration. Celebrate the joy of gardening and brighten the winter months by connecting with fellow gardeners.

*(Andrea Knepper is a University of Vermont Extension master gardener from Bolton.)*



Photos by Andrea Knepper

A winter garden party is a fun event where guests can browse seed catalogs, swap seeds and houseplant cuttings, share ideas from their garden journals and enjoy a potluck meal featuring dishes that use ingredients that can be grown in the garden.



Inviting green-thumbed friends to a garden-themed winter gathering is a great way to generate excitement and plan for the upcoming garden season.

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## Gardening

# Increasing vegetable plant diversity with seeds

Amy Simone  
University of Vermont Extension

Choosing seeds and starting your own transplants are among the most empowering ways to garden. Why grow the same vegetable varieties that you can buy at the grocery store when there are so many others to try?

In addition, purchasing unique varieties of seeds encourages growers to keep offering them. As a bonus, diversity in your vegetable garden can give our pollinators and other beneficial insects a wider diet.

Perhaps you are looking for the ideal tomato to slice fresh off the vine into your salads and prefer them to be balanced between acidity and sweetness. As you read the growers' notes on various tomato varieties, focus on the description of their flavors and uses and let that guide you to a few options.

Among the choices between those perfect, not-too-sweet, fresh eating tomatoes, there also are options for hybrid, heirloom or open-pollinated seeds.

Hybrid seeds, also referred to as F1 (first generation off-spring) hybrids, are the result of a controlled cross between two parent plants of the same species carefully chosen for their attributes. This



Photos by Amy Simone

Selecting seeds and starting transplants is the best way to diversify a garden as not only will it provide a jump start on the season, but gardeners can try varieties that may not be available to purchase at garden centers.

is a lengthy process that may take seven to eight years until a consistent hybrid plant is achieved.

The seeds from this winning combination are packaged and sold with a higher price tag. In exchange for the extra cost are seeds with "hybrid vigor." These seeds germinate into strong seedlings that become larger plants, yield more fruit and are more resistant to the common diseases and pests for that type of plant.



Growing different tomato varieties allows gardeners to enjoy a wider range of unique flavors and ripening times throughout the growing season.

To clarify, hybrids are not genetically modified organisms, also called GMOs, as some people may believe. GMOs are made by modifying the plant's genetic material in a lab.

The downside to hybrids is that to continue to grow the variety that you like, you will need to buy seeds for it each year. Seeds saved and planted from F1 hybrids will not result in the same plant.

Open-pollinated seeds, often noted as OP on packets, are from plants that are pollinated naturally by the wind and insects. Seeds saved from these plants will grow exactly the same variety. It's especially easy to save the seeds of beans, lettuce, tomatoes and peas for planting in future seasons since these are self-pollinating plants.

Heirloom seeds are open-pollinated plants that were developed naturally outside of the commercial plant trade. Heirloom plants often have been saved and replanted for more than 50 years, and there is usually an interesting backstory

to how that variety developed.

Standard and heirloom open-pollinated seeds will yield stable traits from generation to generation. Many people feel that their flavor is superior to that of hybrids. They are less expensive than hybrids, especially when you save their seeds for the following year's crop.

If saving seeds is important to you, there is likely an open-pollinated variety with the desired attributes that is similar enough to a hybrid that you like.

Hybrid varieties may be better if you have a smaller garden and want to get more yield from fewer plants. Open-pollinated plants will offer more varieties that focus on taste and uniqueness. There is room in your garden for both.

Most importantly, embrace the power to expand the diversity of vegetables that you grow by selecting your own seeds.

For questions about seeds, seed starting and other gardening topics, feel free to reach out the Extension Master Gardener Helpline at [go.uvm.edu/gardenquestion](http://go.uvm.edu/gardenquestion).

## Hey, hay



Photo by Lee Krohn

On Saturday, hay bales were on the move on Greenbush Road.



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## In the Outdoors

# In spite of the polar vortex, looking ahead to spring

Elizabeth Bassett  
Contributor

My garden journal features sporadic entries over the decades, usually after a spectacular success (tastiest cantaloupe ever!) or disasters, woodchucks again — aaargh.

Weather entries enjoy top billing, such as the fourth week of February 2001: It never seems to fail — rain or sleet ruin any existing snow the weekend that school vacation begins. Rain, ice and wind transformed the little remaining snow into cement.

It remains like this until I read ahead to the first week in March: Town Meeting Day, fourth greatest snowfall ever in Champlain Valley, dumping 30+ inches on us. Town Meeting postponed. Wind whips up drifts. No school through Wednesday.

In 1998, the first week in March, I order \$65 of garden seeds from Johnny's, an extravagance, but cheaper than therapy. Must have been a rough winter.

In 2016, first crocus blossoms on March 8.

Which brings us to this winter. Most of the United States has been under the spell of the polar vortex, making parts of the country, per The New York Times, the most unusually cold place on the planet so far this year. The frigid airmass that usually winters over Canada, Greenland and the Arctic, migrated south, leaving those places warmer than

usual and us shivering. More than 30 states have had average temperatures at least five degrees colder than average.

Given that I love to ski or snowshoe out my backdoor, I am quite content but I am looking ahead to spring.

The Winooski Natural Resources Conservation District's annual plant sale inspires us to fill empty spots in the garden or yard with native plants at good prices. Plants are bare root and must be planted promptly; for example, plan and dig before driving to Williston to pick up your bounty. Offerings range from peach to hazelnut trees, spruce and fir to elms, high bush blueberries and the increasingly rare butternut tree, and pussy willows and red osier dogwood. Ordering deadline is May 3 but popular items sell out quickly. Pick-up date is Saturday, May 10, in Williston from 9 a.m. to noon. I suggest aiming for 9 a.m. or earlier. Gardeners are eager folk. Info at [winooskinred.org](http://winooskinred.org).

If you are itching to tidy up your land, think again about leaving snags for wildlife. Snags are generally standing dead trees, but we have a cavity-rich sugar maple that lives on against all odds. When we moved to our house 40 years ago, some suggested cutting it down. The tree was full of holes but still leafing out on its remaining branches. Forty years later, the maple is little changed other than its resident cavity dwellers.

From Mary Holland's blog, Naturally

Curious, it is estimated that about a fourth of northeastern forest wildlife species need cavity trees. Mammals raise their young in cavities as well as 85 species of birds in North America. Even invertebrates such as snakes, frogs and salamanders find food and shelter and incubate eggs in tree cavities.

Whoooo of us who walks Mt. Philo in the spring has not seen the family of owls nesting in a tree cavity? Naturally Curious is published several times each month: [naturallycuriouswithmaryholland.wordpress.com](http://naturallycuriouswithmaryholland.wordpress.com). It's brief, pithy and fun for nature lovers.

Green Mountain Club volunteers will lead two wintry outings on the weekend of March 8-9. On Saturday, March 8, a moderate, pet-free, 6-mile snowshoe or hike, with 800 feet of elevation gain, to expansive views of Moosalamoo. The outing departs from Branbury State Park in Salisbury, on the shores of Lake Dunmore. On Sunday, March 9, snowshoe and microspike on a difficult hike in the Worcester Range, including Mount Hunger and White Rock, 6.5 miles and 2,100 feet of elevation gain. Go to [greenmountainclub.org](http://greenmountainclub.org), and then to Events for details and registration. The website hosts a wealth of information, events, classes, courses and resources for outdoor recreation year-round.

While not outdoors, the 2025 Vermont Flower Show, March 7-9, at the Champlain Valley Exposition in Essex Junction, cures



Photo by Elizabeth Bassett

Think again about leaving snags for wildlife. This cavity-rich sugar maple has survived for more than 40 years and has served as housing for a variety of cavity dwellers over the years.

the winter blues. Tickets are available at the door or online at both Claussen's and Gardener's Supply. Smell the roses and get an early dose of spring.

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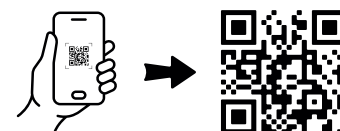
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# Sacred Hunter

## Early sunny day and thoughts of nature's balance

Bradley Carleton  
Contributor

On the first warm sunny day of the month, my heart calls me to step outside and breathe in the fragrances of woodsmoke as it mixes with the mellifluous symphony of birds singing for the pure joy of another spring. The chickadees and nuthatches fly from branch to feeder to ground as the melting snow reveals the spoils of hasty winter meals, cardinals flutter in without caring that the blue jay claims his role as the thief of all good seeds.

A fat grey squirrel leaps off the ground to the bark of the maple and scurries up to the feeder, only to find that it does not provide him with solid footing, and he drops to the ground below as the downy woodpecker feeds on the leftover suet. The woodpecker is grinning at the squirrel's greed and resulting embarrassment.

Walking into the backyard, the snow has a hard crust and appears to be able to support my weight. But no, those large helpings of comfort food all winter betray me and I break through the crust and sink into the soft snow under the surface, my low Bean boots allowing the cold snow into the boots. I laugh. I feel spring is coming, but like the squirrel, my hopes are delayed by the reality of a Vermont winter more like the ones we were used to a decade or two ago.

Without assigning any political belief to the concept, most of us now accept that things are changing in our state. The ice fishing season offered us plenty of solid surface but the fish seemed to have changed their patterns dramatically. That's not to say that there were no good days. One of ours was a 105 fish day, for which we were grateful, but after that first good day, the bite disappeared.

We fished in a dozen separate locations that, in the past, were very productive, and we came off the ice shaking our heads in disbelief. Someone floated a theory that we had forgotten since the last time the lake had this much ice — alewife die-offs. These invasive species were brought into our lake by out-of-state anglers bringing in their "own bait" from Connecticut's kettle ponds. The alewives reproduced like throwing gasoline on a fire.

However, their genetics did not allow them to live when the water turned to ice. Thus, massive die-offs have occurred throughout the lake. When the alewives die off, they eventually sink to the bottom, and in a magnificent twist of irony, the yellow perch who had to compete for forage with the more aggressive alewives, found that the decaying bodies of their arch-rival were transformed into their preferred source of protein, to the exclusion of any other bait presented by ice fishers.

It's funny how nature works. Without advocating for introducing any more invasive species to our waters, it is fascinating that sometimes nature finds ways to repair the effects of our foolish actions or lack thereof. Witness, the decline in hunters in our state and the correlative increase in the deer population. This is proof that we, as animals ourselves,

are a necessary component of the ecosystem that relies on our participation to manage and sustain healthy populations.

Our Fish and Wildlife Department recognizes the necessity of our participation in this process. The Vermont Fish and Wildlife Board has recently requested public input on some new proposals to manage the deer herd more effectively. The proposed changes aim to balance the deer herd to what available habitat can support by encouraging hunters to harvest more antlerless deer, primarily does, in certain parts of the state.

"Deer hunting is incredibly important to many Vermonters' culture and sense of identity, and it is also absolutely essential for keeping deer numbers in line with what is sustainable for our habitats," said Interim Commissioner of Fish and Wildlife Andrea Shortsleeve. "The updates our biologists are proposing will help hunters continue to balance Vermont's deer herd with the available habitat as our forests get older, winters get warmer, and land use patterns change."

The main proposed changes to Vermont's deer hunting regulations would: 1. Allow hunters who obtain antlerless permits to harvest antlerless deer during the regular November rifle season. Currently, only antlered deer can be harvested during the November season. 2. Set the archery season as Oct. 1 through Dec. 15, including during the regular November season. Currently, the archery season closes during the regular November season. 3. Create special additional archery hunting zones with a Sept. 15 opening date in select areas where deer numbers are high. 4. Allow hunters to hold two antlerless permits from different wildlife management units at the same time. Currently, hunters can only hold one antlerless permit. 5. Allow hunters to harvest a second legal buck during the season if they have already harvested one buck with three or more points on one antler and one or more antlerless deer. Currently, hunters can only harvest one buck per year. 6. Reinstate an antler point restriction in Wildlife Management Unit D1 where mature buck numbers are low. 7. Return the state's youth deer hunting weekend to the Saturday and Sunday prior to the start of the regular November season.

"In a nutshell, there are some very specific parts of the state, like the Champlain Valley, where we need hunters to harvest more does," said Shortsleeve. "Doe numbers are one of the main factors that determine the deer herd's ability to grow. In much of Vermont, the herd is already pretty well balanced to the available habitat, but in some areas, there are just too many deer. In those places, our forests are suffering as a result."

In addition to the proposed deer regulation changes the board also invites public comment on proposals from department biologists on the moose and turkey hunting seasons, and on transporting wild game meat from out of state into Vermont.

Should you decide to hunt, fish or forage in our lovely state, please take the time



Photo by Bradley Carleton

Christian Poupart from Georgia, Vt., with 105 yellow perch.

to get informed and involved and help us maintain this balance intended by the Great Spirit.

(Bradley Carleton is the founder and

director of Sacred Hunter.org which teaches the public respect and empathy through hunting, fishing, and foraging. More of Bradley's writing can be seen at [sacredhunter.substack.com](http://sacredhunter.substack.com).)



## Our Local Feast

# Let seasonal citrus liven our winter vegetables

Dorothy Grover-Read  
Contributor

While spring tries to happen, we still have plenty of our stores of root vegetables and local greens, although it can be challenging to keep these interesting while we wait for the new crops. We're grateful for these of course, but also for the vibrant, sunny citrus we get this time of year from the south.

I'll take oranges and lemons in exchange for our apples, especially since they brighten up our meals during our spring season of deception. A little squeeze of lemon and those roasted potatoes are lifted up, the rutabaga transformed with some blood orange and the broccoli revived with Meyer lemon.

The seasonal citrus will wake up the flavors in these two colorful dishes, and as an added bonus, we'll eat the rainbow for the best range of vital nutrients.

### Rainbow chard with goat cheese and orange



Photos by Dorothy Grover-Read  
Rainbow chard with goat cheese and orange is a dish of the season using our local produce with a splash of the citrus from the south. If you have rainbow salad servers, all the better.

With rainbow Swiss chard, you are way ahead of that nutrition game. It's easy to find locally, and one of the most nutritious foods we can eat.

With a little spark of orange and a tang of goat cheese, this humble green will please a crowd. There's a little sweet, some



Rainbow Swiss chard is filled with nutrients and widely available this time of year.

sour, a bit of crunch, and the orange and chard just taste lovely together.

I used a smoked red pepper jam goat cheese from Vermont Creamery and it was just right, but use any you love, herbed or plain, or even some soft feta or vegan feta.

#### First, prep the vegetables:

- 1 large bunch of chard
- 2 small carrots
- 1 small sweet red pepper

Rinse the chard and separate the stems from the leaves. These will be cooked separately. Cut the stems into strips and set aside.

Scrub the carrots. With a vegetable peeler, create long strips or curls from one of the them to use as final garnish, we want to delight the eyes first. Cut the other into strips about the same size as the chard stems. Dice the pepper coarsely.

#### In a large skillet over medium high, heat:

- 1 tablespoon butter
- 1 tablespoon olive oil

Add the chard stems, carrots sticks, and red pepper. Sauté for a few minutes, season with salt and pepper, then reduce the heat to medium low.

#### Add:

- 2/3 cup orange juice
- 1 tablespoon grated orange peel

Cover and cook until the stems have softened. Give the chard leaves another rinse, shake, and add to the pan. If you like, place the carrot curls on top to soften a little. Cover, then remove from the heat

and let sit until the leaves are just wilted. Remove them from the hot pan as they soften to stop cooking, taste and correct seasoning.

Place the chard stems and carrots on one side of the serving plate and add the leaves to the other. That way, people can easily choose what they like.

#### Sprinkle with:

- 2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
- 2 tablespoons toasted pumpkin seeds

Arrange the goat cheese however you like it — sliced or crumbled. The cheese will softly melt a little into the warm chard.

Make sure to get all the juice and small pieces of vegetables from the pan onto the vegetables! It is a flavorful little sauce. Garnish with flaked sea salt, pepper, and the reserved carrot curls.

### Wild rice salad with lemon



Wild rice salad with local radishes is enhanced with the vibrancy of lemon and mint.

#### and mint

We've had this salad several times this winter, and everyone loved the snappy mint and lemon flavor.

Wild rice has a nutty taste and interesting texture, which make it great in a salad. It's an aquatic grass similar to rice, but not a rice at all. Most varieties are native to North America and were used extensively by the Indigenous population for centuries.

A nutrient-dense food, wild rice is a good source of vitamins and minerals including B6, folate, magnesium, zinc and copper. High in fiber, this seed is also a good protein source. A 3.5-ounce serving has 4 grams of protein and it is a complete protein with all amino acids present. Consuming this humble grain supports heart health and is beneficial for those with Type II diabetes.

Just what we need after those Mardi Gras feasts of this past week. The watermelon and Daikon radishes are widely available at co-ops and farm stands. Their vibrant pink and purple colors please



Winter radishes don't look like much on the outside, but these long keeper radishes, the purple Daikon and watermelon, are available all winter and well into spring. Look for the black Spanish radishes as well, the spiciest of them all.

the eyes first and add sturdy crunch.

You can make this salad many ways, adding sugar snap peas rather than shelled peas, or maybe some broccoli or broccoli rabe. No scallions? Toss in some shallots or finely minced onion. Pumpkin seeds were delicious here, but any nut or seed would do. You can also swap out the wild rice for any favorite or left-over grain, like regular rice, farro, barley or quinoa.

Just keep the lemon and mint; this salad is very refreshing with these culinary stars, and if you can find Meyer lemons, all the better.

Lovely textures will keep you interested with every bite. It works great as a side, especially if you have a potluck or large gathering, but it is also delicious as a stand-alone lunch or snack, served warm, room temperature, or cold, even topped with a boiled egg.

To make the salad, cook one cup of wild rice in two cups of vegetable stock or water as your package directs. You want the rice to be still chewy with a nice texture. Cool.

Place the cooled rice (unless you are impatient, a little warm is all right) in a large bowl and add:

- 2 large watermelon and 1 purple daikon radishes, diced, about 1 1/2 cups
- 2 scallions, whites and greens, sliced thinly
- A few baby carrots, sliced thinly
- 1 cup mint leaves, minced
- 1 cup thawed frozen peas
- 1/4 cup pumpkin seeds.

#### Whisk together:

- Zest and juice of one lemon, about 3 tablespoons
- 1/4 of a cup of fruity olive oil
- 1 tablespoon of native honey.

Add this to the rice mixture mixing well. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

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# Calendar

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

## Vermont Flower Show Friday-Sunday, March 7-9

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

## 'A Stranger in the Kingdom' Saturday, March 8, 7 p.m.

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

## Boat building presentation Sunday, March 9, 2-3 p.m.

The stories of Vermont naval history and commercial shipping have been well documented by generations of historians. However, the traditions of small boat building from throughout our state have remained untold. In this slide presentation at the Ferrisburgh Community Center, Douglas Brooks shares his research on these traditions and his work in recreating some of these historic vessels.

## St. Patrick's Day luncheon Tuesday, March 11, 11:30 a.m.

St. Catherine of Siena and Age Well are offering a St. Patrick's Day luncheon on March 11 for anyone 60 or older in the St Catherine of Siena Parish Hall at 72 Church Street in Shelburne. The check-in time is 11:30 a.m., and the meal will be served at noon. There is a \$5 suggested donation. The menu is Irish stew with corned beef, potatoes, cabbage, carrots, onions and celery; green leaf salad; buttermilk biscuits; and leprechaun cake. The deadline to register is March 5 at 802-662-5283 or email [mbongiorno@agewellvt.org](mailto:mbongiorno@agewellvt.org).

## Grain Growers Conference Wednesday, March 12, 9 a.m.-5:30 p.m.

Randy George, co-founder of the Red Hen Baking Company in Middlesex, is among speakers for the 2025 Grain Growers Conference at the Essex Resort and Spa in Essex on March 12. George will describe his decades-long journey working with local grain farmers to source product for his wholesale bakery and café. Register at [go.uvm.edu/2025graingrowers](http://go.uvm.edu/2025graingrowers) or by calling 802-656-8407 until March 7 on the day of the event at 8:15 a.m. View the agenda at [go.uvm.edu/conferences](http://go.uvm.edu/conferences). The conference fee, which includes lunch, is \$85 per person and \$60 for Northern Grain Growers Collaborative members. The conference will include two baking sessions, a networking social hour and concurrent workshops on organic dry bean research, fusarium disease management, peri-urban grain growing, rye in the broader grain economy, sensory evaluation of malt products and managing fertility and soil



The photography exhibit The Seen and the Unseen will be at Frog Hollow Craft Gallery in Burlington through April 22. There will be an artist's reception on 2-4 p.m., March 22.

health on an organic grain farm without livestock, among other topics.

## Underground Railroad exhibit Saturday, March 15, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.

Find out what the Underground Railroad was at Rokeby Museum on Saturday, March 15. Admission is free. Explore the main exhibit Seeking Freedom: The Underground Railroad and the Legacy of an Abolitionist Family. The trails are open for snowshoeing, cross-country skiing or walking. The gift shop will be open.

## Hinesburg Artist Series concert Sunday, March 16, 2 & 4:30 p.m.

The Hinesburg Artist Series will present its 27th annual concert on Sunday, March 16, at 2 p.m. and 4:30 p.m. at St. Jude Catholic Church in Hinesburg. The South County Chorus and Hinesburg Artist Series Orchestra, under the direction of Rufus Patrick, will perform Faure Requiem and selections from Part II and III of Handel's Messiah. The South County Chorus and Hinesburg Artist Series Orchestra will also present Sky-Born Music from Sing Evermore! by Gwyneth Walker, and Lord Make Me an Instrument of Thy Peace by Mary McDonald. Tickets for the concert are \$25 (free for children under 12) and available at the door or at [hinesburgartistseries.org](http://hinesburgartistseries.org).

## 'Twyla Moves' Wednesday, March 19, 6:30 p.m.

The film "Twyla Moves" about legendary choreographer Twyla Tharp and her rigorous creative process, trailblazing dances, cinematic partnerships, Broadway collaborations and work with international dance stars will be shown at Contois Auditorium in Burlington City Hall on March 19 as part of the Architecture + Design Film Series. Doors open at 6 p.m. for light refreshments and a cash bar; the film begins at 6:30 p.m. It can also be viewed online at [adfilmseries.org](http://adfilmseries.org). Free.

## Charlotte Walks Friday, March 21, 8:30-9:30 a.m.

The Charlotte Grange invites you to this month's Charlotte Walks. On the third Friday of each month, meet at 8:30 a.m. at a different Charlotte trailhead for a morning walk. It's 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](http://charlottegrange.org/events). Questions? Email [kknh.nh@gmail.com](mailto: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. 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](mailto:laura@vtcoverts.org).

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

Tournesol returns for its second year 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.

## 'Her Favorite Things' Sunday, March 30, 3 p.m.

Capital City Concerts presents "Her Favorite Things," 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](http://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 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@madriver.com](mailto:valleyplayers@madriver.com).

## 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](http://charlottegrange.org). Completed entries can be dropped off March 15-April 1 at the library. Questions? Email [sallyw@aol.com](mailto:sallyw@aol.com).

## CHARLOTTE TOWN MEETINGS AND AGENDAS

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

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

**Charlotte Energy Committee Meeting**  
Tuesday, March 11, 7 p.m.

**Recreation Commission Meeting**  
Monday, March 10, 5:30 p.m.

**Development Review Board Meeting**  
Wednesday, March 12, 7 p.m.

**Charlotte Park & Wildlife Refuge  
Oversight Committee Meeting**  
Wednesday, March 19, 5 p.m.

**Planning Commission meeting**  
Thursday, March 20, 7 p.m.

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

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





# Library News

## Even with snow on ground, library prepares for spring

Margaret Woodruff  
Director

The library is getting ready for spring with these events:

- Join the Seed Library Social.
- Enter the favorite tree art contest.
- Learn how you can promote and protect pollinators in your own garden.

### 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.

#### Preschool story time

##### Tuesdays, 10 a.m.

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

#### After-school book club

##### Tuesdays, 3 p.m.

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

#### Preschool free play

##### Wednesdays, 10 a.m.

Play in the preschool years enables children to explore and make sense of the world around them, as well as to use and develop their imagination. Explore the sensory table, sorting, playing with blocks, playdoh — these are a few of the open-ended projects planned for Wednesday morning play-based learning at the Charlotte Library.

#### Babytime

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

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

#### Let’s Lego

##### Saturdays, 10 a.m.-1:30 p.m.

Drop-in for Lego free play. We’ll have loads of Lego bricks out, along with some books and prompts for inspiration. For all ages. Please note: Children under 10 must be accompanied by an adult.



### Programs for adults

#### Stillwater meditation

##### Saturdays, 9 a.m.

Poetry and meditation are offered freely and in person to the Charlotte community. Come for quiet reflection, contemplation and gentle meditation instruction. Respect for all beings and faiths is a foundational quality of our time together. Beginning and experienced meditators are welcome.

#### ‘How to Be Animal’

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

A book discussion of “How to be Animal” by Melanie Challenger on Zoom will be sponsored by the Charlotte Library, the Conservation Commission and Sustainable Charlotte. 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.

#### Seed social

##### Saturday, March 8, 10 a.m.-noon

Kick off the gardening season by coming to the library for a Seed Social. Pick up sample packets for seeds featured in the Seed Library’s 2025 Seed Catalog ([charlotteseedlibrary.org](http://charlotteseedlibrary.org)). Chat with fellow gardeners and master gardeners, who will be on hand to answer questions. There will be light refreshments and seed giveaways to enjoy. After March 8, the Seed Library will be open self-serve during library hours. Watch for gardening support programs throughout the year. Questions? Email coordinators Karen Tuininga and Linda Hamilton at seed@charlottepubliclibrary.org.

#### Tech Help at senior center

##### Wednesday, March 12, 10 a.m.-Noon

Have a new device or questions about your old one? Want to learn how to use your library card to read or listen to books on a device? Sign up for a one-on-one session with Susanna Kahn, the Charlotte Library’s technology librarian for some tech support. She will troubleshoot with you and provide suggestions for next steps. Make sure to bring your device and any necessary login information. 20-minute appointments: 10 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 11 a.m. and 11:30 a.m. Registration required, please call the senior center at 802-425-6345.

#### ‘From Earth to Earth’ at senior center

##### Thursday, March 13, 1 p.m.

The short documentary, “From Earth to Earth, The Lost Art of Dying in America,” will be shown This 20-minute documentary

showcases the beauty and significance of natural burial. It explores the legalization of natural burial in Vermont and the opening and first burial at its first natural burial ground, Vermont Forest Cemetery, alongside one woman’s journey to find her “forever home” at Greensprings Natural Burial Preserve, the third oldest natural burial ground in the United States. Afterward there will be a question and answer session. Register by calling 802-425-6345.

#### Short story selections

##### Wednesday, March 19, 1 p.m.

Join library director Margaret Woodruff to share and discuss short stories old and new on the third Wednesday of each month on Zoom. Story selections are sent out by email the Friday before the meeting date. Email [margaret@charlottepubliclibrary.org](mailto:margaret@charlottepubliclibrary.org) to join the group.

#### Better Together Book Club

##### Wednesday, March 19, 7 p.m.

In March, the group is reading “The Guncle” by Steve Rowley. Patrick, or Gay Uncle Patrick (GUP for short), has always loved his niece, Maisie and nephew, Grant. That is, he loves spending time with them when they come out to Palm Springs for week-long visits or when he heads home to Connecticut for the holidays. So, when tragedy strikes and Maisie and Grant lose their mother and Patrick’s brother has a health crisis of his own, Patrick finds himself taking on the role of primary guardian. Quickly realizing that parenting, even if temporary, isn’t solved with treats and jokes, Patrick’s eyes are opened to a sense of responsibility and the realization that, sometimes, even being larger than life means you’re unfailingly human. Copies available at the circulation desk.

#### Men’s Book Group

##### Wednesday, March 19, 7:30 p.m.

The group is reading “Agony Hill” by Susan Stewart Taylor. Join us in person or on Zoom. In the hot summer of 1965, Bostonian Franklin Warren arrives in Bethany, Vermont, to take a position as a detective with the state police. Warren’s new home is on the verge of monumental change; the interstates under construction will bring new people, new opportunities and new problems to Vermont, and the Cold War and protests against the war in Vietnam have finally reached the dirt roads and rolling pastures of Bethany. Warren has barely unpacked when he’s called up to a remote farm on Agony Hill. Former New Yorker and back-to-the-lander Hugh Weber seems to have set fire to his barn and himself, with the door barred from the inside, but things aren’t adding up. The people of

Bethany, from Weber’s enigmatic wife to Warren’s neighbor, widow and amateur detective Alice Bellows, clearly have secrets they’d like to keep, but Warren can’t tell if the truth about Weber’s death is one of them. Copies available at the 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 on home electrification will educate participants on examples of heat transfer in the home. This workshop also connects participants with ongoing weatherization initiatives in Vermont.

#### Thursday book group

##### Thursday, February 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.

### Recurring programs

#### Book chat

##### Wednesdays, 3 p.m.

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

#### Crochet & knit night

##### Wednesdays, 5-6:30 p.m.

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

#### Library contact information:

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

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# Senior Center News

## March brings diverse range of offerings to senior center

Lori York  
Director

This month, the senior center offers a diverse range of new programming.

For those concerned about falls, the center presents A Matter of Balance, a nationally recognized, evidence-based program, designed to help reduce fall risks.

Those curious about natural burials can attend a screening of the documentary “From Earth to Earth: The Lost Art of Dying in America.”

Additionally, for anyone feeling overwhelmed by Medicare, a comprehensive presentation on Understanding Medicare will be available.

### Programs

#### Alzheimer’s Caregivers Support Group Wednesday, March 12, 3-4 p.m.

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

#### ‘From Earth to Earth’ Thursday, March 13, 1 p.m.

Join us for a presentation of an award-winning documentary on natural burials, “From Earth to Earth: The Lost Art of Dying in America.” This 20-minute documentary describes the reemergence of natural burial as an eco-friendly alternative to current funeral practices and cremation through personal stories of some of its major proponents that led to the (re)legalization of natural burial and the founding of the first cemetery devoted entirely to natural burial in Vermont and from people who have experienced the ways that natural burial can help with the grief of the death of loved ones and bring comfort to those facing their own deaths. The documentary will be followed by a question-and-answer session and time for personal discussions. Free. Registration suggested at 802-425-6345.

#### Friendship Gathering Thursday, March 13, 12:30-1:30 p.m.

The Friendship Gathering is a series of social events for seniors looking to build friendships and make new connections. Join us for light refreshments, engaging conversation and plenty of mingling. Please RSVP to ensure we have enough refreshments. Free. Registration required by calling 802-425-6345.

#### Understanding Medicare Wednesday, March 19, 12:30-1:30 p.m.

This informative session will help you navigate the complexities of Medicare and empower you to make informed decisions about your healthcare coverage. Topics include: How Medicare works, how to avoid future Medicare penalties, what Medicare will cost in 2025, assistance available for low-income individuals and how to cover costs that Medicare doesn’t pay. Join for a clear, concise overview of Medicare and the support

options available to help you make the best choices for your healthcare needs. Free. Registration suggested at 802-425-6345.

### Art

#### March exhibit

The March art exhibit at the senior center is entitled “A Brush with Nature.” It features paintings by Lillian Kennedy, a distinguished visual artist whose lifelong focus has been on landscape art, with works in corporate and private collections worldwide. Her notable murals include a 54-foot scene at Tavern on the Green in New York, as well as exhibits at the Bronx Zoo and Sunset Park Courthouse in Brooklyn.

#### Creative 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](mailto:kfranko@gmavt.net).

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

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

#### Watercolor workshop Tuesday, March 18, 9 a.m.-noon

Join us for a spring-themed watercolor workshop with artist Lynn Cummings. The class will dive into the technique of “negative painting,” focusing on painting the negative spaces, creating a stunning and unique effect. You’ll also learn how to play with high value contrasts, adding depth and vibrancy to your artwork. This is a wonderful opportunity to explore new techniques while celebrating the beauty of spring. Cost: \$45. Registration and payment required by March 11. To register, call 802-425-6345.

### Exercise

#### A Matter of Balance Fridays, March 21-May 9, 1:45-3:45 p.m.

“A Matter of Balance” is a nationally recognized evidence-based program sponsored by AgeWell and offered free of charge. This program is designed to help older adults reduce the fear of falling and boost activity levels and features eight two-hour classes that provide practical strategies and exercises to improve balance and build confidence. Led by a trained coach, each session offers support and guidance in a positive, empowering environment. For questions contact Elizabeth 802- 771-4560. Free. Registration required by 3/17. To register, call 802-425-6345.

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

Let Your Yoga Dance incorporates basic



Photos by Lori York

Monday afternoons are devoted to folks playing duplicate bridge in the Great Room at the senior center.



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

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

### Tai chi

#### Thursdays, 9:45 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](mailto:belizahammer@hotmail.com). \$10 a class. No registration required. \$10 a class. No registration required.

### Bone Builders

#### Mondays, 9:45-10:45 a.m., Tuesdays, 10:30-11:30 a.m., Wednesdays, 1:30-2:30 p.m. & Fridays, 11 a.m.-noon

RSVP Bone Builders, a program of United Way of Northwest Vermont, is a no-impact, weight-training program designed to prevent and even reverse the negative effects of

osteoporosis in older adults. Bone Builders consists of a warm-up, balance exercises, arm and leg exercises, and a cool down with stretching. Free. No registration required, but there is paperwork to complete for the RSVP Bone Builders program.

### Meals

Menus are posted on the website: [charlotteseniorcentervt.org](http://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](http://charlotteseniorcentervt.org). The “Week Ahead” email is sent out on Friday mornings with activities, lunch menus and special programs for the upcoming week.

Lori York, director  
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Follow the senior center on Facebook or Instagram at [charlotteseniorcentervt.org](http://charlotteseniorcentervt.org).



## Write Ingredients

# Not all the 365 food holidays inspire rush for ingredients

Susan Ohanian  
Contributor

### March 10

#### Monday Munch

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

Turkey stew with potatoes, carrots and mushrooms. Dessert to be announced.

### March 17

#### St. Patrick's Day

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

Corned beef and cabbage soup, oatmeal strawberry bars and ginger ale.

According to "Foodimentary: Celebrating 365 Food Holidays with Classic Recipes," March 10 is Ranch Dressing Day. Whoopee!

With 365 days to cover, not all of these "holidays," ranging from Peanut Butter Lover's Day to Tater Tot Day, make one want to rush off to the grocery store for ingredients.

Wikipedia includes a fact about ranch dressing that should make us blink: In 1972, Clorox bought the Hidden Valley Ranch Dressing brand for \$8 million. Clorox and salad dressing: What a combo!

Rest assured that when making fresh salad the volunteer cooks at the Charlotte Senior Center follow Oscar Wilde's advice: "To make a good salad is to be a brilliant diplomatist — the problem is entirely the same in both cases. To know exactly how much oil one must put with one's vinegar."

Go to the Charlotte Senior Center on March 17, and you can celebrate Eat Like the Irish Day with corned beef and cabbage soup.

Sláinte maith!

As early as the 11th century, there was mention of this Irish favorite. From the late 17th century until 1825, the beef-curing industry was the most important asset to Cork as they exported vast quantities of cured beef to Britain, Europe, America, Newfoundland and the West Indies.

President Grover Cleveland was born on March 18 and according to "Life is Meals:



Photo by Misa S of Pexels

A Food Lover's Book of Days," he "much preferred eating pickled herring and Swiss cheese instead of the French stuff" he was served at the White House.

President Ulysses Grant's favorite pastime in what became the State Dining Room was shooting bread balls at his children, but his wife was determined to put that room to official use, and the presidential state dinner was born. Valentino Melah, a Sicilian trained in hotel kitchens, was in charge of Grant's White House kitchen, where he often produced twenty-nine courses. Sometimes the courses numbered 35.

The first State Dinner was held on December 11, 1874, with Grant welcoming King Kalākaua of the Kingdom of Hawai'i. The king brought two guards to stand on either side of his chair and a third, the cup bearer, made sure the food wasn't poisoned.

Perhaps the most noteworthy meal served by the Grants was the wedding breakfast for their daughter, a meal including soft-shell

crab on toast, chicken croquettes, beef tongue in aspic, woodcock and snipe, spring chicken, strawberries with cream, charlotte russe, Nesselrode pudding and blancmange.

Walt Whitman recited his poem "A Kiss to the Bride" at this event.

Think about this: A United States president asking a poet to grace his meal with a poem.

Rene Verdon, executive chef for the Kennedys, stayed on for LBJ, for a while. But after LBJ hosted a barbecue of beans, spareribs, cole slaw and beer at his Texas ranch for the West German chancellor, Verdon left in a huff, declaring no such food would appear at the White House: "You do not serve barbecued spare ribs at a banquet with the ladies in white gloves."

Jimmy Carter hosted the biggest state dinner ever held. On March 26, 1979, celebrating the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty, more than 1,300 guests sat down to enjoy Columbia River salmon, cheese straws, roast sirloin with spring vegetables and hazelnut

mousse with petits fours.

Richard Nixon seems to be the champion of the state dinner, hosting more than 40. Later, expressing great disapproval of such fetes, Donald Trump hosted only two during his first term. His first state dinner was held in the Rose Garden, with a fiber rug laid over the grass. Diners ate sunchoke ravioli, Dover sole and apple pie à la mode.

Wikipedia provides a list of state dinners — Grant through Biden. Although it does not provide a description of the food served, it does give info on the entertainment provided. For example, the South Korean president Yoon Suk Yeol surprised Biden state dinner guests with his rendition of "American Pie" (<https://tinyurl.com/bdhpbrjp>).

As you enjoy a fulsome turkey stew at the Charlotte Senior Center, consider that turkeys weren't domesticated in North America until the late 15th century. Before this, people dined on swans, storks, herons, cormorants and turtledoves.

Give a nod of gratitude that the turkey took over.

Oats has an interesting history. This principal grain in Scotland provoked Samuel Johnson to quip in his famous dictionary that oats is "a grain which in England is given to horses, but in Scotland supports the people."

He confessed he was deliberately trying to vex the Scots, but when living with a family in Aix-in-Provence, I noted the over-the-top enthusiasm for oatmeal expressed by the Scots co-boarder. When she and I decided to prepare culturally iconic dishes for the family, she enthusiastically promoted her oatmeal as the Scottish dish. I made pumpkin pie.

Married children dropped by the house, eager to taste these delights — and were bewildered by both.

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