

# The Charlotte News

April 3, 2025Your nonprofit community news source since 1958Vol. 67, No. 20

## The Charlotte News gets timely grant

Scooter MacMillan  
Editor

The Charlotte News has received a \$32,685.00 grant from NewsMatch.

This is the fifth year in a row that the newspaper has received a NewsMatch grant, said John Quinney, who has recently retired from the newspaper’s board of directors.

The amounts the newspaper has received have more than doubled from a grant of \$15,000 in 2020 to more than \$32,000 for 2024.

“These grants matched contributions from our readers and have made a significant contribution to the newspaper’s financial health,” Quinney said. “We’re deeply grateful to the Institute for Nonprofit News, sponsors of the Newsmatch program, and to the hundreds of Charlotters who have shown their support for the newspaper over the years.”

Treasurer Margery McCracken said the newspaper was “pleasantly surprised to learn of additional private donations on top of the base NewsMatch Grant,” coming at a critical time for the newspaper. The newspaper will finish 2024 in a strong financial position, which

**“We’re deeply grateful to the Institute for Nonprofit News, sponsors of the Newsmatch program, and to the hundreds of Charlotters who have shown their support for the newspaper over the years.”**

— John Quinney,  
formr publisher

**GRANT** continued on page 2

## Town seeks volunteers

Brett Yates  
Contributor

New volunteers will have a chance to join Charlotte’s various municipal committees and commissions this spring. According to a notice posted in March, 16 terms on bodies including the trails committee, the recreation commission and the conservation commission will expire on April 30, joining eight preexisting vacancies.

The selectboard plans to interview candidates at its next scheduled meeting on April 14. They must apply by April 7. If positions remain unfilled after April 14, the board will hold a second round of interviews on April 28, with applications due by April 21.

“We’ve been putting out

notices on Front Porch Forum for going on a few months,” town administrator Nate Bareham said.

Interested residents can find an application on the town website. They can also call 802-425-3071 ext. 5 for more information.

Terms last between one and four years. The planning commission, the park & wildlife refuge oversight committee, the Thompson’s Point wastewater advisory committee and the energy committee all have openings. The selectboard will also look to appoint a tree warden, two deputy tree wardens, an emergency management director, an emergency management coordinator and two alternates for the development review board.

## THE CHOSEN ONE



Photos by Scooter MacMillan

A boom truck, a large excavator and a smaller excavator, taking down a black locust on the Clemmons Family Farm for an art installation on Main Street in Burlington. It was a big project.

## Synchronicity leads Milliken to the right tree

Scooter MacMillan  
Editor

Charlotte environmental artist Nancy Winship Milliken searched for months for just the right tree to hang in Burlington for an arts installation as her part of the Main Street Project.

Several times, while looking far and near in both traditional and social media for a tree to meet her creative needs, Milliken thought she had found the tree that would fit the bill perfectly.

But every time with each there was some hassle that meant it wouldn’t work for her project. (An earlier story about Milliken’s project ran in this newspaper at <https://tinyurl.com/24762t2c>.)

Just a couple of weeks ago it looked like she’d finally hooked up with the tree that met her very specific needs. Milliken and her design team

**MILLIKEN** continued on page 2

A worker attaches a chain to the trunk of a tree to pull it over with its root system intact.



MILLIKEN

Continued from page 1

wanted a 35-foot-tall white oak, cedar or black locust. With the roots intact.

But equally important: The tree could not have come to its demise for the art project. It had to have been already doomed. When the purpose of your art is to herald the importance of trees, it kind of contradicts your message to kill one in the making of your point.

As an environmental artist committed to art celebrating the natural world and speaking to our vital relationship to it, Milliken wanted a tree that had blown down or was scheduled to be taken down already, that she and her team could use for their art installation as part of Burlington’s Main Street Project.

A couple of weeks ago, Milliken and her team were making final plans to dig up a tree at St. Michaels that needs to come down. At the antepenultimate minute, they discovered there was fiber optic cable running through the roots of the tree. St. Mike’s will have to find another way to take that tree down.

Milliken’s project is one of four that won commissions from Burlington City Arts as part of the city’s revitalization of Main Street. Besides repairing and replacing old pipes and other underground infrastructure, the Main Street Project is making changes above ground to make Burlington more dynamic, livable and attractive to tourists.

The sidewalk along Main Street downtown is being widened to make it more pedestrian- and bike-friendly and safe.

A week or so ago, Milliken learned of a tree that needed to come down. And it was in Charlotte.

And, it was just three doors down from her home and studio on Greenbush.

Lydia Clemmons at the Clemmons Family Farm had a tree that needed to be taken down — a black locust, Milliken’s first choice of the three tree species that would work for her project.

Black locusts are thought of as invasives in this part of the country, said Greg

GRANT

Continued from page 1

bodes well with 2025 beginning with some increasing operating expenses, like printing costs rising.

During NewsMatch 2024, 382 participating nonprofit newsrooms leveraged \$7 million in funds from the program to generate over \$62 million in community support through individual donations and local matches.

NewsMatch (newsmatch.inn.org) is the largest grassroots fundraising campaign to support nonprofit news in the U.S., benefiting members of the Institute for Nonprofit News, according to its website. Since 2017, the campaign has helped raise \$400 million to jumpstart emerging newsrooms and support independent media outlets that produce fact-based, nonpartisan news and information.

“I grew up with that tree.”

— Lydia Clemmons,  
executive director  
of Clemmons Family Farm

Ranallo, owner of Teacher’s Tree Service, which was the majority of the group working on gently bringing the tree down on Wednesday, March 26.

Generally, if you see a stand of black locusts, you can assume that they were planted by farmers some generations ago to supply fence posts. Black locust is a hard wood that is difficult to get lit, but once it’s going, will burn for hours in a woodstove.

It’s the kind of wood that will last for years, hanging horizontally overhead a section of sidewalk in Burlington, which is exactly what Milliken and her team will be working on for much of the next year, to end up with at least 35 feet of tree with much of the limbs and roots intact, a

testament to the importance and beauty of nature.

The tree needs to be prepared. For example, all of the bark will be coming off. Bark is notorious for serving as housing for parasites and such.

Watching as an excavator worked on the tree, Clemmons said the black locust was one of several that had already been growing, “an adolescent,” when her family moved to the farm in the early 1960s. (More about the Clemmons Family Farm at [clemmonsfamilyfarm.org](http://clemmonsfamilyfarm.org).)

“I grew up with that tree,” Clemmons said.

As bitter as seeing it go must be, there must also be some sweet in seeing the tree go to Milliken’s project. It seems a supreme example of serendipity that, when Clemmons Family Farm first started its artist in residence program on the property several years ago, Milliken was the first artist to set up shop in the Big Barn.

She worked on her art in the Big Barn, as it is known on the farm, until she had built her own studio at her home. Just three houses up the road.

Spear on target



Photo by Dave Speidel

Far left, road commissioner Junior Lewis talks with workers on the Spear Street bridge. The repairs look to be on target for meeting the April 6 deadline in order to qualify for federal funds to pay for the reconstruction. Lewis said there were still a few things to do before the road will reopen like putting up guard rails. Spear Street will be unpaved here when it reopens because paving companies aren’t paving this early in the year. Lewis said it should be paved in May.



**Mission Statement**  
To engage and inform Charlotte and nearby communities by:

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

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

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

- Seek truth and report it.
- Minimize harm.
- Act independently.
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**Postmaster/Send address changes to:**  
The Charlotte News, P.O. Box 251,  
Charlotte, VT 05445 Telephone: 802-425-4949  
Circulation: 2,100

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# Travel back to the future or forward to the past at library map exhibit

Scooter MacMillan  
Editor

If you would like a glimpse into a time when old Route 7, or Ethan Allen Highway, headed north toward Shelburne turned right and up Church Hill Road and then left at the Charlotte Museum, or a peek at when Greenbush Road was a major thoroughfare, take a gander at the map exhibit at the Charlotte Library.

Jenny Cole of the library and Charlie Russell, chair of the development review board, town moderator and local cartophile (someone who is fascinated with maps) have put together an exhibit of Charlotte maps. The exhibit will continue at least through the end of April.

There are probably 20-30 maps on display, but it's hard to give an exact number because Cole and Russell are encouraging anyone who has a map they'd like to share to bring it in. If it is one they don't have that they would like to add to the exhibition, they will see about having it copied. Or maybe you will loan it.

Many of the maps are hanging from the library walls, but there are so many that some are laminated and in piles on library tables to be thumbed through while oohing and

ahhing.

A map from the early 1800s has "still" written on it, identifying the location of a place where liquor was distilled when that was legal without a license.

Locations of old cider mills, where minerals could be found, and a cheese factory is shown on some of the maps, a vision from when Charlotte, like the rest of Vermont, earned much of its money from dairy products.

A map from the second half of the 1800s shows post offices in both west and east Charlotte and on Thompson's Point.

There are maps which attempt to show which lots might have been good for development. It is interesting to see what roads have changed names over the years.

During Charlotte's history, so many maps have been developed of the town to illustrate specific types of information, Cole said. "What we have here is just a small sampling of what's available."

As new maps come in and information is gathered that pertains to them, the exhibit is sort of evolving. Russell is thinking about hanging the future land-use map of Chittenden County the regional planning commission recently released.



Photo by Scooter MacMillan  
Charlie Russell and Jenny Cole stand with a couple of the maps they have displayed at the Charlotte Library through April.



## Food shelf cookies

Photo by Lee Krohn  
On Tuesday evening, March 25, members of Charlotte Volunteer Fire and Rescue Services delivered 12 cases, or 144 boxes, of cookies to the Charlotte Food Shelf they bought from local Girl Scouts themselves.



# Alerts to crime victims in Vermont are full of flaws

Charlotte Oliver  
Community News Service

On a Sunday night, Kelsey Rice found her abuser at her home again, out on bail after an arrest hours earlier. The courts had ordered him to stay away. He didn't.

He assaulted her that March 2019 night, she said, threatening to kill them both — and not for the first time.

Authorities should've told Rice that the man was getting out. She didn't get a call till days later, she told state lawmakers this past fall.

Crime victims in Vermont have the legal right (<https://tinyurl.com/5n8yutwu>) to get timely notifications about the movements of those charged with or convicted of harming them. It's through a system called VINELink, which Vermont pays hundreds of thousands of dollars for and is managed by the state. But gaps are common, say victims and advocates, and Rice's experience shows one of many ways those lapses can have dangerous consequences.

"Every aspect of my life has been forever altered," Rice said, "and I'll continue to have to manage that for the rest of my life and the impact on my children."

State employees who work directly with victims concur the system doesn't work as intended — and see it as part of a larger state failure to support victims of crimes.

"I have several horror stories," said Meghan Place, a victim advocate for the Department of State's Attorneys and Sheriffs. She's sure every advocate does.

Lawmakers got wind of issues last fall in a legislative oversight committee meeting.

Now, some of them want to change how the system works in Vermont with proposals from victim advocates.

Corrections officials disagree that the service doesn't work, attributing gaps to data errors that their department tries to solve every day. They've recently marshalled a working group to assess the system.

Nobody at VINE, the Louisville company that makes VINELink, responded to three emails seeking comment across two days. Community News Service tried reaching reps for the company by phone seven times over the course of a week; the people who answered repeatedly referred questions to the same email address.

### Little confidence

Notifications through VINELink are designed to give victims timely notice when their offender is released or transferred. The updates come via automated phone call, text or email. People can sign up after talking to a victim advocate or specialist — a state employee assigned to support survivors as they deal with the justice system.

The service is used by 48 states in different ways, and Vermont first contracted for it in 2008. VINE — Victim Information and Notification Everyday — is owned by data analytics company Appriss Insights, itself owned by multinational credit reporting agency Equifax.

The state paid \$414,827 for a five-year contract with Appriss to provide Vermont's victim notification service, up for renewal at the end of 2026. Officials tout its ability to eliminate human error and enhance public safety, offering services in different languages

and live operators who work "around the clock."

But most advocates with the state's attorneys department have little confidence in the system, according to a survey prepared for legislators (<https://tinyurl.com/b8ukevxx>). Many avoid recommending victims sign up entirely because of the potential for inaccuracies, said Place, who has worked in the field for 17 years and helped assemble the survey.

Many victims have gotten incorrect calls telling them an offender was released when the person had actually gone to a medical facility or been transferred, said Jennifer Poehlmann, executive director of the Vermont Center for Crime Victim Services, in her Feb. 12 testimony to the House Committee on Corrections and Institutions.

Victims have also gotten notices about people they don't know or cases that aren't theirs, she told legislators. Sometimes they never get a call at all, or sometimes it's far too late, she said.

"Getting that information at any point in time, even if one chooses, it is going to be traumatic," Poehlmann said in a later interview.

But getting updates about the wrong offender, or not receiving notice about your own, undermines trust in the system, she said.

### No notice

It's well known among experts that trying to leave an abusive relationship carries a high risk of violence for the person being abused, which is why many stay. Forty-four percent of homicides in Vermont from 1994 to 2023 were related to domestic violence, according



Photo by Catherine Morrissey

Kelsey Rice told legislators that the state's alert system for crime victims failed her. She wants to use her experience to help other survivors.

to a government report released this year (<https://tinyurl.com/mrxa9s2w>).

Rice, who lives in the Brattleboro area, said she survived her partner's abuse for years.

"But I reached the point where I knew someone was going to die, and we couldn't continue to live this way. I needed to get us out," Rice said.

**VICTIMS** continued on page 5

## Vermont comes home



Photo by Petty Officer 1st Class Scott Barnes

Vermont's namesake submarine, the USS Vermont, returned to Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam March 16, following a seven-month deployment, the submarine's first deployment to the Western Pacific. The Vermont is the third U.S. Navy ship named after the Green Mountain State. Vermont was administratively commissioned in April 2020. Since the submarine's departure from Pearl Harbor in August 2024, 104 sailors assigned to Vermont earned their first Sea Service Deployment Ribbon.



### NEXT PUBLICATION DATES

**APRIL 17**  
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**May 1**  
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## VICTIMS

Continued from page 4

And getting out wasn't easy. Court and police records obtained by Community News Service show as much.

Reporting domestic violence, especially in full, carries a lot of shame, Rice said. But she sought help from police in 2018. In at least one episode, which the man later pleaded guilty to, he took away Rice's phone during an argument so that she couldn't call police.

Then he grabbed her face with both of his hands, he said in a plea agreement. Rice said the violence was much worse.

During that fall, the man had a court order to stay away from Rice. A few months later came the weekend in March. She didn't tell police then about any assault, just that the man was violating court orders, fearful of him and wary after previous experiences with law enforcement. It would be years until she'd testify that he raped her those nights in March.

Days after the incident Rice was back at work, "trying to keep all the balls in the air," when she got the robotic call announcing the man's release, she said. She ran to the bathroom to throw up.

Then the number called over and over, until she typed in a code noting she had received the message. She said, "Every time it would ring, it would be another trauma reminder."

She wonders whether the delay was just timing, human error. Maybe nobody put info into the system over the weekend.

Whatever happened, she said, it was an "unbelievable gap."

Rice said she was never told she would get updates about the man and had never heard of VINELink before those first calls.

After the 2019 episode, she said she continued to get calls, and not all were accurate.

One time the voice told her he was being released ahead of schedule, she said. "So I get this huge panic, huge trauma reminder," she said — but then a later call would say he was only being transferred.

"That depletes me for the rest of the day and the week," she said. "We need to change what that looks like, right?"

### Officials: 'System is working as designed'

Place, the victim advocate, said errors in VINELink are why she encourages few victims to enroll. Most she works with have experienced serious "physical or emotional harm," she said, often domestic.

For those survivors, receiving any info about their offender is "very scary," Place said, let alone an automated message that may be incorrect. She tells survivors to call immediately when they get a message, regardless of its content. From there she works to find out what's going on.

She isn't alone in her skepticism. The

September 2024 survey asked advocates in the Department of State's Attorneys and Sheriffs if they had confidence in the "operation and effectiveness" of the system.

Eighty percent of respondents selected "no."

Place said problems with VINELink are both computer and human. Sometimes the system goes down, she said, and advocates have to manually update release or transfer dates. Other times human error causes info to go out incorrectly — or not at all, she said. "These are safety issues we're dealing with."

She cited one case where an offender was released without notice to the victim. "Her ex-partner and perpetrator came back and strangled her almost to death."

That survivor didn't get any notice until after her ex was rearrested, Place said.

Victim advocates might not have the capacity to check in every time a call goes through the system. It's recommended that victim advocates handle about 300 cases at a time, Poehlmann said. But those at the Department of State's Attorneys and Sheriffs usually handle about 600, she said, which "is just not acceptable."

After court, cases are usually passed off to specialists at the Department of Corrections.

Place left a job with the corrections department at the beginning of the COVID pandemic because she was trying to manage almost 1,000 cases at once, she said. She went to work for the state's attorneys department instead.

"It just felt like something really dangerous was going to happen, so I had to step away for my own mental health," Place said.

Isaac Dayno, the executive director for policy and strategic initiatives at the Department of Corrections, said, "I think the system is working as designed," after emphasizing that department employees are "constantly striving" to improve it.

Dayno said the problem is that VINELink is used both before and after court. There's a lot of "instability" before a case resolves, and whether someone is held or released can change quickly, he said.

When state workers have high caseloads, it can be difficult to keep up, he said.

Dayno wasn't sure how many cases department victim specialists manage but acknowledged that "there's just not enough staff in this field that can handle the high volume of cases."

Community News Service asked Haley Sommer, director of communications and legislative affairs for the department, to respond to claims that the VINELink system is flawed.

Sommer said problems with the system "often result from data errors as opposed to errors inherent to the VINE system

itself." In those cases, staff make an effort to provide victims with "accurate and complete information," she said.

Anna Nasset, a Vermonter by way of Washington state, has a very different experience using VINELink than Rice. She uses the platform through Washington's system and said it gives her "great peace of mind."

In the 13 years she's used the platform, she's never gotten an incorrect notification, she said.

Since Nasset's stalker and abuser was arrested, she's written a book reflecting on abuse (<https://tinyurl.com/2kp4thvu>) and spoken publicly about her experience on national news networks. Her positive experience with VINELink has led her to volunteer on the company's advisory council and join the working group with the state corrections department, as did Rice.

Nasset, who's been part of the conversation around VINELink in Vermont, sees victims' negative experiences as a result of the way the state uses the system, she said, rather than of a flaw in the platform itself.

### 'Not the voice that matters'

This legislative session, House lawmakers have been turning to victim advocates for recommendations. The Department of Corrections working group plans to review the system separate from the Legislature.

"When you hear testimony like that, then you need to do some follow-up

action," said Rep. Alice Emmons, D-Springfield, chair of the House corrections committee, referring to talks with advocates.

The state must ensure victims get accurate and timely info, while responding to individual needs with a trauma-informed approach, Emmons said.

Survivors and advocates want a more customizable system, said Poehlmann. That way survivors can choose to receive notifications only in certain instances and via a specific format. Giving survivors a choice is "really important to restore agency," she said.

Some take issue with VINELink itself. Rice found the repeated, robotic calls insensitive. Many victims share those qualms, Poehlmann said.

"They went through a system where their voice really is not the voice that matters. It's the state. It's the defendant. The victim is a witness in our criminal justice process," Poehlmann said.

Rice said she's found healing in helping change the system by talking to law enforcement and legislators and in her job providing mental health services for Easterseals.

She wants her experiences and expertise to help others "navigating this maze" of uncertainty in the justice system, she said.

"I can't change what happened," she added, "but I can try to make a difference for future generations."

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



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# Report from the Legislature

## Little sacrifice could keep children off streets

Chea Waters Evans  
Representative

The dust has settled after crossover, and I'll touch on education really quickly, and then I'm going to talk about the mid-year Budget Adjustment Act and how incredibly horrible I think it is that our governor wants to make a bunch of kids homeless starting two days from now.

Everyone was wondering when we'd get an education plan, and now look — we have three! The governor has a plan, Senate Education has a plan, and House Education has a plan. I'm assuming that the eventual course of action will be some compromise between the three, but I'll stand by my earlier assertion that I'll be shocked if there's a realistic, comprehensive one by mid-May, which is when we're supposed to adjourn. The details of the three plans differ wildly, with one common thread: fewer school districts, fewer schools, larger classes. We'll see where that gets us.

Okay, the Budget Adjustment Act. Every January when we come back to the State House, we re-assess the budget ("the big bill") from the previous May and see where we need to make some changes. This year's BAA featured money to extend the state's hotel/motel program that serves as temporary housing for people who

would otherwise generally be unhoused. The program itself is expensive, not well conceived and was never meant to serve as a permanent solution to the problem of homelessness. HOWEVER: I don't think we need to choose sending people out onto the streets as the hill we're going to die on. I don't even understand it. The governor is cool with buying down our property taxes for the next two years with almost \$80 million, but he can't take 2 of those millions to keep pregnant people, children, people with disabilities, seniors and people with mental health challenges off the streets?

The plan is, literally, to give them tents. To hand families tents and say, "Here you go. No one wants you in their communities sleeping in a tent, but go find somewhere to sleep with your children and hope for the best." Even though many of the homeless camps are places challenged with violence, drug use, crime and danger for adults, LET ALONE CHILDREN.

Who are we if we're willing to take a little property tax boost (and believe me, the boost you get from \$2 million taken off that \$70-something million is negligible) at the expense of the most vulnerable people in our communities? I don't care if they're suffering from substance use disorder: they're sick. I don't care if they're having mental health struggles: they're struggling. I don't care if you think they

should get a job: maybe they should, maybe they can't.

But I do know this: None of us wants to be in their shoes. Many of us could end up there, through one series of disasters after another. And if we can't recognize that when we help those who are suffering, we're helping our entire state, then we need to get a little perspective.

I don't know what's going to happen tomorrow when they start phasing people out of the motel/hotel program, but I do know we don't have housing, we don't have room for everyone in the shelters, and we don't have a plan for how to help people get back on their feet after the motel/hotel program comes to an end.

If you'd like to help, call the governor. Call him every day! You're allowed to! He's your governor! He won't answer the phone, don't worry, this isn't his personal cell or anything, but you can call his office and let them know what's important to you. And if you support putting kids out on the street, call and let him know that, too. I'm sure he'd appreciate your support. The number is 802-828-3333.

My number is 917-887-8231 and my email is [cevans@leg.state.vt.us](mailto:cevans@leg.state.vt.us). Please be in touch!

## Around Town

### Congratulations

Eliza Rutherford of Charlotte has been appointed to the board of directors of the American Hanoverian Society.

As the owner of Foxwood Hanoverians in Vermont, Rutherford has dedicated more than two decades to breeding, training and developing sport horses. She has earned United States Dressage Federation silver and bronze medals and twice competed at the U.S. Dressage Finals.

"Her experience as a breeder, trainer and competitor will bring valuable perspectives, and as a longtime New Englander, she will help us connect with more of our breeders in all areas of the country," said Natalie DiBerardinis, president of the American Hanoverian Society.

## Legislators considering bill keeping ad dollars in state

Paul Heintz  
Contributor

A bipartisan group of Vermont lawmakers on Tuesday called on the Vermont House to pass legislation that would keep state advertising dollars in Vermont.

During a press conference at the Statehouse, Republican Lt. Gov. John Rodgers and Democratic Secretary of State Sarah Copeland Hanzas urged the House to pass H.244, which is scheduled for a vote on the House floor this week.

They were joined at the event by House champions from opposite sides of the aisle — Rep. Barbara Rachelson, D-Burlington, and Rep. Kenneth Wells, R-Barton — as well as leaders of the Vermont news media.

The bill, which was recently approved by the House Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs, would require the state to spend 70 percent of its advertising dollars on Vermont-based news organizations — rather than out-of-state social media and search firms. The revenue-neutral proposal would ensure that tax dollars are spent on local businesses and nonprofits, such as community newspapers, radio stations, television stations and digital news outlets.

The bill exempts spending on tourism and job ads, an acknowledgement that the state sometimes seeks to reach audiences outside of Vermont. It also calls for new transparency, requiring the state to report each year on how much money is spent on advertising and where it goes.

The Senate is currently considering a companion bill, S.84.

"It just makes sense to me and many other Vermonters that Vermont government ought to be supporting Vermont businesses at each and every opportunity," Rodgers said, thanking Copeland Hanzas and Rachelson for leading the charge. "I expect the House and Senate will follow suit in passing H.244."

"A free and independent press is a key part of keeping government accountable and transparent," Copeland Hanzas said. "Fact-checked and thorough reporting by Vermont's local news outlets is absolutely critical and this legislation is a great way to keep our local, community news outlets viable."

"This bill gives Vermont media a home-field advantage in capturing state advertising. Vermonters want to keep ad dollars in the Green Mountain State and this bill guarantees that will happen," said Wells, a former photojournalist, editor and publisher of newspapers in the Northeast Kingdom. "After all, who knows local businesses better than Vermont residents who produce the advertising and put their wares and services in the best possible light while providing a guide for buyers in the Green Mountain state? Let's all buy Vermont media first."

Rachelson said she was proud to introduce a revenue-neutral bill that would support Vermont news organizations.

"This bill is about the Vermont government spending our resources wisely," she said. "Why wouldn't we want to keep our dollars here in Vermont, where they can support Vermonters and help our media outlets?"



# Letters to the Editor

## Public safety in Vermont requires rebalancing priorities

To the Editor:

Last fall, Vermonters delivered a clear message: They want meaningful change on the issues impacting their daily lives: property taxes, education, housing and affordability. One common concern unites all these challenges: the need to ensure the safety of our communities, downtowns, neighborhoods and personal property.

I have spent nearly 35 years living and working in Vermont — not only as your commissioner of Public Safety but also as a mother, coach, neighbor, police officer and policy advisor. My commitment to vibrant, attractive and safe communities runs deep. Yet many of our communities face significant public health and safety challenges that threaten our shared way of life.

When I reflect on what I’m hearing and seeing across the state, I think about a pendulum that has swung too far in one direction and needs to be rebalanced. On one end is an overly punitive system that can overlook the potential for rehabilitation and the rights of individuals. On the other end is an approach so lenient that repeat offenders aren’t held accountable for the harm they inflict on our communities. Today, our policies have drifted too far toward leniency, and the damage — measured in undermined trust, diminished social cohesion and degraded public spaces — can no longer be ignored.

Governor Scott’s proposed omnibus public safety bill takes a commonsense, measured approach to restoring balance. It recognizes the close ties between public health and public safety and tackles substance use, mental health and community well-being all at once. Healthy individuals build stronger families, and strong families support thriving schools. Safe neighborhoods attract residents and visitors, fueling local businesses and energizing our downtowns. In short, these efforts create a foundation for a robust, resilient community.

Over the past two years, we’ve worked productively with the Legislature to address persistent problems. Now, we must build on that partnership by providing the right tools to hold a small number of individuals accountable — those whose repeated actions disproportionately damage local businesses, neighborhoods and public spaces. Our proposals include commonsense reforms:

Enhanced accountability: Bail revocation for repeat offenders and improved pre-trial supervision ensure that those who repeatedly harm our communities face timely and proportionate consequences.

Fair treatment for adults: Repealing policies like “raise the age” reaffirms that adults must be held to the full standards of accountability under our laws.

Balanced intervention: Ending “catch-and-release” practices and improving access to recovery and mental health services at critical intervention points ensure that our measures are both just and effective.

These reforms are essential at a time when Vermont is facing rising drug trafficking, increased violent crime and the resultant uptick in gun violence and homicides. When serious offenders perceive our state as a soft target, our communities bear the cost — and that must stop.

At the heart of these reforms lies our shared social contract. This contract is the unspoken agreement that binds us as Vermonters. It represents our mutual commitment to support one another, hold each other accountable and ensure that our rights come with responsibilities. It promises that our communities will be safe havens where every individual — whether a resident, a visitor or someone seeking help — can thrive. Our proposed measures aim to renew that contract. They are not merely punitive steps but a balanced response that combines accountability with compassion, enforcement with opportunities for rehabilitation.

By reaffirming our commitment to the social contract, we are pledging to safeguard

our parks, neighborhoods and downtowns — not only as spaces of economic opportunity but as symbols of our collective trust and responsibility. When every individual knows that their actions have consequences and that our community will stand by those in need, we create a foundation for a safer, healthier and more vibrant Vermont.

We owe Vermonters our best efforts to uphold this promise. By enacting these measures, we can recalibrate our approach to public safety and renew the social contract that underpins our shared quality of life. Together, let’s create a Vermont where every corner of our state reflects the security, respect and opportunity we all deserve.

Jennifer Morrison  
Waterbury

*(Jennifer Morrison is the commissioner of the Vermont Department of Public Safety.)*

**LETTERS** continued on page 9

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LETTERS

Continued from page 7

Climate initiatives are investments in Vermont’s farmers and future

To the Editor:

I want you to imagine standing in a field surrounded by 9,000 beautiful, healthy Brussels sprout plants, months of careful planning, hard work and abundance growing from the soil. But then, in a matter of days, relentless rain pounds the earth, drowning the roots, rotting the harvest and washing away not just my crops but also my livelihood.

This was the reality for many farmers in the summer of 2023 when an otherwise ordinary storm swept through Vermont. It wasn’t a hurricane or some historic, once-in-a-lifetime storm—it was just another rainstorm in Vermont—except now, even “normal” storms are devastating.

I’ve been an organic farmer for 16 years, with the mission to grow nutritious food to feed my community. I cared for the soil, nurtured biodiversity and worked in rhythm with the land. But no amount of careful stewardship can hold back the rising tide of climate change. When extreme weather wipes away farmers’

harvests, when climate change fuels extreme storms, small-scale farmers, especially small growers working in harmony with the land, face devastating losses. They lose their incomes and often bear the financial risk alone with little safety net.

When crops fail, local healthy products don’t reach markets, and neighbors and families lose access to fresh, local food. Rural economies shrink if small farms go under, and good agricultural jobs disappear. We risk losing much of what makes Vermont a wonderful place to live.

If we do not address these vulnerabilities, work to reduce emissions and set up safeguards now, we will have a food system dominated by large-scale industrial farming. The only farms that will survive will be those that depend on chemicals and excessive tillage and produce emissions that harm ecosystems and human health. This will intensify climate feedback loops until these farms can no longer survive in extreme climate conditions, and our entire food system will collapse.

How we farm, protect our land and respond to climate change directly impacts the social determinants of health — the conditions that shape how we live, work and thrive. Food, in my opinion,

is the most essential determinant of all and begins with how we protect our environment. If we ignore the climate crisis, our farms and communities will deteriorate. We have an obligation, and an opportunity, to reduce our reliance on fossil fuels and move our state to more clean, local, energy-independent resources. In doing so, we must do our part to mitigate the high cost and deeply consequential risks of ongoing, insufficient efforts to cut planet-destabilizing pollution.

We need a government of compassion, not austerity. We need lawmakers and Governor Scott to be forward-thinking and recognize what is at stake. We need real solutions, not rhetorical support. The well-being of Vermont’s farmers, families and future generations is on the line.

Vermont committed to climate resilience with the Global Warming Solutions Act, a landmark law that holds the state accountable for reducing carbon emissions and protecting communities from climate impacts in a just and cost-effective way. This law is critical to ensuring a future where farmers can withstand extreme weather; local food systems remain strong; and we all do our part to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions.

We do not need Bill H.289, which has been introduced in the Vermont House

of Representatives and seeks to reverse our climate progress and gut the Global Warming Solutions Act, essentially continuing to punt on essential climate solutions. If Vermont retreats on climate action, when state leadership is more critical than ever as President Trump doubles down on fossil fuels, the result will be failed crops and increased economic instability. That reality directly threatens the health of every Vermonter who relies on clean air, stable weather and a secure food system. We must not let that happen; far too much is at stake. We must protect our farms, food, families and future.

That is why I am calling on legislators to reject this harmful bill and instead focus on building a regenerative food system and renewable energy economy.

Jaiel Pulskamp  
Worcester

*(Jaiel Pulskamp has been an organic farmer for over 15 years and is an appointed member of the Vermont Climate Council, representing the agriculture sector.)*

Merrymac Farm founder named 1 of 20 outstanding VT women

Mari Lowder  
Contributor

Era MacDonald, founder and executive director of Merrymac Farm Sanctuary in Charlotte, was honored as one of 20 Outstanding Women in Vermont and Northern New York.

Carolyn Siccama, instructional designer at the University of Vermont, nominated MacDonald for transforming a former horse farm into a sanctuary for over 150 formerly abused and neglected animals.

“The work that Era does to help these animals 24/7, 365 days per year, is remarkable, and we are so lucky that we have her and the Sanctuary in our community,” Siccama said.

This is the fourth year in a row Hannaford Supermarkets and 98.9 WOKO have partnered in celebrating women in Vermont and Northern New York who go above and beyond to make their communities a better place to live. MacDonald and the other honorees were recognized at a ceremony on Wednesday, March 26, in South Burlington.

Merrymac Farm Sanctuary was founded as a 501(c)3 non-profit organization in 2023 to provide abandoned farm animals with permanent, healthy homes where they can live free of abuse or cruelty, to provide education for the local and broader communities about the well-being of animals, and to promote a culture of equity between animals, people and the planet. Merrymac now provides long-term homes to a variety of farm animal species, from goats, sheep, cattle and horses to smaller animals such as ducks, chickens and rabbits. Relying on a small part-time staff, regular interns and a



Courtesy photo

Era MacDonald of Marrymac Farm Sanctuary

large community of volunteers, Merrymac’s operations are completely donation-driven.

“I’m happy to accept this recognition on behalf of everyone at Merrymac Farm Sanctuary,” MacDonald said. “It takes a village.”

Other honorees included women working in business, emergency medical service, entrepreneurship, education, advocacy, the military, nursing and, like MacDonald, non-profit leadership.

## Education

# Charlotte Central School variety show deemed ‘magical’

Naomi Strada  
(Summarized by Tom Scatchard)

Over 150 students took the stage in a wide variety of performances before an enthusiastic crowd of parents, relatives and other students for the Charlotte Central School variety show on Thursday evening, March 27.

The show included musicians, jugglers, singers, comedians, story tellers and poets.

Principal Tim O’Leary said, “Last night’s variety show was nothing short of magical. Our students took the stage with courage, showcasing their diverse talents and strengthening the very fabric of our community.”

After the success of the variety show, the PTO has announced the launch of a capital campaign to enhance the school theater space. The goal is to raise funds for much-needed upgrades, including new stage curtains, a state-of-the-art sound system and improved lighting. Those who would like to contribute to the theater improvement project may write a check to CCS PTO or contact the school to find other ways to donate. Every contribution, large or small, will help bring this dream to life.

### Rowland Fellowship

As mentioned in the Feb. 20 issue of this newspaper, Charlotte Central School

teacher Julia Beerworth has been awarded a 2025 Rowland Fellowship. Beerworth is an eighth-grade humanities teacher and student council advisor. This prestigious fellowship supports Vermont educators in implementing initiatives to enhance school culture and climate.

Beerworth will step into a teacher-on-special-assignment role for the 2025-26 academic year, working beyond her regular classroom duties. She will work across the middle school and upper elementary school to advance project-based learning opportunities to empower students as active learners.

Her initial focus will be on reimagining personal interest projects for seventh and eighth graders, ensuring they provide meaningful, real-world learning experiences. At the same time, she will guide conversations around developmentally appropriate projects in fifth and sixth grade, helping younger students build ownership of their learning.

She will also play a key role in implementing project blocks across grades 5-8, ensuring students have dedicated time

for hands-on, interest-driven exploration. Beyond stand-alone projects, Beerworth will collaborate with interested teachers in third-eighth grades to integrate project-based learning into everyday classroom instruction, helping educators rethink what learning can look like in traditionally structured classrooms.

“This fellowship is an incredible opportunity to co-design learning experiences alongside students and teachers that foster curiosity, independence and purpose,” said Beerworth. “We know students thrive when they engage in meaningful, real-world work, and I’m excited to help shape an environment where that kind of learning is embedded throughout our school.”

“Julia’s passion for student engagement and innovative learning makes her the perfect leader for this initiative,” said O’Leary.

Beerworth is the first Rowland Fellow from Charlotte Central School, and she worked closely with O’Leary, a 2020 Rowland Fellow, to develop this initiative.

## LEGO champ



Courtesy photo

Nigel Pluss of Shelburne won the kindergarten-second grade section of Vergennes’ Bixby Free Library’s seventh annual LEGO Contest at the beginning of March.

## Teacher Feature

Maddie Kolb  
Charlotte Central School student

Fifth-grade teachers Brian Loughlin and Dave Baird are often described as “great teachers.”

What were their teaching experiences and motivation to be great teachers?

Dave Baird, who didn’t have great teachers growing up, didn’t want any kid to have the experience that he had. He decided to be a teacher so that he could ensure that the kids in his class would have a great experience, loving learning all the while.

Brian Loughlin also wants his students to love learning and have fun. He said that his biggest motivation to teach was wanting to be a helping hand for kids that struggled.

His funniest moment teaching was when it was his first day at a new school, and the superintendent came into the room to find that Loughlin had spelled the word “which” wrong on the whiteboard.

Baird’s funniest moment, on the other hand, was when he was interviewed for the school newspaper about the history of the Charlotte Central School field day. He made up a total fib, thinking that the student wouldn’t fall for the tall tale, but in the end, it was actually published.

Here is an excerpt from the published article: “Field day all started in 1873 at the direct request of principal Ebineezer Johnson. The first field day consisted of shovels and dirt, and believe it or not, all the kids shoveled dirt for fun. In later years, super fun activities like rolling a hoop with a stick and kicking a tin can were added.”

Both these teachers have had their share of funny, and Baird’s favorite part of the job is having a laugh with his students. Loughlin’s favorite part of his job is helping his students achieve things that they didn’t think they could.

There are many amazing teachers at Charlotte Central School, and these are just two. Who is or was the great teacher in your life?



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# Hi! Neighbor

## Kathleen Fleming finds escape from the world in her studio

Phyl Newbeck  
Contributor

Kathleen Fleming’s work has been shown in a number of locales across the state, but she loves it when her art appears in places of healing. She hopes that her paintings will brighten those spaces and make them less stressful.

Fleming grew up drawing and painting and, although she was an English major, she took a lot of art classes in college. “I’ve always had some creative outlet in my life,” she said.

Finding time for that outlet hasn’t always been easy given the demands of raising children and having a full-time job, but in the last decade or so since Fleming’s children have moved, she has found more time for artistic expression.

It helps that Fleming has cut down on her hours and is now a part-time vocational counselor for HireAbility Vermont where she has worked for eight years.

Thirty-three years ago, as a newlywed, Fleming moved to Charlotte.

“We landed really well,” she said. “We were young and naïve, and we found a house that fit our budget.”

Fleming feels lucky to be living in Charlotte.

Fleming usually works with acrylic paint, but she likes mixed media, so she sometimes adds collage elements, oil pastels or graphite. Her work used to be representational landscapes, but these days, her art is more abstract although it is still based on the environment and the natural world.

“As the world gets more chaotic, I’m looking for something calming,” she said. “Painting is a great outlet.”

In the past, Fleming did plein air (outdoor) painting with pastels, but lately she has moved away from that. She still spends a lot



Photo by Kathleen Fleming

Kathleen Fleming with her painting Broadening the View.

of time outdoors, which is where she gets her inspiration.

Fleming likes to work on a series of paintings, based either on a theme or a color theme. “When I do one piece, I sometimes overwork it and get stuck,” she said. “This helps me not to get too constricted. I can be

more expansive and create more of a body of work.”

Fleming usually paints square canvases. Fleming prefers squares because she feels that when she paints a rectangle, she tends to be more representational and finds herself adding a horizon line.

“Painting squares puts me in a different direction,” she said.

Fleming is grateful that she has been able to work with Burlington City Arts because they often exhibit her work in public spaces, including medical facilities. “I like being in

places of healing,” she said.

Since Fleming’s art is not representational, she is happy to have people see what they want in her work. Fleming thinks some people might recognize the basis for her work, but others might not, and she is comfortable with that.

“I’m inspired by nature,” she said. “I like the form and shape, but I don’t have to replicate things exactly.”

Fleming sees art as an escape from what’s going on in the world. “I spend a lot of time in my head,” she said, “and this helps me stay calm but also connected. It’s a way in and a way out.”

For Fleming, painting is a way of creating problems and then solving them. “It’s a constant puzzle of how to make something that will speak to people in some way and is pleasing for me and the viewers.”

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### Slow birding



Courtesy photo

As part of the Earth Month celebration, the senior center is sponsoring Rewilding with Bridgett Butler, also known as the Bird Diva. Her presentation is at 7 p.m., Wednesday, April 9. Free. Registrations encouraged but not required at 802-425-6345.



## On Books

# A few stand-outs in sea of good reads for trying times

Katherine Arthaud  
Contributor

Just as the fields outside are blanketed with fresh white snow (even though many of us thought it was spring, ha), my king-size bed is blanketed with all the books I want to tell you about, along with a fuzzy black mini-Aussie dreaming of whatever fuzzy black mini-Aussies dream about.

“Framed,” “Confessions,” “Intermezzo,” “Northwoods,” “All Fours,” “The Grey Wolf,” “The God of the Woods,” “The Mistress of Bhata House,” “Fly Girl” — all good reads, in my opinion, and if I run into you at the Old Brick Store, the Shelburne supermarket or on a trail somewhere, I would be more than happy to discuss any and all of them, but alas, space is limited, and so I will tell about my favorites.

My book group recently read “The God of the Woods” by Liz Moore, a mystery that takes place in the Adirondacks and involves a missing 13-year-old camper from a prominent and important family. It’s a fun read, especially for those who have visited or hiked in the Adirondacks, but for me not as good as a previous book by the same author called “Long Bright River.”

Like “The God of the Woods,” “Long Bright River” is a suspense novel, but deeper, and darker. Instead of the Adirondacks as a backdrop, we have Kensington, a Philadelphia neighborhood slammed by the opioid crisis. The main characters are two sisters: one (Kacey) in the throes of active addiction, living on the street; the other (Mickey) a police officer patrolling the same streets, a 4-year-old son to take care of, torn between worry about her homeless sibling and her work on a force riddled with corruption and prejudice.

The action begins when Kacey’s disappearance coincides with a series of murders in Mickey’s district. Mickey becomes determined to find the person responsible, as well as her sister, from whom she has grown, over the years, estranged.

This novel is a compelling and cleverly woven mystery, but it’s more than that in the way it takes on the complex, devastating and often controversial topics of addiction, prostitution and police corruption, as well as



the deep connection of sisters, of family, even in the most trying of times and circumstances.

“Long Bright River” is well written and thought provoking; not an easy book to read, given its general subject matter. Writes The New York Times Book Review, “(Moore’s) careful balance of the hard-bitten with the heartfelt is what elevates (this novel) from entertaining page-turning to a book that makes you want to call someone you love.”

Lauren Groff’s “The Vaster Wilds,” a New York Times bestseller and one of Barack Obama’s favorite books of 2023, is a sparkling masterpiece of a novel. “Part historical, part horror, part breathless thriller, part wilderness survival tale,” says NPR.

It is so good I almost felt my jaw literally dropping as I turned the pages. It reminded me at times of the movie, “Revenant,” in which a frontiersman (Leonardo di’Caprio) is attacked by a bear and left for dead and must fight to stay alive in the wilderness and somehow find his way back to civilization. Both that movie and this novel had a huge emphasis on solitude, and also, nature — its beauty, timelessness, comfort and terror.

Unlike “Revenant,” in “The Vaster Wilds,” the protagonist is a female, a servant girl escaped from a colonial settlement. The novel begins: “The moon hid itself behind the clouds. The wind spat an icy snow at angles.



In the tall black wall of the palisade, through a slit too seeming thin for human passage, the girl combed into the great and terrible wilderness. Over her face she wore a hood drawn low, and she was slight, both bony and childish small, but the famine had stripped her down yet starker, to root and string and fiber and sinew. Even so starved, and blinded by the dark, she was quick. She scabbled upright, stumbled with her first step, nearly fell, but caught herself and began to run, going fast over the frozen ruts of the field and all the stalks of dead corn that had come

up in the summer already sooty and fruitless and stunted with blight. Swifter, girl, she told herself, and in their fear and anguish, her legs moved yet faster.”

One hardly sees another human in this book. There are a few flashbacks that help clarify who this child is, some of what she has been through and what has made her run, but they are sketchy, suggestive. The principal, over-riding relationships are the girl with the wilderness and the girl with herself.

Poetic and exquisitely written, I highly recommend this novel. It is truly stunning. Life-changing, the way it makes one think of the body’s desperate, unrelenting, animal drive to survive — despite pain, hardship, cruelty, betrayal, uncertainty and loneliness. Unforgettable, in its descriptions of the natural world, and how that dripping, blustering, thundering, brilliant, shimmering, backbreaking, soul-restoring world is brought to life for the reader.

Before I sign off, here’s another beautiful line: “For, inches beyond this face and in the profoundest sufferings of her body, the world went on in its grand and renewing and wholly indifferent beauty.”

So many good books, so little time. Hope you are taking care of yourself in all the current madness of human civilization. Reading helps. Till next time.

## Tesla protest



Photo by Scooter MacMillan

More than 200 protesters were gathered at the intersection of Hannafords Drive and Shelburne Road by noon on Saturday, March 22, and the crowd was growing. Gatherings here, at the short road that leads to a Tesla dealership, have been happening regularly. A number of Charlotte residents have joined the protests, including on this day Chris and Joel Cook. In spite of Elon Musk’s claims that the protesters are paid actors, Chris Cook said she heard about the protest at the Grange’s monthly poetry event. On this day, media predicted that there were peaceful protests at over 90 Tesla dealership. On March 30, PBS said organizers were working to have protests at all 277 dealers in the country and over 200 cities around the world.





This fine casting of professionals loves the outdoors, plants, animals, bugs, and especially you, our customers. We are all striving to grow the finest plants and deliver the finest services. While our customers seek us out from farther and farther away, Charlotte remains the center of our universe. Thank you, Charlotte.

*Charlie Proutt*



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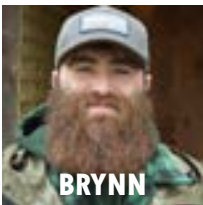
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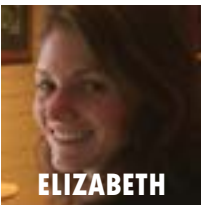
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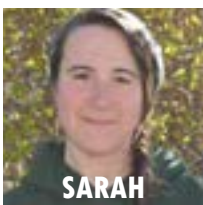
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# Lawmakers mull compensation for public-trail access

Sam Hartnett  
Community News Service

Should landowners who allow public trail networks on their property be compensated? That’s the question a study group would be tasked with answering under a bill in the Senate.

It’s too late to pass this year, but the bill, S.79, has gained bipartisan support and excited trail-network advocates.

In Vermont, around 70 percent of public recreation trails crisscross private land. Through agreements with trail orgs and under state law, landowners allow use of their land in exchange for liability protection — meaning they can’t be sued for injuries that occur on trails. But if landowners charge a fee for people to use their land, that liability protection goes away.

The bill would set up a panel to explore different ways to compensate landowners for allowing public use of their trails. The committee would measure the “costs and liabilities that private property owners incur” when they open up their land for public recreation, then report findings to the Legislature by the end of next year.

Included in the bill is \$250,000 to hire a consultant to figure out the economic impact of the state’s outdoor rec industry more broadly. The money would go to the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation and also support the work done by the committee.

“We’re looking to have more tools in our toolbox for crediting landowners,” said Sen. Scott Beck, R-Caledonia, in a phone call last week.

Beck, one of a dozen co-sponsors on the bill, hopes the study would better identify the

issues that landowners face and offer more ways to solve them. For now, it remains in the Senate natural resources committee.

Threats to outdoor recreation trails frequently involve the transfer of land ownership. When a landowner allowing trails on their property sells to someone who doesn’t want the trails, issues arise. When a landowner cuts off public access to their property, trail networks can become fragmented and more difficult to use.

“Not everyone, especially people from out of state, are familiar with the public-private cooperation that is essential to trail networks,” said Nick Bennette of the Vermont Trails and Greenways Council in Statehouse testimony March 18.

Representatives of trail networks say their industry is crucial for Vermont’s economy as a whole. Kingdom Trails in Burke has brought in a \$10 million boost annually to an economically challenged part of the state, the Northeast Kingdom, according to the trail network’s director.

“We value landowners so much, and we hope that the state can also recognize the public benefit that landowners contribute,” said Abby Long, the network’s executive director.

Long hopes the study can help solidify and grow outdoor recreation opportunities in Vermont, bringing more money into rural communities.

The outdoor recreation industry makes up around 4.8 percent of Vermont’s gross domestic product, or \$2.1 billion in 2023. Vermont is second only to Hawaii in the portion of its gross domestic product, or GDP, that comes from the industry.

“Outdoor recreation is woven into the fabric of Vermont,” Bennette said in the



Photo courtesy Vermont Agency of Transportation

A cyclist rides on a waterside trail.

March 18 testimony.

Some senators on the committee feel that now isn’t the time to explore programs that could muddy the waters inundating the property tax system. Sen. Ruth Hardy, D-Addison, thinks her colleagues should focus on finding ways to overhaul that system before exploring any program that may offer tax credits.

“It’s not a good time to introduce the potential of any kind of additional property tax credit or exemption into the system,” said Hardy in a phone call Monday. “Once you study something, and an exemption is recommended, it is harder to say no.”

Hardy also questioned how frequently there are problems in landowner-trail network agreements, as no statewide statistic exists on landowners leaving shared-use contracts.

While some landowners have stopped allowing trail access, it is unclear how much of a threat the outdoor recreation business faces.

The state’s current-use program allows for properties to be assessed based on what the land is being used for instead of potential development value. Some lawmakers point to the program as a model of compensating landowners for the public benefit they provide through conservation or farming.

The committee convened by the bill could examine how the current-use program might benefit landowners working with trail networks and include findings in its recommendations to the Legislature.

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

## Community Roundup

### Know the health risks when raising backyard birds

As warmer weather and peeping baby chicks mark the springtime return of migrating wild birds and backyard flocks, state health and agriculture officials are encouraging people to keep themselves and their feathered friends healthy.

Domestic poultry kept for producing eggs or meat can carry harmful bacteria and viruses, including Salmonella, Campylobacter, E. coli and avian influenza (bird flu), that can make people sick. Children younger than 5 years old, older adults and people with weakened immune systems are more likely to get severe illness from the germs poultry can carry. Knowing how to protect your birds can keep you and your family safer from these health risks.

“Raising baby poultry like chicks, ducklings and goslings in your backyard can offer many benefits, such as fresh eggs, opportunities to connect with nature and education for children and families,” said Natalie Kwit, the state’s public health veterinarian. “But these animals can carry germs that make people sick, so it’s important to take steps to stay healthy — like washing hands after any contact with birds, their eggs and areas where birds live or roam.”

Wild birds can be a source of viruses, potentially infecting domestic poultry and other animals. The H5N1 bird flu virus is most commonly spread to domestic poultry through direct contact with infected

waterfowl like ducks and geese or their droppings. While waterfowl can carry the H5N1 bird flu virus without becoming sick, it is often fatal for domestic poultry. While these viruses usually do not infect people, the risk is higher for people who work with infected poultry or dairy cattle. Since 2022, there have been five backyard flocks impacted by H5N1 in Vermont. There have been no human or dairy cattle cases of H5N1 bird flu in Vermont or any northeastern states.

Whether you are building your first coop, are a seasoned poultry owner, or are just visiting a farm or county fair, take these precautions to protect yourself, your family and your flock:

- Wash your hands with soap and hot water after touching live poultry, their eggs or objects in the area where they live or roam.
- Supervise children around poultry and make sure they wash their hands thoroughly after interacting with birds.
- Don’t kiss or snuggle backyard poultry.
- Collect eggs regularly and throw away any cracked ones. Clean eggs with fine sandpaper, a brush or a cloth before putting them in the refrigerator.
- Keep backyard poultry and items used to care for them outside and away from areas where food or drinks are prepared, served, stored, or where dishes are cleaned.

- Don’t eat or drink in areas where poultry live or roam.
- Set aside a pair of shoes to wear while tending to poultry and keep those shoes outside.
- Stay outdoors when cleaning any equipment or materials used to raise or care for poultry, such as cages or food and water containers.
- Clean the coop, floor, nests and perches regularly.
- Keep your flock and your family away from wild waterfowl like ducks and geese and their droppings. Ensure your birds do not share a water source with wild waterfowl.
- Do not touch dead wild or domestic birds. If you need to touch them, wear protective gear.

Report dead birds if the cause is unknown or there is a suspicion of H5N1 bird flu. You can call the State Veterinarian at 802-828-2421 or the USDA’s toll-free number at 1-866-536-7593.

Anyone involved with poultry production, from small backyard coops to large commercial producers, should review their biosecurity plans and activities to ensure the health of their birds. If you have concerns about your flock, contact your veterinarian or call 802-828-2421.

Learn more about backyard poultry safety from the Centers for Disease Control and

Prevention at <https://tinyurl.com/42juvdrv>.

### 2025 grant applications open for free days in the state parks

Vermont Parks Forever has opened its Park Access Fund grant application for 2025. Since 2016, Vermont Parks Forever has granted over \$85,000 to cover park entry fees and help create a more equitable outdoor experience throughout the state. This year, the Park Access Fund will again provide over 14,000 free days in the parks to community partners across Vermont.

Organizations serving Vermonters facing barriers to outdoor experiences can apply for a Park Access Grant at <https://www.vermontparksforever.org/park-access-fund>. The deadline for this short application is April 11, 2025. The Park Access Grant is open to Vermont government agencies and non-profits with 501(c)(3) status serving Vermont.

“The Park Access Fund breaks down barriers for Vermonters who otherwise might not experience all that Vermont State Parks have to offer. The Fund provides free state park day passes to community partner organizations helping foster families, youth programs, those with developmental disabilities, BIPOC communities, new Americans, mental health clients and those with limited mobility, among others, enjoy all the benefits that come with time spent in the parks,” said Sarah Alberghini Winters, Vermont Parks Forever executive director.



## Sacred Hunter

# Class dismissed; the Dude abides, fishing for whatever

Bradley Carleton  
Contributor

As I sit fishing on the side of the road of what locals call the South Slang, between bites on my line, I begin to ponder on those deeper insights into life. Fishing, of any kind, can do that to you. Especially when you're alone.

It is late afternoon and the sun has begun to sink behind dark clouds across the lake. Migrating wood ducks whistle overhead, calling to their mate "whoooo-eeeeek!" Red-winged blackbirds rise and fall, twisting in unison from one weed bed to another. A lone Canada goose honks high overhead.

I am sitting in my ultra-comfortable folding chair, and two medium-heavy rods stick up above my head at 45-degree angles on either side of my chair. I am watching the tips at the end of the rods, peering at them and watching for the telltale twitch downward on the taut line.

As I am staring, waiting for that slight movement that indicates a fish nibbling on my nightcrawler, I am creating questions in my humble mind that cannot be answered without great cogitation. It is a topic that vexes me regularly: classism. But how is "classism" applied to fishing? I am in pursuit of "bullpout," known by colloquialisms as "hornpout," "pout," or as an elitist fisherperson would call them by their pejorative name, "mud puppies."

Follow me down this rabbit hole and let's see if we can learn anything about how a society that divides people into classes — rich, poor, middle class or a one percent — and examine how this habit of creating classes can be seen even in the fishing world, where one goes to escape this kind of cerebral superiority complex.

Let's start with what most people might think of as the "Ubers," or 1 percenters. This group will only consider fishing in the Argentine Patagonia waters, chasing behemoth rainbow trout, while being guided by the most exclusive outfitters and wearing all the new gear from the most expensive outdoor designers. They will not settle for less than this extraordinary experience that requires a personal balance sheet exceeding most third-world GDPs.

One step down from them are the merely wealthy. They will take the company jet to the Yellowstone Club, where the cost of a membership is still greater than a small business' annual revenue. These folks also fish for trout. Cutthroat, rainbows and browns that weigh as much as a newborn with a future in sumo wrestling. They have custom hand-turned fly rods with African Blackwood reel seats and polished silver guides. They have mastered the spey rod and can converse for hours about catching salmon on the Miramichi River in New Brunswick.

Next step down on the class ladder would be the bass fishermen who want to look like they had just won the latest Bassmaster's tournament. \$100,000 boats with more glitter than a Mardi Gras "woman of ill repute" with decals and stickers of fishing companies that want onlookers to drool over their sponsorships. These guys (mostly) have 20 rods and at least 2,000 different



Photo by Bradley Carleton

The magic of fishing should erase angling class distinctions.

lures with colors to match their boat and windproof neon jackets. Their motors typically cost as much as the new double-wide trailer they call home. (Because if you're never home, who cares where you sleep?)

Next step down the social ladder would be the local fly-fisherman who buys the best Orvis rod they can afford on a middle-management salary. They are typically adorned in breathable waders and felt sole wader boots with a 50-pocket front-style waist pack full of eight different tippet sizes and four Wheatley fly boxes with custom A.D. Maddox prints in a wrap-around paint.

They will not, under any condition, share their best spots with you and will likely have you make a blood promise by taking a blue-winged olive fly on a number 12 hook and draw blood from your ear then rub it on your forehead, swearing that you will never speak of or take anyone other than them to this location that they refer to as "theirs."

Some are obsessed with a specific trout species and physically begin to resemble the belly of a spawning brook trout around their necks, as they will fish all day in the hot sun. Oddly enough, this species of fishermen must never be referred to as "rednecks." Rednecks don't go to boarding schools.

Further down the classist rabbit hole

we go. Panfish fishermen. These folks are what the other classes kindly refer to as "salt of the earth." It means that their primary culinary additive is the actual mineral by which these folks are classed. They love yellow perch, sunfish, pumpkinseed, bluegill, and yes, that one piscatorial species relegated to the worst possible moniker: "crappie."

These folks carry ultralight spinning rods that can be broken down into several pieces for storage under the driver's seat of the Ford Escort. Their bait of choice is nightcrawlers or the smaller, more tender "dillies" packed in a round plastic container with very dark soil that seems to stick to everything as if it were related to Velcro.

And finally, the bottom dwellers of the fishing world, the bullpout fisherman, happily ensconced on their throne of a white plastic pickle bucket. They will lob heavy spin casting lines with multiple large hooks that look like they might make reasonable earrings for the high school prom.

These large hooks are pierced through the half-body of a nightcrawler and heaved into the center of the channel, then propped up on a proper Y-shaped branch stuck into the shoreline mud. It is then that the fun begins. They sit back in their folding chairs and stare at the tips of their rods. If they pulse downward, they wait until the fish swallows the hook and then set it by a violent upward tug on the rod, like the rich kids do on their tuna boats.

So, there it is. You should now have an idea where you "belong" in this ridiculous caste system. Frankly, I can't afford to fly the family jet to Argentina or even take a commercial plane to Yellowstone.

As a beginner fisherman, I was taken to elite fly-fishing clubs and learned to hold my own, but over the years, I have come to realize that I just love fishing. I don't care if it's catch-and-release steelhead, jigging for perch on the ice, delicately casting an elk hair caddis to a small brookie in a mountain stream or even yanking big yellow bullpout out of the slang.

This classism must stop. True fisherpeople should know this quote, which should govern all our prejudices and stereotypes: "The Dude abides."

*(Bradley Carleton is the founder and director of Sacred Hunter.org, a privately owned limited liability corporation that seeks to educate the public on the spiritual connection of man to nature through hunting, fishing and foraging. For more of his writings, please subscribe to sacredhunter.substack.com.)*



# Our Local Feast

## Celebrating the ‘season of deception’ with clams

Dorothy Grover-Read  
Contributor

Yes, it’s the season of deception, which happens in New England just before, sometimes during or even after mud season. You know what I mean: Beautiful blue skies and temperatures in the 60s and 70s, the snow has all gone, we shed our heavy coats, pop on some cut-off jeans and dig in the garden.

Then, when we least expect it, we look outside to what we’ve been treated to this past week — more snow or sleet. Never fear, it will turn to rain, right?

I’m always reminded of the Robert Frost poem “Two Tramps in Mud Time”:

When the sun is out and the wind is still,  
You’re one month on in the middle of May.  
But if you so much as dare to speak,  
A cloud comes over the sunlit arch,  
A wind comes off a frozen peak,  
And you’re two months back in the middle of March.

The only thing to do is add something tasty to our menu, preferably something that at least nods at better weather. This week, the fish market had both steamers and very large quahogs, and the latter definitely caught my eye.

Our family loves New England clams in any form. Deep fried of course while visiting the shore with lots of tangy tartar sauce. A summer treat. Or steamed with all the dunking and slurping rituals at a cookout. We’ll find them in a silky chowder, tossed in a simple white wine and garlic sauce over spaghetti, and in clam dip, too.

But one of our favorites is the traditional New England stuffed clam, a “stuffedie” if you will, with a wide range of variations and possibilities. The stuffing can be as simple as a little breading with sauteed onions and celery; usually some fresh parsley is involved or it may be flavored with chorizo in the Rhode Island-style with its nod to its Portuguese culture.

This version is flavorful and moist, with a crispy top, scented with herbes de Provence and chives.

New England boasts two distinct varieties of clams, hard and soft shells. Hard shell, referred to as quahogs (pronounce co-hog). Quahogs take their name from the native Narragansett “poquauhocks.” They are sold by size and include countnecks, topnecks, littlenecks, mahogany, cherrystone and the larger chowder or beach clams usually referred to simply as quahogs.

Soft-shell clams are the basic steamers, and the shell is not really soft, so I’m not sure where this designation comes from. They have a long neck, hence their alternate name of longnecks, and often called “pisser” clams as well because they can tend to spray the harvester. Quite an image.

However you use the clams of any type, buying and prepping them properly is essential, but pretty easy.

Look for clams that are solidly shut with



A bowl of quahog clams. Most clams you find in New England are quahogs, or hard-shell clams. We also have soft-shelled clams called steamers, but the quahogs are best for stuffing, and the bigger the better.

absolutely no cracks or chips. Have the fish monger check each one, they can tell as they pack them. Although best to buy at a fish market, you can find them easily in New England and elsewhere in supermarkets at the fish counter, but you’ll probably have someone inexperienced packing your clams, so watch them like a hawk. Don’t let them put the clams in a tied-up plastic bag, they need to breathe. Mesh is best, then paper. If they have to be in plastic, don’t let them close the bag. Ask for ice as well.

No matter how you are going to cook them, you’ll have to give them a cleansing soak in salt water first to remove the sand and sea grit in the shell. Fill a bowl with a couple of quarts of cold water and add a couple of tablespoons of coarse salt. My mom used to also add cornmeal to aid in the purging, but I don’t bother with this any longer, and it doesn’t seem to matter. Sorry, Mom.

Gently place the clams in the water and let soak for a half hour and up to an hour. When ready, gently remove them from the water and scrub off any debris with a stiff brush. This is a good time for a last inspection.

Note: Sometimes if your water is room temperature or warmer, the clams will open up slightly. Just give them the tiniest of taps on the counter and they should close again. Next time, make sure your water is cold.

Now you are ready to cook.

For these stuffies, I used Maine beach or topneck quahogs about 2 1/2 inches wide. Two made a perfect appetizer.

### New England stuffies

Soak and scrub eight or nine quahog or beach clams, about 2 1/2 inches in size. Open them with a thin, sturdy knife (I use my oyster knife) over a bowl to catch all the liquid, this is gold. Insert the knife at the hinge and twist the knife. The clam should release easily.

Run the knife along the top to loosen all around, taking care not to jab the clams. Cut the clam away from the shell and drop in the juice then open the rest. Chop up the clams and return to the liquid. Tuck these in the refrigerator while you prepare the rest of the filling, and clean and rinse out the shells to use as a baking vessel. You can make this in



Photos by Dorothy Grover-Read

New England stuffed clams, also known as ‘stuffies,’ bring the feeling of summer to the table, even during this time of year with wild swings in the weather.



The stuffing in your clams should be tender and flavorful. There’s no egg in this stuffing to mask the delicate flavor of the clams.

a casserole dish.

Preheat the oven to 375 F.

In a medium sauté pan, to a tablespoon of oil and one of butter add:

1 large or two small shallots, minced  
1/2 cup minced mushrooms of choice

1 rib of celery, minced  
2 cloves garlic, crushed  
1 tsp. herbes de Provence  
1 tsp. minced chives

Season with pepper, no salt needed, and cook until soft and starting to brown on the edges.

### Add:

1/2 cup of dry white wine.

Let this simmer until the wine is reduced to almost nothing.

Place the vegetables in the bowl with the clams and juice.

### Grate or process:

2 slices whole wheat bread

2 tablespoons of Parmesan cheese

Mix these together and add a little at a time to the rest of the ingredients until you have a moist stuffing consistency. You may have some bread left over, or you may need to grate a bit more depending on how much juice was in the clams.

Pack the shells tightly with the stuffing mixture. There are no eggs in this dish, the flavor of them is too pronounced, so you want to mound the stuffing in each clam.

Place on crumpled foil on a sheet pan to keep the clams from rocking. Spritz with a bit more olive oil or brush with butter, cover, and bake for 10 to 15 minutes, depending on size. Turn on the broiler and continue cooking until the tops are browned and you can see bubbling on the sides.

Top with a few more chives and serve with lemon slices.

Now, if by chance we get a 75-degree day, you can also dig out your cut-offs and cook these on the grill for a lovely smoky flavor.

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## Gardening

# Linnaeus' taxonomy gives us universal names for plants

Andrea Knepper  
University of Vermont Extension

Rudbeckia hirta. Solanum lycopersicum. Acer saccharum. Have you ever seen these names on plant tags or seed packets and wondered where they came from? We can thank Carl Linnaeus for taxonomy, the study of categorizing and naming organisms, and binomial nomenclature, the precise, two-termed naming system we use today.

Carl Linnaeus was a Swedish professor, scientist and doctor who was born in 1707. From a young age, Linnaeus was fascinated by the plants growing in his father's garden.

At the time, plants were scientifically named in Latin by describing their features. These names were often long and described multiple unique plant traits. Linnaeus was determined to learn as many as he could, sometimes neglecting his formal studies.

Linnaeus began studying medicine when he was 19 years old. Notable naturalists and botanists of the time noticed his interest and ability. They invited him to become a botany teaching assistant at Uppsala University. During his 20s, Linnaeus continued to study, travel and collect specimens.

While traveling and collecting detailed information on the natural world, Linnaeus completed his medical degree, practiced medicine and became a professor of botany.

Linnaeus proposed a system to classify and describe these specimens by sorting and relating them to other known organisms. He first described this system in his 1735 work, Systema Naturae.

According to this initial system, plants and animals were sorted into a kingdom, class, order, genus and species. These categories are ranked from most general to most specific. This is why we use the genus and species names to precisely identify organisms.

Over time, scientific discoveries have expanded this system to include the ranks of kingdom, phylum, class, order, family, genus and species. Discoveries have required the addition of kingdoms to include non-plant and animal living things, like bacteria, fungi and single-celled organisms.

We call this system of giving scientific names binomial nomenclature. "Binomial" means two names and "nomenclature" means naming system.

The first of two terms in a scientific name is the genus and is always capitalized. The second is the species.

Plants that are a specific variety have an additional name after this. For example, Rudbeckia hirta var. hirta is the black-eyed Susan native to the eastern United States while Rudbeckia hirta var. floridana is a variety native to Florida. Sometimes, the variety name will appear in quotations instead.

Home gardeners can use scientific names to confidently obtain the exact plants they need.

One year when I was selecting seeds for my garden, I was excited to see huckleberry seeds. Thinking about my travels on the west coast and experiences with huckleberry jam and pie, I ordered the seeds.

I planted the seeds and was truly disappointed by my results. I had to add a lot of sugar to make the jam palatable, and the flavor was quite different. When I looked more closely at the seed packet, I noticed that the botanical, or scientific, name was actually Solanum scabrum, not the Vaccinium ovatum I was hoping for.

Next time you spot an interesting plant, take a closer look at its scientific name. This detail can ensure you get exactly what you expect. Thanks to Carl Linnaeus, we have a universal language to connect scientists and gardeners around the world.

*(Andrea Knepper is a University of Vermont Extension Master Gardener from Bolton.)*

Photo by Andrea Klepper

Plant tags contain the botanical, or scientific, name of the plant along with other information that enables gardeners to obtain the exact plants that they want.



Photo by Bronislaw Drozka

A statue of a youthful Carl Linnaeus by American sculptor Robert Berks graces the Heritage Garden in the Chicago Botanic



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## Gardening

# Heuchera is a versatile, colorful landscape addition

Deborah J. Benoit  
University of Vermont Extension

If you're looking for a plant for your garden that will come back year after year, is easy to care for and suitable for a variety of growing conditions, coral bells (Heuchera) just might be the plant for you. It's also known by the common names alum root and rock geranium.

Heuchera are semi-evergreen perennials that are native to eastern and central North America. They can be grown in United States Department of Agriculture Plant Hardiness Zones 4 to 9, with some varieties hardy to Zone 3.

They grow in a well-behaved, mounding shape. Depending on the variety, they can grow from 12 to 36 inches in diameter and 6 to 24 inches high.

Heuchera leaves are by far this plant's star feature. Foliage comes in a variety of shapes and textures. It can be solid colored or variegated, smooth, bumpy or ruffled. Colors range from shades of red, pink and burgundy, to neon green, caramel, silver and nearly black.

Tiny, bell-shaped flowers in shades of white, red and pink appear during the summer months on thin stems that grow above the foliage. They attract pollinators such as bees and hummingbirds.

For the best foliage color and flowers, plant heuchera in part sun/part shade (4 to 6 hours of direct sun a day). Most varieties do fine in conditions from full shade (less than 4 hours of direct sun) to full sun (at least 6 to 8 hours direct sun). Check the plant's tag for a particular variety's needs.

If you notice foliage showing signs of sun scald, consider moving the plant to a more compatible location in your garden and remove any damaged leaves.

Heuchera can be used as a ground cover or to add interest to garden beds, borders and containers all season long. Those grown in containers may need added insulation to protect against winter temperatures. As an alternative, they can be planted in-ground and repotted the following spring.

They can add a burst of color to a shade garden and make good companions for hostas (Hosta), bleeding hearts (Dicentra spectabilis) or ferns, like ostrich fern (Matteuccia struthiopteris). They're equally at home in a part-sun or full-sun garden, along with lady's mantle (Alchemilla mollis) and day lilies (Hemerocallis). Check the care tag for the variety you select.

Plant one variety of heuchera in a group for a bold statement of color, or mix varieties to highlight the contrast in foliage color and leaf texture.

Heuchera can be planted in spring or fall. They prefer rich, well-drained soil but will adapt well to all but heavy clay soil. Amend heavy clay soil to improve drainage.

Heuchera should be planted with the crown at the same soil level as in the pot. Water well when planting and water as needed until established, particularly if conditions are hot or dry.

Because of the plant's shallow root system, the crown may lift from the ground during freeze-and-thaw cycles in winter. Applying a generous layer of mulch around plants in the fall can help reduce the chance of this happening. If you notice plants have heaved out of the ground over the winter, replant in spring as soon as the soil is workable.

Divide mature plants every 3 to 4 years by separating clumps in springtime, being sure each piece has a good amount of roots and foliage.

Heuchera are considered deer and rabbit resistant, but keep in mind that during lean times, these garden visitors will feed on almost any plant.

For answers to your home gardening questions, please contact the University of Vermont Extension master gardener helpline at [go.uvm.edu/gardenquestion](http://go.uvm.edu/gardenquestion).

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



Photos by Deborah J. Benoit

Choosing varieties of heuchera with different foliage color and leaf textures to plant in the garden will add interest to flowerbeds and borders throughout the season.



Coral bells, or heuchera, an attractive, low-maintenance semi-evergreen perennial, will grow well in a variety of growing conditions.



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# Calendar

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

**Mad River Story Slam**  
**Saturday, April 5, 7:30 p.m.**  
The Valley Players Theater will present the fifth annual Mad River Story Slam at the Valley Players Theater, 4254 Main Street in Waitsfield. This year's theme is "Relationships," or true stories exploring the many facets of relationships — love, family, friendships and everything in between. Storytellers participated in two workshops in preparation for the show learning about the storytelling process and getting feedback to refine their story for the slam. For tickets and more information, go to [valleyplayers.com](http://valleyplayers.com) or call 802-583-1674.

**Slow birding & re-wilding your backyard**  
**Wednesday, April 9, 7 p.m.**  
Learn how to foster healthy, diverse habitats in your backyard to create a birding sanctuary, a peaceful space to sit and observe birds, at a talk by Bridgett Butler at the senior center. The presentation will focus on slow birding, an approach that encourages a deeper connection to the land, birds and ourselves. The event is free and sponsored by the Charlotte Land Trust. For more information visit [birddiva.com](http://birddiva.com).

**Age Well lunch**  
**Tuesday, April 8, 11:30 a.m.**  
St. Catherine of Siena and Age Well are offering a luncheon on April 8 for anyone 60 or older in the St. Catherine of Siena Parish Hall, 72 Church Street in Shelburne. The check-in time is 11:30 a.m. and the meal will be served at noon. There is a \$5 suggested donation. The menu is baked ham with raisin sauce, sweet potatoes, capri blend vegetables,



Courtesy photo

A detail from Morgan Wickstrom's wood-burned painting of Champ is part of the exhibit 'Champ: The Art of Believing' at the Frog Hollow Craft Gallery in Burlington through April 30. There will be an artist reception 3-6 p.m. on Saturday, April 26.

wheat dinner roll, Easter cake with icing and milk. The deadline to register for is April 3 by calling 802-662-5283 or emailing [mbongiorno@agewellvt.org](mailto:mbongiorno@agewellvt.org).

**Poetry at the Grange**  
**Thursday, April 10, 1-2:30 p.m.**  
Poetry at the Grange is planned for every second Thursday, 1-2:30 p.m. at the Grange, 2848 Spear St. in Charlotte. RSVPs are encouraged but not required: [abigailkilley@me.com](mailto:abigailkilley@me.com). Each month a local poet is invited to share about themselves and recite several poems. Participants are then invited to recite their own poetry, read poetry of their choosing or just listen. Prizes are offered to those who can recite their poems from memory. Join for hot tea and homemade cookies.

On April 10, guest poet will be Jack Mayer, a Vermont writer and retired pediatrician. His first practice was on the Canadian border where he began writing poems about his practice and hiking Vermont's Long Trail. A cancer researcher at Columbia University, he returned to Vermont as a primary care pediatrician in Middlebury, retiring in 2021. As a writer, he participated in the Bread Loaf Writers' Conference twice for fiction and once for poetry. He has written two books, "Life in a Jar: The Irena Sendler Project" and "Before the Court of Heaven," and two poetry collections, "Poems from the Wilderness," which won the Proverse Prize, and "Entanglements: Physics, Love and Wilderness Dreams," reflecting his interest in the physics and metaphysics of cosmology and the primacy of relationships. More information at [charlottegrange.org/events](http://charlottegrange.org/events).

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).

**Kids clothing drive**  
**Sunday-Monday, April 13-21**  
Please consider donating outgrown kids' and teens' clothes, outerwear and footwear to the Charlotte Grange's Hand-Me-Downs project. We are also accepting donations of large reusable shopping bags to use in re-distributing the clothing. There will be a large sealed bin on the porch at the Grange Hall (2858 Spear St.) for anyone who may want to drop donations off at other times during these dates. The Charlotte Hand-Me-Downs project is a program of the Charlotte Grange. Every spring and fall local families donate clothes their children have outgrown. Volunteers organize them for the Charlotte Food Shelf to give. See [charlottegrange.org/events](http://charlottegrange.org/events) for in-person drop-off times.

**Charlotte Walks**  
**Friday, April 18, 8:30-9:30 a.m.**  
The Grange's Charlotte Walks is the third Friday of the month. Meet at 8:30 a.m. at a different Charlotte trailhead for a morning walk. Walks usually last about an hour and are led at a comfortable adult walking pace. Each month's location will be posted on the Grange events calendar: [charlottegrange.org/events](http://charlottegrange.org/events). Questions? Email [kknh.nh@gmail.com](mailto:kknh.nh@gmail.com).

**Atlantic Crossing**  
**Saturday, April 19, 12:30-2 p.m.**  
Atlantic Crossing showcases the rich legacy of traditional New England music at the Bixby Library in Vergennes on Saturday, April 19. From foot-stomping reels to soulful ballads, Atlantic Crossing brings Vermont's rich musical traditions to life.

**'Plastic People' film**  
**Thursday, April 24, 6:30 p.m.**  
The Jericho Energy Task Force is celebrating Earth Week with a showing of the movie "Plastic People" at the Deborah Rawson Memorial Library on April 24 at 6:30 p.m. This award-winning feature documentary investigates our addiction to plastic and the growing threat of microplastics on human health. Plastic breaks down into microplastics become a permanent part of the environment. Author and science journalist Ziya Tong visited scientists

## CHARLOTTE TOWN MEETINGS AND AGENDAS

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

<b>Planning Commission Meeting</b> Thursday, April 3, 7 p.m.	<b>Planning Commission Meeting</b> Thursday, April 17, 7 p.m.
<b>Charlotte Energy Committee Meeting</b> Tuesday, April 8, 7 p.m.	<b>Conservation Commission Meeting</b> Tuesday, April 22, 7 p.m.
<b>Development Review Board Meeting</b> Wednesday, April 9, 7 p.m.	<b>Development Review Board Meeting</b> Wednesday, April 23, 7 p.m.
<b>Regular Selectboard Meeting</b> Monday, April 14, 7 p.m.	<b>Regular Selectboard Meeting</b> Monday, April 28, 7 p.m.

A logo for the Charlotte Town Meetings and Agendas. It features a stylized illustration of a house with a chimney, a sailboat on the water, and a sun or moon in the sky, all within a circular frame.

**Clean Out the Closet Sale**  
**Saturday, April 12, 9 a.m.-3:30 p.m.**  
St. Peter's Resale Closet in Vergennes is holding its Clean Out the Closet Sale in the Parish Hall including clothing, household goods and books. All proceeds go to HOPE, Vergennes Food Shelf and the John Graham Shelter. This sale is affordable with take-what-you-want-pay-what-you-can pricing.

**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

CALENDAR continued on page 21



CALENDAR

Continued from page 20

around the world and underwent experiments in her home, on her food and her body in a call to action to rethink our relationship with plastic. “Plastic People” was named one of the best documentaries of 2024 by Variety Magazine. Light refreshments will be served but bring your own mugs and plates. For more information email catherine.mcmains@gmail.com.

**April bird monitoring walk  
Saturday, April 26, 7:30-9 a.m.**

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

**Artist reception  
April 26, 3-6 p.m.**

An exhibition exploring the enduring power of myth, legend and belief through artistic interpretation of Champ, the Lake Champlain legend, runs at the Frog Hollow Craft Gallery through April 30. There will be an artist reception for “Champ: The Art of Believing” 3-6 p.m. on Saturday, April 26. Lake Champlain, a vast and mysterious body of water, has long been the subject of folklore, most notably the tale of Champ, a creature said to inhabit its depths. “Champ: The Art of Believing” invites artists to delve into the nature of belief, using Champ as a springboard for creative expression, inspired by eyewitness accounts.

**Food drive for farmworkers  
Thursday-Thursday, May 1-15**

The Charlotte Grange is gathering non-perishable food items in support of local underserved farmworkers. Bins will be on the front porch of the Grange Hall (2848 Spear St.) during this two-week period, as well as several other places around in the area. The food drive is looking for these specific items: spaghetti (1-pound boxes), dried black beans (1-pound bags), canned black beans (16-ounce cans, preferably Goya brand), dried lentils (1-pound bags), white rice (1-pound bags), Goya yellow rice (7-ounce boxes), Maseca yellow corn flour (4-pound bags), apple or cranberry juice (64-ounce containers) and vegetable oil (48-ounce containers). Also: Goya Adobo All Purpose Seasoning, Goya Sazonador Total Seasoning, and Goya Sazon Culantro y Achiote Seasoning

packets. To learn more email [sallyw@aol.com](mailto:sallyw@aol.com) or visit [charlottegrange.org/events](http://charlottegrange.org/events).

**Poetry at the Grange  
Thursday, May 8, 1-2:30 p.m.**

Poetry at the Grange is planned for every second Thursday, 1-2:30 p.m. at the Grange, 2848 Spear St. in Charlotte. RSVPs are encouraged but not required at [abigailkilley@me.com](mailto:abigailkilley@me.com). Each month a local poet is invited to recite several poems. Participants are also invited to recite their own poetry, read poetry of their choosing or just listen. Prizes are offered to those who can recite their poems from memory. For more information visit [charlottegrange.org/events](http://charlottegrange.org/events).

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

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

**Worn flag collection  
Saturday-Saturday, May 24-31**

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

**Memorial Day gathering  
Monday, May 26, 9-10 a.m.**

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

Spring prediction



Photo by Alexandra Lazar

The first crocus of the year is a sure sign spring is on the verge of chasing away the dreariness of winter with a burst of color. Lazar is also happy to see the appearance of this flower, reminding her of her late grandmother Eleanor Wojcik, who was always excited to see crocuses blooming.



# Library News

## A month with many varied ways of celebrating the Earth

Margaret Woodruff  
Director

Don't forget that Charlotte's Earth Month celebration will kick off at the library on Saturday, April 5, 9 a.m.-noon.

At 11 a.m: Charlie Nardozzi will talk about edible landscapes and native planting.

The Earth Month kick-off will include a lot of activities including garden tours, a tree identification workshop, a beaver natural history kit for an opportunity to get a close-up look at beaver features. A beaver pelt and skull will be on display at the library.

Stop in to the library to knit a line or two for the temperature-based wall hanging that's part of the tempesty knitting project.

Make a gift for your garden with a wildflower seed bomb, a ball of non-invasive flower seeds.

Find a full list of the town's Earth Month programs at <https://bit.ly/3DgxdUB>.

### Programs for kids

#### Monthly baby & toddler time Saturday, April 5, 10 a.m.

The first Saturday of each month is time for babies and toddlers 10-11 a.m. Baby time is an opportunity to join other young families in an unstructured hour of play and exploration in the young children's area. Ages birth to 12 months. Toddlers, 1–2-year-olds, will also have an hour of an unstructured hour of play and exploration, but they and their families will meet in the program room.

#### Preschool story time Tuesdays, 10 a.m.

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

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

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



Photo by Margaret Woodruff

Deirdre Holmes was part of a group that learned how to make the most of the grid at a workshop with the Vermont Energy Education Program.

### 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.

#### 'Matter of Mind: My Alzheimer's' film Tuesday, April 8, 1 p.m.

The library will show the PBS Independent Lens film exploring how Alzheimer's disease transforms the lives of three families who confront the challenges of becoming primary caregivers. Registration appreciated but not required at <https://tinyurl.com/4m2m8d4h>.

#### Birder's-eye view of Easter Island Thursday, April 10, 7 p.m.

Join Hank Kaestner for another Earth Month event as the world-traveled birder relates his firsthand account of Easter Island and southern Chile. Kaestner will talk about the Polynesian settlement of Easter Island and how they made their famous stone statues. He will continue to mainland Chile's lake district, which reminds him of the Champlain Valley, including creemees.

#### Water Matters Monday, April 14, 7 p.m.

Join Lewis Creek Association for a presentation and discussion about water quality in Charlotte and how it affects Lake Champlain's health as another Earth Month event at the library. Hear about some of the causes of poor water quality and what you can do to help. Learn about a new resource available from the Lewis Creek Association to help you assess your property for stormwater problems and direct you to the appropriate resources to design and implement improvements.

#### 'The Serviceberry' Tuesday, April 15, 7 p.m.

Come for another Earth Month event at the library to talk about Robin Wall Kimmerer's newest book, "The Serviceberry: Abundance and Reciprocity in the Natural World." As Indigenous scientist Kimmerer harvests serviceberries alongside birds, she considers the ethic of reciprocity that lies at the heart of the gift economy. "How," she asks, "can we learn from Indigenous wisdom and the plant world to reimagine what we value most?"

#### 'Remarkably Bright Creatures' Wednesday, April 16, 7 p.m.

Better Together Book Club discusses books related to parenthood and this month it is discussing "Remarkably Bright Creatures." After Tova Sullivan's husband died, she began working the night shift at the Sowell

Bay Aquarium, mopping floors and tidying up. Keeping busy has always helped her cope since her 18-year-old son vanished on a boat in Puget Sound over 30 years before. Tova becomes acquainted with curmudgeonly Marcellus, a giant Pacific octopus living at the aquarium. Marcellus knows more than anyone can imagine but wouldn't dream of lifting one of his eight arms for his human captors — until he forms a remarkable friendship with Tova. Copies available at the circulation desk. Ebook and audiobook available on Hoopla.

#### 'Born a Crime' Wednesday, April 16, 7:30 p.m.

The men's book group is reading Trevor Noah's book about his unlikely path from apartheid South Africa to the desk of The Daily Show and how it began with a criminal act: his birth. Noah was born to a white Swiss father and a black Xhosa mother at a time when such a union was punishable by five years in prison. Living proof of his parents' indiscretion, Noah was kept mostly indoors for the earliest years of his life, bound by the extreme and often absurd measures his mother took to hide him from a government that could, at any moment, steal him away. Finally liberated by the end of South Africa's tyrannical white rule, Trevor and his mother set forth on a grand adventure, living openly and freely and embracing the opportunities won by a centuries-long struggle. Join in person or on Zoom. Copies available at the circulation desk.

### Recurring programs

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

Meet each week (except April 16) to discuss new books, old books and books we might have missed. Each week, library director Margaret Woodruff selects a theme and highlights related titles from the library collection. No registration necessary.

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

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

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

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

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



# Senior Center News

## Variety in full bloom at senior center this April

Lori York  
Director

The senior center is offering variety this April, from screenings and workshops focused on Alzheimer's care and personal growth to creative arts and exercise classes. Highlights include a screening on Alzheimer's caregiving, a transformative workshop on reconnecting with your authentic self and an art exhibit by local educators.

You can also enjoy gentle yoga, tai chi or a Bone Builders class. Whether you're looking to expand your creativity, improve your health or gain valuable insights into aging, these events offer enriching opportunities to connect with the community.

### Programs

#### 'Matter of Mind' film Tuesday, April 8, 1 p.m.

The Alzheimer's film "Matter of Mind" explores how Alzheimer's disease transforms the lives of three families who confront the challenges of becoming primary caregivers. Please note: The film will be shown at the Charlotte Library. Free. To register, call the senior center at 802-425-6345 or <https://bit.ly/4h1P1AA>.

#### Alzheimer's caregivers support group Wednesday, April 9, 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 from 3:00-4:00 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. Free. No registration required. For additional information email [louisefairbank67@gmail.com](mailto:louisefairbank67@gmail.com).

#### What's Running Your Life workshop Wednesdays, April 9-30, 10-11:30 a.m.

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

#### Rewilding with the Bird Diva Wednesday, April 9, 7 p.m.

As one of the town's many Earth Month events, join Bridgett Butler, known as the Bird Diva, for a unique presentation on Slow Birding, hosted by The Charlotte Land Trust. This approach encourages a deeper connection to the land, birds and ourselves. Learn how to create your own slow birding sanctuary in your backyard; one that supports healthy, diverse habitats for birds and offers a peaceful space to sit and observe. For more info, go to [birddiva.com](http://birddiva.com). Free. Registrations encouraged but not required: 802-425-6345.

#### AARP Smart Driver course Saturday, April 12, 11-4 p.m.

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

#### The Ins & Outs of Senior Living Wednesday, April 16, 1 p.m.

Join the Harbor Village team for an insightful presentation on senior living options. This session will cover a variety of housing choices for seniors and debunk common myths. Gain valuable tips on planning for aging and find communities that best suit your needs, personality and lifestyle. Free. To register, call 802-425-6345.

### Art

#### Creative expressions by local educators

The work of local art teachers is on display throughout April. This informal group was formed to encourage one another in pursuing creative passions and producing original artwork. An artist reception will be held on Thursday, April 10, 4:30-6:30 p.m.

#### 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, April 6, 2-4 p.m.

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

#### Spring watercolor workshop Tuesdays, April 15-May 6, 9 a.m.-noon

In this upbeat, supportive class, you'll explore spring-themed subjects and vibrant colors through watercolor painting. Perfect for all skill levels, the class will guide you through fun and dynamic techniques. Please be sure to provide an email address when registering as the supply list will be emailed upon registration. Cost: \$165. Registration and payment required by Tuesday, April 8. To register, call 802-425-6345.

### Exercise

#### 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



Photo by Lori York

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

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.

#### Chair yoga Tuesdays, April 8-22, 1:30-2:30 p.m.

Join Lynn Alpeter, former co-owner of Yoga Roots and yoga teacher, for a gentle and accessible chair yoga class designed to help you connect with your breath, move your body and lift your mood. Whether you're new to yoga or looking for a more supportive practice, this class is perfect for anyone seeking to increase flexibility, balance and relaxation. Using a chair for support, we'll explore mindful movement and simple stretches that can be easily adapted for all levels. Leave feeling uplifted, energized and centered. All are welcome! \$30 for the three-week series. Registration and payment required by April 4. To register, call 802-425-6345.

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

The Yang international short form is the most popular form of tai chi practice. It consists of slow continuous soft circular movements which are coordinated with breathing. Regular practice helps to improve balance, mind/body connection, mental awareness, flexibility, stability, coordination and overall health. When practiced in the company of others, it is both uplifting and energizing. Taught by a certified instructor who has studied with the founder of the Tai Chi for Arthritis Association. Email questions to [belizahammer@hotmail.com](mailto:belizahammer@hotmail.com). \$10 a class.

No registration required.

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

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

### 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,  
[lyork@charlotteseniorcentervt.org](mailto:lyork@charlotteseniorcentervt.org)  
212 Ferry Road, Charlotte  
802-425-6345  
[charlotteseniorcentervt.org](http://charlotteseniorcentervt.org)  
Follow the senior center on Facebook or Instagram at [charlotteseniorcentervt.org](http://charlotteseniorcentervt.org).



# Write Ingredients

## Memories of when only pink margarine was legal in VT

Susan Ohanian  
Contributor

For salad de Madison, there’s no need to travel to the second-most populous city in Wisconsin, and you can also skip James Madison’s Virginia home. Forgo that famous garden in New York City, and rest assured: the ballistic missile submarine the USS James Madison was scrapped in 1997.

For a tasty salad de Madison, and lots more, go to Monday Munch at the Charlotte Senior Center on Ferry Road.

This salad is delicious, but the butter and margarine for bread and rolls have a contentious history. When margarine, invented by a French chemist, was first introduced to the U.S. market in 1873 as a cheaper substitute for butter, one tactic of dairy producers lobbying against it was to argue for restricting margarine’s color: Don’t let it look like butter.

Wisconsin declared that using yellow margarine was a crime. In 1884, Vermont passed a law requiring that margarine be pink.

When World War II produced butter shortages, margarine gained in popularity. Many of us of a certain age remember that white glob coming from the grocery store in a plastic bag, looking like a second cousin of the sticky white paste sitting in big jars in every classroom.

The glob in our kitchens was white because of the dairy industry’s ingenuity in getting politicians to tax yellow margarine. The margarine bag contained a little piece of dye. By squeezing the bag, we could bust that dye, and with lots of kneading the white mass turned yellow and voila: It looked like butter.

In “The Butter Wars: When Margarine was Pink,” National Geographic tells how first lady Eleanor Roosevelt got involved in the margarine-butter wars (<https://tinyurl.com/kmn5rp8z>). Appearing in a TV commercial, she said she ate margarine on her toast.

We can anticipate a TV ad with Melania sitting in a Tesla.

Pro-butter political cartoonists pictured factories dropping everything from stray cats to soap, paint, arsenic and rubber boots into



Photo by lou\_zeni from Pixabay

the margarine mix; and a barrage of dubious scientific reports hinted that margarine caused cancer, or possibly led to insanity. Nonetheless, by the 1970s, Americans were eating about 10 pounds of margarine per person per year. But by 2014, butter was again our favorite spread: 5.6 pounds per person of butter a year is consumed, as opposed to a dwindling 3.5 pounds of margarine.

Meanwhile, the two varieties of chicken soup at upcoming Monday Munches reflect how very important chicken is in our diet. Indicative of the times, “Grandma’s Wartime Kitchen: World War II and the Way We Cooked” has a recipe for chicken bone soup.

The Chicken of Tomorrow contest somehow has a very contemporary feel to it. In the summer of 1945, the contest, organized by the USDA, with the backing of A&P and with 55 national organizers — scientists and bureaucrats loaned from government agencies, producer organizations, land-grant colleges, joined by hundreds of volunteers — all had the goal of producing bigger chickens.

In the 1950s, producers discovered feed laced with antibiotics allowed chickens to grow twice as fast, and these days, 80 percent

of antibiotics sold in the U.S. are used in livestock.

These videos are worth watching: The Trouble with Chicken (<https://tinyurl.com/4ckzue8u>), Chickens with John Oliver (<https://tinyurl.com/4txuepr5>) and Why is Chicken so Cheap (<https://tinyurl.com/4v9csdr9>).

For a very colorful look at chickens, see “Art of the Chicken: A Master Chef’s Paintings, Stories and Recipes of the Humble Bird,” by Jacques Pépin, personal chef to three French heads of state, including Charles de Gaulle and Emmy recipient for his TV show with Julia Child. Pépin describes cooking at The Plaza in the 1950s and preparing vol au vent financiere, or chicken banker’s style: the comb, the wattles under the beak, the kidneys and, when available, unlaidd eggs removed from slaughtered hens.

Besides offering lots of stories and recipes, Pépin has fun with his paintings: Angry Chicken, Proud Rooster, Militant Chicken, Untroubled Chicken, Chicken Goddess, Reflecting Rooster, Dancing Rooster, Pineapple Chicken. Lunatic Chicken and lots more. The book, featuring Hippie Cock on the cover, is available at the Charlotte Library.

Historical note: Chicken Lyonnaise was one of the dinner choices when, on April 14, 1912, passengers in the first-class dining room were served 10 elaborate courses, each with a different wine. First came oysters, then soup, then filet mignon or chicken. There were also courses of vegetables, lamb, roast duckling or beef sirloin. Lots of choices for dessert, too.

Then, just before midnight, the Titanic hit an iceberg, and passengers discovered that their ship carrying lots of food lacked sufficient lifeboats.

Recommended: Webster’s Dictionary sends out a word a day. And it goes beyond offering a definition of that word. Recently, besides the definition, the reader found entries entitled “Flowering Etymologies for your Spring Garden,” “‘In Vino Veritas’ and Other Latin Phrases to Live By” and “The Many Plurals of ‘Octopus’.”

Here’s one of those Latin phrases to live by: “Post hoc, ergo propter hoc.” It refers to the logical mistake of claiming that one thing caused another just because it happened first.

For example, the rooster crows and the sun rises, but to argue that the rooster’s crowing causes the sun to rise would be post hoc, ergo propter hoc reasoning.

Suggestion: Send post hoc, ergo propter hoc complaints to D.C. politicians along with this piece (<https://tinyurl.com/mryjxsyd>) from Science in The Public Interest.

Everything is, indeed, connected.

**Monday Munch**

**April 7, 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.**  
Lemon chicken orzo soup, salad de Madison and M&M cookie bars.

**April 14, 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.**  
Spring chicken with barley soup, salad, bread and homemade dessert.

Note: A wonderful children’s book has been added to The Little Free Library for Kids at the Grange, 2858 Spear Street. In “Frank & Ernest” by Alexandra Day, a bear and an elephant learn diner lingo, including “Adam and Eve on a raft, wreck’em,” which means scrambled eggs on toast and “fry two, let the sun shine,” meaning two fried eggs with unbroken yolks.

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