

The Charlotte News

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Energy committee wants fast action on energy proposals

Brett Yates
Contributor

By its own request, the Charlotte Energy Committee has officially become the Charlotte Energy & Climate Action Committee. It lived up to its new name in a presentation that immediately followed the selectboard's unanimous vote in favor of the change on Monday, as volunteer Jim Hodson pressed municipal officials to greenlight the next phase of an aggressive plan to decarbonize municipal buildings.

Based on research undertaken with the help of a grant-funded consultant, the committee wants to build 60 kilowatts of new solar panels, using both rooftop and ground-mounted arrays on town-owned land in the West Village and on the town garage property. It offered a potential solar installation at Thompsons Point, which would power the wastewater facility and sell excess electricity to adjacent landowners, as an optional addition.

The rest of the new solar power would facilitate a transition from fossil fuel heating systems to

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Awakening the Dragon

Dragonheart Vermont dots its 'eyes' to kick off 2025 boating season

Shannon Cuniff
Contributor

Dragonheart Vermont, a local breast cancer support and dragon boating organization, announces the official start of its 2025 paddling season on June 2, when it holds its "eye-dotting ceremony."

The public is invited to witness this centuries-old Chinese ceremony which is about awakening the dragon after its rest during the off-season. In Chinese culture, it is particularly associated with lion and dragon dances. It involves symbolically "awakening" the lion or dragon by painting its eyes, thus imbuing it with life and spirit.

Weather permitting, after the eye-dotting ceremony, the dragons will be paddled around Burlington's waterfront — reintroducing the dragons to the "water spirits."

In a break with tradition, one will likely see Dragonheart Vermont dragon boats out on the water before the ceremony. That's because some of Dragonheart Vermont's teams will be heading to Montreal for the sixth annual



Courtesy photo

Dragonheart Vermont will hold an 'eye-dotting ceremony' on June 2 to awaken the boats' dragons for the upcoming boating season.

Pan-American Club Crew Championships on July 4-6, and the teams need to squeeze in as many practices as possible before this international event.

In addition to competing on the world stage, Dragonheart Vermont offers programming to beginners as well. Thursday, June 5 will be a "Try Paddling Night" where folks

will get the opportunity to get into a boat and try the sport. Participants need to register and sign a waiver in advance at <https://forms.office.com/r/JwPwvVknS3>.

New breast cancer survivors that try the sport are eligible for a \$100 annual membership to Dragonheart Vermont for their first year, a \$200 discount.

And for folks who only want to paddle a couple of days this summer, participating in Dragonheart Vermont's 2025 Lake Champlain Dragon Boat Festival (secure.qgiv.com/event/2025lcbdf) is the way to go. This charity event supports those in our local community affected by cancer and still has berths open.

Community teams — the heart and soul of the festival — are formed by local businesses, organizations, sports teams, friends, etc. to compete in 200-meter races and raise funds. A full team consists of 17 people (16 paddlers and a drummer), but individuals can also register and Dragonheart will help find them a spot to race.

This year's fundraising benefits Dragonheart Vermont, the Mahana Magic Foundation, and Sail Beyond Cancer Vermont. Dragonheart Vermont encourages community teams to register now to secure one of the limited team slots, guarantee you receive your requested T-shirt size and ensure successful fundraising.

Dragonheart Vermont strives to strengthen and empower breast cancer survivors and supporters

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Charlotte Central School taking strides to stage upgrade

Scooter MacMillan
Editor

It's curtains for the curtain on the stage in Charlotte Central School's multipurpose room. The school and its PTO hope that's just the beginning.

Just before the school's variety show at the end of March, the school and PTO announced a fundraising effort to upgrade the curtain and other stage equipment like sound and lights.

Actually, "upgrade" is probably not the correct term for the sound system because the stage doesn't have a sound system now, although principal Tim O'Leary is hopeful the school might have both a new sound and new lighting system before the beginning of next school year.

His optimism is fueled by the extremely encouraging start to a \$50,000-fundraising effort. By the time of the variety show, the effort, that just started days prior, had raised half of its goal.



Courtesy photo

In April, third graders lead an all-school assembly, as each grade level does during the school year. Because of technical limitations like inadequate lighting, these student presentations take place on the floor in front of the stage.

The PTO committed \$10,000 from its funds, and O'Leary committed school discretionary funds to cover the rest of the \$14,350 cost for a new curtain and its installation.

After the variety show, John Canning, president and co-founder of PCC (Physician's Computer Company), a software company focused on pediatric medicine, wrote a check for \$12,000 to the campaign and pledged another \$10,000 in matching funds from his company.

Canning said his company supports theater because when he was a kid he did theater, both as an actor and on the tech side. Sometimes the performances he was involved with might have 30 people in the audience, but sometimes the shows would be sold out. He learned the importance of getting people into seats and always said, "When I get older, I'll make sure I support local theater, and I try to do that as much

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STAGE

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as I can.”

Although PCC is in Winooski and Canning is from South Burlington, he said he is good friends with some Charlotte Central School families and has been aware, since before the pandemic, that the school’s multipurpose room needed some significant upgrades to its stage.

“It’s now come together with a principal who understands it and has been able to move it forward,” Canning said. “My company works with pediatricians, so we like to support programs that create opportunities for kids.”

Last year, PCC gave close to a million dollars to different community projects around the state.

One of the Charlotte Central School families that Canning is friends with is the family of Oscar Williams, who graduated from the school. Williams played Christian Bechdel in “Fun Home,” when the musical adaptation of Vermonter Alison Bechdel’s graphic memoir opened on Broadway in 2015.

Zoe Williams, the mother of Oscar, has six children, three of whom are currently students at Charlotte Central School. As an active theater family, they are happy to see the prospect of improvements to the school’s stage.

As fate would have it, when she talked to this reporter by phone, she was standing in line with some of her children to see a

“Having a well-functioning theater down the road is something that I hope can be used by different groups in the community.”

— Principal Tim O’Leary

Very Merry Theatre production of “Tarzan Jr.”

Zoe Williams said that Oscar’s first stage experience was in second grade in the school’s variety show. That experience ignited a passion in him for performing. He began making the circuit of theatrical opportunities for young people in this area — Very Merry Theatre, the Flynn youth theatre program before it was discontinued, Lyric Theatre and Middlebury Community Players.

Now, he is getting ready to graduate from Pace University in New York.

After his disappointment at not getting called back for the lead in a Lyric Theatre production of “Oliver,” Zoe Williams relayed a story from another cast member’s mother, whose daughter had been auditioning for “Matilda” on Broadway.

The mother told Zoe to tell her son, “Disappointment is part of theater.”

That message was lost on Oscar. “All he heard was: ‘Oh, I can live in Vermont and audition for Broadway,’” Zoe Williams said.

He insisted that his parents take him to New York for Broadway auditions. He was 9. A year and a half later, he was cast in “Fun Home.”

After two years in “Fun Home” on the Great White Way, Oscar Williams returned to Charlotte Central School. After his return, he was cast in a big role in the spring musical, “The Music Man,” in eighth grade.

During his time in New York, Zoe said her son took advantage of the opportunity to soak up the theatre scene there. He saw “everything” on Broadway and really became a part of the theatre community. Oscar became good enough friends with Lin-Manuel Miranda that his phone voicemail is Miranda rapping about Zoe’s son.

“There used to be a lot more youth theater opportunities in this area. We’ve lost a couple of groups. That makes youth theater at the schools a lot more important, and our facilities at Charlotte have not been up to par with a lot of other schools,” Zoe Williams said. “I think that if we have the right equipment and a good place to watch, we’ll be able to put on better shows, which will draw more kids to participating and participating earlier.”

This will lead to more parent involvement, more audience, more tickets sales and more donations which will help fund the program, she said.

Besides being an asset to the variety show and other school thespian endeavors, upgrading the sound and lighting would make the learning space so much more dynamic, O’Leary said.

Monthly school meetings happen in front of the stage, instead of on the stage, because the lighting is so bad, he said. When the school does productions, sound and lighting equipment must be borrowed or rented.

O’Leary has visions of using the stage for a variety of things, like having a space where a fifth and sixth grade humanities class could present poems they have written.

He imagines opportunities to invite more people into the school building and strengthen bridges between the community and the school.

“Having a well-functioning theater down the road is something that I hope can be used by different groups in the community,” O’Leary said. “Could it be a place a community theater group running summer camps might use?”



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

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Courtesy photo

Zach Martin (left) and Shannon Cuniff celebrate with fellow crew members on Lake Champlain.

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through the challenging sport of dragon boating, instilling in members the values of teamwork, fitness and community giving and empowering survivors one paddle at a time.

The Vermont chapter of Sail Beyond Cancer (sailbeyondcancer.org/vermont-chapter) offers private, three-hour respite sailing excursions for individuals living with cancer or currently in treatment. These meaningful experiences provide patients, caregivers and their families a chance to spend uninterrupted time together while

surrounded by the healing beauty of Lake Champlain. Each sail reflects the core belief of Sail Beyond Cancer: that taking time to celebrate life's beauty — especially during difficult times — is essential. They honor that by offering a unique, therapeutic experience that supports emotional well-being and fosters much needed resilience.

Mahana Magic (mahanamagic.org) supports children through a parent or guardian's cancer journey. It is centered around making children feel understood, connected and nurtured through gentle support groups and thoughtfully curated programs.

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electric heat pumps at the senior center, the Charlotte Volunteer Fire & Rescue Services building and the town hall. While the existing solar array on the town garage's roof meets most of the current demand for electric power at those buildings through group net metering, that demand would increase considerably with the introduction of heat pumps.

"A lot of our heating and cooling equipment is aging," Hodson said. "We took the approach that we'd keep, not the air conditioners, but the heaters in place and use them as backup. And so, it will extend the life of those, and if we implement this, we could see if we ever actually needed them and then kind of get them out."

According to Hodson, Charlotte needs to

move quickly if it hopes to meet its voter-approved goal of 90 percent renewable energy by 2050. That figure encompasses not only municipal energy usage but also private usage by Charlotte residents.

"One of the greatest triggers for people to turn green is when a neighbor turns green," Hodson said. "I think this is a great opportunity, as a town, to lead by example."

For financial reasons, the solar projects would, by Hodson's telling, need to break ground before winter. He cited favorable regulatory conditions that won't last much longer, owing in part to state legislation from last year that affected net metering. He also referred to what he sees as the precarity of the current federal incentives, given the political environment on the national level.

"The hardware rebates right now are 30 percent. It's significant," Hodson said. "We

Clarification of article about town garage solar power

To the Editor:

Kudos to the Charlotte Energy Committee and the Charlotte Selectboard for their forward-thinking work on the town garage solar array. Seeing this project to fruition required dedication, research and extensive planning, as well as an engaged town government and populace. SunCommon was excited to have been a part of this collaboration with the town and the Municipal Bond Bank. As the solar project consultant for the garage array, I would like to clarify a couple of points raised in an article in the May 1 issue of The Charlotte News, "Trip to Montpelier highlighting town's energy conservation work."

Unfortunately, the regulation the town garage array was permitted under is no longer available in Vermont. Due to changes in our state's net metering rules, projects permitted after August 31, 2024, may not group net meter, i.e. share credits, with accounts that are not adjoined parcels. Thanks to the Public Utility Commission, if another town wants to install a solar array, they can only share excess credits with a building that is next door or directly across the street from the host account. This is an unfortunate rule change that flies in the face of Vermont's energy goals.

I would also like to clarify Wolfger Schneider's comment that the garage array produces 60-70 percent of the energy that a south-facing array would produce. Advances in solar technology, namely DC optimizers and highly efficient solar modules, limit the losses of east/west siting. The 129 kW array is expected to produce about 131,000 kWh annually, while a south-facing array of the same size would be expected to produce about 143,000 kWh, a gain of less than 10 percent. Reputable installers would not consider installing an array with anticipated losses of 30-40 percent due to siting.

If Charlotters have any questions about current net metering policy, the town garage array or solar in general, I am always happy to talk solar and can be reached at carrie.fenn@suncommon.com.

Carrie Fenn
Charlotte

(Carrie Fenn is a solar project consultant with SunCommon.)

Vermont leaders step up to protect environment & democracy

To the Editor:

It has become clear that the Trump administration will be unrelenting in its assault on our right to breathe clean air, drink clean water and leave a livable planet for our children and grandchildren. That is why the Vermont Natural Resources Council and allies gathered on Earth Day with statewide elected leaders to speak up and out for the future of our planet.

Earth Day is an annual day of activism which began back in 1970, and was the result of a time in U.S. history when rivers caught fire, air pollution choked cities and events like the devastating Santa Barbara oil spill made frequent headline appearances. The first Earth Day was bipartisan and broadly popular, and brought out an estimated 20 million Americans — 10 percent of the country's population at the time. Since then, we have been working tirelessly to improve the health of our communities with better regulation of pollution, and the transition to cleaner technologies such as renewable energy.

Now in 2025, more than 50 years after the inaugural Earth Day, we have a federal administration that is looking to bring us back to the days where corporations could pollute unchecked to maximize their profits at the expense of healthy communities.

Recent Trump administration actions include:

- At a time when clean energy is the cheapest, fastest source of electricity to bring online, and while families and businesses are struggling with energy costs, the Trump administration is doing everything they can to ban cheaper clean energy and instead double down on old-fashioned, expensive and polluting technologies like coal.
- Rolling back regulations on toxic air and water pollution, including a recent announcement that they were cutting grants to protect children from toxic chemicals.
- Closing all environmental justice offices around the country, leaving our most vulnerable communities to face increased exposure to dangerous contamination.
- Decimating staff at federal agencies who work to ensure clean air, clean water,

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know they're gunning for that money."

The Vermont Bond Bank, which issues debt on behalf of municipalities, helped Charlotte finance its previous solar project. In combination with subsidies, a low rate of interest would, by the energy committee's calculations, avoid the need for a tax increase to pay for the town's full-scale energy transformation.

"They say they've got a two-and-a-quarter-percent rate on a 10-year bond for municipalities with the right credit rating," Hodson explained. "With the incentives, we essentially have enough to cover that loan payment for 10 years without going negative to the taxpayer."

Bond financing, however, would require approval from a townwide vote, following a "resolution of necessity" by the selectboard and "some public hearings," according to

town administrator Nate Bareham. It would also need the cooperation of Charlotte Volunteer Fire & Rescue, the municipally funded nonprofit that owns 170 Ferry Road.

Selectboard chair Lee Krohn expressed skepticism at the energy committee's proposed timeframe: "I can't imagine the possibility of getting town votes, permits and everything else. Most of those things take years to work through."

Nevertheless, the board approved the energy committee's request to enter "phase two" of its Town Energy Modernization Project, in which it will issue requests for proposals for its desired scope of work. It will bring those proposals back to the selectboard for review.

The board also approved the installation of a bike repair station outside the Charlotte Library. The energy committee had budgeted up to \$1,000 for the project.

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the safety of our food, the operations of our national parks, healthy national forests and wildlife populations, and on and on. The result? Even those protections that don't get gutted will not have the staffing or expertise needed to ensure our laws are actually being enforced.

- Weaponizing the government by making baseless attacks on civic institutions that the Trump administration doesn't agree with. And they are threatening our democratic institutions, which underpin our ability to work together for a healthy environment for all.

Meanwhile, at the state level, during a time when we should be shoring up our environmental laws, the Scott administration is primarily proposing bills to weaken state laws like the Global Warming Solutions Act and Renewable Energy Standard. While these attacks on our health, communities and institutions are daunting, we know that Vermonters care deeply about our environment, and there is a lot we can do to

fight back.

We are fortunate to have courageous statewide leaders who are stepping up to today's challenges.

Attorney General Charity Clark has sued the Trump Administration 10 times and joined 19 other "friend of the court" briefs to defend Vermonters' environment and human rights through the courts.

Secretary of State Sarah Copeland Hanzas is working to defend our democracy from attacks like the SAVE Act, a dangerous piece of legislation that would create barriers to vote and is anticipated to cost many people money to simply maintain access to the ballot.

Treasurer Mike Picciak is working to invest in solutions to help make our communities more resilient. With federal funding at risk, these investments — and state laws like the Climate Superfund to hold Big Oil accountable — are more important than ever.

Vermont House Speaker Jill Krowinski and Senate President Pro Tem Phil Baruth helped spearhead enactment of strong environmental laws in recent years, and are working to defend and protect this important progress.

The actions these state leaders are taking is admirable and critical, but they will only be able to win these fights if they are supported by Vermonters making their voices heard. Fortunately, many people are already stepping up: they're taking to the streets to protest, they're calling their elected officials, they're writing letters to their local papers and in online forums, they're donating to groups fighting these attacks, and they're weighing in with state lawmakers to defend state laws that provide a backstop to federal rollbacks.

The Vermont we love is worth fighting for, and we are excited to see so many statewide leaders and community members rallying together to stand up against the attacks on so many things we care deeply about, from a clean environment to a healthy democracy and fundamental human rights. We won't back down from our efforts to ensure Vermont protects and defends our shared future on Earth Day and beyond.

Lauren Hierl
Montpelier

(Lauren Hierl is the executive director of the Vermont Natural Resources Council.)

Report from the Legislature

Working to balance free speech and deceptive AI messages

Chea Waters Evan
Representative



As a former journalist, I get really fired up about transparency and accountability in government, which is in part why I begged to be on my committee after I first got elected. I was a really intense dork hassling the future Secretary of State to put in a good word for me even though I had just met her six minutes ago.

In House Government Operations and Military Affairs, we have jurisdiction over many things, two of which are open meeting laws and election laws. We have two really interesting bills in our committee right now that came over to us from the Senate: S.23 (<https://tinyurl.com/yvfmeznf>), which is about using synthetic media in elections, and S.59 (<https://tinyurl.com/bwdr5ypa>), which is a bill that makes amendments to current open meeting laws.

There's a link between these two bills that I love to think about and talk about and even almost bored the butcher at the Shelburne Meat Market to death with last week when he was like, "How are you?" And I started talking about AI in elections and I think he was praying, "Oh God, please send me a meat emergency so I can run away. I didn't even really care how this lady is doing."

The connection is this: free speech and the First Amendment. Remember last year when a robocall went out in New Hampshire that was fake Joe Biden telling people not to vote in the presidential election? That's synthetic media; it could also be an AI-generated video, the deepfake kind where it looks, sounds and generally appears to be totally real. In this case, it was intentionally created to disenfranchise voters and maliciously influence the outcome of an election.

As technology improves and evolves so rapidly right now, it's hard for people to know what's real and what isn't, especially since people (erroneously, in my opinion) often blindly trust that what they see on social media is true. By the way, don't worry, your grandmother won't get put in the slammer for sharing something she thinks is true; we're working on the law in a way that makes sure it targets the purposefully deceptive folks.

So this bill proposes to require some kind of disclosure on synthetic media in the 90-day period before an election. Like, when candidates run for office, they have to include on their campaign materials who paid for them. If a PAC makes a TV ad, they have to say that they paid for it.

The synthetic media disclosure is a parallel to this and would require anyone creating that content to include a statement that it was created using AI and that it's not real.

Fun little thing I learned while we were working on this bill: Politicians are legally allowed to lie! Not that I'll take advantage of this loophole, of course, but it's nice to know.

The trick is to make sure that any

laws we make prohibiting these kinds of synthetic media don't trample on our right to free speech, political speech and things like parody and satire. Other states have similar laws, upon which we modeled this one in order to avoid unconstitutionality.

One part of the open meeting law bill that intersects with the AI bill is a section that would prohibit members of the public from egregiously disrupting public meetings. It's the same issue: People have a right to make their voices heard, and just because someone is unpleasant or slightly disruptive by doing so, we can't stop them. I learned an interesting fact while we were hearing testimony on this bill — heckling is actually considered a part of the democratic process. As elected officials, in the eyes of the law, we're signing ourselves up for a certain amount of disgruntled loudness on the part of the public, which I love. I mean, I do prefer a civil conversation or a quick text that says, "You're the worst!" but if public heckling is part of the gig, then I'm all for it. And I certainly don't want to limit that.

The part where this gets tricky and fascinating is that as people who live in the United States, we are also constitutionally given the right to freely assemble. We heard some pretty grim stories from town clerks and other public officials that detailed habitually aggressive persons who are so disruptive that they're actually causing meetings and town halls to shutter, which means that this one angry person is violating the constitutional rights of everyone who's trying to get through a darn meeting without getting shouted at during a public comment section of a meeting taking two hours.

I think it's incredibly important right now that all of our rights to free speech and access to government and its processes are held sacred; this is certainly not the time to even accidentally limit our First Amendment rights, even if the intent of these bills is to make sure we're all allowed to participate in democracy safely. So, we're carefully taking our time on them to make sure we're standing on that tightrope between preserving democracy and limiting it.

Of course, you're allowed to heckle me, as we now all know, but I prefer not. In any case, you can always reach me at cevens@leg.state.vt.us or 917-887-8231.

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Environment

Over the years, some have ‘cleaned up’ at Green Up Day

Scooter MacMillan
Editor

Trying to find someone more committed to cleaning up Charlotte’s roads than Ken Spencer would be a fool’s errand.

He walks picking up trash almost every day; he developed and sells an open-faced backpack he invented for easily picking up and carrying litter on the nonprofit website planetpeople.org; he frequently posts new original poems about picking up litter on social media; and he is the town’s representative to the Chittenden Solid Waste District.

And since 2017 he has been co-coordinating with Kim Findlay the town’s crusade against litter on Green Up Day. This Saturday, May 3, even a fool would know that rain wouldn’t deter their efforts for the 55th anniversary of the statewide effort to rid Vermont roads of refuse.

They were not alone. The rain which began just after the 9 a.m. kickoff of the cleaning-up campaign did not seem to diminish the efforts of many enthusiastic volunteers.

“The rain seemed not to matter. Spirits were high, and I saw no diminishment of anything,” Spencer said.

In Charlotte the effort is held in concert with Sustainable Charlotte, which had, as usual, a panel truck and volunteers collecting electronics for recycling. Louis Cox, Ruah Swennerfelt and Wolfer Schneider were helping a steady stream of people arriving with no-longer-wanted electronics equipment to unload, while trying to keep the driveway clear for those coming to pick up or drop off green bags.

One of those picking up green bags for trash pickup was farmer Steve Schubart of Grass Cattle Company, who said he has been picking up trash on Green Up Day since he was old enough for his mother to get him out on the roads.



Courtesy photo

Suzy Hodgson picked up trash with her neighbor David McColgin on Spear Street between Mount Philo and Guinea roads. She said the snack wrappers of ‘cool, healthy’ foods she had never heard of was ‘a lesson in snack consumption and the art of packaging.’

As a young person, his enthusiasm for picking up trash surged after he found a \$20 bill.

Schubart laughed and admitted that some of the detritus might have blown off his own vehicle: “To be fair, I’m probably cleaning up some of my own mess.”

Several years ago, this reporter interviewed a young girl in the Hinesburg Town Hall who said Green Up Day was litterly ... oops, make that literally her favorite holiday. Even in the rain in the parking lot of Charlotte Central



Photo by Scooter MacMillan

Nancy Wood, left, dispensed green bags and kept up with which roads had been picked up and which hadn’t. Steve Schubart, who came to get bags, said he had been picking up trash for Green Up Day since he was old enough to do so.

School this year, there was a festivity among volunteers. In more than five decades, Green Up Day has become a well-loved tradition, very much akin to a holiday.

One of those dispensing green bags and keeping track of which roads in Charlotte had been cleaned up was Elizabeth Bassett, who remembers Green Up Day from its beginnings in 1970.

Her father became a huge fan of the event early on because he noted how many Budweiser cans there were in the litter he picked up. This inspired him to buy stock in Anheuser-Busch. It proved to be a very fruitful investment. She remembers her dad saying to her for years, “Can you believe how much money I made because of Green Up Day?”

Greg Ranallo, owner of Teachers Tree Service, said he had realized while picking up trash Saturday that he was a “litter racist”

because, when he sees an empty can of Budweiser or other cheaper beer, he assumes someone threw it there. But, when he sees a craft beer container, he assumes it must have blown off someone’s vehicle.

Probably while they were on their way to the redemption center.

Tony Federico showed up at the Green Up Day table with the happy news that he had gone to pickup on Wildwood West and Stonewall Lane and “there was not a spec of trash.” Kudos to that neighborhood.

The vehicles with volunteers and bags of trash were every bit as steady as the rainfall. Spencer said they filled two dump trucks with green bags of trash on Saturday.

“My favorite part is seeing happy, familiar faces full of pride and catching up with folks I have not seen,” he said. But also, the donuts.

Preying for breakfast



Photo by Meg Berlin

A bobcat visited on Greenbush Road Monday morning.

Around Town

Condolences

Deborah “Debbie” Kellogg

Debbie Kellogg, 63, of Charlotte, passed away unexpectedly in her sleep at her home beside the love of her life, Danny Thomas, in the early hours of Friday, April 11, 2025.



Debbie was born April 14, 1961, in Hornell, N.Y. She was the daughter of Penny Green and the late Carl Micglire. She graduated from Hilton High School in 1979. Debbie got with her life-long partner Danny Thomas in October 1993.

Debbie worked in customer service at Walgreens in Shelburne, where she was well known and was like family. She also worked as a caregiver for a number of years.

Debbie loved spending time with her family, grandchildren, friends and pets. Debbie found joy in plastic canvas, making cards, playing cards, going to bingo and diamond art. She had a hobby of collecting M&M’s.

Debbie was preceded in death by her

sisters Cathy Chandler and Liz Newmen, niece Beth Leo, father Carl Micglire, father-in-law Archie Thomas and brother-in-law Artie Thomas.

Debbie leaves behind her lifelong partner Danny Thomas of 32 years; three children —Michelle, Eric (Aliyah), and Melissa (Glenn); four granddaughters and one grandson whom she adored — Abigail, Madison, Rylee, Isabella and Gabriel; siblings — Judy (Tim) and Neal (Betty); half siblings — Val and Josh; sisters-in-law — Val, Pam and Darlene; many aunts, uncles, nieces; and nephews, as well as Danny’s family and mother Penny Green.

Debbie will be remembered for her kindness and compassion for others and the love she had for her family. Debbie had a heart of gold and would make friends wherever she went.

Calling hours will be Wednesday, May 14, from 4 to 7 p.m. at the Shelburne Funeral Chapel of Corbin & Palmer, 209 Falls Rd, Shelburne.

A graveside service will be celebrated on Thursday, May 15, at 11 a.m., at Maplewood Cemetery, Huntington with a reception to follow.

In lieu of flowers, memorial gifts may be made to UVM Breast Care Center, 111 Colchester Ave level 2, Burlington, VT 05401.

Fuel truck rollover



Photo by Robert Caldwell

Around 8 a.m. on Wednesday, Ferry Road in Charlotte was closed because of a fuel truck rollover. It reopened just before 1:30 p.m. Charlotte Volunteer Fire and Rescue responded to the accident for a hazmat diesel leak and traffic control. There were no injuries. According to CVFRS, they pumped out 3,000 gallons of fuel before pulling the truck from the ditch. Only a small amount of diesel spilled from the truck’s engine fuel tank, which was contained with absorbent booms.



Photo by Lee Krohn



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Opinion

Government not a problem — if supported, used responsibly

Bill Schubart
Contributor

There’s been a lot of blither written on both ends of the political spectrum about how government is not the answer to our accelerating challenges. Well, if not government, meaning the balanced authority of the executive, legislative and judicial branches, then what?

Please don’t say “the marketplace.” We’ve been pushing that folly since Reagan announced in his 1981 inaugural address: “Government is not the solution to our problem, government is the problem.” His policies marched the middle class off a cliff like lemmings, creating the widest disparity of wealth between rich and poor among all other major developed nations.

In 2023, the wealthiest Americans are worth 38 times what they were worth in 1982. The richest 1 percent own 50 per cent of the stock market and mutual funds, according to the Federal Reserve. According to PEW Research, the share of Americans who are in the middle class has shrunk from 61 percent in 1971 to 51 percent in 2023.

And now, in Trump II, we’re trying the same strategy on steroids and expecting different results...? Einstein is supposed to have said, “Insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results.”

Democratic liberals have looked to plug the poverty holes with social safety-net programs. I sympathize with this, though I grew up in a small Vermont town in which everyone was Republican. In those days, Republicans believed in helping those who couldn’t help themselves; they cared about the environment as they understood

it. They believed in science and invention. They drew the line, however, at spending money they didn’t have.

Today’s MAGA Republicans bear no likeness to the Republicans I grew up with. They decry and destroy effective government systems and collaborative international relationships, ignore science and innovation, and unwind regulation and taxation, at least for themselves, and pray at the feet of a would-be dictator.

Who are these people? Certainly not the party of Lincoln.

Here in Vermont and in the nation, we must ... I was going to say “reinvigorate” but will now say “salvage” ... the fundamental utility of government in our lives, not in the oligarchic form as currently envisaged but in its constitutional form, with its basic tenets of free speech, due process, balance of powers and attention to the common good.

Government’s role scales geographically from community to state to nation. Here at home, we must pay attention to the critical role of government in our lives as well. Politics being politics, we tend to focus on the successes and failures of individuals and lose sight of how the architecture of governing across the three branches must also change with the times. We whine about politicians with whom we disagree but don’t bother to communicate with them. Being a legislator in Vermont is hard work, poorly compensated and under-resourced. I respect those willing to make the effort. We must come together and address the hard work of being a public servant and review the structural deficiencies in the system within which they work.

As technical progress accelerates, it only complicates strategic issues:

1. Public education — quality and financing
 2. Healthcare — implementation, regulation and financing
 3. Criminal justice — courts and corrections
 4. Poverty — housing, hunger, a livable wage, food systems
 5. Transportation — public and private
 6. Environmental protection and remediation.
- Do we elect leaders willing to do the difficult work of navigating change? Does the arcane cabinet system in the executive branch still make sense with six departments of health?
- Can legislators address these complex issues with the limited resources they have at hand?
- Are our judges, prosecutors, defenders and court systems adequate to handle the pace of what we call crime? What is a crime and what is an illness? Are addiction and mental illness really crimes?
- We must ask the hard questions of ourselves, not just attack “government” as “the problem.” Government is an organizing concept. It needs care and adjustment like any other complex system. We must be ready to reimagine how we govern in each of the three branches. Our goal should not be to assign blame but

to solve problems that are increasingly interwoven and complex. Are not the “moral determinants of health” that support wellbeing the same as those that determine educational success?

Here in Vermont, might it be time to convene some experienced people to imagine how we might re-engineer state government to better serve the needs of Vermonters rather than decry its failures?

On the national level, might we revisit what it means to be a politician? Is it a profession that seeks to aggregate power and authority and thereby enhance personal wealth and influence? Or is it a commitment to using the tools of good government to enhance the common good and defend the rights guaranteed us by our Constitution? Is it a lucrative career opportunity that simply benefits the office holder and his cronies or a commitment to serve others and enhance the lives of all of us?

To me, it is certainly not the sad, insecure little boy in the White House trying to present himself as a mature adult.

(Bill Schubart is an adviser to The Charlotte News.)

Peaceful easy feeling



Photo by Lee Krohn

The lake on the evening of Tuesday, May 6, was permeated with a sense of peace so often missing in other areas of our lives.

Sports

Except for one hiccup, CVU baseball continues to add wins

Scooter MacMillan
Editor

Rain has been a major player in Champlain Valley Union High baseball of late.

After having regularly scheduled games and rescheduled games postponed by precipitation over the last couple of weeks, the sun finally came off the bench on Monday, May 12, for the Redhawks' home game against visiting South Burlington, which CVU came from behind to ruin a no-hitter and win 5-1.

CVU 4, Mount Mansfield 3

The Redhawks entertained Mount Mansfield on Thursday, May 1, in a thrilling contest that was knotted at 3-all for six innings.

In the bottom of the sixth, Riley McDade hit a sacrifice fly that put CVU up for the final score in the 4-3 win.

Quinn Vincent was the winning pitcher. He gave up four hits and three runs while striking out 11.

Ryan Wood led the Redhawks' effort at the plate, going 3-for-3 with a double and an RBI.

CVU 15, Essex 14

On Saturday, May 3, CVU entertained the visiting Hornets in a constant rain that, for once, didn't interrupt the on-field proceedings.

Essex took a 2-0 lead in the first inning, and Champlain Valley didn't respond until the bottom of the fourth. Xavier Barnes knocked in a run to knot things up 2-2. Then, Will Myers put the Redhawks up 4-2 with two RBIs.

In the top of the fifth, the Hornets came back to make the score 4-3, but CVU plated eight runs in the bottom of the fifth, making it look like the game was going to be a blowout, taking a 12-3 lead.

The top of the sixth inning turned into the kind of affair that gives coaches early-onset baldness with a series of errors and scores off bases-loaded walks that treated the Hornets to what looked like it might be a comeback, but the CVU skid halted with the Redhawks' lead diminished to 12-10.

A three-run bottom of the sixth, capped by a single by Ryan Wood which scored John Deyo, put the home team up with what seemed a comfortable 15-10 lead.

But comfortable was not on the calendar on this chilly and rainy afternoon. Essex's final frame turned into a nailbiter for the CVU faithful as Redhawks' pitching filled the bases and walked home four runs in a row.

With the tying run on third and the bases loaded, Essex hit into a fielder's choice that finally and mercifully ended the game for a 15-14 Champlain Valley win.

CVU 5, South Burlington 1

The Redhawks and Wolves finally were able to get in a rain-postponed game on Monday, May 12. The contest at home for CVU turned into another edge-of-your-seat competition.

South Burlington's Henry Doorman pitched five innings of no-hit ball and Nick Kelly knocked in a run to stake South Burlington to a 1-0 lead.

In the bottom of the sixth, CVU finally got on the board, scoring five to go ahead for the final 5-1 margin of victory. This win improved the Redhawks' record to 4-2-1 and moved the team up to eighth place in the state Division 1 rankings.

Quinn Vincent was the starting pitcher and lasted for five innings, giving up five hits and one run while striking out four and walking four.

Assistant coach Sam Fontaine praised Vincent's grit on the mound.

"Never, ever give up. That is the storyline from this game. It is never easy facing one of the state's best pitchers and one of the top teams in Vermont," Fontaine said. "Vincent battled all game."

"We needed to back him up, and it took some quality performances from some unsung heroes," Fontaine said. "Once one hit came, the floodgates opened."

Mt. Mansfield 3, CVU 1

Champlain Valley had a game the next day, Tuesday, May 13, at Mt. Mansfield. The Cougars took the lead in the bottom of the fourth, when Henry Rogers doubled in two runs and Charlie LaPorte singled in another.

Langdon Hazen pitched seven innings for Mt. Mansfield, striking out 11 and giving up five hits and walking three.

Andrew Nunziata pitched five innings for CVU, giving up four hits and striking out seven, while only giving up three walks.

Vincent was the hits leader for the Redhawks, going 2-for-2 at the plate and knocking in his teams sole run.

Fontaine said CVU's games against Mt. Mansfield are "always a battle" that his team usually comes out on the winning side of, but not this time.

The Redhawks played a competitive game, Fontaine said. "Full credit to Hazen who threw one of the best games I've ever seen him pitch."

"There's still many games to be played," he said.

Also on the Redhawks' dance card is a 4:30 p.m. game Thursday at BFA-St. Albans. On Saturday, CVU should travel to Essex, if the weather cooperates, for an 11 a.m. rematch. There should also be a makeup of a rained-out Burlington game on Monday, May 19, at home field in Hinesburg.



Photo by Al Frey

Quinn Vincent pitched Champlain Valley to a thrilling 4-3 victory over Mount Mansfield on May 1.

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Community Roundup

A landmark year of community impact

The past 12 months for SCHIP (Shelburne, Charlotte and Hinesburg Interfaith Projects) Upscale Resale have been truly epic. Consider:

- Over 10,000 items sold, including women’s, men’s and children’s clothing, accessories, shoes, jewelry and home goods
- 6,156 customers served
- First-time customers almost tripled in 2024

- Awarded \$108,037 in grants to more than 33 community organizations and schools in the last 12 months
- Store and warehouse manager hired, elevating SCHIP to new heights
- A new program children’s clothing fund created

This remarkable year was made possible by the collective effort of 10+ volunteers, 15 board members, a full-time manager, 16 part-time staff and 5,000+ hours of sorting, moving and merchandising.



As of April 2025, SCHIP has awarded over \$1 million dollars to community organizations and non-profits serving our community. This spring, \$58,270 went to 13 nonprofits for projects that align with SCHIP’s mission.

These organizations include Age Well, Bone Builders, Carpenter-Carse Library, Charlotte Volunteer Fire and Rescue, Color Our World, Community Cares Fund from Champlain Valley Union High, Hinesburg Nursery School, Lake Champlain Chamber Music, Shelburne Community PTO, Shelburne Food Shelf, Stern Center, Trinity Episcopal Church and Vermont Parks.

To find out more, visit TheSCHIP.org.

Book now to ensure blood and platelets ready for emergencies

The American Red Cross encourages the public to schedule a donation appointment this month before summer gets into full swing. Year-end school ceremonies, sporting events and celebrations are expected to fill evenings and weekends, and patients are counting on donors to also make blood donation a priority.

Emergencies can happen anywhere, at any time, without a moment’s notice. By giving blood to the Red Cross, donors can help ensure blood is ready for patients in the most critical situations.

Give blood or platelets during Trauma Awareness Month during May to keep hospitals prepared for all transfusion needs, including emergencies. Type O blood donors and donors giving platelets are especially needed right now:

- Type O negative is the universal blood type and can be transfused to any person, no matter their blood type. This makes it essential in the most dire situations.
- Type O positive blood is the most-used blood type because it can be transfused to Rh-positive patients of any blood type.
- Platelets are often needed to help with clotting in cases of massive bleeding.

Schedule a time to give now by visiting RedCrossBlood.org, calling 1-800-RED CROSS or by using the Red Cross blood donor app. Those who come to give by May 18 will receive a \$20 e-gift card to



a merchant of choice. Those who come to give later in the month, May 19-31, will receive an exclusive American Red Cross solar lantern, while supplies last. Plus, all who come to give in May will be automatically entered for a chance to win a U.S. trip of their choice for two. Full details can be found at RedCrossBlood.org/May.

Chittenden Burlington

May 15, 9 a.m.-1:30 p.m., BCA Center, 135 Church St.

Hinesburg

May 16, 12:30 p.m.-5 p.m., St. Jude’s Parish Hall, 10759 Rte. 116

Winooski

May 16, noon-4:30 p.m., Winooski Senior Center, 123 Barlow St.

South Burlington

May 20, 10 a.m.-2:30 p.m., Temple Sinai South Burlington, 500 Swift St.

Williston

May 20, 11:30 a.m.-4 p.m., Williston Fire Station, 645 Talcott Road.

Education

Graduates’ job priorities changing from just paycheck size

Margo Bartsch
Contributor

“Back when I was in college ...” is a familiar phrase most parents reflect upon when talking about job prospects for today’s college graduates. With May being popular for college commencements, this generation of young adults is shifting their priorities in moving from campus to career.

CNBC reported this April the top five considerations for recent graduates in choosing a profession: familiar location (73 percent); job stability (70 percent); positive employer reputation (67 percent); high starting salary (63 percent); and flexible work schedule (52 percent).

These statistics are from a survey of the class of 2025 graduates conducted by Handshake, an online career platform.

Location is the number one factor, replacing top salaries from prior years. More than half of recent graduates apply to jobs within 250 miles of their college. Less than 10 percent apply to jobs that are more than 2,800 miles from home.

CNBC explains that new graduates prioritize having a work-life balance that includes a supportive community, family and friends around them. Some new graduates prefer not taking a dream job in a pricey city to working closer to home with more affordable rent and everyday costs. Recent graduates feel the cost of living is an important consideration because many have student loans and limited job opportunities.

Second, job stability is a real concern. There is a shift away from careers that were previously considered as more “job secure,” such as working in government agencies and non-profits that have experienced staffing and budget cuts. There is increased interest in law, politics, real estate and construction

because these sectors are perceived as stable industries.

For example, this March, the Wall Street Journal reported a 20.5 percent increase in law school applications to nearly 200 law schools. The University of Michigan Law School had their largest number of applicants in its 166-year history. Georgetown University Law Center received 14,000 applications for 650 spots.

Third, recent graduates prefer working in organizations with a positive reputation. Applicants can research online company feedback from current and prior employees. Websites such as Glassdoor, ZipRecruiter, LinkedIn Job Search and Indeed Hiring Platform include information on the interview process, salary ranges and work environment.

However, nearly 40 percent of employers reported that they avoid hiring recent college graduates, according to a December 2023 survey of 800 U.S. directors and executives responsible for filling job openings.

Employer surveys reveal that many recent graduates fail to hold eye contact during interviews and have unrealistic salary expectations. Being unprepared or unenthused can create doubt about being a team player or having a desire to build skills.

Fourth, a higher starting salary is no longer the top priority as tech jobs become less attainable. The LinkedIn article, “The Era of High-Paying Tech Jobs Is Over,” explains the shift away from mind-boggling tech salaries. Layoffs and hiring freezes are more common and even expected.

Many tech companies are maximizing profitability with less workers. Google announced in February layoffs to “operate more efficiently” and “remove layers” in its businesses. Trends include less new employee hiring, more in-office work requirements and increased use of artificial intelligence.

Tech companies have been backing off from remote work that was essential during the pandemic. This April, Fortune reported that Google is requiring some remote workers to move within 50 miles of an office and work there for up to three days a week or risk losing their jobs.

The fifth priority is having a flexible work schedule. The U.S. Department of Labor explains work flexibility as not working within the traditional 9-5 hours of the 40-hour week. This allows employees to vary their arrival and departure times and be present during a daily “core time” according to some policies.

In February 2024, Forbes explained that many employers believe that working in the office fosters employee engagement and group collaboration, which can be missing with online work. Interacting in the same

space and spontaneously brainstorming new ideas can foster a proud and shared brand identity.

Recent graduates who attended school and worked remotely during the pandemic can be more comfortable in working independently online, with teams and with personal time management. The debate about the trade-offs with remote work and being in the office is shaping how people build careers.

Commencement means new beginnings. Defining work for the next generation requires flexibility during uncertainty. Today, career choices have more considerations than just a big paycheck.

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

Education

Doctors share brain and brain mysteries with students

Maddie Kolb
Charlotte Central School student

It feels like tofu.

If you're wondering what feels like tofu, it's the human brain that fifth graders got to touch at Charlotte Central School last week.

Brain Day is a fun and interactive day that has happened every spring in fifth grade for eight years. Dr. Scott Lollis, who is a neurosurgeon at University of Vermont Medical Center, brings in a real human brain for students to hold.

He also has training equipment for real medical students including accurate plastic skull models, hand drills, stints (which are tubes that get inserted into the skull), plates and screws used to repair damages to the skull.

Dr. Lollis started doing Brain Day when his son, Will, was in Dave Baird's fifth grade class. For many years he did Brain Day with fellow neurosurgeon Dr. Susan Durham, whose daughter was in that same class. Durham has moved away, but Lollis continued this unique experience.

Lollis said the best part of Brain Day for him is "when students ask questions. I am amazed at how insightful many of these questions are. I am often stumped and forced to consider ideas or questions that have never occurred to me before."

"The most interesting part of being a



Photo contributed

Maddie Kolb holds a brain with Dr. Scott Lollis.

doctor is the mystery of what is not yet known. Despite thousands of years of human scientific inquiry and our amazing modern technological tools, our understanding of the brain and consciousness is still in its infancy," Lollis said. "There is so much left to learn!"

This year, Dr. Noah Kolb joined Dr. Lollis

on Brain Day. Kolb is a neuromuscular neurologist at the University of Vermont medical center and taught the students about balance and reflexes. His daughter is a member of the class and the reporter for this story.

Kolb said, "It was a definite highlight of

my year. It's fun to teach smart, interested learners no matter their age, and I really hope I will get the opportunity to do it again."

Kolb helps teach medical students at the University of Vermont and runs studies about cancer.

"I really love my job. I get to do different things that are equally important every day," he said.

During Brain Day, there were three rooms with different activities. In one room, Kolb taught students about balance and reflexes, with fun activities like having kids react to things under a container and spinning kids in a chair to explain dizziness.

In another room Lollis had real hand drills. If the students wanted to, then they could hold a real human brain.

In the third room there were brain puzzles and mazes. Students look forward to this day every year.

"Today was fun and interesting, I learned a lot," said Charlotte Central School student, Keer Chol.

"Today was awesome and I really enjoyed doing reflexes with Dr. Kolb," Rowan Jones said. "Holding the brain was really gross though."

After talking to a lot of fifth graders it was clear that Brain Day was a once-in-a-lifetime experience, but many fifth graders will probably never eat tofu again.

Champlain Valley Story Sharks come to Charlotte Central School

Naomi Strada
(Summarized by Tom Scatchard)

On May 8, the Charlotte Central School K-4 students were treated to a performance by the Story Sharks, a traveling children's theatre and literacy group made up of Champlain Valley Union student actors and directors. Their mission is to cultivate a lifelong love of learning by amplifying young people's voices and celebrating their stories and identities.

Inspired by sharks, ancient creatures known for their timeless presence, Story Sharks sees storytelling as a universal part of being human. Through song, skit, rap and dance, the group brought Charlotte Central School student writing to life in a 45-minute show that was both joyful and deeply affirming.

The students submitted original writing of all kinds, from short stories to "how-to" essays, and the Story Sharks cast selected a range of pieces to adapt.

A huge round of applause to the featured student authors, whose creativity and courage lit up the stage:

- Ethan Dix – "Akai the Fire Dragon"
- Vi'na Kremenstova – "When I Was a Baby"
- Piper Finley – "How to Make Pasta Salad"
- Mav Dunbar – "Gorilla With a Pickle"
- Nora Woolsey – "Ollie Octopus"
- Conor Landry – "The Bad-Mad Spider"
- Imani Gelinas – "The Cop Story"
- Johnny Slater & Ben Ringler – "The Story of Bob and Jeff"

Each author was honored at the end of the show with a high five, a certificate and thunderous applause from their peers. It was

a celebration not just of writing, but of voice, identity and imagination.

Thanks to Champlain Valley Union English teacher and theatre advisor Henry Lang, the visionary behind Story Sharks, the talented CVU students, the deft Charlotte Central School writers and librarian and assembly organizer, Heidi Huestis, who all worked together to make the magic happen.

Recycling to honor eighth graders

The Charlotte Central School Student Council, in collaboration with the Sustainability Committee, has been working across the school for almost a year to collect 1,000 pounds of plastic for recycling as part of the Nextrex program. When they have collected 1,000 pounds, they will have earned a bench for the school yard. This bench will be dedicated to the class of 2025, the current eighth graders.

The final day for collecting plastic is May 15. The students want to thank everyone

who has helped the school reach the goal, and they want to encourage people to keep recycling plastic. Plastic may be dropped off at the Charlotte Library or many of the local grocery stores.

Spring Fun Run

The Charlotte Central School Spring Fun Run and potluck is Tuesday, June 3. This is one of the biggest school community events and fundraisers of the year.

Event timeline

- Fun Run 5:15 p.m.
- Potluck 5:30 p.m.
- Raffle 6:30 p.m.

The optional Fun Run is intended for all ages and skill levels. And there will be many opportunities to cheer.

New this year: Because of support of the corporate sponsors, each student will receive a shirt specific to their grade color. More details to follow.

Register (optional) and collect Fun Run

pledges. Students may register through Pledgestar and ask friends or family to make donations on their behalf. Runners do not need to register to participate in the run.

Basket raffle details went out to each class earlier this month. Please visit the PTO website for a listing of the basket themes by class.

Basket donations are optional and do not need to be expensive. If it is easier to donate money, include it in a sealed envelope and provide it to the classroom teacher or Venmo Julia Schofield @Lippy6.

If there are any questions, reach out to Schofield at jschof02@gmail.com.



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Hi! Neighbor

Charles Russell enjoys watching democracy in action

Phyl Newbeck
Contributor

Sometimes being town moderator isn't an undiluted joy. This year, for example, Charles Russell got overruled on the first motion of the day. However, unless someone else steps up to the plate, he's willing to continue in the position as long as the town wants him.

Russell is no stranger to municipal government. He served on the selectboard for over a decade, spending half of those years as chair before leaving in 2015. He decided to run for town moderator in 2018 when Jerry Schwartz retired from that position.

Every year the Vermont League of Cities and Towns provides a tune-up training for moderators, helping them walk through the process and letting them know what kinds of issues they might encounter. Through that, and on his own, Russell has learned a few tricks that help him run an efficient meeting.

One of those tricks is to have someone else on the dais keep track of the order in which people raise their hands so he can make sure he calls on people in that order. Another is to call a voice vote slowly. After what appears to be a positive vote, he will slowly say, "The ayes appear to have it." This gives people the opportunity to object before he says, "The

ayes have it."

In the past, when there was no definitive voice vote, the moderator would ask people to raise their hands. Russell asks them to stand, finding that a more obvious way of stating a choice.

If it is still unclear which way the vote has gone, it takes seven people to request a paper ballot. Russell said some towns have increased that number. Westford, for example, requires 25 people.

"It hasn't been a problem in Charlotte," he said. "It's pretty obvious when people want a paper ballot."

This year's town meeting was a tough one for Russell. "It was pretty embarrassing," he said.

The first order of business was a routine article on whether to hear the reports of officers and act on them. When Nancy Wood rose to move that motion, she proposed additional language.



Photo by Julia Russell
Charles Russell reviewing the Town Report.

"That threw me for a loop," Russell said. He concluded that it was a replacement motion, but he was overruled, and the motion was then considered as an amendment to the original motion.

Russell grew up in Brandon, attending Otter Valley Union High School. He and his wife moved to Charlotte in 1995, in part so their children would be able to attend Champlain Valley Union High School. He was familiar with the area after spending summers in Charlotte during his childhood.

"We moved for the school system," Russell said. "I didn't know what an AP class was until I went to college. Going to school here did my kids good."

Russell has a degree in engineering and worked in electronics for a military contractor for 11 years when the family lived in Massachusetts. When Russell's wife got a job at UVM and they moved back to Vermont, he began farming so he could stay home with their children.

Russell worked seven "enjoyable but intense" years with H&R Block in Brandon, helping people with their taxes.

"You can be helpful to people but it's a

terribly upsetting process," he said.

Although Russell still farms, he doesn't raise as many cattle or grow as much hay so he and his wife, who has retired, have more time to spend with their grandchildren.

Russell's father and grandfather were in the Navy, and he inherited their interest in maps. He and Jenny Cole put together a collection of maps which is currently on display at the library.

"We had a big atlas in the house when I was growing up," he said. "I also learned about nautical charts and how to tie knots."

Russell was on the committee which looked at alternatives to town meeting. A hybrid meeting was held for three years but it had a sunset provision and was not reestablished.

"There has been a lot of talk about reviving the plan," Russell said, "but the vote at town meeting to go to straight Australian ballot failed."

As long as nobody is interested in taking over, Russell is willing to stay on as town moderator. At his most recent Vermont League of Cities and Towns training, he met a man who had been his town's moderator for 50 years, inheriting his civic pride from his mother who had been town clerk. Although Russell doesn't plan on holding his title for that long, he does enjoy the work.

"It's nice to hear people having a reasonable discussion and being civil," he said.

Local food program looks for security in state money amid funding worries



Produce inside the Plainfield Co-op. File photo by Catherine Morrissey

Sam Hartnett
Community News Service

Funding may be at risk for a nonprofit program that buys local food and gives it to Vermonters struggling with money — so its leaders are backing a bill that would solidify its budget through a state agency, rather than grants and donations.

Vermonters Feeding Vermonters, created and run by the Vermont Foodbank, helps get

locally grown produce and protein into the hands of food-insecure Vermonters.

Started in 2018, the program provides money to purchase food wholesale from local farms, offers grants to community organizations and buys shares of community-supported agriculture programs, or CSAs.

The program is two-pronged: Farmers say it helps secure their bottom line, and officials

Food Shelf News

Thank you to Fenns and a host of hardworking volunteers

Katherine Arthaud
Contributor

Amid ongoing concerning and ever-confusing news regarding cuts to social programs just about everywhere you look, and the mounting dread that our neighbors and friends may be experiencing more hunger and hardship in the days to come, there has emerged a shimmering silver lining in our town, which is the beautifully renovated space at the Charlotte Food Shelf — brought to you by Peter and Carrie Fenn and a host of bighearted, hardworking volunteers.

Yes, while some were visiting museums in nearby cities or sunning themselves on tropical beaches, a blessed few took the recent weeklong spring break to create something truly noteworthy and important for our town.

As most know, the Charlotte Food Shelf has been operating out of the basement of the Charlotte Congregational Church since 1994, and we would be remiss not to thank the church again (and again) for their ongoing and consistent support, not to mention their generosity and patience in allowing us to expand and renovate the basement area. A special shout out to Rev. Kevin Goldenbogen, senior pastor, and Rev. Hadley Bunting, associate pastor for families, children and youth, for their support for this project.

Bunting and the church youth group did a great job consolidating the church's portion of the basement, hauling away old stuff and building shelves to better organize their storage capacity, to enable the food shelf to expand in the downstairs space. Seven members of the Senior High Youth Group participated, and we thank them one and all.

Once the food shelf area was emptied of bins, boxes and other items, Peter and Carrie Fenn came in and, rather like Thing One and Thing Two in "The Cat and the



Photos by Peggy Sharpe
Carrie Fenn helping to transform the food shelf space.

Hat," worked a miracle. They tore down shelving and metal hook panels, removed obsolete equipment (including a heavy table which had to be cut in half to be budged) and painted the once-orange walls with a fresh coat of white paint. All their labor was donated, and we can't thank them enough. When asked to comment on their part in the project, Peter remarked, "You can just say we were happy to help out. A lot of others do

much more."

After the space was cleaned up, spruced up, renovated and painted, brand new sparkling wire shelving and brightly colored plastic bins were brought in and set up, paid for by a generous grant from the Vermont Foodbank. (Thank you!)

So, thanks to many, the place has a fresh, new, tidy, glittering, organized feeling which is quite extraordinary. Food shelf director Peggy Sharpe, who procured the food bank grant and organized the project from soup to nuts, said the new set up will really make a difference when people come to shop. There will be a new flow for how shoppers move through the space, and it will be much more efficient.

And if this all sounds like a lot, keep in mind that this renovation had to be begun and done within the week of April 18, because the childcare facility that operates out of the lower level of the church had to be closed to allow free access to doors and hallways.

"It was like solving a puzzle," said Sharpe. "People worked hard all vacation week to get this done, and we are so appreciative."

She added that many volunteers came together to make this renovation happen: those mentioned above and Champlain Valley Union students and regular volunteers, who worked hard to pack up and move the food both in and out of the basement area, along with all kinds of other labors necessary to get the project up and running.

Along with all who helped with the renovation, we extend thanks to Jim and Mary Ellen Hebert for their gift in memory of Merry Eleanor Converse and Jocelyn Schermerhorn, Richard Mintzer, John Henry Siedlecki, Susan Raber Bray, Cecily Stokes-Prindle, Kathleen Nolan, the Tiller family, Janice Rossetti, William Hella and Judith Hill, James Sharpe, Lynn and Greg

Cluff, Michael and Janet Yantachka, Willem Leenstra and Dorothy Schmitt, Kathleen Bushey, Sustainable Charlotte and those attending the Repair Café, and Ed Sulva and the Northfield Savings Bank. Also, thanks to Robert and Kathleen Finn for the knit baby caps and to the St. George family for the fresh eggs. And for all who have given time and donations whose names we have failed to mention here, we thank you one and all.

Our schedule:

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

- Wednesday, May 14 and 28
- Saturday, May 17 and 31

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

If you would like to donate to the Charlotte Food Shelf, you can use your PayPal account or your credit or debit card. If you prefer to donate via check, you can make checks payable to Charlotte Food Shelf, Inc. and mail to: P.O. Box 83, Charlotte, VT 05445. For more information, call 802-425-2402.

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

The Charlotte Food Shelf is a nonprofit tax-exempt organization. Gifts are tax deductible within the guidelines. You can also contribute using the QR code or by going to <https://tinyurl.com/2e8yz2zz>.



Also, for you gardeners out there: When you are planting your vegetable garden this year, think about putting in an extra row or two for the food shelf.

FOOD PROGRAM Continued from page 12

in and outside the Legislature say it's vital to curbing hunger.

"Rather than investing Vermont dollars in fruit from Florida or potatoes from Maine, this program designated funding to support local Vermont producers," said Rep. Michelle Bos-Lun, D-Westminster, introducing H.167 to the Senate's agriculture committee last Tuesday after it passed the House.

The bill looks to continue funding for the program through the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets, with \$2 million in general funds floated as a price tag.

"Food insecurity is increasing again as pandemic support programs have come to an end and with recent changes in federal funding," Bos-Lun told the Senate committee.

According to nationwide food bank network Feeding America, one in nine people in Vermont face hunger.

"The number-one thing is to reduce food insecurity, which is far too high in a very wealthy state in a very wealthy nation," said lead bill sponsor Rep. Esme Cole,

D-Hartford, in a phone call.

Since its inception, Vermonters Feeding Vermonters has been run by the Vermont Foodbank, a private nonprofit. The state has provided direct appropriations to the food bank in the past because "it's good at what it does," legislative counsel Michael O'Grady said in a February meeting in the House.

Officials outside the Legislature agree: The program is included in the state's 2021-2030 agriculture plan, which states, "There is universal agreement that support for food and farm businesses must be coupled with funding and policy to enable low-income consumers to access this local food."

Carrie Stahler of the Vermont Foodbank said the proposed legislation "codifies the relationship" between the state and the food bank. Stahler believes the bill would have an impact beyond food insecurity.

"This is part of Vermont making a commitment to farmers, local farms of all sizes and community members," Stahler said.

The federal agriculture census reported that in 2012, Vermont had 7,338 farms. That number dropped to 6,537 in 2022, the most recent survey said, with many of the closures being small dairies.

The bill originally aimed to continue the program with \$2 million from the general fund, money included in the Vermont Foodbank's total ask of \$5 million. But the latest version of the bill strips away a specific dollar amount and says the state's running of the program is contingent on an appropriation from the 2026 fiscal year general fund.

Farmers participating in the program see it as vital for their businesses, giving them a chance to compete with larger out-of-state producers.

"Produce in Vermont at this point is not making a whole lot of money ... and the Boston market is very competitive," said Melissa Mazza of Sam Mazza's Farm Market in Colchester.

Vermonters Feeding Vermonters can give local farms an edge over those competitors by paying market value for Vermont produce specifically.

Christa Alexander of Jericho Settlers Farm has been a member of the program since its inception. The food bank provides the farm with a stable market to sell around 10-15 percent of its root crops.

"It's nice to just have a known market, so that we can plan out our workflow, plan out

pricing schemes," said Alexander. In addition, the program matches her philosophy about local food.

"Being able to feed the community with food that is grown here is such a win-win," Alexander said.

Graduate students from a University of Vermont's food systems policy class presented a project to the House agriculture committee last week on the program, saying it has contributed \$3.8 million to Vermont's economy.

The students identified limited funding as the core issue challenging the program's efficacy.

Small farms in particular have trouble accessing the program, as they often don't produce large enough quantities for the Vermont Foodbank to purchase wholesale. To combat that, the Vermonters Feeding Vermonters program includes mini-grants for organizations to distribute food from smaller farms.

The graduate researchers said mini-grant funding often varies, and the grants would be more effective with constant support.

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

Gardening

Bleeding hearts – a fleeting pleasure of spring gardens

Deborah J. Benoit
University of Vermont Extension

Have you ever heard of the lady in the bath flower? That’s just one of the common names for bleeding hearts (*Lamprocapnos spectabilis*, formerly *Dicentra spectabilis*). If you’re wondering where that name comes from, just look at the flower upside down and you’ll see her.

Other common names include heart flower, lyre flower or Asian bleeding heart.

There is a bleeding heart (*Dicentra eximia*) native to the eastern United States that’s commonly referred to as the fringed bleeding heart. It has grayish-green colored foliage and pink to purple-red flowers and, at about 18 inches in height, is somewhat smaller than *Lamprocapnos spectabilis*.

Interestingly, while *Dicentra spectabilis* appears related to our native bleeding heart, genetic testing revealed it is not. This led to it being reclassified as *Lamprocapnos spectabilis*, many cultivars of which are available to home gardeners.

Bleeding hearts are one of the fleeting pleasures of spring in the garden. Each year, this perennial emerges from the ground, its stems reaching upward and outward. Heart-shaped flowers in combinations of red, white or pink dangle beneath the arching stems.

Native to Asia, *Lamprocapnos spectabilis* was introduced to European gardens in the mid-1800s and has been a shade garden favorite since that time.

It is a charming, old-fashioned flower equally at home in a cottage garden with dappled sunlight or in a woodland shade garden. Bleeding hearts are hardy in United States Department of Agriculture plant

hardiness zones 3 to 9.

They grow 2 to 3 feet tall and wide and bloom for four to six weeks each spring. The flowers attract bees, butterflies and hummingbirds and offer a mild, sweet fragrance.

If you enjoy sharing plants or simply want more of a good thing for your own garden, mature plants can be dug up when dormant and the root clumps divided using a clean shovel or blade.

Plant in early spring as soon as you can work in the soil. You can also plant during the fall when temperatures are mild to give the roots a chance to establish before the ground freezes. Either way, you may want to mark the planting location to avoid accidentally digging up the roots during its dormant period.

For best results, plant in partial shade or filtered sunlight in rich soil that drains well. Amend soil with compost if needed. Heavy soil that retains water may cause root rot.

Add a layer of mulch to help keep moisture levels consistent. Mulch will also help keep soil cooler during the heat of summer and protect the roots from freezing and thawing in winter.

Feed, if needed, in early spring, according to package directions, to encourage flower and root development.

After it’s finished flowering, the foliage will yellow and die back. The plant will go dormant until the following spring.

Bleeding hearts spread by underground stems called rhizomes or through self-seeding. They’re not considered aggressive in the garden.

They are a low-maintenance plant, but root rot may occur due to standing water or



Photos by Deborah J. Benoit

A shade garden favorite, bleeding hearts come in a variety of colors, grow 2 to 3 feet tall and wide and bloom for four to six weeks each spring, attracting butterflies, hummingbirds and other pollinators.

excessive moisture in heavy soil. They’re also a good option if deer or rabbits tend to browse in your garden as both tend to avoid nibbling on them.

A word of caution: Although bleeding hearts appear delicate and harmless, all parts of the plant are toxic to pets and humans if eaten. Touching them may cause skin irritation, so wear gloves as a precaution.

If you have questions regarding bleeding hearts or other home-gardening questions, please contact the University of Vermont Extension master gardener helpline at go.uvm.edu/gardenquestion.

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

CALENDAR

Continued from page 14

Energy fair Thursday, May 29, 4-6:30 p.m.

Come one, come all, to the energy fair at Browns River Middle School in Jericho on May 29 from 4 to 6:30 pm. Presented by the Jericho Energy Task Force and the Underhill Energy Committee, this free event will have over 15 booths with information on electric vehicles, weatherization and workforce development. There will be e-bike demos and a kids’ tent. Organizations represented include Drive Electric VT, Efficiency Vermont, Green Mountain Power, Local Motion, ReSource and VT Works for Women. Jericho Energy Task Force member Peter Ehrlich will answer questions about heat pump installation and how to avoid tariffs with U.S.-made pumps.

Paul Asbell book release Sunday, June 1, 4 p.m.

Guitarist Paul Asbell will hold a book-release event for “Stages: Ruminations, Rants, and Reminiscences on a Life In Music” at Main Street Landing at 60

Lake St. on Burlington’s waterfront. The book includes essays on his experiences playing in Chicago with artists such as Muddy Waters, Howlin’ Wolf, John Lee Hooker, Lightnin’ Hopkins, Paul Butterfield, Earl Hooker and Sam Lay, and his career after moving to Vermont in the early ’70s. Asbell played with the award-winning jazz group Kilimanjaro and The Unknown Blues Band, featuring Big Joe Burrell and has taught music at the University of Vermont and Middlebury College for several decades. Besides readings from the book, the free event will include musical interludes demonstrating the styles and artists featured in the stories.

Annual lake seminar Friday, June 6, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

The 2025 lake seminar, co-sponsored by the Federation of Vermont Lakes and Ponds and the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation, will address improving and restoring the health of the state’s lakes and ponds by focusing on the rivers and streams that feed into the lakes. By reducing pollution flowing into these tributaries, lake health can

be improved. Topics to be covered will include restoration of stream floodplains to reduce runoff, the impact of road salt, dam removal and river reconnection, protecting stream headwaters and the contribution of beavers in watershed restoration. The seminar is free and

open to the public but you must register to receive the Zoom link or to attend in person at the South Burlington Public Library Auditorium. Info is available at vermontlakes.org/event/2025-fovlap-lake-seminar.

Weed’s in the Garden

Varieties of viburnum good for every space in your garden

Joan Weed
Contributor

Because I have four varieties of viburnum in my gardens I thought I had a good selection to write about. Little did I know how many I was missing.

Michael Dirr’s book, “Hardy Trees and Shrubs,” features 21 varieties. I didn’t have any idea there were so many.

In the late professor Norm Pellet’s booklet for the University of Vermont’s Extension Service, “Landscape Plants for Vermont,” he features only 11. But if he suggests them, you will know they are right at home in Charlotte.

I was honored by Pellet’s asking me to add some pen-and-ink drawings to the updated version done with Mark Starrett, also of the University of Vermont, back around 2000.

The reason viburnums came to mind is that right outside my study window, in bloom, is a *Viburnum carlesii* or, as you might know it, Korean spice bush. And spicy it is.

In the evenings its delicious fragrance wafts in the open windows. The blooms for *carlesii* begin as pink clusters about 2-inches wide and fade to white as they open and mature. The leaves have a fuzzy texture.

I find mine suffer from aphids and curl up a bit. This doesn’t deter me from appreciating it though.

The form is rangy and needs pruning every few years to keep it in size. Though I do have one farther from the house that I have never pruned except for deadwood. This is one of the earliest bloomers in my spring garden.

Another favorite which has offerings for three seasons is *Viburnum plicatum* var. *tormentosum*, commonly known as doublefile viburnum. This shows itself more as an understory tree than a shrub.

The branches are horizontal with white blooms up and down each limb. The largest petals are not the flowers, but in the center are tiny fertile flowers which will produce berries in fall. The berries begin

as red and eventually become black (if the birds don’t get them first).

Leaves have fascinating pleats and turn a brilliant red in fall. This is a charming addition and adds height to the garden along with its blooms and berries. Pruning is not necessary.

My third viburnum’s the *Viburnum trilobum* or American cranberry bush. It has spectacular red autumn color and red jewel-like oval berries. This variety doesn’t mind wet feet and even thrives in moist soil. It rises to 8-12 feet at maturity.

When I first planted two of these in 1989, they were immediately devastated by the viburnum beetle. Pellet teased me for planting them. I thought I’d wasted my money, but both recovered and still are living and producing today. The leaves are maple shaped, and the shrub is often mistaken for European cranberry (*opulus*), but *trilobum* is the better choice.

The last one in my collection is the last one I acquired. It’s a cultivar of *Viburnum plicatum* called summer snowflake. The difference is in plant shape, which is more tree-like than shrub and doesn’t have the orderly rows of blooms on horizontal limbs. But it has blooms aplenty, and it reblooms all summer long.

There are many more varieties and the internet can help you find them. I find searching online invaluable. Not only do you get to read about care and hardiness but also where you can acquire them.

We have several good local nurseries to choose from and I support our own whenever I can. Learning about viburnums shows how important Latin names are in horticulture. The species are differentiated after the name *Viburnum*, and since the types are so different, you’ll want to know what you are buying.

I find a lot of joy in growing viburnums without a lot of work. There is one for each spot in the garden so I encourage you to look into them.



Photos by Joan Weed
Viburnum carlesii or Korean spice bush



Viburnum plicatum or summer snowflake



Viburnum plicatum or doublefile



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Outdoors & Environment

Could Vermont fight climate change by hosting Olympics

Noah Diedrich
Community News Service

Ask any Vermont legislator, and they'll tell you that two of the issues that have dominated discussion in the last five years are climate change and Act 250 reform.

Multiple ideas have been floated to solve these issues to no avail. But a recent bill in the House hopes to remedy both problems at once.

The solution? Host the Olympics in Vermont.

So says Rep. Brian Cina, P/D-Burlington, the author of H.367. The bill would create a Vermont Olympics Task Force to examine the possibility of hosting the Olympic Games and how they could address perennial problems surrounding land use and climate change.

"I have been proposing that Vermont make a plan, like a long-term plan, to reimagine the way that we live on Earth and create a regenerative economy instead of an extractive economy," Cina said.

Several years ago, Cina caught wind of Olympic Agenda 2020, a plan from the International Olympic Committee that aims to change the relationship between the mammoth event and the cities that host it.

Part of the effort looks to foster sustainable economic growth and development in the places the Games occur. The International Olympics Committee is prioritizing cities that demonstrate they can build infrastructure and facilities that can be used after the sports conclude.

"Imagine a network of public access to gyms and facilities and recreational opportunities and how that could affect our public health," Cina said. "When you think about the influx of money, of people coming to use them, that also stimulates the tourist and recreational economy."

In Cina's eyes, a Green Mountain State Olympics could be an avenue through which Vermont could spur Act 250 reform, the oft-talked about movement to reshape the state's marquee land-use law, by taking a hard look at the state's landscape and building needs. The Olympics could be an opportunity to bring money to the state while serving its residents, he said.

One factor in selecting an Olympics host could be how it helps illustrate the impact of



Courtesy of National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

An ice rink at the 1980 Winter Olympics in Lake Placid.

climate change, Cina said.

Warmer winters in Vermont, for example, could challenge organizers to figure out how to maintain the state's storied ski slopes for the Games.

That way, international audiences could see the effect of climate change on a region's environment and economy and learn from its efforts to mitigate those impacts.

"It's like building an ark," Cina said. "It's an example for the rest of the world too. Like, 'Okay, this is what this place did. How do we think this way?'"

Vermont has had its fair share of climate-related disasters in recent years. The warming atmosphere has brought about more frequent rain patterns in the state, which are partially to blame for the devastating floods the state sustained the past two years.

To engage with the International Olympic Committee, Vermont has to form a task force, which H.367 would do. Then, if discussions are successful, the committee pays for a feasibility study at no cost to the state. Pending the results of said study, planning would go forward.

Pablo Bose, a geography professor at the University of Vermont who teaches a class

on the Olympics, has some doubts about the idea's feasibility — but not because of Vermont's size.

"It's not the case that smaller cities haven't hosted before," Bose said. "Turin isn't tiny, but Lake Placid isn't a huge place either."

When it comes to hosting an Olympic Games, Bose said it mostly boils down to having suitable infrastructure. First, there's infrastructure for events: stadiums, ski slopes and trails for cross-country skiing and biathlons.

Then there's infrastructure for hosting, which includes accommodations for athletes, hotels for spectators and reliable transportation to and from the venues.

For Bose, it's hard to imagine hosting the Olympics in Vermont due to the sheer amount of infrastructural transformation necessary to put the Games on. That's not even considering the bid fees, which can range anywhere from \$50 million to \$100 million alone.

"It's really hard for me to see how this would be viable," he said.

The Winter Games would be easier, but they pose their own infrastructural snafus, Bose said. Take ice events.

"In Vancouver, they had separate rinks for speed skating, for ice dancing — it's not going to cut it if you had a couple of rinks at UVM," Bose said. "I mean, UVM barely has NCAA-level facilities. How would you upscale that?"

The big question for many host cities is how to use the sports facilities after the Games are over, Bose said. London and Vancouver are the best examples of handling that issue. Officials in both cities planned for their facilities' post-Olympic use ahead of time.

But Vermont may not be able to attract enough visitors to the area after the Games, Bose said.

"Even if you made the airport at Burlington an actual international airport, are you going to have that volume of people coming in the rest of the year that would justify that investment?" he asked.

Transportation and good airlines were the two hallmarks of suitable host regions emphasized by an organizer of Vermont's closest Olympic comparison.

Doug Hoffman, corporate controller of the 1980 Lake Placid Winter Olympic Games, said the Adirondacks village was able to keep its budget — a spartan \$150 million — much lower than previous Games.

"Our motto was 'Olympics in perspective,'" Hoffman said. "We geared the Olympics toward the athletes rather than the spectators, and that's part of the reason that we were able to have a smaller budget than the previous Olympics."

That model runs contrary to how the Games operate today. Hoffman said the typical budget for an Olympic Games runs into the billions, which he sees as a tall order for Vermont to achieve.

Even with its abnormally low budget, the Lake Placid Games finished with a \$5-6 million budget deficit, though Hoffman puts the onus for the losses on the boycott of the 1980 Moscow Summer Games, which cut into ticket sales for the Games in the U.S. later that year.

But if Lake Placid's case is any example, Cina may be onto something when it comes to facility use and long-term economic benefit.

"That PR from those Olympics carried us for the next 40 years," Hoffman said. "So much so that New York State reinvested in all our facilities in the last five years and rebuilt them all because of that consequence, the fact that return on investment was tremendous."

Lake Placid is also still benefiting from its Olympic-level reputation. In February, the village held the Ski Jumping World Cup using those newly-renovated facilities.

If Vermont were to go forward with hosting, Hoffman said its best chance would be to host a regional games in concert with neighboring cities. That way, it could take advantage of the existing facilities in Lake Placid just 50 miles or so to the west of Vermont's largest municipality, Burlington.

Back in Montpelier, Cina's bill shows no sign of going forward — it's currently lying dormant in the House Committee on Commerce and Economic Development. But he's probing the possibility of attaching the measure to any Act 250 reform bills next year.

But time isn't a problem. Vermont's earliest opportunity to host? Only 12 years from now.

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

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Outdoors & Environment

‘Big Nights’ mean big risks for amphibians and reptiles

Theresa Golub
Community News Service

Across Vermont, the songs of spring peepers mark the change in seasons. Temperatures rise, snow melts and water runs into the dips and divots of the land to form vernal pools.

Biologists call those springtime basins the coral reefs of the forest — and their emergence helps explain why spring peepers and other frogs get so vocal this time of year.

These fishless bodies of water are vital to the survival of reptiles and amphibians, known together as herptiles or herps, and provide safe breeding grounds for species such as wood frogs, spotted salamanders and, to a lesser extent, the peepers. Without fish around to eat herptiles’ eggs, breeding can boom.

In early spring, forests are dry and barren. Vernal pools spread nutrients across the landscape, serve as sites for photosynthesis and help manage flooding by providing a place for water to settle.

It all makes the pools a prime destination for species such as herps. But the journey often is not easy.

On rainy nights, when temperatures reach above freezing, herps leave their winter habitats to head toward vernal pools — and frequently attempt to cross busy roadways, said Jim Andrews, a herpetologist who manages the Vermont Reptile and Amphibian Atlas.

Those migrations, known around the country as “Big Nights,” see hundreds of herps per hour crossing roads to reach the vernal pools.

To protect the creatures and reduce casualties, volunteers across Vermont gather on those nights to help herps traverse the roads. Most often, that entails



Photo by Theresa Golub

Emily Kaplita, an educator with Audubon Vermont, holds a frog during an April 23 herp-filled event in Huntington.

people scooping critters into their hands and shuttling them to safety.

They also collect data.

“We record the number of herps we see, the species, how many are dead or alive and the sounds we hear,” said Ira Powsner, an assistant at the Vermont Reptile and Amphibian Atlas.

The info collected by these volunteers is used by the atlas and the Vermont Center for Ecostudies to track the location of the vernal pools and the herps statewide.

Despite those efforts, vernal pools and their herp inhabitants face increasing threats as the result of both climate change and human development.

“We’re seeing changes in hydroperiods,” said Kevin Tolan, a staff biologist at the Vermont Center for Ecostudies, referring to times when land is waterlogged.

Less snowfall and warmer winters shrink spring runoff and dry up vernal pools, leaving less time for herptiles to

breed successfully and survive.

Early warm spells often cause herps to migrate too soon, only for temperatures to drop again and cause more deaths.

Increased flooding across the state — also tied to climate change — has effectively sterilized streams, cleaning rocks and getting rid of leaf matter and other organic material that herptiles rely on for food, Andrews, the atlas manager, said.

Flooding also flushes salamanders downstream, killing many. Those that survive and return to their homes find them unsuitable.

Development often isolates breeding areas, forcing herps to make dangerous road crossings during their migrations.

Building over vernal pools directly destroys the basin herptiles rely on. Development within 400 to 500 feet of a pool, known as the “life zone,” can significantly disturb their habitat, Tolan said.

Still, Vermont’s herptile populations remain healthier than those in many more heavily developed states.

Only a few herptile species, such as the boreal chorus frog and Fowler’s toad, are believed to have disappeared in Vermont in recent decades. The frog, for example, hasn’t been seen or heard here in over 25 years.

In 2019, the Vermont Center for Ecostudies launched the Vernal Pool Monitoring Project to track herptile populations. Volunteers visit pools throughout the spring, recording egg masses, frog calls and water temperatures to monitor the timing of events and population trends.

Protecting herp habitats, after all, first requires identifying them.

“Vernal pools qualify as protected wetlands, but they must be officially mapped and documented,” Tolan said.

Citizens play a growing role in conservation by helping with monitoring and crossings, or by submitting sightings through platforms like iNaturalist.

Projects including road closures on rainy nights and organized crossing events also help raise awareness of the importance of herp migrations. And groups statewide keep the conversation going. University of Vermont students run a club dedicated to herps. Last month, a crew of people came to Huntington for a new Audubon Vermont event called “Women Who Herp.”

In Monkton, wildlife underpasses have been installed to help animals safely cross busy roads, reducing roadkill and preserving migration routes, Andrews said.

“Introducing people to herptiles is key to conservation,” he said.

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

In the Outdoors

Make plans to see showy lady’s slipper at Eshqua Bog in Hartland

Elizabeth Bassett
Contributor

Looking for joy these days? Look no further than the great outdoors. My mother always told me to just get outside, swing from a limb of our apple tree or play in the sandbox. Mom got a break, and I fell in love with the great outdoors.

Hence my advice: Grab some bug dope and get thee to a beautiful place.

I have written before about Eshqua Bog in Hartland. Put a date on the calendar as average peak flowering of the rare showy lady’s slippers is June 20. The preserve is a botanical wonderland of cold-climate holdovers from the post-glacial era 10,000 years ago. The 41 acres contain a diverse array of bog and fen plants, including Labrador tea, cotton grass, pitcher plants, showy lady’s slippers, larches and buckbean.

The difference between a bog and a fen is the water source. Bogs tend to be acidic; fens are more alkaline. Water flows into bogs through rainwater and run-off,

whereas fens are also fed by calcium-rich groundwater.

Eshqua Bog Natural Area hosts a 460-foot accessible boardwalk. It is co-owned and managed by The Nature Conservancy in Vermont and Native Plant Trust.

While you are in the neighborhood, take a walk at the Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Park in Woodstock (nps.gov/mabi/index.htm). No admission is charged.

Closer to home is Colchester Bog, a University of Vermont Natural Area, (uvm.edu/frils/naturalareas/colchester-bog). Fluctuations in the level of Lake Champlain mean that occasional floods deliver nutrients and soil that make it possible for non-bog plants to flourish and out-compete the endemics.

For example, white pine trees grow faster than larch, red maple and black gums that are native to a bog forest. A boardwalk leads to an open section of sphagnum moss that hosts pitcher plants, leather leaf, cotton grass and other bog



Photo courtesy of Orchardhunter1939

The rare showy lady’s slipper usually hits its peak at Eshqua Bog in Hartland around June 20.

LADY’S SLIPPER continued on page 20

Seeking connection to ‘Give Away’ bird yields bounty

Bradley Carleton
Contributor

Before I went to bed last night, I sequestered myself in my den where I perform a native ritual asking for a blessing for my hunt tomorrow. I prayed that I might witness the Give Away bird the next day.

I won’t detail the entire ritual because some might take offense that I am just a privileged white man who could not possibly understand native worship. The fact is that I am just a white man who has never had his lands stolen or been persecuted for his appearance. But in my heart of hearts, I embrace the Indigenous beliefs and practice them in solitary reverie.

Each year, in May, I seek to make a connection to the “Give Away” bird — the Eastern wild turkey. I learn their habits, watch their patterns, their roosting preferences, their mating rituals, and most importantly, their way of communicating. I have listened to hours and hours of dialogue amongst a flock. I have learned their way of signaling danger, their seductive mating clucks, purrs and drumming.

The males, known as “toms,” are divided into two social groups: “jakes,” which are the young of the year and fully mature toms, which claim dominance over the jakes and hens. Their dominance is displayed by long, thick beards that protrude from their iridescent, feathered chests. Their tails are displayed as “full fans,” unlike the jakes with the fan’s center feathers higher than the sides of the variegated golden-brown arch.

And finally, their lengthy spurs on the backs of their armored, scaled legs, which can grow to a sharpened point of over 1 1/2 inches. These spurs are used to fight other males for the mating rights of the hens in the flock, and in a naturally cruel way, spike into the female’s back to hold them still while breeding them.

Clearly, we have evolved as a society in which this character trait was left behind in the Pleistocene epoch, before mankind began finding more courteous ways of recreating. To watch and learn all these attributes, one finds oneself fascinated, and the more we study these birds, the more we learn to love them.

And so it was, the following day, I awoke at 4 a.m. and, bleary-eyed, wheeled my way into my camouflage suit and hat. Everything



Bradley Carleton with the fruit of his doubled good luck.

Courtesy photo

had been laid out the night before because I don’t like to forget anything in the fog of four hours of sleep.

I reached down to grab my trusty 12-gauge in front of the back door (this, because I have driven long distances to my hunting spot and realized that I had left my firearm at home). But this day, I planned to walk the half mile to a spot where I had known birds to roost in the past.

I sat down in the dark and closed my eyes to emphasize the importance of hearing a gobble in the distance. When I reopened my eyes, I watched the sun struggle to rise from cloud cover that seemed as though it was trying to hold the sun down below the horizon. A gentle southerly breeze carried the smell of someone’s lawn that had been mowed the day before. The sweet fragrance of the lake’s water caressed my face as it drifted inland.

I sat for an hour, but did not hear the sound I hoped to, other than the cheerful chirping of robins and cardinals. I got up and walked the tree line staying in the shadows of buckbrush and thorny shrubs. My arms were being

torn up through my sleeves, and I finally whispered aloud, “The heck with this!”

I walked along the outside of a high-tension fence and followed it down into a small depression that quickly made its presence known by sucking on the heels of my rubber boots. I might point out here that, except for beginner’s luck or professional guide services, hunts are about challenging the spirit of the hunter who is willing to suffer for their prize. Very few “successful” hunts are without struggle. It is the price one must pay to honor their prey.

As such, I continued into a swampy area, pausing every 100 yards to call out, pleading with an excited clucking cacophony of love. Nothing. Over and over again. Nothing.

I spent an hour setting up my decoys and finding the most likely path of a lovesick bird to lure him into my trap. I did this four times to no avail. I looked at my watch and noticed it was now 10:30 a.m. I had just an hour and a half left before the noon deadline for shooting ended. I was getting discouraged.

I crossed a small stream. (Turkeys don’t like to cross any obstacle that impedes their

breeding tactics. Nature dictates that the hens are supposed to come to the males, and when calling to them, we are asking him to make an exception to walk toward us.) I turned into a field with tall, brilliant green grass and headed toward another tree line.

What the heck is that?!!! A bird jumped out of the grass in front of me. My eyes immediately scanned the body for a red head. Confirmed. Shot taken. Bird down!

I had never seen a tom hide in the grass before. I knelt beside him as his body began relaxing and accepting his end. I prayed over him. The same prayer I had said the night before. I thanked the Great Spirit for this beautiful bird.

I tagged him and hefted his body over my shoulder as a soldier carries his wounded comrade and began marching home across the long fields. I crossed a road and entered a second field in the same direction when an eruption tore the long spring grasses to the side.

A larger tom beat his mighty wings to lift his heavy body. But before he got 20 yards from me, I dropped the jake with my left hand, shouldered my shotgun, verified that it was another red head and fired. The big bird dropped at the edge of the tree line.

I ran to him and, again, knelt to pray and thank the Great Spirit for this incredible abundance. I sat in the cool grass, still wet with the dew in the shadows of the pine trees and shook my head. It is one thing to be blessed with one bird in a season, but here I was with two nice turkeys, accepting that my season ended as quickly as it began — two bearded birds being the spring limit.

Now came the more serious outcome, I was half a mile from home, and after trying numerous methods to carry the two birds and my shotgun, I recognized that it was futile. I called my friend and fellow hay-tosser, Hunter Kehoe, who picked me up with my prizes on his four-wheeler and gave me a ride home. I thanked Hunter and promised him a just reward — maple teriyaki smoked turkey breast.

Once home, I sat exhausted in the yard full of gratitude for the hunt. I deserved some rest. And then my lovely wife came out and said, “C’mon! Get up! We’re going fishing!”

How lucky can one man be?

LADY’S SLIPPER

Continued from page 19

plants.

Charlotte hosts Williams Woods Natural Area (<https://tinyurl.com/33d3r8x4>) with a 1.2-mile walking trail honoring the late Larry Hamilton, Charlotte’s Tree Warden and volunteer extraordinaire. Clay plain forest of this type originally covered the Champlain Valley but is now a rare ecosystem.

Please note that the 63-acre preserve is tricky to explore. Trees have shallow roots as they need more oxygen than the saturated clay soil can provide. Roots vein the surface of the property. Blowdowns and big potholes reign as shallow root systems render the trees vulnerable to storms or microbursts. The boardwalk is also in rough shape. Yet, for an intrepid

and careful walker, a stroll beneath ancient oaks and towering hemlocks is a change of pace. And close to home.

In the dark days of December several years ago, I included some thoughts about stress in my column. I’ve long forgotten the original source.

Humans need a certain amount of stress. Without it, we’re bored, inefficient and frustrated; too much stress and we’re irritable, overwhelmed and exhausted. When the balance is just right, we are motivated, productive and able to function effectively.

- Prioritize. Make three lists: essential, important and trivial. Throw out the third list. Within the essential category, prioritize again. Now, get busy.
- Do it today. Hard work is often the

accumulation of easy things you should have done earlier.

- Everyone has a best time of day. For some it begins at 10 p.m., for others it’s 5:30 a.m. Schedule the most important work when you are sharpest.
- Set an alarm clock to remind you of bedtime. Fatigue reduces your ability to function and cope with stress.
- Your time. We all value different activities and have our own ways of spending free minutes or hours. Be a ruthless critic of where your discretionary time goes: email, doom-scrolling, blogs — no matter how inspiring or informative, cute puppy videos, long phone conversations.
- Delegate, swap or pay for help. You might hire your own children to do chores.

- Donate extra stuff to charity. It will be easier to find the things you need.
- Exercise. A body lacking in physical stamina is in no condition to counter stress.
- Learn to relax. Perhaps try yoga, meditation, weeding or watching birds as you sip a cup of tea.
- Enjoy. Life is what happens while you’re busy making plans. If you’re waiting for the perfect moment, when the lists are all checked off and life is under control, you will have a long wait. Smell the flowers or fresh bread, listen to beautiful music, marvel at the stars, send a note to someone you love. Make friends with non-worriers.
- Help others. This will bring more joy to you than to the recipients.

Good luck!

Books

Beautiful poetry at library via Friends of the Senior Center

Susan Ohanian
Contributor

No question about it: The Flying Pig Bookstore is the place to be on Indie Book Day. There, I found “Blooming Beneath the Sun,” poems by Christina Rossetti with intricate collage art by Ashley Bryan on display.

This copy of the cover does not do justice to the brilliance of Bryan’s spectacular peacock. In his autobiography “Words to My Life’s Song,” Bryan remembers how much his father loved birds. With bird cages lining the living room, he remembered “cages with over one hundred birds: canaries, finches, warblers, parakeets.”

As it happens, years ago I had a “connection” with Bryan. I attended one of his talks, where he described how, in his many travels, he always took books to give to children who lacked ready access.

At the time, I was book reviewer for a national teacher magazine, and so I began sending children’s books to Bryan. He’d pack books up for his travels, and then, when he got home from a trip, he’d write me a few

lines about the joy of children receiving books to keep.

Ashley Frederick Bryan, the recipient of many book awards, was born in 1923. He remembered his childhood in the Bronx as an idyllic time. Think about two important facts:

- Bryan found wonderful books at his public library.
- Bryan learned to draw, paint and play musical instruments at public school because the federal government’s Works Progress Administration hired artists and musicians to work with children in those schools.

In its tenure the WPA spent \$10,500,000,000 and employed 8,500,000 people. In New Deal programs, unemployed Americans planted 3 billion trees, constructed over 620,000 miles of streets, built 46,000 bridges, restored 360 Civil War battlefields, put up more 65,000 buildings, stone monuments and murals, and worked with many children in schools.



Most of the jobs were in construction, but some 10,000 artists were employed to create arts and crafts, easel paintings, sculpture, graphic art, posters and photography. Nearly 850 artists were commissioned to paint 1,371 murals, many installed in post offices across the country. It was a great example of government by, with and for the people.

Ashley Bryan was mentored by some of the 8,500,000 people who found employment

in this federal outreach.

Although this wonderful WPA program has never been replicated, Charlotte is fortunate enough to have three very attractive places where our children can find good books: Charlotte Central School on Hinesburg Road and the Charlotte Public Library, 115 Ferry Road are both book treasure troves.

At the Charlotte Public Library (charlottepubliclibrary.org/youth/kids/index.php), you can find book recommendations for children and for teens. Look at some

recommendations online. And walk inside to get personal recommendations from the experts inside.

Charlotte’s third great book resource for kids is the Little Free Library for Kids at the Grange, 2858 Spear Street. There, children from babies to teens are invited to find a treasure to take home and keep — or bring back and get another one from the ever-changing supply. The Little Free Library for Kids structure was designed and built by Stuart Robinson. Note that, as part of his Eagle Scout project, Stuart carefully designed this structure to reflect the historic architecture of The Grange Hall.

Located in front of The Grange Hall, the Little Free Library for Kids is open all the time and is supported by the Friends of the Charlotte Senior Center and The Flying Pig Bookstore. Many will remember that The Flying Pig got its start here in Charlotte, and so it is fitting that this great resource for books, now in Shelburne, is where the Friends of the Senior Center purchased Ashley Bryan’s book as a gift to the Charlotte Library.

Two poetry books lift flagging spirits, bring solace of beauty

Bill Schubart
Contributor

I often ask myself if depression is circumstantial or anatomical. Although it runs deep in my family, current events certainly play a role, and I know I’m not alone. But which is it? Both?

I turn to three resources for relief. One is simply acknowledging my own powerlessness. Another is escaping into the natural world of woods and water, and a third is immersing myself in beauty.

Two recent collections of poetry have lifted my flagging spirits, reminding me again of the solace found in beauty.

Angela Patten’s most recent collection of poems, “Feeding the Wild Rabbit,” deserves your time and attention. Captive of both her passion for the language, the innate lyricism of poetry, all seeped through the filter of a Catholic upbringing in her native Ireland, her work is a celebration of her love of words, birds and her coming-of-age memories.

Like an illuminated manuscript, the opening poem enlightens uncommon words: “clavichord, clavicle, tangent, serpentine, sin, and venial” — the meaning and sound of each, a small epiphany.

Patten’s migration from the moral rigors of Catholicism to the freedom of agnosticism reminds us how we never fully escape our religious upbringings.

“Yet even now in foreign cities, lacking one iota of religious belief, I visit churches to light white votive candles, pay homage to their long hard labor and remember their romantic souls, their spirit-shone servitude.”

Like all great poetry, Patten’s work emerges from her life experiences, a panorama of joy and pain. But unlike many poets, Patten is able to revisit these memories without false packaging or delusion and shares them with us openly and even occasionally with sly humor.

In “Why I Would Like to Be a River,” her self-knowledge and clairvoyance shine out:



Because it begins as a whisper in a lonely place high up among the bracken and the sedges, unnoticed, trivial.

At first slender as a girl collecting sallies in her apron, a river swells with rainfall, shrinks with drought, may slacken to a stingy trickle or strengthen to a torrent.

Reed buntings skim its surface. An emerald dragonfly and kingfisher flit and dazzle above its banks. Its voice is never jabber, only song.

A river may appear impressionable, Foolish, easily led. And yet, if turned aside, will in the end come round to its intended course.

It cannot be contained by fences, ditches, levees, dams. Leaves everything it has ever owned behind it in the past.

It runs its own way home, holding a kiss in its watery mouth.

Her ability to see and convey to us her readers the trajectory of her own sensual emergence as a young woman as described in the meanderings of an upland river gaining mass and torrent, we experience her skill as an observer of her life and her ability to convey this within the limitation of words.

We come to see ourselves through the window of her lyricism.

If, like me, you’re too easily mired in the quotidian darkness of the day, give yourself a gift and read this beautiful collection by Angela Patten.

In the second new poetry release, Scudder Parker immerses us in his life in Vermont. In a forenote to the reader, he writes, “I reflect on early family life, a first career as Protestant preacher, midlife changes, evolving relationships, and a longing to find intimacy with the mystery and specificity of this world.”

After which he urges us to read the book sequentially. I followed his advice and was rewarded. Few poetry collections ask this of us, but in the case of this remarkable life trajectory, his advice is well taken.

The riverine theme meanders through several generations of Parker’s life in Vermont.

Going Back

Our childhood brook crept through Hummocked marshes dove under Canopies of roots paused and pooled by granite boulders thrilled me with speckled many colored trout.

I captured their sleek elusive bodies. But they flourished in that trickle almost to the first of spring — welling With its liquid song of leaving.

I knew every riffle pool from that spring to the Burroughs Road and for a few years every change the seasons or the beaver wrought. At North Danville School when we sang about the land of the free I knew this was what they meant hours to feel the water in my shoes — still home for chores by three.

Scudder Parker’s new collection of prose and verse poems is among the best I’ve ever read about Vermont. Like a series of modest tributaries flowing into a river of practical, cultural, and spiritual exposition, it buoys our understanding through several generations of life in rural Vermont and, more broadly, our finite time on earth.

The “Poem of the World” ranks for me alongside Robert Frost. It will be my gift to my dearest friends.

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



Library News

Rainy spring means gardeners look for volunteer help

Margaret Woodruff
Director

Despite the rainy start, spring is in the air and the gardens at the library are bursting with new life. Thanks to the garden coordinators who keep these spaces so beautiful and functional for our community.

If you're garden-minded and would like to volunteer, please let us know. Email info@charlottepubliclibrary.org.

If you're craft-minded, please join us for two upcoming workshops: indigo dyeing on May 31 and kokedama (moss-covered planters) on June 14. Both are part of a Japanese cultural series based on a grant from the Japan Foundation.

Programs for kids

Preschool story time Tuesdays, 10 a.m.

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

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.

Book some artwork Wednesdays, thru May 28, 2 p.m.

Rebecca Lindy Coll leads an after-school session using old books to create new crafty masterpieces for Wildcard Wednesdays. For grades 5 and up. Space limited; call or email to inquire.

Baby Time Thursdays, 9:30 a.m.

An unstructured hour for parents, caregivers and babies to play, explore books and chat in the young children's area. Ages birth to 18 months.



Let's Lego Saturdays, 10 a.m.-1:30 p.m.

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

Programs for adults

Stillwater meditation Saturdays, 9 a.m. (no meeting April 26)

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.

Thursday book club Thursday, May 15, 7:30 p.m.

The Thursday book club is reading "Rough Sleepers," the story of Jim O'Connell, who graduated from Harvard Medical School and was nearing the end of his residency at Massachusetts General when the hospital's chief of medicine made a proposal: Would he defer a prestigious fellowship and spend a year helping to create an organization to bring health care to homeless citizens? That year turned into O'Connell's life's calling. Tracy Kidder spent five years following O'Connell and his colleagues as they worked with thousands of homeless patients. O'Connell navigates the city streets at night, offering medical care, socks, soup, empathy, humor and friendship to some of the city's most endangered citizens. Copies available at the circulation desk.

Mystery book group Monday, May 19, 10 a.m.

In "The Poacher's Son," game warden Mike Bowditch returns home one evening to find an alarming voice from the past on his answering machine — his father Jack, a hard drinking womanizer who makes his living poaching illegal game. An even more frightening call comes the next morning from the police; they are searching for the man who killed a beloved local cop the night before, and his father is their prime suspect.

Jack has escaped from police custody, and only Mike believes that his tormented father might not be guilty. Copies available at the circulation desk.

Food waste prevention program Tuesday, May 20, 7 p.m.

Wasting food is expensive. Every year, Americans lose more than \$218 billion on wasted food. Join Anne Bijur from the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation for a conversation about preventing food waste to save money, fight hunger and protect our environment.

Better Together book club Wednesday, May 21, 7:30 p.m.

Join this open group that discusses books related to parenthood, which will be discussing Claire Keegan's multi-award-winning, bestselling novel "Small Things Like These." In 1985 in an Irish town, during the weeks leading up to Christmas, Bill Furlong, a coal and timber merchant, faces his busiest season. As he does the rounds, he feels the past rising up to meet him and encounters the complicit silences of a people controlled by the church. Copies available at the circulation desk. Ebook and audiobook available on Hoopla. Join in person or on Zoom (<https://tinyurl.com/yrjrx8rh>).

Beautiful Blues Saturday, May 31, 10 a.m.-noon

Indigo enthusiast Toby Goldsmith's indigo-dyeing workshop will introduce the art and process of dyeing with the indigo plant. Participants will design their own small piece and dip dye it in the prepared vat. No experience necessary. For all ages 10 and up. Space is limited, email info@charlottepubliclibrary.org to let the library know if you'd like to join. Presented as part of a Japanese cultural series based on a grant from the Japan Foundation.

Kokedama workshop Saturday, June 14, 10-11 a.m.

Try your hand at the Japanese art of

growing plants in a moss-covered ball of soil. Make your own to take home. For ages 10 and up. Space is limited; please email info@charlottepubliclibrary.org to let us know if you'd like to join us. Also presented as part of a Japanese cultural series based on a grant from the Japan Foundation.

Recurring programs

Book chat Wednesdays, 3 p.m.

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

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

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

Library contact information:

Margaret Woodruff, director
Cheryl Sloan, youth services librarian
Susanna Kahn, tech librarian
Phone: 802-425-3864
Email: info@charlottepubliclibrary.org
For the latest information about programs, books and activity kits, sign up for the newsletter at <https://tinyurl.com/n5usd25r>.
The Charlotte Library Board of Trustees meets the first Thursday of each month at 6 p.m., unless rescheduled following the Opening Meeting Law. Contact the library or visit the library website (charlottepubliclibrary.org) for more information.

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Birdbrain



Photo by Lee Krohn

A squirrel stopped by the Charlotte Library to check out some seeds.

Senior Center News

Plants, dogs, artificial intelligence among May offerings

Lori York
Director

This May, the Charlotte Senior Center is buzzing with a wide range of programs. Save the date for the much-loved annual plant sale fundraiser for a gardening fix not to be missed.

Charlotte resident Brandon Tieso will be offering an introduction to artificial intelligence, and plan to explore dog behavior with trainer Deb Helfrich.

Senior center plant sale

Saturday, May 24, 9 a.m.-noon

The senior center's annual plant sale will be rain or shine. Stop by for well-priced annuals and perennials and miscellaneous garden pots and tools. If you're dividing perennials in your garden, pot (and label) a few to donate to the sale. Drop off plants at the center any time between Friday, May 16, and Wednesday, May 21. Extra veggies and annual seedlings are welcome too! Downsizing? Gardening tools and other gardening items are gladly accepted. Questions? Email Polly Price at ppolly62@ymail.com

Friendship gathering

Thursday, May 15, 12:30-1:30 p.m.

The friendship gathering meets every third Thursday of the month, providing a welcoming space for seniors to make new connections and build lasting friendships. Enjoy light refreshments, engaging conversation, and plenty of opportunities to mingle. To help us plan accordingly, please RSVP by calling 802-425-6345. Free. Registration required.

Women's kayak trips planning meeting

Friday, May 16, 11 a.m.-noon

It is time to plan the kayak trip season. If you are interested in leading, co-leading or finding out more about becoming a trip leader, please contact Susan Hyde at susanfosterhyde@gmail.com.

Memory Café

Saturday, May 17, 11 a.m.-noon

Join the first Memory Café at the Charlotte Senior Center. This free event offers a supportive and social environment for individuals living with memory loss, along with their caregivers or loved ones. Engage in a fun activity, connect with others and find support. Memory Cafés will be held monthly at the senior center on the third Saturday. This program is provided in partnership with Age Well and the Charlotte Library. Free. To register, call 802-425-6345 or contact Susan Cartwright at cartwright.susan1@gmail.com for more information.

Gentle walk & hiking group

Thursday, May 22, 9 a.m.

Enjoy the beauty of nature! Come walk at a gentle pace with other seniors. The group will meet each month for a congenial non-strenuous walk. Location to be determined based on conditions of the local walks. Meet at 9 a.m. in the foyer of the Charlotte Senior Center. Free. Registration required. Questions? Contact Penny Burman at 916-753-7279.

Getting to Know "AI"

Thursday, May 22, 1-2:30 p.m.

What is AI, really? Should we be using

it — or avoiding it? Join Brandon Tieso for this 90-minute session that is a relaxed, live walkthrough of what AI can do for you in the real world. You'll see examples, ask questions and learn how it can help with everyday tasks like planning, writing and staying safe online. Bring: laptop computer (optional) and ChatGPT free account (optional). Free. Registration is required as space is limited. To register, call 802-425-6345.

Death café

Wednesday, May 28, 2:30-4 p.m.

Gather on the fourth Wednesday of each month to come together in fellowship, celebrating life through open conversations about death and dying. While these discussions can be difficult, sharing thoughts, questions and stories heart-to-heart helps us build a strong sense of community and fosters a unique joy that enriches our lives. We look forward to walking this journey together and growing our community. Have questions? Reach out to ppolly62@ymail.com. Free. Registration required by calling 802-425-6345.

Woof! What's the dog saying?

Friday, May 30, 12:30-2 p.m.

Join Deb Helfrich from Gold Star Dog Training for this presentation on understanding dog communication. Is a yawn always just a yawn? Why does a dog shake off when it's not wet? Why is a growl a good thing? Is a tail wag always friendly? This popular dog communication and safety lecture is a multimedia extravaganza of fun where the audience gets to test their "dog-reading" skills. We'll demystify dog communication, reveal common dog-human misunderstandings and explore how we can all live safely and happily together. This lecture is for humans only — our furry friends will need to sit this one out. Free. Registration is appreciated but not required.

Mahjong

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

Join an informal mahjong gathering, open to all levels of experience. Free. No registration required. If you're interested in Shanghai mahjong, whether you're new to it or a seasoned player, you're welcome to join the group for casual play and fun conversation. Questions? Contact Nan Mason at anne.mason@uvm.edu. If you are interested in American mahjong, a few players are looking to start up some games. Feel free to stop by during this time and get a table going.

Art

May art exhibit

This month's art exhibit at the senior center is For the Love of Nature. It features art by Ann Sage, inspired by the beauty of the natural world. Her original works are primarily in oil and acrylic. From tranquil landscapes to delicate floral studies and glass still lifes, each piece celebrates the seasons and the wonder found in nature's details.

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 Way of Northwest Vermont, is a no-impact,



Photos by Lori York

Students reflect on their watercolor paintings with instructor Lynn Cummings.



Dominoes Train was the game of choice for this week's Brain Games gathering.

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.

Qigong and stretching

Tuesdays, 3:00-3:45 p.m.

Join Levi Sanders for a qigong and stretching class for seniors, designed to improve flexibility, balance and relaxation. Through gentle movements, deep breathing and simple stretches, you'll boost energy, reduce stress and enhance overall well-being. This class offers a safe, mindful practice to help you feel more connected to your body and promote a calm, refreshed mind. Free. 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.

Monday lunches

Served weekly. Lunch is served 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m., or until the food runs out. Suggested lunch donation \$5. No registration required.

Senior center info:

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

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

Follow the senior center on Facebook or Instagram at charlotteseniorcentervt.

Write Ingredients

Explore abundant joys of eating eggs at senior center

Susan Ohanian
Contributor

As you look at the Monday Munch menu for May 19, think about how you’d go about preparing deviled eggs for 60 people or so.

Some years back, people on my cooking team had heard a variety of theories about which were easier to peel: really fresh eggs or eggs that had been around for a while. We had both available and then argued about whether there was any difference.

We didn’t try other egg-peeling theories: add various things to the water in which the eggs are boiled like salt, baking soda, white vinegar, apple cider vinegar. Or put the boiled egg in a small Mason jar and shake the jar. Shake it hard.

Here’s Anthony Bourdain in his “Les Halles Cookbook: Strategies, Recipes, and Techniques of Classic Bistro Cooking”:

Put your eggs gently in a small pot filled with cold water. Bring the water to a rigid boil. As soon as the water is boiling, shut off the heat and put a lid on top. After 10 minutes, remove the eggs and slide them carefully into ice water to cool. Here’s how to know if you’ve done it right: If the egg is cooked through, the shell peels off cleanly, and the yolk is not surrounded by an unsightly gray ring. Gray ring? Try again.

In his “The Upstairs Delicatessen,” Dwight Garner points out that James Bond liked eggs so much that a proofreader of Ian Fleming’s “Live and Let Die” noted that whoever might be following Bond need only walk into a restaurant and ask, “Was there a man here eating scrambled eggs?”

Calvin Trillin tells the tale of his small daughters announcing their refusal to eat any more of the scrambled eggs he made for them every morning before school (<https://tinyurl.com/p2ze8wnp>). “I had just



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contributed the recipe — the only recipe I knew — to one of those cookbooks that are put together for charity. My contribution was called ‘Calvin Trillin’s Scrambled Eggs That Stick to the Pan Every Time.’”

Noted chef José Andrés taught a culinary physics course at Harvard and has received innumerable culinary awards, as well as the National Humanities Medal, for his work with World Central Kitchen, providing food relief around the world.

In his book “Change the Recipe,” Andrés advises that “My Microwave Omelet” is for when “you’re stretched for time, equipment and money.” He notes that one tablespoon of mayonnaise is “the genius” in this recipe. Yes, mayonnaise.

Andrés ends his book expressing awe for people “who volunteer all around the world for a day, for a week, for a month,

for a year ... just to try to bring comfort for other. ... It’s never too early or too late to change the recipe and fix our broken world.”

One of the first two recipients of the \$100 million Bezos Courage and Civility Award, Andrés used the money to expand World Central Kitchen which he started in 2010, following the earthquake in Haiti. In a moving tribute to the seven World Central Kitchen workers killed in Gaza, Andrés said: “These are people I served alongside in Ukraine, Turkey, Morocco, the Bahamas, Indonesia, Mexico, Gaza and Israel. They were far more than heroes. Their work was based on the simple belief that food is a universal human right. It is not conditional on being good or bad, rich or poor, left or right. We do not ask what religion you belong to. We just ask how many meals you need.”

Donald Trump sued Andrés for \$10 million for withdrawing from a lease to put a restaurant in the Trump International Hotel in Washington, D.C. Andrés, who became a naturalized U.S. citizen 27 years after entering this country, was very public about the fact that Trump’s disparaging statements about immigrants made it impossible for him to run a restaurant in a Trump hotel.

The Trump argument was, in effect, what’s new? He’d always disparaged immigrants, so why should anyone get suddenly upset. You can get more details at FindLaw (<https://tinyurl.com/yx6msv6n>).

Vermont Harvest of the Month for May points out that, besides being the core of the most popular street food in Tanzania, the egg is “one of the most versatile, nutrient-rich foods on the planet.”

In “Life is Meals: A Food Lover’s Book of Days,” James and Kay Salter provide details: “The egg is the food against which all others can be measured for efficiency. Loaded with protein ... as well as all the amino acids, vitamins A, B, D and E, and most of the minerals essential for human life.”

On Monday, May 19, you don’t have to walk on eggshells or go fry an egg. Just stroll into the Charlotte Senior Center at 212 Ferry Road and enjoy a fine, healthy meal prepared by the friendly and talented cooks there.

Monday Munch
May 19, 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
Baked potato, ham, broccoli chowder, deviled eggs, homemade sour dough bread and Rice Crispy treats.

Monday, May 26, Memorial Day.
The Charlotte Senior Center is closed.
Note: The Monday Munch crew is always looking for more dishwashers. For more info, please call the Senior Center at 802-425-6345.

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