

# The Charlotte News

May 29, 2025

Your nonprofit community news source since 1958

Vol. 67, No. 24

## Selectboard chooses deferring to voters on Act 250 exemption

Brett Yates  
Contributor

Charlotte residents will have the final say on whether the town should pursue a permanent partial exemption from Act 250, Vermont's statewide land-use law, for its village centers.

On May 27, citing a preference for a townwide vote, the selectboard declined to act on a resolution endorsed unanimously by the planning commission, which would have sought to promote residential development in the commercial districts of East Charlotte and West Charlotte.

Last year, Vermont's housing shortage spurred legislators in Montpelier to pass Act 181, which revised Act 250, the landmark law on subdivisions that, since 1970, has protected the state's natural beauty (according to its proponents) and stymied its growth (according to its critics).

In the hope of jumpstarting a construction boom, Act 181 suspended Act 250's quasi-judicial process for certain developments in certain areas, including the aforementioned sections of Charlotte, until Jan. 1, 2027,

So far, Charlotte hasn't turned into New York City, but it's still early. One year later, eligible towns can "opt in" permanently to the same freedom from state-level land-use scrutiny that Act 181 initially imposed upon them. The Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission will use geographic boundaries suggested by municipal officials to create a map of proposed growth areas, which it will send to the governor's Land Use Review Board for approval.

Charlotte's villages would earn Tier 1B status, which would bring tax credits, prioritization

**BOARD** continued on page 2

## Torrents then tranquility



Photo by Carlanne Herzog

On Saturday evening after the rowdy thunderstorm had ceased, this is the view from McNeil Cove looking over Lake Champlain and the clouds that look so peaceful.

## A magic show that dazzles and instructs appears at senior center

Scooter MacMillan  
Editor

In the belief that sometimes refugee children need more than just medical attention, that they might need some magic, Tom Verner and Janet Fredericks founded Magicians Without Borders 22 years ago.

In the intervening two decades, they have brought their magic to 1.5 million young refugees and orphans in 47 countries.

You can add to the tally of those who have been touched by the magic of Magicians Without Borders — the 15 people who showed up to the Charlotte Senior Center on May 14 to see Verner perform with the help of two teenage magician's assistants.

Magicians Without Borders has grown to nine chapters around the world in countries including Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, South Africa and India. From these chapters, they have recruited "Sorcerer Apprentices," or very poor kids the couple teach to abracadabra in order to entertain, educate and empower them, Verner said.

Two years ago, they started a



Photo by Scooter MacMillan

You might say that Hank Kaestner was spellbound by Tom Verner's demonstration of the ancient cups and balls magic trick.

Sorcerer Apprentice chapter in Ukraine, and they are headed back there this week.

"We've performed for tens of thousands of refugee children," Verner said. "It feels like now, more than ever, we need to go to Ukraine."

Fredericks sees their role as

citizen diplomats in going to these refugee camps.

Among those touched by their magic, is Wendy Rodriguez who came up at a performance and said, "I always wanted to be a nurse."

She sold beans in the marketplace for 75 cents a day. One of their adult students, who had traveled to

El Salvador with them to practice magic, heard Rodriguez's story and set up a scholarship for her.

Wendy is now a geriatric nurse who makes more in an hour than she used to make in a month. She has built her mother a house and inspired her sister to go back to college. Hers is just one of many stories told on [magicianswithoutborders.com](http://magicianswithoutborders.com) about those who have been transformed by magic.

Besides magic, the audience at the senior center got a history lesson. Verner pulled out some cups and balls, introducing this as the oldest magic trick in the world. A 3,000-year-old Egyptian carving depicts two men doing this trick.

The cups and balls trick is done around the world. In Japan, Verner said, it's done with little bamboo baskets. In India, it's performed with little round cups with handles on top, in the Middle East with clay cups.

"The Lakota Sioux, the great mystic warriors of our plains, did this with boxes," he said.

In the U.S., it is often used as a gambling trick called the shell game.

As Verner wove a spell of

history mingled with magic, he demonstrated why he is someone you would never want to gamble against. He started with a red ball. As anyone over the age of 6 would probably expect, after the ball was placed under a cup and the cups were shuffled, volunteers were repeatedly unable to figure out which cup the ball was under. Then it was two balls under the unexpected cup, and then three.

Then, when Verner lifted a cup, instead of a red ball, a clementine was there. When covered and uncovered again, the clementine had transformed into a potato, which transformed into an egg, before finally being revealed to once again being the red ball.

Next, he performed what he said is the world's second oldest trick — the rope trick.

As many times as you may have seen this trick on TV or with large audiences, it was particularly amazing to see it up close as three different lengths of rope became one long rope, or a rope loop with no visible breaks or blemishes. Also amazing was how he repeatedly tied a knot in a rope and then

**MAGIC** continued on page 3



# Day of remembrance

Photos by Lee Krohn

Memorial Day was observed in Charlotte at the Grandview Cemetery behind the Charlotte Congregational Church with Charlotte Central School student Ben Vincent playing taps, veteran Jordan Paquette sharing heartfelt comments and residents placing fresh flags on veterans' gravesites.



## BOARD

Continued from page 1

for state investment and the right to build 50 or fewer units on 10 or fewer acres without interference, except by local regulations, which would remain active. But not all Charlotters want to see projects that big.

“Services are something that I think needs to be upgraded in the town before we go through a whole bunch of building,” selectboard member Frank Tenney said during a presentation by the regional planning commission. He pointed to inadequate water and sewer infrastructure and an absence of sidewalks.

Selectboard member Natalie Kanner expressed doubt that new “million-dollar houses” in Charlotte would ease Vermont’s affordability problem for low-income renters or homebuyers. Observing that “a climate-resilient environment needs green spaces,” she urged “high-density housing in existing paved places.”

Board member Lewis Mudge called the regional planning commission’s local housing development targets “reasonable.”

Under an optimistic scenario, Chittenden County would see more than 10,500 new units by 2030, but its six “rural towns” — including Charlotte — would absorb only 3.8 percent of these. As a share of the county’s

total population, these municipalities would shrink, not grow.

Kanner professed a reluctance to override the local planning commission’s recommendation. Yet the selectboard did not bring its proposed resolution to a vote.

“This is a really sensitive issue in this town,” Mudge said. “I do think we should probably put it to a townwide vote.”

This year, on Town Meeting Day, Charlotters voted to adopt a municipal charter that would prohibit amendments of the town’s land-use bylaws except by popular vote via Australian ballot.

The state has not approved this charter, and opting into the permanent Act 250 exemption would have no bearing on the town’s land-use bylaws in any case. Nevertheless, the selectboard seemed determined to abide by the spirit of the March vote, which had appeared to indicate a widespread desire to resolve land-use questions through direct democracy.

The Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission expects to finalize its Regional Future Land Use Map in October. The Land Use Review Board’s subsequent review will likely take eight months. Charlotters will not go to the polls again until November.

“If you wanted to change something, we’d have to go back through that eight-month process,” Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission executive director

Charlie Baker said. “But I think you have to make the decisions on the timeline that’s right for you.”

### Lights for crosswalk

The Friends of the Walter Irish Senior Community Center will install LED signs at the crosswalk between the senior center and the post office. The selectboard voted unanimously to accept the gift.

“As we all know, the concern at any crosswalk is: do motorists even know it’s there?” selectboard chair Lee Krohn said. “Personally, I think having these lights is a great idea.”

### Recreation director resigns

Recreation director Zac Farnham-Haskell has submitted a letter of resignation, according to the selectboard. The town will repost the job description that it used to recruit Farnham-Haskell last June.

“Shame to see Zac go, and we thank him for his service to the town,” Mudge said.

The town website currently lists openings for a zoning administrator and a town planner. On Tuesday, the selectboard approved an agreement with Spherion Staffing & Recruiting, a temp agency.

In Krohn’s words, the arrangement will provide “some temporary assistance for the town administrator during this period of very short staffing.”



#### Mission Statement

To engage and inform Charlotte and nearby communities by:

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

#### Editorial independence

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

#### Code of Ethics

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

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

#### Disclaimer

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

#### Letters, Opinions and Obituaries

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

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

#### Editorial Staff

**Editor:** Scooter MacMillan ([scooter@thecharlottenews.org](mailto:scooter@thecharlottenews.org))  
**Production Manager:** Anna Cyr ([anna@thecharlottenews.org](mailto:anna@thecharlottenews.org))  
**Proofreaders:** Mike & Janet Yantachka, Katherine Arthaud

#### Business Staff

**Ad manager:** Susie Therrien ([ads@thecharlottenews.org](mailto:ads@thecharlottenews.org))  
**Bookkeeper:** Susan Jones ([billing@thecharlottenews.org](mailto:billing@thecharlottenews.org))

#### Board Members

**Board Chair:** Andrew Zehner ([andrew@thecharlottenews.org](mailto:andrew@thecharlottenews.org))  
**Treasurer:** Margery McCracken ([treasurer@thecharlottenews.org](mailto:treasurer@thecharlottenews.org))  
**Secretary:** Meredith Moses  
**Board members:** Peter Joslin, Susan McCullough, Julia Russell, Dave Speidel, Damaris Herlihy, Vince Crockenberg (emeritus), John Hammer (emeritus)  
**Technical advisor:** Melissa Mendelsohn, Orchard Road Computers

**Website:** [charlottenewsvt.org](http://charlottenewsvt.org)

#### Subscription Information

The Charlotte News is delivered at no cost to all Charlotte residences. Subscriptions are available for first-class delivery at \$60 per calendar year.

**Want a subscription? Subscribe on our website, [charlottenewsvt.org](http://charlottenewsvt.org)**

#### Postmaster/Send address changes to:

The Charlotte News, P.O. Box 251, Charlotte, VT 05445 Telephone: 802-425-4949 Circulation: 2,100

Copyright © 2025 TCN, Inc., dba The Charlotte News. Member of the New England Newspaper and Press Association, LION Publishers, Institute for Nonprofit News and the Vermont Press Association.

**Support local nonprofit reporting. Donate Today!**





# Once upon a time, Vermont barn dances were the rage

Kate Lewton  
Community News Service

Vermont’s barns are generally for cows, but years ago, with a spare Saturday night and a broom, plenty of them played home to a now half-forgotten art — the barn dance.

Someone’s grandparents always seem to remember one, and sometimes you can still find the scruffs and scrapes of shoes and boots on the floors. But where’d those hoe-downs go? What were they like? And what did they do for small, rural communities?

The history of barn dances in Vermont is dynamic with movement itself. Many of the forms throughout local history have been European inspired, influenced by early French-Canadian, Scottish and English settlers, with modifications throughout modernization. The dances spanned country styles: square, line, contra.

Some of the earliest 19th century dance events recorded in Vermont were called kitchen tunks or junkets. First mentioned in 1868 by a St. Albans newspaper, tunks entailed stripping the furniture from a farmhouse kitchen and bringing in a fiddler. Usually, they followed a community labor or gathering.

Terry Bouricius, who went to Middlebury College in the 1970s, said he’s heard plenty of folklore about those kitchen tunks from his longstanding time in the Vermont dance community.

“People would have a dance in the winter,” he said. “You know, it is not harvest season, it’s not planting season — there’s downtime. The joke, and I don’t know if it is true or not, is the fiddle player would stand in the sink so there would be more floor space.”

Though he never attended a tunk, Boruicius has gone to his fair share of community dances, especially ones focused on contra

“I lived in Charlotte at the time, and we would get a carload of people, and we’d drive, you know, two and half hours to get to go dance till dawn and then take turns driving back ’cause we were all too sleepy to drive the whole way back.”

— Terry Bouricius

dancing, which involves partners in opposite lines, rather than in square formations. The gatherings came a little too late, roughly the mid-’70s onward, to be considered classic barn dances.

But they were an offshoot of the old Vermont tradition. Boruicius remembers dawn dances in particular — contra dances held with live music until the sun came up and dancers dropped.

“There were dawn dances in the community recreation gym in Brattleboro,” he said. “They would have a whole list of bands lined up, and they would start at like 8 p.m., and they would go till 8 a.m. with live mu-



Photo courtesy Library of Congress

People dancing in a barn in Louisiana in 1938, as shown in a film negative from Farm Security Administration photographer Russell Lee.

sic and people contra dancing all through the night. And occasionally there would be dawn dances in other parts of the state, too.”

He remembers them as popular events, recalling that people were willing to travel for the hurrah.

“I lived in Charlotte at the time, and we would get a carload of people, and we’d drive, you know, two and half hours to get to go dance till dawn and then take turns driving back ’cause we were all too sleepy to drive the whole way back,” he said. “I did that probably 10 times over the years.”

Barn dances played in small corners of communities for decades. By local ac-

counts they appeared most popular in the 1930s-50s but remained a staple up into the 1970s and 1980s. Initially inspired by the western music of Nashville, many families operated small-scale bands that would travel around the state playing events, becoming something of local celebrities.

Daniel Cole, president of the Charlotte Historical Society, remembers how many people enjoyed the music of his father, Al Cole, when his swing band would play barn dances — and the dust they kicked up.

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

## MAGIC

Continued from page 1

pulled those knots off and displayed them as separate little chunks of rope knots.

A spectator “cut” the rope using his two fingers as scissors, and the rope fell into separate pieces.

Verner was joined by his two adolescent assistants, his granddaughter Amaya Freund and Yasmin Artis, who performed magic themselves — much to the delight of the audience.

And much to the delight of her grandfather. Afterward, Verner said performing with his granddaughter is like a dream come true.

“I perform at a resort in the Adirondacks once a week all summer, a place called Timberlock on Indian Lake. Last summer, she performed with me,” he said. “Then in November, we went to India together, and she performed in orphanages and hospitals. Yeah, it’s really wonderful.”

Verner has toured veterans administration hospitals in New England, training veterans to be magicians. He calls them “Warrior Wizards,” and they travel to VA hospitals or perform at events for vets and their families.

As audience members were called up to help with the prestidigitations, each was asked for their favorite incantation. Abracadabra and shazam were suggested and each worked their magic, but when hocus

pocus was offered, Verner lapsed into another historical sidenote.

It seems that, during the Middle Ages, there was a holiday called the Feast of Fools, which was celebrated by turning all the procedures and roles in a town upside down. For instance, the town drunk would become the bishop for the duration of the celebration.

“The village idiot would become the president. Oh, did I just say that?” Verner faux apologized. “That was a little politics in there. Sorry about that.”

The most holy words in the Catholic mass are “hoc est enim corpus meum,” or “this is my body” in English. According to Verner, the town drunk usually didn’t know Latin, and as he stumbled over the words, it sounded like “hocus pocus,” and hence this conjuration was born.

In the 1970s, Verner was working as a clinical psychologist in a residential drug and alcohol hospital where there was a patient who was a professional magician. He had lost everything because of his heroin addiction.

The patient was reluctant to share his magic secrets. However, when Verner was assigned his case for individual psychotherapy, the patient relented.

“He came to the first hour-long session and said, ‘OK, Verner, 50 minutes are mine and 10 minutes are yours.’ So, for two years, he taught me magic 10 minutes a week,” Verner

said.

The patient was very strict. If Verner hadn’t practiced and learned the trick he’d been shown in their previous session, the patient wouldn’t share a new trick during Verner’s 10 minutes of their session.

After two years, Verner’s patient graduated from the residential treatment center. In his new life he became a barber because making a living as a magician is just so hard, but he continued to be a performing magician.

For many years, Verner was a practicing psychologist, a college professor and a professional magician, so in addition to practicing magic, he was practicing juggling ... in this case, three jobs. Then, he and his wife founded Magicians Without Borders and began traveling to refugee camps around the world.

They live in Lincoln and have taught magic classes at Lincoln Community School, but those have stopped for summer vacation and for the Ukrainian refugee camp trip. After the trip, they might offer a summer magic camp for all ages, if there is enough interest.

If you are interested in improving your “spelling” or in supporting the organization’s refugee efforts, go to [magicianswithoutborders.com](http://magicianswithoutborders.com) or call 802-453-5425. You might find some of your free time disappearing, while your sense of accomplishment materializes.



## NEXT PUBLICATION DATES

<b>JUNE 12</b>	<b>JUNE 26</b>
<b>Copy Deadline:</b>	<b>Copy Deadline:</b>
JUNE 6	JUNE 20
<b>Ad Deadline:</b>	<b>Ad Deadline:</b>
JUNE 6	JUNE 20

**TO ADVERTISE CONTACT:**  
[ads@thecharlottenews.org](mailto:ads@thecharlottenews.org)  
**SEND YOUR CHARLOTTE NEWS TO:**  
[news@thecharlottenews.org](mailto:news@thecharlottenews.org)



# Letters to the Editor

## Concerns about the Education Transformation Bill

To the Editor:

Champlain Valley School District Board Chair Meghan Metzler and I have been carefully considering when to bring your attention to a bill currently in the Vermont Senate. We believe the time to communicate is now.

The bill — H.454 — was introduced in response to Governor Scott’s call for education spending and governance reform in our state. Given the stakes and the timing of the legislative session, it would be irresponsible to remain silent about a bill that will have dramatic impacts on the students we serve.

The bill is complex and far reaching, and many of these reform ideas could represent a meaningful step forward in Vermont’s long-standing conversation about equitable education; however, the most current version (<https://tinyurl.com/4dxvcd9>) of the bill, largely drafted in the Senate, fails to achieve those objectives and politicizes the task force redrawing district lines. It includes few, if any, provisions to address the very real cost pressures facing schools, such as rising healthcare expenses, the increasing demands placed on the education system and the economic inefficiencies associated with maintaining very small schools across the state. It proposes changing the way schools are funded by implementing a foundation

formula.

Unfortunately, both the Senate and House versions of the proposed new foundation formula could result in a loss of at least another \$10 million in funding for our schools. To put that in perspective: over the past 12 months, we’ve already reduced \$9 million — resulting in the elimination of 82 positions. A combined impact exceeding \$20 million is unworkable.

Most importantly, from our perspective, this bill would significantly reduce opportunities for the students we serve.

We are open to being constructive partners in this work. But we urge you to contact your legislators and let them know that we need legislation that strengthens the Champlain Valley School District — not dismantles it.

Adam Bunting  
Williston

*(Adam Bunting is the superintendent of the Champlain Valley School District.)*

## An update on charter testimony and next steps

To the Editor:

On April 30, I provided testimony in support of the charter for town-wide vote on land-use regulation changes, now referred to as bill H.506, to the House Government Operations and Military Affairs Committee. I shared the comments and concerns heard from Charlotters in support of the charter in three sections: civic engagement, power of the selectboard and transparency in



Courtesy photo

Members of the Charlotte Congregational Church stand in front of the church with signs reflecting their concerns about policy changes coming from Washington.

government, and the importance of building consensus. I conveyed that Charlotte’s desire to vote on land-use regulation changes is not an attempt to close the doors on housing in Charlotte; we too experience the effects of the statewide housing shortage, and as a community, we are taking steps to work on that issue.

Next, Charlotte Selectboard Chair Lee Krohn also testified in support of the charter as written, in honor of the 2-1 vote in favor of the charter in March.

Finally, Kesha Ram Hinsdale, author of the Home Act, testified. Her presentation highlights the need for increased housing stock in Vermont, as well as concerns that land-use regulations can exacerbate barriers to housing access and development.

I reiterated that the charter in Charlotte addresses one specific piece of the Home Act: Charlotte residents want to maintain our ability to vote on land-use regulation changes — rather than giving permissions to the selectboard to make changes without a town vote. Charlotte residents want to be involved in decision making around development in town, not to block decision making. Our community continually works to be good stewards of our natural resources and the rural character of the town.

No other action is being taken by the House Government Operations and Military Affairs Committee at this time, so our next step is to work with the selectboard to create town policy that preserves town-wide voting on land-use regulation changes. Changes to our land-use regulations are in the works, so we hope to formalize policy ASAP.

The recording of the testimony can be viewed online: [youtube.com/watch?v=5-EgKT9vaV0](https://youtube.com/watch?v=5-EgKT9vaV0).

Karen Frost  
Charlotte

## Building a flock of hope

To the Editor:

On Monday, May 12, from 5-6 p.m., the Social Justice team of Charlotte Congregational Church hosted the first of eight vigils, which will run through July 14, on the front lawn of the church at 403 Church Hill Rd. We rang bells, held encouraging signs and waved at cars and bicyclists as they passed by.

We’re doing this because:

- We recognize that so many of us across the political spectrum are feeling anxious, angry and overwhelmed by the rapid and extensive policy changes coming from Washington.
- We know that so many of us are deeply concerned about how these are negatively impacting our neighbors, refugees and immigrants, the LGBTQ+ community, our businesses, public health and research, our free speech.
- We recognize that all this is taking a toll on our emotional, spiritual, physical and relational well being.

As a faith community, committed to “prayerful, compassionate and courageous action in the world,” and as a supplement to the many protests already occurring around the country, we’ll gather once a week to offer something different: a place and time to build a flock of hope, saying: “We see you, and we’re here as people of hope to meet you with hope.”

All are invited to join us. For more info about the Charlotte Congregational Church, see [charlotteucc.org](https://charlotteucc.org).

Rev. Kevin Goldenbogen  
Charlotte

*(Kevin Goldenbogen is the senior pastor of Charlotte Congregational Church.)*

Advertise Your Business in  
**The Charlotte News**

Contact [ads@TheCharlotteNews.org](mailto:ads@TheCharlotteNews.org)



Commentary

Big Beautiful Bill may be big, but really not that beautiful

Peter Macia  
Contributor

Before many of us woke up the morning of May 22, the Republican-controlled U.S. House of Representatives passed HR.1 aka “The One Big Beautiful Bill Act” by one vote, 215-214.

If passed by the Republican-controlled Senate (presumably by a vote barely over 50 percent) and signed by Donald Trump (who won less than 50 percent of the popular vote), this bill would become the biggest wealth transfer in the history of the United States. It would permanently enrich the wealthiest 5 percent while giving the rest of us a little tax break that would expire after three or four years, while slashing benefits across nearly every aspect of our lives.

The top 5 percent of earners in the US make an average of \$499,900 per year. Is this you? It sure as hell isn’t me!

I don’t know what else it could take for us to get over the culture wars of the last 10 years if this doesn’t do it.

If you voted for Trump and think giving more money to the people who already have most of it will eventually make its way to the rest of us, let me ask you: How much you think Donald Trump has given to charity since the 1980s?

The answer is \$7,800,000. And some of that went to dubious recipients like \$25,000 to current U.S. Attorney General Pam Bondi’s Florida campaign PAC in 2013, when she was considering joining a lawsuit against Trump University for fraud. Trump claims he’s worth \$5.5 billion dollars. That \$7,800,000 in charity is 0.001 percent of his wealth.

Trump has also paid almost nothing in taxes while accruing his billions.



Photo by Aaron Kittredge of Pexels

What does that mean? Nearly every penny he makes stays in his pocket.

How much of your income stays in your pocket?

Trump also now gets world-class health insurance for free for the rest of his life. How much do you pay for health insurance? How many of you are on Medicaid or Medicare? How much will you be able to pay in the future?

How many of you can have another child to earn the \$1,000 “Trump Account” deposit included in this bill? What if that account is in Trump’s cryptocurrency?

Do you plan to benefit from tax exemptions on tips? What about the third of tip workers who don’t make enough to owe income tax? What about low-income

non-tip workers? What do they get?

How many of you are worried about the \$3-\$5 trillion this bill will add to the debt over the next 10 years?

How many of you are worried about the cuts to Alzheimer’s, cancer and heart disease research? Or the cuts in Veterans Administration benefits? Who do you think will pay increased insurance premiums when the elderly require more care for Alzheimer’s, cancer and heart disease, or when veterans need more care?

What would you do with the \$180 billion dollars going to states that promise to assist Homeland Security in deporting and detaining legal residents? Or the \$46 billion going to build a border wall when a vast majority of immigrants enter the U.S. through legal ports of entry? Or the \$175 billion going to build a “Golden Dome” missile defense system that would be physically impossible according to science?

Would you rather have \$500 billion dollars going to Medicare?

What about energy independence? Were you planning to get tax breaks or

incentives on solar panels or an electric vehicle or heat pumps or any kind of renewable product that would alleviate the cost of fossil fuel now and in the future?

Are you part of the 9 percent of taxpayers who itemize their deductions and would benefit from an increase to the SALT cap? Or are you part of the 91 percent who will see no benefit at all?

What about your kids going to college? Were you hoping to pay less for tuition or student loans? Or would you rather it be harder to get and repay student loans and have university endowments taxed 21 percent more than they are now, leading to decreased spending outside of tuition?

Would you like to drink toxic water and breathe toxic air? Would you like to have our National Parks turned into private fracking fields?

I could go on, but do I need to?

What will it take for us to come together and realize that the culture wars over stolen elections, transgender athletes, gay marriage, Black Lives Matter, antifa, DEI, gun ownership, immigration, women’s rights, climate change, universal healthcare, etc. were always meant to lead to this moment?

The moment when the wealthiest people in human history tried to steal the wealth and health we, our parents and grandparents worked so hard to build for our future generations?

In order for them to succeed, all they need is for us to stay divided and keep fighting each other instead of fighting them. This is the steal we need to stop. We cannot let them make another gilded age.

If you’re a Vermonter, I beg you to put all of that aside and call or write Bernie Sanders’ office, to give him ammo in the Senate debate of this bill.

If you’re registered to vote in another state, I beg you to put all that aside and call or write your Senator and give them hell for voting for it.

Call or write your relatives in other states and ask them to do the same. This will be our only chance to stop it. We are all in this together.

Trail screening



Photo by Tom Hengelsberg

From left, Coleen Kiley, Deedle Kiley, Richard Hendrickson, Chris Boffa and other volunteers and members of the trails committee, plant four trees in early May, paid for by the Rutter Family Tree Fund, to help screen private property adjacent to the Village Loop Trail between the Old Lantern Inn and Ferry Road.

200 Wake Robin Drive, Shelburne | wakerobin.com

.....

**Tag & Book  
SALE**

Saturday, June 7, 9 am - 3 pm

Rain or Shine | Cash or Check preferred

Pets not allowed



## Commentary

# 'Nonprofit' healthcare system governing boards questions

Bill Schubart  
Contributor

As healthcare costs in Vermont gobble up more and more expendable resources needed for housing, education, property tax abatement, etc. it's time to ask hard questions and hold providers and their governing boards ethically and legally accountable for honest answers and transparency instead of further mission-failure and public relations psychobabble.

Key to understanding the current healthcare crisis today is its history. Established in 2011, University of Vermont Health Network, formerly called Fletcher-Allen Partners, by 2018 had acquired three New York hospitals and two more Vermont hospitals, Central Vermont Medical Center in Berlin and Porter Hospital in Middlebury, and also the former Chittenden and Franklin County Visiting Nurse Association.

It's important to understand that University of Vermont Health Network is not a hospital but rather a lucrative healthcare business aggregator acquiring and running hospitals and healthcare service institutions to expand market share. The stated goal was, through collaboration and cost-efficiencies across the network, to lower costs, improve access and enhance service quality. But what has emerged

from all this is a bloated monopoly that has skyrocketed healthcare costs and reduced access for Vermonters and Vermont businesses, while failing to achieve "cost efficiencies."

Latest available 2019 data from PubMed, a division of the National Institutes of Health, shows \$584 million worth of annual waste embedded in University of Vermont Medical Center on the administrative and management side and a total of \$1.038 billion in waste across all Vermont hospitals. So much for systemic cost-efficiencies.

Vermont healthcare employees fall into two groups: hands-on healthcare providers (clinical) and system managers and administrators (overhead). When the \$1.9 billion budget of University of Vermont Medical Center is broken into these two categories, it ranks among the worst ratios of any of the similar-sized academic medical centers in the country. A 2023 analysis of federal data by Rees Partners, LLC, showed the University of Vermont Medical Center's ratio of clinical care to admin/management to be 1.38 against a 2.30 mean among 44 comparable academic medical centers, or 40 percent worse than the mean.

While Blue Cross Blue Shield of Vermont teeters on the brink of insolvency with less than two weeks of cash reserves

to pay claims, the University of Vermont Medical Center charges to all commercial insurers rose by \$400 million in FY 2024 — 74 percent of which were Blue Cross Blue Shield of Vermont claims. In the recent court settlement of a suit brought by the University of Vermont Medical Center against our state regulator, the Green Mountain Care Board, the plaintiff agreed to offer \$12 million back to the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Vermont, adding insult to injury. On May 15, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Vermont filed a rate increase request with the Green Mountain Care Board of 23.3 percent in the individual market and 13.7 percent in the small group market, increases needed to survive the ongoing overbilling.

Meanwhile, the University of Vermont Medical Center lost \$119.5M on Medicare reimbursements in FY2022 while 82 of 106 comparable academic medical center peers broke even or earned positive margins from Medicare. The average annual net profit in this group was \$5M. Over the past 10 years, the University of Vermont Medical Center has lost an average of \$54.5M a year caring for Medicare patients.

The latest analysis by Rees Partners of 2018 & 2019 audits by Price Waterhouse Coopers and in 2020 to 2024 by Ernst & Young found "board-designated" and "board-restricted" funds in 2018 of \$897,484, escalating 220 percent to \$1,942,529 in 2024. The University of Vermont Health Network Board owes us an explanation of what the "terms and conditions" are for actually using these funds to provide healthcare to Vermonters rather than squirreling money away from accounting scrutiny.

We must be clear that the declining number of healthcare professionals in the system work tirelessly to care for and help heal and control pain among those suffering adverse health events. MDs and nurses (RNs & LPNs), physician assistants (PAs), techs, mental-health counselors, addiction specialists, primary-care docs, hospitalists and specialists for the most part work in the system because they believe in the goal of universal healthcare for all, even as our country doesn't. These "better angels" of the system deserve better. Non-specialists are generally under-compensated for their professions. Many techs, nurses and PAs can't afford to live in the communities they serve and leave either by choice or necessity. The term we often hear is "moral injury," meaning that the lofty goal of caring for those needing help is confounded by the system in which one works.

By regulation, all Vermont hospitals must be nonprofit. Nonprofit board governance is legally and ethically accountable for its institution's delivery-on-mission, as well as its ethical and financial integrity. The president serves solely at the will of the board, which must hold him or her accountable in an annual performance review. The board is also accountable for compensation and benefits. Is more than \$2 million, including bonus and benefits, the appropriate compensation for the president of an institution whose climbing costs and declining access are a matter of record

and whose quality was just downgraded by Medicare because of an increase in hospital-acquired infections, though these are not reflective of the quality of care but rather of poor facility hygiene?

Given the dire financial numbers cited above, it's a stretch to assume that the governing boards of our healthcare institutions are doing their jobs according to the rule of law.

Isn't it time to hold the intermingled governing boards of our University of Vermont Health Network hospitals to ethical and legal account for their own governance failures? Here are their names: the University of Vermont Health Network Board and the University of Vermont Medical Center Board.

Many Vermonters concerned about the runaway costs of healthcare in Vermont and how those costs have put healthcare insurers at grave risk or simply caused them to leave the Vermont market have come together to form a coalition to suggest ways to make our healthcare infrastructure affordable, accessible and sustainable while retaining service quality. Made up of business and nonprofit leaders, a former governor and president of the Vermont Business Roundtable, four statewide service unions, AARP-VT and Vermont Businesses for Social Responsibility, Vermont Health Care 911 was formed and is working across party lines to achieve these shared goals.



In deference to the "common good," nonprofits are not required to pay taxes and donors to their causes can deduct their contributions. Were the combined retained earnings of the University of Vermont Medical Center and University of Vermont Health Network taxed, what would that contribute to Vermont's stressed budget? Were the vast Burlington property holdings of these institutions taxable as properties in Chittenden County, how much would that revenue contribute towards the creation of affordable housing for those who work there?

Having chaired 13 statewide Vermont organizations in my long lifetime, including Fletcher-Allen Health Care two decades ago, shortly after the president of the hospital was charged with lying to its regulator, the department of Banking, Insurance, Securities & Health Care Administration (now the Department of Financial Regulation), and who was then remanded to two years in a federal prison, I wonder if it's time for a thorough audit of our leading medical institution by the Vermont Attorney General's Office or the Vermont State Auditor. Remember: The difference between a nonprofit organization and a business, simply put, is delivery on mission rather than lucrative business expansion.

We must ask these questions, but more importantly, the boards of these institutions must ask these questions, and we must hold them accountable.

*(Bill Schubart is former chair of the Vermont Business Roundtable and Fletcher-Allen Health Care, current board member Vermont Health Care 911 and an adviser to The Charlotte News.)*

### Fun Play Clothes from Rylee & Crui!



54 FALLS ROAD  
MON-FRI 10-5, SAT-SUN 10-4 7  
802-985-3221

# Hi! Neighbor

## Enjoying the view in Charlotte, saving lives at UVM

Phyl Newbeck  
Contributor

In 2015, Dr. Mary Cushman attended a seminar at the University of Vermont on how medical professionals should talk about philanthropy with patients. She disappointed the presenter by not following his advice, but he forgave her because she may have saved his life.

Joe Golding's message was that when people thank doctors for their work, the physicians should accept the gratitude and tell them that if they want to further express their appreciation with a donation, there are people they can talk to. After the presentation, one of the organizers asked Cushman to look at Golding's leg. As a vascular hematologist, she is an expert in blood clots, and she agreed that his leg looked worrisome.

An ultrasound didn't show a clot, but Golding also mentioned chest symptoms, and Cushman was concerned that a clot might have moved from his leg to his chest. Golding was about to get on a plane, which is a risk factor for clots. Cushman convinced him to delay the flight and get a CT scan which revealed early-stage cancer.

When Golding thanked her, she forgot her lesson and just said "no problem." She recalls that Golding gave her a look which reminded her that she had erred, but it didn't matter. He had decided to donate \$25,000 to one of Cushman's research projects.

Cushman wears many hats including director of the Thrombosis and Hemostasis Program at the University of Vermont, co-director of the Vermont Center for Cardiovascular and Brain Health and co-director of the Laboratory for Clinical Biochemistry Research.

She works with patients who have either deep vein thrombosis which occurs mostly

in the legs, or pulmonary embolism. She noted that less than half of the population understands these issues, which can lead to delayed diagnoses.

"Too often we see people who have been short of breath for weeks," she said, "and it turns out their lungs are full of clots. I want to raise awareness of these issues."

In addition to her medical degree, Cushman completed a master's in epidemiology to learn about research methods that explain how and why diseases and health conditions are distributed across various populations.

"It made all the difference," she said. "The training allowed me to elevate my research using state-of-the-art methods."

One research project Cushman has been involved with is Reasons for Geographic and Racial Differences in Strokes. She is part of a group that won a \$24-million grant from the National Institute of Health to follow 30,000 people across the country. The American Southeast, with the exception of Florida, is known as the stroke belt, and Black people are at a high risk of strokes, so the goal was to identify risk factors.

"To study geography as a risk factor you need a lot of sites," Cushman said.

The initial information was collected by telephone and then people were visited in their homes for bloodwork, physical exams and EKGs to get a baseline. The first exams were conducted in 2003, but the grant has been renewed, and exams were conducted again 10 and then 20 years later. Cushman just learned that the first person who participated in the study has agreed to a third visit.

Of the original 30,000 people involved in the study, 8,000 are still involved in it. UVM is the central lab and holds all the blood and urine samples, but scientists from outside the university have begun

using the information for other purposes like genomic research. When the grant was initially funded, the National Institute for Health asked Cushman's team to also collect cognitive testing results. She now has a post doc student who is studying how atrial fibrillation contributes to cognitive impairment.

After 27 years in Shelburne, Cushman sought a place with a little more space and a view, landing in Charlotte in 2019. When she was stuck at home during the pandemic, she felt lucky to have a view that didn't include other houses, and she began taking sunset photographs every night to post on social media with the goal of bringing something positive to her feed.

Cushman enjoys creating perennial gardens on her property. "Digging in the dirt and pulling out weeds and thinking of the design are very different from what I do at work," she said. "It's relaxing and good exercise."

Cushman is thrilled that one of the first students she trained is now a full professor at the University of Vermont.

"You can do your science and publish papers," she said. "That's wonderful and rewarding, but it doesn't always have staying power. The people that emanate from what you're doing and go on and share that with others is equally important."



Photo by Andy Duback  
Mary Cushman cares about your heart.

## Around Town

### Congratulations

After a nationwide search, Philo Ridge Farm, a nonprofit working demonstration farm in Charlotte dedicated to promoting organic regenerative agriculture, has hired Bryan Flower as executive director and Marc St. Jacques as director of food and beverage and executive chef. These leadership hires mark a significant milestone in the farm's evolution as a nonprofit organization, the organization said in a press release.

Flower has worked across South Africa, Europe, the Middle East and the United States. He brings expertise in team leadership, food systems innovation and operations.

Most recently, he led the nationally lauded Northern Illinois University's Edible Campus initiative and Sustainable Food Systems Innovation Challenge as assistant. Prior to that, he directed operations, led faculty mentorship and organized an annual culinary symposium

as associate dean at Robert Morris University. His background includes raising livestock, developing sustainable farming practices and building community food programs.

St. Jacques brings over two decades of culinary leadership, most recently as owner and executive chef of Bar Bête in Brooklyn. His career includes executive chef positions at the Ace Hotel (overseeing The Breslin and John Dory Oyster Bar), culinary director for Pearle Hospitality developing farm and butchery programs and executive chef at Auberge du Pommier and Restaurant Michael Mina.

Under St. Jacques' direction, guests can expect refined, yet approachable menus highlighting the farm's seasonal harvest.

Philo Ridge Farm said it will share more details around summer operating hours and experiences in early June. The farm is hiring for positions including line cooks, servers and market associates. Visit [philoridgefarm.org](http://philoridgefarm.org) for details.





# Community Roundup

## Major milestone reached in securing farmland

The Agrihood Collective, led by farmers, food business owners and agroecologists, has acquired over 360 acres of conserved farmland in South Burlington with support from the Vermont Land Trust. The Agrihood Collective will use the land to establish a community hub for food and farming in the greater Burlington area.

The organization’s mission is to provide communities with quality nutrition, land-based education and healthy ecosystems by ensuring the permanent regenerative stewardship of land and viable farm livelihoods.

In an area facing intense development pressure, The Agrihood Collective has reached a major milestone in securing this land which includes 227 acres of farmland, 46 acres of wetlands and 13 miles of streams. This land will be permanently stewarded using regenerative farming practices (that restore soil and ecosystems) and will serve as a home for land-based education.

## Does your business want to be a VIP?

Easterseals Vermont has been empowering families for the last 40 years, providing

services throughout Vermont, often partnering with the Department for Children and Families to find family-centered solutions and create safety and well-being for children and parents.

This spring, Easterseals VT launched its first ever Local Biz Sticker Program to raise funds for its Very Important Partner (VIP) Campaign. This fundraising campaign helps Easterseals VT provide best-in-class programs and services to families and children. For a \$100 donation, local businesses can become a Very Important Partner of Easterseals VT in 2025. In return, they receive a window sticker to proudly display their support for the community and Vermont neighbors in need and will be listed on the Easterseals VT website as a 2025 VIP.

With 100 employees across the state, Easterseals VT supports the needs of approximately 2,000 individuals each year, including at-risk youth, foster youth and families formed by adoption or guardianship.

This year, Easterseals VT aims to raise \$10,500 through the VIP Campaign to guarantee critical services and programs to those who rely on them. Make an impact on your neighbors in need. Contact [development@eastersealsVT.org](mailto:development@eastersealsVT.org) or 802-461-8582.

To learn more about Easterseals Vermont and our mission, visit [eastersealsVT.org](http://eastersealsVT.org).

## Big Brothers Big Sisters of Vermont celebrates 50 years

For 50 years, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Vermont has been nurturing, one-on-one mentoring relationships that ignite the promise of youth.

Since its founding in 1975, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Vermont has matched thousands of children (“Littles”) with caring adult mentors (“Bigs”), fostering relationships that help young people realize their potential for a brighter future. This milestone is not just a celebration of years; it’s a celebration of lives changed, challenges overcome and a community that continues to show up for its youth.

“This anniversary is a powerful reminder of what’s possible when a community comes together to support its young people,” said Stacy Kramer, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Vermont executive director.

Research shows that one in five youth between the ages of 3 and 17 experience mental, emotional, developmental or behavioral obstacles where the impact of mentoring is monumental, helping to reduce depression symptoms and increase social acceptance, academic attitudes and grades.

In the past year, 96 percent of the organization’s Littles reported that their mentor is making a positive difference in their life, with 87 percent believing they will succeed in life after high school. Youth who



Cowan and Colin are a Big and Little whose lives have been changed by participating in Big Brothers Big Sisters of Vermont.

meet regularly with their mentors are:

- 52 percent less likely than peers to skip a day of school
- 46 percent less likely than peers to start using illegal drugs, and
- 27 percent less likely to start drinking.

Consider volunteering as a mentor, a small-time investment for a lifetime of impact. You can also support with a donation, encourage your workplace to get involved or become a program sponsor.

To learn more visit [bbbsvt.org](http://bbbsvt.org) or call 802-689-0092.

## Rescuers recognized



Photo by Lee Krohn

From left, Jamie Valyou, Lanie Billings, Zach Trono and Devin St. George were presented awards by the board of the Charlotte Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service for their actions in saving a life on May 2. The rescue responders used CPR and defibrillation to restore spontaneous circulation on a person who had suffered a cardiac arrest. The patient was conscious and alert when they arrived at the University of Vermont Medical Center.



# Mock wreck portrays consequences of poor decisions

Scooter MacMillan  
Editor

Prom season seems like a very good time to talk to high school students about making good decisions. But sometimes talk about such subjects goes in one ear and dissipates into adolescent ethers before it even has time to travel out the other.

Instead of just talking about the dangers of poor decision making mixed with alcohol or drugs, area fire and rescue services staged a mock crash at Champlain Valley Union High on May 15.

Hinesburg Fire Chief Prescott Nadeau decided to revive an event that had been

regularly staged until around eight years ago. He said staging the mock crash sort of lost steam some years ago, and then COVID really put a damper on it.

The rescue workers and teacher and student volunteers portraying victims worked to make the “crash” as realistic as possible.

Two wrecked vehicles were staged with victims that had been painted with makeup to look like blood and other injuries to intensify the portrayal of the consequences of adolescents celebrating inappropriately and out of control because of substances they might have ingested on nights that should be festive rites of passage instead of long-

lasting tragedies with possibly lethal results.

In the portrayal, one of the “victims” was even pulled from a wrecked car, placed on a gurney and covered with a sheet to signify that they had “died.” A helicopter even flew in, landing on CVU’s baseball field to depict the necessity of life flighting “victims” with critical injuries.

“It can be very emotional,” Nadeau said. Participants were encouraged to lean into the intense emotions of the situation they were portraying.

The crowd of rescue workers went about the emergency tasks completely serious and in character. There was no small talk or joking. Students were able to see as rescue

workers used jaws of life to tear doors off the wrecked vehicles in order to get victims out.

Asked if the lights and sirens were triggering, Josh Flore of the Shelburne Police Department and Charlotte Constable said he had just stepped away from the scene to gather himself because it was so realistic.

The scene was fraught with sad memories for those who have been at the scene of a tragic accident.

One of the student “victims,” Miranda Stewart said she volunteered for the simulation because “driving under the influence is really a big issue and having this will help inform students of its consequences.”



Students were silent and immersed in the depiction of a wreck and its consequences. After the vignette students went to the gym to debrief and subdue from any triggering emotions they may have felt.



CVU Road was closed for almost an hour while a tragic wreck resulting from poor decisions was portrayed.

Photos by Scooter MacMillan

## News from Charlotte Central School Students

### Fifth grade celebrates Law

Lucinda Smith and Louise Brines  
Charlotte Central School Students

Regina Coco taught the fifth grade about laws on May 1, which is known as International Workers Day, Labor Day and Law Day. Coco works in immigration

law as the staff attorney at the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants in Colchester.

During her presentation, the fifth graders got to learn about immigration law. Immigration law is the law you have to pass to enter, leave or become a citizen in a country.

We learned about migration, which

is where someone moves from another country. The difference between forced and voluntary migration is that when you’re forced you may need to leave because of a natural disaster or a war. Voluntary migration is where you choose to leave your home country because you want a better chance in the U.S. or you might come here for better opportunities.

Coco also talked about push-and-pull factors. Pull factors of immigration mean to move voluntarily to a foreign country. Push factors are negative and mean you are forced into moving due to war, religion or other factors.

Some other stuff that was discussed was the difference between refugees and asylees. Refugees are people with permission from the U.S. government to come to the country. They normally want permission because they are outside their country, and they fear persecution if they go back or have already been persecuted. Persecution is to be punished.

Did you know 125,000 refugees get permission to come to the U.S. every year, but only 50,000 to 75,000 end up in the U.S. because of security and other stuff? An asylee is someone already in the U.S. when they ask for protection from the U.S. government; they need to have a reasonable fear of persecution if they

return to their home country.

In 2020, the height of COVID, refugees stopped coming and going from countries so they would not get COVID. The same thing happened at schools and work offices; you might have had to stop going to school or work while the pandemic swept through North America.

In Vermont about one in 20 residents are foreign born, which means a lot of people in Vermont aren’t born in America. They could have been born in another country, then because of different opportunities, they decided to come to Vermont.

If your parents weren’t born in the U.S. and then got naturalized, then you automatically become a U.S. citizen, even if you weren’t born in the U.S. More than half of the refugees in Vermont become citizens.

Out of the 20 million refugees around the world, 40 percent are children. The refugee resettlement program has nine steps. First is the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) identification and referral. Next is the Resettlement Support Center Africa interviews. Third is U.S. Citizenship



STUDENT NEWS

Continued from page 10

and Immigration Services interviews. Phew, this is a lot of interviews. Next is approval or denial. This is one of the most important steps as it decides whether you can continue the resettlement process. Fifth is medical examinations to make sure you don’t carry any disease into the U.S. The next step is cultural orientation, so when you go to the U.S. you don’t end up not knowing anything about the history and culture of the country. Step 7 is to travel to the U.S. Step 8 is working hard and learning English to fit in and get a job. The last step is to start safely living in the U.S. and start becoming a citizen.

If you are a refugee and want to become a citizen then you have to do the naturalization process. The first step in this process is to apply for a green card (permanent resident visa) then wait a year. Step 2 is to make your declaration of intention, which is a pledge under oath that you intend to pledge your allegiance to the U.S. A special thing that the U.S. has is it does not require you to renounce your loyalty to other countries like other countries do; you only have to pledge allegiance to the U.S. The third step is to get your fingerprints checked in case you are a criminal from another country. The next step of the naturalization is to pass an interview and citizenship test with the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services; all applicants have to take the test in English. Once you pass the test you attend a ceremony and pledge your loyalty to the U.S. and promise to obey the laws, then you take the oath of allegiance.

Once you are done with that process, you then have all rights and duties that citizens of blood do. The only thing you cannot do that citizens of blood can do is run for president or vice president.

The NexTrex Challenge

Lincoln McLaughlin  
Charlotte Community School Student

Last year, Charlotte Central school started the NexTrex challenge, which is a challenge to gather 1,000 pounds of plastic to be turned in for a bench for Charlotte Central School. Teacher Julia Beerworth, who runs the seventh and eighth grade student council, helped start the challenge.

The current eighth and ninth grade student council started the NexTrex challenge. “The NexTrex challenge is a step to having an eco-friendly school and recycling in school and out.” All of the plastic gets collected from the school and gets weighed by student council members and then brought to grocery stores by the Charlotte Central School sustainability committee to be collected by NexTrex.

NexTrex’s goal is to reduce the amount of household plastic and make it Trex’s wood substitute that outdoor furniture and a sustainable, splinter-free decks can be made of.

Some seventh and eighth grade student council members seemed super passionate about helping make this world a cleaner place. They said they think, if other schools did this, it would positively affect the planet and result in a cleaner school and environment.

Overall, the NexTrex challenge is an amazing program that supports the environment while making beautiful long-term furniture and decks, while making the world a better place. It makes you feel good that the zip-lock bag you donated is going to a great cause.

Charlotte Central School jazz band

Annie Palmer  
Charlotte Central School Student

The Charlotte Central School jazz band is a group of sixth-eighth grade students who meet before school, working to dazzle the community with outstanding performances.

With jazz band coming to an end for this school year, the Charlotte Central School jazz band will be featured in many events including: Champlain Valley School District Jazz Night on May 14, Charlotte Central School’s spring concert on May 28 and Burlington’s Discover Jazz Fest on June 5.

The Charlotte Central School Press sat down with Andy Smith, who has taught band and jazz band for many years.

**Question:** How many years have you taught jazz band?

**Answer:** Thirty-one years, I think it was 17 here at Charlotte.

**Question:** What is different about teaching jazz band than regular band?

**Answer:** Jazz band has an element of improvisation, which is where a different type of creativity comes up. So, we start to learn about musical theory, which improvisation means to make it up. Concert band is more about interpreting something a composer made up.

**Question:** Is there anything that makes this year’s jazz band stand out from past jazz bands?

**Answer:** Every jazz band every year has something very unique and special about it. This year our rhythm section has an older demographic, whereas our horn section has a younger demographic.

Furthermore, what’s very interesting about this particular demographic is that the older students in the band give guidance to the younger members, and the younger band members carry a lot of

weight and exceed the expectations for their age.

Another thing that’s very special about this year’s jazz band is that this is my last jazz band. Next year, due to schedule changes, I will not be able to teach jazz band, so I am passing the baton over to Mr. Gribnau.

**Question:** Is there anything you would tell students thinking about doing jazz band next year?

**Answer:** I would encourage everybody to do jazz band. It expands our musical vocabulary. There are many fun, exciting opportunities to perform, including the CVSD jazz festival and the discover jazz festival, and everyone has the ability to do it. Furthermore, it’s a great way to represent our school and our community. It’s been one of the highwater marks of my career.

Next year, Chris Gribnau will be teaching jazz band, and we’re very excited for a great jazz band next year with him. If you are going into sixth, seventh or eighth grade at Charlotte Central School and have played an instrument in band for at least a year, you should look into doing jazz band next year. It’s a super-fun experience that is highly recommended to anyone.

Charlotte Central School play ‘Willy Wonka Jr.’

Lucy Palmer  
Charlotte Central School Student

On Friday, March 21, students auditioned for this year’s Charlotte Central School school play, “Willy Wonka Jr.”

The cast list was posted on Tuesday, March 25, and can be found on the Charlotte Central School Theatre website. Practices started on April 1, and shows are on June 5, 6 and 7 in the Charlotte Central School multipurpose room. We interviewed some of the cast members to get their take on the play.

Eddie Moore, sixth grader, has the role of Mr. Salt.

**Question:** Are you excited for the play?

**Answer:** I am very excited for the play.

**Question:** Are you happy with the role you got? Is it your original choice?

**Answer:** Yes, I am happy with my role. I originally wanted to be an Oompa Loompa, but the director said I have a role with lines but no singing solo.

**Question:** Have you ever been in a play before?

**Answer:** Other than making up a few skits, no.

Annie Palmer, sixth grader, has the role of Violet Beauregarde.

**Question:** Are you excited for the play?

**Answer:** Yes.

**Question:** Are you happy with the role you got? Was it your original choice?

**Answer:** It was not my original choice, but I am very happy with my role.

**Question:** Have you ever been in a play before?

**Answer:** Yes. I did the Very Merry Theatre play “Winnie-the-Pooh” two years ago.

The Charlotte News

JOIN OUR EMAIL LIST AND GET

THE LATEST TOWN NEWS WHEN IT HAPPENS!



SIGN UP ON OUR WEBSITE

[www.CharlotteNewsVT.org](http://www.CharlotteNewsVT.org)

## Education

# Tough staffing decisions at Charlotte Central School

Naomi Strada  
(Summarized by Tom Scatchard)

Charlotte Central School administrators Tim O’Leary and Beth Slater have had the challenging responsibility of navigating the school through a series of staffing reductions necessitated by the 2025-26 school budget. They have approached this task with a focus on the school’s core values: taking care of ourselves, each other and this place.

The personnel changes for the next school year include:

- Connecting Youth mentorship — Kate Rooney is retiring at the end of this year, and Jessica Phelan, who previously served as the district’s Connecting Youth communications coordinator, will step into the mentor coordinator role at Charlotte Central School.
- Behavioral support — David Leng will join Tim Holcomb as a second behavior systems coordinator in a program designed to support student well-being.
- World language — After 35 years, Sarah Pierson is retiring. Her institutional knowledge and rare dual certification in French and Spanish will be missed. Owen Duff will join Charlotte Central School as

the full-time world language teacher and also serve as a core teacher on the seventh-eighth grade Omega Team. All seventh and eighth graders will study French next year. Spanish instruction will continue in some form next year, for students who have been studying it in previous years.

- Seventh and eighth grade humanities — As Julia Beerworth takes on her Rowland Foundation Fellowship, the Omega Team (seventh and eighth grades) will operate with one humanities teacher next year instead of the two. This represents a full-time equivalent (FTE) reduction in a fifth-eighth classroom teacher for next year.
- Music — Andy Smith, who has been full time at Charlotte Central School as an instrumental music teacher, will be shared with Hinesburg Community School next year as Charlotte Central School saw half an FTE reduction in music educators in next year’s budget.
- Fourth grade — Tasha Grey will join Charlotte Central School while Dana Hanf remains on parental leave. As part of the reduction in overall kindergarten-fourth grade staffing, the current third-grade cohort will move from three learning groups into two classes for fourth grade.

As a result of this reduction in staff, Jane Redden will not be returning to Charlotte Central School next year; she is planning to take a one-year leave of absence from the Champlain Valley School District to explore other opportunities.

- Academic intervention — Due to a full-time equivalency reduction in paraspecialist intervention staffing at Charlotte Central School, the fifth-eighth grade literacy interventionist role will not continue next year, while the fifth-eighth grade math paraspecialist interventionist position will remain. Kindergarten-fourth grade interventionists Nan Boffa and Elizabeth Kehr will remain in their current positions. Deb Killkelley will shift her role to focus entirely on coordinating and delivering intervention services, with particular attention to supporting fifth-eighth grade literacy.
- Special education — Due to a reduction of one full-time special educator position at Charlotte Central School, Betsy Martin will transition to a role at Hinesburg Community School. The school and district will work to redesign the Charlotte Central School special education model for next year.
- Administration — The administration has moved from two and half positions in the original 2024-25 budget to two positions for the coming year. Tim O’Leary continues to serve as full-time principal, and Beth Slater serves in a dual role — assistant principal and director of

student services.

### Big week at Charlotte Central School

The week ending Thursday, May 23, had many interesting activities happening at Charlotte Central:

- Eighth graders headed to Champlain Valley Union High School this week for their in-person orientation.
- Charlotte Central School welcomed future kindergartners, who explored classrooms and met one another. Meanwhile, caregivers met with other members of the school team for an orientation and tour.
- A visit from Champ occurred on Wednesday. The beloved mascot of the Vermont Lake Monsters gave high fives, brought smiles and helped with dismissal.
- The new stage curtain arrived and will be installed in early June.
- The fifth-sixth grade social was a dance to remember, complete with a DJ in the multipurpose room, gym games and caregiver-donated snacks.
- Charlotte Central School celebrated mentorship on Wednesday night with a dinner hosted by mentor coordinator Kate Rooney honoring Connecting Youth mentors and mentees.
- An author visit by Ann Braden inspired young readers on Friday. She is best known for writing books about kids standing up for themselves and others, even when it’s hard.

Send us your photos!

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





# Sports

## CVU proves adept at notching wins while dodging rain

Scooter MacMillan  
Editor

### CVU 6, BFA-St. Albans 2

The Redhawks traveled northwest to an away game with BFA-St. Albans on Thursday, May 15, and tallied another win. In the bottom of the first inning, the Bobwhites were the first to get on the scoreboard when Carson Neveau hit a double to score Gavin Clark from second base. The score stood at 1-0 until the top of the fourth when Xavier Barnes tied it up at 1-all on a sacrifice grounder to first to bring home Andrew Nunziata.

John Deyo’s single in the fifth and a Bobwhite error scored Riley McDade to give CVU a 2-1 lead in the fifth.

Deyo’s single was one of a barrage of singles he had. In his four trips to the plate, he hit singles in the first, third, fifth and sixth innings. Deyo’s single in the sixth, scoring Daniel Tuiqere and Tommy Barnes, gave the Redhawks a more comfortable 4-1 advantage.

Another run in the sixth on a Ryan Wood grounder to right field that scored Deyo made it even more comfy.

Quinn Vincent hit a double shortly after to score Wood for the Redhawks’ sixth and final run of the game.

A BFA-St. Albans score in the bottom of the seventh with two outs was too little too late.

Riley O’Brien threw five innings of one-run ball, giving up just two hits. It was a memorable game with O’Brien pitching against his cousin Evan Marchessault.

Assistant coach Sam Fontaine said they had expected a big game against a vastly improved BFA-St. Albans team.

“This was the ultimate team win, that had many great things to take away,” Fontaine said. “One of those was putting the ball in play, which we did. It proved to be the key to winning baseball, keeping it simple at the plate.”

### CVU 9, Burlington 1

CVU easily dispatched the visiting Seahawks on Monday, May 19, starting their scoring in the first in their first at bat, when Noah Musgrave knocked a double to left field and scored on a fielder’s choice by McDade.

Deyo scored from second on a Quinn Vincent grounder to center field, and CVU was up 2-0.

In the second inning, a McDade double, scoring Will Myers and Tommy Barnes, put the Redhawks up 4-0. A Deyo sacrifice grounder scored Musgrave. Wood followed with a triple to score McDade, putting CVU up 6-0, and the rout was on.

Burlington crossed the plate in the top of the third, and that was all of the offense the Seahawks would muster.

McDade and Wood both went 2-for-3 at the plate. McDade had a single, a double and three RBIs. Wood ended up with a single, a triple and two RBIs.

Vincent took the win on the mound for the Redhawks, throwing three innings of no-hit ball and striking out three.

### St. Johnsbury 3, CVU 1

Champlain Valley traveled to St. Johnsbury on Tuesday, May 20, for a pitchers’ duel. The Hilltoppers got on the board with a run



Photo by Al Frey

Quinn Vincent prepares to launch the ball for Champlain Valley.

in the bottom of the first when Carson Finn hit into a sacrifice double play that scored one run. That was all of the scoring for either team, until the bottom of the sixth when St. Johnsbury added two more.

In the seventh, Tuiqere scored on a wild pitch, but that, as they say, was all she wrote. Well, almost all: With the bases loaded in the final frame, two outs and the bases loaded, Deyo hit a lineout to center field that was barely caught by Will Eaton to end the game.

Nunziata took the loss on the bump with six innings of two-hit ball, giving up three runs and striking out six.

Cage Thompson was the winning pitcher, giving up three runs and striking out seven.

### CVU 7, Rice 3

After the Wednesday, May 21, win at Rice, coach Nicky Elderton gave the game ball to team captain Wood. Elderton emphasized the word “captain,” noting that there aren’t too many juniors who are captains.

So, it wasn’t just this game in which Wood has been a defensive and offensive standout. He has been contributing from the plate and with his play at first and third base. The game at Rice was CVU’s third game in three days, and Wood had been particularly adept at helping to pick the team up in big situations during that three-game stretch, Elderton said.

In the first inning, Wood hit a double, scoring McDade and John Deyon, to put the Redhawks up 2-0 shortly after the game had started.

O’Brien hit a fly that was at the fence for a double in the second inning. Tuiqere knocked him home for a third run to put CVU up 3-0.

In the bottom of the fifth with two outs, Rice’s Oliver Quong hit a double to right field that scored Holden Mulvey. Coleton Merchant followed with a pop-fly single to right that scored Quong to make things interesting at 3-2.

The top of the seventh started with Henry Bushey drawing a walk. Tommy Barnes and Tuiqere followed with bunt singles to load the bases.

A passed ball put McDade on and brought home another run for Champlain Valley.

Wood hit a drive that bounced off the top of left fielder Bryce Phelp’s glove to make it 5-2.

Quinn Vincent hit a grounder to right field and was thrown out trying to make it to second, but Tuiqere and Deyo scored to put the Redhawks up at 7-2.

The Knights managed a third run in the last inning but no more.

The switch to bunting in the final frame came, Elderton said, because Rice is a really good team, and one run didn’t seem like a big enough margin.

“We just always want to put pressure on teams, and we wanted to manufacture a couple insurance runs,” he said. “Small ball puts a lot of pressure on teams, and things went our way.”

### CVU 8, Rutland 3

At the last minute, because of the weather the Redhawk’s home game at 11 a.m. on Saturday was changed to a 2 p.m. game at Rutland.

Fontaine said they were proud of how the team handled the uncertainty, grinding out a dominant win on a confusing day.

O’Brien shone on the mound, hurling six

innings while giving up three hits, striking out 13 and committing no errors.

In a scoreless game to that point, CVU got on the scoreboard in the third inning when a hard-hit ground ball led to a Rutland error that scored Tommy Barnes and McDade, putting the Redhawks up 2-0.

In the sixth, Wood and Quinn Vincent scored off a Xavier Barnes double with two outs.

The Redhawks added four more in the top of the seventh, and Rutland responded with three runs in the final frame, but it was just window dressing with CVU leaving town with a 8-3 victory.

CVU tallied 12 hits. Once again, Woods made big contributions at the plate, going 2-for-4 with a triple and two RBIs.

Going into the last week of the regular season, Fontaine said, the team is focusing on a new word — finish.

With three games remaining, the Redhawks were in seventh place in Division 1.

### South Burlington 4, CVU 3

On Tuesday, for once playing on a beautiful day at South Burlington, the result was not as beautiful as the Redhawks wished. CVU dropped a game it had led from the third inning on a walkoff.

Champlain Valley was scheduled for another away game on Wednesday at Essex and its final game of the regular season, a home game on Thursday against Colchester. Those games were played too late for this edition of the newspaper.

With the season moving to the regular season culmination, Elderton is happy with how his team has evolved and their prospects for the postseason.

“The games that we’ve lost, they’ve been playoff intensity,” he said. “You’ve got to go through those battles to be ready. The postseason is a whole other beast.

As of Tuesday, Wood is the hitting leader with a .404 average and 15 RBIs. Deyo is batting .333, Vincent .311 and McDade .300. Musgrave is leading in steals with eight.

The team’s ERA is 3.08. Vincent has an ERA of 1.75 in 36 innings on the mound, and O’Brien has an ERA of 1.79 with just over 27 innings.



# Outdoors

## Birding enthusiasts meet enthusiastic birds in park and wildlife refuge

Scooter MacMillan  
Editor

A group of birding enthusiasts and wannabe birding enthusiasts gathered in the Charlotte Park and Wildlife Refuge on Saturday, May 17, to hear about birds and biodiversity in the park.

They joined Mark LaBarr of Audubon Vermont and Ali Wagner of Green Mountain Audubon Society. LaBarr was banding birds that morning, and while he worked he discussed habitat management steps taken there to improve conditions for golden-winged warblers and other shrubland birds.

LaBarr had hung five mist nets around the vicinity of where the group gathered. Like their name implies, mist nets are very thin, gossamer nets and hard to see in the low light of a forest. When a bird flies into one of these it collapses around them into a pocket where it is restrained, but can't hurt itself before LeBarr takes it out and brings it back to the banding station.

The goal was golden-winged warblers. Although they could be heard during the presentation, which LeBarr paused periodically to interrupt himself and identify one of the many species of birds that could be heard. During the talk, no golden-winged warblers were caught, but a couple of other species were, including a chickadee, which LaBarr banded and weighed and whose data he recorded.

LaBarr is a federally licensed bird bander, who has been doing this for about 30 years.

"I've banded maybe 15,000 birds, everything from little chickadees to albatrosses in Hawaii," he said. "Each one



Photo by Scooter MacMillan  
Mark LaBarr demonstrates how to hold a bird without hurting it as he prepares to weigh and band it.



Photo by Meg Berlin  
A golden-winged warbler that was caught on another day in Charlotte.

of these bands has a unique number on it. When I report that to the bird-banding lab, they'll keep track of it. If we ever catch the bird again, we'll be able to read that band and know who it is.

The chickadee he had found in one of his mist nets was 15.5 grams. LeBarr sends the band number, the bird's weight and other data to a bird banding lab in Laurel, Maryland.

### Regal eagles




Photo by Susan Sim  
In a moment fraught with symbolism, a pair of eagles landed in a tree next to the lake on Memorial Day, stayed for quite a while, flying off when the sun came out. And where did this synchronous situation take place? Wings Point, of course.

To Advertise in

# The Charlotte News

Contact [ads@TheCharlotteNews.org](mailto:ads@TheCharlotteNews.org)



**Restoration, Preservation, and Construction  
of Antique and Classic Boats**

**802-425-2004**

**821 Ferry Rd., Charlotte | [sam@darlingsboatworks.com](mailto:sam@darlingsboatworks.com)**



# BUSINESS DIRECTORY

## ADVERTISE YOUR BUSINESS HERE!

Half and full-year options with **FREE** color  
starting at \$22 cost per issue.

Contact:  
[ads@thecharlottenews.org](mailto:ads@thecharlottenews.org)

### Chris's Lawncare & Mini Excavating LLC



Tree, Shrub & Stump Removal  
Stump Grinding  
Complete Invasive Species Removal  
72' Bucket Truck  
16" Brush & Wood Chipper  
Brush Hog & Flail Mowing  
**And Much More!**

**802-425-3846**

Philo.  
Surveying  
LLC

[PHILOSURVEYING.COM](http://PHILOSURVEYING.COM)

Jason C. Burt, Licensed Land Surveyor  
[jason@philosurveying.com](mailto:jason@philosurveying.com)  
802-782-9273 | Charlotte, VT

### BEAGLE BUILDERS, LLC

#### ROOFING, SIDING & EXTERIOR FINISHES



WINDOWS & DOORS  
DECKS, PORCHES & SUNROOMS  
REMODELING & ADDITIONS

Monkton, VT [beaglebuilders@gmavt.net](mailto:beaglebuilders@gmavt.net)  
**802-453-4340 CALL US! 802-355-0807**

### Brushhogging by Adam

Adam Dantzsch  
*Proprietor*

#### Services

Brushhogging  
Brush Clearing/Mulching  
Chain-Sawing  
Delivery/Haul-away  
Driveway Repair  
Excavating  
Roadside Mowing

Phone: **802-578-8347**  
email: [adamdantzsch@aol.com](mailto:adamdantzsch@aol.com)



### Investing in better water

- Water Filtration Systems
- Water Delivery
- Water Softeners

Call us today!

*Culligan Water*

**802-865-0000**  
154 Brentwood Drive  
Colchester



## Outdoors & Environment

# Sixth summer of program combating invasive species

Kate Kelly and Olivia Welford  
Contributors

Aquatic invasive plant species have long threatened the health and populations of native plants in the Lewis Creek watershed. By forming dense mats of vegetation, aquatic invasive plant species impede the activities of recreational boaters, swimmers and anglers, while degrading ecosystems and wildlife habitats.

Aquatic and riparian environments are fragile and sensitive to change. The health of these places is essential to the health of surrounding plants and animals. Terrestrial invasive plants also create hazards by altering erosion patterns, out-competing native species and impacting water quality. Management of all invasive species can be difficult because they are easily spread via seeds, roots, fragments, animals and humans.

Bristol Pond and Monkton Pond, popular destinations for anglers, recreational boaters and wildlife enthusiasts, both contain aquatic invasive plant species. As of 2024, there were three known aquatic invasive species in Bristol Pond: European frogbit, Eurasian watermilfoil and brittle naiad. There are four aquatic invasive species in Monkton Pond: Eurasian watermilfoil, curly-leaf pondweed, banded mystery snail and Chinese mystery snail.

If left unmanaged, the aquatic invasive plant species in these ponds will spread throughout the rest of the watershed and the state. To prevent further spread, Lewis Creek Association, a local non-profit watershed group, will be launching their sixth summer of the boat launch steward program at Bristol and Monkton ponds beginning in June.

The boat launch steward program was created to teach the public about aquatic invasive plant species within the Lewis Creek watershed. At Bristol and Monkton Ponds, the boat launch stewards greet boaters as they arrive and offer to inspect

their boats for aquatic invasive species, while also collecting data on where the boat has been and how many aquatic organisms they encounter. They tell boat owners about how to prevent the spread of aquatic invasive plant species, which includes cleaning, draining and drying your boat, and other equipment that has been in the water, before moving to another body of water. This could include swimsuits and life jackets, which can carry microscopic organisms like the fishhook waterflea, which was recently found in Lake Champlain.

In addition to staffing the ponds on the weekends, the stewards also work on manually removing Japanese knotweed at two sites along Lewis Creek in North Ferrisburgh and Starksboro. Japanese knotweed is a particularly tough plant to remove; it spreads primarily by its roots or rhizomes, which can break off during a flood then resprout and form a new colony downstream.

Knotweed in the Lewis Creek watershed is patchy and has not yet spread prevalently across streambanks (unlike in many other Vermont watersheds where it covers nearly every square foot available). The Lewis Creek Association is excited to demonstrate a non-chemical removal method at these two sites, where stewards will lead weekly removal efforts and occasionally display these methods to the public.

Everyone is invited to help. Lewis Creek Association is partnering with Mike Bald of Got Weeds? to guide this work and demonstrate effective methods for knotweed removal without herbicides.

You can also get involved in a project to help understand the distribution of knotweed in the watershed using iNaturalist. With this app, you can photograph and identify invasive or native plants and post your findings so other users can corroborate the plants' identity. This creates a map that can be used to understand where Japanese knotweed is found in the watershed.

If you're interested in learning more, sign up at <https://bit.ly/lca-knotweed> or email [kate@lewisecreek.org](mailto:kate@lewisecreek.org) or call 802-488-5203.

Since 2020, Lewis Creek Association's



Photo by Sara Lovitz

Lewis Creek Association volunteers with a canoe full of frogbit they have removed from the LaPlatte River Natural Area in Shelburne in 2024.

boat launch stewards have been the first line of defense against invasive species within the Lewis Creek watershed. At Bristol and Monkton Ponds, stewards have interacted with over 2,250 boats and intercepted 493 boats that had aquatic plants on them. They informed many more members of the community about the threat and spread of aquatic invasive plant species at these ponds.

Next time you are out at Bristol or Monkton ponds, say hi to Lewis Creek Association's boat launch stewards. They will gladly discuss any topics regarding aquatic invasive plant species and show you how to help prevent their spread.

### Volunteer to remove

The Lewis Creek Association has been working closely with the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation and the Lake Champlain Basin Program since 2009 to monitor and remove European frogbit, water chestnut, yellow iris and

flowering rush in Town Farm Bay in Charlotte and the LaPlatte River Natural Area in Shelburne. These two areas are very diverse ecologically, and many people recreate there, making control of non-native invasive species critical.

Frogbit removal efforts in Town Farm Bay began in 2009, when approximately 50 percent of the wetland there was covered in frogbit. Since 2011 in Town Farm Bay and 2012 in the LaPlatte River Natural Area, volunteers have helped rake frogbit off the surface of the water each summer to maintain a small population, which has resulted in the annual coverage to decline to less than 5 percent.

Though frogbit will never be eradicated in either location, maintaining this low population allows native plants and animals to thrive. Through the end of 2024, the association and volunteers have removed 31.7 tons (63,356 pounds) of frogbit from Town Farm Bay and 8.5 tons (16,960 pounds) of frogbit from the LaPlatte River Natural Area.

The frogbit removal volunteer program runs in June and July at both locations. The Lewis Creek Association provides all the equipment, and you provide a few hours of your time to weed on the water. These trips are great fun; all you have to do is show up and be able to paddle in a canoe or kayak, raking plants off the water surface and putting them into a bucket or laundry basket on your boat.

If you're interested in an enjoyable paddle, while making a difference in the health of your local wetland, contact Sara Lovitz at [sara@lewisecreek.org](mailto:sara@lewisecreek.org) or 802-488-5295. Even better, get a group of friends and sign up together to make a difference.

The  
Charlotte  
News

JOIN OUR EMAIL  
LIST AND GET

THE LATEST TOWN NEWS  
WHEN IT HAPPENS!



SIGN UP ON  
OUR WEBSITE

[www.CharlotteNewsVT.org](http://www.CharlotteNewsVT.org)



## Outdoors & Environment

# Authority of tree wardens have long history in Vermont

Cliff Mix  
Contributor

As tree warden for the town of Charlotte, I hope to keep Charlotte residents informed about the laws and policies that impact one of our valuable resources — trees. The law in Vermont authorizing the position of tree warden was passed by the Vermont Legislature more than 120 years ago. Tree warden statutes enacted in 1904 charged each municipality to appoint a tree warden.

In 1969, the law was amended to give the municipality tree warden more authority over municipal trees. The amendment clarified that tree wardens would enforce all laws related to public shade trees and could propose regulations for planting, protection, care or removal of public trees to the local legislative body.

There were no more changes to the tree warden statute until 2020 when Act 171 (Title 24 Chapter 067 legislature. [vermont.gov/statutes/chapter/24/067](http://vermont.gov/statutes/chapter/24/067)) made substantial changes to the tree warden law. For the first time, legislation defined a shade tree as “a shade or ornamental tree located in whole or in part within the limits of a public way or public place,” provided that the tree was

planted by the municipality or is designated as a shade tree in a municipal shade-tree preservation plan.

The town already has the authority to regulate trees along Charlotte town roads, sidewalks or other municipal property, but the new law grants authority for municipalities to adopt a shade-tree preservation plan. At this time, the town of Charlotte has not yet adopted a shade-tree plan.

Tree wardens still have control over the care of shade trees, but the process for removing them has changed. A public hearing is no longer required for a shade tree to be removed when it is infested or infected (or at risk to become so).

A public notice is still required for the cutting of a non-diseased or healthy tree on Charlotte public lands. Nobody can cut, prune or plant trees and shrubs on any Charlotte town-owned land without the permission of the tree warden. If the decision of the tree warden is appealed then a public hearing is required.

Charlotte has several lands that are public lands, including Thompson’s Point, Barber Cemetery, Bradley Cemetery, Williams Woods Natural Area, Charlotte Parks and Wildlife Refuge,

the town garage, Plouffe Lane, the senior center, the Charlotte Library and the town offices. When in doubt concerning exact ownership, please contact the town for verification.

The penalty for the act of willfully and critically injuring or cutting down a shade tree without the permission of the tree warden now ranges from \$50 to \$2,000 per stem. The same penalty will apply for the willful or malicious removal or damage to trees in municipal and state highway rights-of-way without prior consent from the state or the tree warden.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me or a deputy tree warden through the town website at [treewarden@townofcharlotte.com](mailto:treewarden@townofcharlotte.com).

*(Cliff Mix is the town of Charlotte’s tree warden.)*

Courtesy photo

A 100-year-old horse chestnut tree in Charlotte. This species is found around the town and is popular for planting along streets and in parks around the world.



LIMITED TIME

## Heat Pump Rebates

Heat and cool your space, all with one system.

Efficiency  
Vermont

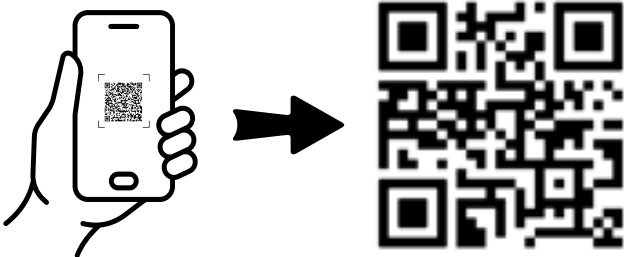
[efficiencyvermont.com](http://efficiencyvermont.com)  
(888) 921-5990

## \$500-\$2,200 off ducted and ductless heat pumps

- Alternative to traditional AC that will heat your home all winter long
- Qualifies for 0% interest financing
- Can be used in combination with your existing heating system
- Control your ductless heat pump and central heating system by installing an integrated control, and get an additional \$600 back

Funding is made possible by your electric utility and Efficiency Vermont. Federal tax credits are also available.

Use your phone’s camera  
to scan the QR code below.



\*Subject to availability and eligibility.



## Gardening

# Moving start plants to the garden by “hardening”

Deborah J. Benoit  
University of Vermont Extension

Planting time is almost here. While some crops will be directly sown, many others will begin as starter plants that have been grown from seed at home or purchased locally. The trick is to successfully move those plants from the controlled environment where they’ve been nurtured to the great outdoors.

The first thing to decide is when you’ll be moving those starter plants into the garden. There’s more to consider than waiting for a warm, sunny day. We all know how fickle Mother Nature can be: temperatures in the 70s one day, dropping below freezing at night the next, maybe snow a few days later. Springtime in New England can be tricky.

To help decide when to put in your garden, first determine your location’s average last frost date. While anything is possible weather-wise, the average last frost date will tell you when the chances of freezing temperatures have diminished sufficiently for you to put in your garden without worrying that a killer frost will wipe out your efforts.

You can find the average last and first frost dates for your location here: [garden.org/apps/frost-dates](https://garden.org/apps/frost-dates). Enter your zip code to find the chance of freezing temperatures from April to June.

For example, in Bennington there is a 50 percent chance of temperatures falling to 36 degrees on May 22, but by June 1, the chance of a frost falls to just 20 percent. A week later,



Photo by Zbfj/Pixabay

Starter plants need to be “hardened off” to prepare them for transitioning to the garden, beginning two weeks before the average last frost date for the area.

it’s just 10 percent.

Those in St. Johnsbury will need to be a bit more patient with an average 50 percent chance of frost on June 2 and a 10 percent chance not until June 17. Using your location’s average last frost information, you can select a date to begin planting your garden.

Two weeks prior to that date, begin “hardening off” your plants to prepare them for the transition. During that time, you’ll

introduce them to conditions outdoors: sunlight, changing temperatures, wind and perhaps rain.

When daytime temperatures are above 50 degrees Fahrenheit, temporarily move plants to a protected location outdoors, such as a covered porch or an area of dappled shade. Begin with an hour or two the first day, gradually increasing the amount of time they’re outdoors over the next two weeks.

At this point, don’t worry that your plants

won’t get enough light. Direct sunlight is far stronger than a grow light or natural light through a window and can burn tender leaves accustomed to less intense light. By the end of two weeks, the plants can be placed in the area where they’ll be planted.

Be aware that wind can break tender stems. Wind and sun can also dry out pots faster than if they were inside, so adjust watering as necessary.

After a week or two (depending on the weather), your plants will be acclimated to their new environment and ready to take their place in your garden.

Moving plants in and out each day for two weeks may seem like a lot of bother, but by slowly introducing plants to life outdoors, you can lessen their stress adapting to stronger light, wind and varying temperatures that they didn’t experience indoors.

When it’s time to put in your garden, overnight temperatures should be above 50 degrees Fahrenheit, but watch the weather forecasts. A late-season frost is always possible.

Have a plan in mind to protect plants if needed. An old sheet, blanket or tablecloth work well. Avoid using plastic because it can cause damage to foliage it touches.

It won’t be long before those tiny starter plants will be flowering and bearing veggies for your table.

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

## Simple tips for stunning clematis

Nadie VanZandt  
University of Vermont Extension

With abundant blooms in a wide range of colors from soft white to dark purple, pink and even yellow, clematis reign supreme among climbers.

A genus in the buttercup (Ranunculaceae) family, clematis are versatile, easy-to-maintain perennials that grow as climbers, spreading shrubs or groundcovers. More than 300 species grow worldwide, including many native to North America.

The flowers and foliage depend on the species. Four to eight sepals surrounding a cluster of stamens form showy blooms in the shape of bells or stars. Their leaves may be deciduous or evergreen, typically compound with several leaflets and arranged alternately along the stem.

They thrive in locations where their foliage and flowers receive sun while their roots remain shaded. A low-growing bush, decorative stones or mulch will do the trick to shade the base of the plant.

Clematis enjoy moist and well-drained soil with neutral to slightly alkaline pH. Their deep roots require thorough watering. As heavy feeders, they will benefit from a low-nitrogen, slow-release fertilizer applied as needed during the growing season.

Depending on the species, clematis can thrive in U. S. Department of Agriculture hardiness zones 3 to 11 and bloom from spring to fall. They adapt to many climates, temperatures and soil types, which explains their presence in forests, along rivers and on

mountains and rocky slopes throughout the world.

These plants are divided into three large flowering groups designated as group (or type) 1, 2 and 3. The timing and method of pruning depends on which group and is crucial to ensuring abundant blooms.

Group 1: Flowers in early spring (often with small flowers) and blooms on old (previous year’s) stems. They do not require pruning, but you can prune them lightly in summer after flowering to remove dead or damaged shoots. Cut back branches above a large bud.

Group 2: Flowers in late spring and fall. These large-flowered varieties bloom on old and new wood. Prune lightly before flowering in spring by removing dead branches and cutting weak ones just above a bud. To encourage fall blooms, perform a second pruning by cutting the plant to half its height after spring flowers fade.

Group 3: Flowers in summer or fall on new wood. Prune them a foot above ground in late winter to encourage new growth.

All parts of the clematis plant are poisonous to humans and animals. When crushed or damaged, the plant releases a toxic compound that irritates the skin and can be harmful if ingested. It is advisable to plant them in an area least accessible to children and pets. While the plant’s toxicity generally repels deer and rabbits, young shoots remain vulnerable.

Like any climbers, clematis plants need support to wind their tendrils. Whether using a trellis, wire mesh or netting, it is important



Photo by Nadie VanZandt

Clematis are versatile, easy-to-maintain perennials that come in a range of flower colors including dark purple, pink and white.

that the support is installed 4 inches away from a wall to allow space for the plant to grow behind it.

To plant, dig a hole 8 to 12 inches away from the wall. It should be deep enough to bury the first set of leaves and wide enough to position the clematis at an angle with its stems towards the support.

Fill the hole with water and allow it to drain. Place the plant in the hole and water again. Add topsoil around the sides of the root ball and the first set of leaves, then pat down

gently.

Finish by applying a general amount of compost followed by a 1- to 2-inch layer of mulch. With proper care, these remarkable vines will grace your landscape for decades.

For questions about growing clematis or other plants, contact the University of Vermont Extension Master Gardener Helpline at <https://go.uvm.edu/gardenquestion>.

*(Nadie VanZandt is a University of Vermont Extension master gardener from Panton.)*



# Calendar

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

**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.

**Music with the Museum**  
**Thursday, May 29, 6-10 p.m.**  
Rokeby Museum presents its third annual Music with the Museum fundraising event, Thursday, May 29, 6-10 p.m., at the Ferrisburgh Community Center (town hall). It’s \$30 for museum members, \$45 for non-members. Get more information or purchase tickets at <https://tinyurl.com/3ktkjr7>. There will be music by Patti Casey with Colin McCaffrey and a silent auction. Proceeds benefit Rokeby Museum’s educational programming and preservation of collections and buildings.

**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.



Courtesy photo  
The Rokeby Museum will hold Sheep & Wool Day on Saturday, June 14, with live sheep and weaving demonstrations.



Photo by Bill Fraser-Harris

The Charlotte Town Party is Saturday, June 28. It starts at 5 p.m. with dining starting at 6 p.m. Bring a dish to share because it is a potluck and be prepared to have fun.

**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](http://vermontlakes.org/event/2025-fovlap-lake-seminar).

**Wake Robin tag sale**  
**Saturday, June 7, 9 a.m.-3 p.m.**  
On that Saturday morning, shoppers will begin lining up before 7 a.m. for the 9 a.m. start. It only runs until 3 p.m. so get ready for some competitive shopping in in 19 departments including furniture, gardening, books, lamps, art, kitchenware and more. Around 1,250 customers showed up last year. A special treat this year will be the screening of a documentary shot at last year’s event.

**Age Well luncheon**  
**Tuesday, June 10, 11:30 a.m.**  
St. Catherine of Siena and Age Well are offering a luncheon on June 10 for anyone 60 or older in the St. Catherine of Siena Parish Hall 72 Church Street in Shelburne. The check-in time is 11:30 a.m. and the meal will be served at noon. There is a \$5 suggested donation. The menu is meatloaf with brown sauce, mashed potatoes, five-way mixed vegetables, wheat bread and apple crisp with topping. The deadline to register for June 10 is June 3. Contact David Zych at 802-662-5283 or [dzych@agewellvt.org](mailto:dzych@agewellvt.org).

**Free summer night at Shelburne Museum**  
**Thursday, June 12, 5-7:30 p.m.**  
Visit galleries, listen to live music, enjoy a picnic, stroll through gardens and take in the splendor of a summer’s night at the Shelburne Museum for free. The museum will stay open from 5-7:30 p.m.

**Sheep & Wool Day**  
**Saturday, June 14, noon-3 p.m.**  
There will be live music, live sheep, weaving demonstrations and food at the Rokeby Museum on June 14, and it’s free.

**CHARLOTTE**  
**Charlotte Town Beach Party**  
**Saturday, June 28, 5 p.m.**  
The town party at the beach will start at 5 p.m. with dinning starting at 6 p.m. It is a potluck so please bring something to share. It’s BYOPUB (bring your own plates, utensils and beverages). And come prepared to carry out all the trash you generate. Local products will be served courtesy of Grass Cattle Company, Fat Cow Farm, Misty Knoll chicken, Stony Loam salad, Stones Throw

Pizza, Adam’s Berry Farm dessert and Backyard Bistro gelato (courtesy of Elizabeth Moore with Ridgeline Real Estate). As in the past, the grilling will be handled by the chefs from Fortin’s Lawncare & Snowplowing. Music by The Intentions. No dogs, but free parking after 4 p.m.

**Green Mountain Conservation Camp**  
**Friday-Sunday, July 11-13**  
Teens interested in the outdoors and environmental issues wanting to spend a weekend in the woods learning from industry experts about Vermont’s natural resources while taking part in outdoor recreational activities should apply for the Natural Resources Management Academy’s camping weekend at Buck Lake in Woodbury. Registration closes June 13 with space for just 30 participants. It’s open to anyone entering grades 7 to 11. The all-inclusive fee is \$125, which covers all meals, snacks, workshops, use of canoes and other equipment and two nights’ accommodations in rustic cabins. Register at [go.uvm.edu/nrma](http://go.uvm.edu/nrma). Learn more at [camille.kauffman@uvm.edu](mailto:camille.kauffman@uvm.edu) or 802-780-0074.

**CHARLOTTE**  
**Music at town beach**  
**Thursday, July 17, 5 p.m.**  
Skylark, a quartet made of Vermont Symphony musicians, will be performing a series of outdoor concerts at Charlotte Beach. These picnic, BYO events are sensory experiences not to be missed. Please note one Thursday performance on July 17, then performances will be the following two Wednesdays, July 23 & 30. Picnicking at 5 p.m., music at 6 p.m. The events are free with your beach pass or daily beach parking. Donations to help pay the musicians will be requested.

**Free summer night at Shelburne Museum**  
**Thursday, Aug. 14, 5-7:30 p.m.**  
Visit galleries, listen to live music, enjoy a picnic, stroll through gardens and take in the splendor of a summer’s night at the Shelburne Museum for free. The museum will stay open from 5-7:30 p.m.

## CHARLOTTE TOWN MEETINGS AND AGENDAS

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

**Planning Commission Meeting**  
Thursday, May 29, 7 p.m.

**Trails Committee Monthly Meeting**  
Tuesday, June 3, 6:30 p.m.

**Regular Selectboard Meeting**  
Monday, June 9, 7 p.m.

**Charlotte Energy Committee Meeting**  
Tuesday, June 10, 7 p.m.



**Development Review Board Meeting**  
Wednesday, June 11, 7 p.m.

**Planning Commission Meeting**  
Thursday, June 19, 7 p.m.

**Regular Selectboard Meeting**  
Monday, June 23, 7 p.m.

**Conservation Commission Meeting**  
Tuesday, June 24, 7 p.m.



# Check out Green Mountain Bicycle Club rides for June

Phyl Newbeck  
Contributor

Below are the Green Mountain Bicycle Club introductory and touring rides for the month of June. Note the following:

- All riders must fill out one waiver of liability per season.
- Although it isn't mandatory, we ask cyclists to sign up on line prior to doing a ride.
- All riders must wear helmets and obey the rules of the road. Please do not ride two abreast if there is traffic in either direction.
- In the event of inclement weather, ride leaders will notify those who have signed up in advance and post to the listserv if the ride is being cancelled no later than two hours before the start of the ride.
- Riders below the age of 18 must have a signed waiver from a parent.
- Rides begin promptly 15 minutes after the meeting time.
- All riders should carry some basic tools including a pump or CO2 cartridge, tire levers and a spare tube or patch kit.
- Social rides are more leisurely versions of the mapped ride, usually the shorter route, with longer food breaks. Always contact the social-ride leader before the ride to make sure those versions of the ride are taking place.
- Additional local social rides will be scheduled in the Champlain Valley for later in the season, but the time and date is subject to change based on weather conditions. Please email [lightspd@comcast.net](mailto:lightspd@comcast.net) to be added to the social riders email contact list, which is the only guaranteed notification for these rides. Weekend social rides are usually announced by Thursday and group size is limited.

**Date:** Sunday, June 1

**Ride:** Grand Isle Flats. One of the flattest rides of the season. The 28-mile ride circles Grand Isle. Riders on the mid-mileage route, 44-mile ride, turn around at Hero's Welcome, the rest stop, food break. The long 75-mile version visits St. Anne's Shrine and a fossil bed. Contact Karla Ferrelli at [karla.ferrelli@gmail.com](mailto:karla.ferrelli@gmail.com) for social ride information and sign-ups.

**Meeting Time:** 8:45 a.m.

**Meeting Place:** Folsom School, South Street in South Hero. Those coming from the Burlington area may want to carpool.

**Leader:** Dorothy Pumo – 802-829-8729, [dpumo5@gmail.com](mailto:dpumo5@gmail.com)

**Co-Leader:** Ed McSweeney – 802-522-5505, [edmc32@gmail.com](mailto:edmc32@gmail.com)

**Social Ride Leader:** Karla Ferrelli – 802-864-0101, [karla.ferrelli@gmail.com](mailto:karla.ferrelli@gmail.com)

**Date:** Saturday, June 7

**Ride:** Mostly Unpaved Ride #1 – Gravel and dirt roads in Hinesburg-Charlotte area including Guinea, Bingham Brook and Garen.

**Meeting Time:** 9:15 a.m.

**Meeting Place:** Charlotte Central School

**Leader:** Brian Howard – 802-304-0610, [bjhowd@gmail.com](mailto:bjhowd@gmail.com)

**Co-Leader:** Mark Dupuis – 802-318-6492, [mdd514902@yahoo.com](mailto:mdd514902@yahoo.com)



Courtesy photo

Riders with the Green Mountain Bicycle Club pause for a photo at Kingsland Bay earlier this year.

**Date:** Sunday, June 8

**Ride:** Jaunt from Jasper Mine – This rolling-hill, 60-mile ride passes through Georgia and Milton before heading to St. Albans Bay for a break by the bay and over to Swanton. The shorter, 40-mile version turns around after the break stop. This ride has a short stretch along the shore of the Lamoille River and a longer stretch along Lake Champlain. There is only one store on the ride, and it is at the point where the two rides separate.

**Meeting Time:** 8:45 a.m.

**Meeting Place:** Jasper Mine Road, off Route 2 heading towards Grand Isle

**Leader:** Dave Merchant – 802-825-3808, [merchand59@gmail.com](mailto:merchand59@gmail.com)

**Co-leader:** Joyce McCutcheon – 802-734-4999, [mellowmiti@aol.com](mailto:mellowmiti@aol.com)

**Date:** Saturday, June 14 –

Ride for the Lake

Annual fundraiser led by the Friends of Northern Lake Champlain for clean water. Distances range from 30 to 100 miles and routes travel throughout the islands and around the perimeter of Lake Champlain. This is a great way to enjoy a day by Lake Champlain and pay it forward for clean water.

**Ride:** Distances 30, 60, 80 and 100-mile routes

**Meeting Time:** Between 7 a.m. and 10 a.m.

**Meeting Place:** Knight Point State Park, North Hero

Register online. \$55 before April 16, \$70 before June 1, \$95 day of ride and free for those raising \$250 or more. There is no rain date.

**Date:** Sunday, June 15

**Ride:** Hinesburg Hollow – This hilly route travels south through Huntington via the beautiful Hinesburg Hollow Road. The short route is 25 miles and returns to Williston via North Road (and a little bit of dirt) while the long route is 47 miles and continues through North Ferrisburgh to the lake and back through Hinesburg.

**Meeting Time:** 8:45 a.m.

**Meeting Place:** Williston Central School by the tennis courts

**Date:** Sunday, June 22

**Ride:** Kingsland Bay – The 35-mile ride rolls from Shelburne through Charlotte to Kingsland Bay Park and back. The 51-mile ride heads towards Vergennes and climbs to Monkton Ridge, returning through Hinesburg and a 65-mile option heads into Huntington but will not have a leader.

Contact Donna Leban at [donna.leban@gmail.com](mailto:donna.leban@gmail.com) for social ride sign-ups.

**Meeting Time:** 8:45 a.m.

**Meeting Place:** Left hand side of the Shelburne Shopping Park parking area.

**Leader:** 802-578-5822, [evadveloVT@gmail.com](mailto:evadveloVT@gmail.com)

**Co-Leader:** Tom Kennedy –

802-735-5359, [etomkennedy@gmail.com](mailto:etomkennedy@gmail.com)

**Social Ride Option:** Donna Leban- 802-862-1901, [donna.leban@gmail.com](mailto:donna.leban@gmail.com)

**Date:** Saturday, June 28

**Ride:** Gravel – Texas Double D - Texas Hill, Dugway, Duxbury loop. This 43-mile ride starts with a big climb, then downhill to Duxbury and North Road to Waterbury.

**Meeting Time:** 9:15 a.m.

**Meeting Place:** North Road turnaround or possibly Iroquois Trucking on Mechanicsville Road.

**Leader:** Brian Howard – 802-304-0610, [bjhowd@gmail.com](mailto:bjhowd@gmail.com)

**Co-Leader:** Carlie Krolick – 802-999-1813, [ckrolick@gmavt.net](mailto:ckrolick@gmavt.net)

**Date:** Sunday, June 29

**Ride:** Way to Weybridge – 64 miles of rolling hills from Shelburne through Vergennes and on to Weybridge. There are several food options in Vergennes for either the way out, the way back or both.

**Meeting Time:** 8:45 a.m.

**Meeting Place:** Shelburne Village Shopping Center

**Leader:** Allan Kunigis – 802-324-9958, [akunigis@gmail.com](mailto:akunigis@gmail.com)

**Co-leader:** Chip Krakoff – 603-943-3701, [ckrakoff@koiosllc.com](mailto:ckrakoff@koiosllc.com)



## Books

# Fireworks and acorns, magic, adventures and a labor of love

Katherine Arthaud  
Contributor

I have a friend, who, when invited to any event involving fireworks — the Fourth of July, for instance — will politely decline, explaining that since she has already seen the best fireworks the world has to offer, there's really no point, as any subsequent pyrotechnic display would only be a disappointment.

I thought of her the other day, when contemplating “Peace Like a River,” a novel by Leif Enger, which is so excellent it is almost hard to move on to anything else. It's like, if you've ever flown first class, you know it is a lovely, refreshing experience. But the problem is, it's really hard to go back to regular old steerage once you've tasted that legroom, that service, that early boarding, those warmed nuts.

I almost didn't read this novel when my sister handed it to me back in March because it looked to me like a book I had read before. The cover, the title, even the author's name, seemed vaguely familiar. Perhaps a bygone book group pick? But then, one day, perhaps for lack of any other unread book on my shelf, I gave it a try.

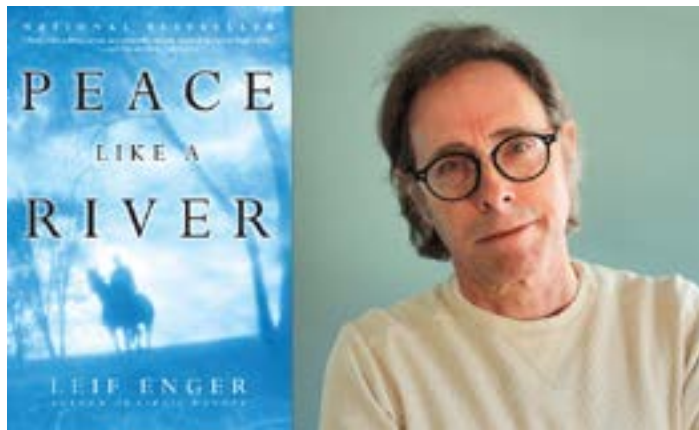
And I am here to report that it is extraordinary.

“Peace Like a River” is narrated by 11-year-old Reuben Land, who would not have lived to tell any tale at all had not his father intervened early on. While Reuben's mother lay “dazed, propped against soggy pillows, unable to comprehend what Dr. Animas Nokes was telling her,” Reuben's lungs were “refusing to kick in.” The doctor later said he had “never seen a child with such swampy lungs.”

Surely young Reuben would, probably should, have died had not Reuben's dad, who was outside the hospital restlessly pacing and praying in the damp September wind, come running into the room, having had an intuition that something was up. Though it had been 12 breathless minutes for the newborn boy, Jeremiah wrapped the near-dead baby in a canvas coat and said, “Reuben Land, in the name of the living God I am telling you to breathe.”

So, begins Reuben's life and tale.

The Lands' life appears calm and settled at the outset of the book. But then Reuben's extraordinary father (janitor at the local school) stops two town bullies from attacking his eldest son's girlfriend. The bullies then retaliate by kidnapping Reuben's sister Swede (who one reviewer said may be literature's most unforgettable little girl since Scout in “To Kill a Mockingbird”) and then breaking into the Lands house, which impels Davy, whose girlfriend was savaged by the bullies in the first place, to shoot them dead. Things go on from there. That's just the beginning.



Apparently Enger wrote this novel to amuse his family, taking story suggestions from his children and giving the lead character, Reuben, asthma to encourage one of his sons, who also has asthma.

Born in 1961 to two teachers, Enger grew up in Minnesota, and for 20 years worked as a reporter and producer for Minnesota Public Radio. “Peace Like a River” is Enger's first of four novels. In 2001, it was voted one of Time magazine's top five novels of the year.

All told, this book is a lot of bang for the buck. Gorgeously written, with an almost Twain-like humor and sensibility, it is thoughtful, deep and understatedly magical, with well-rendered, interesting characters. I highly recommend it.

Another book that was also handed to me, this time by a neighbor, is Ethan Tapper's “How to Love a Forest.” Superstar environmentalist Bill McKibben praises it as “beautifully written, full of scenes those of us who live in and love the forests of the northeast will recognize immediately.”

Now, I love trees. All trees. But I don't know anything, really, about them. I can tell a maple from an oak, a weeping willow from an apple tree, but my knowledge doesn't go much deeper or broader than that. Having read this book, I now know a good deal more.

But “How to Love a Forest” is not merely about trees. It's about the “living threads that stitch” forests together. The community that is a forest. “The insects and the ephemerals, the fungi of the soil, the creatures of the rhizosphere and the necrosphere, the birds and the bats — these things are not simply a byproduct of a healthy forest. They are fingers on the same hand, branches on the same tree, as integral to the health and the function of this forest, as an organ is to my body.”

“As I reimagine this forest and what it means to care for it,” writes Tapper, “I know that I cannot love and protect it without loving and protecting all the native species that call it home.”

A little bit Lewis Thomas, a little bit Edward Abbey, a little bit Genesis, chapter

one, this book is a gem, unique unto itself. It is poetic and accessible, inspiring, convincing and transformative.

In it, Tapper tells a bit about his own life, which begins “in a small town in southeastern Vermont, surrounded by mountains, forests and rivers.”

“Though forests were ever-present in my life,” he writes, “it never occurred to me that they were my calling — that I would someday become a forester.”

But then, one day in early March, Tapper and a few friends were carrying their skis up a steep mountain highway when they passed “a washed-out gravel road, a rusted cable with a worn Keep-Out sign pulled across its entrance.” Tapper never guessed that day that this would be a place he would give his life to — “a place that would teach me what it means to love a forest, a place that I would someday call Bear Island.”

Tapper walks the reader through his journey with this piece of land, introducing them to wolf trees and chestnut trees and a beech that “lies in the snow like a queen in her coffin.” He talks about bear and moose and beavers and deer and butterflies, pileated woodpeckers, minnows and tree frogs. He tells us that we who don't understand the experience of forests suffer from “shifting baseline syndrome”: “the belief that the things we are used to are normal.”

“In fact,” Tapper writes, “the forest on the mountain and the forests of our world are aberrations, oddities, unprecedented and unfamiliar; shining replicas standing in place of ancient relics.”

Invasive plants and trees, logging, the extinction and overpopulation of certain animal species, etc. have degraded our forests, says Tapper. “And human beings have arisen from ecosystems to become

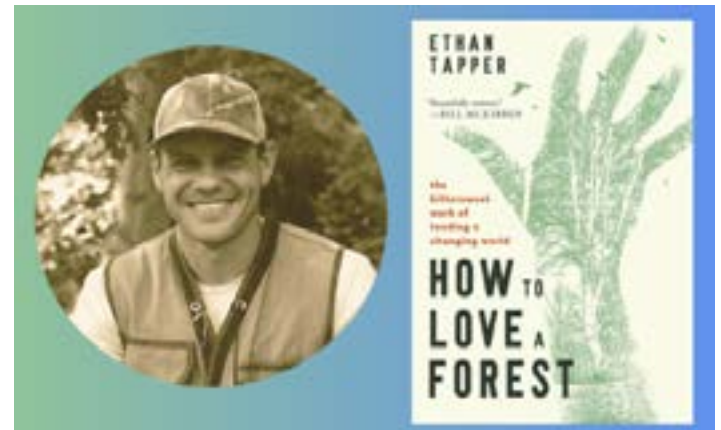
a force as primal and earthshaking as a glacier, shaping this planet physically, biologically, chemically, climatically. We have sent the biosphere that sustains us into a profound reorganization. We teeter on an unsteady foundation, moving into an uncertain future together.”

Tapper's writing is incredible. He frequently spins off into abstract, beautifully phrased commentary about the world, forests, species, humans, evolution, change, responsibility, etc. But all this is grounded in a dirt-real endeavor: his calling to restore a 175-acre piece of land to a healthy, vibrant forest — “a forest that is alive and glorious with change.” It is a Herculean task. A labor of love. We witness Tapper singlehandedly attack destructive invasive species such as barberry and fell diseased trees to open up areas in the forest for pioneer species to thrive. We watch him hunt deer; we watch him plant seeds.

This book whetted my appetite to learn more about forests and what we can do to help them. And though the world is a mess, and humans have done a ton of damage, Tapper's words never stop ringing of energy and hope.

“We owe too much to the future to be imprisoned by the past,” he says, then ends with this: “Sometimes this life feels like autumn: the exhausted end of a boundless summer. Today I choose to live in a world in which spring is just breaking, impossible and inevitable — a world that is just awakening, just beginning to discover what it truly is. I look toward the broken ridge of the mountain and feel a powerful nostalgia, not for the past but for the future. High about the storm, the light is swelling, calling everything upward, toward a world that is just beginning. I am trying.

“I bend and plant another acorn.”



## Send us your photos!

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



The Charlotte News

To Advertise in  
**The Charlotte News**

Contact [ads@TheCharlotteNews.org](mailto:ads@TheCharlotteNews.org)



# Library News

## Library one of 300 chosen for small, rural libraries grant

Margaret Woodruff  
Director

The Charlotte Library has been selected as one of 300 libraries to participate in the third round of three of Libraries Transforming Communities: Accessible Small and Rural Communities, an American Library Association initiative that provides community engagement and accessibility resources to small and rural libraries to help them serve people with disabilities.

The competitive award comes with a \$10,000 grant that will help the library improve access by adding a safety rail to the library entrance ramp.

The library is proud to be chosen again for this opportunity. This third round of funding will provide the Charlotte Library with an additional grant to help continue what was started in the first round.

As part of the grant, Charlotte Library staff will take an online course in how to lead conversations, a skill vital to library work today. Staff will then host a conversation with residents about safely accessing the library building and use the grant funds to continue making the library a welcoming place for all.

If you are interested in getting involved or taking part in the conversation, please contact the library.

Since 2014, the Libraries Transforming Communities initiative has reimagined the role libraries play in supporting communities. Libraries of all types have utilized free dialogue-and-deliberation training and resources to lead community and campus forums; take part in anti-violence activities; provide a space for residents to discuss challenging topics; and have productive conversations with civic leaders, library trustees and staff.

### 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.

#### 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.

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.

#### 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](mailto: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.

#### Garden Circle Mondays, 8:30-10a.m.

It’s time to open up the educational gardens around the library and start tending them regularly again. These include the Rain Garden along the east

side of the building, the Welcome Garden that wraps around the south end and the raised bed food and herb gardens behind the Quinlan School building. Garden stewards Karen Tuininga and Linda Hamilton invite past and new members of our Garden Circle to join. Come regularly or as you can. Questions? Email [seed@charlottepubliclibrary.org](mailto:seed@charlottepubliclibrary.org).

### Recurring programs

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

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

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

Join in a casual weekly session of crocheting and chatting, knitting and catching up. Bring your project or start a new one with yarn and needles available at

the library, along with plenty of books to instruct and inspire. For teens and adults.

### Library contact information:

Margaret Woodruff, director  
Cheryl Sloan, youth services librarian  
Susanna Kahn, tech librarian  
Phone: 802-425-3864  
Email: [info@charlottepubliclibrary.org](mailto:info@charlottepubliclibrary.org)  
For the latest information about programs, books and activity kits, sign up for the newsletter at <https://tinyurl.com/n5usd25r>.

The Charlotte Library Board of Trustees meets the first Thursday of each month at 6 p.m. except the month of August unless otherwise rescheduled following the Opening Meeting Law. Contact the library or visit the library website ([charlottepubliclibrary.org](http://charlottepubliclibrary.org)) for more information.

## For sail



Photo by Lee Krohn

The boats at Point Bay Marina are being spiffed up and prepared for summer days on the water.

The Charlotte News

JOIN OUR  
EMAIL LIST  
AND GET  
THE LATEST  
TOWN NEWS  
WHEN IT  
HAPPENS!

SIGN UP ON  
OUR WEBSITE

[www.CharlotteNewsVT.org](http://www.CharlotteNewsVT.org)



# Senior Center News

## Learn how to cook great meals for one with Harbor Village chef

Lori York  
Director

This June, enjoy a variety of programs at the senior center. Join a chef from Harbor Village for Healthy Cooking for One and learn how to prepare simple, delicious meals designed for one person. Take a stroll through The Hidden Garden, a self-paced tour of the private gardens in Hinesburg, learn pickleball or join the women’s kayak trips and explore local lakes and rivers of Vermont.

Beginning this month, American-style mahjong will be offered on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. The Shanghai mahjong and the American-style mahjong groups welcome both beginner and experienced players.

### June art exhibit

This senior center art exhibit this month is On the Trail, A Collection of Photographs by Jeffrey Trubisz. Over the last 40 years, Trubisz has trekked, scrambled and hiked hundreds of trails up mountains, through forests, into canyons and along beaches. As a photographer, his desire is to immerse in the natural world, not just see it, but connect with its deeper spirit or essence.

### 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.

### Healthy Cooking For One Friday, June 6, 12-2 p.m.

Join Chef Shaun from Harbor Village Senior Communities for a fun and informative healthy cooking class designed just for one. Learn simple, nutritious recipes perfect for solo dining with tips on portioning, freshness and flavor. Free. Registration required as space is limited.

### The hidden garden Tuesday, June 10, 12-4 p.m.

Discover the beauty and tranquility of The Hidden Garden, a self-guided tour through Peter McNaull’s stunning 26-acre property located at 693 Lewis Creek Road in Hinesburg. Wander at your own pace through thoughtfully designed landscapes, meadows, forest trails and artistic garden spaces that reflect a deep connection to nature and creativity. Come explore one of Vermont’s most inspiring private gardens. If you need assistance walking between the upper and lower gardens, Peter has a golf cart available to help assist with getting around. For a glimpse of these magnificent gardens, check out aerial drone footage of this privately owned garden on YouTube (youtu.be/o73ynmHvsZs). Free. No registration required.

### Games

#### American-style mahjong Tuesdays, 12:45-3:45 p.m. & Wednesdays, starting June 11, 6 p.m.

Enjoy American mahjong in a welcoming social setting, with opportunities to play twice each week. Beginners and experienced players alike are encouraged to join. Free. A great time to join the fun and get to know other players. Register for your first visit to Tuesday sessions in order to be included in the group texts. Email Suzanne Slesar at suzluna@madriver.com. Jane Krasnow, an experienced player, will be there to teach newcomers and guide play on Wednesdays. Open to all skill levels. Email jane.krasnow@gmail.com.

#### Shanghai mahjong Tuesdays, 12:45-3:45 p.m.

Join an informal mahjong gathering, open to all levels of experience. Whether you’re new to Shanghai style or a seasoned player, you’re welcome to join the group for casual play and fun conversation. Questions? Email Nan Mason at anne.mason@uvm.edu. Free.

#### Backgammon Tuesdays, 6-8:30 p.m.

Backgammon is a tactical table game with a 5,000-year history. We welcome players at all levels. Free. To register, email at jonathanhart1@gmail.com.

#### Bridge Mondays, 12:30-4 p.m.

We play an intermediate level of duplicate bridge using the basic American Contract Bridge League conventions. Names are drawn for partners, and friendly games ensue. Those unfamiliar with duplicate bridge are welcome and paired with an experienced player to help for a few weeks of open dialogue training. We are always looking for new players who have basic bridge knowledge. Free. No registration required.

### Outdoors

#### Pickleball for seniors Saturday, June 7, 10 a.m.-noon

If you’re curious about pickleball, come to the Charlotte Town Beach pickleball courts on June 7. The rain date is June 14. Pickleball allows you to work on your balance, agility, reflexes and hand-eye coordination without putting excessive strain on your body. It’s a wonderful alternative for older players who used to play tennis, but have physical limitations like hip, shoulder, knee or other joint problems. Bring folding chairs to watch how pickleball is played. Afterward, there will be the opportunity to try out pickleball. Wear comfortable clothing and sneakers. Paddles will be provided. Questions? Call or text 802-425-4567 or text 802-338-7909. Free. Heads-up: There is a parking fee at Charlotte Beach. No registration required.

#### Women’s kayak trips Second & fourth Friday mornings

Join a community of active women who enjoy exploring local lakes, ponds and rivers by kayak. Trips are planned based on water and weather conditions and are subject to change. To express interest, email Susan Hyde at susanfosterhyde@gmail.com to be added to the master list of paddlers. Details



Photo by Susan Hyde

Paddling along Molly Falls during one of our women’s bi-monthly kayak adventures.



Photo provided by Jeffrey Trubisz

This image of the trail to the Matterhorn is part of On the Trail, the June art exhibit of photographs by Jeffrey Trubisz.

for each trip will be sent via email the week prior to the outing. Free. Registration required.

### 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, 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, 3-3:45 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.

### Meals

Menus are posted on the website: charlotteseniorcentervt.org.

#### Men’s breakfast Friday, June 13, 7 a.m.

On the second Friday of every month, the men come together for a morning of breakfast and fellowship. This month, Heather Moore, director of the Shelburne Craft School, along with staff member Jonathan Silverman of Charlotte will talk about the school’s mission, programs and a new partnership with colleagues in a sister community in Japan. For those interested, there will be an opportunity to visit the Shelburne Craft School following the breakfast presentation. Registration required by emailing Lane Morrison at lmorrison@gmavt.net no later than Tuesday, June 10. Suggested donation: \$6.

#### 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



# Write Ingredients

## Enjoy whale of good meal at senior center — minus whale

Susan Ohanian  
Contributor

Hendrik Hertzberg’s “One Million” offers a statistic to think about: Over a lifetime, the average American eats 100,874 pounds of food.

Herman Melville had a word — or 10,000 or so — about what people eat, noting that three centuries before he was writing “Moby Dick,” the “tongue of the right whale was esteemed a great delicacy in France and commanded large prices there.”

“In Henry VIII’s time, a certain cook of the court obtained a handsome reward for inventing an admirable sauce to be eaten with barbecued porpoises, which you remember, are a species of whale,” Melville wrote. “The fact is, that among his hunters at least, the whale would by all hands be considered a noble dish were there not so much of him, but when you come to sit down before a meat pie nearly 100 feet long, it takes away your appetite.”

Melville doesn’t stop there but offers more specifics: “What further depreciates the whale as a civilized dish, is his exceeding richness. He is the great prize ox of the sea, too fat to be delicately good. Look at his hump, which would be as fine eating as the buffalo’s (which is esteemed a rare dish), were it not such a solid pyramid of fat.”

“Guinness World Records 2024” offers another food to take away your appetite. To produce MrBeast’s veggie burger, a team of 43 people mixed together a huge amount of soy protein concentrate, water, salt, and sunflower and coconut oils. Then they used a forklift to transfer two burgers into a propane oven to cook for 10 hours. After these cooked burgers were put on two giant brioche buns that outweighed a grand piano, they were garnished with 200 pounds each of onions, lettuce and cheese.

Once assembled, the MrBeast burger



MrBeast veggie burger Facebook image

stood almost 7 feet tall.

Looking at the four-color, two-page spread featuring this burger makes one think, “Go fry an egg.”

In the past few months, eggs have made a lot of newspaper headlines. You can take a look at The New Yorker food critic’s answer (<https://tinyurl.com/ytd48ve5>) to a reader’s question about alternatives to the beleaguered chicken egg in “Helen, help me: Should I be cooking with ostrich eggs?”

“Gastro Obscura: A Food Adventurer’s Guide” describes crocodile eggs, gull eggs, snail eggs, octopus eggs, quail eggs and turtle eggs. And “When California Went to War Over Eggs” (<https://tinyurl.com/4vmprhfx>) tells the story of what happened when the Gold Rush brought lots of prospectors to San Francisco, and egg battles ensued.

Discussing the price of eggs on Fox & Friends, U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Brooke Rollins offers Oval Office flunky wisdom: If you’re bothered by egg prices, raise your own chickens. Quite a solution.

Instead of worrying about blubber, in whale humps or on Capitol Hill, sit back and listen to the humpback’s song (<https://tinyurl.com/m7s52xyx>).

I would note that a meal that changed my life is linked to the outrageous office attack on international students and the universities they attend. Most of my 27 books are about teaching and learning, but three feature the bombast, babes and bigotry of Donald Trump and his progeny, rollicking verse verified by engrossing news accounts: “Trump, Trump, Trump: The Swan Song,” “Trump, Trump, Trump: The March of Folly” and “The Little Red Book of Trump Quotations.”

My meal was at International House, UC Berkeley. International House was financed by John D. Rockefeller Jr., a big money man who believed in community. His International House plan was that half the residents would be foreign students, the other half Americans so that international understanding would develop.

When I lived at International House, we ate all our meals there except on Sunday. On Sundays, there was only Sunday Supper. At the first supper I started talking with the foreign student sitting next to me.

The rest of the story: We’ve been married for over 50 years, and a framed poster celebrating the 50th anniversary of International House in 1980 sits in our sunroom. Hats off to the big money man who wanted to bring people together, not tear them apart.

Here’s a link (<https://tinyurl.com/ycab8zuv>) giving free access to the article showing what big money buys. It lists the fat cats the president invited to his private dinner for customers of his cryptocurrency business.

Not only do the volunteer cooks at Monday Munch at the Charlotte Senior Center offer food with an international flavor — French one week, Italian the next — they don’t need forklifts to prepare the food. Nor do these cooks need to exaggerate to get your attention. Instead, at Monday Munch you’ll find lots of good food served with friendly smiles and good conversation.

There is no charge for Monday Munch, but a \$5 donation is appreciated.

**Monday Munch**  
**June 2, 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.**  
Crustless quiche with cheese and bacon, tossed salad, crescent rolls and dessert TBA.

**June 9, 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.**  
Chicken and spring vegetable tortellini salad, green salad, bread, beverage and dessert TBA.

U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
MAILED FROM  
ZIP CODE 05482  
PERMIT NO. 9

PRESORTED STANDARD