

The Charlotte News

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Climate change brings changes to VT farming

Maeve Fairfax
Community News Service

Vermont's farmers are growing crops that better suit the state's warmer and wetter climate and branching into products that provide income even when traditional crops fail.

Since 1900, annual temperatures in Vermont have increased by about 2 degrees Fahrenheit, and annual precipitation has increased by 21 percent over the same span, according to the state. The changes have forced agriculture to adapt in sometimes surprising ways.

Now that winters are milder, it has become commonplace for Vermont orchards to grow peaches. Nick Cowles owns Shelburne Orchards, and 35 years ago, he saw a bedraggled peach tree at a hardware store and bought it on a whim. Since then, especially in more recent years, peaches have become a lucrative addition to his business.

Peach trees like rain, and so the increased precipitation in Vermont does not bother them. Historically, temperatures posed a problem for peach-growing.

"It takes around 15-17 degrees below zero in the winter to kill the bud, and it used to be that there would be a stretch in the winter that we would get those temperatures. I figured we would get a peach crop maybe every third year," Cowles said.

Now, he said, "It's rare that they freeze out."

Innovation is also making Vermont a more peach-friendly place.

Farmers have used new technology to develop more cold-hardy

peach varieties, Cowles said, and he now has trees that ripen at different times so that the picking lasts longer and brings in more customers.

In Ferrisburgh, Erik Andrus has turned his hayfields into rice paddies.

His Boundbrook Farm uses the rice-and-duck farming technique, a pesticide-free method in which ducklings are released into rice paddies. They control weeds and pests — and provide fertilizer.

The farm mostly grows cold-tolerant rice varieties from Japan, which sits at a similar latitude to Vermont, but has recently started to grow lotto rice from Italy.

The farm once accidentally planted koshihikari, a variety of Japanese rice poorly suited to the cold. It did eventually mature, but not until October, which Andrus said was "a little bit of a nailbiter."

Floods and droughts appear to be striking Vermont more frequently, but the rice grown at Boundbrook Farm is fairly immune to both, Andrus said.

The plants can be underwater for two days without being harmed, and the grains are protected by a husk that means they won't be contaminated by pollution from floodwaters. Because the varieties can be planted in floodplains, they can get water even during droughts.

Andrus said "flood-prone bottomlands" are the best places to create rice paddies. Vermont has many such areas, and rice could represent a path forward for farms

FARMING
continued on page 2



As the party wound down, the sun was setting over Lake Champlain.

Photo by Scooter MacMillan

Scooter MacMillan
Editor

A huge crowd showed up for this summer's town party at the Charlotte Town Beach on Sunday. Although the party was postponed from the day before because of a weather forecast that predicted rain for Saturday, the delay didn't appear to have diminished the turnout.

And the weather Sunday was delightful. It was sunny but not hot; the temperature was perfect.

It's hard to know how many came but everyone who was asked agreed this was the largest town party ever.

Organizer and town fun guy Bill Fraser-Harris

estimated that this was 20 percent larger than last year's crowd, which was the previous biggest crowd.

A more accurate indication of crowd size might be that he needed to get extra tables just before serving began to hold all the food people had brought for the potluck picnic.

The Fortins, who once again were handling the grilling, said they had cooked 280 hamburgers, 200 pieces of chicken, 108 hot dogs, 72 sausages and 40 veggie burgers. By the way, over 20 Fortin family members were pitching in to make sure the crowd was fed.

Clearly, a well-fed, good time was had by all.

See more photos on page 3

Charlotter directs new musical 'KIN'

Scooter MacMillan
Editor

Ben Recchia of Charlotte has his bachelor's in zoology from the University of Vermont, his master's in biology and now he's back at UVM where he's working on his doctorate in biology with a focus on science education, although he admits that may change.

So, how is he spending his summer? Well, founding a theatre company and producing and directing a new musical from England, of course.

Although Recchia is grounded in science, he is at home in the world of theatre as well.

Recchia was one of those kids who the theatre bug bit young and hasn't let go, but sort of unique among many of those with a passion for doing theatre, he doesn't

see a fork between these two paths of science and theatre. They dovetail quite nicely in his psyche.

When you "are building a set for a show, you are trying to figure out how to get this set piece to work with this other set piece, that has to be safe to climb on, but also temporary," he said. "And cheap."

He is applying both his theatre and scientific minds to the founding of Workaround Theatre Company, creative producing and directing "KIN" and "wearing 15 other hats." "Because we're small, I'm doing a little bit of everything," Recchia said.

"KIN" will run July 18-27 with Wednesday-Saturday performances at 7:30 p.m. and Saturday and Sunday matinees at 2 p.m. in Burlington's Main Street Landing Blackbox theatre. The musical by Emil Dale and Stefan Kelk sold

out performances in four different theatre locations in London.

Recchia was Googling and looking for a musical to workshop when he discovered "KIN" and decided it was just what he was looking for.

Workshopping a new play is different than producing an established play, where you are bound by contract to perform the play exactly as it was written. In workshopping, the playwrights encourage experimentation and changing the dialogue to help develop the play and hopefully make it better.

Although Dale and Kelk are working with Recchia et al, the collaboration is long distance. The two playwrights won't be able to travel to Burlington to see what

KIN
continued on page 2



Photo by Spencer Robb

Newbury farmer Jette Mandl-Abramson holds a mason jar of cured saffron in 2025.

KIN
Continued from page 1

Workaround has done with it, although the production here will be taped for them to see and possibly incorporate the changes Workaround has discovered.

A workshop production is a unique theatre situation, Recchia said, where the playwrights are encouraging you to change things, including lyrics, music, plot or even change the characters. They’re encouraging you to “mess with it and try to make it better than it was before.”

Although it is unique, it’s not so eccentric for this area. In recent years, Vermont has been an incubator of new plays. “Fun Home,” “Hedestown” and “Suffs” have Vermont roots, have had Broadway success and have won Tony Awards.

Recchia is a graduate of Charlotte Central School and Champlain Valley Union High, where his father Carl Recchia was longtime choral director.

Ben Recchia has been in over 20 productions at Charlotte Central School, CVU and the Flynn. He initially discovered the thrill of performing but gradually fell in love with working backstage which led to directing. He realized what he really liked doing was creating opportunities for others to be on stage.

“I just really like creating the space for people to do theater, and I love to bring my sciencey background and training into the planning and the preparation,” Ben said.

For the first time, the Workaround Theatre version of “KIN” will have a live band with two keyboards, acoustic and electric guitars, strings and percussion. On one of the keyboards will be Carl Recchia.



Photo by Mary Recchia

Carl Recchia leads a music rehearsal for “KIN” at the Main Street Landing Blackbox theatre.

The score is pop rock, 1980s-inspired music.

A good number of the cast of 15 are veterans of CVU or Flynn Theatre productions. Others are from relatively nearby, like Montpelier or Calais, so the theme of community, or kin, is close to home, figuratively and literally.

“KIN” is loosely based on a historical story of a cult that moved into a small town where the residents viewed them with suspicion and outright hostility. The cult held a big concert festival a la Woodstock at the same time the town’s election was taking place. They had concertgoers vote in the election and a member of the cult was elected mayor.

After that, the story of “KIN” strays from the historical facts and introduces the son of the mayor, who was defeated in the election.

The son is attempting to redeem himself from a previous tragedy and decides to infiltrate the group to get back into the good graces of the town residents.

“All of a sudden, he discovers these people are lovely. They’re helping him process his grief. They’re super welcoming; they’re friendly; they’re kind and thoughtful,” Ben Recchia said. “So, he’s now torn between his actual family of the town and his new family of this group, which is called the KIN.”

The story is similar to something that happened in the Pacific Northwest, but the location of the play is intentionally left ambiguous so that the story is universal.

“The idea is that it can be anywhere, any small town, anywhere with some mountains,” said Ben Recchia. “It should feel pretty close to home for Vermonters.”

FARMING
Continued from page 1

impacted by flooding.

Andrus works as a consultant at Cornell University, where a team of researchers is studying rice-farming techniques in the Hudson Valley. They are also offering workshops and creating resources for farmers.

But nothing like that exists in Vermont, and acquiring the tools, seeds and knowledge to create and manage a rice paddy without help is unrealistic for most farmers here.

Andy Jones, the manager of Burlington’s Intervale Community Farm, said it has become easier to grow crops that like it warm: peppers, eggplants, melons, sweet potatoes.

The member-owned farm has also seen increased yields of cold-weather spinach, lettuce and kale grown in unheated greenhouses in the winter. The flip side is that, for several weeks in the summer, the farm has had to stop growing some of those crops because it gets too hot.

Precipitation is becoming more intense but also more inconsistent. An increase in dry periods means more irrigation is needed, and bigger rainstorms mean plants get wet and stay wet, leading to an increase in diseases, Jones said.

Climate change has hit Intervale Community Farm particularly hard because the entire farm sits in the floodplains of the Winooski River.

Jones said that they are used to floods, but “what’s been changing is the magnitude of the flooding.” Tropical Storm Irene and the flooding events of 2023 and 2024 devastated the Intervale area. Jones estimates the farm lost 80

percent of its crops in 2023.

In response, the farm is doing more succession cropping, or planting and harvesting the same crop multiple times. Its farmers plant crops that take little time to mature, so that if there is a flood, they have new ones ready quickly.

The farm has been renting fields at another farm in Hinesburg to plant slower-growing crops. It’s also moved a lot of crops into hoop houses and to higher elevations to keep them dry.

In spite of the flooding, Jones believes the farm is there to stay.

“The Intervale has been in agriculture for more than a thousand years, and that’s not going to change,” he said.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture estimates that 90 percent of American farms take in \$250,000 or less per year, which usually doesn’t leave much profit. A failed crop can mean disaster for a small farm.

For apple trees, thunderstorms pose a special danger, particularly ones that include hail. Cowles, from Shelburne Orchards, said that hail can “in five minutes just wipe out a whole year’s worth of work.”

After losing 80 percent of his main crop, MacIntosh apples, to a frost last year, he decided to buy crop insurance, which has provided some peace of mind. But that does little to address the increasingly unpredictable nature of farming.

“You used to be able to think seven generations ahead, but right now, really if you can even make it through the next couple years it will be good,” he said.

Many farmers are adapting to the uncertain-

ty by diversifying their products. Since 2016, University of Vermont entomologist Margaret Skinner has been studying saffron farming in Vermont. According to the state, the spice sells for \$20-\$75 per gram and grows in or out of a greenhouse.

It ripens later than most other crops, meaning farmers have more time to devote to saffron’s tedious harvest.

Vermont’s warming is too subtle to impact saffron’s growth. And even if erratic weather makes harvests less consistent, saffron has an advantage: longevity. It lasts two or three years if dried properly, Skinner said, and farmers can count on it to bring in money when other crops fail.

Vermont saffron is also appealing to customers because it is niche. As Skinner put it: “People are really into local cool crops.”

The cool crop factor also applies to Boundbrook Farm’s rice. The farm sells to specialty retailers, restaurants and consumers who pre-order it from an email list.

Cowles said the novelty of fresh peaches in Vermont made them a coveted commodity, as is the experience of going to an orchard to pick them. Shelburne Orchards’ peaches are so popular that some customers sign up in advance for pick-your-own days to ensure the pickers don’t outnumber the peaches, Cowles said.

The orchard also distills its Dead Bird Brandy from those peaches and apples.

“We bottle it after nine years, and that’s income that comes in regardless of whether we have a failed crop or not,” Cowles said.

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



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TOWN PARY

Continued from page 1



Photos by Scooter MacMillan

A Charlotte Volunteer Fire and Rescue vehicle made a nice backdrop for the Remember Baker band's performance.



Hadley Fortin, one of many in the Fortin family contingent, found some neat smooth rocks to play with.



Possibly inspired by the fire and rescue vehicles on the scene, Weston and Nathan Moreau relaxed in the shade to make a fire truck.



The tables filled with food seemed to go on forever, but the line was even longer.



Brittany and Cameron Ambrosia were enjoying the perfect picnic weather. In fact, Cameron seemed to be more interested in checking out the scene than eating.

Discovering Vermont’s essence in search for peace signs

Scooter MacMillan
Editor

For the past year, Shawn Dumont and his kids Zoë (9) and Jasper (5) have been on a quest.

Rather than seeking a grail, they’ve been crisscrossing Vermont in pursuit of peace signs to photograph. And they have found the Green Mountain State to be unique among U.S. states in having a plethora of peace signs.

Many of the peace signs the three explorers have found and photographed were on barns, but they’ve also found them on houses, sheds, other buildings, peace signs on signs and mowed into a field.

The result of their efforts has been a book, “Peace Signs of Vermont: The Visual Legacy of the Back-to-the-Land Movement,” and an exhibition of their photographs at the Karma Bird House at 47 Maple Street in Burlington. The show runs 9 a.m.-3 p.m., Monday-Saturday, through Aug. 29. There will be an opening reception and screen-printing workshop this Thursday, July 10, 6-9 p.m.

Last summer, Shawn Dumont and his children set off on Saturdays, driving to different areas of Vermont with their eyes wide open and alert for any peace signs.

Shawn and his wife Ali Dumont had recently moved to Prindle Road in Charlotte. They had lived in Burlington for a number of years and were seeking a quieter lifestyle. Shawn was head of graphic design for Burton Snowboards for about 10 years, and decided to go freelance, so he can pick projects he wants to work on, like a book about Vermont peace signs.

Zoë will be in the fourth grade at Charlotte Central School this fall and Jasper is entering kindergarten.

Zoë has become the official ambassador of the group. When they’ve found a promising

example of a peace sign, the 9-year-old walks up to the house, knocks on the door and says, “Hi. My name is Zoë. We’re taking pictures of peace signs. Do you mind if we take a picture of your peace sign?”

That simple introduction has resulted in all sorts of positive engagement for the three of them “and just an opportunity to engage with a stranger in a really cool way that I don’t think you can do in a lot of places,” Shawn said.

These experiences have made Zoë more confident in talking with new people, her father said.

They haven’t been so obsessed with finding peace signs to photograph that they’ve forgotten the other necessities of Vermont summers — creemeees and swimming holes.

And the homes where they stop have proved to be wonderful sources of information about where the best local swimming holes and creemee stands are. In addition, the farms have also often had or knew where to find great local breads or other foodstuffs to purchase for picnic lunches on the banks of swimming holes.

Zoë said the people they meet when stopping to photograph also have often had animals, a big plus for the kids. Like once the woman who answered the door had a bunch of baby chicks for them to meet.

Jasper said his favorite peace sign is on a barn in Hinesburg that all of the horses came out of and stared at them while they took a photograph.

Part of what motivated Shawn Dumont was a curiosity about the back-to-the-land movement of the late 60s or early 70s that brought so many young people to Vermont, looking for another lifestyle than a corporate career in a large city. The back-to-the-land movement inspired the founding of so many co-ops and other nonprofit health and mental



Photo by Scooter MacMillan
From left, Zoë, Shawn and Jasper Dumont discuss their peace-sign quest at the Old Brick Store.

health organizations here.

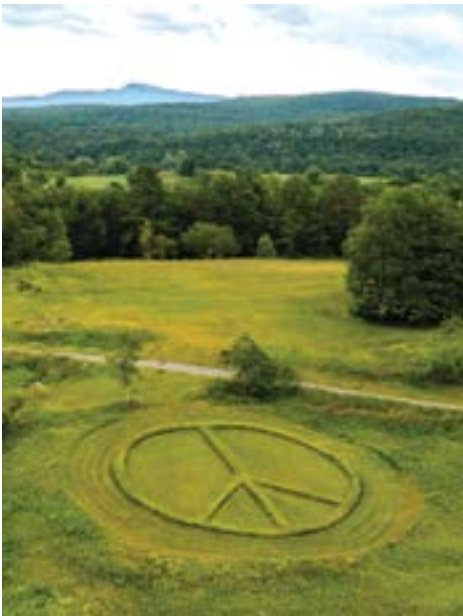
On their adventures, he and his children heard so many “amazing stories about these folks who are old back-to-the-landers or young folks who came up to Vermont because of the culture.”

“The peace sign is this incredible symbol that means that the person who made it is made of a certain stuff. They have a certain belief system. They believe in community. They believe in kindness,” Shawn said.

On their drives out of state in New York, New Hampshire or Maine, they didn’t find peace signs, he said. When driving back home, “we didn’t see a peace sign until we crossed the border.”

Shawn Dumont said he has come to believe that the peace sign is a perfect representation of the Vermont state motto: freedom and unity.

He asks that people share their peace sign photos with him at shawn@sheltercultivationproject.com.



A landowner even mowed a peace sign into their field.



Photos by Shawn Dumont
The Dumonts found one of their favorite peace signs on a chicken coop near their home in Charlotte.



Three volunteers paint a peace sign on the Farmer Barn in Burlington’s Intervale.

This is how Green Mountain Bicycle Club rolls in July

Phyl Newbeck
Contributor

Below are the Green Mountain Bicycle Club introductory and touring rides for the month of July. 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 online prior to doing a GMBC 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 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, July 13
Ride: Willsboro Wanderer — 40- and 55-mile options of hilly terrain on low-traffic roads in New York. There are two potential stops for ice cream and other refreshments: Denton’s Bare Necessities and a Stewarts just up the road from Denton’s. Bring money for the ferry and food stops. The shorter version of this ride skips the big hill out of Willsboro. Contact Donna Leban at donna.leban@gmail.com for social ride sign-ups.
Meeting Time: 8:30 a.m. for the 9 a.m., Charlotte Ferry
Meeting Place: Old Champlain Flyer parking lot, Ferry Road, Charlotte, NOT the ferry parking lot
Leader: Ed McSweeney — 802-522-5505/edmcs32@gmail.com
Co-Leader: Kevin Batson — 802-825-2618/kevbvt@gmail.com
Social Ride Leader: Donna Leban — 802-862-1901/donna.leban@gmail.com

Date: Saturday, July 19
Ride: Gravel Grinder - Hollows, Ponds, and Falls
Meeting Time: 9:15 a.m.
Meeting Place: Richmond Town Park before the bridge and before the Round Church. Parking also for more riders at Richmond Post Office.

Leader: Brian Howard — 802-304-0610/bjhowd@gmail.com
Co-leader: TBD

Date: Sunday, July 20
Ride: Not Quite Quebec — 51- and 64-mile rides on low-traffic roads near the Canadian border. The route crosses the Missisquoi River twice and travels along the shore of Lake Carmi.
Meeting Time: 8:45 a.m.
Meeting Place: Tractor Supply Company at I-89, exit 20

Leader: Dave Merchant — 802-825-3808/merchand59@gmail.com
Co-Leader: Joyce McCutcheon — 802-734-4999/mellowmiti@aol.com

Date: Saturday, July 26
Ride: Gravel Ride - TBD
Meeting Time: 9:15 a.m.
Leader: Brian Howard 802-304-0610/bjhowd@gmail.com
Co-Leader: Mark Dupuis — 802-318-6492/mdd514902@yahoo.com

Around Town

Birth announcement

It is with great joy that Jack and Olivia Barton announce the arrival of their baby boy, **Walter James Barton**, who entered the world on June 7, 2025, at 1:11 a.m. at the University of Vermont Medical Center in Burlington. He weighed 8 pounds, 6 ounces and was 20 inches long. His sister, Charlotte, is beyond happy to meet her baby brother. Welcome to the world, Walter! We love you!

Congratulations

Finnegan Mittelstadt of Charlotte was named to the dean’s list at the University of Minnesota Duluth for the spring semester.





Charlotte pastoral

Photo by Lee Krohn

A farmer hays on conserved land along Greenbush Road in Charlotte. The town is celebrating its conserved land this month. The Charlotte Land Trust has put up signs around town identifying land that is conserved. It is also hosting a scavenger hunt. There are forms with instructions and a list of activities at locations like the library, senior center, Spear's Corner Store and the Old Brick Store. Complete five or more of the scavenger hunt activities and email the land trust with your results to be entered into a drawing for prizes. For more info email charlottelandtrust@gmail.com.

Letter to the Editor

Suggestions on how to 'liberate your barn'

To the editor:

If you are feeling heartened, angry, frustrated or perhaps just annoyed about our barn signs that Steve Goldstein wrote about last week that is OK. It means you are awake and caring. I often feel that there is little meaningful that we can do, but here are a few ideas:

- Check out Bill McKibben's Third Act (thirdact.org). A great resource for information and ideas. Join and participate.

- Send money to lawyers. Never thought I would say that, but courts are really what we have left as a front-line force. ACLU and others are working hard.

- Inspire a friend, who may then inspire another.

I would also like to thank my good friend and artist Tom Baginski for helping bring the signs to life. The font he designed I am calling the Baginski Resistance Font. If you would like to "liberate your barn" with a sign, let me know — glad to help out.

Peter Fenn
Charlotte

Boat training



Photo by John Quade

This summer the Charlotte Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service has been training with the United States Coast Guard in Burlington. Recently, the training focused on two-boat scenarios like transferring while underway or towing and search.

Summer is Here...

A photograph of three children playing in the water. A girl in a green floral shirt is on the left, a boy in a blue shirt is in the middle, and a boy in a green shirt is on the right. They are all smiling and splashing water.A circular logo for Jamie Two-Coats Toy Shop. It features a cartoon character of a boy in a red shirt and blue pants, holding a fishing rod. The text "JAMIE TWO-COATS" is in a red arc above the character, and "TOY SHOP" is in a red arc below the character.

...20% off all swimsuits!!!!

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

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A circular logo for The Charlotte News. It features a newspaper icon and the text "The Charlotte News" in a blue arc.

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Food Shelf News

Uncertain, unsettling times, but food shelf powers on

Katherine Arthaud
Contributor

You’ve probably noticed that there’s been a lot of press lately focusing on the “big beautiful bill” that has been making its way through the gauntlets of the House and Senate. Likely, many of you are asking how this bill will affect Vermont and Vermonters when it comes to food and food security.

Though there is some uncertainty around the issue, as of the writing of this article, this bill includes a cut of \$290-\$300 billion to the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) over the next 10 years — the largest cut in the program’s history.

It also shifts 5 percent of benefit costs and 75 percent of administrative costs to states like Vermont, upending the current federal-state cost-sharing model. Work requirements will be expanded, with adults aged 18-64 required to work 80 hours a month (currently the requirement is only up to age 54); and parents will only be exempt if they have children under the age of 7, instead of age 18, as has been the case. SNAP nutrition education will be eliminated, impacting healthy-eating programs and outreach.

Up to 20 percent of Vermont SNAP recipients (approximately 13,000 people) are at risk of losing benefits — a loss of \$7-37 million annually. Current providers (food shelves, school meal programs, etc.) will likely have a tough time meeting the rising need, especially after the recent United States Department of Agriculture cuts.

Sen. Peter Welch tried to propose amendments which would block cost-shifts to states, keeping federal funding intact and preventing new work requirements for SNAP. Rep. Becca Balint opposed the bill, saying it is the largest cut to food assistance, while highlighting its negative impact on food benefits.

Food shelf director Peggy Sharpe adds that Head Start funding, “which provides all kinds of services, including nutrition to vulnerable children, is also in jeopardy.”

“Medicaid cuts will also affect our families,” she said.

Cuts to Medicaid (\$600-\$716 billion over 10 years) will threaten insurance for 7-11 million people, many of whom rely on SNAP. Loss of healthcare often results in reduced access to food assistance and worsens health outcomes related to food insecurity.

Thursday, July 3, the “big beautiful bill” was passed by the House, 218-214, with Reps. Thomas Massie (Ky.) and Brian Fitzpatrick (Pa.) the only Republicans to join all Democrats in voting against the measure.

Vermont residents are urged to contact their Senators, emphasizing that all 65,000 recipients of SNAP are at risk for at least a partial loss of benefits, and to thank Vermont representatives for fighting the proposed SNAP cuts and voting no on the bill. The governor and legislature are looking into budget options to make up for the funding gaps but are facing multi-million-dollar yearly burdens.

Meanwhile, through all the ups and downs and uncertainty, the Charlotte Food Shelf has been working diligently to continue to provide food for individuals and families in need. Thanks to a hard-working team of volunteers and generous donations from our community,

we are currently meeting that need.

We are happy to report that we have received a grant this year from the Vermont Food Bank, as part of the Vermonters Feeding Vermonters program. This is our third year receiving this grant. The funding provided allows us to partner with local producers for local food for our families.

We are currently partnering with Meaghin Kennedy of Frog Song Farm and Jane MacLean of Sweet Roots Farm and have already purchased some of their delicious, nutritious berries and produce.

Sharpe said, “We are thankful to the food bank and to these partners for their flexibility and support in working with us. We look forward to lots more delicious food throughout the summer.”

If you want to get involved, here’s an idea: We are looking for additional drivers to pick up our Costco order at 9 a.m. on the second and fourth Tuesday of the month. Please contact Nancy Bloch for more info: nancyhbloch@gmail.com.

We thank the following for their donations: Nancy and John Barnes, Lori and Damon Silverman, Sheila and Jeffrey Hollender, Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Cecily Stokes-Prindle, Jocelyn Schermerhorn, John Henry Siedlecki and Shanley Hinge. Please let us know if we have forgotten anyone. We are so grateful for all your support.

Our schedule:

- Wednesdays 4-6 p.m. and Saturdays 9-11 a.m. (second and fourth of the month, unless otherwise noted)
- Wednesday, July 9 and 23
- Saturday, July 12 and 26.

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

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

A convenient way to support the food shelf is to sign up for monthly donations through



Photo by Peggy Sharpe

From left, Charlotte Food Shelf volunteers Michelle Donlon, Liz Foster and new shelving filled with fresh vegetables at the Charlotte Food Shelf.

PayPal, which will allow you to spread your donations out over the year.

The Charlotte Food Shelf is a nonprofit tax-exempt organization. Gifts are tax deductible within the guidelines. You can also contribute using



the QR code or by going to <https://tinyurl.com/2e8yz2zz>.

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

For any other inquiries please contact Peggy Sharpe at ckmj@comcast.net.

HOT SUMMER DAYS



Beach relief

Photo by Lee Krohn

A couple of families realized that when you can't stand the heat, it's a good idea to go down to the Charlotte Town Beach to cool off. And also get out of the kitchen.



Swim time

Photo by Claudia Pfaff

A mother duck takes her brood for a sunset swim.

Rainbow connection

Photo by Claudia Pfaff

After a recent heatwave, storms rolled in, bringing tolerable temperatures and a rainbow over Nordic Farm.



Commentary

Way forward for Democratic Party is listening to constituents

Bill Schubart
Contributor

New York City, the largest city in the United States, with a population of 8.4 million people or 2.5 percent of the country, just chose a young progressive Democrat, Zohran Mamdani, in a landslide as their lead Democratic candidate for mayor. The Democratic Party elite, despite being in popular decline, has decided to line up against him. ... Raise foot, load pistol, aim at foot, pull trigger.

I'm sorry, in this time of partisan chaos and an accelerating wealth gap, the noncommittal center will not hold. A growing percentage of this country is simply unable to make ends meet and is desperately casting about for a way forward that will fulfill the promise of their country: economic security, due process, freedom to speak their minds and to elect people they feel represent them in getting that job done. Bernie Sanders' mass rallies in the midwestern states have shown us that many Americans are looking for someone who understands their plight and will fight for their interests and the common good.

Some Americans will still cling to their narrow ideologies on the right or left, but most of us watch with fear what's going on nationally and want to work for a reunification that celebrates and strengthens us all, starting with economic security.

We rattle on about MAGA Republicans who don't have the courage to stand up for their constituents against Trump and his camouflage cabinet of tech-elite billionaires. But it's time now to call out our own Nervous Nellie, "centrist" Democrats like Chuck Schumer, Hakeem Jeffries and the others who deter or outright refuse to support Mamdani. They, too, are funded by tech-elite interests.

We must remind them that, since FDR, the strength of the Democratic Party has been that it stood for the common good rather than the further enrichment of elites. In FDR's time, the elites were monopolist industrialists. Today it's the tech-elite — Peter Thiel, Elon Musk, Mark Zuckerberg, Jeff Bezos, Larry Ellison, et al — who pay homage to "democratic values" but, in reality, believe they can manage our lives better than we can and should manage them for us. So much for the common good.

Some of the old-line Democrats have gone so far as to endorse Eric Adams, the disgraced current mayor of New York City who has just announced he is running again in November even though he is under federal indictment for conspiracy to defraud the United States — one count of wire fraud; two counts of soliciting campaign contributions from foreign nationals; and one count of soliciting and accepting a bribe. Is this what the Democratic Party has become?

My only wish is that Mamdani had not called himself a "democratic socialist." "Socialist" has no real meaning in today's society and is easily used by opponents to tag him as some Marxist politician. I understand what he's saying, and he

clarified it himself on Fox News: "To me it means that every New Yorker has what they need to live a dignified life; it's local government's responsibility to provide that."

He said he would achieve this with a rent freeze on the city's 2.3 million apartments, free childcare starting at six months, free buses and a \$30 an hour minimum wage by 2030 — \$30 an hour is the current calculation for a livable wage for New Yorkers. The federal minimum wage in the United States in 2025 remains \$7.25 per hour. Who in the country much less New York City can live on \$15,000 a year?

My problem with the term "socialist" is that it is now most often used derogatorily, at least in this country where it has for many years been synonymous with communism. Whereas its spectrum of vernacular meaning includes a description of the popular Scandinavian economies wherein high taxes are used cost-efficiently to fund a social safety net. A majority of Scandinavians have, in other words, a shared belief in funding the common good.

"Socialism" is already being used widely here in political broadsides against Mamdani, with the clear intent of associating him with past figures like Marx, Engels and Trotsky rather than many progressive economies that now exist around the world.

What will put this country on a better footing? Not the tech-elites, who will use their vast wealth and influence to fight any form of progressive taxation of their wealth or effective regulation of their businesses. Mamdani, by contrast, has suggested a 2 percent tax on the top 1 percent of New Yorkers making more than \$1 million a year. To put this in perspective, currently just 34,000 households (or 1 percent) account for 35 percent of all earnings in the Big Apple. He has also proposed raising the top corporate tax rate to match neighboring New Jersey's at 11.5 percent. These two reforms in NYC would alone bring in \$10 billion, funds that could be used to invest in a social safety net for poorer New Yorkers.

The other attack strategy now being used against Mamdani is to accuse him of "antisemitism." In the recent primary campaign for mayor, former New York Governor Andrew Cuomo did not shrink from attacking him as an "antisemite" and even "a Holocaust denier." Since Cuomo was roundly defeated by New Yorkers, Republicans are trying to paint Mamdani as the poster child of a Marxist, terrorist immigrant, consistent with Trump's meme. And some Democratic politicians are joining forces with them, as I've noted.

New York's business leaders and Wall Street elites are in a swivet about Mamdani's rise, and it remains to be seen how they will respond.

Meanwhile, President Trump has broached the subject of stripping Mamdani of his U.S. citizenship after Andy Ogles, a Republican from Tennessee calling him "little Muhammad," demanded his citizenship be revoked, claiming with no evidence that Mamdani concealed

his support for terrorism during the naturalization process.

Admirably, Senator Chris Murphy, the Connecticut Democrat, recently wrote on his Bluesky account, "Trump will stop at nothing to protect billionaires and price-gouging corporations, even racist bullshit like this. Zohran won because he ran a campaign laser focused on putting power back in the hands of working people. And that's a threat to the Mar-a-Lago crowd."

Quite simply, the way forward for this seemingly lost Democratic Party is to listen to its constituents. Since the Obama era, the party has been in popular decline, in large part because it seems they are trying to play both sides of the interests that support them — voters and megadonors. There comes a time in our lives when we must choose. History has proven that we cannot be all things to all people as the Preamble to our Constitution says:

"We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to



Zohran Mamdani

ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America."

Happy Independence Day.

Education

Summer work can mean experience and help build resume

Margo Bartsch
Contributor

Rihanna is famous for her catchy song, “Work,” where the word is repeated six times in the first sentence. Growing up in Barbados, she sold clothes on a rack on a city street and repackaged candy to sell for a profit at school. Developing her work ethic was integral to her success.

As summer nears, there are three ways for students to get work experience: paid jobs, volunteering and internships.

First, the economy needs more workers. Local TV, radio, newspapers and social media advertise an abundance of job openings. This April, Governor Phil Scott announced Vermont lost 26,000 workers since the pandemic began. Today, less than 40 percent of young workers aged 16 to 19 are working in jobs compared to 60 percent just 20 years ago, reported WCAX.

Job openings are plentiful across many industries. College students, as well as high school students with work permits or those over the age of 18, should consider applying. Students can earn extra money and gain experience with paid work. Employers look favorably on young adults who take initiative to show responsibility and be part of a team. When Megan Markle

was interviewed by Oprah Winfrey, she shared that her first job was at age 13 working at a frozen yogurt shop. “I’ve always worked. I’ve always valued independence,” Markle said.

For college applications, Stanford University and other schools include essay questions asking how a student spent the last two summers. Work stories can highlight accountability, patience and even humor. For example, Vermont Smoke and Cure in Hinesburg is advertising for summer job opportunities for those 18 years and older.

In developing your resumé and LinkedIn profile, work experience shows initiative and maturity at a younger age. When interviewing for jobs, an icebreaker can include talking about the importance of being involved and supporting the local business community.

Second, volunteer opportunities are a great first step to get work exposure. For example, the Vermont State Parks includes a volunteer program to work three to five days per week.

Also, some local summer camps offer counselor-in-training opportunities. Some counselor-in-training positions may require registering and paying to participate if the camp provides mentoring and training.



Photo by Margo Bartsch
Hannaford is one of many local businesses looking for employees.

Volunteer experience can open the door to consider new college classes as a major or minor. For example, if a student enjoys working with children, adding education or psychology courses could be an additional pathway and a relevant credential for future careers.

Colleges consider volunteer opportunities as “experiential learning,” which are real-world interactions that build academic knowledge. Volunteering can be an educational exposure for the student and make a positive impact on others.

Finally, internships are on-the-job training as a window into a prospective career. Many college students begin building their resumé with internship experiences. Internships can be for a specific project or exposure to many departments within a company. A positive experience could result in a future job offer and networking opportunities.

After graduating college, recent graduates can apply for fellowship scholarships, with some including a stipend. Fellowships typically require a rigorous application and interview process. In some cases, submitting teacher references, work experiences and academic transcripts may be required.

The Wall Street Journal reports that there are many job opportunities for recent college graduates. Some competitive industries have higher salaries and increased opportunities. This growth is a result of needing to fill entry-level jobs since many workers quit during the pandemic.

Also, many companies are expanding their work force. Having internship experience in professional industries can make a candidate a stronger fit for an open position. With job openings, the student’s resumé and LinkedIn profile help to verify credentials. College students and recent graduates usually have a one-page resumé highlighting education, work and activities.

The LinkedIn profile elaborates on the resumé by including writing samples, professional references and personal interests. Many companies use artificial intelligence to screen for specific skills and experiences as a fit for a job.

Summer is three months away from the typical school routine. As life returns to normal since the pandemic began, there are many work options to consider. Students can use this time to gain knowledge and build skills outside of the classroom.

Work experiences can begin shaping a resumé and LinkedIn profile. Although many first jobs may not result in a long-term career, working is an important first step toward adulting.

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



Poetry readings

Photo by Joe Bergin

Stephen Cramer, professor of writing and literature at the University of Vermont, read his poetry for the Poetry at the Grange’s June event. July’s program will feature Vermont’s Poet Laureate, Bianca Stone, and be held in the Quinlan School House on the Charlotte Town Green on July 10 at 4:30 p.m., just prior to the Grange on the Green concert at 5:30 p.m.

Hi! Neighbor

Lydia Smith never outgrew her childhood love of sheep

Phyl Newbeck
Contributor

Lydia Smith jokes that her sheep are both her therapy and the reason she needs therapy. Her Echo Ridge Flock currently consists of 43 sheep, two of which are recent award winners.

“We’ve done quite well at shows on the national level,” she said, “but I mostly just like to watch them eat grass.”

Smith was raised in Charlotte in a family of seven kids. Her parents wanted to introduce them to homesteading, starting with llamas but soon switching to sheep. The first two sheep were purchased when Smith was 2.

“It was supposed to be a backyard hobby,” she said, “but at one point we had 100 sheep.”

Although two of Smith’s sisters have some interest in sheep, Smith is the only one who really stuck with them. She was 14 when she started her own flock within the family farm. Smith’s family raised Border Leicesters and that breed is still her favorite, but she also raises white Lincolns.

An important part of Smith’s life is her work with the Youth Conservationist Program. The program started in 1997 and is based at the Maryland Sheep and Wool Festival. Its goal is to connect kids who want sheep with breeders of heritage breeds. Ten years ago, Smith applied to be part of the program.

“Now,” she said, “I’m managing the absolute chaos that it has turned into. This is the first year I made it through the ceremony with my voice intact and not bleeding.”

Smith said the gathering is the biggest sheep and wool festival on the East Coast. Some kids come from as far as California. This year there were three Vermonters among the 22 entrants. Smith said a fair number of flocks in Vermont have grown through this program thanks to the generosity of breeders who donate ewes.

Although Smith spent most of her life in Charlotte, she lived in Delaware from 2019 to 2024. She is happy to be back, noting that in Delaware, the grass would already be brown in June from lack of rain.

“I’m definitely appreciating getting back to my roots,” she said. “I love to see all the green.”

This year, Smith had a full-circle moment. Ten years ago, she bought a ewe named Niki from a Michigan breeder who was retiring. Niki was the last ewe he sold. This year, Niki’s 8-month-old great-grandson was named the Supreme Champion Ram at the Maryland Festival. His twin was named Reserve Champion White Lincoln Ewe.

Smith describes sheep as a good entry-level animal for someone wanting to get into animal husbandry.

“There are so many different breeds and types, so they fit into way more environments than cows or goats and they



Photo by Jennifer Audet
Lydia Smith enjoys the company of Wallace and Dena.

are more accessible for smaller acreage,” she said. “There’s a sheep for everyone and they’re a nice size for kids just getting started.”

All of Smith’s sheep are registered. Most of her lambs are sold as breeding stock but some become pets. She jokes that she only eats the ugly ones.

Smith also does all her own shearing and occasionally helps others with that task. A mentor told her that if you want to really know your sheep you should shear them yourself.

Smith works off the farm because, as she notes, “The sheep are not self-supporting.” She also has a few chickens for her father and two llamas who guard her flock, a good idea since her farm abuts a wildlife corridor and she’s seen coyotes and bears.

All of Smith’s sheep have names and are friendly enough that someone sitting down in her field would have three trying to sit on their lap, she said.

Spending her summers going to county fairs Smith made lots of friends and some great mentors. That’s one of the reasons she is committed to the Youth Conservationist Program. “Even if they don’t stick with sheep they are learning something,” she said.

“Sheep are my ‘thing,’” Smith said. “I fell in love as a teenager and refused to grow out of it. The sheep have given me some amazing opportunities as well as a lot of headaches and heartbreak. They have given me a sense of community.”



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Community Roundup

Red Cross urges blood donations during summer

The American Red Cross urges all donors to give blood or platelets now to keep the blood supply strong this summer. Type O blood products are most needed on hospital shelves, especially in the face of summer challenges that can quickly cause blood and platelet reserves to drop.

In addition to summer fun and holidays, severe summer weather can have a sudden impact on the ability to collect blood and platelets. Scheduling and keeping donation appointments are crucial this month to ensure blood products are constantly available in the weeks to come for all patients, including those in trauma situations that may require several lifesaving transfusions.

All blood types are needed, and donors who don't know their blood type can learn it after donation. Book a time to give blood or platelets by visiting redcrossblood.org, calling 1-800-RED CROSS or by using the Red Cross blood donor app.

As a thank-you, all who come to give by July 14 will receive a pair of Red Cross x goodr sunglasses, while supplies last. Donors can personalize their one-of-a-kind shades with a blood type sticker that's included. For details, visit redcrossblood.org/goodr.



For those who come to give July 15-31, the Red Cross will say thanks with a Fandango Movie Reward by email. Use it to catch a summer blockbuster. See redcrossblood.org/july.

Upcoming area blood donation opportunities in July:

Burlington

- July 14: noon-5 p.m., Hula Lakeside, 50 Lakeside Avenue
- July 22: 9 a.m.-1:30 p.m., Greater Burlington YMCA, 298 College Street

Colchester

- July 29: noon-4 p.m., Saint Michaels College Dion Student Center, Winooski Park

Essex Junction

- July 10: 11 a.m.-4:30 p.m., Champlain Valley Exposition, Route 15
- July 19: 9 a.m.-1:30 p.m., Essex Resort & Spa - The Mansion, 70 Essex Way
- July 29: noon-4:30 p.m., Essex Alliance Church Community Building, 37 Old Stage Road

Hinesburg

- July 15: 12:30 p.m.-4:30 p.m., United Church of Hinesburg, 10570 Route 116

Jericho

- July 31: 1 p.m.-5:30 p.m., Catalyst Church on Raceway, 100 Raceway Road

Shelburne

- July 22: noon-5 p.m., St. Catherine of Siena, 72 Church Street

South Burlington

- July 24: noon-4 p.m., South Burlington Public Library, 180 Market Street

Williston

- July 17: 9 a.m.-1:30 p.m., Williston Fire Station, 645 Talcott Road

Winooski

- July 18: noon-4 p.m., Winooski Senior Ctr., 123 Barlow Street.



United Way's Volunteer Connection seeks volunteers for variety of programs

United Way's Volunteer Connection site is set up to help connect agencies and volunteers. Here is a link (<https://tinyurl.com/3x3zexju>) for Volunteer Connection to learn more about these and other opportunities:

• **The Winooski Partnership for Prevention** invites volunteers to help clean up Landry Park 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m., Friday, June 27. They'll provide snacks, drinks, gloves, trash bags, sharps containers and training. All you need is enthusiasm for a clean park with less substance-related litter. Contact mmatthews@winooskiprevention.org.

• **Senior Medicare Patrol** empowers and assists Medicare beneficiaries, their families and caregivers in preventing, detecting and reporting health care fraud, errors, and abuse through outreach, counseling and education. Volunteers can

positively impact their communities by helping to protect the Medicare program for future generations. Volunteers present short, scripted presentations on Medicare fraud and scams and participate in community resource fairs to raise awareness about the program. Flexible scheduling. Call 877-272-8720 or visit stopmedicarefraud.org.

• **Feeding Champlain Valley** is looking for volunteers, age 18 and older, to pack food, deliver groceries, prepare breakfasts and lunches, pick up donations and stock shelves to help support our neighbors who are experiencing food insecurity. Monday-Friday, 6:30 a.m.-4 p.m., at food hubs in Burlington, Colchester and Middlebury, with opportunities to help outside of those hours. Apply at <https://tinyurl.com/yk4wymht>.

• **Big Brothers Big Sisters of Vermont** offers volunteers, age 18 and older, many ways to make an impact in the lives of Vermont youth. Become a community-based and school-based mentor; Share your love of sports as a Sports Buddy. Share your career/trade/skills at your place of business, and more. Two to four hours a month of your time can make a lifetime of difference in the life of a child. Background check and references required. Inquire at <https://tinyurl.com/k6mcdpvn>.

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Heron watching



Photo by Marybeth Gilliam

A recent visit to a farm near Lake Dunmore south of Middlebury where there is a blue heron rookery with at least 30 nests yielded some great pictures. The fledglings are expected to leave their nests this week.

Weed’s in the Garden

Carrying on a love affair with lesser-known clematis

Joan Weed
Contributor

Whatever our stage as gardeners, we have all fallen in love with clematis at some time. Some of us have moved on to more subdued blossoms, and some have gotten in so deeply we have collections of them.

Since I’ve been gardening in some way now for nearly 80 years, I have been in both states of mind. Currently, I have by my count six varieties and have had a few others that didn’t make it.

I thought I’d share some of the lesser-known ones to encourage you to stretch your gardener self.

I began as many of us do with the fabulous Jackmanii with large royal purple petals. It climbs posts and arbors and usually thrives with little worry and that is one I have.

Many clematis are vines, but there are also many that are more apt to crawl. The vines can be encouraged to climb trees as well as structures. Nelly Moser is another commonly found large-petaled one in a fuschia and white design on its petals. Duchess of Albany is a large petaled sort with deep red petals. One of my disasters though.

There is much talk in gardening circles of when and how to prune clematis and you might have heard of the 1-2-3 varieties and the particular needs for pruning each kind. For me, this just spoils the fun of clematis. A more orderly mind will study the rules and follow them. I haven’t been able to wrap my mind around that so have simply cut my plants back to 18 inches in fall and most have returned. The worst that can happen is losing some blooms later.

I personally love the bell-shaped blooms and my most favorite is rooguchi (oh my, the variety of spelling for this one). It is purple and simply charming.

In a similar shape is clematis tangutica in bright yellow. I love this one and have managed to get it to return a few seasons but have yet to crack the code for permanent residency. Two tiny bell-shaped varieties, both with white blooms, are climbers with tiny blossoms of about half an inch to an inch size.

One, clematis recta midnight masquerade, has burgundy foliage and climbs a short structure in my garden and has returned faithfully. The other tiny one has a similar 4-foot tuteur to climb. It’s called clematis campaniflora.

A very successful large-petaled kind is perle d’azur. I read about it in English gardener Christopher Lloyd’s books. If he loved it, that was fine with me. It is a very vigorous vine in a subtle shade of blue that overclimbs my tallest structure.

My other blue one is not a viner but has a soft blue aura with yellow centers. Her name is olgae. She dies to the ground each fall but has emerged faithfully for years.

Though clematis need full sun to bloom completely, they dislike dry hot soil and, in fact, love their roots to be cool. The way I accomplish this is with a piece of blue slate that covers the root area, leaving room for the plant to emerge alongside.



Clematis roguchi tangutica



Olgae

Photos by Joan Weed



Clematis tangutica



Clematis jackmanii



Clematis perle d’azur

Supply plenty of water as well.

I encourage you to check out clematis at your local nursery but also venture into the internet and see all the beautiful choices. I hope I’ve given you the spark needed to investigate. I believe the price of bringing delight for many years is never too much.

Sacred Hunter

Summer musings on gratitude for miracle of being here

Bradley Carleton
Contributor

Sweltering heat. Powerful thunderstorms that tear across the lake like a dark wall of clouds. They make fools of forecasters. If you want real weather predictions, go ask a farmer whether he is cutting today or tomorrow, when will they be tedding the hay?

If you really want a workout, offer to throw bales. With 90-degree temperatures by midday, the exercise plan starts at 6 a.m. Farmers are typically jocular people with cheerful personalities. After three or four hours (or five fully loaded trailers), the jovial conversations are reduced to speaking while gasping for air and stretching every sore muscle in your body.

Having grown up in a primarily privileged environment, I saw my life vision as one that sits behind a big desk, a computer and a phone. Banking. Insurance. Brokerage. Soft-dollar trading strategies. Intellectually complicated work. I had thought that the financial industry made me appear intelligent and was a “respectable” career path. But that feeling was an empty promise for me.

I spent more than 40 years running on that treadmill, chasing the dollar. After life handed us some significant health challenges, my lovely wife found a small cape on a 300-acre farm. We’ve been here for over 20 years now. Recently the farm was purchased by a local, Nick Powden who has a great attitude and a personality that attracts people to him. His joy for his work led me to ask if I could help him. Now I look forward with a big smile whenever he asks.

He is the kind of guy that, when you see him working on something, you are compelled to help. So, one day last year I offered to throw hay for him and his crew. It was unlike any work I’d ever done. It was incredibly strenuous. I had spent decades working out in gyms. Lifting fancy weight machines, spinning, even yoga, but nothing beats the feeling of working with a team throwing hay and laughing for three or four hours. Afterward, I would go home grinning and exhausted. I had found happiness in the most unlikely way, given my career path.

This solid definition of “real work” helped me to feel more connected to the Earth than any other job I’d ever done. The fragrance of

fresh cut hay. The texture difference between the first cut and second cut brought me a deeper understanding of all the miracle of the Earth providing for us.

As I make my nightly rounds, looking for deer at the edges of fields in our town, I watch the winter wheat from Aurora Farms swaying like a perfectly choreographed dance. All bending in unison with the breeze, their proud seed heads bowing to the blue sky above. Observing the earth’s bounty, I feel more connected to “Pachamama” than ever.

When thunderstorms build giant walls of wind and torrential rain as they sweep through the valley, instead of feeling disappointment, I stare with wonder at the windowpane watching the rivulets form squiggly patterns. Rain can be a true blessing after a long dry period. Or, as we learned last year, it can annihilate culverts and bridges. Nature blesses us with its nourishment but commands respect for its awesome power.

This year, I discovered the taste of locust buds and found several elderberry bushes with mammoth flower heads that appear like bright white fireworks being shot out of the stems. When I heard that the flowers make a great cordial as a simple syrup, I had to try the recipe from my writing colleague and famous outdoor chef, Hank Shaw, who wrote what I believe to be the culinary bible for wild foods, “*Hunt, Gather, Cook*.”

But when Mother Nature wants to remind you that she is in charge she sends heat waves that slow down virtually all outdoor activity. When the temperature of the small mountain streams rises over 58 degrees, the glacier-born brook trout is in danger, so we don’t fish for them until autumn when the small streams cool down.

Brookies like clear, clean, cold water, and what resourceful Vermonter wants to share a favorite fishing hole with a bunch of swimmers who bought a book giving directions to every mountain pool in the state? To me, these remote pools are sacred and are inhabited by the stunning colors of the brook trout. Brookies, albeit typically small, are the most beautiful being on earth.

My friend, Chris, likes to say: “Do you know how I know there is a God? The proof is orange juice and brook trout.”

When the Great Spirit brought elderflowers, brook trout and hay fields, they



Photo by Bradley Carleton

Throwing hay is unlike any workout you’ve ever done.

knew that what they created was truly heaven. And for those of us that are still inhabiting this planet, “heaven” is all around us. All it takes to recognize that this is heaven is to take a few minutes to breathe in the scent of the freshly cut hayfield. Fix your gaze upon the flowering elderberry bush. Hike up into the mountains and toss a dry fly into the edge of a frothy pool.

Let us set aside all our differences and stand firm on our agreement that we are blessed to be sharing this Earth. Set aside the

debit card. Walk away from behind the desk into the backyard and ask the tree how it feels about sharing the land with us. How can we shift our focus from division and fear to love and gratitude for the miracle of being here?

(Bradley Carleton is the founder and director of sacredhunter.org, which teaches the public respect and empathy through hunting, fishing and foraging. More of Bradley’s writing can be seen at sacredhunter.substack.com.)



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In the Outdoors

Adorable kid leads to change from flowers to goats

Elizabeth Bassett
Contributor

Life does not always go to plan. For Margaret Aiken, who recently opened a United States Department of Agriculture-certified goat dairy in Charlotte, meeting an adorable goat kid is what happened, even as she dreamed of one day owning a flower farm.

Aiken said she fell in love. “One happy summer I worked at a flower farm,” said the horticulture graduate. “But I realized that flowers are static, and this frolicking kid brought me so much joy. So, I bought a goat.”

One thing led to another and one goat to many.

“I thought it would be fun to have babies, so I bred a few females. When I tasted their milk I thought, ‘Wow, this does not taste like goat, it is sweet and delicious,’” she said.

Aiken raises Nigerian dwarf goats, small enough to be manageable and indeed cute. Butterfat content of their milk is 6 to 10 percent. She said Nigerians are the Jersey cows among goats. The production of the Nigerians is low, however, meaning more work and more goats to produce the same volume of milk.

In 2018, Aiken moved to Charlotte. While she tended gardens and animals for Diana McCargo and Peter Swift, she raised and bred goats at home. She experimented with yogurt and goat cheese, called chevre. Soon Aiken started looking to buy a farm through the Vermont Land Trust Farmland Access Program.

“I looked at properties for years, all over Vermont,” she said.

None was affordable or realistic for building a market. As a last-ditch effort, Aiken turned to a free service for farmers at the Intervale Center, Vermont Land Link. The program connects farmers with property owners looking to sell or rent their land.

At the same time, Roel Boumans and Tiny Sikkes, who subsistence farm on 14 conserved acres at the intersection of Greenbush and Thompson Point Roads, were seeking a succession plan of their own. With no children, the farmers hope to farm and remain on their land as long as possible. The two parties reached an agreement and are sharing the property and its bounties. They have carved out space for each to live comfortably in the straw-bale home

the couple built after the rambling LaBerge farmhouse burned to the ground in 2003. Aiken has moved her herd into the former cow barn and built a dairy.

“This was a huge project,” Aiken said. “I removed metal cow stanchions with a Sawzall. The floor and gutters were at multiple levels, so we had to pour concrete. Lots of it. My bill for concrete alone was \$30,000.”

She installed a septic holding tank, wired and plumbed. Sanitation standards for the USDA required not just heating and cooling but specific easy-to-clean walls, lots of sinks and an incinerating toilet, which Aiken found used for \$2,000. She had to dig a perimeter drain around the dairy portion of the barn.

Then came the specialized equipment, fridges and freezers. A pasteurizer with digital recorder, to confirm that the milk has been kept at a required temperature for a specified time, cost \$20,000. The USDA requirements for Grade A certification fill a 400-page book.

The barn, where the goats live and frolic, is completely separate from the sanitary dairy. A maze of doors and passageways results. Aiken, who is a skilled carpenter, built all the enclosures for the goats as well as many rooms in the dairy. The connector between these two domains, barn and dairy, is the milking parlor, currently set up with a stand for six goats and capacity to double in the future.

Aiken currently milks 18, three hours in the morning and three in the afternoon. In a week or two, the last kids will be weaned, adding 10 dams to the current milkers and about a half hour to each milking. The middle of each day is for dairy tasks, making yogurt and cheese, packaging for market and selling at farmers markets.

This year there were 65 kids. Once Aiken establishes more markets for her products, she hopes to increase the herd. Why labor so long and hard and invest so heavily in this project?

“In my core, I want to feed people,” Aiken said. “Perhaps that comes from growing up poor and food insecure. Goats’ milk is the closest to human breast milk, so for babies or those who can’t drink cows’ milk, this product is a tasty gift.”

Signs on Greenbush and Thompson’s Point Road East lead to the barn and farmstand, open 7 a.m.-7 p.m. daily. Sale of unpasteurized milk on farms is permitted. Raw milk joins chevre and yogurt, plain,



Photo by Emma Allen
Jujube is one of the goats that inspired Margaret Aiken to start Flower Gap Farm.



Photo by Elizabeth Bassett
Margaret Aiken stands beside chèvre, or goat cheese, which has to drain its whey for 18 hours.

maple and lemon curd, in the farmstand refrigerator. There’s a bench for kid-viewing, too. Philo Ridge Farm also carries the pasteurized products.



Photo by Elizabeth Bassett
Margaret Aiken stands next to her goat milking stand.

Gardening

Nurturing milkweed helps with monarch butterfly decline

Bonnie Kirn Donahue
University of Vermont Extension

Milkweed may seem like a weed because of its name, but it’s actually an incredibly important plant.

The leaves of milkweed are the primary food source for monarch caterpillars. The flowers provide nectar for the adult monarch butterfly and countless other pollinators and insects.

The monarch (*Danaus plexippus*), Vermont’s state butterfly, is a species at risk with a declining population due to loss of habitat, climate change and other factors. Planting milkweed and protecting existing milkweed can help support this species.

Milkweed can grow in a wide variety of environments, from roadsides and abandoned lots to the edge of fields, meadows and even in manicured gardens. This native, perennial powerhouse is an adaptable plant that should be embraced in almost any landscape.

One easy thing you can do to encourage milkweed to grow is to only mow what you really need to use. Leaving infrequently mowed meadow areas provides an opportunity for milkweed to flourish. Cutting back to mowing once per year, or once every few years, is a great way to do more good by doing less.

Another thing to try when milkweed appears in your garden is just to leave it and let it grow. Try to get used to the idea that even if you didn’t plant it, it could be beneficial, so you can leave it in certain sections of the garden.

When milkweed is happy, it tends to grow in colonies, so try to embrace this as well. It is providing many benefits by being there, perhaps more than other common ornamental plants.



Swamp milkweed, which is taller with thinner leaves than common milkweed, grows best in full sun and medium to wet soils.

Milkweed can also be sown as plants, plugs or even by seed. There are multiple species of milkweed that are adapted to different conditions.

You can buy milkweed plants from local nurseries that sell native plants or order seed online from native plant nurseries. Try to find seed that has been collected as close as possible to your area to support local plant genetics.

Common milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*) grows in a variety of conditions from dry

to medium-wet soils in full sun. It tolerates poor soil and can grow into large patches by underground rhizomes. This species grows 2- to 3-feet tall, and about 12 inches wide. Its pink-mauve clusters of flowers are fragrant and showy.

True to its name, swamp milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*) grows in medium to wet soils, but can tolerate some variation. It grows 3- to 4-feet tall, preferring full sun. This taller milkweed has thinner leaves than common milkweed, and it also likes to



The leaves of the milkweed plant are the primary food source for monarch caterpillars.

naturalize.

While lovely and highly attractive to pollinators, gardeners should reconsider planting the orange-flowered butterfly weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*) in gardens. It has been added to the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife’s list of “Rare and Uncommon Native Vascular Plants of Vermont,” which means that planting butterfly weed with genetics from other parts of the U.S. may interfere with local genetics of this threatened species. However, if this plant is already in your garden, there is no need to pull it up.

Interested in growing milkweed? More information can be found here: monarchwatch.org/milkweed.

Together, with little changes in landscape maintenance and mindset, we can help protect and build habitat for the monarch and many other important pollinators and insects.

(Bonnie Kirn Donahue is a University of Vermont Extension master gardener and landscape architect from central Vermont.)



Raindrops on daisies

Photo by Alexandra Z. Lazar

‘Daisy’ is one of a few words in English that are one-word poems. Centuries ago, people referred to the sun as the ‘day’s eye.’ Eventually, the flower we now know as a daisy became associated with the sun, and it took on the sun’s euphemism of ‘day’s eye.’ Over time, these two words got smooshed together into one word and became ‘daisy.’ The drops here are not tears; it’s the day’s eye glinting with liquid sunshine.

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Gardening

Saving seeds from vegetable crops is fun and easy

Amy Simone
University of Vermont Extension

Saving seeds from your vegetable crops is a fun and easy way to benefit from nature’s generosity. With a little knowledge and some advanced planning, you can restock your seed supply for next years’ planting at no cost.

When you purchased your vegetable seeds this year, you may recall that some varieties were classified as open-pollinated or heirloom. If you have any of this type of seed, then their fruit can be saved and harvested for seed stock. Hybrid or F1 seeds, however, will not produce seeds that result in true-to-type plants so avoid saving seeds from those plants.

Vegetable plants such as peas, beans, tomatoes and peppers are ideal introductions to seed saving. Their flowers are self-pollinating, so there is less risk of cross breeding.

Keep in mind that the purpose of saving seeds is to propagate more of the fruit that has the best attributes and taste. Therefore, be purposeful about which fruit you select to harvest seed from.

For example, choose the cherry tomato variety with an incredible flavor and fruits that ripened earlier and skins that didn’t crack with too much rain. This may be a better fruit from which to harvest seed than your other cherry tomatoes.

On the other hand, the shell pea variety that was slow to mature, had lackluster flavor or the plant became diseased or didn’t produce well may not be a good candidate. The less desirable traits will be perpetuated in its seeds.

The following are seed saving steps for these four crop types:

- Tomatoes — Save seeds from the fruit at the point at which it is fully ripe. Cut a tomato open and scoop the seeds and gel out, placing them in a glass jar and adding some water. Agitate the mixture twice a day for five days, at which point it will ferment,

and the seeds will sink to the bottom. Discard any seeds that float on top as these are non-viable. Pour out the liquid and lay the seeds out on newspaper, coffee filters, paper plates or a screen to dry.

- Peppers — Choose your seed pepper from the first few fruits produced by the plant as those seeds may have the highest viability. Allow the pepper to ripen to its final color before harvesting. Cut open the pepper and separate the seeds from the flesh. The use of gloves and goggles will help you avoid direct exposure to the capsaicin contained within hot peppers. Put the seeds in a glass jar with water to test for viability. Scoop off and discard any seeds that float to the top. Rinse the remaining seeds and spread them on drying medium.

- Peas and beans — Leave bean and pea pods on the vine until they are dry, begin to turn brown and the seeds rattle inside. Pick the pods from the plants, and bring them indoors to continue drying.

Seeds are adequately dry when you cannot dent them with a fingernail, about one to three weeks. Label your seeds with the plant name, variety and the date of seed harvest. Dried seeds can be stored in tightly sealed glass containers, glassine sleeves (translucent seed-saving envelopes), plastic bags or containers or paper packets.

When completely dry, store your seeds in a cool, dry, dark place and pull them out next season to enjoy the fruits of your labor.

For more information, check out go.uvm.edu/saving-seeds and seedsavers.org. In addition, University of Vermont Extension Master Gardener helpline volunteers can answer questions about saving seeds or other gardening topics. Call 802-656-5421 (Thursdays, 9 a.m. to noon) or submit questions online anytime at go.uvm.edu/gardeninghelp.

(Amy Simone is a University of Vermont Extension master gardener from South Burlington.)



Photos by Amy Simone

Store harvested seeds in glass, paper, plastic or glassine containers in a cool, dry, dark place.



Tomato seeds are harvested using a “wet fermentation” method that separates the seeds from the protective gel.

Calendar

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

**‘As You Like It’
Thursday-Sunday, July 10-13**
For the first time in their 46-year history, the Valley Players are producing a play by Shakespeare. “As You Like It” concludes its run with 7:30 p.m. performances through Saturday and a 4 p.m. closing performance on Sunday at the Valley Players Theater in Waitsfield. The romantic comedy is set in the Forest of Arden, where characters discover love, identity and forgiveness. Tickets are available in advance at theaterengine.com. For more information, go to valleyplayers.com.

CHARLOTTE

**Grange on the Green concert
Thursday, July 10, 5:30-7 p.m.**
Singer and songwriter Patty Casey will play a variety of genres, including folk and blues on the Charlotte Town Green. The concert sponsor is Lake Champlain Chocolates.

**‘As You Like It’
Thursday-Sunday, thru July 13**
The Valley Players present Shakespeare’s “As You Like It” at the Valley Players Theater, 4254 Main Street, Waitsfield, June 26-July 13. Show times are Thursday-Saturday at 7:30 p.m. and Sundays at 4 pm. Tickets are \$18 for adults & teens, \$14 for seniors and kids 12 and younger and are available in advance at valleyplayers.com.

**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



Photo by Wayne Fawbush

Silvius pleads his love to a disdainful Phoebe as Celia and Rosalind look on in a rehearsal for ‘As You Like It,’ playing through this Sunday, July 13, at the Valley Players Theater in Waitsfield.

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. Learn more at camille.kauffman@uvm.edu or 802-780-0074.

**Lake Champlain Maritime Museum
Sunday, July 13, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.**
The museum offers a free family field trip day for the whole family with activities focusing on archaeology, boats and conservation. There will be a scavenger hunt in one of the Lake Champlain Maritime Museum exhibit buildings. Learn about how archaeologists work in the field and get a peek into the conservation process and more. Here’s an overview of the Family Field Trip Day schedule: 10-10:15 a.m., welcome and introduction to archaeology, 10:15-11:45 a.m., archaeology activities including the shipwreck simulator, archaeology dig kits, 11:45 a.m.-12:30 p.m., BYO picnic lunch, 12:30-2 p.m.,

museum activities including guided exhibit tours, conservation lab, and more, 2-4 p.m., free time, scavenger hunt. This experience is free but registration is required (<https://tinyurl.com/2rrmezda>).

**Rokeby Museum summer camp
Monday-Friday, July 14-25, 9 a.m.-1:30 p.m.**
Those ages 9-13 should consider the Rokeby Museum’s two-week summer camp that combines art, nature and hands-on history. Play fun games as you learn about the Robinson artists and naturalists who once walked these grounds. Take nature walks, practice birdwatching and search for animal tracks. Create a nature journal and add to it as you explore this historic property. Study the Robinsons’ sketches, scrapbooks and paintings, then try your hand at each medium. Pay what you can (\$450 suggested per camper); bring your own lunch; snacks are included. No artistic experience required. All supplies are provided. Contact Jonathon Ahl, education programs manager, with questions at jahl@rokeby.org or 802-877-3406.

**Kingdom Community Wind tour
Wednesday, July 16, 10 a.m.**
Registration is open to tour Kingdom Community Wind in Lowell and learn about how wind power works. This summer’s tour is 10 a.m. on July 16. The tour is led by Green Mountain Power experts and takes about 90 minutes. It’s free, but space is limited and registration is required at <https://tinyurl.com/23ejxmjk>.

**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 events are sensory experiences not to be missed. Please note: There is 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.

CHARLOTTE

**Grange on the Green concert
Thursday, July 17, 5:30-7 p.m.**
Charlotte-based Greenbush will jazz fusion and blues on the Charlotte Town Green. The concert sponsor is Cumbancha.

**Maritime museum summer party
Friday, July 18, 5-8 p.m.**
The Lake Champlain Maritime Museum’s annual summer party is an evening to celebrate the museum and raise a glass to the 2025 season. The museum will stay open late for this event and there will be dinner options from from Crooked Ladle and La Chapina; drinks including beer, wine and a special summer cocktail; dessert from Lu • Lu Ice Cream; live music by Unruly Allies; lawn games; and a scavenger hunt. Tickets are \$50 at lcmm.org/support/summer-party-tickets and include your dinner choice, ice cream and a raffle ticket. Attendees under 10 are free; please indicate in your ticket reservation if you are bringing any kids under 10.

**‘KIN’
Friday-Sunday, July 18-27**
“KIN,” a new musical will be performed in Main Street Landing’s Blackbox theatre in Burlington in a production by Workaround Theatre Company with a cast featuring many performers from Charlotte and staff and graduates of Champlain Valley Union High. Tensions rise when a mysterious cult moves into an otherwise quiet mountain town. To redeem his troubled past, the mayor’s son infiltrates the cult’s festival, where he finds himself caught between two families that are more similar than anyone could have thought. Inspired by true events from the 1980s and told through an original ‘80s-pop-inspired score, “KIN” is about moving on without letting go. For tickets and times: <https://tinyurl.com/44vadbzd>.

CHARLOTTE

**Grange on the Green concert
Thursday, July 24, 5:30-7 p.m.**
Dave Vallett will play American folk and country, Irish music and humorous originals on the Charlotte Town Green. Individual donors from Charlotte sponsored this concert.

**Grange on the Green concert
Thursday, July 31, 5:30-7 p.m.**
Forest Station, a local bluegrass band will perform on the Charlotte Town Green. The concert sponsor is Otter Creek Awnings.

**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

CHARLOTTE TOWN MEETINGS AND AGENDAS

Visit charlottetvt.org for more information

Regular Selectboard Meeting
Monday, July 14, 7 p.m.

Conservation Commission Meeting
Tuesday, July 22, 7 p.m.

Development Review Board Meeting
Wednesday, July 23, 7 p.m.

Planning Commission Meeting
Thursday, July 24, 7 p.m.

Regular Selectboard Meeting
Monday, July 28, 7 p.m.

Planning Commission Meeting
Thursday, August 7, 7 p.m.

Regular Selectboard Meeting
Monday, August 11, 7 p.m.

Charlotte Energy Committee Meeting
Tuesday, August 12, 7 p.m.

Library News

Celebrate summer at the Friends of the Library book sale

Margaret Woodruff
Director

Summer at the library would not be complete without the festive Friends Book Sale. High-quality selections for all ages and Lulu's Ice Cream, too.

The Friends of the Library book sale is Sunday, July 13, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

Thanks to all who made the library rainbow collage a true work of art. Stay tuned for the next stamp-collage project.

In the meantime, don't miss Craft Stop at the Library to try your hand at a new craft each week. The library has the supplies and space to try a new craft from macrame rainbows to garden sachets.

Share your harvest table Tuesdays-Fridays, 10:30 a.m.-4 p.m.

Are you overflowing with kale, carrots or cucumbers? Share with your neighbors. The library will have a table set up on the porch throughout the summer. Bring what you can, take what you need. Please drop off veggies at the desk.

'On the Trail' photography

Jeffrey Trubisz has "trekked, scrambled and hiked hundreds of trails up mountains, through forests, into canyons and along beaches." He said, "The camera enables me to record that immersion. I hope that in observing my photographs you feel the essence of the place as if you were on the trail." Enjoy the breathtaking images through August and join us for a gallery talk with Trubisz at 5:30 p.m. on Friday, Aug. 19.

Town cooling centers

The Charlotte Library and the Charlotte Senior Center are designated cooling centers with air-conditioned facilities where you can cool down during hot weather. Community cooling centers help provide temporary relief and are especially

helpful when the National Weather Service issues a heat advisory or excessive heat warning.

During a heat advisory or excessive heat warning, notices will be placed in Front Porch Forum in addition to notices on social media and the library and senior center websites. You can find more information about managing during heat emergencies on the library's website.

Programs for kids

Find all the kids' summer programs on the Color Our World summer schedule at <https://tinyurl.com/yvd8nrvf>.

Family art evenings Mondays, July 14-28, 4:30-6 p.m.

Art evening will be celebrated every Monday in July. Each Monday will have a different theme and craft medium:

- July 14 — watercolor
- July 21 — chalk art on the sidewalk and bubble painting
- July 28 — clay and slime

Music on the porch Wednesdays, July 9-23, 3:30 p.m.

Enjoy old time and Irish music performed by Zachary DeFranco on the Charlotte Library porch. This is a family event, all ages welcome.

Weekly summer programs

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



Photo by Janice Heilmann

Jenny Cole shares lemonade with Flynn Trono at the 2023 book sale.

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

Garden Circle Mondays, 8:30-10 a.m., & Wednesdays, 4:30-6 p.m.

Garden stewards Karen Tuininga and Linda Hamilton invite past and interested new members of to the library's Garden Circle to join in tending the library

LIBRARY continued on page 22

CALENDAR

Continued from page 20

night at the Shelburne Museum for free. The museum will stay open from 5-7:30 p.m.

**Softball tournament
Saturday & Sunday, Aug. 23 & 24**
The seventh annual Harper Rose Briar Men's Softball Tournament will be held at Kampersville in Salisbury. This tournament is held in memory of Harper Rose Briar, who died on Jan. 24, 2019, at 6 months old after being given an overdose of a medication containing diphenhydramine, and to raise awareness about the risks of over-the-counter medications for children. All the proceeds are donated to a local family or nonprofit in need. The registration deadline is July 23. The cost is \$300 per team. To sign up or for more info contact Brenda Colburn at 802-772-5015 or bcolburnmsw@gmail.com.

**Fall woodland training
Friday-Sunday, Sept. 12-14**
Vermont Coverts: Woodlands for Wildlife invites landowners, foresters, and conservation-minded individuals to its fall cooperators training, held at Kehoe Conservation Camp on the shores of Lake Bomoseen. This free, 2 1/2-day program immerses participants in the science and art of woodland stewardship. With presentations from state and local experts in forestry and wildlife management and stories from fellow landowners, the training explores forest ecology, habitat enhancement, invasive species control, conservation planning and how to maintain connected and resilient landscapes. Applications are open now. Learn more or apply at vtcoverts.org. For questions, email info@vtcoverts.org.

**Words in the Woods
Saturday, Sept. 20, 11 a.m.**
Vermont Humanities Words in the Woods events allow Vermonters and visitors to enjoy our state's natural beauty while listening to and reading literature in the outdoors at different Vermont State Parks. The fifth of this

year's readings will be at Mt. Philo State Park and will feature the Young Writers Project (YWP), an independent nonprofit begun in 2006 in Burlington to inspire, mentor, publish and promote young writers and artists. Vermont Humanities will cover park entries for the program.



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LIBRARY

Continued from page 21

gardens. 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 Schoolhouse. Come regularly or as you can. All help welcome. Questions? Email seed@charlottepubliclibrary.org.

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

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

Poetry at the Grange
Thursday, July 10, 4:30 p.m.

July’s special Poetry at the Grange program will be held at Grange on the Green with featured poet Bianca Stone, Vermont’s Poet Laureate, starting at 4:30 p.m. in the Quinlan School House. Following the poetry reading in the schoolhouse, Stone will perform a poem to open the Grange on the Green concert at 5:30 p.m.

Grange on the Green
Thursday, July 10, 5:30-7 p.m.

On Thursday, July 10, there will be music from Patti Casey and Tom MacKenzie featuring folk, blues and bluegrass. The concert sponsor is Lake Champlain Chocolates. The rain location is the Charlotte Senior Center.

Silent reading party
Tuesday, July 15, 4-6 p.m.

Welcome to introvert happy hour. Come to Adam’s Berry Farm for a silent reading party and enjoy a book in this beautiful pastoral setting. At silent reading parties there’s no assigned reading. All readers are welcome — ebooks or audiobooks, poetry or prose, fiction or non-fiction: It’s BYOBook. Simple refreshments served and berry treats available for purchase.

Short story selections
Wednesday, July 16, 1 p.m.

Join library director Margaret Woodruff to share and discuss short stories old and new. This is an online program. Zoom link at <https://tinyurl.com/2uxwrsyr>.

Better Together book club
Wednesday, July 16, 7-8:30 p.m.

Read anything great lately? Need some reading inspiration? Bring some ideas, get some ideas.

Men’s book group
Wednesday, July 16, 7:30-9 p.m.

In an extraordinary feat of narrative invention, in “The Plot Against America” Philip Roth imagines an alternate history where Franklin D. Roosevelt loses the 1940 presidential election to heroic aviator and rabid isolationist Charles A. Lindbergh. Shortly thereafter, Lindbergh negotiates a cordial understanding with Adolf Hitler, while the new government embarks on a program of folksy anti-Semitism. Copies available at the circulation desk. Join in person or on

Zoom at <https://tinyurl.com/3aastdwh>.

Tech help at the senior center
Thursday, July 17, 10 a.m.-noon

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

Thursday book group
Thursday, July 17, 7:30 p.m.

A free, world-class education for anyone, anywhere: This is the goal of the Khan Academy, a passion project that grew from an ex-engineer and hedge funder’s online tutoring sessions with his niece, who was struggling with algebra, into a worldwide phenomenon. Today millions of students, parents and teachers use the Khan Academy’s free videos and software, which have expanded to encompass nearly every conceivable subject; and academy techniques are being employed with exciting results in a growing number of classrooms around the globe. Copies of “The One World Schoolhouse” are available at the circulation desk. Join on Zoom at <https://tinyurl.com/mr4ah6p6>.

Mystery book group
Monday, July 21, 10 a.m.

In “The Last Dance,” maverick sleuth Declan Miller is back at work following the murder of his wife (and amateur ballroom-dancing partner) Alex. Working with new partner and heavy metal enthusiast Sara Xiu, he is tasked with investigating the double killing of gangland family scion Adrian Cutler and IT consultant Barry Shepherd. The search for the hitman begins and Miller begins to reconnect with his old network — his ballroom-dancing friends, homeless informant Finn and even the ghost of his wife, who keeps showing up in his kitchen. Copies available at the circulation desk.

Cooking book club
Tuesday, July 22, 5:30-7 p.m.

Join us for a summer celebration with Hetty Lui McKinnon’s “love letter to vegetables.” Her cookbook, “Tenderheart,” is the happy outcome of McKinnon’s love of vegetables, featuring 22 essential fruits and vegetables that become the basis for over 180 recipes. Stop by the library to choose a recipe for a dish to share and meet us on the library porch for dinner and conversation. No time to cook? There’s plenty to share so bring your good company.

Jigsaw puzzle competition
Saturday, July 26, 10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Come to the library for a fast and friendly puzzling competition. The first team to finish wins a prize and bragging rights. For adults and kids 11 and up. Team size is one to four people. The puzzle will be 500 pieces. There’s a two-



Photo by Margaret Woodruff

The library’s rainbow collage is complete.



Photo by Jeffrey Trubisz

A view of St. Moritz, Switzerland, from Jeffrey Trubisz’s photography exhibit at the library.

hour time limit. Arrive 15 minutes early for the 10:30 a.m. start. Registration required at the desk or by emailing info@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
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 Open Meeting Law. The next scheduled board meeting is Thursday, July 17, at 6 p.m. Contact the library or visit the library website (charlottepubliclibrary.org) for more information.

Senior Center News

Inside or outside, senior center has something for you

Lori York
Director

Summer is in full swing, and a wide range of activities are happening at the senior center.

Participants can enjoy the outdoors with the gentle walking group or sign up for one of the women’s kayak trips.

For those looking to beat the heat, indoor options include a ceramic workshop with local potter Judy Devitt, Monday lunches and weekly games — all offered in the comfort of air conditioning.

The senior center will also host a musical performance with Peter and Helen Rosenblum of Hinesburg, featuring hits from the 50s, 60s and 70s. In addition, a free pop-up yoga dance class will be offered this month.

July art exhibit

The senior center art exhibit this month includes works by John Peckam and Nikolas Kotovich.

John Peckham’s striking bird photography captures avian life in its natural habitat, inspired by a lifelong passion for wildlife and a background in conservation biology.

Nikolas Kotovich’s watercolor and acrylic paintings blend natural history illustration with contemporary techniques, reflecting his dual love of art and science.

Programs

Photo discussion group

Sunday, July 13, 2-3:30 p.m.

Join a monthly photo discussion group, where photographers of all skill levels are welcome to share their work, ideas and experiences. Bring a photo and a story to share with the group. This is a great chance to engage in creative dialogue, get feedback and explore the impact of your images in a supportive and collaborative environment. For questions or more information, email Emily Cross at ecross@ecrossphoto.com.

Memory Café

Saturday, July 19, 11-noon

The Memory Café meets monthly on the third Saturday at the Charlotte Senior Center. This free event provides a welcoming and supportive space for individuals living with memory loss, along with their caregivers or loved ones. Enjoy a fun activity, connect with others and find meaningful support. This program is offered in partnership with Age Well and the Charlotte Library. Free. Registration is appreciated, but not required. Questions? Email Susan Cartwright at cartwright.susan1@gmail.com. The Memory Café will take a break for August and will resume in September.

Ceramic tray workshop

Thursday, July 24, 1-2:30 p.m.

Join potter Judy Devitt for a hands-on workshop where you’ll create your own ceramic tray or dish. Starting with a clay slab, you’ll add texture and design using fabric and stamps, then learn how to attach decorative elements. Once your piece is dry, Devitt will fire and glaze it in the color of your choice. Your finished tray will be ready for pickup at the senior center in about three weeks. Cost: \$20 plus a \$10 supply fee (paid

directly to the instructor). Registration and payment required by Friday, July 18.

Music from the 50s, 60s & 70s Friday, July 25, 2 p.m.

Join Peter and Helen Rosenblum, the popular duo from Hinesburg, as they sing and strum from their large playlist of music that includes folk songs, romantic ballads, blues and rock. To register, call 802-425-6345. Free. Registration appreciated.

French conversation

Mondays, 2:30-3:30 p.m.

Parlez-vous français? We are an intermediate group of French speakers who meet weekly for French conversation. As the group grows, there may be opportunities to split according to skill levels. Questions? Email Roberta Whitmore at robertawhitmore27@gmail.com.

German conversation

Tuesdays, 3-4 p.m.

Möchtest du dein Deutsch üben? Come join this group to meet other German speakers and practice your German. No agenda, just a casual conversation. All experience levels are welcome. Questions? Contact Dan York at dyork@Lodestar2.com.

Games

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.

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 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.



Photo by Jean Rook

Kayakers pause along the shores of Otter Creek to enjoy a water break and some conversation.

Exercise

Women’s kayak trips

Second & fourth Friday mornings

Join a community of active women who enjoy exploring our 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 for each trip will be sent via email the week prior to the outing. Free. Registration required.

Let Your Yoga Dance pop-up

Tuesday July 22, 11 a.m.-noon

Join us for this free pop-up of Let Your Yoga Dance with Heather Preis. This class incorporates basic dance-like movements to music, guided by the body’s energy system (chakras). It is a safe, compassionate, gentle movement practice, allowing for individual expression and nonjudgemental acceptance. This class is appropriate for all levels of fitness and abilities. Everyone can “let their yoga dance.” Free. No registration required.

Gentle walk-hike

Thursdays, July 24, 9 a.m.

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

Tai chi-yang style short form

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

Join Eliza Hammer for a tai chi class featuring the Yang international short form, the most popular style of tai chi practice. This form involves slow, continuous, soft circular movements coordinated with breathing. Regular practice helps improve balance, mental clarity, flexibility, stability, coordination and overall health. Practicing in a group setting is both uplifting and energizing. Eliza, a certified instructor, has

studied with Dr. Lam, founder of the Tai Chi for Arthritis Association. Please note that this class is not for beginners. If you have questions about whether this class is appropriate for your skill level, you are warmly welcome to observe a class or reach out to Hammer at belizahammer@hotmail.com. \$10 per class. No registration required.

Bone Builders

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

RSVP Bone Builders, a program of United Way of Northwest Vermont, is a no-impact, weight-training program designed to prevent and even reverse the negative effects of osteoporosis in older adults. Bone Builders consists of a warm-up, balance exercises, arm and leg exercises, and a cool down with stretching. Free. No registration required, but there is paperwork to complete for the RSVP Bone Builders program.

Meals

Menus are posted on the website: charlotteseniorcentervt.org.

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 Thyleen Tenney, assistant director, ttenney@charlotteseniorcentervt.org 212 Ferry Road, Charlotte 802-425-6345, charlotteseniorcentervt.org

Write Ingredients

Celery: Actually quite a bit more than Kalamazoo chew

Susan Ohanian
Contributor

Upcoming Monday Munches feature deliciously tempting summer offerings: couscous, Italian pasta salad, strawberries, blueberries and watermelon. In contrast to this scrumptious bounty, let’s take a look at that overlooked kitchen staple: celery, the unannounced presence in many meals.

Pascal celery was first cultivated in Kalamazoo, Michigan, in 1874, with corporate impresarios of the day organizing handouts of free stalks at the train station. Around town, celery boys stood next to paper boys on street corners, pushing their wares. An urban legend circulated that young men in Kalamazoo offered their dates celery stalks topped with a ribbon.

Japanese immigrants introduced celery in the Salinas Valley in 1911, and now California is the source of 95 percent of the nation’s supply.

Kalamazoo, once known as “Celery City,” now offers the Portage Creek Bicentennial Park with a guided tour explaining the history of celery in the region. The Michigan Celery Cooperative wants us to know they produce an annual crop worth about \$20 million.

We may laugh at the way con artists profited from celery fervor in the last century, claiming that celery would “purify blood, quiet nerves, regulate the liver and treat nervous disease,” but this sort of chicanery repeats itself. In 2018, an Atlantic article (<https://tinyurl.com/ynkhtsrw>), “Actually, You Can Just Drink Some Water,” offered insight on the celery miracle cure mania swamping Instagram.

The author notes that a bottle of celery juice “cost \$6.50 and tasted like celery. I don’t know what I was expecting.”

This New York Times article (2019) asks, “Why Is Everyone Drinking Celery Juice as if It Will Save Them from Dying?”

The Times doesn’t mention that celery leaves and inflorescences were part of the garlands found in King Tut’s tomb—or that Tut died in 1323 BCE at age 18.

Fads aside, the Cleveland Clinic attests



Image by July Salomena Trujillo Reyes from Pixabay

that celery is good for you (<https://tinyurl.com/2vv6hajy>).

Mention “celery” and people remember Ogden Nash’s famous quip: “Develops the jaw.”

As was often the case, George Bernard Shaw had an answer: “The thought of two thousand people crunching celery at the same time horrified me.”

Regrettably, the ever-irascible Dr. John Hodgman offers no opinion on celery, but in its 9,655 celery entries, The New York Times offers lots of possibilities. That said, the prospect of yam and celery custard, squid and celery salad, parboiled octopus with celery or cold celery soup with pink radishes might make celery tonic (2 teaspoons of celery seeds added to 2 cups of vodka) sound attractive even to teetotalers.

Yes, celery is 95 percent water, but it can offer adventure. At Nicosi’s dessert bar in San Antonio, the chef works celery into a grassy marmalade layered on strawberry curd and hibiscus meringue, producing tapa y porrón, served on top of a glass vessel filled with strawberry consommé. In the

19th century, fancy glass celery containers, often with the owner’s name engraved on the bottom, were a regular part of the crockery.

The New York Public Library’s historical menu archive shows that celery was the third-most-popular victual during the 19th and early 20th centuries, trailing only coffee and tea.

The article titled “When Celery was More Expensive than Caviar” (<https://tinyurl.com/yc6rnaa9>) is misleading, but even so, a menu in the library archives shows these startling prices:

- one half cold lobster \$.75
- celery service \$.50
- caviar sandwich \$.50
- ham sandwich \$.25.

The menu at the Trump National Golf Club in Los Angeles reveals an 18-ounce, bone-in ribeye (served with “Trump’s signature steak butter”) will set you back \$82. Maybe Trump surcharges for adjectives: The iceberg lettuce is “gem;” the tomatoes “heirloom;” the sea salt “smoked;” the feta “marinated;” the

strawberries “fresh.” There’s no mention of celery on the menu.

Celery is not mentioned in this article (<https://tinyurl.com/55373fmb>) about cooking in Ukraine. I offer free access because it’s about cooking with love for people in the community: “Cooking With Love (and Lots of Beets) for the Front Line in Ukraine.”

In a starkly different timeframe, some may have noted that Joey Chesnut celebrated July 4 by gobbling down 70.5 hot dogs and buns in the allotted time at Nathan’s Famous Hot Dog Eating Contest in Coney Island. His gobbling wins in previous years have included massive amounts of macaroni and cheese, shrimp wontons, pizza, corned beef sandwiches, Buffalo wings. He even won a contest in Toronto by downing a staggering amount of poutine.

There’s an important message here: Stay in Charlotte. Relax. Eat slowly. Savor your food.

But should you choose to ignore this message, the 2025 World Poutine Eating Championship in Toronto is coming up: Sept. 6. The contest lasts only 10 minutes, and the person eating the most of the uniquely Québécois mixture of fries topped with cheese curds and gravy will take home \$5,000. Here’s Merriam-Webster on poutine: “Some assert that poutine is related to the English word pudding, but a more popular etymology is that it’s from a Quebecois slang word meaning ‘mess.’”

Avoid mess in your kitchen on Mondays by enjoying a tasty meal at the Charlotte Senior Center, prepared by volunteer cooks demonstrating their love of community. There is no charge but a \$5 donation to help keep the kitchen well stocked is appreciated.

Monday Munch
July 14, 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Couscous, strawberry fields salad, bread and beverage and blueberry lemon squares.

Monday Munch
July 21, 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Italian pasta salad, garlic toast, watermelon and Nina’s shortbread cookies.

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