

The Charlotte News

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Charlotte Sailing Center closing

Boat owners tread water — wondering what's next

Scooter MacMillan
Editor

Just as the summer sailing season was at full tilt, a single email has caused ripples and distress as a number of boat owners find themselves scrambling to find a winter home for their craft.

Guy Franko was working on his boat at the Charlotte Sailing Center on Monday and appeared relatively content in comparison to many of his fellow tenants of the marina. He didn't know where his boat would go in light of the email sent Wednesday, July 30, informing tenants that Charlotte Sailing Center's lease was not being renewed and that owners needed to move their boats and belongings, but Franko's optimistic demeanor appeared to indicate he expected mostly smooth sailing, despite the transition.

Lake Champlain Transportation owns the 90 acres at the corner of Ferry and Converse Bay roads where the sailing center is located. Multiple inquiries were unable to determine whether it was the sailing center or Lake Champlain Transportation that initiated the lease termination.

The email tenants received from the Charlotte Sailing Center said that its lease ends Oct. 1 and that Lake Champlain Transportation has requested that all personal property be removed by Sept. 1,

including cradles, ladders and boats.

In an email, Lake Champlain Transportation said the company is seeking another operator for the marina. There was no word on what changes might be expected under a new operator.

The email from the O'Brien family, the current operators of the Charlotte Sailing Center, said that Andy O'Brien will be moving to a to-be-determined adventure.

Franko said he felt there was good chance he might be able to strike a deal with a new operator. He talked to someone at Lake Champlain Transportation, and they said that "they're looking to keep the marina open under new management."

Dave Speidel moored his boat in Converse Bay but relied on the Charlotte Sailing Center to put his boat in the water and take it out. Although he sold his boat two years ago, word that the Charlotte Sailing Center was closing was "kind of a bummer."

Speidel said he has great memories of stories he's heard at the sailing center because "half the thrill" of having a boat is the conversations that take place around boats.

Someone who spoke on the condition of anonymity, because they didn't want to jeopardize their chances of finding another place for their boat, said the Charlotte Sailing Center was great for its relatively informal atmosphere and reasonable prices for someone who wants to work on their boat themselves.

They said they guessed there were more than 40 boats stored at the Charlotte Sailing Center, but

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Photo by Scooter MacMillan

Guy Franko stands with his 30-foot Tartan named 'Kindred Spirit,' a name that should be familiar to fans of 'Anne of Green Gables.'

Clemmons Family Farm gets preservation of historic African American places grant

Scooter MacMillan
Editor

The Clemmons Family Farm is one of 24 cultural sites from around the country to be awarded a portion of a \$3 million investment from the National Trust for Historic Preservation to support historical sites in their preservation efforts.

The grants, awarded through the trust's African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund and announced on Tuesday, July 22, aim to support historical sites of "Black American joy, resilience, innovation and activism," according to a news release.

The African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund was established in 2017. Since its founding, it has raised over \$150 million to support 378 projects across the country. This was the first year that the fund sponsored the Descendants and Family Stewardship Initiative.

The Clemmons Family Farm's portion of the Descendants and Family Stewardship Initiative is \$200,000 for two years of technical assistance, said Lydia Clemmons, the president of the nonprofit farm.

"As president and eldest Clemmons girl, I've been the one leading the transition between what

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Courtesy photo

From left, Kia' Rae Hanron, arts learning director, and Rose Twagurumukiza, administration and operations director, are part of the team leading the Clemmons Family Farm as it transitions into a nonprofit with national impact.

The Charlotte News depends upon the kindness and generosity of its neighbors

Peter Joslin
Board of Directors

Keeping The Charlotte News sustainable is possible because of generous supporters like you.

Charitable giving accounts for about 60 percent of the annual budget, so please join me in keeping The Charlotte News strong by making a donation during our annual fund campaign.

Our goal is to raise \$25,000. Additionally, The Lionheart Charitable Trust is matching gifts from first-time supporters dollar for dollar. That means that a \$60 gift doubles to \$120. The match opportunity is limited and ends on Aug. 31.

I keep abreast of town governance, the various commissions and committees, school issues and people of Charlotte by reading The Charlotte News. I also enjoy the variety of articles submitted by people in town on a vast array of topics.

Sitting down with the paper for a read on alternate Fridays is a comforting reminder of a slower-paced time. The Charlotte News keeps me in touch with our community.

Since the beginning of the internet and the dramatic expansion of digital platforms, the news business is becoming increasingly decentralized, resulting in the considerable decline of regional and local newspapers. This has not been the case in Charlotte.

The Charlotte News has been publishing for 67 years and will continue with your help, so please make a donation online at charlottenews.org/donate or mail your check to: The Charlotte News, P.O. Box 251, Charlotte, VT 05445, or use the donation envelope included in this issue.

Thank you for your support!
(Peter Joslin is a member of the board of directors of The Charlotte News.)

Tax rate set with just over a half-a-penny increase

Scooter MacMillan
Editor

It’s that time of year when the honest-to-goodness, final tax rate is approved. With almost all the expenses and revenues in for last year (seems like it was just yesterday), the selectboard unanimously approved, by a 4-0 vote (Lewis Mudge was absent), a municipal tax rate of \$0.1892 for fiscal year 2025.

Last year, the municipal tax rate was \$0.1835, said Mary Mead, town clerk and treasurer. That’s an increase of \$0.0057.

Education tax rates have gone down slightly. The homestead tax rate is \$1.4464, down from \$1.4756 last year. The non-homestead tax rate is \$1.5114, down from last year’s rate of \$1.5147.

In a social media post, Mead encouraged residents to check their tax bill when they receive it, particularly to make sure that they are shown as qualifying for the homestead exemption, if Charlotte has been their primary residence since April 1.

“There is no penalty for late homestead declaration filing, and it is easy to do so online,” Mead said in her post. To file go to myvtax.vermont.gov.

Tax bills should go out this week.

Although there were some areas where spending went over budget, this was by and large offset by areas where spending was less than budgeted. For example, wages were less because the town planner retired and hasn’t been replaced, the hours for the recreation director were reduced and the senior center hasn’t had a volunteer coordinator.

On the other hand, the road

commissioner’s budget went over. This was unforeseen because it is such a rarity. Junior Lewis is known for consistently coming in under budget, but even he was barreled over by Beryl. The July hurricane’s destruction of the Spear Street bridge over Muddy Hollow Brook also washed away any hopes of a road budget surplus this year.

Luckily, the town qualified for government grant money to help pay for the devastation. Fixing the bridge cost almost \$1.05 million. All but about \$55,000 was reimbursed. Mead said the extra cost was due mostly to some engineering and paving work done after the April 6 deadline.

Charlotte should receive another \$33,000 from the state within a week, she said.

Property values in Charlotte appear to have been relatively level; the municipal grand list, a measure that reflects the value of all properties in a town that’s used for tax calculations, rose less than 1 percent during the year, Mead said.

Parking worries again

Lane Morrison read a letter from the senior center to the Charlotte Selectboard at the board’s regular meeting on Monday, July 28, which said there had been several close encounters with folks with young children getting out of cars on Ferry Road from the Old Brick Store down to the senior center from vehicles rushing to get to the ferry.

“It’s an accident waiting to happen with the success of the Old Brick Store and the increased activities at the senior center,” Morrison read during the public comments portion of the meeting. “There’s just not enough parking.”

Morrison recommended forming a study

committee that might revisit the street parking plan for a sidewalk, a curb and diagonal parking, that was approved by residents at town meeting some years ago, then overturned later by residents.

“The concept was there. Perhaps that could be reconsidered,” Morrison said.

The senior center’s other recommendation is contacting neighbors with property on the east and west of the center to see if a deal could be worked out for the purchase or lease of land for parking. There is land north of the senior center that wouldn’t even need to be improved if the neighbor approved of parking 10-15 cars on their property, he said. There is also suitable property on the south side of Ferry Road, but the town needs to move quickly because of the increasing popularity of the area, he said.

“It’s an important problem, but it’s a good problem to have,” said chair Lee Krohn.

If the town decides it wants to buy property to help with the parking problem, Morrison said the senior center is willing to hold a fundraiser to help buy it.

Conservation commission change

The selectboard voted to reduce the size of the Charlotte Conservation Commission from nine to seven members. The change was requested by the conservation commission and discussed periodically at selectboard meetings for a couple of months.

Conservation commission members said they had success with recruiting a strong commission of seven members, but had trouble finding two more, so getting a quorum had become tricky.

CLEMMONS

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was a private, family-owned farm into now a farm that’s owned by a nonprofit,” Clemmons said. “We’re going to be receiving a lot of national-level support to help guide the planning for the future of the farm. The majority of that money is going to be used to hire a team of consultants and to mobilize communities in four states to help steward and cherish the Clemmons Farm.”

She expects the funding will lead to some traveling and some visiting from the other grantees to network on ways to ensure each of their futures. She also expects the funding to help identify who will lead the farm into the next generation.

As far as the Clemmons Family Farm is concerned, Lydia Clemmons said, “The whole purpose of the grant is really safeguarding the future and making sure that the farm is preserved, protected, stewarded and cherished for generations to come.”

As part of what Clemmons hopes to achieve as a result of the initiative, Clemmons is particularly interested in connecting with a descendant community in Roper, N.C., where, in 1917, her great-grandfather founded the first African American high school in Washington County.

She imagines the possibility of a

partnership where high school students come from North Carolina to learn about the farm on Greenbush Road and what it’s doing in the way of preservation and outreach.

Likewise, there’s also a very real possibility that visitors from Roper could have things to share with the farm that would make a difference there. “That high school is still active and vibrant today,” Clemmons said.

Ashley Bouknight, senior manager of preservation practice with the National Trust for Historic Preservation’s African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund, said they were overwhelmed to receive more than 100 applicants for this initiative in its inaugural year.

From the applicants, seven sites were selected from four states, including the Clemmons Family Farm.

Regarding the farm, the fund is interested in exploring: “How can we connect their Vermont story to the larger national community?” she said. “How can we help the Clemmons Family Farm create a larger staff to work on partnering with other organizations and how to acquire future funding for capital projects?”

This fund is different than the usual fund because applicants come with a vision, not necessarily a completed plan, Bouknight said.

This gives the fund staff the opportunity

to work with the grantees on their vision and how to best achieve it. It’s not just funding but also technical assistance, staff and national and regional scholars to help grantee organizations reach their goals.

Bouknight said they are less interested in one-time projects than they are multi-year projects.

This year’s recipients include the house of Chicago blues musician Muddy Waters; New York’s Apollo Theater; Houston’s first African American cemetery; and Tennessee’s Highlander Research and Education Center, where Martin Luther King Jr. and Rosa Parks trained.

Dr. Jackson Clemmons and Lydia Monroe Clemmons purchased the 148-acre, late-1700s farm in 1962. They moved from Cleveland, much to the surprise and chagrin of family and friends, to Charlotte where Jackson Clemmons became the second African American faculty member at the University of Vermont and worked as a pediatric pathologist, and Lydia Clemmons became the first African American nurse anesthetist at the University of Vermont. According to the farm’s website (<https://tinyurl.com/4r94crum>), “Over the years, they ran an African art import and mail-order business, one of the first in the country, from the property. The site is now part of the Vermont African American Heritage Trail.”



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

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

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

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

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Send submissions, questions, photos, etc. to scooter@thecharlottenews.org.

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Fooling around



Photos by Scooter MacMillan

At the Festival of Fools in Burlington last Friday, Woody Keppel of Charlotte fronted the Hokum Brothers, as the vaudeville music-and-hijinks group joined forces with The Russian Strongman, Yuri Alekhin, who, among other feats of brawn, drove a nail into a board with the palm of his bare hand.



Are you satisfied with the Trump dictatorship?

To the Editor:

I'm slowly coming to the opinion that a growing number of Americans who voted for President Trump are OK with the idea of living under a dictatorship.

Many Trump supporters are unwilling to see through all the white noise coming from their selected media sources. They have found solace and comfort with a narrow window of information which, for many of us, is easier to understand. Conspiracies and "alternative facts" have been skillfully planted and advanced by Trump and his followers to create an imaginary world based on lies and deceitful actions. This has purposely distracted believers from taking more time and thought to explore a variety of news sources to gain a broader range of opinions and information.

There are also Trump supporters who know the lies and actions coming from the president during these first six months are taking the nation apart and hurting a majority of Americans. These supporters continue to remain silent because they benefit financially from a smaller government, less regulation and lower taxes. They know the reductions and elimination of federal and state revenues will cause great harm to most of us, but their greed to put their profit before our country drives their support of the MAGA agenda.

I wonder how the 77 million Americans who voted for President Trump now feel about our economic future after these initial months of his presidency, watching the president follow the Heritage Foundation's playbook governing America's finances. Do they understand the direct impact of America's largest companies paying an average of only 14.1 percent on their profits and the lowest corporate rate (21 percent) in more than 80 years? Do supporters understand that corporations have used most of their tax savings and profits to buy back their shares, giving the stock market a boost and rewarding the wealthy and greedy who own those shares?

Do they understand Trump's corporate tax cut has shifted more of the total tax burden onto the rest of us? Our payroll taxes made

up 7.8 percent of our national income while corporate taxes made up only 0.9 percent. In total, taxes on working Americans were 35 percent of the federal tax revenue, while taxes on corporations were only 6.5 percent.

How does that feel now? Do the greedy billionaires and millionaires care about the economic pain being inflicted on Americans and eventually passed onto our children? I don't think so.

All these tax cuts of course have created the largest federal deficit in our nation's history. If we are to ever buy down the debt, more federal dollars will be needed, leaving fewer dollars for millions of hard-working Americans. It's not just food stamps and other family support services, but our Social Security, disability benefits and Medicare as well. The greedy billionaires funding the Heritage Foundation and the Trump presidency are just fine with privatizing these services and handing them to their investors and hedge fund managers on Wall Street. That will be a disaster for most of us.

Dictators cut deals with rich business executives. It's one of the many ways they remain in power. They also take apart labor unions, undermine public education, use fear to convince us that there is a "them" out there causing our economic stress and anxiety over social issues, shut down unfavorable media sources, crack down on colleges, universities and voices of dissent, fill the airways and alternative media platforms with more fear, lies and deceitful actions, convince us that they can fix everything, get elected and then take over with the blessing of the courts and the support of the military. Sound familiar? It should.

For many Americans, it seems that keeping democracy alive and vibrant is just too much work. From the earliest of our nation's years, our Founding Fathers and successive

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SAILING CENTER

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had no idea how many boats have been abandoned there. And they didn't have an idea of what would happen to boats that were left there after Oct. 1.

The Charlotte Sailing Center has operated on the property for 20 years. Before that it was Fisher's Landing on property Kurt Fisher's parents bought in 1957 and where, in addition to housing boats, they taught sailing and had a day camp until they sold to Lake Champlain Transportation in 1987.

Heather Stewart, operations manager for Lake Champlain Ferries, said that customers who are mooring their boats can continue to park on the property and use the docks to access their boats through the end of September.

In its email, Charlotte Sailing Center said it would not be hauling any boats at the end of the season.



Photo by Scooter MacMillan

According to an email, all of the tenants of the Charlotte Sailing Center are supposed to have their cradles, ladders and boats off the property by Sept. 1.



NEXT PUBLICATION DATES

AUG. 21 **SEPT. 4**
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LETTER
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presidents understood the need to have an educated citizenry if we were to sustain this grand experiment. That’s why public schools were established in 1870 and that’s why our country has always had multiple newspapers, journals, public debates and now a variety of social media outlets to present a broad range of perspectives and opinions. An engaged and literate public, able to discern fact from fiction, has always been the backbone of American democracy.

However, many Americans have become disengaged and complacent, and we are paying the price. President Trump has taken advantage of that and coalesced the unwilling to learn and the greedy who know. Having a dictator in control making promises seems to be an easier way to live. As for the greedy, as long as their investments, position power and businesses are in the black, they’ll put up with the white noise of “alternative facts,” lies and distractions. For them, it’s profit before country. As in combat, a real patriot looks out for the safety and well-being of others. For this greedy crowd, true patriotism and love of country is a foreign concept.

Many of us take time to read, listen and understand other points of view. We are willing to learn more. That’s why it is deeply disturbing and chilling to see a president pull the wool over the eyes of so many Americans who are stuck in their narrow road of information and then reward the wealthiest Americans and billionaire friends, family and donors with unfair and unjust tax advantages with profit opportunities unavailable to the rest of us. That’s not an American democracy; it’s the economic foundation for a successful Trump dictatorship.

John Bossange
South Burlington

(John Bossange is a retired Vermont middle school principal who now serves on multiple nonprofit boards in the Burlington area.)

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Commentary

Come together now, support your local paper

Claudia Marshall
Contributor

I saw a bumper sticker the other day that read, “I’M ALREADY AGAINST THE NEXT WAR.”

I had to laugh. It sounds about right. So many of us are positional and defensive these days. It seems sometimes that the wheels are coming off the bus. Plus ... who’s actually driving this bus? And where in the world are we headed?

It’s clear to see that we are a nation divided. Politics aside (if that’s even possible!), civility and kindness are no longer among our guiding principles. But here at home, we can come together. Maybe we can’t do much to affect the vitriol and acrimony roiling our nation. But we can support The Charlotte News, a vital resource that helps us understand one another in our own small Vermont town.

We certainly have our quarrels in Charlotte, but I like to think of our town as an oasis of sorts. Perhaps that’s naive, but here at the local level, we can make a difference when we “think globally, act locally.” We

can build community when we support our local, nonprofit newspaper. That’s right. The Charlotte News creates connections in our town and your donation — of any amount — is an important investment in Charlotte.

There is no better time than today for you to make a contribution to the paper’s annual fund. The Lionheart Charitable Trust is matching gifts from first-time supporters dollar for dollar. That means that a \$60 gift doubles to become \$120. The match opportunity is limited and ends on Aug. 31.

For 67 years, this scrappy little paper has connected our community and kept us informed without a lot of drama. You may not agree with every word you read here. But at the end of the day, this public service outfit quietly goes about the business of making sure Charlotters know what’s up. In ways small and large, that brings us together.

And you know what? The teeny staff does it on a shoestring budget. It currently costs roughly \$6,000 to publish each issue of The Charlotte News and to keep the website humming. It doesn’t cost readers a dime. Boom. There it is in your mailbox,

your inbox, on your laptop and phone. The majority of the expense to ensure our local, nonprofit paper is alive and thriving has always been paid voluntarily by readers. As business models go, it sounds kind of crazy, but somehow it works.

Two or three donors will reach deep into their pockets (thank you!) but most of our readers make more modest contributions, and that’s as it should be. A hundred dollars here, fifty dollars there. It’s a grassroots operation and has been since the very start. This is our newspaper. We make it happen with our support.

I am so grateful to live in a town with public service, local journalism devoted exclusively to Charlotte, and I’m grateful that readers like you see the value and support it. Did I mention The Charlotte News is a nonprofit? We rely on your generosity.

I urge you to join us, your friends and neighbors and donate today so The Charlotte News is here for us in the weeks and months to come.

(Claudia Marshall is a former publisher and board member and an award-winning journalist.)

What’s big idea with forest blocks, corridors?

Sharon Mount
Contributor

Our town, Charlotte, is known for its beautiful rural landscapes, scenic vistas and deep-rooted connection to the natural world, which is dependent on an ecological system that sustains both wildlife and people.

One of the most critical and vulnerable parts of that system are blocks of forest habitat and the connecting wildlife corridors that link them. But exactly what are these forest habitats and wildlife corridors and why are they important?

Large forest habitats are continuous expanses of woodland that provide shelter, food and breeding areas for wildlife. In Charlotte, these forests support a wide range of creatures, from bobcats and bears to songbirds, amphibians and pollinators. Undisturbed interior forest habitat is increasingly rare. Unlike much of Vermont, less than 30 percent of Charlotte is forested and only small patches of core forest habitat remain.

Wildlife corridors are natural pathways, often made up of woods, hedgerows, streams and wetlands, or other undeveloped

areas, that connect these larger forests. They allow animals to move safely between habitats to find food, mates or new territory. Without corridors, forests become ecological “islands,” isolating animal populations and reducing their chances of survival.

Even low-density development can fragment habitat. A single driveway through a forest to a cleared area with a residence will create an “edge effect” that can be detrimental to threatened woodland birds. This newly created edge habitat exposes forest-breeding birds to increased nest predation by allowing edge dwellers like raccoons and blue jays to move in.

Forest blocks and corridors are important because wildlife survival depends on them. Many of Vermont’s native animals need undisturbed forest tracts to survive and thrive. For example, intact, deer-wintering yards allow white-tailed deer to congregate during the harsh winter months and find food and shelter. Smaller creatures like salamanders and turtles rely on seasonal migration routes between wetlands and upland forests. Without room to move, they can’t feed, breed or maintain healthy

populations. Roads and fragmented development act as deadly barriers.

In addition, forests provide clean air and filter water, as well as a buffer from climate change. Wooded areas protect the watersheds that drain into Lake Champlain. When forests are cleared, stormwater runs off more quickly, carrying pollutants into streams and wetlands.

Trees store carbon, regulate temperature and slow floodwaters. As Vermont faces more intense storms and droughts, large forest blocks become one of our best tools for local climate resilience. Forests cool the air in summer, stabilize soils during heavy rains and store carbon over the long term.

Charlotte is at a crossroads. Development pressure is real, but so is our opportunity to act wisely. By protecting forest habitats and the wildlife corridors that connect them, we safeguard biodiversity, climate resilience and the rural identity that makes our town special. These lands are not just empty space — they are the living framework of our ecosystem, and once lost, they cannot be replaced. Now is the time to:

- Support conservation easements. These voluntary agreements with landowners permanently protect open space while keeping land in private hands.
- Plan smarter. Charlotte can encourage development in already built-up areas and away from key habitat blocks and corridors.
- Incentivize stewardship. Offering recognition to landowners who preserve ecological integrity benefits the whole community.
- Stay informed and involved. Attend planning commission, development review board or conservation commission meetings. Voice support for thoughtful growth and habitat protection.

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The Charlotte News

Commentary

We need to heed forecasts of 20th century visionaries

Bill Schubart
Contributor

A new book by Giulano da Empoli entitled “The Hour of the Predator” paints a bleak but credible landscape in which the bloom of technology distracts us from the realities of what’s happening around us and empowers technocrat billionaires to assume power over our lives.

He traces these plutocratic power grabs in history from when the Spanish Conquistadors first arrived in Mexico where they and their innovations were greeted with curiosity and interest by Moctezuma and the Aztec nation. Several decades later there was little trace of Aztec society, a signal metaphor for the arrival of technocrats whose innovations distract us from their quiet assumption of power.

In 1931, Aldous Huxley wrote “Brave New World.” In this darkly premonitory novel, Huxley predicts technical and scientific innovations that enable psychological manipulation of citizens in his “brave new world.” Castes are defined at birth and rigidly managed by a class of “alpha leaders.”

In 1949, George Orwell wrote his dystopian novel “1984” about the emergence of totalitarianism, coining the words, “doublethink” and “thought police.” It defined a term that rings true today, “a cult of personality” enforced by “thought police.” A later essay by Orwell summarizes the theory of his contemporary, theorist James Burnham, who had recently published “The Managerial Revolution.”

“Capitalism is disappearing, but socialism is not replacing it. What is now arising is a new kind of planned, centralized society which will be neither capitalist nor, in any accepted sense of the word, democratic. The rulers of this new society will be the people who effectively control the means of production: that is, business executives, technicians, bureaucrats and soldiers, lumped together by Burnham under the name of ‘managers.’ These people will eliminate the old capitalist class, crush the working class, and so organize society such that all power and economic privilege remain in their own hands. Private property rights will be abolished, but common ownership will not be established. The new ‘managerial’ societies will not consist of a patchwork of small, independent states, but of great super states grouped round the main industrial centers in Europe, Asia and America. These super states will fight among themselves for possession of the remaining uncaptured portions of the earth, but will probably be unable to conquer one another completely. Internally, each society will be hierarchical, with an aristocracy of talent at the top and a mass of semislaves at the bottom.”

In a prescient 1967 look at emerging media technology, Marshall McLuhan coined the phrase, “The medium is the message,” meaning simply that more is conveyed by the medium of transmission than by the message itself. He later changed it to “The medium is the massage,” implying that the medium of delivery is a source of pleasure and distraction rather than its content.

Then in 1985, Neil Postman wrote his landmark book, “Amusing Ourselves to Death,” in which he warns us that, unlike the print medium, modern technological programming avoids rational argument in favor of selling and influencing. Although

“influencers” are a relatively recent phenomenon, Postman argues that most emerging electronic media eschews rationality in favor of “sales and influence.” Politics is no longer about rational debate of challenges, ideas and solutions, but rather easily digestible nostrums and appearances.

Stephen Miller, who came from wealth but did not augment it, is Trump’s current White House deputy chief of staff for policy and an architect of much of the philosophy behind the prevailing technocracy. President Donald Trump, a billionaire though not from tech, is merely the hood ornament for this vehicle and is rapidly losing his luster as such.

As these authors warn us, we are seeing (or not) the clear erosion of democracy as we have known it in favor of a ruling class of plutocrats who believe they can better manage society once they control it.

Education, free speech, fact-based news, taxation and regulation all represent threats to their ascendancy.

Trump’s efforts to control public education and colleges under the ruse of eliminating “racism” as expressed in DEI principles and fighting antisemitism (of which Donald Trump has been credibly accused) essentially “weaponize” the accusation of “antisemitism” to simply declare war on free speech. Antisemitism has nothing to do with legitimate criticism of the policies of Israel under Netanyahu or expressing empathy for Palestinians.

In this time of unregulated social media on smartphones with “influencers” and pedophiles on Instagram, YouTube and TikTok, we must reimagine our public education curriculum to include media literacy, ban smartphones from schools altogether and bring our young people into real positions of leadership in which they can exert power over their own future.

In Trump’s current attack on news, he has either threatened or sued The Associated Press, Murdoch’s Wall Street Journal, ABC, The Des Moines Register, CBS’ “60 Minutes,” CNN and has defunded the PBS network.

An informed citizenry is a threat to plutocracy.

Another central goal in wealth expansion by the elite is privatizing many government functions such as the U.S. Postal Service, the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Transportation Security Administration (TSA), the Federal Bureau of Prisons, Medicare, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), air traffic control and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association (NOAA), among others, and selling the National Parks System, closing the Department of Education and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and devolving what’s left to the states.

Another goal is to eliminate regulations aimed at preventing further global warming while growing the fossil-fuel economy which causes it.

The Project 2025 Tracker tells the story of progress on conservative efforts to diminish democratic government, free the technocrats of troublesome regulations and create vast new private sector business opportunities.

Yet again, the profit motive trumps the common good.

Adding to this is the technocrats’ \$104-billion investment in artificial

intelligence in the first half of this year which matches their total investment in 2024. Microsoft partnered with OpenAI. Meta just invested \$14.9 billion in Scale AI. Nvidia invested in over 50 AI startups in 2024. Google and Amazon are investing through partnerships and acquisitions, focusing on internal AI development like their Gemini model. Meanwhile, Trump has issued an executive order “removing barriers to American leadership in AI,” rescinding President Biden’s earlier order for “the safe, secure and trustworthy development and use of AI.”

AI facilities’ projected electricity demand from data centers worldwide is set to more than double by 2030 to around 945 terawatt-hours, slightly more than the entire electricity consumption of Japan today. Electricity demand from AI-optimized data centers is projected to more than quadruple by 2030, raising the questions of where all this power will come from and who will own the power producers.

Already 30 percent of American households try to live on incomes of under \$50,000 a year. These same households favored Trump over Harris by 50 to 48 percent. In Vermont, MIT calculates a livable, after-tax income for a family with two parents working and two kids is \$122,956.

Factoring in its tax provisions and cuts in benefits, Trump’s budget bill will incur a net financial loss for the bottom 30 percent of

American households by income, whereas the bill that passed will benefit the wealthy with a \$12,000 increase in net income, on average, for households in the top 10 percent who earn above \$692,000 a year. According to the Yale Budget Lab, the top 0.1 percent, those with incomes over \$3.3 million, would receive tax cuts of \$103,500 on average.

Impoverish the many to enrich the few.

Perhaps the darkest manifestation of what is happening before our eyes is the use of the Epstein affair as a political football by both political parties.

Excuse me, but the Epstein affair is about the criminal sexual abuse of countless young people; it’s not about political winners and losers. It may well be a serious threat to plutocrats, but we once defined ourselves as a “nation of laws.” Countless young people’s lives have been damaged by the unmitigating trauma of sexual abuse. Who will speak for them? Will they see justice done?

In a time when Congress and the Supreme Court are genuflecting to plutocracy’s orange hood ornament and his managers, we Americans must keep paying attention to trustworthy news sources, talk with one another not at one another and use the unique tools we have to support democracy if we’re going to evade the fate forecast by our 20th century visionaries.

(Bill Schubart is the former chair of Fletcher Allen Healthcare and an adviser to The Charlotte News.)

Food Shelf News

Bad news, good news and a grateful farewell to Mary Volk

Katherine Arthaud
Contributor

Okay, so let’s start with the not-so-good news. The Vermont Foodbank, the state’s largest food assistance provider, has laid off seven employees and eliminated two vacant positions in response to the loss of one-time COVID-related funding and a 20 percent reduction in the amount of food received from the federal government, which was granted earlier this year. The recent layoffs amount to approximately 9 percent of the foodbank’s total staff.

With an eye to long-term sustainability, the organization is restructuring as best they can to ensure minimal disruption to services. Their plan is to try to increase donations and stretch resources to address growing food insecurity, likely to be worsened by expected cuts to Medicaid and SNAP benefits.

These layoffs come as food banks across the country are resorting to downsizing, due to decreased federal support and increased need. The Vermont Foodbank says that despite the layoffs, people should not expect to see any changes in when and where food is available.

Hunger and food are big issues internationally, as well. A February 2025 report by USAID’s Office of Inspector General revealed that approximately \$489

million worth of humanitarian food aid has been stranded at ports, in transit or in warehouses, meaning it is likely to spoil.

One particularly maddening and heartbreaking story is that of the 500 tons of high-energy emergency biscuits sitting in a warehouse somewhere in Dubai, nearing their expiration date and slated by the United States to be incinerated rather than distributed. The biscuits would have fed 27,000 acutely malnourished children in Pakistan and Afghanistan for a month and were paid for by American tax dollars.

But, on a much happier note — and heaven knows we all need some happy notes these days — the Charlotte Food Shelf is working hard to get food to neighbors in need, and many of you in our community are helping us do that. We thank you one and all.

This week, we want to feature a very special volunteer, Mary Volk, who is leaving her post after seven years of dedicated service to the organization.

Mary Volk and her husband Tim moved to Charlotte in 1985 from Brooklyn, N.Y. Both had attended college in the north country (she went to McGill) and, having spent time in Burlington, were happy to find a restored farmhouse in Charlotte. When they relocated here, their oldest child was just over a year old; two more were born in Vermont. All three kids attended



Courtesy photo

During her time volunteering at the food shelf, Mary Volk gave ‘invaluable’ help with the organization’s budget system.

the Charlotte Children’s Center, Charlotte Central School and Champlain Valley Union High School, Volk said, then were off to good colleges, new pastures and new adventures. Volk was the third president of the board of the Charlotte Children’s Center; her husband served on the board as well. (She also served on the board of Charlotte Land Trust for 20 years.)

Seven years ago, Volk — “retired” (neither of us like that word) from a career in business and finance — one day noticed a post on Front Porch Forum seeking someone to balance the checkbook at the Charlotte Food Shelf. The task seemed simple enough, and she decided to jump in. At that time, Volk said, the organization was just incorporating and wanting to formalize operations.

Volk started doing basic bookkeeping, working closely with then-treasurer Cindy Tyler. “We were able to give some good reporting to the board and help them manage the organization based on what was being spent and trying to anticipate what would be needed next year,” Volk said.

“To me,” said Volk, “the food shelf is one of the most valuable services in town. My husband Tim and I have supported it since we moved here,” adding that when their children were little, she volunteered to help create Thanksgiving and Christmas baskets for families in need.

“It felt like we live in this small town and there are people that need this service, and it is a very important service,” she said.

Once Volk became involved with the food shelf, she found that it is about more than just food, that emergency dental work, car repair, heat and rent assistance, school supplies, and winter clothes and boots for kids are also services offered to the community, if the budget allows.

What’s next for Mary Volk? She said that she now has four grandchildren “as of yesterday,” and an elderly mother living in Shelburne, and added that her husband has begun slowing down his consulting business so they can do more things like travel, bike, ski and spend time with family.

Since Volk’s three children live in Salt Lake City, Cleveland and Portland, Maine, that will likely be a good amount of traveling.

The Charlotte Food Shelf is so very

grateful to Mary Volk for her service, expertise and dedication to the organization and to the community. “The Food Shelf is a great organization,” she said. “I was happy to be part of it. We are lucky to live in a community that is so generous and that supports each other.”

Food shelf director Peggy Sharpe said, “On behalf of the Charlotte Food Shelf board, I want to extend our sincere thanks to Mary for all she has done for our organization the past seven years. Her dedication and service are deeply appreciated. Her guidance and support this past year, as the food shelf initiated significant changes to our bookkeeping systems and processes, has been invaluable. We extend gratitude and best wishes as she moves forward with new and exciting adventures.”

The food shelf would like to acknowledge the following for their generous contributions: Susan Hyde, John Henry Siedlecki, Michael and Janet Yantachka, Kathleen Nolan, Lewis and Sandra First, Jessica Shevitz Rauch and Jeremy Rauch, Jocelyn Schermerhorn, Cecily Stokes-Prindle, Anita Royer, the Cedar Beach Association, the Charlotte Congregational Church, Our Lady of Carmel Parish, the Windham Foundation and the Weezie Foundation. Apologies to any we have missed. Please let us know so we can thank you. We couldn’t do this without you!

Our schedule:

- Wednesdays, 4-6 p.m., & Saturdays, 9-11 a.m. (second and fourth of the month, unless otherwise noted)
- Wednesday, Aug. 13 & 27 (Donations of food can also be brought in on Wednesday distribution days.)
- Saturday, Aug. 9 & 23

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

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

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

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



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Community Roundup

New era of preservation for Vermont landmark

The Rokeby Museum has received a \$1-million donation from the Patrick Foundation.

In a release, the museum described the gift as a pivotal moment in the museum’s history, setting the stage for a bold new chapter of preservation and growth.

The funds will be used to support the preservation of the museum’s historic structures.

“Rokeby’s message is not only vital — it’s enduring. The Patrick Foundation’s gift reflects both trust in our leadership and belief in Rokeby’s importance, not only for Vermont, but our nation as well,” said Joel Loquvam, chair of the Rokeby Museum Board of Trustees.

Health officials urge taking steps to prevent mosquito bites

The first positive results of mosquito testing this year have detected two viruses in the state: West Nile virus in St. Albans and Jamestown Canyon virus in Rutland.

This is the first year Vermont is testing for Jamestown Canyon virus, which can cause illness in people similar to other mosquito-borne viruses.

There have been no human or animal cases of mosquito-borne illnesses reported so far this season. Health officials are encouraging people in Vermont to protect themselves from mosquito bites and the potentially dangerous diseases they can spread.

Mosquitoes are tested for three viruses that can be spread through the bite of an infected mosquito: West Nile virus, Eastern equine encephalitis virus and, this year, Jamestown Canyon virus.

Most people who are infected with these viruses do not feel sick, but they can lead to serious illness, such as inflammation of the brain, called encephalitis. Symptoms can include fever, headache, body aches, joint pains, vomiting, diarrhea or a rash. Anyone who has symptoms should contact their

- health-care provider.
- According to a press release, the best way to protect yourself and your family is to prevent mosquito bites:
- Wear long-sleeved shirts and pants outdoors.
 - Limit your time outside at dawn and dusk when mosquitoes are more likely to bite.
 - Use insect repellent labeled as effective against mosquitoes. The EPA has a tool to help find the right repellent for you. These products can also protect you from tick bites.
 - Get rid of standing water, including flowerpots, buckets, barrels, wading pools and other toys and containers.
 - Cover strollers and outdoor playpens with mosquito netting.
 - Fix holes in screens and make sure they are tightly attached to doors and windows.

Since 2002, there have been 17 confirmed human cases of West Nile in Vermont. Eastern equine encephalitis virus or “Triple E,” which is more deadly, caused illnesses in two people in Vermont last year, one of whom died. Last year, significantly higher numbers of mosquitoes tested positive for Eastern equine encephalitis virus in more areas of the state than in any previous years. Vermont has not had any reported cases of infection with Jamestown Canyon to date.

As part of the state’s annual surveillance efforts, the Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets collects mosquitoes throughout Vermont, which are then tested at the State Public Health Laboratory each week. As of July 24, more than 46,000 mosquitoes had been tested.

Horse owners should consult their veterinarians and make sure their animals are up to date on vaccinations for diseases spread by infected insects or ticks. Horses cannot spread these viruses to humans or other horses, but the infections can

cause neurologic disease and death in unvaccinated animals.

Learn more about mosquitoes, the diseases they spread, and how to prevent bites at healthvermont.gov/mosquito.

Health department promotes breastfeeding for newborns

The Vermont Department of Health is celebrating the state’s high breastfeeding rates and showcasing programs and events to support new families who want to learn more about breastfeeding as part of World Breastfeeding Week 2025 that ends Aug. 7.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported that about 93 percent of Vermont infants born in 2021 had been breastfed, compared to a national average of 84 percent. At 12 months of age, about 57 percent of Vermont babies are breastfed, exceeding the national average of about 40 percent. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends exclusive breastfeeding for six months, and encourages parents to continue until two years or beyond.

Vermont’s high rates of breastfeeding and chestfeeding, a term used by some trans or nonbinary parents, are supported by the state’s network of breastfeeding programs and resources.

“Learning to feed your baby can take time, patience and practice, and every baby can have a different experience,” said interim health commissioner Julie Arel.

“We want all new families to have the

resources and information to make choices about feeding that are right for them.”

New parents can find assistance for breastfeeding throughout the state. The Strong Families Vermont Nurse Home Visiting program (<https://tinyurl.com/3pc28hms>) provides lactation support and many other services for families with newborns. Many local breastfeeding resources including hospitals, community organizations and health-care professionals are also available.

Vermont WIC, which provides food benefits, nutrition education and counseling programs for low-income Vermonters who are pregnant and/or parents or caregivers with children under 5, also provides breastfeeding support through its breastfeeding peer counseling program. The program connects trained peer counselors with WIC participants to help families reach their infant feeding goals, whether breastfeeding or pumping, by offering support, information and referrals to lactation experts in the community.

“WIC’s breastfeeding peer counselors are WIC parents who have breastfed their own children, are part of the community and care deeply about helping fellow parents,” said Tricia Cassi, WIC’s state breastfeeding coordinator. “Our peer counselors are often the first to hear about feeding challenges, offering much-needed support at critical times.”

COMMUNITY ROUNDUP continued on page 9

Bluegrass respite



Photo by Scooter MacMillan

The final Grange on the Green concert brought the summer series on the town green to a close in rollicking manner with the exuberant, bluegrass renderings of Forest Station on Thursday.

COMMUNITY ROUNDUP
Continued from page 7

For more information about what’s happening in your area during World Breastfeeding Awareness Week, contact your Local Health Office at <https://tinyurl.com/yhmykew3>.

Lake Champlain Basin program seeks land conservation proposals

The Patrick Leahy Lake Champlain Basin Program seeks proposals for projects that conserve land for clean water and healthy ecosystems in the Lake Champlain Basin.

The intent of this opportunity is to support the acquisition of land or conservation easements, the organization said in a release. Priority will be given to projects that protect or improve water quality; enhance aquatic, riparian, or shoreline habitat for native species; or provide flood resiliency.

“Protecting land within the Lake Champlain Basin is one of the most effective long-term strategies we have for improving water quality and enhancing habitat,” said Eric Howe, director of the Lake Champlain Basin Program.

Up to \$4 million is available to support awarded projects. Each applicant may request a minimum of \$100,000 up to a maximum of \$4 million for an individual proposal. Multiple proposals will be accepted from a single organization. Eligible organizations are entities authorized by the corresponding state law (New York or Vermont) to hold conservation easements or property titles within these jurisdictions. These entities may include land trusts, not-for-profit organizations or non-government entities.

This grant opportunity is supported by funds awarded to Lake Champlain by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Proposals are due at 5 p.m. on Nov. 12. An informational webinar will be offered on Monday, Aug. 11 at 10 a.m. Register for this Zoom webinar at <https://tinyurl.com/bdz329xk>. Awarded projects should begin work in April 2026 and must be completed by June 2027. More information, including grant guidelines and applications, is available on the Lake Champlain Basin Program’s website at lcbp.org/grants.

Shelburne Farms tour offers nitty-gritty glimpse at process of cheddar-making

Sam Stout
Community News Service

If you were to walk through the two massive barn doors at Shelburne Farms’ central complex, you would see a hangar-sized room, a desk and two windows. The window farthest away — the one to the back of the room — is small and fogged over and coated with soot.

The larger window to your side frames something of a live exhibit: Two people clad in aprons and sanitary caps and masks toil over a metal bin, stirring a sea of cheese curds.

Though a small part of the program, watching the cheddar cheese-making process is central to Shelburne Farms’ “Sun to Cheese” tour, which opened May 10 and runs into October.

Stretching from the tiny welcome center near the road to a red brick building on the lakeshore, the tour travels the entirety of the farm’s campus, developed in the late 19th century when Vanderbilt heiress Eliza Webb bought and consolidated 33 farms.

Hannah Kuhn, a professional cheesemaker, explained how making cheddar is a laborious process. “The milk arrives through the wall,” she said, referring to a hole where workers attach a tube and pump milk in from outside. “It all comes from our own dairy just about a mile and a half down the road.”

Milking happens at 6:30 a.m. and ends at 7:30 a.m., she said.

“It’s anywhere between 5,000 and 6,000 pounds of milk, give or take,” Kuhn said, which will make anywhere from 550 to 650 pounds of cheese.

Then cheesemakers use paddles to stir the milk in a vat. Warm water heats the vat walls, and the workers add “starter culture” to the milk, bacteria crucial to turning it to cheese.

The next step is to measure the acidity by pH level. Cheesemakers continue to stir while monitoring the pH, then they add rennet.

That’s a term for enzymes, especially those found in the stomachs of calves, that help curdle milk. Rennet can be made from practically anything, including



Photos by Sam Stout

A cheesemaker at Shelburne Farms about to pack cheese June 23.



A Shelburne Farms cheesemaker stirs “fingers” on June 23.

mushrooms, though in Kuhn’s opinion, animal rennet makes cheese taste the best.

Rennet comes in both liquid and powder forms. Shelburne Farms exclusively uses the liquid form. The purpose of rennet is to dehydrate the milk and make it clump together in bunches. Before it becomes curds, the milk solidifies into a sort of gelatin, says Kuhn.

After the concoction sits for half an hour, the workers take a tool called a cheese harp, a wooden rectangle intersected with strips of sharp wire, and rake it through the mixture, helping separate the curds. Depending on the type of cheese, cuts are made finer or wider, Kuhn said.

They mix the curds around another hour and a half, allowing the bacteria from the culture to eat lactose from the milk and produce lactic acid, bumping down the pH.

The workers push the curds to one side, letting them pack together into a mass. Whey flows down the drain at the bottom of the vat. Once the curds pack together,

they are cut into slabs, then tiny “fingers” — what you typically picture hearing the word “curd.”

The fingers are salted, then packed into rectangular metal molds called hoops.

“We use water pressure to press out the curds overnight,” Kuhn said. “We come in the next morning at 6:30 and take all of those blocks of cheese, all very pressed, put them in vacuum-sealed bags, put them in boxes and then put them in the back.”

The blocks are left in storage for up to three years. The longer the cheese is kept in storage, the stronger the taste, a tour guide said.

As Kuhn spoke, the two masked cheesemakers kept working, bending down to toss and stir curds. They started to funnel the curds into the hoops.

Several hours later, the boxes of cheese were placed in storage, where they wait for months, possibly years.

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

Green Mountain Bike Club

Check out the Green Mountain Bike Club's August rides

- 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 are 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: Saturday, Aug. 9

Ride: Gravel Ride — Fairfield-Fairfax Gravel Goodness. This 41-mile ride has 3,050 feet of elevation on 79 percent gravel roads in the Fairfield and Fairfax area. There is a portable toilet at the starting location.

Meeting time: 9:15 a.m.

Meeting place: Cambridge Elementary School, 186 School Road, Jeffersonville



Courtesy photo

The Green Mountain Bike Club requires all riders to fill out a liability waiver every season.

Leader: Jeff Warner, 603-717-6647, Mtnaudax@yahoo.com

Co-leader: Hilary Frost-Warner, 603-223-9940, hilaryfrostwarner@gmail.com

Date: Sunday, Aug. 10

Ride: Waitsfield and Waterfalls — Enjoy a scenic tour through the countryside of Waitsfield and Warren with a visit to Moss Glen Falls south of Warren (not the one in Stowe). Turn around at the falls for a 35-mile ride or continue up Middlebury Gap with a stop at Texas Falls for a 60-mile ride. A visit to the Warren Store is always popular and the general store in Hancock provides an additional respite for those on the long ride. The Social Ride starts and ends at the Warren Store.

Meeting time: 9:15 a.m.

Meeting place: Waitsfield Elementary School — Route 100 on the left when approaching the village area in Waitsfield. Those coming from the Burlington area may want to carpool.

Leader: Allan Kunigis, 802-324-9958, akunigis@gmail.com

Co-leader: Mark Dupuis, 802-318-6492, mdd514902@yahoo.com

Social ride option: Donna Leban, 802-862-1901, donna.leban@gmail.com

Date: Saturday, Aug. 16

Gravel Ride: Texas Double D — Texas Hill, Dugway, Duxbury loop. The ride starts on a big climb and then goes downhill to Duxbury and North Road and out to Waterbury for 43 miles.

Meeting time: 9:15 a.m.

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

Leader: Brian Howard, 802-304-0610, bjhowd@gmail.com

Co-leader: Carlie Krolick, 802-999-1813, ckrolick@gmavt.net

Date: Sunday, Aug. 17

Ride: Buck Hollow and Beyond — The 40-mile route goes north to Fairfax, through Buck Hollow into Fairfield, returning via St. Albans. The 58-mile loop continues into Sheldon. There are potential food stops in St. Albans, Georgia and Fairfax.

Meeting time: 9:15 a.m.

Meeting place: Milton High School
Leader: Dave Merchant, 802-825-3808,

merchand59@gmail.com

Co-leader: Joyce McCutcheon, 802-734-4999, mellowmiti@aol.com

Date: Saturday, Aug. 23

New gravel ride: Middlebury to Snake Mountain Gravel Grinder

Meeting time: 9:15 a.m.

Meeting place: Academy Street Municipal Parking Lot, Middlebury

Leader: Brian Howard, 802-304-0610, bjhowd@gmail.com

Co-leader: Carlie Krolick, 802-999-1813, ckrolick@gmavt.net

Date: Sunday, Aug. 24

Ride: Venise En Quebec — Ride 40 miles from Alburgh across the border through farmland to Venise en Quebec, a summer resort on Missisquoi Bay where we will stop for lunch. There are stores and restaurants or you can bring your own lunch. The return is through Alburgh Springs border crossing.

Bring your passport or Vermont Enhanced Driver's License as the required customs documents.

Be aware that the border crossing closes on the Quebec side at 4 p.m.

Meeting time: 9:45 a.m.

Meeting place: Alburgh Community Education Center

Leader: John Bertelsen, 802-557-4633, jo.bertel@gmail.com

Co-leader: Karla Ferrelli, 802-864-0101, karla.ferrelli@gmail.com

Date: Sunday, Aug. 31

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

Meeting time: 8:45 a.m.

Meeting place: Williston Central School by the tennis courts

Leader: Kevin Batson 802-825-2618, kevbvt@gmail.com

There is no co-leader for this ride.

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Lewis Creek Association works on road erosion in Starksboro

Kate Kelly & Sara Lovitz
Contributors

A grant from the state clean water fund allowed Lewis Creek Association to hire engineers from SLR Consulting to design a fix for the road leading to Common Ground Center in Starksboro.

This fix is intended to decrease the erosion occurring on a section of the privately owned portion of Tatro Road. The gravel roadway has eroded during heavy rains over the past few years, dumping sediment and pollutants directly into Lewis Creek, which flows into Lake Champlain in Ferrisburgh.

The project will help to reduce phosphorus, which contributes to harmful algal blooms and fish die-offs in Lake Champlain.

The plans include raising and regrading a portion of the road, adding a turnout and removing grader berms, which will allow

water to sheet off into the adjacent swale. The swales will be reshaped as necessary to hold more water, then lined with stone in steep areas or lined with grass in less steep areas.

Current 10-inch and 12-inch culverts will be replaced with 15-inch culverts to better accommodate the increased volume of stormwater due to the increasing intensity of rain storms.

These improvements will help reduce sediment and other pollutants washing into Lewis Creek, while also minimizing the chances of the road washing out in the future.

This site will become one of the Lewis Creek Association’s Ahead of the Storm demonstration projects in the watershed. These projects will help Starksboro citizens and students learn more about their watershed’s water quality needs and fixes.

Learn more about the Ahead of the Storm program at bit.ly/lca-aots.



Photo by Jessica Louisos

Road and gully erosion, which need to be addressed to reduce sediment heading directly into Lewis Creek.

Gardening

Consider goldenrod for garden despite undeserved reputation



Photo by Bonnie Kirn Donahue

Goldenrod, which is commonly found in roadsides and fields, is an important host plant for caterpillars and a food source for caterpillars, butterflies, bees and other pollinators.

Bonnie Kirn Donahue
University of Vermont Extension

Many common flowering plants that grow on roadsides and fields are more beneficial than you might think. One of these plants that you should consider letting flower this year is goldenrod (*Solidago* spp.).

Native to the Northeast, goldenrod is an incredible host plant for caterpillars and a pollinator plant for butterflies, bees and other pollinators. According to research from the University of Delaware, goldenrod is considered a “keystone plant” or one of a special group of plants that play a large role in overall ecosystem health, providing habitat to large numbers of insects.

Along with goldenrod, other keystone plants include oaks, willows, asters, wild plums, cherries, birch, pines, aspen and blueberries. These plants feed and house many species of caterpillars, which in turn feed birds who eat caterpillars for a great source of protein and fats for energy.

Insects and their caterpillars are critical to biodiversity and without them the earth wouldn’t be able to support as many species of birds. Allowing native plants to grow, even opportunistic ones like goldenrod, helps to support this interconnected web of species.

While there are many species of goldenrod, one of the more common species in the Vermont area is Canadian goldenrod (*Solidago canadensis*). It grows 4 to 5 feet tall, with bright yellow, arching panicles of blooms that almost look like fireworks frozen in time.

Goldenrod, which grows best in full to at least partial sun, prefers well-drained soils. It has rhizomes that make it very effective at spreading, which is something to keep in mind when considering whether you want goldenrod in your garden.

If you have a more natural-looking garden where plants blend together loosely, goldenrod would compliment this style. In a more traditional garden where each plant has its own distinct place, this might not be the best plant for those conditions.

Goldenrod gets a bad reputation as being responsible for seasonal allergies. In fact, this plant is pollinated by insects, not the wind, so its pollen generally does not irritate eyes and noses. Ragweed (*Ambrosia artemisiifolia*), on the other hand, is wind-pollinated, blooming at the same time as goldenrod, so it is the most likely allergen culprit in late summer.

Interestingly, while goldenrod is native to North America, it is considered invasive in Europe and China. It is important to keep this in mind when thinking about the potential spread of introduced invasive species. Many countries have shared plants back and forth over the years, so it is a widespread, human phenomenon to have plants from one part of the world get a little too comfortable in another area.

You can also let goldenrod grow where it chooses, such as in meadows, fields and at the edge of roads. You will be supporting a vast ecosystem of insects and birds that rely on plants like it for food and habitat. If desired, goldenrod plants or seeds can be purchased at native plant nurseries.

For help identifying pollinator plants or other gardening questions, contact the University of Vermont Extension master gardener helpline at 802-656-5421 (Thursdays, 9 a.m.-noon, through Oct. 30) or online year-round at go.uvm.edu/gardeninghelp.

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

Gardening

Trees: One of hardest working flora in plant show business

Amy Simone
University of Vermont Extension

Trees are among the hardest working plants in the landscape. Even the smallest yard can accommodate at least one or two of these botanical powerhouses.

Adding a tree will provide habitat and shelter for many animals and beneficial insects. Birds will build nests in the branches and eat the berries, squirrels will tuck the seeds away for winter and a whole host of insects will be attracted by the nectar of its flowers.

Meanwhile, below ground, the tree’s roots are expanding out and down and may capture toxic heavy metals and sediment, preventing them from entering stormwater systems. Strategically placed trees can combat soil erosion and minimize water runoff.

During photosynthesis, a tree binds carbon dioxide into sugar, releasing oxygen and storing the carbon in its wood. The tree’s leaves filter out air pollutants, thereby reducing smog, acid rain and cooling greenhouse gas-related temperatures.

Trees are your natural awning, creating a cool, shady area for you to escape the summer heat. The addition of fruit or nut trees will also provide you with delicious food.

Despite all their attributes, however, the purchase of a tree can seem intimidating. Keep in mind the value of the investment of time and labor by the grower, especially as the caliper (diameter of tree trunk) size increases.

The good news is that younger, smaller trees are less expensive as well as more resilient to transplant stress. Once established, they will grow quickly.

Regarding growth, another concern you may have about planting trees is their future size. Thankfully, there are options for varieties that do not get very large. Treeform paniculata hydrangeas, dwarf crabapples and

laceleaf Japanese maples are examples of trees with mature heights of less than 12 feet.

If you are looking for a tree to make a big impact but not exceed 20 feet in height, there are several options. Flowering dogwoods, serviceberries and some magnolia varieties as well as full-sized crabapples and Japanese maples are excellent choices in this range.

With the capacity to accommodate a larger tree, you are only limited by the light and soil conditions in your yard that match the needs of the trees. Honey locusts provide filtered shade to your patio and an oak tree supplies an entire neighborhood of wild creatures with food and shelter. Willow trees will happily absorb excess water from a low area in your yard.

Fruit trees are fun to add to your landscape, offering fragrant spring flowers followed by a bounty of fruit, giving you plenty to share with the animals. There are apricot, peach, pear, plum, cherry and apple varieties with mature heights of less than 20 feet. Be sure to look for resistant cultivars to the most common diseases affecting each species. Likewise, walnut, chestnut and hazelnut trees are both beautiful and productive.

Beyond the deciduous (leaf-shedding) trees, is an entire realm of evergreen varieties. Evergreens are invaluable as shelter and food for animals, as well as for privacy and wind protection for you. Again, there are options with mature heights of 6 to more than 60 feet, as well as a plethora of forms, habits, hues of green and needle types.

Once you have chosen the trees to incorporate into your landscape, carefully follow the steps to properly plant and care for them. They will repay you with benefits that last more than a lifetime.

For information on tree planting and care, visit vtcommunityforestry.org/tree-care.

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



Photo by Amy Simone

Trees with unique leaf shapes are like artwork for the landscape, making them a good choice for any yard.

Weed’s in the Garden

Recipes for enjoying the many fruit bounties of summer

Joan Weed
Contributor

What a fabulous season we are in. It’s one of plenty with farm stands and gardens overflowing with the bounty of summer.

In particular, I am enjoying summer’s offerings of fruits. Eating fresh out of hand is fine and reminds me of childhood summer days. With seven children in our family, we had to scramble to get our share. We had in our backyards, as many neighbors did, fruit trees and a grape arbor.

Mom made Concord grape jelly, and one house had a huge cherry tree which you needed a ladder for picking. The next house had a pear tree, and I think there was a plum tree for a while at one. Pears were canned, and apples made into sauce.

Through the years I have preserved fruits by canning and making jams and jellies, but now, I freeze berries, apple and rhubarb sauces for winter enjoyment.

Smoothies mean it’s OK to use imperfect berries for a treat. Nowadays, I love making desserts with the fruits of summer.

Here are a few tried-and-true baking recipes I love. I only offer recipes I have personally tried:

Blueberry buckle

Serves 12

- 3/4 cup sugar
- 1/3 cup butter, melted
- 1 egg
- 1 cup milk
- 2 cups sifted flour
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 2 cups blueberries

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Mix first ingredients together. Gently stir in blueberries and place in well-greased 8x8-inch floured pan.

Topping

- 2/3 cup sugar
- 2/3 cup flour
- 2 teaspoons cinnamon
- 1/4 cup melted butter

Mix ingredients together and sprinkle

over blueberry mix. Bake for 45-50 minutes. Serve warm or cold.

Raw apple cake

- 4 cups coarsely chopped and peeled apples
- 2 eggs
- 2 cups sugar
- 2 teaspoons cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon nutmeg
- 1/2 cup oil
- 1 cup chopped walnuts or pecans
- 2 cups flour
- 2 teaspoons baking soda

In a large bowl break eggs over chopped apples, add sugar and spices, oil and nuts. Mix well. Sift flour, salt, soda. Add and mix well.

Bake in a 9X13-inch pan at 350 degrees for 45 minutes.

Variation: 1 teaspoon cloves and allspice may be added if desired. (I like adding.)

Pear maple upside down cake

- 11 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 3/4 cup maple syrup
- 1/4 cup packed brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 2 large eggs
- 1 1/2 cups flour
- 1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 cup milk

Heat oven to 350 degrees. Melt 3 tablespoons butter in small pan over medium heat; add maple syrup and brown sugar and cook stirring, until sugar dissolves. Bring to a boil and cook for another 2 minutes; remove from heat set aside.

When mixture has cooled a bit pour it into a 9-inch baking pan and arrange pear slices in an overlapping circle on top.

Beat remaining butter and sugar



Photos by Joan Weed

Right: golden plums
Above: pears



until light and fluffy. Add vanilla and eggs, one at a time, continuing to mix until smooth. In a separate bowl, combine flour, baking powder and salt.

Add flour mixture to butter mixture in three batches alternating with milk; do not over mix. Carefully spread batter over pears, using spatula to make sure all is even.

Bake until top of cake is golden brown, and edges begin to pull away from sides of pan, about 45-50 minutes. A toothpick inserted into center should come out clean. Let cake cool for 5 minutes. Whipped cream goes well.

NY Times plum torte

- 3/4 to 1 cup sugar
- 1/2 cup unsalted butter
- 1 cup unbleached flour, sifted
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- Pinch of salt (optional)
- 2 eggs
- 24 halves pitted purple plums
- sugar, lemon juice and cinnamon for topping

Heat oven to 350 degrees.

Cream the sugar and butter in a bowl. Add the flour, baking powder, salt and eggs and beat well.

Spoon the batter into a spring form of 8, 9 or 10 inches. Place the plum halves skin side up on top of the batter. Sprinkle lightly with sugar and lemon juice, depending on the sweetness of the fruit. Sprinkle with about 1 teaspoon of cinnamon, depending on how much you like cinnamon.

Bake 1 hour, approximately. Remove and cool; refrigerate or freeze if desired. Or cool to lukewarm and serve plain or with whipped cream. (To serve a torte that was frozen, defrost and reheat it briefly at 300 degrees.) I have made this with peaches or cherries as well.

Any Fruit Crisp

- 2 pounds berries or sliced fruit (5-6 cups)

- 1/2 cup granulated sugar
- 2 tablespoons cornstarch
- Juice of one medium lemon (about 2 tablespoons)
- 1 tablespoon grated ginger (optional)

Topping

- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1/2 cup granulated sugar
- 3/4 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1/4 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/2 cup unsalted butter, soft at room temperature, cut into tablespoon-sized slices

Heat oven to 350 degrees and grease a 2-quart baking dish (8-inch square pan)

Make filling; combine fruit, sugar, cornstarch, lemon juice and ginger. Mix and pour into baking dish.

Make topping; combine flour, sugar, salt and cinnamon. Add butter and work into dry ingredients by rubbing with fingers until mixture looks like a crumbly cookie dough. Scatter crumbles over fruit and bake for 45 minutes until topping is golden brown. Let cool for at least 30 minutes before serving, with ice cream if you like.

Crumbled topping can be made up to three days ahead and stored in refrigerator.

Just about all of the above can be frozen if needed. The best thing to do with more cake than you can eat is to share it with neighbors or have a coffee klatch. The Swedes have a name for it — fika.

We had Swedish families near us who honored the tradition of fika by offering a baked goody and coffee around three o’clock in the afternoon. The ladies would gather and visit and take a break. I have fond memories of fika. It was one of the rare moments in the day when my mother took a break.

Why not take advantage of summer’s bounty and get to know a new neighbor, church member or a classmate’s mom?

Outdoors

Disputed Green Mountain National Forest logging passed

Camryn Woods
Community News Service

A new logging plan for the Green Mountain National Forest could harvest almost 5 million cubic feet of timber, or enough trees to fill 5,000 school buses.

The Telephone Gap Integrated Resource project was approved on June 13 after seven years of assessment. It will manage 72,000 acres of federal, state and private land primarily in the towns of Brandon, Chittenden, Goshen, Killington, Mendon, Pittsfield and Pittsford, according to the U.S. Forest Service’s Final Decision Notice, a document outlining the new plan.

The Forest Service said in its final plan that the Telephone Gap project would improve wildlife habitat, restore soils and wetlands, allow for prescribed burns and trail building and increase logging. But the project has received both praise and push-back from environmental organizations in Vermont over the last few years of its development.

During its commenting phase, the project received more feedback than any other Forest Service project in Vermont, according to advocates, with over 2,300 public comments filed. The public attention pushed the Forest Service to conduct an analysis of the carbon output from the project, according to Zack Porter, executive director of Standing Trees, a nonprofit founded in 2020 to protect state and public lands in New England.

The carbon analysis revealed that the adopted plan will produce 255,000 metric tons, or about 3 percent of Vermont’s total output of carbon in 2022, according to the state’s most recent greenhouse gas inventory.

The issue over forest management has a long history in Vermont, where old-growth forests are glaringly scarce after clearcutting led to the loss of 80 percent of state trees before the 20th century. Today, less than 1 percent of New England’s forests are over 150 years old, according to Porter, and the Telephone Gap area contains many of these rare ecosystems.

Advocates are split over how these modern-day forests should be managed. Some advocates argue that forests should be left alone, while others say that they need some level of human intervention to remain ecologically healthy.

For example, forests are healthier when they include multiple age classes, according to Steve Hagenbuch, senior forest program manager at Audubon, a nonprofit that focuses on protecting birds. The age classes include the tall trees of the canopy, the shorter trees of the mid-canopy, and the shrubs, saplings and seedlings that cover the forest floor, which Hagenbuch said forests don’t necessarily have today.

Lots of species, especially birds, rely on the complexity of mixed-age classes, according to Hagenbuch. When big trees fall and create gaps in the canopy, younger vegetation fills the forest floor. That’s where bird species Audubon considers under threat like wood thrush and black-throated blue warbler like to nest. But now, he said, forests are generally less complex.



The Green Mountain National Forest.

Courtesy photo

The Telephone Gap project’s Final Environmental Assessment, a document that evaluates its potential environmental impact, also found that there are fewer saplings and young trees than would be ideal in a well-managed forest. The forest plan includes using commercial timber harvest, prescribed fire and other treatments to open space for this young growth, according to the Final Decision Notice.

However, these methods could also target old and mature trees that sequester carbon, increase the likelihood of introducing non-native invasive species through logging procedures and may affect air quality, according to the Final Environmental Assessment.

Vermont environmentalists worry about the harvesting of these older trees.

“We should be doing everything to protect this biodiversity hotspot,” said Annette Smith, executive director of Vermonters for a Clean Environment, a nonprofit that advocates for sustainable environmental and economic policies. “This is man’s hand in nature that should be left alone.”

But other environmental organizations like Audubon and Vermont Natural Resources Council, a nonprofit dedicated to protecting and enhancing Vermont’s natural environments, view the project as an opportunity for the Forest Service to try a “new model” on Vermont’s forests, one that encourages the flourishing of old growth while also diversifying age classes.

In April 2024, the two nonprofits, along with William Keeton, forestry professor at the University of Vermont, submitted formal comments to the Forest Service encouraging an alternative to the project plan. The revision, titled Alternative C, was approved by the Forest Service in December of 2024 and became the version that was implemented this summer.

Alternative C deferred 661 acres of forest that display old growth characteristics from logging. With an emphasis on ecological silviculture, it includes management practices like cutting trees and leaving them on the forest floor and strategically planting trees that are better suited for the climate, according to the Final Decision Notice. It would also reduce the need for constructing temporary logging-related roadways, making it less likely for inva-

sive species to be carried into the area by logging machinery.

“These would be opportunities to go in and do some management to accelerate these forests so that they move towards an old growth condition even more quickly than if they were left alone,” said Jamey Fidel, forest and wildlife program director at Vermont Natural Resources Council.

But advocates like Chris Gish, com-

munity organizer at Standing Trees, said Alternative C is inadequate.

“They went from about a 12,000 acre logging project to about an 11,000 acre logging project, so it was a small decrease in acreage,” Gish said. The carbon analysis revealed that the original plan would have produced 279,000 metric tons of carbon dioxide, while Alternative C will produce 255,000 metric tons, about a 24,000-ton decrease.

Despite this, District Ranger Chris Matrick of the U.S. Forest Service said that the emissions were “not significant” in the final decision notice, citing that the trees in the Green Mountain National Forest would sequester that amount of carbon in about three months.

The plan will go into effect immediately and will last through 2030. In the meantime, Standing Trees is exploring legal options to challenge the project. The amount of public engagement the project received shows the public is prepared to advocate for their public lands, Porter said.

“We’ve changed the conversation about national forest management nationally,” Porter said.

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

Outdoors

Raccoon rabies rises in Vermont, crosses into Quebec

Lindsey Papasian
Community News Service

Vermont is in the midst of a rabies resurgence, and the virus has crossed the border into Quebec, with infected animals found in the province for the first time in almost 10 years.

The state has faced an increase in cases since 2022. The last time Vermont saw a rise in rabies-positive raccoons, the primary species carrying the virus, was between 2015 and 2016.

The tally plateaued for a year, then dropped five years straight, reaching just three raccoons in 2021, before a jump to 18 in 2022, 17 in 2023 and 37 in 2024.

Last year's figure was the highest since Jim Douglas' final run for governor, and for the first six months of this year, officials had recorded 18 rabid raccoons as of July 21. That's on top of an otter, three foxes, three skunks, four bats and a woodchuck who likely carry the raccoon variant.

"Rabies in general is always a concern in Vermont. We are endemic for it," state public health veterinarian Natalie Kwit said.

In December 2024, Quebec had its first recorded case of raccoon rabies since 2015. Officials and scientists on both sides of the border have been collaborating as they look to control the virus.

"We have the same goal to eradicate rabies, and we all work together," said biologist Marianne Gagnier, who

coordinates rabies control for Quebec's parks, forests and wildlife ministry.

After 2020, Quebec officials decided to suspend vaccination efforts; there hadn't been a case in the province in five years, and those in Vermont were far from the border, Gagnier said.

Then came the surge in cases in 2022, mostly in Burlington, about 37 miles from the border with Canada.

The cases crept closer and closer to the border, according to provincial officials, and in 2024 Quebec brought back the vaccine campaign.

Despite efforts to quell the spread, in December that year Quebec saw that first case: a dead raccoon found in St. Armand, about a mile across the border from where, earlier that month, a case had been discovered in Highgate.

Since then, the rabies has spread just over 15 miles into Quebec, Gagnier said.

The raccoon variant is the dominant strain present in Vermont and Quebec. Cats, dogs, skunks and foxes can all contract the virus, which is spread through contact with rabid hosts, usually bites. Once symptoms show, it is virtually 100 percent fatal in mammals.

The variant has been in the southeast U.S. since the 1950s. The virus crawled up the coast over the decades, first confirmed in raccoons in Vermont in 1994. In the late '90s, the federal government approved and began distributing a vaccine that raccoons can eat. It became the primary strategy to

prevent the virus.

"When the program began, it was, and still is, our goal to try and stop the spread of raccoon rabies and then eventually eliminate it," said U.S. Department of Agriculture wildlife biologist Kathy Nelson, who coordinates the National Rabies Management Program.

Sometimes the food-scented vaccine packets are dropped from planes or helicopters. Other times, they're thrown from vehicles or scattered around by workers on foot.

"It's a well-kept secret, even though it's not a secret at all," Nelson said. "We've been doing it in Vermont since 1997, and it's amazing how many people don't know about it."

Last year, the USDA started distributing vaccines in Vermont twice a year, which had never been done before, Nelson said.

"That's what we're doing now to try to tamp it back down," she said.

Both Vermont and Quebec dropped vaccines in May.

Urban areas are most at risk for outbreaks due to abundant food sources attracting a dense population of critters, said Kwit. The number of hubs for animals to interact with each other or with humans adds to the risk.

In cities, even those as small as Vermont's, raccoons often congregate in small spaces such as trash cans or alleys, where a bite or a scratch from a rabid raccoon could infect the whole group.

Last year, Chittenden, Caledonia and Franklin counties had the most cases. State data this year shows a new trend: There are positives in Orleans County, on the east end of the Canada border, for the first time since 2017. Five raccoons have been positive there so far this year.

In Quebec, rabid animals this year have been recorded in barns, fields and orchards but not yet in cities like Montreal. If it spreads to urban centers, Gagnier said, "Rabies outbreaks could explode."

Vaccines are usually dropped in the spring, when food is scarce, and in the late summer and fall, when raccoon cubs born in the spring are old enough to consume the



Photo by Franco Folini, Wikimedia Commons
A common raccoon spotted in California.

packets.

It takes between four and six weeks for the immunization to set in, according to Gagnier.

The main struggle with containing rabies in urban areas, said Kwit, is making sure the raccoons are actually taking their medicine. Greater choice of food, in places where more people live, makes them less likely to choose the vaccine.

Nelson and Gagnier called the rabies-control efforts in Vermont and Canada an example of cross-border cooperation.

If you come in contact with a potentially rabid animal, rPEP (rabies postexposure prophylaxis) can be administered as a treatment.

But administering rPEP is three to four times more expensive to the Canadian government than oral vaccines, Gagnier said. So, avoiding the animals entirely is the best choice.

Vermont game warden Jake Johnson advises people to vaccinate pets and household members and avoid handling any wild animals.

If you are in contact with a potentially infected animal, try to keep it in place, if you can do so safely. Then call your local game warden or 1-800-4-RABIES. Experts advise against transporting nuisance animals from your property because you could inadvertently spread the virus.

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

Good evening earthshine



Photo by Scooter MacMillan
The moon is in its waxing crescent phase, growing bigger until it is full again on Saturday, Aug. 9. The faint glow on the dark portion is called earthshine because it is sunlight reflected from the Earth.

Outdoors

Electric canoe quietly hits waters of Vermont state park

Kate Kampner
Community News Service

It’s quiet on the Green River Reservoir in Hyde Park, and it has been for years. But it’s especially serene now that the 653-acre state park and campsite, accessible only by boat, received an electric canoe.

Previously, the park faced a dilemma: In order to carry all the supplies to ensure that park users could have a safe and clean experience, park staff used an aluminum boat powered by an onboard gas motor — the only one allowed on the state park’s water.

“That never sat well with any of us,” said Nick Caputo, the regional manager for Northeast Vermont State Parks.

Park users complained of the noise from the motor and accused the rangers of being lazy. Park workers felt hypocritical for using a motor when others weren’t allowed to. Something needed to change.

So, three years ago, park staff approached Friends of the Green River Reservoir, a nonprofit that works to preserve and protect the state park, and challenged the group to find them an electric canoe.

The group started researching boats with electric onboard motors. It took time before they found the right alternative: a 17-foot-long cargo canoe made of a green vinyl that muffles the sound when it hits the water. The boat came from Esquif, a Canadian company, and instead of a gas-powered motor, the canoe has an electric motor from the German company Torqeedo.

Caputo said because the nonprofit was purchasing foreign products, leaders wanted to buy before federal tariffs impacted the cost.

The boat “really fits the wilderness-like character of the lake,” said Eric Nuse, a retired game warden who was recruited by the Friends of the Green River Reservoir in 2010. “They’re fairly expensive, but it just seemed like a perfect fit.”

Between the canoe, motor and other assorted parts, the total cost to create the boat was just under \$10,000.

Along with the motor, the group purchased three lithium batteries, each

weighing about 25 pounds. There’s always at least one battery on a charger and two on the boat.

Rangers can easily get up to four hours at half speed, allowing them to motor up the length of the reservoir and back, said Milford Cushman, another member of Friends and founder of the Cushman Design Group in Stowe, which has provided most of the park’s architecture, including their contact station and garage.

“We feel proud,” Cushman said. “We think an electric motor on a cargo canoe is something that rangers can talk about when they’re out with visitors and can help improve visitors’ understanding of why it’s important to protect wilderness-like areas.”

On the water, the electric motor makes a soft hum, which blends in with the sound of the reservoir — people laughing as they paddle to their campsite, trees swaying against each other from the wind and common loons sitting on the lake diving for meals, all undisturbed by the minimized noise.

On the old boat, park rangers had to wear headphones, said Ryan Angevine, who has been a park attendee for five years. “Otherwise, you’d be deaf by the end of the trip.”

The park keeps the old gas boat around in case of emergencies but has not used it since the recent donation.

Right now, purchasing more of these canoes isn’t necessarily in the queue, said Caputo, but as the park moves toward electrification in a variety of their products, he hopes to see more of these boats in the future.

“It really goes to show what you can accomplish working with a group of dedicated people when you all share the same goal of stewarding such a wonderful piece of property,” Caputo said.

Caputo, along with park workers, showed lots of appreciation for the work that the Friends of the Green River Reservoir did to make this donation happen.

“They are the best friends a park could have,” Caputo said.

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



Photos by Kate Kampner
The electric canoe stationed at one of the Green River Reservoir’s docks.



The electric Torqeedo motor attached to the boat without the battery.



The canoe carrying materials used by the park crew to maintain the property.



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Outdoors

Placing trees in streams helps fish, protects from flooding

Natalie Bankmann
Community News Service

A pair of environmental stewards have spent the summer trudging through Vermont forests with chainsaws, griphoists to lift and pull wood and rock bars, heavy-duty rods that can move large objects. They use the tools to place trees like speed humps across the headwaters of the Lamoille and Winooski rivers.

“There are a number of interconnected benefits of placing this wood as a natural component of the ecosystem,” said James King, a restoration technician at Redstart, a natural resource management company based in Corinth.

For years, environmental experts like King have been sawing down trees to place across river beds. Over time, these efforts have tripled the number of brook trout in streams, according to a study by Jud Kratzer, a fisheries biologist at the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife. This method, called strategic wood placement, is being done across Vermont by placing wood in streams within forested areas away from infrastructure.

So far, the state has completed this work across 68 miles of Vermont streams, Kratzer said. Not only does it benefit fish in a multitude of ways, but it also benefits people and the environment.

“Trees on the stream are so important for trout that we say, ‘Fish grow on trees,’” said Kratzer as he explained the role trees play in hiding fish from predators, providing a safe place during flood events and creating an area for fish to spawn.

“We have water birds that are fishing off the sides (of trees) or mink that are crawling over it and under. We are trying to build the fish population, yes, but everything’s got to eat,” said Erin Rodgers, a project manager



The Mad River in Warren.

who works on strategic wood additions at Trout Unlimited, a nonprofit organization based on conserving waterways for trout and other aquatic species. “It’s great for the whole ecosystem.”

Leaves and other particles collect along the base of planted trees, providing food for insects that are then eaten by fish and other predators, Kratzer said.

“It’s creating benefits for creatures at the lower trophic levels, which then benefits all the species in the waterways and the forest beyond that,” King said.

The wood also allows sediment to collect



Photos by Natalie Bankmann

Wood across the Mad River.

in streams, slowing down their flow to lakes and rivers, where increased sediment can cause algae blooms, Kratzer said. It also reduces the level of inorganic materials like nitrogen and phosphorus in larger waterways, King said.

“We already have too many sediments in Vermont’s larger lakes and rivers,” Kratzer said.

Much of the work being done to add wood to streams is being done in forests away from towns and infrastructure. The tree additions help during flooding by slowing down the water, allowing it to collect in the surroundings rather than destroying infrastructure on the outskirts of rivers and lakes, Kratzer said.

Kratzer’s team has worked on wood addi-

tions this year at Willoughby State Forest and Five Mile and Six Mile brooks in Norton.

“We are always looking for opportunities on the stream where we can feasibly drop wood,” King said.

These tree placements are considered “strategic,” thanks to the calculated effort that goes into the job. Teams will cut the first tree they place, measuring it to fit precisely in the stream bed. They’ll place another tree 300 feet upstream, Kratzer said.

“We want them to be spread out so that the benefits are spread rather than the wood all moving and ending up in one big log jam,” Krazter said.

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



Butterfly effect

Photos by Elizabeth Bassett

A few weeks ago, a caterpillar was munching on a dill plant. Last weekend, it was a swallowtail butterfly, drying its wings moments after emerging from its chrysalis.

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As Sturgeon Moon approaches, hunters’ hearts race

Bradley Carleton
Contributor

For many hunters, fishers and foragers, mid-August means different things, but the overall sentiment is one of bounty and anticipation. The garden is yielding yellow pear tomatoes and the Romas have grown into small trees requiring that they be tied to 6-foot posts.

Looking at the proliferation of Romas is daunting when considering the canning process ahead. The garden responds to the time and love put into it. The more effort and sweat devoted to weeding, watering and nurturing often seems like a labor of love at the time, until August rolls around and that love is returned tenfold as nurturing sustenance.

The day lilies have pulled their shoulders up over their heads and have gone to sleep for the remainder of summer. Hydrangeas continue to dominate the yard with their dazzling white globes. In the woods and along oak-lined roadsides, fat grey squirrels have begun their own harvest. Watching them compete for robust acorn prizes and corkscrewing around the trunks of trees is enough to make even the most stoic individual grin.

The heat has been oppressive and the Canadian wildfires, although harmful for those with lung issues, has offered us the fascinating sight of a giant orange tennis ball to mark the end of our day. The smoke has given us pause, attempting strenuous activity like aggressively hiking up our beloved summits. Deer flies seem to have reveled in our misery. Only the Great Spirit knows why they even exist.

The lack of rain this summer has also provided us with a conundrum of sorts. Fly fishers know that brook trout do not survive in water above 60 degrees for long periods, so unless you discover a stream at the source of a spring high up in the mountains, it is not wise to fish these beautiful natives. Once on the hook, if the fight does not kill them, the struggle to return to a stable breathing pattern likely will.

OK, enough of what we do not like. How about the wonderful fragrance of woodsmoke from a campfire down the road? Or a barn full of hay? In the evenings, as the sun retreats into the Adirondacks, the edges of fields begin to show life. Brown forms move cautiously, melding into the shadows to graze on the nutritious, sweet, late-summer grasses.

Sometimes it’s just a movement. The twitch of white that is the tail of a deer, a foot stomping the earth between the hedgerow, or the horizontal outline of an upper back that stands out from the vertical lines of the saplings. Trucks drive backroads at speeds significantly lower than posted.

Just because someone is driving around and looking out their windows with binoculars does not mean they are road hunters. Many seek to get a better understanding of the deer’s patterns and where they are likely to feed or cross a road. Let us instead pull safely around

them without laying on our horns and flashing expletive-inspired hand signals. We all have enthusiasm for the sports we love, so let us wish them good luck as you would your own team.

Near ponds that still have some water, the bullfrogs belch out their basso profundo love song. Crickets chirp in syncopated rhythm and a barred owl hoots in the distance, “Who cooks for you?”

As the days grow gradually shorter and we approach the Sturgeon Moon on the ninth, hunters’ hearts begin to race with adrenalin and the instinct to hunt. Preparation takes the form of archery practice in the backyard. Tree stands get hung over deer trails. Duck boats get prepped for the October opener. Scouting for Canada geese before work seems more important than arriving to work on time.

A goose hunter will often practice their calling techniques in the truck because they’re simply too raucous for the home. They will try repeatedly to perfectly mimic the hail call, the feeding murmur and the lonely single cluck often as they are in traffic or waiting for a green light.

Rifles are sighted in at Laberge’s range, which is governed by the hunters policing each other or by range officers to assure safety. Deer camps are stocked with necessities, and shelves are filled with age-appropriate liquids.

Mid-month brings with it a feeling rooted deep in the soul that we are returning to honor our human instincts. Our hearts seek a world where we are not necessarily a dominating species, but one that recognizes that we are an important piece of a puzzle that includes all life. We all belong and each of us finds their place in the tribe, contributing their talents and gifts to the rest of the community.

Some are accountants. Some are lawyers. Some bring water. Some bring healing skills. Some bring firewood and sculptures or art. And others bring food. These are the hunters. A peaceful society requires all of this. All gifts are sacred.



Courtesy photo

A game camera captures two bucks, a scene that will pique a deer hunter’s interest.

Perhaps there is something we can learn by examining our inner drives, recognizing that although we each may have different desires or preferences for our own lifestyle, we are all still a part of a greater universe. Hunter and non-hunter alike.

For those who hunt, I wish you all the best. Good luck. Be safe and respectful of each other and those who do not follow our path. Perhaps they are hunting for a

different purpose.

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

Calendar

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

Sunset bird & nature walk
Thursday, Aug. 7, 7 p.m.

Enjoy a sunset stroll around Birds of Vermont's clearings. Erin Talmage and Ali Wagner will lead the walk. Not an early riser? You're not alone. Some birds also prefer to sing, call or display in late afternoon and early evening. Although we may see and hear fewer species than we do at dawn, a late-day ramble gives us more time to appreciate each kind and to better learn their songs. Call 802 434-2167 to reserve your spot or visit birdsofvermont.org/special-upcoming. Suggested donation: \$5-\$15.

Guide to drawing & painting birds
Saturday, Aug. 9, 10 a.m.-1 p.m.

Explore the beauty of nature through art in this workshop at the Birds of Vermont Museum in Huntington. Tap into the rich resource of Bob Spear's dioramas and the museum's natural history library to draw and paint birds in their natural habitats. Touching on bird anatomy and reflecting on habitats, the course will use watercolor and colored pencils. Three-hour workshop (includes all materials) is \$68. Register with the Davis Studio at <https://tinyurl.com/43y3j6ts>.

Dinghy sailing for teens
Saturday, Aug. 9, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.

Teens can join us for a one-day introductory sailing class and learn about small-boat dinghy sailing in the museum's custom fleet of Split Rock Sailing Dinghies. Basics include how to sail a small vessel, how to right a capsized boat and how to get out on the water and guide your vessel. This is a class for beginners or anyone looking for a refresher class on how to sail. Please bring a packed lunch and plenty of water to stay hydrated throughout the day. Make sure to wear clothing you don't mind getting wet and as well as adequate sun protection. The class is pay-what-you-can with a suggested cost of \$125. Register at <https://tinyurl>.



Courtesy photo

The Swing Peepers — John Hadden and Matthew Witten — will perform kids' music and storytelling at the Richmond Farmers Market Kids' Day on Aug. 15.

com/mr2s7w94.

Age Well luncheon
Tuesday, Aug. 12, 11:30 a.m.

St. Catherine of Siena and Age Well are offering a free luncheon for anyone 60 or older in the St. Catherine of Siena Parish Hall at 72 Church Street in Shelburne. The check-in time is 11:30 a.m., and the meal will be served at noon. There is a \$5 suggested donation. The menu is chicken-n-biscuits, red mashed potatoes, broccoli florets, melon and milk. The deadline to register is Aug. 7. Contact Molly BonGiorno at 802-662-5283 or mbongiorno@agewellvt.org.

Shelburne Museum free summer night
Thursday, Aug. 14, 5-7:30 p.m.

Visit galleries, listen to live music, enjoy

a picnic, stroll through gardens and take in the splendor of a summer's night at the Shelburne Museum for free. The museum will stay open from 5-7:30 p.m.

Kids' Day
Friday, Aug. 15, 3-6:30 p.m.

The Richmond Farmers Market will hold its second annual Kids' Day 3-6:30 p.m., Friday, Aug. 15. Music by the Swing Peepers, giant bubble-making station, yard games, mini golf, kids' yoga and more. Info at richmond-farmers-market.square.site.

Middlebury film festival
Wednesday-Sunday, Aug. 20-24

The 11th annual Middlebury New Filmmakers Festival brings more than 100 films across seven screens. The festival includes 55 Vermont premieres, six world premieres and 12 special panels and talks. Approximately two-thirds of the festival's screenings will be accompanied by a live, on-stage Q&A from a visiting filmmaker. Get passes here mnff2025.eventive.org/passes/ buy.

Festival of woodcarving
Wednesday, Friday, Aug. 20-22

Green Mountain Woodcarvers Matt Strong and Bob Lindemann lead a three-day workshop to create a scaled-down great blue heron. More info: <https://tinyurl.com/mry28y4n>. The woodcarving festival will be followed by the annual carvers show on Saturday, Aug. 23, 10 a.m.-3 p.m. At the show, discover some of the variety of styles and techniques possible: from caricature carving to wildfowl, birds to Scandinavian flat plane carvings. Demonstrations are planned throughout the day. This is a good opportunity to learn how woodcarvers, using simple

hand tools, transform a block of wood into a piece of art.

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.

Shelburne Museum yoga
Sunday, Aug. 24, 5:30-7 p.m.

Join a special after-hours experience blending art, mindfulness and movement. Begin with a guided tour and art-based meditation in the Dana-Spencer Textile Galleries at Hat & Fragrance featuring the exhibition, "Dahlov Ipcar: the Possibilities of Pattern," designed to spark reflection and presence. Then join an all-level yoga class led by Lynn Alpeter, surrounded by the natural beauty of the museum grounds. Bring your own yoga mat; \$10 for members; \$15 for non-members; advance registration required at <https://tinyurl.com/dd4z269r>. Additional dates are Sept. 2 and Sept. 24.

Sunset bird & nature walk
Thursday, Aug. 28, 7 p.m.

Enjoy a sunset stroll around Birds of Vermont's clearings. Erin Talmage and Ali Wagner will lead the walk. Not an early riser? You're not alone. Some birds also prefer to sing, call or display in late afternoon and early evening. Although we may see and hear fewer species than we do at dawn, a late-day ramble gives us more time to appreciate each kind and to better learn their songs. Call 802 434-2167 to reserve your spot or visit birdsofvermont.org/special-upcoming. Suggested donation: \$5-\$15.

Chamber-folk music
Saturday, Aug. 30, 7:30-10 p.m.

Toronto-based chamber-folk string quartet Medusa appears at the Burnham Hall to kick off the Burnham Presents concert series. Doors open at 7 p.m. and the music at 7:30 p.m. There will be homemade desserts available. Tickets and info at burnhampresents.org.

The Steph Pappas Experience
Sunday, Sept. 7, 1-2:30 p.m.

For a third year, The Steph Pappas Experience returns to perform on the lawn of the Charlotte Museum at 215 Museum Road. There will be refreshments and the museum will be open 1-4 p.m.

CHARLOTTE TOWN MEETINGS AND AGENDAS

Visit charlottevt.org
for more information



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

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

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

Development Review Board Meeting
Wednesday, Aug. 13, 7 p.m.

Planning Commission meeting
Thursday, Aug. 21, 7 p.m.

Regular Selectboard Meeting
Monday, Aug. 25, 7 p.m.

Conservation Commission Meeting
Tuesday, August 26, 7 p.m.

Development Review Board Meeting
Wednesday, August 27, 7 p.m.

Library News

During dog days of summer, send photo of your favorite dog

Margaret Woodruff
Director

According to the Farmer's Almanac, the dog days of summer end on Aug. 11. Whether or not this brings relief from hot temperatures, the library is celebrating with a dog days photo gallery, and you are invited. Send in a picture of your favorite pup to be featured in the display. Although canine friends can't be allowed into the library, they are welcomed on the porch with a water bowl and a dog treat. Let the library staff know if your pup is waiting for you when you visit.

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.

Plastic recycling reminder

The library is one of the drop-off spots for the Trex Recycling Project coordinated by Ken Spencer. In order to continue this program the library asks that people dropping off plastic follow these rules from Trex:

- Please make sure that you only leave stretchy plastic in the Trex bins. If it crinkles, the plastic is not recyclable in this program.
- Make sure that any plastic for the

stretchy plastic bins is clean and dry. Plastic with even a small amount of food waste can contaminate the entire recycling bin and can attract vermin as well.

- Do not leave recycling items (other than plastic in bins) on the porch when the library is closed.
- Please follow the guidelines for recycling eligibility for all items.
- If you have any questions or are unsure about what is recyclable, please ask at the library circulation desk or email info@charlottepubliclibrary.org.

The library staff appreciates your assistance to continue to make the program a success. Including non-eligible plastic makes more work for the staff and others. Thank you for helping to minimize waste and landfill use.

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 additional information about managing during heat emergencies on the library's website.

Programs for kids

Kindergarten library card party
Monday, Aug. 18, 5:30-6:30 p.m.
All incoming kindergartners are invited to a small party at the Charlotte Library. They will receive their very own library card and get a chance to meet other kindergarten families.

LIBRARY continued on page 22



Photo by Margaret Woodruff

Thanks to Garden Circle volunteers, the library's pollinator garden is flora bountiful.

CALENDAR

Continued from page 20

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.

Lake Champlain Challenge Race
Saturday, Sept. 13, 9 a.m.-2 p.m.
The Challenge Race is an annual summer race on Lake Champlain that's open to all human-powered vessels, who race to complete a 3-mile course. Race categories include: rowing gigs (fixed seat and sliding seat, solo and crew), kayaks, canoes, paddleboards and miscellaneous. The only requirement is the boat must be propelled by human power. Awards will be given for fastest in each category and most creative race name. After the race, all are invited to a free lunch buffet, hosted by the museum's rowing clubs. The Challenge Race is \$30 a person and payment will be collected in person at check-in. Pre-registration for the Challenge Race is strongly encouraged to guarantee a spot in the race and lunch. Registration encouraged at <https://tinyurl.com/bdf7h7df>.

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

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 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 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. The library will 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 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.

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.

Tech-help, drop-in sessions

Tuesdays in August, 1-3 p.m.

Drop in for up to 30 minutes of one-on-one tech help with tech librarian Susanna Kahn. She will work with you to troubleshoot issues and answer your questions in easy-to-understand, non-techy language. You’ll leave with solutions or clear next steps. If needed, bring your device and any login information.

Silent reading party

Tuesday, Aug. 12, 4:30-6 p.m.

Welcome to introvert happy hour at Adam’s Berry Farm for a silent reading party to enjoy a book in this beautiful pastoral setting. All readers are welcome, ebooks, audiobooks, poetry, prose, fiction or non-fiction. It’s BYOB (book). Simple refreshments will be served and berry treats available for purchase.

Poetry at the Grange

Thursday, Aug. 14, 6:30-8 p.m.

Jorden Blucher shares his poetry for our August “Poetry at the Grange” evening. Poetry at the Grange is held every second Thursday at the Charlotte Grange. Reservations are encouraged but not required at abigailkilley@me.com.



Photo by Margaret Woodruff

The Chalk the Walk event resulted in a sidewalk covered in inspirational messages.

Mystery book group

Monday, Aug. 18, 10-11 a.m.

In “Rock with Wings” by Anne Hillerman, doing a good deed for a relative offers the perfect opportunity for Sergeant Jim Chee and his wife, Officer Bernie Manuelito, to get away from the daily grind of police work. But two cases will call them back from their short vacation and separate them. Copies available at the circulation desk.

Gallery talk

Tuesday, Aug. 19, 5:30 p.m.

Join Jeffrey Trubisz for an informal tour and conversation as he discusses the 21 images that comprise “On the Trail: A Collection of Photographs,” which have adorned the walls of the Charlotte Library this summer. All are welcome to hear stories about the images, including trips to the Alps, the Peruvian rainforest, the American West and a few Vermont scenes. Light refreshments will be served.

Author talk

Wednesday, Aug. 20, 6:30-7:30 p.m.

Author talk with Dr. Robert Macauley about his new memoir, “Because I Knew You: How Some Remarkable Sick Kids Healed a Doctor’s Soul,” and the world of palliative care. Co-sponsored with the Flying Pig Bookstore.

Men’s book group

Wednesday, Aug. 20, 7:30-9 p.m.

“The Borrowed Life of Frederick Fife” by Anna Johnston tells the story of Frederick Fife, who was born with an extra helping of kindness. If he borrowed your car, he’d return it washed with a full tank of gas. The problem is, at age 82, there’s nobody left in his life to borrow from, and he’s broke and on the brink of eviction. But his luck changes when he’s mistaken for Bernard Greer, a missing resident at the local nursing home, so he takes his place. Copies available at the circulation desk.

Thursday book group

Thursday, Aug. 21, 7:30-9 p.m.

In “Circe” by Madeline Miller, the house of Helios, god of the sun and mightiest of

the Titans, a daughter is born. But Circe is a strange child — not powerful, like her father, nor viciously alluring like her mother. Turning to the world of mortals for companionship, she discovers that she does possess power, the power of witchcraft, which can transform rivals into monsters and menace the gods themselves. Copies available at the circulation desk. This is on Zoom at <https://tinyurl.com/5b4u38xj>.

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 6 p.m., Thursday, Sept. 4. Contact the library or visit the library website (charlottepubliclibrary.org) for more information.

Very Merry on Ferry



Photo by Scooter MacMillan

The Very Merry Theatre’s traveling troupe of actors brought a bit of Off-Broadway musical to the town green on Ferry Road on Friday evening as they performed ‘Fame.’

Senior Center News

Senior center seeking submissions for senior art show

Lori York
Director

The Charlotte Senior Center is gearing up for its annual Senior Art Show and is now accepting submissions for the September exhibit. Open to artists aged 50 and older, the show is a celebration of the many talented individuals who make up the community.

The center continues to bring fresh opportunities for connection and activity. A beginner-friendly American-style mahjong class begins each month, and there is growing interest in forming an advanced hiking group. With offerings ranging from a healthy cooking class, Pilates fitness and pop-up yoga dance sessions to a variety of indoor and outdoor programs, the center provides a welcoming space for adults 50 and older to stay active, creative and engaged.

Senior Art Show

This show is open to artists of all skill levels, ages 50 and older. Entry deadline is Thursday, Aug. 21. Entries received after this date will be considered only if space is available. Registration forms are available at the senior center and can be downloaded on the website. For questions, contact Judy Tuttle by email at jtuttle@gmavt.net or by telephone at 802-425-2864.

August art exhibit

For the month of August, the senior center will showcase an exhibit by the Friday Arts Group, a collective of local artists. The display features a selection of watercolors, acrylics, oils, photographs and assemblages — each piece created by members of the Center's Friday Arts Group.

Outdoor programs

Experienced hiking group

Love tackling challenging hikes? We're forming a group for experienced hikers interested in exploring scenic trails across Vermont and the Adirondacks. If you'd like to join, contact Michael Rubin at mjrubin99@gmail.com.

Birding trip

Wednesday, Aug. 20, 9 a.m.

Discover the diverse birding habitats of Chittenden County with expert birder Hank Kaestner. Explore Vermont's natural beauty while identifying various bird species and their unique habitats. Space is limited and registration is required, but it is free. Call 802-425-6345.

Gentle walk

Thursday, Aug. 28, 9 a.m.

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.

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. 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.

Programs

Alzheimer's Caregivers Support Group Wednesday, Aug. 13, 3-4 p.m.

Are you caring for someone with Alzheimer's? Do you know someone who is? Please join us for our monthly Caregivers Support Group on the second Wednesday of each month from 3:00-4:00 p.m. The meetings provide a safe place for caregivers, family, and friends of persons with dementia to meet and develop a mutual support system. For additional information please contact Louise Fairbank at louisefairbank67@gmail.com.

Photo discussion group

Sunday, Aug. 10, 2-4 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, contact Emily Cross at ecross@ecrossphoto.com.

Healthy cooking for one

Friday, Aug. 15, 12-2 p.m.

Join Chef Shaun from Harbor Village Senior Communities for a fun and informative healthy-cooking class designed just for one. Learn simple, nutritious recipes perfect for solo dining with tips on portioning, freshness and flavor. Free. Registration required by calling 802-425-6345. Space is limited.

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

American-style mahjong

Tuesdays, 12:45-3:45 p.m. & Wednesdays, 6 p.m.

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

Shanghai mahjong

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

Join an informal mahjong gathering, open



Photo by Lori York

Members of the center's arts group are exhibiting their work during the month of August.

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.

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.

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.

Exercise

Yoga dance pop-up

Tuesday Aug. 19, 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 nonjudgmental acceptance. This class is appropriate for all levels of fitness and abilities. Everyone can "let their yoga dance." Free. No registration required.

Pilates fitness

Tuesdays & Thursdays, 8:30-9:30 a.m.

Join Phyllis Bartling for a Hybrid Pilates class designed specifically for individuals 55+. This safe yet challenging workout combines upper-body strength exercises with hand weights and mat exercises that focus on strengthening core muscles to improve balance, strength, and posture. Cost: \$10/class. No 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. Hammer, a certified instructor, has studied with the 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 welcome to observe a class or reach out to Hammer at belizahammer@hotmail.com. \$10 per class. No registration required.

Bone Builders

Mondays & Tuesdays, 9:45-10:45 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.

Write Ingredients

No thimbleberries, but Monday Munch has blueberries

Susan Ohanian
Contributor

It’s August and I’m happy to report that thimbleberries have appeared.

Years ago, when I had no idea what they were, I took a few to the local source of all information, the post office, and of course, the clerk there said that they were thimbleberries.

Here’s some information about these berries (<https://tinyurl.com/38h3m9zm>).

Thimbleberries aren’t on the menu at the senior center for Monday Munch, but another favorite is; three cheers for blueberries.

The menu for Monday Munch at the Charlotte Senior Center brings to mind some famous advertising slogans:

- Runs on Dunkin’ (Dunkin’ Donuts)
- Finger Lickin’ Good (Kentucky Fried Chicken)
- Melts in your mouth, not in your hands (M&M’s)
- Betcha can’t eat just one (Lay’s)
- Snap, Crackle, Pop (Rice Krispies).

Now we have “TACO,” an acronym coined by Financial Times columnist Robert Armstrong that stands for “Trump always chickens out.” What started as a way to describe Trump’s changing his mind on tariff policies and immigration has morphed into a multipurpose social media maxim, with all sorts of memes and AI images depicting TACO.

In June, the Democratic National Committee parked a rented taco truck, with images of Trump wearing a chicken costume, outside the Republican National Committee headquarters and distributed free tacos to passers-by as a way to draw attention to Trump’s tariff policies, which they described as “playing games with working families’ livelihoods.”

As late as the 1960s, tacos were virtually unknown outside Mexico and the American Southwest. Over time, they grabbed



Thimbleberries

Photo by Walter Siegmund

attention, and within 50 years the United States had shipped taco shells everywhere from Alaska to Australia, Morocco to Mongolia. The Smithsonian offers an interesting article on the taco’s origins: <https://tinyurl.com/tznp79r>.

Chapter 8 in Sam Sifton’s “See You On Sunday: A Cookbook for Family and Friends” is titled “Taco Night” and begins with this quote: “Everything tastes better on a tortilla.”

Sifton’s daughter told him, “Taco night is the best night.”

“The authenticity police will tell you that tacos, in the main, should be served on corn tortillas, and that flour ones are a Tex-Mexican abomination,” he adds. “That is not true, but I get it. Rules are important in the kitchen as in life. But in matters of tacos? No judgments.”

Sifton, food editor of The New York Times, an “Eat” columnist for The New York Times Magazine and the founding editor of NYT Cooking, the newspaper’s digital recipe collection and cooking site, was formerly the chief restaurant critic of the Times. He makes a great point in “See You On Sunday” that relates directly to Monday Munch at the Charlotte Senior Center: “There is great pleasure to be had in cooking for others, and great pleasure to be taken from the experience of gathering to eat with others.”

Meanwhile, Wikipedia tells us: “The only consistent ingredient in coleslaw is raw cabbage, while other ingredients and dressings vary widely. Some popular variations include adding red cabbage, pepper, shredded carrots, onions, grated cheese, pineapple, pears or apples.”

What’s in the coleslaw at the Aug. 18 Monday Munch? We’re not telling. You need to go to the Charlotte Senior Center at 212 Ferry Road to find out.

In the meantime, should you ever need a rhyme for coleslaw, here it is: Quebecois.

Whenever the topic of food comes up, think of this wise counsel: “Because of media hype and woefully inadequate information, too many people nowadays are deathly afraid of their food,” Julia Child said. “I, for one, would much rather swoon over a few thin slices of prime beefsteak, or one small serving of chocolate mousse, or a sliver of foie gras than indulge to the full on such nonentities as fat-free gelatin puddings.”

So, let’s agree with Child and shout “hoorah” for that lemon mousse on Aug. 11, for those Hawaiian rolls on Aug. 18 and for all the rest of the delicious food offered by the talented volunteer cooks at Monday Munch.

And hats off to the volunteer dishwashers, too. Stacks and stacks and stacks of dishes.

Note: Offering the good news that small changes and community action can make a difference, the Chittenden Solid Waste District newsletter noted that, since the single-use, plastic-bag ban went into effect five years ago in July 2020, plastic-bag use in Vermont has dropped 91 percent.

Other good news can be found at The Little Free Library outside the Grange Hall, 2858 Spear Street, where attractive books for babies through teenagers are regularly added. If children find a book they like at the Little Free Library, they can keep it. More good reads will be added.

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

Taco salad and blueberries with lemon mousse.

Aug. 18, 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Barbeque pulled-pork, coleslaw, Hawaiian rolls and dessert.

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