

The Charlotte News

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The Charlotte News reaches fundraising high

Andrew Zehner
Board of Directors

Thank you to everyone who contributed to this year's Annual Fund Campaign. With your help, we exceeded our goal, raising \$26,476 to help sustain the paper's operations this year.

Readers contributed 203 gifts — a new campaign high — showing that the paper continues to be relevant, meaningful and valuable to our community.

We are pleased to welcome 22 first-time supporters whose gifts were generously matched by the Lionheart Charitable Trust.

A special thanks to all those who shared their personal reflections on why the paper matters, inviting others to join them in supporting the campaign. These included: Sandi Detweiler, Dorothy Grover-Read, Susan Hong, Damaris Herlihy, Peter Joslin, Lorraine Koffman, Claudia Marshall, Susan McCullough, Meredith Moses, Susan Ohanian, John Quinney and Greg Smith.

If you would like to help support the paper's ongoing efforts to raise funds through advertising or charitable giving, please contact me at andrew@thecharlottenews.org.

(Andrew Zehner is chair of board of directors of The Charlotte News.)



Photo by Scooter MacMillan

From left, Francis Foster, Jim Hyde and Glen Findholt discuss the Charlotte Congregational Church's new Sanctuary and Memorial Garden.

Memorial garden intended to turn church inside out

Scooter MacMillan
Editor

The stroll from the parking lot to the construction site at the Charlotte Congregational Church is as peaceful as being tucked into a warm bed on a cool night.

It may be the product of an over-active imagination, but in the shade of huge old trees on the church grounds, the workers putting the final

touches on the church's memorial garden seem quieter than is usual for a construction site. The scene feels pervaded by calm.

The committee that planned the memorial garden looked at two other sites on the church property, but it's hard to envision the garden going any place else.

The memorial garden sits to the west and in front of the church with a commanding view of

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Moe Harvey has never stopped volunteering

Brett Yates
Contributor

Nearly three decades after his time on the selectboard, Charlotters may still spot Moe Harvey at the town hall from time to time.

On a recent Thursday, he was trying to fix a grandfather clock that he had co-donated to the town 25 years earlier. He also took a brief turn manning the front desk when the town clerk and the assistant clerk both had to step out of the building.

According to Harvey, that doesn't happen often. His regular unpaid job is to ferry check deposits from the town hall to a bank in Shelburne. It's not an official role — it's just something that he does.

"I've been doing that for like 25 years with no charge," Harvey said.

A prolific volunteer, Harvey, a retiree, still holds a formal position in municipal government as well. As an elected trustee of public funds, he oversees special-purpose investment accounts created by charitable bequests to the town. In Charlotte, the title is a slight misnomer, as the town has only one such fund.

By Harvey's recollection, a change in state statute allowed

HARVEY continued on page 3

When life douses your dream, find a different dream

Steve Goldstein
Contributor

On a recent Saturday night, Aaron Flinn sat down on the patio at Shelburne Vineyards, picked up a guitar and started strumming, as he'd done a thousand times before, in different places, for different faces. A lifetime of making music. An appreciative audience, including family from Seattle, welcomed Flinn warmly.

The following morning, a traveler boarding the ferry in Charlotte headed to Essex, N.Y., was greeted by Flinn as he collected tickets from passengers.

"Good morning," Flinn said. "Did you enjoy the show?" He acted as if his overnight transition from crooner to crewman was the most natural thing in the world.

For the 55-year-old Charlotte native, it was just that the circumstances

triggering the change were anything but natural.

Growing up in Charlotte, Flinn's first love was music. His second love, also music. Third? Yep.

As an eighth grader, Flinn took three months of lessons on the bass guitar. His love of music could not overcome his boredom with the lessons, so the guitar went back in its case. Two weeks into his freshman year in high school at CVU, he was approached by another student who asked Flinn if he wanted to start a band. Flinn didn't need to be asked twice; he unearthed his instrument and began writing original songs.

The band lasted for just shy of three years and gave Flinn the motivation to make music his career. After graduating from the University of Vermont, Flinn attended Boston's



Photo by Steve Goldstein

Aaron Flinn went from full-time musician to working on the ferry and part-time musician when mounting medical bills required a career change.

AARON FINN continued on page 3

Selectboard discusses more solutions for West Charlotte parking and traffic

Scooter MacMillan
Editor

Another selectboard meeting; another discussion of parking and traffic calming in West Charlotte.

At the selectboard’s regularly scheduled meeting on Monday, Sept. 8, town administrator Nate Bareham said Shelburne has recently completed a traffic study, and there might be things that town discovered Charlotte might learn from.

Bareham said Shelburne’s traffic-calming investigations have yielded “mixed success.” He hopes to connect with their planning director in the next couple of weeks to find what lessons they learned that might apply to Charlotte’s traffic situation on Ferry and Greenbush roads.

Chair Lee Krohn said Shelburne tried two different types of speed tables, one that was steeper and one that was smoother and more rounded.

“I’ve noticed it’s been a year, and none of them are up,” said board member Lewis Mudge.

Fellow board member Frank Tenney said one interesting solution Shelburne tried was having some crosswalks that were about 50 feet long.

Toward the end of the meeting, Krohn



presented a sketch the owners of the Old Brick Store had drawn of the intersection and down to the crosswalk at the senior center. That plan suggested painting lines, or striping, on the pavement on the north side of Ferry Road to indicate a walking route from the senior center to the store.

This sketch also proposed painting striping for four crosswalks at the intersection. Krohn emphasized that the sketch was a hypothetical proposal.

Tenney noted that years ago there had even been a discussion about moving the memorial at the intersection down to the town green as a way of clearing up confusion about what is Old Brick Store parking and what is Greenbush Road. There has been much talk about how

dangerous it is when drivers cut between the monument and the store, through what is actually the parking lot.

The parking lot is not delineated very well, Tenney said. He said a possible solution might be painting lines that were clearer or adding a hump, “so that people would realize that it’s not the town road.”

An increase in customers at the Old Brick Store is only a part of the problem. Another part is a change in the store’s business model under the new owners, with more people sitting down to eat and visit instead of dashing in and out, Krohn said, so parking spaces don’t turn over as quickly as before.

The new town planner has a decade of experience working in transportation, Krohn said. He suggested she be asked to give the situation “a fresh perspective” to see what solutions she might come up with.

The sketch “is a good start for some of these discussions, but it needs work and needs engineering,” board member JD Herlihy said.

Bareham said he thought part of the discussion should be “whether the board is open to the idea of having some kind of strict walkway or not” and whether that’s something he and the staff should start looking into.

Lake Champlain Basin Program seeks clean-water projects

Mae Kate Campbell
Contributor

The Patrick Leahy Lake Champlain Basin Program seeks proposals for projects that improve water quality in the Lake Champlain basin.

The intent of this funding opportunity

is to improve water quality through the planning, design, or prioritization for future water quality improvement projects, or the implementation of projects that will directly result in the reduction of water pollution in Lake Champlain and its tributaries.

Proposals for grants will fall into one of

three categories:

- Clean water: small grants for implementation
- Clean water: large grants for implementation
- Clean water: grants for planning.

“By supporting both on-the-ground projects and the planning that makes them possible, this funding opportunity provides the tools needed to reduce pollution, restore healthy waterways and protect the lake for future generations,” said Eric Howe, program director of the Lake Champlain Basin Program.

Eligible organizations must be located in the U.S. and able to conduct work within the Lake Champlain Basin and include colleges and universities; nonprofit organizations; for-profit companies; New York Soil and Water and Vermont Natural Resource conservation districts; and non-federal, non-state government agencies, including municipalities.

Approximately \$680,000 in funding is available to support awarded projects. Grant request limits vary by grant category. One proposal may be submitted per eligible organization.

The awarded projects will advance the goals of the long-term Lake Champlain management plan, Opportunities for Action (plan.lcbp.org).

Proposals are due at 5 p.m. on Sept. 29. Awarded clean water projects are targeted to begin work in May 2026 and must be completed by June 2029.

More information, including grant guidelines and applications, is available on the Lake Champlain Basin Program’s website at lcbp.org/grants.

Memorial blossoms



Photo by Scooter MacMillan

The blooms are booming at the Memorial Garden in the heart of West Charlotte. Enjoy the flori abundance while you can. The safe money is betting the look of the memorial will be changing in the near future to a more Halloweeny look.



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:

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

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AARON FINN
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Berklee College of Music. With his band Salad Days, Flinn was a regular presence in and around Burlington and built up a following. Thoughtful lyrics paired with Americana folk-rock tunes made him a popular entertainer in the lively local music scene.

“Aaron was a fixture on the scene with Salad Days, particularly in the late 90s/early aughts,” said Seven Days’ Chris Farnsworth, a savvy veteran chronicler of Vermont’s music and musicians. “He built up a nice bit of buzz and esteem and is generally regarded as a very talented songwriter and guitarist.”

Flinn’s voice might vary between a twangy baritone and the low rumble of a vintage Ferrari. Seven albums of original songs to the good, the number eight proved unlucky. It was when he was wrapping the eighth album that life intervened.

“I was touring a bit in 2015 and working on another album,” Flinn recalled, when he found out that his then 4-year-old son had leukemia. Flinn dropped everything else and became a full-time caregiver.

“I was lucky enough to be in a position

“If I could just go on making music the rest of my life, that’s where my love is.”

— Aaron Flinn

where I could sort of shelve everything and really focus on his care,” he said.

Fortunately, the type of leukemia was treatable. “It was brutal and no fun at all, but we went through those four years, and the treatment, knock on wood, has been successful, and he’s 14 now and doing well.”

Flinn honored the music gigs he had booked before his son was diagnosed. He had no way of knowing that a worldwide pandemic might stop the music. When it became clear that the cancer was in remission but the bills were not, Flinn quickly realized that he needed a steady income, and that just playing music was not enough. Having been raised in

Charlotte — he lives in the house in which he grew up — Flinn was very familiar with the ferries that shuttled people and vehicles between Vermont and New York.

“I’ve ridden that ferry ever since I can remember,” said Flinn. “And so, I thought that might be a good gig, and I got the job.” In 2022, the Lake Champlain Transportation Company had its first deckhand troubadour.

As anyone who has taken the 30-minute voyage knows, Lake Champlain can be temperamental. One day smooth as glass, the next furious waves and foamy whitecaps. Getting cars on and off requires patience and some spatial awareness. Winter ice can make docking a trial. Flinn

works two days on, then two days off. A summer day means the schedule may run from 7 a.m. to 8:30 p.m.

Flinn enjoys the job so much that he’s going to apply for a captain’s license. “I expect to be on the job for a long time and hopefully progress to captain.”

Music still runs through his veins and he’ll take gigs where he finds them. His long-delayed ninth album may soon be released. But live performance opportunities have dwindled with the closure of music venues like Nectar’s and Arts Riot.

“If I could just go on making music the rest of my life, that’s where my love is,” he said. Yet, he’s realistic. “Being a decade older is not a help,” he sighed about “reintroducing” himself to the music scene.

Trying to rebuild his music career while working on the ferries, he reckoned, “is a great combination. I’m very lucky.” Watching Flinn perform suggests he’ll find a way. Tackling life, he said, is like being a deckhand.

“I’ve always been somebody who feels that there’s no such thing as bad weather, just bad gear. And I can handle what the lake might have to throw at me.”

HARVEY
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him some years ago to dispose of the other four, based on their trivial size. Instead of continuing to deliver a few dollars of annual interest each year to the Charlotte Central School or the Charlotte Volunteer Fire & Rescue Services, he could turn the principal over to the beneficiary and shut down the account.

But the fifth fund, seeded with \$35,000 in the early 1950s to ensure the perpetual upkeep of four particular headstones in Grandview Cemetery (and, secondarily, of the cemetery itself), was not trivial. A prior trustee had converted the savings account into a brokerage account, and over time, it had swelled. By Harvey’s telling, it now holds about \$800,000.

The brokerage firm had prioritized growth over dividends, so until recently, the fund provided only about \$13,000 in annual income to the Grandview Cemetery Association, which manages the cemetery behind the Charlotte Congregational Church. This past spring, Harvey requested a new investment strategy, telling the broker to focus on delivering dividends rather than continuing to expand the principal, since the latter, according to the town attorney’s reading of the terms of the bequest, can never be spent.

“It looks like now, for next July, when we have to do the distribution, it’ll be like \$35,000 to \$40,000 a year,” Harvey boasted.

In ways large and small, Harvey’s career of service to the community has helped shape Charlotte, where he has lived since 1982. For years, he made weekly home deliveries for seniors on behalf of the Charlotte Food Shelf.

“I’m very active,” Harvey said. “I’ve been on so many committees; it’s unbelievable.”

When he joined the selectboard in 1994, the Charlotte Central School still housed the municipal government. As selectboard chair, Harvey guided the growing town through



Photo by Brett Yates
From the selectboard to the food shelf, Moe Harvey has been an avid volunteer for a variety of organizations and municipal government.

the purchase and demolition of an old house in West Charlotte whose property would become the town hall and public library.

He spent the rest of his term overseeing the construction of those buildings, as well as the development of a wastewater system for the camps at Thompson’s Point. The town clerk provided assistance.

“We needed her advice, and she was very, very helpful,” Harvey said. “It overwhelmed me, how wonderful she was being to help us.”

More than a decade later, Mary Mead and Harvey would marry. Mead continues to work as Charlotte’s clerk and treasurer.

In 1997, Harvey became the chair of the Charlotte Land Trust. When news arrived from the state that the Charlotte Central School might have to shut down and move elsewhere due to septic challenges on Hinesburg Road, the land trust, under

Harvey, jumped into action, facilitating the municipality’s acquisition of a large property that included the Old Lantern Inn and Barn, as well as plenty of open space for development.

But school officials eventually determined that they could solve the school’s septic problems at its existing location. After subdividing its new land and selling off three of the resulting parcels, the town used a portion of the remaining property to build a sewer for its new municipal buildings.

More recently, the selectboard has allowed a few private landowners to hook up to the sewer, thereby supporting a degree of commercial development in the West Village. But Harvey believes that municipal officials should exercise caution.

“I really, really would love to keep Charlotte the way it’s been for the past 40 years,” he said. “I don’t want to be Shelburne. I don’t want to be South Burlington. I like Charlotte.”

Harvey grew up in St. Albans, one of Vermont’s larger commercial hubs, where his family had come to work for the Central Vermont Railroad — ultimately his own first employer, apart from the Vermont National Guard, where he enlisted for a six-year stint while still in high school. But his grandparents owned a camp in Waitsfield, and there he discovered a love for the outdoors and learned how to hunt. Amid a busy career as the founder and owner of Patterson Fuels, he made time for trips to nearly every part of Canada during caribou season.

Harvey also gave back to the outdoors through his involvement in a wetlands preservation nonprofit called Ducks Unlimited, where he became the vice president. In 2016, the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department honored him as a founder of Vermont’s Duck Stamp program, which raises money for the state’s Migratory Waterfowl Fund through hunting licensure fees.

At age 82, Harvey no longer goes duck hunting, preferring golf for recreation. Except when back pain prevents it, that’s how he spends much of his time in Naples, Florida, where he now lives during the winter. He sold Patterson Fuels to his son in 2022, after 49 years leading the company.

Unsurprisingly, Harvey serves as the president of his condo building in Naples, managing its affairs remotely during the warmer months. Several of his friends from Vermont have moved down there full time.

“I would, too,” Harvey said, “if the town clerk would retire.”



NEXT PUBLICATION DATES

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CHURCH

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the Adirondacks in the distance and flirting glimpses of Lake Champlain. The view seems to confirm that this is the perfect spot for reflection, contemplation and ideally situated for a loved one’s ashes.

One drawback to the site that committee members considered was the noise of vehicles passing on Church Hill Road, but the location is back from the road, and committee member Jim Hyde said a row of arborvitae trees will be planted between the garden and the road to help block the sound. That also seems like a perfect solution for this ideal location because the name arborvitae is derived from Latin for tree of life.

Hyde is the member of the committee who appears to have been the prime mover for this project. In harmony with his Congregational faith, he shuns the title of chair, but everyone else from the church who was interviewed for this story didn’t have any problem with calling him that.

Committee member and expert on decisions about what to plant in the garden, Joan Weed said, “Jim is a wonderful encourager. Cream rises and Jim just rose to the top. He keeps us focused.”

Keeping people focused is a wonderful talent to have on a Congregational committee because the denomination’s practice is that all decisions are made by consensus.

This project has taken the church three years, which is actually a short time for a Congregational project, Hyde said. A group from the Old Meeting House in East

“Well, if we’re going to build this space, it ought to be a spiritual space that transcends just a memorial garden but is an extension of the sanctuary.”

— Jim Hyde

Montpelier, which is closely aligned with the Congregational Church, took seven years to agree on their memorial garden.

Members of the Charlotte committee took a field trip to East Montpelier and were impressed by what they saw and ended up hiring the same landscape architect, Cynthia Knauf, for their memorial garden on Church Hill Road.

The Charlotte Congregational Church’s memorial garden is getting its final touches with plants going in as this story was written. The church plans a dedication on Sunday, Oct. 12. The dedication will be a continuation of the regular worship service that will begin inside the church at the usual time of 10 a.m. and move out to the garden during the service.

This is appropriate because, Hyde said,



Photo by Jamie Masefield

The stone mason for the garden was Jamie Masefield, who switched gears from a life as a traveling musician with the Jazz Mandolin Project to stone mason when the rigors of touring became too much.

when they started thinking about creating a garden where a loved one’s ashes or remains could be spread, they realized it should be an extension of the inside of the church to the outdoors.

There’s a lot of people in the congregation who are really interested in nature, the connections between nature and spirituality and getting closer to nature, he said.

“The more we thought about it, the more we thought, ‘Well, if we’re going to build this space, it ought to be a spiritual space that transcends just a memorial garden but is an extension of the sanctuary,’ and so we’re calling it the Sanctuary and Memorial Garden,” Hyde said.

As the landscape architect, Knauf said she was impressed by the wonderful views from the site of the garden.

“There is a lot going on there to really soothe the soul,” she said.

More and more, she finds that people who hire her to design gardens are seeking much of the same things the church sought for its garden. No matter whether the project she is working on is a residential, commercial or spiritual landscape design, most people who engage her skills are looking for a garden that brings a calming influence into their lives.

“I think people are looking for that everywhere, including their homes,” Knauf said. “There’s a movement towards making one’s home a sanctuary.”

To find that sense of calm and sanctuary, she said, “You really have to listen to the land.”

The design of the garden is elliptical, and it incorporates lots of spirals, so as you walk towards the altar, you are following a spiral path. Knauf said the spiraling effect is similar to the feeling of a walk in a labyrinth.

“So many things in nature are spiral shaped,” Knauf said. “It really mimics a shape found in almost everything in nature.”

Knauf’s business is located in South Burlington, and Jamie Masefield, the stone mason the church hired to build walls and benches for the garden, is from Monkton.

Hyde said there was a conscious decision, as the project progressed and tariff uncertainty created confusion and fluctuating prices, to hire as many of the contractors as possible from Vermont and some of them are even from Charlotte.

The landscaping work was by Church Hill Landscapes, whose co-owners Nate Carr and Stacy Fraser live practically next door to the

Charlotte Congregational Church.

“I’m very fortunate that I got to work in that beautiful setting,” Masefield said. “Everyone who stops by is so appreciative.”

He confirmed that, unlike many construction sites, the memorial garden work has not had much profanity nor boisterous argumentative conversations.

“There’s been none of that,” Masefield said.

Most conversation has been about one of the worker’s trip to the Metropolitan Museum of Art or another worker from Mexico who has instructed the others about how to make the best pico de gallo. “It’s a great opportunity to learn from someone from another country.”

Heather Ritchie of Barre sculpted the altar for the memorial garden from a huge piece of granite. Although she has carved altars before, those were smaller altars for private gardens. This was the first church altar she’s ever carved.

Despite its size, Ritchie was worried that the altar would look small when it was placed in the garden. Her concerns were unfounded. The altar looks imposing, but not overbearing, at the end of a spiral walk way.

The huge boulder altar has a baptismal font carved into its surface. That task was one Ritchie was familiar with from carving bird baths.

Committee member Weed, who writes the Weed’s in the Garden column for this newspaper, emphasized that the garden isn’t just for the church; she sees it as a community garden.

“This is not just a church thing; it is also a community thing,” Weed said. “It’s a place of respite, meditation and peace for everyone who wants to go there.”

Hyde points out that the dedication on Oct. 12 won’t be so much a celebration. It’s rather more of a dedication, with the congregation concerned about senior pastor Kevin Goldenbogen, who is on sabbatical while he goes through treatment for cancer.

Associate pastor Susan Cooke Kittredge said that Goldenbogen’s spirits are good and he is confident that he is in the hands of a great medical team.

Kittredge said the church will discover how they should use the garden.

“There’s something about having a designated spot that lets your spirit relax,” Kittredge said. “This is an affirmation of what the congregation has held to be holy from the start, that all of creation is a gift and that we need to honor it by creating this space.”

Commentary

Vermont's nonprofit sector ... a study in governance

Bill Schubart
Contributor

We're supposed to be "a nation of laws," with an evolving body of statutory law established by the Congress and state legislatures that also put in place regulatory boards such as the Environmental Protection Agency, Federal Aviation Administration and Federal Trade Commission nationally and, here at home, the Vermont Public Utility Commission, Green Mountain Care Board and Professional Responsibility Board.

Add to this the social-benefit missions of the country and Vermont's diverse nonprofit sectors and \$2 we have an architecture of institutions that codify and reflect a continuum of Americans' ethical beliefs and guide our decisions as we work together to maintain civility and enhance the common good. But when nonprofit boards misunderstand governance conventions, missions are put at risk, usually due to human failings such as abuse of power, greed, ignorance or the naive "gee-whiz, we're all honest" mindset, which is uncomfortably close to willful ignorance.

As of June 2024, there were 5073 501(c)3 Vermont nonprofit organizations established to deliver on a specific mission and another 1400 nonprofit trade-advocacy nonprofits. Mission-driven organizations work in a variety of areas such as public education, the environment, arts and culture, healthcare, human rights, journalism and media, and criminal justice.

My experience chairing 12 Vermont and national nonprofit boards, during which time I oversaw eight leadership changes, reinforces my sense of how thin the veneer of understanding among nonprofit boards is around governance conventions and trustee responsibilities and ethics. At the heart of their responsibilities is being wholly independent of their institution's paid leadership. A failure here puts the whole enterprise at risk of failure.

Among the worst mistakes I've seen boards make is failing to do candid annual performance reviews of their executive director, holding the person fully accountable for delivery-on-mission. Such a review includes open input from staff, community leaders and the constituents they serve. A candid review depends on an independent board, and too many executive directors hand-pick their board members, surrounding themselves with well-meaning friends they believe will make their job easier.

But boards must be self-perpetuating with a focus on diverse candidate skills and community connections. An independent board's first and most important task is to hire, and then review, compensate and hold the executive director accountable for delivery on mission, while also ensuring the financial, ethical and legal integrity of the organization. This is why it's the trustees, not the executive director, who bear ultimate liability for organizational failure.

One sector where this breadth of misunderstanding is harming Vermonters is in healthcare where some hospital

boards are apparently ignorant of their job descriptions or have been deprived of their trustee authority by the organization that appoints them, as is the case with the University of Vermont Health Network. This obliviousness to their duty of public accountability, and the inherent liability, is wreaking material and fiscal havoc on Vermonters.

Two egregious current examples of governance failure are University of Vermont Health Network and Blue Cross Blue Shield-VT.

In the first case, the University of Vermont Health Network board's — about which I have written extensively — abject failure to review the performance of and hold accountable to mission its president, Sunny Eappen, exemplifies nonprofit board governance failure that damages the very Vermonters the board is committed to serve. During Eappen's tenure, total operating expenses have risen from \$1.9 billion to \$2.3 billion, or 24.6 percent. And, in an organization failing miserably on all fronts when measured against the core tenets of its mission — population health — meaning healthcare quality, access and affordability, why is the University of Vermont Health Network board proposing a \$188,575 raise for its CEO and \$124,724 for its CFO in 2026 instead of warning or dismissing Eappen? The board's role is not just to assess financial performance; its key strategic role is, when all is said and done, to assess performance-on-mission.

Instead of improving healthcare access, quality and affordability, Eappen and his overstaffed team of nonclinical administrators and managers are focused on enhancing Vermonters' perception of their performance. They're spending money on a massive and costly publicity campaign focused on key decision-makers like legislators and business leaders when conventional wisdom tells us it's cheaper and more effective to be good at what you do than to spend money trying to convince people you're better than you are. These funds should be spent on improving clinical services.

Another sad example of bad governance in healthcare is the struggling insurer of 230,000 Vermonters, Blue Cross Blue Shield – Vermont. It's appropriate for a president to suggest potential trustees to the board's nominating and governance committee, but the committee must decide for themselves who serves on their board. Presidents don't select their board members, as has been the case with Blue Cross Blue Shield – Vermont. Also, unlike most other nonprofit boards, the Blue Cross Blue Shield – Vermont trustees are paid a stipend beyond incurred expenses. Having served on 22 nonprofit boards over 55 years, I've never earned a dime beyond reimbursement for legitimate expenses.

The Blue Cross Blue Shield – Vermont president, Don George, whose 2024 compensation package totaled \$1,010,105 (\$943,890 salary plus \$66,215 in additional compensation) has announced his retirement in December of this year. So, between '21 and '24, while facing insolvency as their payment reserves

shrank to a week's worth of claims, why did the board choose to award him a 38 percent increase, and for his vice president/treasurer, a 40 percent increase? During the same period, the Blue Cross Blue Shield – Vermont board also paid key executives some \$280,000 in retention incentives, \$910,600 in affiliation and project incentives and \$1,852,275 in variable compensation totaling \$3.04 million or 10 percent of its total reserves at the end of 2024. Is this the best use of funds? What is the board's logic here?

In fairness, much of the financial chaos at Blue Cross Blue Shield – Vermont is due directly to Vermont's largest hospital, University of Vermont Medical Center, charging its commercial insurers some \$801,927,336 in fiscal year 2023, up from the prior years' \$373,677,045, an increase of 115 percent, according to the National Academy for State Health Policy.

According to ProPublica's Nonprofit Explorer, the trustees of MVP Health Care, Vermont's other nonprofit health insurer, paid its CEO, Chris Del Vecchio, \$2,181,970 in 2023 plus \$540,508 additional income and \$190,086, totaling \$2,912,564. Board members are also paid. The chair's compensation is \$89,500 with other trustees averaging \$60,000.

VT Statute 18VSA § 9371 mandates

that healthcare spending must balance the healthcare needs of Vermonters with their ability to pay for such care. After reviewing Blue Cross Blue Shield's and MVP's proposals for rate increases, Green Mountain Care Board chair Owen Foster says executive salary spending is not making Vermont's health care more affordable. To their great credit and consistent with statute, the Green Mountain Care Board reduced the current University of Vermont Medical Center 2026 budget request by \$88 million.

According to Common Good Vermont, healthcare and education generate the lion's share of the nonprofit community's \$10 billion in revenue and \$3 billion in wages. One in five Vermonters works in the sector at an annual wage averaging \$62,510. It's a vital part of Vermont's economy and we must learn to better use it to support the common good. But the dismal truth is that too many Vermont nonprofits working to make the lives of Vermonters better are handicapped by their own poor understanding of how nonprofit governance is meant to function. Nonprofit board service is more than a resumé builder; it's a major contributor to the common good in all sectors ... worth getting right for all Vermonters.

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Letter to the Editor

Remove RFK Jr. as Secretary of Health and Human Services

To the Editor:

As members of Vermont’s public health professional community, we call for the immediate removal of Robert F. Kennedy Jr. as the Secretary of Health and Human Services. We also call on Vermont’s congressional delegation as well as Governor Phil Scott to join as a unified front to demand his immediate removal. The Senate Finance Committee hearings of Sept. 4 made clear the harm Robert F. Kennedy Jr. in his current role will bring to Vermonters and to the health of the entire United States. Kennedy’s world view is anti-science, militantly anti-vaccine and

based in biological racism and is thus driven by ideology that is the antithesis of responsible and just public health practice.

Kennedy has intentionally acted to decimate the national public health infrastructure. He has created chaos at the Department of Health and Human Services and its subsidiary agencies (the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the National Institutes of Health and the Food and Drug Administration, etc.), working to hobble our federalized system that serves the health and welfare of the American people.

All told, he has fired an estimated 10,000 employees from these agencies. When the former director of the Center for Disease Control, Dr. Susan Monarez,

pushed back against Kennedy’s wholesale firing of the committee responsible for determining vaccine eligibility and recommendations (the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices), he fired her also, prompting several other leaders from Center for Disease Control to resign in protest. In addition to firing top leaders, he has actively dismantled the Center for Disease Control’s essential data and research capacity and imposed an illogical dogmatic framework to control its functioning.

If he is allowed to continue in leadership at the Department of Health and Human Services, Kennedy’s ideological views on vaccines will permanently destroy a well-developed system of research, development and distribution of safe, effective and affordable vaccines to children, families and individuals. He has hindered full-public access to COVID-19 vaccines, creating a dangerous situation that will set the stage for widespread outbreaks or pandemics over the next

decades. He has restricted full access to children’s vaccines, endangering the health of our next generation by inviting outbreaks of once-controlled infectious diseases such as polio and measles.

Robert F. Kennedy is a grave threat to our society and must be removed from office. The essential health of our population — both of Vermont and the U.S. — is at stake.

Sally Kerschner
Ferrisburgh
Jon Shaffer
Charlotte

(Sally Kerschner, RN, MSN, is a public health nurse and a member of SOS for Public Health, a group of former and retired Vermont health department employees who are dedicated to speaking out strongly for Vermonters’ health.)

(Jon Shaffer, Ph.D, is an assistant professor of sociology at the University of Vermont and a national organizer for Defend Public Health at defendpublichealth.org.)



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Verse or burst



Photo by Joe Bergin

Cindy Hill reads her poetry at the Grange poetry series on Thursday, Sept. 11. She was joined by many local poets reading at the open mic.

Around Town

Condolences

Jackson Joshua Walter Clemmons

Dr. Jackson Joshua Walter Clemmons passed away peacefully in his sleep on Sept. 10, 2025, at his home in Charlotte, Vermont, with family and friends watching over him. He was 102 years old.

Jackson was born in Beloit, Wisconsin, on March 24, 1923, the son of Henry and Ora Bell Clemmons. His family's history reflected both hardship and resilience: his maternal great-grandfather had been enslaved in Mississippi, and his grandparents joined the Great Migration to the Midwest in 1914. His maternal grandfather, Walter Bell, a master painter and carpenter, taught young Jackson those trades.

Meanwhile, his paternal grandfather, J.J. Clemmons, who was originally from Martinique, was a University of Chicago law school graduate. In 1917, he founded and served as the principal of the JJ Clemmons High School, the first school for African American children in Washington County, North Carolina.

Jackson's father, a graduate of Hampton Institute (now Hampton University), worked for the railroads and opened a hat shop and laundromat in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, with his mother, Ora. Their shop was located next door to the offices of the Milwaukee Journal, whose reporters frequented the business. The reporters gave Jackson their expired rolls of film,



Dr. Jackson Joshua Walter Clemmons

sparkling his early passion for photography. Jackson learned to shine shoes and make hats, and with the tips he received from his parents' customers, he purchased his first camera. When he was not working or studying, Jackson enjoyed drawing — an interest his mother, Ora, gently encouraged.

Jackson attended the University of Wisconsin–Madison to study agriculture, but his education was interrupted by World War II. Drafted into the military, he served in the Philippines before eventually returning to UW-Madison to complete his bachelor's in agriculture (1948), his master's in biochemistry (1949) and his

doctorate in biochemistry (1956). He was the first African American student in the university's biochemistry department.

Working alongside his mentor, Dr. Karl Paul Link, Jackson contributed to the development of a series of anticoagulants, including what is now known as d-CON (a popular brand of rat poison), Dicoumarol and Warfarin, a groundbreaking prescription anticoagulant that reduces the risk of blood clots, saving countless lives worldwide.

Jackson Clemmons was awarded prestigious postdoctoral fellowships, including two from the American Cancer Society and a highly competitive Helen Hay Whitney Fellowship. He continued his research at the Karolinska Institute of Biophysics and Cell Research in Stockholm, Sweden, and at the Sloan Kettering Institute for Cancer Research in New York City.

During his graduate studies in Wisconsin in the 1950s, Jackson met the beautiful Lydia Monroe, a nurse anesthetist. He asked her to marry him on their second date, but she insisted he wait a year and ask again. He did, and on Dec. 26, 1952, they married in her parents' home in Harvey, Illinois.

After completing his doctoral studies, Jackson pursued medicine at Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine in Cleveland. The university rescinded his financial aid package, apparently

after learning that Jackson was African American. Jackson and Lydia refused to give up. For four years, they worked multiple jobs while he continued his studies and lived on a frugal diet that consisted primarily of oatmeal, canned baked beans and chocolate bars. In 1959, Jackson completed his medical training and earned his M.D.

In 1962, Dr. Clemmons joined the University of Vermont Medical College as a pediatric pathologist and professor — the second African American on its faculty. Over decades, he taught several thousand students, mentoring many, especially students of color. He was prolific in publishing his scientific research and served as an advisor to the National Institutes of Health and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Drawing on the carpentry skills he had learned from his grandfather, he often designed and built his own laboratory equipment. As both a civil rights advocate and a pediatric pathologist, Jackson saw the links between social inequities and child health outcomes, and often did public speaking, writing and advocacy about the need to integrate social justice into the teaching and practice of medicine.

With his wife, Lydia, Jackson shared a love of travel and discovery. Their

AROUND TOWN continued on page 8



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AROUND TOWN

Continued from page 7

honeymoon in 1953 was a cross-country trip to visit Lydia’s sister in Los Angeles. Jackson’s mother, who had lost her husband the previous year, accompanied them. They made the trip during the Jim Crow era of legal racial segregation. Since safe lodging was not guaranteed, they camped all the way from Illinois to California. Later, they traveled to Sweden and New York City during Jackson’s research fellowships, and in 1962 they drove from Ohio to Vermont in their 1950s emerald-green MG to relocate for his new appointment at the University of Vermont Medical College. Much to the chagrin of their families, friends and

colleagues, rather than buying a modern urban home, they invested everything they had to purchase a historic 148-acre farm in Charlotte.

Within his Vermont community, Jackson became deeply involved in education at the local level. He served as co-president of the Charlotte Central School PTA with his wife Lydia, and as vice chair and later chair of the Champlain Valley Union High School board, where he worked to improve educational opportunities and foster inclusivity for all children.

Beyond his passion for his work and serving his local community, Jackson loved to travel. He carefully researched and curated trips to Africa, where he and his wife traveled and volunteered in

hospitals across the continent over a span of nearly 20 years.

In the 1980s, they founded Authentica African Imports, then one of the only exclusively African retail mail order and import businesses in the country. While his wife Lydia managed the daily operations, Jackson repaired the African art and artifacts, built display bases for sculptures and masks and joined her in sourcing art across the continent.

Dr. Clemmons was also a farmer and environmentalist. For over 60 years, he resisted development pressures on his family farm in Charlotte, and instead, restored the farm’s historic buildings, invested in planting thousands of pine trees in the farm’s forest and taught his children how to cherish and cultivate the land. Jackson shared his love of photography and drawing with his family, taking thousands of photos over the years and helping his children to create beautiful woodblock prints of the farm and of African art and imagery. Inspired by his experiences across America, Europe and Africa, he dreamed of transforming the farm into a foundation and a place of teaching and multicultural exchange. His home and farm were always open, creating a welcoming space for students, artists and visitors from around the world.

In 2023, at the age 100, Jackson and Lydia secured their legacy by selling their beloved farm to the nonprofit they inspired, Clemmons Family Farm, Inc., ensuring its preservation as a center for

African American heritage, art, farming and multicultural community building.

After having lived a very full life, Jackson is now reunited with his beloved wife Lydia, who predeceased him in August 2024. He leaves behind their five children — Joshua, Lydia, Laura, Jocelyn and Naomi — 12 grandchildren, extended family in Wisconsin, Maryland and California and a global community of students, mentees and friends who loved and admired him.

A community celebration of life will be held at the Clemmons Farm in spring 2026. In lieu of flowers, tax-deductible donations may be made to the JJ Clemmons Alumni Association in North Carolina, which will use the funds to support a Roper High School student scholarship program. Please make checks to: “Washington County African-American Museum and Cultural Arts Center” and write: “JJ Clemmons Alumni Association” in the check memo.

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Gardening

Find your thrill on blueberry hill — or field or garden

Vern Grubinger
University of Vermont Extension

Blueberries, which originated in North America, are one of the healthiest fruits you can eat. They have a unique and delicious flavor, are low in calories and are packed with antioxidants. They hold up well in the freezer or fridge, so you can enjoy them long after harvest. This year, the blueberry crop is plentiful on Vermont farms.

For centuries, Native Americans ate wild, or low-bush, blueberries. These grow naturally on acid soils, producing fruit that is rather small on plants that only grow about a foot tall. The domesticated, or highbush, blueberry produces much bigger berries and more of them on a plant that grows many times taller than its wild cousin.

The domestication of the blueberry started in 1908 when a researcher at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Frederick Coville, began seeking out superior wild plants for breeding in New Hampshire. In 1911, he lucked out when Elizabeth White, a commercial cranberry grower in New Jersey, learned of his work and perceived its potential. She offered her assistance and for the next two decades enlisted her pickers to search for exceptionally fine bushes in the wilds of the pine barrens.

Coville developed the first 15 commercial varieties of blueberries. In 1937, a Vermonter took over the USDA blueberry-breeding program. George Darrow initiated cooperation with state agricultural experiment stations and private growers so new varieties could be tested in different growing areas.

Between 1946 and 1962, he provided over 200,000 seedling plants to cooperators in 13 states. Two of these cooperators were Green Mountain Orchards and Harlow's Sugarhouse, both of which had apple orchards in Putney.

Over time, the highbush blueberry crop really took off. The 2022 U.S. Census of Agriculture counted 286 farms with 404 acres of blueberries in Vermont. The typical yield is almost 2,000 pounds per

acre, so about 800,000 pounds of Vermont blueberries must be picked, sold and eaten in a relatively short time. Almost all these berries are sold directly to customers or to local stores and distributors.

Nationally, 795 million pounds of blueberries were harvested in 2024. About half the crop comes from Washington and Oregon, which have a combined 32,000 acres in production, mostly on specialized farms that ship to stores and processors.

Blueberries are unusual in that they require an acidic soil to grow well. In many locations, sulfur should be added to lower the soil pH before the crop is planted. Then, the plants must be mulched, pruned and irrigated to produce the highest yields.

Fruit buds form on the second year of cane growth, so removal of old canes is important to allow room for new canes, which maintain production over time. And it can be quite some time! Blueberry bushes, if well-tended, live for many decades.

Eating blueberries can provide a slew of health benefits. They are a good source of vitamins C and K as well as dietary fiber. In addition, blueberries, like other blue and red-colored fruits and vegetables, are high in antioxidants.

One of the antioxidants in blueberries is anthocyanin, a type of flavonoid responsible for the blue pigment. Antioxidants protect your body from free radicals, which are unstable molecules that can damage cells and contribute to diseases. Research also suggests that blueberries are beneficial to maintaining memory and cognitive function.

To find a farm where you can pick your own fresh, delicious local blueberries, visit vermontpickyourown.org.

(Vern Grubinger is the University of Vermont Extension vegetable and berry specialist.)



Photos by Vern Grubinger/University of Vermont Extension

Highbush blueberries produce large, sweet berries that ripen beginning in early to mid-July with peak season typically occurring in early August.



Blueberries are best picked when they are a deep, even blue color, feel plump and come off the stem easily.

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Education

AI is called artificial intelligence for a reason

Margo Bartsch
Contributor

“I got fired for using ChatGPT” is a 2023 article written by Nolan Clark in Medium that profiles how he broke company policy in relying on artificial intelligence (AI) to write his emails to balance his workload.

“We pride ourselves on personal connection with employees,” his boss explained in firing him.

Clark’s emails lacked the personal touch that the company valued. Plus, passing off computer-generated work as his own violated the firm’s privacy policy and idea authenticity.

College students are also falling into the AI trap. In 2023 at Yeshiva University in New York City, two students were caught using AI to complete take-home exams.

The students argued that the AI policy was not clear. Thus, Yeshiva updated its Academic Integrity Policy that using someone or something else’s language is intentional misrepresentation.

Just as AI can make it seem easy to cheat, AI detection software continues to expand. Turnitin AI Content Checker, Copyleaks, Winston AI and AI Writing Check are all claiming with high accuracy to be able to identify information that is being passed off as unique work.

This August, Forbes published “Using ChatGPT At work? These Mistakes Could Get You Fired.” The article explained how employees carelessly used AI in violation of company policies.

Three top ways to get caught are: using unapproved AI tools for tasks; uploading confidential or proprietary information; and failing to fact-check AI-generated content before sharing.

Instead of going down the AI rabbit hole, here are some tips for developing writing skills, the old-fashioned way.

Thinking critically includes trial and error. The University of Michigan defines critical thinking as “the mental process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing and evaluating information.”

This August, Clay Shirky, New York University’s Vice Provost for AI and Technology in Education, wrote a New York Times Op-Ed explaining the shift away from critical thinking:

“Now that most mental effort tied to writing is optional, we need new ways to require the work necessary for learning. That means moving away from take-home assignments and essays toward in-class blue book essays, oral examinations, required office hours and other assessments that call on students to demonstrate knowledge in real time.”

This September, Fortune reported that Stanford University computer science professor Jure Leskovec resumed giving paper exams to prove students were not relying on AI to guide their thought processes.

Leskovec explained that his testing previously focused on open-book and take-home exams. However, as AI models became widely available, both students and teaching



Adobe Stock photo

assistants started to question how exams could best test their unique thought processes and problem-solving skills.

In developing proposals and writing samples, coming up with ideas, tossing some out, refining the words and evolving the story are all parts of learning. This evaluative process considers many pathways to pursue until the writer decides on the theme to focus their narrative.

Idea generation is unique to each person. Brainstorming with colleagues can remind you of relevant content that does not rely on buzzwords or repetition. How can AI capture that?

Once information is discussed and data is analyzed, now is the time to develop a theme to shape the story, pitch or email. Continue brainstorming with others the potential themes to frame the narrative.

Sadly, starting the brainstorming process with AI can limit these possibilities. This is how employers and teachers can identify AI-generated writing. It is formulaic without tone or personality, which is expected since the ideas are from a computer. In some cases, the information can be inaccurate, and the sentence structure can be awkward.

With the competitive labor market, why would a job candidate fall prey to using AI in developing cover letters or writing samples to claim as their own? If a person did not take the time to think of their own ideas, why would a company hire them when they already broke a level of trust in representing themselves?

Although AI can be a helpful tool in building the framework to gather information, automating tasks and summarizing data, it is not a substitution for human thought to identify future trends and propose relevant solutions. Be sure to double-check for accuracy and cite all sources. Both man and machine can effectively work together.

AI can become a slippery slope for idea generation. It lacks the breadth of personal experiences and fresh perspective that forms an original idea. Taking short cuts in the competitive marketplace is a recipe for ruining your professional reputation and resume. Original thought always prevails.

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

Fifth grade leads community-building activities at school

Naomi Strada
(Summarized by Tom Scatchard)

The joy, engagement and community spirit seen at the first all-school meeting on Sept. 5 were incredible. The fifth graders and their teachers led the gathering with the help of Kevin — a game show host and Champlain Valley Union graduate.

Students joined together in two large groups in the multi-purpose room, working as teams to solve clues, guess words and celebrate each other’s efforts. The fifth graders were applauded for creating such a joyful start to the year.

Charlotte Central School’s focus on identity, connection, proficiency and direction this year was continued the week of Sept. 8 with four initiatives.

Clubs, community and connections

Every Wednesday through June, all middle school students now participate in the C3 block for clubs, community and connections. Options rotate every six to eight weeks, giving students repeated opportunities to explore interests, develop skills and build friendships across grades.

After-school SPARK

The SPARK program is a series of after-school clubs for all kindergarten through eighth-grade students designed to help kids discover new interests, build skills, forge new relationships with adults and make new friends.

Running in multiple sessions across the

year, SPARK brings students together across grades with adults they might not otherwise meet. Clubs will feature sewing, dance, languages, leadership activities and knitting.

Morning movement

The morning movement program invites kindergarten through fourth-grade students to start the day getting active. From 7:45-8:08 a.m., children can walk laps with friends and track their progress or join simple body-weight exercises in the center of the gym. Morning movement helps students who want or need an energetic start, moving their bodies to settle their minds before morning meeting.

Collaborative working groups

The Charlotte Central School faculty and staff are also forming their own clubs through collaborative working groups during the Wednesday professional learning time. Educators have committed to areas they care deeply about — building emotional resilience, learning American Sign Language, deepening social studies curriculum, researching project-based learning, refining technology skills and more. These groups strengthen the professional community and directly benefit students.

All of these initiatives reflect Charlotte Central School’s commitment to engagement for every learner and educator.

One hour can make a difference

Middle schoolers benefit from many kinds of relationships. In addition to the support of families and teachers, a mentor offers

something different: a consistent hour each week during school to step out of the regular routine and spend time with a caring adult not connected to family or classes. Charlotte Central school needs more mentors this fall; please consider whether you, or someone you know, could help.

Through the Connecting Youth Mentoring Program, community members are paired with students for this weekly time together. The commitment is simple, one hour a week. Mentors and students both describe the experience as meaningful and often

transformative.

No special expertise is needed. The school will provide training and support; you bring curiosity, consistency and care. If you’ve ever wondered how you might give back in a way that strengthens both a young person and the school community, this is one real and lasting way.

To learn more or to get involved, please reach out to mentoring coordinator Jessica Phelan (jphelan@cvsdvt.org or 802-425-6682).



Courtesy photo

The fifth grade, along with game show host and Champlain Valley Union High graduate Kevin Conger, leads Charlotte Central School’s first all-school meeting of the year.

Sports

Redhawk starts football season with one win, one loss

Scooter MacMillan
Editor

The first two games of Champlain Valley Union's football season have been a study in contrasts.

In the season opener at Rutland on Friday, Sept. 5, CVU coaches' and players' expressions were serious, if not grim, following a 25-point defeat. It was the Redhawks' biggest losing margin since 2019.

This game and the next could serve as an example of how sporting countenances can change very radically. However, as last season ended, it was CVU who ushered Rutland to frown town with a 27-point defeat in the state title game at St. Johnsbury.

And after the gridiron clash at home against visiting Bellows Free Academy-St. Albans this past Saturday afternoon, Sept. 13, CVU expressions changed again, and everyone associated with the Redhawks was all smiles. It wasn't just the beautiful football weather that inspired the happier looks; the 28-point loss CVU had just handed the Bobwhites helped, but the cleaner, more confident play in the second week of the season also contributed to the more upbeat demeanor.

Rutland 35, CVU 10

Initially, Champlain Valley Union's football season might have seemed like things were going to go like last year's string of overwhelming wins on the way to an unbeaten season. Just minutes into the first quarter of the first game of the 2025 season, the Redhawks notched the initial score on an Alex Jovell field goal.

But such thoughts quickly dissipated as Rutland scored itself when Grady Gallagher took the ensuing kickoff 90 yards to the promised land, giving his team a lead it did not squander.

With just over two minutes left until the second quarter, it was already 14-3, and Rutland's offense was just getting going, putting up 21 points before intermission.

The second half began with the Redhawks still struggling to find their offense. CVU had to punt on its first two possessions, and then Rutland notched another touchdown on a 22-yard pass from quarterback Gio Spallieri to Cellan Wood.

Rutland's defense added another score on a Whit Sullivan interception for a pick six that made the score 35-3.

The Redhawks might be able to take a miniscule measure of satisfaction in being the team to score first and last in this game. Connor Nichols scampered 10 yards for CVU's lone, late touchdown with just over two minutes left in the game to make the final score a little bit more respectable 35-10.

Early in the game, it looked like CVU might make this a game with its running, but as Rutland's lead grew, the names of its running backs were called less and less, and the Redhawks were forced to rely on passing to have any chance of catching up in scoring.

Despite his disappointment at the opening loss, new head coach Frank Parisi took some pleasure in how so many of his younger players were stepping up. Parisi and his coaching staff face a daunting task with almost half of their players sophomores and freshman, many of whom had never been on the sideline of a varsity game before.

"They're just making some mistakes," new coach Frank Parisi said. "We've got to get back to fundamentals."

Parisi was pleased with the play of his senior quarterback Ian Kennelly. There were a couple of passes that went to empty areas, and the coach said that was a result of routes run incorrectly, not of inaccurate throws.

Kennelly's play to start the season should shore up Parisi's confidence in his quarterback since he only got to play under center in one game last year after he dislocated his shoulder. Coincidentally, that injury happened against BFA.

CVU 31, BFA-St. Albans 3

It didn't take Champlain Valley Union long to demonstrate that a week of practicing fundamentals had paid off. Early in the first quarter Blake Companion scored a rushing touchdown, and Jovell's foot was true as usual, kicking the extra point to make the early score 7-0 and surely putting many Redhawks fans' minds at ease.

Not long after, Saladino followed with a rushing TD of his own, and shortly after that D'Marcus Riggs grabbed a touchdown pass.

Just before the first half ended, the Bobwhites kicked a field goal for their only score of the game, and the teams went into intermission with the score 21-3.

In the second half, Nichols had a rushing touchdown and Jovell kicked a field goal with three and half minutes left in the third quarter for the final score of 31-3.

The game ended with Parisi getting an ice water dousing in honor of his first win as the Redhawk's head coach.

Kennelly said he wouldn't put the blame on his receivers for the previous week's missed passes. He put it on his own shoulders, including the one that was rehabilitated.

"I'll take responsibility for that, Kennelly said. "But we did great as a team today."

As a team, they had played sloppy the previous week against Rutland, and as a team, they had played crisper and more focused against BFA, he said.

The quarterback said the Rutland game was a wake-up call. Many of the players had never experienced a loss, and many didn't have any experience of what it's like to play at the varsity level. But they were much more focused for this game against BFA.

Saladino is another Redhawk who was sidelined last year by injury. He suffered a torn ACL and getting over that took a lot of hard work, "but you know, it's so worth it. I really love playing the sport."

Saladino and Nichols both had rushing TDs. These two are expected to carry the weight of the ball-carrying duties.

The cold water had not dampened Parisi's enthusiasm even after the fields and stands had emptied. He was pleased with his team's "crisper" play and less mental lapses.

If this game's trend continues, the coach is optimistic about what the rest of the season might hold for CVU.

"Physically, we can compete with any team. I have no doubts about that," Parisi said. "It's just the mistakes."

Next game

CVU will host Burlington-South Burlington Seawolves this Saturday, Sept. 20, 1 p.m.



Photos by Calvin Morse

No. 10 John Saladino battles through Bobwhite defenders in one of several punishing runs he had up the middle against BFA-St. Albans in a 31-3 win for Champlain Valley on Sept. 13.



Connor Nichols scored CVU's only touchdown at Rutland on Sept. 5.



Gardening

Removing stresses helps plants deal with lilac leaf blight

Ann Hazelrigg
University of Vermont Extension

Lilacs are currently losing their leaves due to a disease called lilac leaf blight, caused by the fungus *Pseudocercospora* spp. Common throughout Vermont and the Northeast region, this disease also occurred in 2024 because of the wet weather in the spring and early summer.

The fungus overwinters on the fallen leaves and infects the emerging leaves in the spring during wet weather. As wet weather continues, more leaves become infected. Lilac leaf blight symptoms start as brown spots on the foliage that begin at the leaf edges.

As the infection progresses, the spots grow together and cause leaves to curl and eventually drop. The fungus is favored by rainy or humid weather, and I suspect the recent hot dry weather is accelerating the defoliation.

Although it may look like your lilacs are dying, if you scratch just under the bark near the end of a twig and still see green, and if the terminal buds for next year are obvious, the plant will be fine in the spring. Over several years of defoliation, however, the plant may be

weakened.

Anything you can do to remove further stress in the bush this season will be helpful, such as watering at the base of the plant during hot dry weather and mulching plants to conserve water.

Rake and destroy the infected fallen leaves this autumn, and thin the plant during the winter to improve air circulation and light penetration. Be sure plants are not crowded.

Fertilizing lightly in early spring may help improve vigor, especially if the plant has been defoliated from the disease over the past two years. Fungicides can be used as the leaves are emerging and expanding in the spring and early summer but are not typically warranted or necessary. Fungicides at this point in the season would have no effect on the disease.

If questions about this or other disease and insect pest problems, you can contact me, Ann Hazelrigg, director of the University of Vermont Plant Diagnostic Clinic at ann.hazelrigg@uvm.edu.

(Ann Hazelrigg is the University of Vermont Extension plant pathologist and director of the UVM Plant Diagnostic Clinic.)



Photo by Ann Hazelrigg

Lilac leaf blight symptoms start as brown spots on the foliage that begin at the leaf edges with the spots growing together as the infection progresses, causing the leaves to curl and eventually drop off the plant.

Enthusiastic flowering



Photo by Scooter MacMillan

This sunflower surprised Mel Huff by growing higher than the roof of her garage in East Charlotte.

Gardening

What are the soil properties of a successful garden?

Benjamin Block
University of Vermont Extension

What makes good soil and what does “good” mean? Most of us would likely answer that good soil is full of readily available nutrients for our vegetables and flowers to uptake and robustly grow.

There is, of course, more to good soil than nutrients. Otherwise, why would we bother to grow plants in soil at all?

Soil, being an ecosystem, is teeming with life that supports plant growth, if conditions are right. The physical and chemical properties are what support soil biology, which in turn supports plant growth. Soil texture, structure, drainage, water and air are all important to consider whether you are growing vegetables or flowers.

Texture, which refers to the combination of different-sized soil mineral particles, mainly depends on the amounts of sand, silt and clay present in your soil. Loam is the ideal combination of these soil particles.

The combination of particles leads to various properties of the soil. For example, sandier soils tend to hold less water and so have better drainage than clay, while clay tends to hold moisture and is more susceptible to compaction but can be more nutrient-rich.

Structure refers to the arrangement or aggregation of soil particles. A good soil structure is one where the structure is loose and porous, similar to a sponge with its pores and channels. This allows for roots to spread and easy flow of air and water. A good structure also supports healthy biological communities that include microorganisms, such as fungi and bacteria, and macro-organisms, such as insects and spiders.



Photo by Rain Photography/Pexels

The best soil for plant growth contains about 50 percent solid material and 50 percent pore space.

Drainage is the rate that water moves through the soil. Too much or too little drainage is equally undesirable. Macro-pores promote good aeration and increase drainage, whereas micro-pores help retain water. Ideally, one-half of the soil’s pore space is occupied by water.

Lastly, air. It may come as a surprise that high-quality soil has a substantial amount of air between soil aggregates. The best soil for plant growth contains about 50 percent solid material and 50 percent pore space. Imagine your garden bed and think that ideally 50 percent of that volume are the pores surrounding the soil aggregates that allow for air flow to and from the roots.

In those cases, adding organic matter (through compost or shredded leaves) may help improve soil texture and structure. Take care to avoid the “too much of a good thing” approach.

Since clay soils hold on to nutrients, overapplying compost may lead to excessive nutrients. Avoid this by monitoring your soils through regular soil testing (<https://go.uvm.edu/soiltest>).

We can also learn to limit practices that negatively impact soil properties such as routine tilling and compaction through repeated walking or driving. Ultimately, the more we learn about soil properties, the more we understand that “good” soil extends beyond fertility.

(Benjamin Block is a University of Vermont Extension master gardener intern from Montpelier.)

In many parts of Vermont, gardeners are challenged with clay-dominated soils.

Aurora watch



Photo by Lee Krohn

On Sunday night the northern lights were putting on a show for those lucky enough to be outside at the right time in the right place.

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In the Outdoors

Savoring treasures close to home on the road not taken

Elizabeth Bassett
Contributor

Summer is for exploring. Recently, I traveled the road less taken on my way to Woodstock, meaning I did not take the interstate.

At a cost of 10 additional minutes, I had myself a mini-adventure. After navigating Middlebury traffic, I headed east on Route 125. Stopping by woods at the Robert Frost Interpretive Trail, I took a stroll. This Green Mountain National Forest landscape inspired Frost's poetry during his decades at Middlebury's Bread Loaf summer campus.

The world falls away as the trail meanders through an alder swamp beneath red maples. Benches urge one to sit a while and listen to birds, flowing water and silence.

Frost's poems punctuate the walk, many lines familiar from "The Road Not Taken," "Going For Water" and "Come In."

The boardwalk gives way to gravel but there is negligible elevation gain on the accessible figure-eight trail. The one-mile loop returns to the parking area but several trails rise into the woods and connect to other networks.

Farther along Route 125 is another favorite spot, Texas Falls Recreation Area, where cascades of the Hancock Branch tumble and whirl through aquamarine potholes. A mile-plus, forested-nature walk features high-elevation spring wildflowers, pink-and-white painted trillium, wintergreen and goldthread. On a hot day, shade and rushing water are cooling. Picnic tables entice you to linger. Alas, I had miles to go ... you know the poem.

Serendipity also took me across the lake for an overnight. The adventure starts on the ferry. In case we forget how special our region is, a crossing on a beautiful day will

cure that. My short journey unfolded near Saranac Lake.

The Hotel Saranac, an Historic Hotel of America, was built during the Roaring Twenties. Recently restored to its original grandeur, with benefits of modern plumbing and electricity, the hotel's lobby and lower level provide history lessons of the town and region. Photos and stories detail the eras of Prohibition, Great Camps, presidential visits, Winter Carnival, collaboration with Paul Smith's College and tuberculosis.

For centuries victims of the illness sought cold climates and fresh air as a cure. After he was diagnosed with the illness, Dr. Edward Livingston Trudeau moved to Saranac Lake where he spent every possible moment outdoors. Reading about such cures in Europe, Trudeau opened the first successful tuberculosis sanatorium in the United States in 1882. Trudeau's facility grew from a single cottage to a sprawling campus attracting a who's who of international patients.

Dating to 1897, the Saranac Lake Winter Carnival is one of the oldest in the nation. What began as a one-day celebration centered around an enormous Ice Palace cut from Lake Flower, it continues today as a 10-day celebration in February.

Fast forward to Prohibition and its local lore, at least seven illegal stills, jaunts to Canada and a speakeasy in the bar of the Hotel Saranac.

Because of the Great Camps of the Adirondacks, writers, philosophers, bankers and industrialists gravitated to Saranac Lake, and the town became a cultural and social hub for many decades. When part of the hotel's huge neon sign repeatedly burned out, HOT SARA became the beloved moniker of the local icon. Unaware of this, I was surprised when ChargePoint directed me to HOTSARA Charger Station to plug in my car. Now I get it.

A recent and ongoing development is the Adirondack Rail Trail. The Adirondack Railroad once connected Lake Placid to Utica. In its stead, the 34-mile, year-round, multi-use gravel path winds its way past lakes, through swamps, field, forest and several towns along its route.



Photo by Elizabeth Bassett

Near the new rail trail is John Brown's home, which is rich with history, art and examples of 19th century farm life.

Not far from the rail trail in Lake Placid lies John Brown's body. After humming the tune for as long as I can remember, "John Brown's Body Lies A-Mouldering in the Grave," I finally visited the site this summer. Tucked a few miles off the main road, John Brown's home and farm are rich with history,

art and examples of 19th century farm life. One of America's great abolitionists, John Brown was buried here in December of 1859, six days after he was hanged for his raid on the U.S. Arsenal at Harper's Ferry, West Virginia.

Enjoy the fall and savor our local treasures.

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The Charlotte News

Sacred Hunter

Celebrate the Sun on Sun Day



Adobe Stock photo

Laurel Green
Contributor

On Sept. 20 and 21, Vermonters throughout the state will be joining in the first national Sun Day celebration. This fall equinox there will be a celebration of the power of the sun and wind to transform our society and provide a healthier and more sustainable future for all.

Sun Day is a day of action here in Vermont and nationally, and Third Act is a primary sponsor of this event. It's a day to celebrate the power of clean energy, according to spokesperson.

As part of the national days of action, people will be showcasing solar installations, electric homes and vehicles that run on clean power. By organizing thousands of events nationwide on the fall equinox, Sun Day will help accelerate the ongoing clean energy revolution. The technology and the solutions to address climate change exist. This is intended as a way to build the political will to scale up and accelerate the growth of clean energy and make it accessible to all.

Solar, wind and batteries are the cheapest form of power on the planet, lowering costs, creating new jobs and strengthening our communities. On these days the progress that's been made will be celebrated while pushing for more. Third Act will install new solar, host e-bike parades, give heat pump tours and rally for change.

Vermonters are invited to join this kid-friendly day of live music, parades and other events in Windham and Windsor Counties, Norwich, Burlington and Middlebury:

Saturday, Sept. 20, 1-4 p.m. —

Solar system tour in Windham and Windsor Counties. The Windham-Windsor (Win-Win) Third Act Vermont regional group is hosting a tour of local solar installations in these two counties to celebrate Sun Day. A self-guided tour that includes several homes that have gone solar, an elementary school with solar panels on the roof and playing field, a historic stone church powered by the sun and more. Sign up at <https://tinyurl.com/28djfv2r>.

Sunday Sept. 21, 10:30 a.m.-1 p.m. —

Join the Upper Valley Sun Day celebration of solar and wind power in a parade on the Ledyard Bridge and festival on the Norwich Green. The parade starts at the Hanover end of the Ledyard Bridge, right near the Earth globe (look for it and a big Sun that morning), crosses the Ledyard Bridge, then goes up the hill to the Norwich Green and a range of energy activities and demos of solar and electric technologies with many local partners. For more info go to actionnetwork.org/events/upper-valley-sun-day.

Sunday, Sept. 21, 10 a.m.-2 p.m. —

Renewable Energy Vermont presents Sun Day at ECHO's Hoehl Park (next to the solar car park) in Burlington for face painting, live music by Frosty Frog, a visit from an electric bucket truck, fun demos from Vermont Energy Education Program and other hands-on activities designed to explore renewable energy. This is a free event. For more info go to <https://tinyurl.com/3dk2pa4y>.

Sunday, Sept. 21, 10 a.m.-noon —

On the Kidical Mass Bike Ride join Local Motion and Dad Guild for a group bike ride, walk, roll or stroll. All ages and abilities are welcome. Route heads south to Oakledge Park, for a stop for fun in the sun. BYO snack for a picnic. Want a little more activity? Head over to Petra Cliffs where Kidical Mass participants will receive 20 percent off day passes. Learn more and RSVP at localmotion.org/kidical_mass.

Sunday Sept. 21, noon-3 p.m. —

Addison County Sun Day takes place in Triangle Park in Middlebury. The Addison County Clean Energy Community is hosting Sun Day to celebrate the power of clean energy to save money, live healthier lives and to confront the climate crisis by eliminating fossil fuels. Join a kid-friendly afternoon of live music, an electric vehicle parade, art projects, face painting, an opportunity to learn how to get involved in local efforts, and more. For more info go to <https://tinyurl.com/yhz7hw5h>.

For a list of Sun Day events nationwide go to sunday.earth/events.

Our Local Feast

September means there's an abundance of tomatoes

Dorothy Grover-Read
Contributor

We wait all year for that blush of red in the garden, and the first few tomatoes are precious. Nothing beats the flavor of fresh tomato, unadorned except for a sprinkle of salt, or the ritual of the first tomato sandwich – white bread, mayonnaise, thick slice of tomato, salt.

Then, we come to September, and all at once, we have tomatoes in abundance. If we grow them, it's hard to keep up. If we buy them at the farm stand, they are hard to resist.

"What's for lunch?"

"Tomatoes."

"Didn't we have tomatoes for breakfast?"

"Yep. Guess what we're having for dinner?"

We make bruschetta, fresh salsa, tomato sauce to enjoy now or freeze, tomato soup, tomato water and, of course, salad Caprese and other tomato salads of all kinds and colors. So many choices.

I have two cherry tomato plants in my yard, and one morning picked over 100 tomatoes. Then, a friend dropped off another pint when I wasn't home. An embarrassment of riches of the best kind.

If you don't have a garden, this is the time of year to scout the farm stands and farmers markets for bulk baskets of "canning tomatoes" or those which might be blemished or contorted shapes, but still packed with intense flavor.

My mother used to can tomatoes every year, usually on the hottest day of the year. If you have never canned before, this high-acid fruit is a good place to start. There are many good online sources of information, or you can follow the canning jar manufacturer's step-by-step instructions for safe handling.

You can also tuck tomatoes in the freezer with little prep for use all winter in soups, stews and sauces, my preferred method. Skin them first if you like, but if the skin is thin, this is really not necessary. This is so easy with cherry tomatoes, just pack in a container and freeze.

For a different taste and texture, dehydrating is a great way to preserve the sun of the summer. But you don't have to actually "sun dry" them. Your oven can do the work and does not rely on the weather since our New England summers can be quite humid, not ideal drying conditions.

This is also the time of year to experiment with different tomato recipes. Since there is also an abundance of zucchinis around, slice up a few and layer in a casserole with sliced tomatoes, some garlic and herbs and a minced shallot. Really mound it up, the tomatoes will shrink down as they bake.

Top with fresh breadcrumbs and cheese and bake until brown and aromatic. This is



Photos by Dorothy Grover-Read

With hundreds of cherry tomatoes, this is the time to toss these sweet dwarfs in the freezer to use in soups, stews and sauces all winter. No need to prep, just place in a container and freeze.



A tomato salad can be anything you want it to be this time of year, but simple is always best.

good hot or cold.

And let's not forget our salads. So simple and so delicious, a little vinaigrette and a few torn herbs and you need nothing else. Well, maybe some fresh, local mozzarella.

Oven-dried tomatoes

Those 100 cherry tomatoes? They ended up sliced in half and placed cut-side up on parchment lined baking sheets, drizzled with a bit of olive oil, to rest in my convection oven for four hours at 175 degrees. If your stove does not go that low, put it on the lowest setting and prop open the door. The time will vary greatly, so check at two hours. It may need more than four hours; it all



Roasted tomato sauce is packed with flavor and can be used for everything from spaghetti sauce to a base for tomato soup. Freezing actually makes it taste even better.

depends on the size.

The texture will feel dry, but still rubbery, and they will have an intense sweetness. Once dried, place them in olive oil and store in the refrigerator with some herbs to impart more flavor or just store as is in a jar in a cool dry area.

Roasted tomato sauce

This tomato sauce has an intensity that is hard to achieve if you cook your tomatoes in a pot, and it also needs less babysitting. If you have a lot of tomatoes to process, this is the quickest and easiest way. Look for bargains at the farm stands right about now.

Everything in this recipe can be sourced locally and organically, so it's a good store to have for keeping.

Use the sauce as you would any basic tomato sauce: to create a pasta sauce, top meat or fish, or as a base for tomato soup using stock to get the consistency you want. You can also add different herbs, or store it as is without the addition of the basil and thyme.

This makes a small batch, just two quarts, so hands-on time is just a few minutes at the

beginning and end.

Because it is a small batch, it is easiest just to freeze to store rather than go through all the effort of canning. It freezes beautifully; in fact, it tastes even better after it has had a little rest in the freezer. Something to look forward to in February.

But this cans well too if you make a larger batch, following standard canning guidelines from either the USDA or the Ball canning jar company. Basic instructions on canning in general are widely available.

You will need five pounds of fresh canning tomatoes for this recipe.

Preheat your oven to 450 degrees. Choose canning or Roma tomatoes, at the peak of ripeness, and wash them. Remove any blemishes. Cut out the little core at the stem end, then slice in half vertically.

Place the tomatoes cut-side down on two generously oiled rimmed baking sheets. Drizzle with a little more oil and season with salt and pepper.

Peel:

- Two large, sweet onions
- One large head of garlic.

Cut the onions into quarters across the diameter. Cut the garlic head in half, and, nestle everything in with the tomatoes; there should be room. Season all with salt and pepper.

Place both pans in the oven close to the center and set your timer for 30 minutes. Rotate the sheets and roast for another 30 minutes, or until the tomatoes have started to shrivel and take on some color. If your tomatoes are large, you will definitely need another 10 minutes, and you may have to take the garlic out first so it does not burn.

When done, remove from oven and let cool a few minutes. Pop the garlic cloves out of their skins and add everything to a large bowl. Puree until smooth and use every drop of the juice that is collected in the oven pans.

If there is a lot of sticking and glazing from the vegetables on the pans, add a couple of tablespoons of water and place on a burner to release for just a minute or so. This is flavor, flavor, flavor. Add it to the mix, along with:

- A few leaves of basil, finely minced
- A few sprigs of thyme, stripped from the stem

Taste and add more seasoning to your own preference.

Pasta sauce

Use the roasted sauce in a very flavorful pasta sauce that you can throw together in the time it takes to cook the pasta. Perfect for a weeknight.

Put pasta water on to boil, and in a large, pot sauté a diced onion in a bit of olive oil. Once the onion is translucent, add a few cloves of minced garlic and four anchovy filets, minced, and stir every well. Don't leave these out.

Once the garlic is fragrant and anchovies disappearing, less than a couple of minutes, add a quart of the roasted tomato sauce and let everything simmer together for about 20 minutes, or until your pasta is ready. Then toss in five or six torn fresh basil leaves, a quarter cup of minced parsley and a tablespoon of lemon juice.

Dinner's ready!

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On Books

American Civil War: ‘Is any thing worth it? This fearful sacrifice ...’

Katherine Arthaud
Contributor

Have you ever read Erik Larson? I’m a fan and have read, over the years, most of his books.

“Devil in the White City” is about the 1893 World’s Fair in Chicago, and contrasts two historical figures — one, architect Daniels Burnham who brings the fair to fruition (a fair which included a 264-foot-tall Ferris Wheel by inventor George Washington Gale Ferris Jr.); and two, conman/sociopath H.H. Holmes, who lured victims to their untimely demise in his creepy “Murder Castle” on 63rd Street, Chicago.

Published in 2011, “In the Garden of Beasts” takes place in 1930s Berlin during Hitler’s rise to power, focusing on America’s first ambassador to Nazi Germany, William E. Dodd, an unassuming, mild-mannered history professor, and the family who accompanied him.

“Dead Wake” (perhaps my favorite of them all) tells the story of the last crossing of the British ocean liner Lusitania, “a floating village in steel,” sunk by a German U-boat in 1915, resulting in the deaths of over 1,000 passengers and crew, including many Americans, which contributed to the turning of public opinion against Germany, influencing the eventual U.S. entry into World War I.

Not to be confused with the comic book creator Erik Larson or the Disney animator Eric Larson, this Erik Larson was born in 1954 in Brooklyn. He grew up in Long Island and went on to study Russian at the University of Pennsylvania, then the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism. Seeing the movie “All the President’s Men” is what he says inspired him to pursue a career in journalism.

Larson’s first newspaper job was at the Bucks County Courier Times in Levittown, Pa., where he covered such topics as environmental poisons, murder, witches “and other unpleasant things.” He later became a features writer for Time and The Wall Street Journal and has published stories in The New Yorker, Harper’s and The Atlantic Monthly.

Larson has covered numerous historical times and events in his work. In a 2016 interview with the Knoxville Mercury, he said that he does all his own research — “Why should I let anybody else have that fun?” he said.

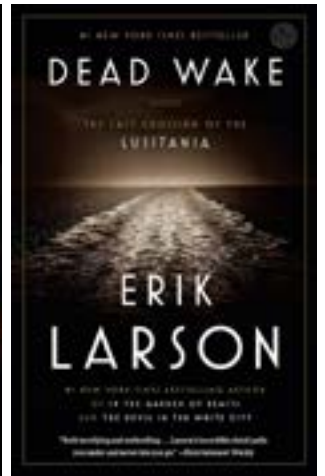
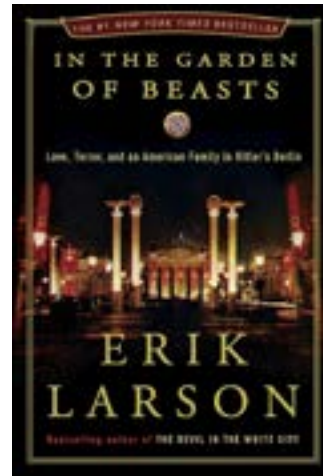
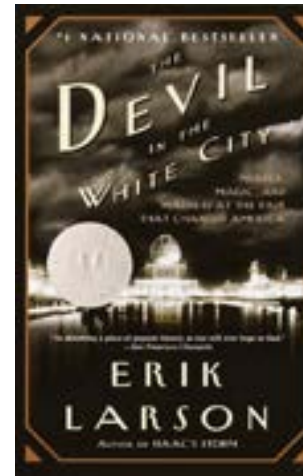


Erik Larson

In August, I stumbled upon his most recent book, “Demon of Unrest,” and found myself once again amazed that reading history (which I found exceedingly dry and distinctly uncolorful in school) can be so gripping, vivid and interesting.

“Demon of Unrest: A Saga of Hubris, Heartbreak, and Heroism at the Dawn of the Civil War” covers the dramatic and tumultuous months between Abraham Lincoln’s election in November 1860 and the Confederacy’s attack on Fort Sumter, where the first shots of the war were fired on April 12, 1861. The fort, located on a human-made island at the entrance to Charleston Harbor, was still under construction when the attack occurred. The Union forces holding the fort eventually surrendered, and what was left of the fort was taken over by the then-fledgling Confederacy.

But there is much, much more to the story which, drawing on slave ledgers, diaries and secret communications, Larson recounts in such a way that it reads like good fiction. One of the main characters in the drama is Sumter’s commander, Major Robert Anderson, a former slave owner sympathetic to the South yet loyal to the Union, a consummate good sport caught between a rock and a hard place, exhausted by mixed messages, unkept promises and dwindling supplies. Another main character is Abraham Lincoln himself, who opposed slavery’s expansion. Freshly elected and a bit overwhelmed, we find him dealing with, among other difficult



things, a not-completely-aboveboard and fiercely ambitious secretary of state, William Seward, along with death threats and a deeply and tragically divided union.

Another interesting character, and one of the few females in the book, is Mary Boykin Chesnut — wife of plantation owner, lawyer, senator and officer in the Confederate States army, James Chesnut Jr. Mary Boykin Chesnut kept a detailed diary which was later published, 19 years after her death, and hailed as “a vivid picture of a society in the throes of its life-and-death struggle.” Writer Edmund Wilson testified the book was “a work of art,” a “masterpiece.” It is considered by many to be the most important work by a Confederate author.

“Is any thing worth it? This fearful sacrifice — this awful penalty we pay for war?” Chesnut wrote in her journal, July 26, 1864.

As the book jacket blurb says, “Demon of Unrest” is a “gripping account,” a “political horror story,” of “a period marked by tragic errors and miscommunications, enflamed egos and craven ambitions, personal tragedies and betrayals. Lincoln himself wrote that the trials of these five months were ‘so great that, could I have anticipated them, I would not have believed it possible to survive them.’”

In a note to readers, Larson writes that he was well into his research for “Demon of Unrest” when the events of Jan. 6, 2021, took place:

“As I watched the Capitol assault unfold

on camera, I had the eerie feeling that present and past had merged. It is unsettling that in 1861 two of the greatest moments of national dread centered on the certification of the Electoral College vote and the presidential inauguration.”

Larson was appalled by the Jan. 6 attack but also riveted. “I realized,” he writes, “that the anxiety, anger, and astonishment that I felt would certainly have been experienced in 1860-1861 by vast numbers of Americans. With this in mind, I set out to try to capture the real suspense of those long-ago months when the country lurched toward catastrophe, propelled by hubris, duplicity, false honor, and an unsatisfiable craving on the part of certain key actors for personal attention and affirmation. Many voices at the time of Sumter warned of civil war, but few had an inkling of what that might truly mean, and certainly none would have believed that any such war could take the lives of 750,000 Americans.

“At the heart of the story is a mystery that still confounds: How on earth did South Carolina, a primitive, scantily populated state in economic decline, become the fulcrum for America’s greatest tragedy? And even more bewildering, what malignant magic brought Americans on both sides of the Mason-Dixon Line to the point where they could actually imagine the wholesale killing of one another?”

This is an important and riveting book. Excellent. Highly recommend.

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Community Roundup

Junapr extends streak of annual wins for communications work

Junapr, a Charlotte-based strategic communications, digital-affiliate marketing and events agency, has been named to the 2026 PRNEWS Agency Elite Top 120 list. This marks the fifth consecutive year that Junapr has earned a place among the industry’s most innovative and impactful agencies in the United States.

Each year, PRNEWS recognizes 120 agencies nationwide that set the standard for creativity, innovation and measurable results in communications. Junapr was selected for its expertise in public relations, affiliate marketing, events and crisis communications, as well as its adaptive team framework, which ensures every client account is staffed with the right mix of expertise and capacity for both strategy and execution.

“Being recognized five years in a row is a milestone that reflects both the strength of our team and the trust our clients place in us,” said Nicole Junas Ravlin, founder & CEO of Junapr. “It’s proof that an agency based in Vermont can make an outsized impact on the national stage, helping brands not only navigate today’s communications challenges, but also build strategies that fuel growth and resilience.”

United Way offers links to organizations seeking volunteers

United Way’s Volunteer Connection site (unitedwaynwvt.galaxydigital.com) is set up to help connect agencies and volunteers including these:

- Cathedral Square is seeking volunteers to help provide essential relief to family caregivers while giving compassionate support to individuals living with dementia. Their new daytime respite pilot at Memory Care at Allen Brook creates meaningful breaks for caregivers who often provide around-the-clock care with little relief. Volunteers can engage with participants through activities, providing companionship or serving a meal. Contact Cathie Cassano at 802-777-4543 or email cassano@cathedralsquare.org.
- The Trinity Educational Center in South Burlington’s University Mall needs a grant writer. The organization provides youth and young adults with a safe, inclusive, educational and empowering environment with encouragement to develop their strengths and talents and contribute to the community. They are looking for a volunteer to research grant opportunities from government and non-government agencies, draft grant proposals and maintain records. Contact Travia Childs at 802-777-8080 or email tec@trinityedcenter.org.
- Cathedral Square is seeking volunteers to help residents mend clothing and repair household textiles. Use your sewing talents to help extend the life of residents’ cherished garments and linens while engaging in meaningful conversation and skill-sharing. Contact Cathy Cassano at cassano@cathedralsquare.org.

- HomeShare Vermont has a need for volunteers to make phone calls from their office to take personal information for applicants. This is an integral part of HomeShare Vermont’s screening process, learning more about applicants to ensure safety, security and compatibility in

home-share matches. About two hours a week with flexible scheduling between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. on weekdays. Basic computer skills needed, and background check required. Call Amy Jelen at 802-863-5625 or email amy@homesharevermont.org.

Three candidate-training sessions announced

Three training sessions for future candidates will be held in three Vermont communities this fall and are open to Vermonters who have not yet declared their candidacy for office.

Participants will discuss several aspects of campaigning including: building a campaign team, framework and messaging; how to find and engage with voters; the role of media, marketing, and publicity; fundraising goal-setting and tactics; and seeking and receiving endorsements.

The trainings, which occur biennially, are created by a coalition of organizations collectively called Leadership Education and Development Vermont and include the Vermont Conservation Voters, the Rights & Democracy, Vermont Public Research Group, Vermont-NEA, ACLU of Vermont, Let’s Grow Kids Action Network, Vermont Interfaith Action and Planned Parenthood Vermont Action Fund.

“The consideration of running for office is a big decision and what our coalition wants is to provide a roadmap and tools for future candidates to be the most effective and successful,” said Justin Marsh, political director, Vermont Conservation Voters.

The trainings occur on Saturdays from 10 a.m.-4 p.m., are free and include lunch, on Oct. 18 in Rutland, on October 25 in Fairlee and on Nov. 8 in Middlebury. Space is limited and registration is required.

To register and for more information, visit vermontconservationvoters.org/lead25.

Applications open for climate catalysts innovation fund

The Vermont Council on Rural Development is taking applications for the fifth round of the Climate Catalysts Innovation Fund, a small grant program for local climate projects.

The Vermont Council on Rural Development launched the fund in 2021 to support local innovators in developing climate and energy solutions for which a small grant could have a meaningful impact. To date, this fund has awarded 92 local innovators with over \$285,000 for community-led climate and energy projects. In 2024, the fund supported a three-week workshop to help Vermonters with disaster preparedness.

“Traditional disaster-preparedness training isn’t designed to meet the needs of disabled Vermonters during times of emergency,” said Kate Larose, of the VT Center for Independent Living.

Grants are awarded based on criteria that combine innovation, resilience, collaboration, replicability as well as serving marginalized communities and those most affected by natural disasters. Eligible applicants include municipalities, town committees, schools, businesses,

volunteer groups and non-profit organizations.

Applications will close 5 p.m., Monday, Oct. 20. To apply visit <https://tinyurl.com/mwenn3m9>. For more information, contact Laura Cavin Bailey at laura@vtrural.org or 802-234-1646.

West-central Vermonters advised to consider testing water for PFAS

The Vermont Pesticide and Poison Action Network advises Vermonters in west-central regions of the state to consider testing their water for PFAS compounds (forever chemicals).

These toxins are known to be in pesticide formulations and are very slow to break down. They contaminate water and impact human health in subtle, difficult-to-detect ways.

Testing is recommended, particularly for private wells, because the U.S. Forest Service intends to use herbicides over large acreages in coming years. The products are intended to control invasive species as well as undesired native species like beech trees.

If these herbicide products impact your drinking supply, you will need before and after data to validate your contention that you have been harmed. Even though PFAS compounds are already present in many wells and water supplies, additional application of more PFAS-loaded products will simply add to existing levels over time.

The Forest Service denies that PFAS compounds are a concern at all with pesticides, per its response to detailed public concerns in recent project proposals, so landowners should expect no assistance from federal or state authorities.

The Vermont PAPAN can link consumers to testing services if requested; email us at vt.papan@gmail.com.

AARP Vermont accepting Winter Placemaking Grant applications

AARP Vermont invites eligible organizations and communities across the state to apply for the 2025 AARP Vermont Winter Placemaking Grant Program, now through Oct. 3 at 5 p.m.

The grants will support quick-action projects that launch winter placemaking

demonstrations aimed at creating or reinventing public spaces to enhance safety, accessibility and overall attractiveness. AARP will award up to six communities or organizations funding of up to \$4,000 each.

Now in its sixth year, the program is part of AARP’s nationwide Livable Communities initiative, which promotes efforts by cities, towns, neighborhoods and rural areas to become excellent places to live for all residents, especially those aged 50 and older.

Vermont’s cold winter months present several challenges for residents statewide, including social isolation. The Winter Placemaking grant program aims to help communities embrace winter by transforming public spaces to promote outdoor activities and social interaction.

“Our winter Placemaking Grants empower local organizations to transform underutilized spaces into safe, accessible and engaging environments for older adults,” said Kelly Stoddard Poor of AARP Vermont. “These demonstrations not only help combat seasonal isolation but also elevate livability across Vermont through creative, intergenerational and inclusive winter activations.”

Previous Winter Placemaking grants have achieved impressive results, with nearly half of grantees expanding their projects to secure additional funding from private and public sector partners.

Grant-writing assistance is available from experienced AARP volunteers who will support interested applicants. To receive grant writing assistance, the applicant must not have previously received grant funds from AARP. To submit a request, email kstoddardpoor@aarp.org.

Since 2020, AARP Vermont has awarded over \$104,000 to 24 projects through the Winter Placemaking grant program for communities across the state.

To submit an application, visit aarp.org/vt and click on the 2025 Winter Placemaking Grant announcement post.

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Calendar

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

Forest sit

Thursday, Sept. 18, 10-11 a.m.

Rest, restore your spirits, watch birds or butterflies, do a little nature journaling or whatever is comfortable and quiet for each at Birds of Vermont. Many of us need some respite, solace and recuperation. Please bring any of these you wish: water, tick repellent, journaling materials, binoculars, camp stool, pillow, a sitting mat. Hats recommended. Register at <https://tinyurl.com/ykvr5k6c>.

CHARLOTTE

Charlotte Walks

Friday, Sept. 19, 8:30-9:30 a.m.

Every third Friday of the month members of the Grange and others meet at a different trailhead at 8:30 a.m. The September walk is at the end of Plouffe Lane, a 1.4-mile network of trails, featuring a meadow, river and woods. It can be found by taking Carpenter Road to Plouffe Lane. Follow the lane to the end, take a right at the fork and park your car in the designated parking area. Please drive slowly down Plouffe Lane. These walks generally last about an hour and are led at an adult walking pace.

Sensory Friendly Mornings

Saturday, Sept. 20, 8:30-10 a.m.

Experience the exhibition Making A Noise: Indigenous Sound Art and the Shelburne Museum grounds in a calm, gentle environment designed for visitors of all ages with varying social and sensory-processing needs. Registration required at <https://tinyurl.com/2v4pd29n>.

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.

Capital City Concerts season

Saturday, Sept. 20, 11 a.m. & 7:30 p.m.

The Capital City Concerts season opens at the Vermont Statehouse on Saturday, Sept. 20, with Robert McDonald, one of the great American pianists and a faculty member at both the Juilliard School and the Curtis Institute. His free 11 a.m. master class will be followed by a 7:30 p.m. recital which will include music of Beethoven, Brahms, Copland, Grieg and Fauré.

VegFest

Saturday, Sept. 20, noon-5 p.m.

The first large-scale vegan food, beverage and business festival, VegFest, in Vermont will be held at Hula in Burlington on Sept. 20. The Vermont VegFest will showcase plant-based food, beverages, artists, makers, businesses and non-profits from across Vermont, New England and New York. Attendees will have the chance to shop vegan products, enjoy

local and regional cuisine and connect with nonprofits focused on sustainability, wellness and animal advocacy. For info and tickets availability, visit vermontvegfest.com. Tickets start at \$8 and are on sale now.

Vermont Coverts anniversary

Sunday, Sept. 21

Vermont Coverts: Woodlands for Wildlife invites landowners, conservation professionals and forest enthusiasts to join in celebrating its 40th anniversary on Saturday, Sept. 21, at Lareau Farm and Forest in Waitsfield. The event will be a full day of learning, connecting and honoring decades of work supporting wildlife habitat across Vermont. Vermont Coverts has trained over 900 cooperators, dedicated landowners who share information and inspiration in their communities to encourage sound forest and wildlife stewardship. The day will include walks, talks and panel discussions. Panelists will explore themes of biodiversity, connectivity and the future of land stewardship in Vermont. Register at vtcoverts.org. For more info, email lisa@vtcoverts.org or call 802-877-2777.

CHARLOTTE

Fall children's clothing drive

Sept. 22-Oct. 4

Please consider donating your child's used clothing, footwear and outerwear to the Grange's fall children's clothing drive and outerwear drive. A weather-proof bin will be located by the front door of the Grange Hall for drop-off Sept. 22-Oct. 4. The fall drive also strives to provide all children served by the Charlotte Food Shelf with a full winter gear set-up. Donations of children's winter jackets, mittens, hats, snow pants and snow boots are welcomed. Volunteers are needed. Email alcoop.vt@gmail.com to sign up or learn more.

CHARLOTTE

Storytelling at the Grange

Thursday, Sept. 25, 6-8 p.m.

Samara Anderson is hosting a storytelling event at every public library in Vermont. This will continue until as many of the 185 Vermont public libraries as possible have hosted one of her storytelling events. In Charlotte, the storytelling event will take place at the Grange. Come as an audience member or as a storyteller. Email Anderson at anderson_samara@yahoo.com to sign up as a storyteller or get more info.

Ski areas of Underhill talk

Thursday, Sept. 25, 6 p.m.

The Vermont Ski and Snowboard Museum in Stowe will kick off the season with a discussion about "Underhill's Lost-But-Not-Forgotten Ski Slopes." Doors to the museum at 1 South Main Street in Stowe open at 6 p.m., and guests are invited to explore the exhibits and socialize. The discussion begins at 6:30 p.m. Admission is \$10 at the door or in advance at vtssm.org/red-bench-donation.

Exploring abandoned vessels

Thursday, Sept. 25, 7-8 p.m.

History, artifacts and shipwrecks lie in the depths of Lake Champlain, waiting to share their secrets and stories with the underwater archaeologists who dive down to explore. Learn about local



Photo by Scooter MacMillan

There will be an open house with an exhibition of Peter Joslin's recent work at his studio on Saturday, Sept. 27, 3-6 p.m.

history, archaeological discoveries, artifacts and unique stories uncovered over four decades of nautical archaeology and research. Exploring the Abandoned Vessels of Burlington's Ship Graveyard will be presented by Paul Gates, co-director of archaeology and research, in the auditorium of the Hoehl Family Education and Visitor Center at the Lake Champlain Maritime Museum. It will last approximately 30-45 minutes with time for Q&A afterwards. The talk is free with registration at <https://tinyurl.com/4z7nvx8r>.

September bird monitoring walk

Saturday, Sept. 27, 7:30-9 a.m.

Birders, current, experienced, newbie and would-be are welcome. Join the monthly monitoring walk at Birds of Vermont to record birds at the museum's trails, forest and meadow. Please bring your own binoculars, dress for weather. We recommend bringing tick repellent and a water bottle. Free, but suggested \$10 donation. Register at <https://birdsofvermont.org/event/sept-bird-monitoring-2025>.

CHARLOTTE

Peter Joslin — recent paintings

Saturday, Sept. 27, 3-6 p.m.

There will be an open house with an exhibition of Peter Joslin's recent work at his studio at 816 One Mile Road. Examples of his art are at peterjoslin.com and on Instagram at [@pfjvt](https://www.instagram.com/pfjvt). Stop by if you're in the neighborhood.

Vermont natural resources celebration

Tuesday, Sept. 30, 5:30-7:30 p.m.

The Vermont Natural Resources Council will be hosting its annual celebration at the Coach Barn at Shelburne Farms on Tuesday, Sept. 30, 5:30-7:30 p.m. This is a party, not a meeting, and will be marked by friends, food, music and drinks. All are welcome. The Arthur Gibb Award for Sustainable Community Leadership will be presented to Charlotte resident Beth Humstone, who has dedicated her career, volunteer time and financial support to enhance Vermont's communities through smart growth planning and protecting natural resources. RSVP at vnrc.org/2025-annual-celebration.

Vermont Female Farmers

Wednesday, Oct. 1

The Henry Sheldon Museum a photography exhibition by Vermont-based artist JuanCarlos González on view from Oct. 1-Jan. 3, 2026. This striking portrait series offers a look into the lives of farmers shaping the landscape and future of Vermont agriculture. Complementing the photography are select objects in the Museum's collection of farming tools and artifacts that have rarely been on view.

Reading and music performance

Saturday, Oct. 4, 11 a.m.

Author and teaching cellist Melissa Perley will read from "The Violin Family Plays New Music" at Bear Pond Books in Montpelier and play the cello, accompanied by Tom Frink on the clarinet, to celebrate the release of her second children's book.

CHARLOTTE

Congregational Church concert

Sunday, Oct. 5, 4 p.m.

Annemieke McLane, an award-winning pianist, will present a concert entitled: A time travel through piano music history from Handel, Bach, Chopin, Grieg to Gjeilo. The concert will include works like the Italian Concerto, the 4th Ballade by Chopin and Peer Gynt Suite movements. The concert is free, although donations to Malayaka House in Uganda are encouraged. The concert is on Sunday, Oct. 5 at 4 p.m. at the Charlotte Congregational Church.

Revolutionary War Gunboats

Thursday, Oct. 9, 7-8 p.m.

Chris Sabick, executive director of the Lake Champlain Maritime Museum, will give a talk on Revolutionary War gunboats in the auditorium of the Hoehl Family Education and Visitor Center. It will last approximately 30-45 minutes with time for Q&A afterwards. The talk is free with registration at <https://tinyurl.com/4z7nvx8r>.



**CHARLOTTE
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Planning Commission meeting

Thursday, Sept. 18, 7 p.m.

Regular Selectboard meeting

Monday, Sept. 22, 7 p.m.

Development Review Board meeting

Wednesday, Sept. 24, 7 p.m.

Conservation Commission meeting

Tuesday, Sept. 30, 7 p.m.

Trails Committee Monthly meeting

Tuesday, Oct. 7, 6:30 p.m.

Library News

Get a copy of ‘The Light Pirate’ as part of Vermont Reads

Margaret Woodruff
Director

The Vermont Reads series begins with a kickoff on Thursday, Oct. 2. Stop by the Charlotte Library to get your copy of “The Light Pirate.” Enjoy some local refreshments, take a tour of the library’s climate-friendly gardens and make a weathervane to take home. Check the library website for additional programs.

Other events in the Vermont Reads series include:

- Wednesday, Oct. 8, 2 p.m. — “The Light Pirate” book discussion at Charlotte Senior Center.
- Thursday, Oct. 16, 7:30 p.m. on Zoom — Thursday book group discussion of “The Light Pirate.”
- Thursday, Oct. 30, 7 p.m. — “Hidden Systems” with graphic novelist Dan Nott.

There’s still time to win a golden library card. This September when you sign up for a library card, you’ll be entered to win a Golden Library Card from libro.fm. If you have questions feel free to ask a librarian or visit libro.fm to learn more. You must be 18 or over to win.

Celebrate your dog. The library’s photo gallery project continues. Send us a photo of your favorite pooch (or pooches) to display at the library. Your pups will be in good company as we have had to expand our display area.

Programs for kids

Baby time

Saturday, Oct. 3, 10-11 a.m.

On the first Monday of the month, join other families in an unstructured hour of play and exploration in the young children’s area. Ages birth to 12 months.

Toddler time

Saturday, Oct. 3, 10-11 a.m.

On the first Monday of the month, join other young families with toddlers for an unstructured hour of play and exploration in the program room. Ages 12 months to 24 months.

‘Fresh-Picked Poetry’ StoryWalk

A new StoryWalk, with the support of the Vermont Department of Libraries, has been installed on the Charlotte Library Green. Just in time for fall’s abundance of vegetables at local farmer’s markets, Michelle Schaub takes readers to the market. What to see, what to eat and how produce is grown.

“Fresh-Picked Poetry” is illustrated by Amy Huntington.

Weekly programs for kids

Preschool story time

Tuesdays, 10 a.m.

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

Preschool free play

Wednesdays, 10 a.m.

Play in the preschool years enables children to explore and make sense of the world around them, as well as to use and develop their imagination. Explore the sensory table, sorting, playing with blocks, playdoh — these are a few of the open-ended projects planned for Wednesday morning play-based learning at the Charlotte Library.

Baby time

Thursdays, 9:30 a.m.

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

Let’s Lego

Saturdays, 10 a.m.-1:30 p.m.

Drop in for Lego free play. 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 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



Photo by Margaret Woodruff

A goldfinch visits the library bird feeder.

beings and faiths is a foundational quality of our time together. Beginning and experienced meditators are welcome.

Short story selections (rescheduled)

Wednesday, Sept. 24, 1 p.m.

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

Thursday book group

Thursday, Sept. 18, 7:30 p.m.

“Hidden Valley Road” is the heartrending story of a midcentury American family with 12 children, six of them diagnosed with schizophrenia, that became science’s great hope. Join us on Zoom at <https://tinyurl.com/mr4ah6p6>. Copies available at the circulation desk.

Not just plain vanilla

Tuesday, Sept. 23, 7 p.m.

Join Hank Kaestner, former director of spice procurement at McCormick & Co., for a fascinating spice story. According to Kaestner, “Vanilla is one of the world’s most popular flavors, but is very much misunderstood. It’s the only orchid species of any commercial importance.” Learn why this flavoring has a special connection to Vermont and enjoy a treat that highlights this familiar yet enchanting flavor.

Restoring insects

Monday, Sept. 29, 7 p.m.

Learn why insects are essential to ecosystems and how we can help restore their populations. Following a short video featuring Doug Tallamy, Jacob Holzberg Pill from Branch Out Burlington and master gardener Lori Martin put this information into context for gardeners and naturalists here in Charlotte and the Champlain Valley.

‘On Books’

Tuesday, Oct. 7, 5:30 p.m.

If you look forward to Katherine Arthaud’s regular “On Books” column in The Charlotte News, join her at the library for a casual conversation about reading, reviews and books.

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 Opening Meeting Law. The next scheduled board meeting is 6 p.m., Thursday, Oct. 2. Contact the library or visit the library website (charlottepubliclibrary.org) for more information.



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Senior Center News

Celebrate September and National Senior Center Month

Lori York
Director

September is National Senior Center Month. Senior centers today have transformed into vibrant hubs of activity and connection, offering a wide range of programs and services — from fitness and nutrition to education and social engagement.

The Charlotte Senior Center's mission is to serve adults age 50 and older. As the image of senior centers continues to evolve, stop by the center and explore the wide range of program offerings offered here in Charlotte.

Designed for curious and active adults, the center provides a welcoming space to stay healthy, connected and engaged.

Presentations

Understanding Medicare open enrollment Tuesday, Sept. 23, 12:30-2 p.m.

Join representatives from Age Well's State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP) for an informative session on Medicare open enrollment. Learn how to navigate your Medicare options and make informed decisions about your coverage. Open enrollment occurs annually from Oct. 15-Dec. 7 and is the time to review your coverage for the new year. During this time, you can switch Advantage or Part D plans or join a plan if you missed your initial opportunity to sign up. To register, call 802-425-6345.

AARP Smart Driver

Saturday, Sept. 27, 10 a.m.-3 p.m.

The AARP Smart Driver course is designed especially for drivers 50 and older with information that will help you refresh your driving skills. The course aims to give you confidence on the road, and upon completion, you may be eligible to receive an auto insurance discount. (Consult your agent for details.) Please plan to bring lunch, your current AARP member card and your driver's license. Checks should be made out to AARP. For questions call Krista Willett at 802-238-9117. The cost is \$20 for AARP members and \$25 for non-members. Registration required by calling 802-425-6345.

Scams, fraud & identity theft

Tuesday, Sept. 30, 1-2 p.m.

Join Mary Kohn, community relations & event marketing specialist with the Better Business Bureau, for a presentation on scams, fraud and identity theft. Learn how to recognize common scams, protect yourself from becoming a victim and take proactive steps to stay safe. Kohn will also highlight free resources offered by the Better Business Bureau, including the Scam Tracker, an online tool that allows users to report scams, research suspicious activity and stay informed with the latest scam alerts and tips. This session will empower attendees with practical knowledge and tools to better safeguard themselves. To register, call 802-425-6345.

'From Earth to Earth' documentary

Wednesday, Oct. 1, 1-2 p.m.

Back by popular demand, join a repeat screening of the award-winning documentary "From Earth to Earth: The Lost Art of Dying in America," a 20-minute film exploring the growing movement of natural burial, an environmentally conscious alternative to conventional funerals and cremation. Through

personal stories of pioneers, advocates and families, the documentary traces the reemergence of this once-common practice and its environmental and personal benefits. It highlights the journey toward the (re)-legalization of natural burial in Vermont and the founding of the Vermont Forest Cemetery, Vermont's first entirely natural burial ground. The documentary will be followed by a Q&A session and time for personal discussions. To register, call 802-425-6345.

Programs

Spanish conversation

Tuesdays, Oct., 10-11 a.m.

¿Habras Español? We will meet weekly. At each session one member of the group will announce the topic of conversation for the following week. Come join our group for conversation in Spanish. Questions? Email Bernice Wesseling at Bernice.Wesseling@uvm.edu.

Memoir writing

Wednesdays, Oct. 15-Dec. 17, 1-2:30 p.m.

Storytelling connects us with our own life experiences while offering a legacy to future generations. Join Laurie Caswell-Burke as she guides you in documenting the stories that have shaped you. During this 10-week class you will write, read and exchange our work with the goal of moving your stories forward. Through storytelling techniques, explore personal memories and create a focused narrative that explores thoughts, personal narratives, recollections and emotions. Cost: \$80 plus \$20 materials fee paid directly to the instructor. Registration and payment due Oct. 8. To register, call 802-425-6345.

Arts group

Fridays, 10 a.m.-noon

This weekly group is designed for artists of all levels who are seeking inspiration and support in a welcoming and social environment. Whether you're just starting or have years of experience, you are invited to bring whatever project you're currently working on. Free. No registration required.

Watercolor

Tuesdays, Oct. 14-Nov. 4, 9 a.m.-noon

Join an inspiring watercolor class. Perfect for those with some watercolor experience, this class is designed to help you expand your skills while enjoying a creative outlet during the darker months. Each session offers a relaxed, supportive environment where you can grow artistically and have fun along the way. Cost: \$165. Registration and payment by Sept. 30. To register, call 802-425-6345. A supply list will be sent to you upon registration. Questions? Contact the instructor at lynn.cummings@uvm.edu.

Games

American mahjong

Tuesdays, 12:30-3:45 p.m. & Wednesdays, 6 p.m.

Enjoy American mahjong with opportunities to play twice each week. Beginners and experienced players are welcome to join. Tuesday afternoons is a drop-in class. Invite your friends and come play mahjong. If you are brand new to mahjong, experienced player Jane Krasnow will be on hand Wednesday evenings to teach newcomers and guide play throughout the



Photos by Lori York

Participants come together on Friday mornings at the center to enjoy coffee, homemade muffins and conversation.

evening. Krasnow starts a beginner-friendly class at the beginning of each month. Already know how to play? Come and enjoy a night of friendly competition. Please email Jane Krasnow at jane.krasnow@gmail.com to let her know you are coming.

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 jonathanhart1@gmail.com.

Exercise

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.

Yoga dance

Tuesdays, September, 11 a.m.-noon

Join Heather Preis for Let Your Yoga Dance, a class that blends dance-inspired movements with music, guided by the body's energy system (chakras). This safe and compassionate practice encourages individual



Janice Bauch of Hinesburg participates in the Friday Arts Group, where she connects with fellow artists while working in watercolor.

expression and nonjudgmental acceptance. Suitable for all fitness levels and abilities — everyone can "let their yoga dance." Cost: \$10/class. No registration required.

Gentle walking group

Thursday, Sept. 25, 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. Free. Registration required by calling Penny Burman at 916-753-7279.

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

Exploring sugar in cornbread debate in words and bites

Susan Ohanian
Contributor

The Monday Munch on Sept. 22 at the Charlotte Senior Center offers the perfect three C’s for a meal: cornbread, coleslaw and chili. In his great book “See You on Sunday: A Cookbook for Family and Friends,” The New York Times food editor Sam Sifton remembers first eating cornbread at the East Coast Grill in Cambridge, Mass., when he was in college.

Years later, Sifton learned to make cornbread at the elbow of that restaurant’s chef and owner, Christ Schlesinger, who advised that he add corn kernels to the batter for texture and sometimes diced jalapeno. He said other possibilities include stirring in shredded cheddar. Or for breakfast, “drizzled with hot honey.”

First domesticated in Mexico some 6,000 years ago, corn was a major food source for the Indigenous people of North America. Wikipedia has a detailed section on cornbread’s origin, with variations among the Hopi, the Hidatsa, the Choctaw, the Cherokee and the Seneca.

Later European settlers in the New World adopted this indigenous practice of making food based on corn, cooking cornbread, cracklin’ bread, corn pone, hushpuppies and Johnnycake. Johnnycake, also known as journey cake, johnny bread, hoe cake, shawnee cake or spider cornbread, is a cornmeal flatbread.

Longtime food journalist and author of 30 books, Mark Bittman encourages people not to be purists about cornbread. He notes that his basic recipe is so easy and forgiving that you may find yourself making cornbread as often as your mother made mashed potatoes. And he encourages people to experiment: add bits of cooked bacon, sautéed onions or shallots, chili powder or cumin, chopped chilies or herbs, grated cheese, mashed or puréed beans or fresh, canned, or frozen corn. And more.

Sam Sifton’s recipe includes 2 cups of all-



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purpose flour, 1 cup yellow cornmeal and 3/4 of a cup of sugar.

Robert Moss, a Charleston, South Carolina–based food and travel writer and contributing barbecue editor for “Southern Living,” strongly disagrees (<https://tinyurl.com/9n98r28c>), saying, “Sometimes a truth is so self-evident that you can’t present an impartial case for both sides. So, I’m just going to say it: Sugar has no business in cornbread.”

He also bans wheat flour, concluding, “One might make something quite tasty with well-sweetened wheat flour mixed with cornmeal, but be honest with yourself and call it a dessert. Cornbread is something else.”

Growing up, I figured that the world was pretty much divided, not by religion or politics but by the critical chasm separating the people who put sugar in their cornbread batter and the people who didn’t. Whenever my mother described an argument with her mother, she’d sniff, “She puts sugar in her cornbread.”

In London in 1766, outraged by the English negative opinions about American food.

Benjamin Franklin published “Homespun,” a long treatise extolling the virtues of his home country’s food. Franklin declared that “Indian corn, take it for all in all, is one of the most agreeable and wholesome grains in the world ... and johnny or hoe cake, hot from the fire, is better than a Yorkshire muffin.”

What we call cornbread, people in Colombia and Venezuela call arepa, and they engage in an ongoing quarrel over who has the best. See “Colombia and Venezuela Have a Beef: Who Owns the, or Makes the Best, Arepa?” at <https://tinyurl.com/mwy5xxj4>.

In “The Devil’s Dictionary,” Ambrose Bierce defined the alligator as the crocodile of America, superior in every detail to the crocodile of the effete monarchies of the Old World. In Louisiana, alligators can be legally hunted from the last week of August until the end of October. Throughout the year, they can be purchased whole or in parts.

Living up to its front-page declaration of publishing “All the News that’s Fit to Print,” The New York Times offers a recipe for alligator chili, adapted from “After the Hunt: Louisiana’s Authoritative Collection of Wild

Game and Game Fish Cookery” by Chef John Folse. Folse recommends serving this chili over spaghetti and combining it with cornbread in <https://tinyurl.com/dpz7xydz>.

Because gift links to free articles in The New York Times are very limited, I’ve skipped over articles about where Taylor and Travis should go on their honeymoon, the obituary of a one-time husband of Brigitte Bardot and “Five Horror Movies To Stream Now.”

Instead, I share a picture of Chef Folse (<https://tinyurl.com/yc8mdsbv>) priming a whole roasted alligator in preparation for Louisiana State University’s home football game, along with a tip for the next time you cook alligator. You’ll read that Chef Folse injects the alligator with a brining liquid until it swells and then douses the mild-flavored meat with beer.

Monday Munch Sept. 22, 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Chili, coleslaw, cornbread and dessert to be decided.

Sept. 29, 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

To be announced. See website (charlotteseniorcentervt.org/lunch/meals) for updates.

Good reading for kids

Just outside the Grange Hall at 2858 Spear Street, you’ll find The Little Free Library for Kids, filled with books suitable for babies through teens. One recent addition, “Squids will be Squids: Fresh Morals Beastly Fables” by Jon Scieszka and Lane Smith has several food tales, including Shark, Wasp and Bacteria wondering why nobody ever sits with them at lunch.

Reminder: This Little Free Library for Kids is sponsored by the board of directors of the Friends of the Charlotte Senior Center where Monday Munch is served to over 50 people each week. Unlike Shark, Wasp and Bacteria, Monday Munch diners always find plenty of company while enjoying a good meal.

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