

Noteworthy changes to MMUUSD 2024-25 budget

Dear MMUUSD School Community,

There have been noteworthy changes in how Vermont's public schools are funded and we want to provide you with important details so that you are well informed to vote on Town Meeting Day. Specifically, the Vermont Legislature passed Act 127 in 2022, the law takes effect in the 2024-25 (FY25) fiscal year and it significantly alters how Vermont schools are funded.

For school districts like MMUUSD, that are disadvantaged by the new law, the Legislature included a 5% tax rate cap to limit the impact on communities. The Legislature added this section to the law because they understood that some school districts would have to make devastating reductions that would cripple their ability to provide students with a quality education.

The 5% tax rate cap is a lifeline for our District and allows us to make substantial improvements to our aging buildings, grounds and infrastructure without changing the tax rate. This is a limited and notable opportunity that will have lasting positive effects for our District and decrease future bonding and borrowing needs. Therefore, we have added \$5.67 million in building/facility upgrades and improvements to the 2024-25 budget.

It is important to note that with or without these investments, MMUUSD tax rate will be the same. In order for MMUUSD to get below the 5% tax rate cap, we would need to

cut \$5.83 million from the proposed budget, in addition to removing the \$5.67 million for one-time facilities funding. This would make it impossible for us to meet students' needs, maintain and keep our facilities safe, adequately staff our schools, meet federal and state requirements and align with Vermont's Education Quality Standards.

The Board acknowledges that the proposed increase of 18.7% in the 2024-25 budget is considerably higher than previous budgets. However, we also recognize that the District has an opportunity to include non-recurring investments for our facilities that do not affect the tax rate. To provide some context, under the terms of Act 127, the MMUUSD tax rate will be the same if we have a 1.7% decrease or a 18.7% increase in the year-over-year total expenditures. Thus, we believe it is very important for MMUUSD to optimize this limited and once in a generation opportunity.

To view additional budget information, please visit our website at <https://budget.mmuusd.org>. Additionally, don't hesitate to contact one of us if you have questions or comments. You can find our contact information at <https://boardmembers.mmuusd.org>.

We extend our sincere appreciation for your support of MMUUSD students and the whole school community.

Sincerely,
MMUUSD School Board Members



Act 127 and this year's school budgets

Mountain Gazette editor Sara Riley

The Editor has tried and failed to compose an explanation of how our state got to the point in 2024 that our method of paying for public schools is so arcane and complex that it defies understanding. Suffice it to say (as best the Editor can figure) that in 2022 with Act 127, the Legislature decided to change the calculation for State Education Fund distribution in order to push more funding to schools in less-economically-prosperous districts. The new calculation "disfavors" more-economically-prosperous districts by reducing their funding from the Ed Fund.

Normally, the State caps districts' school spending increases to 5% per year — that means, anything over 5% was not supported by the Ed Fund but was paid only by the district's property taxes, which would have to be increased. To soften the blow of the new distribution calculation on districts about to get their Ed Funds reduced, Act 127 enacted a five-year window during which school budget increases between 5-10% will not be penalized in that way.

Perhaps the Legislature was too clever by half, because Act 127 (inadvertently?) created a loophole: if a district begins *this* year* to increase its budget by more than 5% (but less than 10%), the State Education Fund will cover that increase, without changes to the district's property tax rate. Presumably the funding for the Ed Fund — property taxes mostly, along with the lottery and a few other sources — is

balanced by the Legislature, at least roughly, so that Ed Fund inflow covers outflow. But if lots of districts increase their budgets and only have to pay for the first 5% of the increase, the money for the State Education Fund still has to come from somewhere, and where it will come from is up to the Legislature.

That is, where the money will come from is likely to be statewide revenues, and *not* from the districts that increase their funding by more than 5%, even for good cause.

And it could amount to quite a large sum, since (per *VT Digger*, <https://vtdigger.org/2024/01/19/unintended-consequences-concern-mounts-in-montpelier-about-the-newest-changes-to-education-finance/>) quite a few districts are proposing such budget increases (<https://vtdigger.org/2024/01/25/in-a-difficult-school-budget-year-there-appear-to-be-no-winners/>), like the one proposed by the MMUUSD Board — see their letter.

There may well be extremely good reasons for these proposed budget expenditures; this statement takes no position on that question. But the Editor did not find the MMUUSD Board's letter to be very clear about the *what* and *how* and *why* that surround their proposal — though again and to be fair, Vermont law in this area is difficult to parse. The Editor recommends readers to the cited *VT Digger* stories, which explain the nuts and bolts of all this better (and likely more accurately) than this Editor can.

Jericho voters to consider bond for new Town Maintenance facility

As the New Year proceeds, residents of Jericho will have the opportunity to vote on one of the most important ballot questions considered in years. As most residents are aware, the Selectboard has approved a bond article that will be presented for vote in support of construction of a new Town Maintenance Facility. This long overdue and modern facility will become the new home for all of our Highway Department trucks, heavy equipment, working spaces, and the dedicated crew who operate them year-round. If vote passes and

permits secured, the facility will be constructed across the road from the current garage, adjacent to the solar farm.

At our Town Meeting on Tuesday, March 5, 2024 will be the question of resident support for a \$4.15M construction bond. A \$500K allocation of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds by the Selectboard will defray the total project cost of \$4.65M, including contingencies. A "yes" vote will be the first step toward providing a much needed, delayed, and modern facility.

News continued on page 3

Catch-22 Fundraiser donates \$2222.50 to Howard Center

On Friday, December 15, Jericho residents Tim and Gail McKenna (above, left and right) continued their tradition of generosity with a contribution of \$2222.50 to Howard Center from their CATCH 22 Flag Football fundraiser. This year marks their ninth consecutive year of supporting Howard Center, with their donation amount reflecting significant numbers in their lives. Their ongoing commitment enables Howard Center to provide essential services in mental health, substance use, and developmental support for individuals and families within the community. Howard Center's Director of Communications Denise Vignoe (above, center) in accepting this year's contribution said, "The McKennas' continued support and dedication are truly remarkable. Their efforts not only raise funds but also awareness for the critical work we do." The McKennas' Catch 22 Football fundraiser, established over two decades ago, has benefited various community organizations, including Shriners' Hospital and the Vermont Children's Hospital, reflecting their broad commitment to the wellbeing of the community.

PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Jericho honors Wayne Howe

By Louise Miglionico

At the annual Town Tea, friends and family of Wayne Howe honored him for his many years of service to Jericho.

Wayne's first contribution started more than thirty years ago when he was on the Jericho Historical Society board of directors and eventually served as president of the organization. During his tenure, Wayne headed many functions of the society. He continued the work of Blair Williams, first president of the society, including ongoing preservation of the Old Red Mill and public presentations of Jericho history topics. Wayne and Ray Miglionico served as archivists to the society, upgrading and organizing the archives. Wayne and Ray also created the Snowflake Bentley Museum so that visitors could learn about and view the work of the Snowflake Man. Wayne also did deep research into the life and activities of Bentley. He created a thorough timeline of Bentley's many trips in the pursuit of sharing the knowledge of his ingenious work.

Wayne then served on the board appointed to evaluate the future location of the Deborah Rawson Memorial Library.

He then went on to serve on the Jericho Planning Commission from 2003-2013 and served on the Jericho Selectboard from 2016-2023.

In all of his positions, Wayne was thoroughly involved and served as a calming influence. He was generous with his time and thoughts, and was always respectful of others' opinions.

When he spoke at the Town Tea, he spoke of his love and caring for Jericho. Wayne said that he'd like to now devote himself to his three grandchildren, who reside in Jericho.

His friends and family all know that Wayne will always continue to give of himself to Jericho, the town which he loves.

At the end of the event honoring Wayne, his granddaughter Juniper suggested that we ring the bell in the tower of the Town Office building. So, Jessica Alexander made that happen. We all went outside on the sunny afternoon to listen to the bell ring to say thank you to Wayne.



2024 Rebates for Your Home



If you're planning on **improving the efficiency of your home or apartment** this year, take a look at Efficiency Vermont's residential offers, including:



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All rebates are subject to availability and eligibility.
Visit www.efficiencyvermont.com/rebates for the most up-to-date information.

NEWS BRIEFS

Generator use and carbon monoxide

By Andy Forsberg, Deputy Chief/EMS Supervisor, UJFD

With all the crazy weather lately, I wanted to take a moment to talk about safety and generator use.

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a silent killer that you cannot see or smell. CO is in the exhaust of any gasoline-burning motor, including a generator.

When using a generator, please only use it outside and away from the home. Keep in mind wind direction. Exhaust has a way of seeping into the home and causing carbon monoxide problems.

Make sure you have CO detectors in your home on every level. CO detectors are good for eight (8) years — there is a date on the back. If it has changeable batteries, they should be changed every six months.

If the alarm sounds, get out! and call 9-1-1 to have us check to make sure there are no issues in the home.

Minor symptoms of CO include tiredness, headache and nausea, but don't wait to call if your CO detector sounds the alarm.

As always if you have questions about this or anything else feel free to call the fire station at 802-899-4025.

Riverside Sidewalk public meeting February 6

By Linda Blasch, Jericho Town Planner

The Town of Jericho has received grant funds from the Vermont Agency of Transportation to design and construct an approximately 1600' long, 5' wide concrete sidewalk along the east side of VT Rt. 15 from Jericho Market to Park Street. The engineering firm, Stantec, will be presenting conceptual plans for the project and seeking public input on the design at the Planning Commission meeting on Tuesday, February 6 at 7:00 PM.

The meeting will be held at the Jericho Town Hall, 67 VT Rt. 15, and via Zoom.

Information about the history of this project, the scoping study that was completed in 2021, and a meeting link for Zoom are available at <http://www.jerichovt.org/riverside-sidewalk>.

If you are unable to attend or prefer to send comments via email please contact Linda Blasch, Town Planner, at lblasch@jerichovt.gov.

Westford Wastewater Study Oversight Committee

By Holly Delisle, Westford Town Administrator

During the January 25, 2024 Selectboard meeting, it was proposed to form a Wastewater Study Oversight Committee (WSOC) to support the Town in researching and presenting alternative wastewater solutions for the municipal, civic, and/or private interests within the Westford Town Center.

The Committee makeup is proposed to be the Town Administrator and/or Selectboard member, a Planning Commission member, the Town's Project Manager/Consultant, and three town residents. The Committee will be a working group, meeting at least three times, with an intention to be unbiased and accepting of any and all ideas for consideration. Meetings will be open to the public, and all public documentation and work products will be posted to the new Wastewater section of the Town website (<https://westfordvt.us/wastewater-alternatives-study/>).

If you'd like to volunteer to serve on this Committee, please review a proposed DRAFT Mission Statement (<https://westfordvt.us/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Mission-Statement-WG-Jan-2024-Draft-as-amended.pdf>) and get more information

News briefs continued on page 5

News continued from page 1

Replacing "the old garage" will assure both the safety of our Highway Department staff and the long-term durability of our machinery investments. The estimated cost to taxpayers for financing this critical project will be \$43 per 100K of homestead valuation. For example, the rate increase on a property valued at 500K would be \$215 annually. This contribution will decrease incrementally as bond principal decreases.

Prior to our first "open garage" event before the holidays, we provided a list of the Top 10 Reasons it is in the interest of Jericho residents (and our road crew) to pursue this project. If the bond vote passes, design and permitting effort will begin immediately. Design and permitting effort will begin in April 2024, bidding from qualified contractors is slated for February 2025, construction will take place in April 2025 and the new facility would be completed for move-in in April 2026.

Our current facility was constructed in two phases, the first in 1968 and the next in 2001. In addition to outdated size and deterioration of the walls, neither of the buildings meets current snow loading or energy efficiency requirements. Guidance provided by Matt Young of Ascent Consulting in Stockbridge, VT (who has recently supported feasibility studies, design, and construction of like-sized new facilities in the municipalities of St. Albans Town and, Georgia) indicates that a new facility is long overdue and Jericho's "is structurally one of the worst I've ever seen." This fact, in conjunction with the expense of having to pour foundation slabs for addition to the building and deepening the current bays, makes renovation a losing cost/benefit decision.

Matt's feasibility review found existing overhead doors and end-to-end garage bays far too small for modern sized trucks — especially with plows attached. In addition, the septic system, well for water, and stormwater collection system are all failing, and no longer viable. The break room and bathroom aren't ADA compliant and don't meet current functional standards. There is also no wash bay for vehicles. The ability to consistently wash trucks and machinery will contribute greatly to extending service life.

Most concerning to the Selectboard, are the number of life safety inadequacies of our current garage. There is no functional eye wash station for staff emergency, no built-in carbon monoxide sensors, no built-in sprinkler system, no Plyovent exhaust panels in doors (for trucks to idle during warm up and repair), no partitioned safe area for welding, and no isolated hazardous material storage. These circumstances equate to having our most important and valuable town asset continue to degrade, present personal safety concerns, present fire risk, and pose unnecessary safety concerns to our hard-working Highway Department staff.

We encourage Jericho residents to lean into long term savings by protecting our most critical municipal assets. Lacking support for a bond for construction of the proposed facility will be cost ineffective in the long term. Listed below are additional rationales for a "yes" vote for the upcoming bond ballot item on Town Meeting Day, Tuesday, March 5, 2024:

- protect capital budget investments by having a modern facility that will house all of our trucks and heavy equipment;
- retention of quality highway staff — critical to outstanding service to residents;
- breakroom and public spaces will meet state and federal accessibility requirements;
- environmental compliance and efficiency will be assured with state-of-the-art fluid catchment and separation system;
- long term cost savings to taxpayers will be maximized by building now, on a 30-year bond payment schedule;
- the Town of Jericho already owns the land where the new facility will be constructed; because the parcel is less than 10 acres in size, it will not be subject to Act 250 review — a lengthy and expensive process;
- project feasibility consultant Matt Young of Ascent Consulting in Stockbridge, VT explained to the Selectboard that our current facility is not only inadequate, but a significant liability and completely out of step with current construction practice and structural standards;
- the retired garage can be repurposed for cold storage of equipment and supplies, and potentially renovated to meet other community needs;
- the new facility will provide an additional conference room and public meeting space.

The feasibility study, cost analysis, design renderings, video, and information on tax valuation increase can be found on the Join in Jericho site at <https://jerichovt.org/Highway-Department/news/feed/town-maintenance-facility-2>.

If you haven't had the opportunity to visit our current municipal facility, please plan on attending the second "open garage" opportunity on Saturday, February 3, 1:00 – 3:00 PM. Refreshments will be provided. Members of the Selectboard and the Highway Department crew will be on hand to provide tours,

answer questions, and distribute information on the proposed Town of Jericho Maintenance Facility.

On Thursday, February 8, 7:00 PM, we will be holding a community forum and information session. Residents are invited to attend and hear details regarding existing conditions, bond vote details, design and permitting, contract bidding, project costs, construction details, and timeline. We hope Jericho residents will join us!

Jericho to vote on using Australian ballot for budget, public questions

By Sarahjane Dube, Jericho

With the urging of the Jericho Diversity Equity and Inclusion Committee (JDEIC), on Thursday, December 21, 2023 the Jericho Selectboard added the following articles to be discussed and voted on the floor at Town Meeting 2024:

- *Shall the Town of Jericho adopt all budget articles by Australian ballot?*
- *Shall the Town of Jericho adopt all public questions by Australian ballot?*

The Australian Ballot is a voting system where voters mark their choices privately on uniform printed ballots. This is how Jericho voters currently decide on the School Budget and elect Town Officials. (Note, this is how all voting was conducted during the pandemic.)

A Floor Vote occurs during Town Meeting. At a floor meeting, voters can engage in discussion to clarify or amend items; voting on items occurs by those present, using a public voice vote. Jericho currently uses floor voting to decide on the Town Budget and public questions (e.g., *Shall the town exempt from property taxation the lands and premises known as the Winooski Valley Park District for a period of 5 years?*).

The JDEIC is chartered to explore ways to make Jericho a more inclusive community. The JDEIC has engaged in extensive study and debate of the extent to which Town Meeting is accessible to all, including a survey of Jericho residents. The results of JDEIC Survey are currently on the JDEIC website. We will share more information on the website (<https://jerichovt.org/diversity-equity-inclusion>) in the coming weeks, including Jericho floor vote and Australian ballot voter turnout statistics of the last 10 years, how many Vermont towns use Australian Ballot and what their Town Meetings look like, and more.

What is the "most democratic" way to govern Jericho? What is the most inclusive and accessible way for residents to exercise their right to vote in Jericho? How are YOU most likely to participate and vote? How can we ensure that Jericho residents have a voice in governance and budgeting if there is no floor voting on Town Meeting Day?

As we approach Town Meeting Day, the JDEIC encourages the voters of Jericho to reflect on these questions and engage in the conversation. You can reach out to JDEIC members directly or to the Committee as a whole using this email: DEIChair@jerichovt.gov.

Fielding futures with local foods

Jericho/Underhill Farmers engage in dialogue on the prospective food hub

As we approach the 2024 Town Meeting Day, the Jericho Food Hub Task Force wrapped up its first year by engaging with Jericho/Underhill farmers, in collaboration with the Underhill Local Agriculture and Local Foods Initiative to explore the Food Hub concept. Representatives from local farms such as The Farm Upstream, Chamberlin's Farm, Settlement Farm, Jericho Settlers Farm, Keszey Farm, Ash Grove Farm, and Birchhill Sugar Works actively participated. Discussions delved into addressing local food issues, fostering cooperation, and meeting the expectations of Jericho/Underhill consumers.

As the Jericho Food Hub Task Force engaged in a dynamic dialogue with local farmers, an array of insightful ideas surfaced, paving the way for collaborative initiatives to strengthen the community's connection with local foods.

Key topics included promoting the purchase of local foods, educating on the benefits of local food preparation, and enhancing the affordability of such foods, as well as supporting farmers in their livelihoods. As the 2024 year unfolds, this collaborative effort aims to shape the local food landscape positively.

One important discussion point was the endorsement of a farm-to-school program, emphasizing the need for a dedicated coordinator to ensure its success. The participants also highlighted the potential of creating a food home delivery program or integrating local foods into existing delivery systems. The suggestion to collaborate with the Extension Service's

food and nutrition program garnered support, emphasizing the importance of building upon existing resources.

The group expressed the necessity of leveraging support systems already in place, including grant writing assistance and navigating paperwork for funding resources. Online platforms were identified as powerful tools, such as listing local farms and resources to facilitate consumer connections and utilizing the Farm to Plate online map of farms.

The idea of a Food Hub initiative drew attention, particularly in marketing existing farm stands. The teams also envisioned a summer food celebration at the farmer's market to showcase local farms. A consensus emerged on sponsoring these types of events to unite farmers and town residents, envisioning these gatherings as opportunities for community building. Local farm stores' efforts received specific focus, with the understanding that supporting their development and success could serve as a portal to food resiliency.

The lively exchange concluded with a shared enthusiasm for the next steps. Community building, celebrating local foods, and educating the public on the significance of fresh food and farming emerged as actionable goals for the Underhill and Jericho food hub committees in 2024. The food hub concept can also be promoted at local farm stands, complemented by community dinners and a community-supported planting project, all aimed at fostering a resilient and interconnected local food ecosystem.

If you would like to get involved with the Jericho/Underhill Food Hub project, please contact us by emailing TTJericho.vt@gmail.com.

The next Food Hub committee meeting will be Wednesday, February 28 at 7:00 PM on a zoom call. The next farmer's meeting will be in April, at a date and time to be determined.



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HEALTH NEWS

If you know a pet like Bridget, the German shepherd who thinks she's a golden retriever and who is a people-lover, consider nominating them to be Bork Ambassador! NAMI Vermont is looking for the perfect pet ambassador for the Make Some Noise. End the Silence VT social media campaign, which aims to engage and encourage young people living with mental health conditions to share their stories. If you know a pet that provides exceptional mental health support, please nominate them! To nominate an ambassador, email the pet's photo, name, fun fact, and a brief story of how they support mental health, to program@namivt.org. (Note, pet photos with humans require a signed release, so solo images are preferred. If nominating someone else's pet, please include the pet parent's contact information for consent.) You'll be able to view the nominees and vote between March 21-31 at www.namivt.org.



PHOTO BY SARA RILEY

Lions-sponsored blood drive February 7

The Jericho-Underhill Lions Club is hosting a Red Cross Blood Drive on Wednesday, February 7, from 12:00 – 5:00 PM. The drive will be held at the Covenant Church, 1 Whitcomb Meadows Lane, Essex Junction.

The nation's blood supply is at dangerously low levels, so please consider making the time to donate. As always, the Lions Club will be serving pie with ice cream after you have donated.

Appointment times can be scheduled at <https://www.redcrossblood.org/>, code: COVENANT.

Free COVID tests available at UJFD

By Andy Forsberg, Deputy Chief/EMS Supervisor, UJFD

Just wanted to let people know again that we have a good stockpile of COVID tests here at the Underhill Fire Station on VT Rt. 15. If you need some, stop by Monday-Friday, 7:00 AM – 3:00 PM, to pick some up. We handed out almost 1000 last week.

The Loudest Bork competition

Join NAMI Vermont in our quest to find the perfect pet ambassador for the *Make Some Noise. End the Silence VT* campaign. This social media campaign aims to engage and encourage young people living with mental health conditions to share their stories as part of our impactful Ending the Silence (ETS) program.

You can help — nominate a pet: If you know a pet that provides exceptional mental health support, please nominate them! To nominate an ambassador, email the pet's photo, name, fun fact, and a brief story of how they support mental health, to program@namivt.org. Note: Pet photos with humans require a signed release, therefore solo images are preferred. If nominating someone else's pet, please include the pet parent's contact information for consent.

Vetting (don't worry, not that kind!): We respect your privacy. If you nominate your own pet, we'll review your submission with you to ensure it doesn't include any mental health information you're uncomfortable sharing. You can also choose to remain anonymous. If someone else nominated your pet, we'll ask for your consent to include them in the competition and review the nomination with you. Again, anonymity is an option.

Vote for your Ambassador: Stay tuned for our dedicated Loudest Bork webpage! You'll be able to view the nominees and vote between March 21-31 at www.namivt.org.

What to expect if your pet wins: If your pet receives the most votes, the NAMI Vermont team will contact you to offer your pet the ambassador position for *Make Some Noise. End the Silence VT* campaign. Upon acceptance, we'll request photos or videos for the official announcement and inquire if you're comfortable sharing a more in-depth story about their mental health support. Again, your privacy is our priority, so you can choose to share your story anonymously.

We hope to announce the winner in April. The Ambassador and pet parent(s) will receive some honorary swag. Throughout the year, we may request additional photos or videos of your pet. All content will be coordinated with respect to your preferences regarding posts featuring your pet.

How to support the Ambassador: Boost the Ambassador by liking and sharing their posts. Use the hashtags [#MakeSomeNoise](https://twitter.com/MakeSomeNoise), [#EndtheSilenceVT](https://twitter.com/EndtheSilenceVT), and [#Bork4MentalHealth](https://twitter.com/Bork4MentalHealth). Share your story as an ETS presenter. To learn more, email program@namivt.org.

Lazy child

Parents have been highly motivated to ask me what they should do for their child who seems to be lazy all the time. Let me see if I can spring into action and provide some information that will help you deal with a child who is on the lazy side.

Important things to keep in mind

First, do NOT call your child lazy, or the label will stick.

Second, know that laziness is not a genetic trait. It is a function of the environment your child is living in. To stop the laziness, it is important to consider changing the environment by creating a sense of motivation in your child.

If your child lacks motivation, there may be reasons for it, such as anxiety or frustration from not succeeding at something in the past. Talk with your child to learn if that is the case.

Whether or not your child has a reason for their being a couch potato, you still need to motivate them to get off the couch.

Energizing strategies

Empower your child with responsibilities that will make them feel significant. Whatever you ask them to do, make it something not overly easy, but something your child would like to do and that you know they could be capable of doing well.

For example, they might help you choose the menu for a family meal and then help you prepare ingredients or dishes for that meal. Showing your appreciation for the effort they are displaying is key to building a child's self-confidence and preventing ongoing laziness.

Another great idea is to set limits on screen time so they become motivated to fill their non-screen recreational time with creative activities such as playing outside, doing some creative art with crafts materials, or reading a book.

Parents, you can lead by example. If you want to see your child take responsibility for something, make sure you "walk the walk" and not just "talk the talk." If you let the chores pile up while you spend time bingeing something on television, your child will do the same.

Hopefully, tips like these will not be viewed as a chore when it comes to motivating your child so they are no longer considered a "slouch on the couch" but someone who will "prove they can move" and show the family — and themselves — what they are capable of accomplishing.

Lewis First, MD, is Chief of Pediatrics at The University of Vermont Children's Hospital and Chair of the Department of Pediatrics at the University of Vermont's Larner College of Medicine

LEGISLATIVE NEWS

Sen. Ram Hinsdale, Rep. Priestley introduce bill to protect kids online

January 18, 2024

Vermont State Senator Keshia Ram Hinsdale and State Representative Monique Priestley today announced their sponsorship and introduction of the Vermont Kids Code (<https://vermontkidscode.com/>), legislation to make technology safer for young users and protect their privacy. Advocates including parents, families, educators, and medical professionals hailed the lawmakers' introduction of the age-appropriate design code bills (S.289 /H.712) as a landmark step in efforts to protect children and teens online.

"Despite skyrocketing rates of youth depression, anxiety, eating disorders, and overdoses, technology companies purposely design their products to keep kids on screens as much as possible," said Sen. Ram Hinsdale. "With the Vermont Kids Code, we're instituting common-sense consumer protections to ensure that digital products, just like physical ones, are designed safely and age-appropriately."

Supported by eight sponsors in the Senate and 28 bipartisan sponsors in the House, the consumer protection bill would require online products reasonably likely to be accessed by children under 18 to be designed with young users' best interests in mind and to protect their privacy. Momentum has grown behind similar bills introduced in Maryland, Minnesota, New Mexico, and Nevada; meanwhile, age-appropriate design provisions are already in effect abroad.

"Every day, I am hearing serious concern from families, medical experts, and educators about the dangers kids face in today's digital world. I am proud we're stepping up to take action here in Vermont," said Rep. Priestley. "The Vermont Kids Code would require Big Tech to implement basic protections for kids as well as hold them accountable if they choose to put a child's well-being at risk."

The legislation's introduction follows a lawsuit about social media's impact on the health and well-being of children filed by over 40 state Attorneys General, including Vermont's, suing Instagram and Facebook owner Meta for intentionally designing

addictive and harmful products. The Kids Code would address extractive practices outlined by Attorney General Charity Clark in the lawsuit, including the use of extortive privacy practices, such as rampant data collection and addictive features such as infinite scroll and autoplay.

"Our kids' time is being monopolized by online platforms and apps that are neither safe nor private, knowingly designed that way by the companies to extort as much profit as possible from our children," said the Vermont Kids Code Coalition. "This is a public health crisis that parents, teachers, and health professionals struggle with every day, which is why we're so thankful to Sen. Hinsdale and Rep. Priestley for their leadership and we're calling on all state legislators to support the Vermont Kids Code and pass it into law."

Specific provisions in the legislation would protect Vermont kids online by requiring companies to conduct risk assessments evaluating whether design features could be addictive or harmful; ensuring all settings for children are set to high privacy by default; providing easily accessible reporting tools for privacy and behavior concerns; and prohibiting covered platforms from collecting and retaining any personal information from children that is not necessary for the service being provided.

Update from the Vermont House

By Theresa Wood, State Representative,
Washington-Chittenden House District

January 16

The 2024 legislative session is off and running. And running would be a good description as all committees are picking up where we left off last spring. Two bills passed the House this week and are now headed to the Senate:

- H.27 — this bill proposes to add coercive controlling behavior as a basis for obtaining a civil abuse prevention order against a family or household member;

- H.72 — this bill proposes a pilot project to establish two overdose prevention centers to address the state's continuous record-setting deaths from opioid overdoses.

The House Human Services Committee (the committee I chair), is embarking on testimony on a Senate bill to address the use of flavors in e-cigarettes and vaping that attract youth. We are also working on emergency housing and the budget adjustment act. The budget adjustment act (or BAA) as it is referred to, is a mid-fiscal year adjustment to the budget that was passed last spring. The Governor presents recommendations to adjust the budget and the Legislature reviews, modifies, and ultimately approves an adjustment to the budget.

The legislative home page has a great deal of information and links to other interesting information. Check it out here: <https://legislature.vermont.gov/>.

Also, if you are visiting the State House please let me know; I'd love to show you around and chat for a few minutes. I can be reached at twood@leg.state.vt.us.

Legislative update

By Senator Irene Wrenner, Chittenden North

January 25

The Vermont Legislature gavelled back into session on Wednesday, January 3.

But thanks to summer floods, elected officials were also quite busy in the off session: fielding calls for assistance, meeting with committees, and drafting bills for recovery.

Certainly, other bills are being introduced. Several deal with such crises as homelessness, theft, and substance abuse. All told, House Reps have introduced 317 bills in 2024; Senators have presented 144 bills, as of January 24.

I've had four bills drafted on behalf of constituents: S.206 (make Juneteenth a state holiday), S.232 (delay phaseout of gas-powered car sales), S.237 (post all municipal job openings), S.283 (don't transport school ballots before counting).

A fifth bill (S.187) emerged from a summer stroll at Bombardier Park in Milton, during the annual public safety campaign known as National Night Out.

As I made my way from one booth to another on August 1, I asked, "What laws do we need, or don't we need? How can I help?"

"Child car seats" was the response from Lt. Allen Fortin of the Highway Safety Division and Sidney Bradley from the VT Health Department. Both men explained how existing statutes are *not* keeping our most vulnerable passengers safe.

Vermont's law isn't nearly as stringent as car seat manufacturers' stipulations.

Buckled-in babies are allowed to face forward too soon, I learned, leading to collision outcomes in which an entire family may walk away, except their infant or toddler dies or is seriously injured.

State Senator Ginny Lyons, who chairs Senate Health & Welfare, and I drafted a Child Safety Seat Bill that would increase the age at which a child can ride in a forward-facing seat, thus catching Vermont up to other states.

We believe this bill, once passed, will prevent injuries and save young lives. We also believe such a law would reduce anguish and heartache among first responders and relatives, who would otherwise see worse outcomes from car accidents.

The Senate Transportation Committee invited me to introduce S.187 on Tuesday, January 16. After discussion, members proposed adding this new child safety seat language to their large committee bill, rather than processing it separately.

I will continue to advocate for the provisions in S.187 and encourage my peers to pass new child safety seat regulations before the biennium ends in mid-May. I'll keep you posted!

If you'd like to keep up with the work of multiple committees and both chambers, *VT Digger* provides an excellent daily summary via Final Report. Subscribe at <https://vtdigger.org/newsletters/final-reading/>.

Meanwhile, please let me know what's on your mind: iwrenner@leg.state.vt.us.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

What time of day should our reps present at Town Meeting?**To the Editor,**

Looking for citizen input on when our elected state representatives should present at Town Meeting Day. My opinion and suggestion are to have them present after lunch, not during the morning session.

Much time was taken up last year and years before with them presenting during the morning session. The public wants to hear from them, but the topics and commentary consume (rabbit hole) so much time with very little benefit or direction, taking away from our time for Town business.

We can conduct our town business, be efficient to get most of it done by lunch break. Maybe having the representatives there right after lunch break will bring citizens back to Town Meeting Day.

With many citizens trying to participate in Town Meeting Day by attending, some can only invest to stay in the morning and most leave after lunch if not sooner.

Cambridge citizens should give them the time to present, not the other way around. We know they have other towns to visit but Cambridge has the largest number of citizens being representative.

Paul Sciortino, Jeffersonville

Heat pump open house / Q&A**To the Editor,**

Peter from Jericho Energy Task Force (JETF) here.

Over the summer I electrified my home in Jericho. I did a

DIY mini-split install, and put in my own hybrid/heat-pump water heater, among other projects. Have experience with EVs, installing chargers, electric lawn care, induction hot-plates, solar, etc. *VT Digger* published a piece of mine on how I did this all on a budget (<https://vtdigger.org/2023/12/27/peter-ehrllich-how-i-decarbonized-my-home-for-3000>).

It's cold enough now to definitively say the heat pump works in cold, and so I'd like to extend an open invitation to come get a tour and a chance to ask questions about the technology, installations, rebates, and comfort.

I'm also happy to hop on a video call with anyone who'd like another pair of eyes on their own home, or a second opinion on a quote from an installer. Just email peter.i.ehrllich@gmail.com and we'll figure out a time!

Peter Ehrllich, Jericho

Make a difference and support human rights**To the Editor,**

The local chapter of Amnesty International (Champlain Valley International) meets virtually each month on a Saturday morning (February 17), at 9:00 AM. If you are interested in helping to support human rights in our country and around the world, please consider joining us.

As human rights defenders, we work on selected issues/cases via mail, email, texting, phone calls, and public education. This is a wonderful way to make a difference in the world from the comfort of your own home.

Email us at Champvalleyai@gmail.com for more information and an invite to our meeting.

Jean Archibald, Underhill Center

Do you speak up for marginalized communities?**To the Editor,**

Have you ever heard family members, friends, or peers say racist remarks or micro-aggressions? Have you ever heard someone say something questionable while they claim it was just a joke? Have you ever felt like speaking up about social political issues at family events, or have been told it isn't worth it in order to keep the peace?

Martin Luther King Jr. often spoke about our society's individualist issue with bystander behavior, "Large segments of white society are more concerned about tranquility and the status quo than about Justice, Equality, and Humanity." King was told he always "makes it about race" which is a common phrase one may still hear today.

King emphasized the importance of community, saying... "If I stop to help this man, what will happen to me?" And he reversed the question: "If I do not stop to help this man, what will happen to him?"

It's essential to come to terms with our tendency to privilege peace over righteousness. There can be no peace without the truth. Speak up. Say no to color blindness.

Destinee Pierce, Jericho

News briefs continued from page 3

Generator use and carbon monoxide**By Andy Forsberg, Deputy Chief/EMS Supervisor, UJFD**

With all the crazy weather lately, I wanted to take a moment to talk about safety and generator use.

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a silent killer that you cannot see or smell. CO is in the exhaust of any gasoline-burning motor, including a generator.

When using a generator, please only use it outside and away from the home. Keep in mind wind direction. Exhaust has a way of seeping into the home and causing carbon monoxide problems.

Make sure you have CO detectors in your home on every level. CO detectors are good for eight (8) years — there is a date on the back. If it has changeable batteries, they should be changed every six months.

If the alarm sounds, get out! and call 9-1-1 to have us check to make sure there are no issues in the home.

Minor symptoms of CO include tiredness, headache and nausea, but don't wait to call if your CO detector sounds the alarm.

As always if you have questions about this or anything else feel free to call the fire station at 802-899-4025.

Riverside Sidewalk public meeting February 6**By Linda Blasch, Jericho Town Planner**

The Town of Jericho has received grant funds from the Vermont Agency of Transportation to design and construct an approximately 1600' long, 5' wide concrete sidewalk along the east side of VT Rt. 15 from Jericho Market to Park Street. The engineering firm, Stantec, will be presenting conceptual plans for the project and seeking public input on the design at the Planning Commission meeting on Tuesday, February 6 at 7:00 PM.

The meeting will be held at the Jericho Town Hall, 67 VT Rt. 15, and via Zoom.

Information about the history of this project, the scoping study that was completed in 2021, and a meeting link for Zoom are available at <http://www.jerichovt.org/riverside-sidewalk>.

If you are unable to attend or prefer to send comments via email please contact Linda Blasch, Town Planner, at lblasch@jerichovt.gov.

Westford Wastewater Study Oversight Committee**By Holly Delisle, Westford Town Administrator**

During the January 25, 2024 Selectboard meeting, it was proposed to form a Wastewater Study Oversight Committee (WSOC) to support the Town in researching and presenting alternative wastewater solutions for the municipal, civic, and/or private interests within the Westford Town Center.

The Committee makeup is proposed to be the Town Administrator and/or Selectboard member, a Planning Commission member, the Town's Project Manager/Consultant, and three town residents. The Committee will be a working group, meeting at least three times, with an intention to be unbiased and accepting of any and all ideas for consideration. Meetings will be open to the public, and all public documentation and work products will be posted to the new Wastewater section of the Town website (<https://westfordvt.us/wastewater-alternatives-study/>).

If you'd like to volunteer to serve on this Committee, please review a proposed DRAFT Mission Statement (<https://westfordvt.us/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Mission-Statement-WG-Jan-2024-Draft-as-amended.pdf>) and get more information by calling Holly Delisle at 802-878-4587. Apply by emailing your reasons for interest to townadmin@westfordvt.us. The Selectboard will take applications for resident participation through Monday February 5, and determine the three resident appointees during the regular Selectboard meeting on Friday, February 8.

MMCTV offers local candidates opportunity to make videos**By Angelike A. Contis, Mt. Mansfield Community TV Bridge St, Richmond**

Ahead of Tuesday, March 5 Town Meeting Day voting, local candidates are encouraged to contact MMCTV if they'd like us to make them a free candidate's video. It only takes a few minutes and it's a chance for voters to associate a face with a name!

Just drop us an email (mmctv15@gmail.com) or call 802-434-2550.

Reminder to file VT Homestead, Property Tax Credit forms**By Dale Copping, Cambridge Lister**

This is a reminder to Cambridge resident taxpayers to file HS-122 for 2024 Homestead Status and HI-144 for 2023 Household Income to qualify for an education tax credit.

This notification from the Town of Cambridge Lists is a reminder to file HS-122 Vermont Homestead Declaration. This form must be filed every year by every Vermont resident whose property meets the definition of a homestead.

A Vermont Homestead is the principal dwelling and parcel of land surrounding the dwelling, owned and occupied by a resident individual as the individual's domicile on April 1, 2024. If your homestead is leased to a tenant on April 1, 2024, you may still claim it as a homestead if it is not leased for more than 182 days in the 2024 calendar year. You must claim any business or rental use of the dwelling. You should also file HI-144 Household Income as you may qualify for a property tax credit.

The forms must be submitted by April 15, 2024 even if you file for an extension on your 2023 taxes. If filed after April 15, 2024, the Town of Cambridge will access a 3% late filing fee. The deadline for filing these forms with the State of Vermont is October 15, 2024. If filed past this date you will not be able to claim a homestead or be eligible for a property tax credit.

The forms are available on the Vermont Department of Taxes website <https://tax.vermont.gov/search/node?keys=HS-122>.

Westford Rec Committee news**By Amanda Gifford, Westford Recreation Coordinator**

The Westford Recreation Department (WRD) would like to extend a warm welcome to Kelsi Cross who is joining the Committee, and a heartfelt *thank you* to Maria, who has stepped down. Maria has offered to help with events still, so we'll still have her helpful presence!

So, right now, your WRD Committee includes: Andrew Katz, Ben McElvany, George Elliot, Elizabeth Ploof, Kelsi Cross, Lori Miller, and — a vacancy!

You could join this great group of people who have a lot of fun at meetings while organizing programming for the community. If you would like to join the Committee, or "just" help with events, like the rink and 4th of July, please email recreation@westfordvt.us.

I'm just the coordinator, a part-time person who does the behind-the-scenes work for this great group of volunteers.

Jeffersonville Farmers' and Artisan Market ends**From Deb Nevil, JFAM, Inc.**

With the heaviest of hearts we have decided to end the Jeffersonville Farmers' and Artisan Market. The losses over the past year have been too much. We just (Sunday, January 14) drove up to a total loss of the stage and picnic tables. We lost so much in July, including our shed full with market items, and four more picnic tables.

We want to thank all of you for your support over the past 12 years. We will miss being with you in community with the music, children, and dogs that brought us so much joy.

In gratitude, Deb and the JFAM Crew

Underhill Banner Project seeking volunteers

It's the time of year where we work on repairing/refreshing existing banners and creating new ones to adorn our community.

We currently need:

- fabric cutters, to cut banner sized pieces from "out of service" Boy Scout Camp tents;
- seamstresses, to repair current banners and sew new banners;
- painters, to refresh old and create new banners.

If you are interested in helping out, please contact byerrick@antiochne.edu.

Here are the dates for painting workshops at the Town Hall: Sunday, January 28, 2:00 – 4:00 PM; Saturday, February 17, 2:00 – 4:00 PM; Wednesday, February 28, 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM; Sunday, March 10, 2:00 – 4:00 PM.

No experience or artistic flair is needed — just a desire to participate in this fun and much appreciated community project.

Opening on Jericho Town Library Board**By Beth Seniw, Chair, Jericho Town Library**

Interested in becoming more involved in your local library and community!? Jericho Town Library (JTL) is looking for a community member to join its board of trustees. Each trustee is tasked with being an advocate for the library and its mission to "enrich the community and inspire lifelong learning."

Board members serve a four-year term and attend monthly meetings, held on the second Tuesday of each month. Interested individuals can contact bethdavis723@gmail.com, or JTL Director Catherine Bass at catherine@jerichotownlibraryvt.org.

Underhill Ice Rink: mind the open/closed sign!

Skaters of Underhill: Please, *please* pay attention to the open/closed sign at the rink! People have been consistently ignoring the sign, which causes footprints in slush, cracks the ice, and generally causes problems and makes it much harder to maintain the ice.

So please, stay off the ice if the CLOSED sign is up! If the rink is closed, it is closed for a reason!

Join your Westford Recreation Department Board**By Amanda Gifford, Westford Recreation Coordinator**

Westford Recreation needs your help — actually, the entire Westford Community needs your help!

We need another person to join the Committee. It's just two hours per month, usually on the first Tuesday, with occasional email discussions. You don't have to lead programs, or work at events unless you would like to. Your thoughts and ideas are what is key!

Please contact recreation@westfordvt.us if you are interested!

Windstorms cleanup on Cambridge' West Farm Road Trails**By Laird MacDowell, Chair, Cambridge Trails Committee**

Members of the Cambridge Trails Committee and the Vermont Land Trust spent three hours removing a dozen downed trees, due to the recent wind storms, from the one-mile-long Pond Loop Trail and the West Farm Road trails that lead to Jeff Falls. All the trees required chain saws to clear and these trails are now free of downed trees and broken branches.

We do yet (January 19) know the status of the Brewster Uplands trails, such as Logger's Loop, or the Alden Bryan Brewster River Trail, although the lower section of this trail is now closed for the winter for deer yard protection. The Midlands bike trails have not been inspected either, but will be this weekend.

If you are aware of any downed trees on these trails that would require a chainsaw to remove, please respond to LairdMacDowell@gmail.com with the location of the tree and trail name.

News briefs continued on page 11

COMING EVENTS



COME ONE, COME ALL!
**3RD ANNUAL WESTFORD
 WINTER FESTIVAL**
 Saturday, Feb 17th, 11:30 - 4:00
 Westford Village Common

Come one, come all, to the Westford Village Common for the Westford Winter Festival will be held on Saturday, February 17, 11:30 AM – 4:00 PM! There will be:

- horse-drawn trolley rides from the Common to the school and back, all afternoon! Free! (Plenty of room to park at the school on Brookside Road)
 - Kickback Brewery's craft beer, and the Westford Chili Cook-off
 - Gracie's Popcorn and Cotton Candy
 - free concerts at the Westford Common Hall (aka: the White Church): 12:30 PM — Rockin' Ron the Friendly Pirate; 2:00 PM — Les Dead Ringers
 - visit the Library to begin a fun Story Walk that will take you around the Common!
 - Passport Adventure — keep track of your fun adventures with a Westford Winter Festival Passport! Pick up your Passport at the Library, get it stamped at each event/ location you visit, and then turn it in for a drawing for \$50 or \$25 gift certificate to the Westford Store & Cafe!
 - 1:00 PM — walk/snowshoe tour of Maple Shade Forest with County Forester, Ethan Tapper
 - skiing and snowshoeing in the Misty Meadows and Maple Shade Forests
 - sledding across from the school on Brookside Road (special thanks to Don & Dale Pouliot)
 - warm up after snowy fun at the campfires on the Common, and the bonfire (on Brookside) tended by the Fire Department, with s'mores and marshmallows from the PTO!
 - drop by the Brick Meeting House to play Mini Golf! Free!
 - get your Westford Girl Scout cookies at the Common Hall
 - tour the new Westford Historical Society building to catch up on their exciting progress and pick up a self-guided Historical Tour of Westford Village
 - stop by for hot dogs, pizza, coffee, and more at the Westford Store — wine tasting at the Store
 - Silent Raffle — proceeds to benefit the Westford Common Hall, 11:30 AM – 3:30 PM, ticket sales; drawings at 4:00 PM, you don't need to be present at drawing to win! Come to the Westford Common Hall to see the great assortment of items, activities, and services available for raffle, and put your tickets in the cups to win!
- For more information: WestfordWinterfest@gmail.com

Ongoing Events

The Underhill-Jericho Walking Club meets Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, 5:30 PM, at the United Church of Underhill on Park St., Underhill. We walk for 30-45 minutes; we don't walk if it is raining or snowing. Please bring yak tracks and a headlamp. Join us whenever you like!

The Jericho Historical Society meets at the Old Red Mill, VT Rt. 15, Jericho on the second Thursday of each month (February 8) at 6:00 PM. Visit our website for more information or to request a zoom invitation: <https://www.jerichohistoricalsociety.org/events.html>.

Craft Group: meets twice a month on Thursdays (February 8, 22), 6:00 – 8:00 PM, Deborah Rawson Memorial Library, 8 River Rd., Jericho. Open to anyone interested in coming with any craft they like: crocheting, rug hooking, knitting, needlepoint, watercolors, jewelry making, macramé... you name it! If you have any questions please contact Amy Tower, 802-355-9671 or atowerinvt@gmail.com, or Julie Hehir, 802-899-3199 or juliehehir@comcast.net.

Soup+Bread+Ale Experience, Fridays through March 29, 5:00 – 8:00 PM, Sinclair Inn Bed and Breakfast, 389 VT Rt. 15, Jericho. Originally reserved for Inn guests, we are opening up reservations on the first and third Friday nights (February 2, 16; March 1, 15) to community members as well as guests. Each event includes: unlimited servings of two homemade soups inspired by what ingredients we can get fresh and local, with vegan/vegetarian option always available; unlimited local artisan bread; a variety of soup accompaniments; and one Ale "Enchantment of Surpassing Excellence" (a special ale brewed and canned locally at Lucy & Howe Brewing Company). Cider is available as gluten-free drink option. Come sit by the cozy fire with friends, good food and great conversation in the warm space of Jericho's premier Victorian Bed and Breakfast. \$25 per person (\$20 without ale). Reservations required, 802-899-2234 or sinclairinnbb@gmail.com.

Calvary Episcopal Church Soup and Bread Supper, on the last Thursday of the month (January 26), 5:00 – 7:00 PM, Calvary Episcopal Church, VT Rt. 15, Jericho. Come and enjoy some great soups and fellowship with your friends and neighbors.

Bone Builders Class: at the Jeffersonville Church (Second

Congregational Church of Christ, 16 Church St., Jeffersonville) from 11:00 AM – 12:15 PM on Mondays and Thursdays. It is a drop-in class, but first-timers have a couple of pages to fill out and sign. It is free, but a donation bucket is available for those wishing to reimburse the church for the use of the space. All are welcome. We have a good time — be prepared for some laughter as well as improving your strength and balance. Call Melody Tobin (802-644-2409) to discuss, or just show up.

Bone Builders Class: at St. Thomas Catholic Church, Underhill Center, on Mondays/Wednesdays/most Fridays, 9:00 – 10:15 AM; first Friday of the month, 9:45 AM. Sponsored by the United Way of Northwest VT, RSVP Bone Builders is a free exercise program for men and women, designed to prevent the negative effects of osteoporosis. For more information contact Danielle Schwer, 802-861-7821 or danielle@unitedwaynwvt.org.

Thursday Trivia nights — Thursdays, through May 1, 6:30 – 8:00 PM: Supersounds Trivia at Jericho Cafe & Tavern, VT Rt. 15, Jericho. Come by for Trivia, hosted by DJ Mike Toomey. Lots of awesome prizes, and a way to ward off the winter blues.

SongFarmers, a community music jam — a place for friends and neighbors to play music just for the fun of it. SongFarmers meets on every third Wednesday of the month (February 21), 6:00 – 8:00 PM at the Jericho Community Center, Browns Trace, Jericho Center. For people of all ages who want to play folk, Americana, blues, bluegrass, Celtic, and more on acoustic instruments: guitars, banjos, mandolins, fiddles, ukuleles, bass, keyboard. No electronics except keyboard and bass. It's a circle gathering where everyone who wants to will have a chance to lead songs. Common tunes with simple chord progressions are encouraged so that everyone can play along. If you plan to lead, please choose a song that you can play at a steady rhythm and bring a chord chart for your song. Both songs and instrumentals are great. Please note this is not a performance, open mic, or lesson. Folks who want to sing, or just come and enjoy the gathering, are welcome too. Bring snacks and drinks if you like, but no alcohol. Free. Registration is appreciated; contact CommunityJamJUVT@gmail.com.

Weekly Community Choir — If you love to sing (or want to join in on the piano to help folks learn parts and play accompaniment), come join *Mountainsong!* We are a volunteer-run community singing group that harmonizes together in four parts on the second and fourth Thursdays (during the winter) of the month (February 8, 22), 6:30 – 8:00 PM at the Mount Mansfield Unitarian Universalist Meeting House, 195 VT Rt. 15, Jericho (across from Packard Road). Whether you sing in the shower, sing Karaoke, or just like to sing in harmony with others, bring your voice and join us! Do you learn by ear or read music? Either way, you'll be comfortable here. Our aim is to sing for the joy of singing (no performances except for one short one for family and friends at the end of the season). Come as often as you are able. Cost: \$1 a week toward space rental. We also ask for a contribution to purchase music for the group of \$7 per semester (fall and spring). Questions about the group? Questions about the group? Contact Lynne Robbins, 802-899-2436 or lar.2436@gmail.com, or Doug Varney, 802-343-4513 or vthockeyman@gmail.com, or just show up!

Healthy Habits VT, meets Friday and Saturday mornings: Fridays in Essex Junction at 9:30 or 11:00 AM; Saturdays in South Burlington at 9:30 AM. Leslie Dunn leads weekly group meetings where participants talk about managing weight, being more physically fit, and motivating each other — building habits to achieve better health is the underlying theme of each meeting. For more information, go to <https://www.healthyhabitsvt.com/>, email leslie@healthyhabitsvt.com, or call 802 234-1277.

Coming Events

Thursday, February 1

An Evening of Bird Tales, 7:00 – 8:30 PM, on Zoom. This has become one of the Friends of Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge's most popular events. This year's collection of avian stories will be coming from some of the members of the Green Mountain Audubon Society. These avid birders and photographers will share with the audience some special moments and encounters with their avian friends. To register for this event, please visit <http://www.friendsofmissisquoi.org/calendar>.

Saturday, February 3

Next Steps with Your Family History, 10:30 AM – 12:00 PM, on Zoom. Are you ready to put a little more meat on the bare bones of your family tree? A little bit stuck? Do your family members roll their eyes when you start talking about genealogy? Go beyond the basics in your search for your family history. Marcie Crocker will introduce the use of research logs, timelines, maps, and more. She'll also touch on why you might want to put some time into the history, and the languages, that might be found in the area, as well as why you might want to research other family members, associates, and neighbors. Cost is \$10. Please visit our website www.vtgenlib.org for additional details and for registration.

Monday, February 5

Lamoille County Legislative Breakfast, 8:00 – 9:30 AM, Akeley Building, 67 S. Main St, Stowe. The session begins with a light breakfast, followed by a short briefing by the legislators attending, and a Q&A session. Breakfast by Two Sons Bakehouse; coffee by Jenna's Promise Roasting Company. Learn more and please register at <https://lamoilleeconomy.org/breakfast/>.

Wednesday, February 7

Lions Blood Drive, 12:00 – 5:00 PM, Covenant Church, 1 Whitcomb Meadows Lane, Essex Junction. Please consider making the time to donate. As always, the Jericho-Underhill Lions Club will be serving pie with ice cream after you have donated. Appointment times can be scheduled at <https://www.redcrossblood.org/>, code: COVENANT.

CSWD webinar: Thinking Outside the Blue-Bin, 6:00 PM, on Zoom. Join Recycle Rhonda to discover the many different items that can be recycled, like plastic bags and mattresses — just not in your blue-bin. Explore the what, where, why, and how non-blue bin recyclables — a.k.a. Special Materials — get turned into new things! Please register online at <https://cswd.net/tours-webinars/> (scroll down to the ZOOM link for this webinar).

Thursday, February 8

Networking for event and venue professionals, 12:00

– 2:00 PM, Carriage House Event Venue, 916 VT Rt. 108, Jeffersonville, VT. Green Mountain Gatherings hosts a free lunch and networking event for businesses in the area involved in events, meetings, weddings, and more — an opportunity to connect with professionals in your industry. Register at <https://forms.gle/tFLSsMLtziyyxK74A>. Lunch provided by The Breadline and Soup Kitchen, a woman-owned catering company in Cambridge. For photographers, catering companies, food trucks, florists, event planners, invitation and paper designers, event space owners, BnB owners offering lodging blocks, or those who offer hair and makeup services; also for local maple syrup, honey, or local favor producers who offer customizable labels/orders. Please contact Dannie McFarland with questions, hello@greenmountaingatheringsvt.com.

Avalanche Dogs: Ski Patrol & Backcountry Rescue, 7:00 – 8:00 PM, on Zoom. Join the Green Mountain Club to learn about and explore the history and training of avalanche rescue dogs in the Wasatch Mountains, specifically at Alta Ski Area with Greg Miller, a nine-year Alta Ski Patrol veteran who trains and works with his four-year old avalanche rescue dog OC. Originally from NJ, Greg grew up learning to ski at Smugglers' Notch and Jay Peak. After graduating from Saint Lawrence University, Greg moved to Alta to become a ski patroller; later, he began to work with Alta's avalanche dogs and is currently the dog coordinator for the Alta Ski Patrol and a member of the Wasatch Backcountry Rescue. Register online at <https://www.tickettailor.com/events/greenmountainclub/1078732>.

Saturday, February 10

Using City Directories to Solve Genealogical Mysteries, 10:30 AM – 12:00 PM, on Zoom. City directories were the precursors of telephone books, except that in addition to telling where your answer lived, they also tell what kind of work they did, and sometimes who they worked for. City directories can be key to filling in gaps in timelines. Lynn Johnson will demonstrate the many details of your ancestor's life you might find in the various sections of these books. She will show how compiling the information can answer questions, while possibly raising new ones. She will also share organizing tips to use whether you're tracing many people, or just one. Cost is \$10. Please visit our website www.vtgenlib.org for additional details and for registration.

Air Scent Dogs in Wilderness Searches, 10:00 AM, Green Mountain Club Headquarters, 4711 Waterbury-Stowe Rd., Waterbury Center. Learn about how air scent dogs are used in New England backcountry rescues. Air scent dog handlers and backcountry rescuers Stella Richards and Jennifer Vaughan will share how search and rescue dogs support humans in locating missing persons, afterwards demonstrating search and rescue skills with their canine partners Mookie and Harley. Free; register at <https://www.tickettailor.com/events/greenmountainclub/1109655>.

Sunday, February 11

Anne Connelly: The Blind Merchant of Burlington, 2:00 PM, Downtown Burlington High School, enter at 67 Cherry St., Burlington; nearby free parking at City Parking Garage on Cherry Street. This talk by John Thomas, Development Director, VABVI, tells the fascinating story of Anne Connelly (1889-1939), who came to Vermont as a blind adult, working for VABVI, introducing trained guide dogs and white canes, running her own business and supporting the blind community. Free; refreshments. Presented by the Chittenden County Historical Society.

Wednesday, February 14

Reflections on Redistricting, 7:00 PM, in person and live-streamed, Kellogg-Hubbard Library, 135 Main St., Montpelier. The League of Women Voters of Vermont (LWVVT) in partnership with Kellogg-Hubbard Library presents the fourth in its 2023-24 Lecture Series on Election Issues and Democracy, this season on structural and cultural issues that affect voter attitudes and election results. Tom Little, former state Representative and Chair of the Legislative Apportionment Board will cover Vermont's state constitution and statutory structure and process for periodic legislative district reapportionment and the roles of the Apportionment Board and the General Assembly, and will focus on where and how the process generated controversy over the last two cycles. Live-streamed by Onion River Community Access TV (<http://orcamedia.net/>).

Friday, February 16

VTSU Calcutta Night Fundraiser, 6:00 – 8:00 PM. VT State University, Johnson. The softball team at VTSU Johnson is doing their Calcutta fundraiser again — tickets this year are \$50; if you want to bring a guest it is an additional \$17 or they can just purchase a ticket for double the chance to win. The cost of ticket includes a dinner, but you don't need to be present to win! The Grand Prize is \$750. All the money we raise goes the team trip to Myrtle Beach at the end of February for spring training. To purchase a ticket, please contact slbsweet802@gmail.com.

Saturday, February 17

33rd Annual Lions Club Pancake Breakfast, 8:00 – 11:00 AM, United Church of Underhill, Park St., Underhill. Pancakes (regular and gluten-free) with local Vermont maple syrup, sausages, bacon, coffee, milk, and orange juice. Donations accepted; proceeds fund scholarships provided by the Jericho-Underhill Lions Club for deserving MMUHS seniors. Take-out available. Food donations are accepted and encouraged for our local food shelf.

Third Annual Westford Winter Festival, 11:30 AM – 4:00 PM, Westford Town Common, VT Rt. 128, Westford. For more information: WestfordWinterfest@gmail.com

Horse Parents 101 Free Informational Clinic, 6:00 – 8:00 PM, Blackrose Morgans, 906 Middle Rd., Colchester. Got a horse crazy kid at home begging for riding lessons, and you have no idea what to do about it? We're here to help. We'll talk about what a kid can learn around a farm, safety, how much it's going to cost, and what kind of commitment levels there are to help you and your family decide if this is the sport for you. Bring your questions and your sense of humor! No commitment to sign up for anything at Blackrose; grown-ups only, please; RSVP via <https://forms.gle/jUVRStQhucyJGar6>. Dress warm! The barn is fully indoors, but not fully heated. Light refreshments provided. Visit us at <http://www.blackrosemorgans.com> or <http://www.facebook.com/blackrosemorgans>. Questions? Email info@blackrosemorgans.com.

COMMUNITY COLUMNS



Woodpeckers forage for the insects and insect larva that colonize rotten wood, and as they forage they create the tree cavities that are nesting habitat for birds including chickadees, like the one shown above. PHOTO BY GARY STURGIS

Managing forests for birds

By Ethan Tapper
Chittenden County Forester

What does it mean to manage forests for birds?

While this may seem like a simple question, it's actually almost impossible to answer. What we call "birds" includes everything from ducks and gulls to hawks and herons, from woodpeckers to hummingbirds, from turkeys to turkey vultures. Vermont is home to more than 80 species of breeding birds — one of the most diverse breeding bird populations in the United States. Birds are an immensely diverse group of animals with incredibly variable habitat requirements.

For this article, let's narrow our scope to songbirds. What we call "songbirds" (known by ornithologists as *passerines*, or "perching birds") includes birds as big as a raven and as small as a chickadee, as common as a robin and as uncommon as a golden-winged warbler. Our songbirds include both year-round occupants and *neo-tropical* migrants — birds that overwinter in the tropics and migrate to Vermont to breed in the summer.

The first thing that songbirds need is food. Most songbirds are heavily dependent on insects and other arthropods, especially when feeding chicks in the spring and early summer. Our tens of thousands of species of native insects have complex relationships with many species of trees, shrubs, and herbaceous plants, as well as being associated with forests of different ages and structural conditions. Managing for insects in the woods means encouraging forests with tree species diversity and structural diversity, big old trees, a gap-filled forest canopy, dead wood, dead-standing trees ("snags"), cavity trees (trees with holes in them) and areas of young forest. Also key to promoting insect habitat (and thus songbird habitat) is controlling threats to forest diversity — especially non-native invasive plants and deer overpopulations.

While insects are a staple of most songbirds' diets throughout the year, another important food source is "mast"— seeds, nuts, fruits and berries. Neo-tropical songbirds will feed heavily on mast (especially "soft mast" like berries) as they prepare for migration, as will year-round occupants as they prepare for winter. Birds that spent the summer north of us will also snack on soft mast in our forests as they stop over in mid-migration,

fueling up for another long night of flying south.

Another important component of songbird habitat is breeding habitat. Just as different species of songbirds utilize different canopy layers (*understory*, *midstory*, *overstory*) for foraging, they also do so for nesting. A forest with a diverse, multi-layered canopy may have rose-breasted grosbeaks nesting in the overstory, red-eyed vireos nesting in the midstory, black-throated blue warblers nesting in the understory, and hermit thrushes nesting on the ground. Managing for structural diversity is key to providing breeding habitat for all of our songbirds.

Other important (and often under-appreciated) habitats for songbirds are big, old trees, snags, cavity trees, and dead wood. Old trees feature complex bark and canopy structure, providing unique foraging habitat for many birds — especially bark-foragers like nuthatches. Both old trees and snags are important food sources for woodpeckers, which forage for the insects and insect larva that colonize rotten wood. As they forage, woodpeckers create the tree cavities that are nesting habitat for birds from owls to chickadees to wood ducks. As old trees, snags, and cavity trees fall over, they create nesting and foraging habitat for birds like winter wrens, drumming logs for grouse, and seedbeds for future generations of trees.

So, what does it mean to manage forests for birds?

We can't answer this question without also answering a larger question: how do we manage for healthy, diverse forests that are functional and vibrant and rich with habitat for all of our native species? All of the habitat features mentioned here — species diversity, structural diversity, old trees, dead wood, snags, cavity trees — are key to improving habitat for all of our wildlife, and as we manage for them we simultaneously manage for forests that are resilient and adaptable in a changing climate, for old-growth characteristics, for water quality, for carbon, and much more. One of the joys of managing forests for songbirds is how by doing so we also create and sustain so many other vital things.

To learn more about managing forests for birds, check out Audubon Vermont's "Foresters for the Birds" program (<https://vt.audubon.org/conservation/foresters-birds/>)!

Ethan Tapper is the Chittenden County Forester for the Vermont Dept. of Forests, Parks and Recreation. See what he's been up to, check out his YouTube channel, sign up for his eNews and read articles he's written at <https://linktr.ee/ChittendenCountyForester>

Underhill history: Poker Hill Road

By Amy Dandurand, Underhill

In 1741, King George II assigned Benning Wentworth as governor of the crown colony of New Hampshire.

Wentworth was also put in charge of Fort Dummer on the opposite side of the Connecticut River. He subsequently used this to claim jurisdiction over the wilderness to the west and north when it was ceded to Britain from France in 1763, including lands which had already been promised to New York. During 1763 and 1764, 131 townships were laid out and chartered in the "Hampshire Grants," most of which were sold off to groups of land speculators aiming for profit rather than settlement. Underhill was among them, containing 23,040 acres which were sold for 1 cent/acre to a group of 65 investors.

King George III ascended to the throne in 1760, and he declared in 1764 that portions of the Hampshire Grants actually did belong to New York, including part of Underhill.

In 1785 the Underhill investor group met for the first time in Dorset, Vermont, to pay off New York for the contested claims, and to arrange for a survey of the entire town. The town then went through a series of four "Divisions" to parcel off lots of 100 acres each for sale, starting with the First Division of the most desirable farming land in 1785, and working out to the Fourth division of least desirable wooded hillsides in 1804.

The two main roads at that time were the "Swamp Road" (now

VT Rt. 15) and the "Hill Road" (now Poker Hill). The best farming lands lay along Poker Hill Road and along River Road to the east, so that's where the First Division lots were. The Second, Third, and Fourth Division lots were progressively farther out and up the hillsides. Poker Hill Road was the main road to Cambridge and the site of some of the earliest settlements, including the tavern in the present Brewer House, the cemetery and site of the first Congregational church near Poker Hill School, and the home of Udney Hay who was an active figure in Vermont and national politics from the 1780s to 1806.

More on history of Underhill, Poker Hill Road

By Susan Thomas, Underhill Historical Society

Poker Hill was Underhill's oldest settlement and the road was the main route to Cambridge. In the 1869 Beers Atlas, it's called just Hill Road. You can see that map, with a lot of other different historical names for Underhill roads, on the Historical Society website, along with several other historical maps: <https://www.uvm.edu/~hp206/2010/Underhill/histmap.html>.

And: Vermont Public's most recent road names episode has a great story about the origin of the Gert's Knob name at <https://www.vermontpublic.org/podcast/brave-little-state/2023-08-24/brave-little-states-6th-annual-brief-history-of-vermont-road-names>.

JURBIC: J.U.R.B. Inverting Club

By Bernie Paquette
January 2024

We are "LIFERS" out to observe and record life forms in our J.U.R.B. communities.

Join today and help us make our communities' biodiversity records grow while enjoying our diverse wildlife neighbors. No admission or dues. Residency in Jericho, Underhill, Richmond, and Bolton *not* required. Walks likely to start in March. Contact Bernie to be added to the JURBIC walk email distribution list.

Who: These walks are appropriate for nature enthusiast. They provide an opportunity and incentive to observe and record our wild neighbors in the community of life, with others having the same interest. Walks are inclusive.

What: Ecological inventory and monitoring walks. The purpose of the walks is to gather long-term data on the presence of life forms, invertebrates in particular, and record them on *iNaturalist* (including birds, amphibians, plants, and other life forms that may interest you — within our four communities).

When and where: Bernie Paquette and Maeve Kim facilitate the walks on an area or trail within the four communities on the second Saturday of each month, spring through fall. Duration one-two hours. Stay as little or as long as you like.

We may also offer a few *Backyard Bug Safari* meet ups.

How: Each observer enters their photographed observations into the *iNaturalist* database where data is stored and can be accessed by all, including scientists.

Bring a camera or a phone-camera and an interest in observing and recording nature in any of its life forms.

Optional for your property: Contact Bernie if you are interested in either a JURBIC group or just Bernie and Maeve to come to your property for a "Backyard Bug Safari" where we can help you record the invertebrates we observe there onto *iNaturalist*. (Duration approximately one hour).

If you have any questions or wish to have your name added to the walk announcement email distribution list, contact Bernie. View walk announcements and details at <https://vtbugeyed.blogspot.com/>.

How to upload onto *iNaturalist*: View the Lunchtime Learning Videos at <https://vimeo.com/>.

WORSHIP SERVICES

Mount Mansfield Unitarian Universalist Fellowship

Sunday services at MMUUF are held at 9:30 AM on the second and fourth Sundays of each month, September-June. Services are led by members of the fellowship and by invited guest speakers, including visiting UU ministers and leaders of other faiths. Each service explores a different topic. Worship, reflect, and sustain one another, within an inclusive spiritual community, built on values of honoring and affirming the worth of every person, striving for justice, participating in the world community, and respecting the natural web of existence. Services will be held at our Barn, located opposite Packard Road at 195 VT Rt. 15, Jericho, and also over Zoom; please contact info@mmuuf.org or 802-899-2558 for how to join virtually. Learn more at <https://mmuuf.org/> and www.uua.org.

Jericho United Methodist Church

Jericho United Methodist Church welcomes you to grow in Christ with us. We hold dear the United Methodist Church's motto: "Open doors. Open Hearts. Open Minds." We recognize that our faith journeys are all unique, just as we as individuals are all unique. Know that whoever you are, whatever you do, you are welcome here. We believe that we grow together or not at all. All are welcome! Join us Sundays at 10:00 AM. There will be music, prayer and message from our pastor, Rev. Taeseob Cho. Please contact Rev. Cho at the church phone number, 802-899-4288, or his email, umccho@gmail.com. Located next to the Jericho Town Hall on VT Rt. 15.

All are welcome at Good Shepherd, Jericho

You are invited to worship at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church on VT Rt. 15 at 9:00 AM every Sunday. The building is accessible — all are welcome! There are varied musical styles in worship services, including Folk, Contemporary, Celtic, Latin American, and traditional. Weekday online offerings include Centering Prayer. We are an open-minded Christian community with a focus on social justice issues, where people from different faith traditions, along with those who aren't sure where they belong or what they believe, seek the support of a spiritual home. We welcome you in the name and love of Christ. More information is at www.goodshephrdjericho.org.

United Church of Underhill

The United Church of Underhill is an active, vibrant community. We are young and old; straight and LGBTQIA; singles, couples, and families; believers, questioners, and questioning believers. We are an Open and Affirming and Reconciling church, which means all ARE truly welcome. We are the Old Fashioned Harvest Market Church, the Clutter Barn Church, and a church of fellowship, mission, and service. We gather to worship together virtually and in-person every Sunday morning at 10:00 AM for a traditional but lively service with music, and Sunday School and nursery for the children. We welcome you to join us for worship or just come in, be still, and contemplate your faith. Located at 7 Park St., Underhill. Pastor's office (with voicemail) 802-899-1722; church secretary email secretary@ucu.church. For instructions on joining worship from home, please see <https://unitedchurchofunderhill.com/joining-worship-from-home/>.

Second Congregational Church, Jeffersonville

The Second Congregational Church in Jeffersonville would like to invite all who feel called to join us for our online church services, Sundays at 10:00 – 11:00 AM, in person or on Zoom. Know that no matter who you are or where you are in life's journey, you are welcome at our church; or in this case, our web-space! <https://www.facebook.com/SecondCongregationalUCC>

Jericho Congregational Church

"An Historic Church Proclaiming an Eternal Message"
On the Green in Jericho Center, VT
Senior Pastor, David Coons and Youth Pastor, Pete Anderson
Sunday School at 8:30 AM for all ages
Fellowship time at 9:30 AM
Worship Service at 10:00 AM
Nursery care provided
Youth group 6:15 PM Sundays in our Sunday school building
802-899-4911; officejcc@comcast.net; www.jccvt.org

Calvary Episcopal Church

Calvary Episcopal is a welcoming, caring, Christian community called to live the Gospel of Jesus Christ, grow our spiritual gifts, and serve our neighbors. The Spirit is stirring in this little church. Come be a part of it! Calvary is located at 370 VT Rt. 15 in Jericho and worships Sundays at 9:30 AM. The parish administrator can be reached at calvarychurchjericho@gmail.com or 802-899-0453.

St. Thomas Catholic Church

St. Thomas Catholic Church in Underhill Center invites you to join us in person for the Holy Mass at 8:30 AM every Sunday. There is also a vigil Mass at 4:00 PM on Saturday evenings. Our priest, Fr. Richard Calapan, also celebrates Mass during the week, on Tuesdays at 6:30 PM and Fridays at 8:00 AM. Confessions are available on Tuesdays before Mass. Visit us at www.stthomasvt.com or call 802-899-4632 for more information.

Covenant Community Church — "Come As You Are!"

What is the Covenant? The unique character of the Covenant is expressed in the design of the logo — people united in Christ, people serving people in God's name, and people bringing people to Christ. The basis of the design is symbolic of four people facing north, south, east, and west. Note that each one's arms are outstretched, indicating the church's outreach in mission and service to the world. The four are part of the whole, yet their hands do not touch, symbolizing their unity in the freedom and evangelical warmth that characterizes the Covenant. The geometric arrangement of the four figures results in a cross-like pattern, representative of the center of our faith. The center circle symbolizes the unity and the bond of fellowship which we call "the Covenant."

Sunday: Bible Study, 9:00 – 9:45 AM; Worship Service: 10:00 – 11:00 AM; Coffee Hour: 11:00 AM – ?

Covenant Community Church, 1 Whitcomb Meadows Lane, Essex (VT Rt.15 across from John Leo's)

Waterville Union Church

We meet in person at 9:30 AM at the church; masks recommended. Zoom is only available when there is bad weather or illness of a speaker. We do not post our recorded services to Facebook. But information can be found at <https://www.facebook.com/watervilleunionchurch>, watervilleunionchurchvt@gmail.com; 32 Church St., Waterville.

LIBRARY NEWS



Westford kids can make Leather Bracelets on Thursday, February 8, afterschool: local crafter Helen Sterling will be teaching a class on how to make a magic mystery braided bracelet. Each participant will go home with at least one bracelet. Snack and all supplies will be provided. Attendees will ride the bus from school; pick up by 5:30 PM. Space is limited; sign up required, 802-878-5639 or westfordpubliclibrary@gmail.com.

PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

DEBORAH RAWSON MEMORIAL LIBRARY

Hours: Tuesday and Thursday, 10:00 AM – 8:00 PM; Wednesday and Friday, 10:00 AM – 6:00 PM; Saturday, 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM; Sunday: 1:00 – 4:00 PM.

Artist for the month of February is Monique Deweyea

Adult programs

Mondays and Wednesdays, 10:00 – 11:00 AM: Seated Tai Chi for Fall Prevention. Age Well and DRML are sponsoring Seated Tai Chi for Falls Prevention for those 60+ or those who have limiting conditions who would like to improve their balance, strength, and well-being. We will learn the Sun Style Form and ways to reduce stress and tension for you to apply when needed. The form can be adapted to your personal needs, so all can participate fully. In person or on ZOOM from the comfort of your own home. Zoom link will be provided. Registration required, please contact Certified Instructor Jo Osborne at joannosborne2@gmail.com.

Representatives Trevor Squirrel and Edey Graning will be holding monthly legislative updates for Jericho and Underhill residents at the Library on Thursdays, February 15, March 14, April 11, and May 9, 6:00 – 7:00 PM. We hope to have remote attendance capability for these updates and will provide that information as we get closer to the event date. If you have specific questions or would like to know what is being discussed at the statehouse, please join us for this conversation.

Sunday, February 4, 2:00 PM: Sunday Music Series: Judson Kimble and Sarah King. Judson and Sarah began jamming together in 2017, and realized that together they write music not quite like either would create on their own. Judson and Sarah's music ranges from fiddle tunes to ambient music. Their compositions jump from Spain to Ireland, from jazz to classical, from mellow to driving, borrowing bits from any tradition that can lend variety, nuance, or groove. Guided by a plethora of musical influences, they write original acoustic music characterized by rhythm, flow and contrast.

Tuesday, February 6, 10:30 AM (or whenever you would like to leave): Cribbage. Underhill/Jericho Cribbage Group meets in the program room at DRML on the first Tuesday of the month. All levels are welcome, we will split up into pairs, singles, and three-hand depending on the turnout. Please bring your own deck and board in case we need them.

Thursdays, February 8, 22, 6:00 – 8:00 PM: Crafters Group. Join us in the fireplace room for a couple of hours of crafting and conversation with your neighbors. All are welcome, beginner to expert, in any craft you can transport. Hope to meet you there! Questions? Contact Amy Tower, 802-355-9671 or atowerinvt@gmail.com, or Julie Hehir, 802-343-0034 or juliehhehir@comcast.net.

Sunday February 11, 2:00 – 4:00 PM: "In celebration of Snowflake Bentley's Birthday." Jericho's own Wilson "Snowflake" Bentley (<https://www.jerichohistoricalociety.org/snowflake-bentley.html>) was born February 9, 1865. The Jericho Historical Society, in cooperation with DRML, host Sue Richardson, Bentley's great-grandniece and Bentley family historian. Her presentation will focus not only on the extraordinary gift that Bentley gave us through the beauty of his photographs, but also the struggles he faced in perfecting his process, and in gaining acceptance from the scientific community as well as his family and friends. Get to know him on a more personal level through photographs, family stories, and his writings.

Tuesday, February 13, 7:00 PM: Deborah Rawson Book Lovers, a monthly adult book discussion group. This month's selection is *Wintering: the power of rest and retreat in difficult times* by Katherine May. New members are always welcome to drop in on any meeting, always the second Tuesday of the month. For more information on how to join, contact Christine@cstaffa.com.

Thursday, February 15, 7:00 PM: Board of Trustees meeting. This meeting will be held in-person. A virtual meeting is available for those who wish to remain remote. Please contact Holly (drawsonmemlib@gmail.com) to receive the link.

Youth programs — ongoing

Tuesdays, 10:30 AM: Baby Toddler Storytime [ages 0-5] Come on down to the story corner and get cozy with tickles, bounces, songs, rhymes and stories!

Fridays (except February 23), 11:00 AM: Stories and Songs with Beth and David London [ages 0-5] Come dance, sing, and play with Beth and David! A reminder, they will not be here during school vacation on Friday, February 23.

Youth programs — here is what's going on this month! All programs meet in person at DRML, unless otherwise specified.

Fridays, February 2, 16, 3:00 – 4:00 PM: LEGO Club. [ages 6+] Build a snowflake, a snowman, or a ski slope! Use a challenge card for inspiration or flip through the LEGO Ideas book. Any way you look at it, there's no wrong way to LEGO! Please sign up for this very popular program when you call, visit or email the library.

Tuesday, February 6, 3:00 – 4:00 PM: Design a Skier STEM Challenge [ages 6+] Using only some aluminum foil, tape, and craft sticks, build a skier! Which design will make it down the slope fastest? Who will go farthest? Will they even be able to stay standing? Find out when you join us for this STEM challenge.

Thursdays, February 8, 22, 3:00 – 5:00 PM: Animation Club [ages 8+] With a few props, a camera, and a whole lot of patience you can make a stop motion movie! We also have tablets with animating apps to try your hand drawn animations. Please sign up for this very popular program when you call, visit or email the library.

Friday, February 9, 3:00 – 4:00 PM: Snowflake Crafts [all ages] Celebrate Snowflake Bentley's birthday with a variety of snowflake crafts fit for all ages. No sign up needed!

Saturday, February 10, 10:30 AM – 12:00 PM: Read to Wyatt [all ages] Cozy up to therapy dog Wyatt and read him a story. He loves Elephant and Piggie, but is happy to listen to anything you want to read. Sign up for a 15-minute spot when you call, email or visit the library.

Tuesday, February 13, 3:00 – 4:00 PM: Paper Bag Stars [ages 8+] Decorate some paper bags, cut some designs into them, and then craft them into a lovely paper star to decorate your room!

Thursday, February 15, 3:00–4:30 PM: Minecraft Social [ages 8+] Come make new friends, or hang out with old buddies while playing Minecraft! Please bring your own device if you have one. The library does have a couple tablets so those without a device can play too!

Tuesday, February 27, 1:00 – 3:00 PM: Nintendo Switch Games [ages 8+] Catch up with friends during the break when you come to play the library's Nintendo switch games like Mario Kart, Super Smash Bros, and Sports Party.

Thursday, February 29, 10:30 AM – 12:30 PM: Board Game Petting Zoo [all ages] Break up the school break by visiting the library and playing some games. Any game that is on the shelf will be available to play, and Ms. Abbey will be on hand to help you figure out the rules. We have games for everyone from preschool on up!

Please visit drml.org or call 802-899-4962 for the most up-to-date information. Contact information: rawsonlibrary@drml.org; www.drml.org; 802-899-4962.

JERICHO TOWN LIBRARY

New hours: Tuesdays 10:00 AM – 7:00 PM; Wednesdays, Thursdays, Fridays 10:00 AM – 6:00 PM; Saturdays 10:00 AM – 1:00 PM. We are completely mask-optional and fully reopened.

Interested in becoming more involved in your local library and community!? Jericho Town Library (JTL) is looking for a community member to join its board of trustees. Each trustee is tasked with being an advocate for the library and its mission to "enrich the community and inspire lifelong learning." Board members serve a four-year term and attend monthly meetings, held on the second Tuesday of each month. Interested individuals can contact bethdavis723@gmail.com, or JTL Director Catherine Bass at catherine@jerichotownlibraryvt.org.

Please be advised that our historic building is not currently ADA-accessible and has a set of four steps leading up to the building entrance. Our second floor is only accessible via a staircase.

Adult events

Children's events

Thursdays, 10:00 – 10:30 AM: Storytime Yoga.

Thursdays, 10:30 – 12:00 PM: Playgroup.

Saturdays, 9:00 AM: Baby Storytime, followed by Coffee and Conversation (for the adults).

Don't have a library card yet? Just drop by; getting a library card takes only a minute! We just need some quick contact information from you and you'll be all set, no ID or anything else needed.

Find us on Facebook and Instagram (@[jerichotownlibrary](https://www.facebook.com/jerichotownlibrary)) for regular updates on our programs, services, and collections. 802-899-4686, library@jerichotownlibraryvt.org, www.jerichotownlibraryvt.org.

VARNUM MEMORIAL LIBRARY JEFFERSONVILLE

Please check our website <http://www.varnumlibrary.org> for the most up-to-date offerings and information.

Tuesdays, 10:00 AM: Story Time.

Tuesdays, 3:00 – 4:00 PM: Crafternoon.

Wednesdays, 10:00 AM: Story Time.

Wednesdays, 9:00 – 11:00 AM: Mobile Rural Resource Navigator.

Wednesdays, 3:00 – 4:00 PM: Crafternoon.

Wednesdays, 12:00 – 1:00 PM: Kids Cooking Club.

Thursdays, 10:00 AM: Coffee and Conversations.

As always, please contact the library for more information or visit our website: <http://www.varnumlibrary.org>, 802-644-2117, or varnumrequests@gmail.com.

Hours: Sunday/Monday, closed (unless otherwise posted); Tuesday-Thursday, 9:00 AM – 6:00 PM; Friday/Saturday, 9:00 AM – 3:00 PM.

WESTFORD PUBLIC LIBRARY

Library hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 10:00 AM – 7:00 PM, Wednesdays and Fridays 1:00 – 7:00 PM, and Saturdays 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM, no appointments needed. Patrons of all ages are welcome; children under 12 must be accompanied by an adult. If you feel you need curbside service, for whatever reason, please email Bree at the library (westfordpubliclibrary@gmail.com) and we can work something out. We want nothing to impede you from using the library.

Wednesday, February 15: Library closes early at 5:00 PM.

Saturday, February 17: WinterFest! All kinds of fun from 11:30 AM – 4:00 PM; library open late until 4:00 PM.

Have you tried Biblio+? Sign up with your library card at www.biblioplus.com to start streaming their selection of films and TV series today! The biblio+ app is available for download on Apple devices (iPhone, iPad, Apple TV), Android phone and tablet, Amazon Fire TV, and Roku, or stream directly from www.biblioplus.com.

Blind Date with a Book! All month long, check out our display of "blind date" books — all you get is a very brief summary. Will you find a new favorite author? Will you have a new reading experience? Spice up your reading by checking out a "blind date" book — take a chance on a new book!

Tuesdays, 4:00 – 5:00 PM: Crafting with Marianne.

Thursdays, 4:00 – 5:00 PM: LEGO Club. Grades 1-4, sign up required (call or email). Kids will ride the bus (with note from home and EWSD transportation form) to the library each week. More information on bussing to those who sign up. Snack included. We will do a combination of free building, building challenges, and have lots of LEGO fun! Space is limited, so plan to attend weekly and sign up early. Priority will be giving to kids who did not get in the first session.

Thursdays, 11:30 AM, inside the library: Early Literacy Storytime. We sing songs, read stories, move and do crafts! No sign up needed, all ages are welcome. February 1: Groundhogs. February 8: Valentine's Day. February 15: Birds. February 22: Teeth. February 29: LEAP year.

First Thursday of the month (February 1, March 7), 6:30 –

8:00 PM: Makers' Group. All types of crafters are welcome to attend. Bring projects to show off, share expertise, and enjoy each others' company.

Tuesdays, February 6, 20, 10:30 AM – 12:00 PM: Coffee and Cards. Whatever your game, we will play it! Meet with folks at the library for coffee, conversation, and cards — a great opportunity to socialize and keep those card playing skills sharp. Open to anyone, especially looking to connect with seniors. Please be prompt so we can include all in play.

Saturday, February 3, 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM: National Take Your Child to the Library Day. Balloons, stickers, and more!

Wednesday, February 7, 7:00 – 9:00 PM: Tea Blending Class. Join local herbalist Amber Kennedy for an evening of tea blending. Sip hot tea, learn the benefits of herbs, discover how to concoct a delicious and therapeutic cup of tea and make your own custom blend to take home along with recipes to create more! Sign up early, as space is limited.

Thursday, February 8, afterschool – 5:30 PM: Leather Bracelets with Helen. Local crafter Helen Sterling will be teaching a class on how to make a magic mystery braided bracelet. Each participant will go home with at least one bracelet. Snack and all supplies will be provided. Attendees will ride the bus from school. Sign up (email or call) required, space is limited.

Thursdays, February 8, 22, 6:30 – 8:00 PM: Table Top Game Night. Meets the second and fourth Thursdays, hosted by avid table top gamers Bill & Martha McClintock who will bring games from their extensive home game collection to share with those who come. This is a new group, so we will see how it goes. Please come to make things like this possible. Snacks provided. Bring your own beverages.

Friday, February 9, 6:00 – 8:00 PM: Essex High School Art Opening. Refreshments provided. Essex High School Art 3, Art 4, and AP Art students selected pieces made with a variety of mediums like oil, acrylic, watercolor, and digital; as well as pieces that explore a variety of themes — from masculinity and childhood to pets and outer space. Each piece is displayed with pride. As you explore the exhibit, we hope that you take some time to really admire each piece.

Wednesday, February 14, 7:00 – 9:00 PM: Trustees Meeting.

Thursday, February 15: Library closes early at 5:00 PM.

Thursday, February 15, 6:00 – 8:00 PM, on Zoom: Meet the Candidates for Selectboard. Zoom link is <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85912977083>. See the Westford newsletter for more information and how to ask questions. This is an informational meeting, not a debate.

Saturday, February 17: WinterFest! All kinds of fun from 11:30 AM – 4:00 PM; library open late until 4:00 PM. The library is offering a story walk around the Common and the Winter Passport Program is back! Get your passport stamped and redeem for a chance at several gift cards to the Westford Store.

Wednesday, February 21, 7:00 – 8:00 PM: Adult Book Group, reading *Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow* by Gabrielle Charbonnet. Sam and Sadie — two friends, often in love, but never lovers — become creative partners in a dazzling and intricately imagined world of video game design, where success brings them fame, joy, tragedy, duplicity, and, ultimately, a kind of immortality. It is a love story, but not one you have read before. These childhood friends borrow money, beg favors, and before even graduating college they have created their first blockbuster, *Ichigo*. Overnight, the world is theirs. Not even 25 years old, Sam and Sadie are brilliant, successful, and rich, but these qualities won't protect them from their own creative ambitions or the betrayals of their hearts. Spanning 30 years, from Cambridge, MA to Venice Beach, CA and lands in between and far beyond, this book examines the multifarious nature of identity, disability, failure, the redemptive possibilities in play, and above all our need to connect: to be loved and to love. Print copies available at the library, ebook and audiobooks are available on Libby.

The Westford Food Shelf is now open twice a month, on the first Wednesday of each month (February 7, March 6), 4:30 – 5:30 PM, on the third Saturday (February 17), 8:00 – 9:00 AM. With increased openings, they need more inventory! The Westford Public Library has food collection bins at all curbside pickups from now on. These bins are for non-perishable food and household items.

Find us on Facebook (www.facebook.com/westfordpubliclibrary) and Twitter (www.twitter.com/WestfordVT). Bree Drapa, Librarian. 802-878-5639; www.westfordpubliclibrary.org; westfordpubliclibrary@gmail.com.

FAIRFAX COMMUNITY LIBRARY

Please sign up at least one week before the program date; all events free unless noted. Please contact library@fairfaxvt.org or 802-849-2420 to register for events! For up-to-date information about programs, visit our website www.fairfaxvtlibrary.org where you can also find a link to the interactive Google calendar.

Youth events

Tuesday, February 6, 3:00 PM: Lego Club. Kids ages 6+ enjoy themed Lego play after school. Please register.

Tuesdays, February 13, 27, 5:30 PM: D&D Club. Dragons! Danger! Dice! The library is now hosting a middle school D&D club. Join our DM, Nic, and create a character to take on exciting magical adventures! No prior Dungeons & Dragons knowledge is necessary, and players of all experience levels are welcome. Materials provided. Grades 5-8. Club meets every other Tuesday. Please contact fairfaxlibrarian@gmail.com or 802-849-2420.

Mondays, February 5-26, 3:30 PM: Chess Club. Chess Club is starting up again! Learning chess has been proven to have many benefits: building creativity, problem solving, and concentration. Ages 7+. Space is limited, so please register! Please contact fairfaxlibrarian@gmail.com or 802-849-2420.

Wednesday, February 7, 3:00 PM: Collage Art. Use bits and pieces of old magazines, newspapers, and cards to create something new! Materials provided. Ages 8+ Please contact fairfaxlibrarian@gmail.com or 802-849-2420.

Wednesdays, February 7, 14, 21, 28, 10:30 AM: Preschool Story Time. Join us for stories and songs! Children's books will be available to check out as well. Before you leave, pick up an activity to make at home!

Wednesday, February 14, 1:00 PM: LED Rose Bouquet. Make a bouquet of roses that light up! Materials provided. Ages 8+ Please contact fairfaxlibrarian@gmail.com or 802-849-2420.

Wednesday, February 21, 3:00 PM: Yarn Letters. Create some

Libraries continued on page 9

MISCELLANEOUS NEWS

Businesses called to sponsor March 30 MMU Project Grad event

Project Graduation is a chaperoned, all-night, alcohol- and drug-free event hosted by students' parents. It was started in Maine in 1979 after the tragic alcohol-related deaths of seven recent graduates during commencement season. Project Grad has grown into a community-wide celebration of our students.

MMU has been hosting Project Grad for 29 years, held on graduation night from 7:00 PM – 6:00 AM the next morning to provide an evening of safety and fun for students to celebrate and make memories during this very exciting time of their lives.

As volunteers committed to raising funds for this special event, we are holding a Casino Night on Saturday, March 30. We are looking for local businesses to sponsor the game tables at the event. The cost to sponsor a table starts at \$150. Businesses who sponsor will be advertised at the tables they sponsor, as well as on social media and in community communications. In addition, the business will receive two free tickets to our event. Your donation will advertise your business while supporting this event and these graduates.

Donations can be mailed to Mount Mansfield Union High School (Attn. Project Grad Donations), 211 Browns Trace, Jericho, VT 05465. We are also happy to come and pick any donations up from your business. You can call Krista Parisi,

203-671-4540, or email projectgrad@mmuvsd.org to schedule pickup of your donation. We ask that we receive all donations by Friday, February 23.

The Project Graduation effort is the community at its best — people and local businesses with diverse backgrounds working closely together toward providing for the safety and well-being of these young adults as they transition to the next stage of their lives. Please consider a gift or donation to assist in this endeavor.

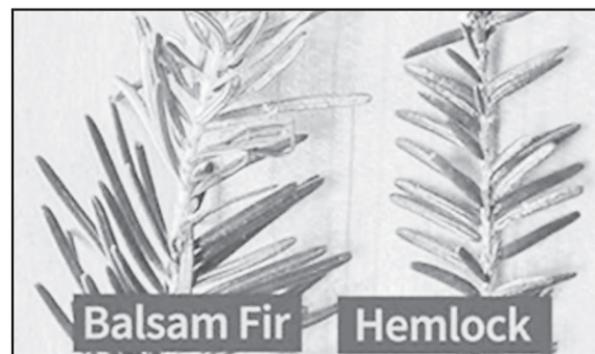
The graduating class of 2024 of Mount Mansfield Union High School thanks you for your consideration and support!

Suffering from cabin fever?

Get out of the house and join your neighbors at the 33rd Annual Lions Club Pancake Breakfast, Saturday, February 17, 8:00 – 11:00 AM at the United Church of Underhill, Park St., Underhill. Pancakes (both regular and gluten-free!) with real Vermont (local) maple syrup, sausages, bacon, coffee, milk, and orange juice — a meal to enjoy with neighbors and friends that you don't have to cook! Suggested donations accepted; proceeds fund scholarships provided by the Jericho-Underhill Lions Club for deserving Mount Mansfield Union High School seniors. Take-out is available.

Also, help out your needy neighbors: food donations are accepted and encouraged for our local food shelf.

Miscellaneous continued on page 10



A stand of hemlock can be a quiet, mysterious place in the forest. Some of these tall, majestic trees have been known to live up to 1000 years. Let the Vermont Land Trust help you spot hemlocks (great information and photos at <https://vt.org/2023/12/14/how-to-identify-hemlock-trees/>), and distinguish them from white pine with similar bark, and from balsam fir with similar needles — and identify woolly adelgid, an invasive insect killing hemlocks in southern Vermont, and moving north. If you're looking for a place to test your hemlock ID skills, visit the trails at Brewster Uplands in Cambridge (<https://vt.org/featured-properties/brewster-uplands/>). PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Libraries continued from page 8

colorful yarn wrapped letters! Materials provided. Ages 8+ Please contact fairfaxlibrarian@gmail.com or 802-849-2420.

Wednesday, February 28, 3:00 PM: DIY Zoetrope. Learn how to make one of the oldest moving picture devices, and draw your own mini-movie! Materials provided. Ages 8+ Please contact fairfaxlibrarian@gmail.com or 802-849-2420.

Adult events

Saturday, February 17, 10:30 AM: Needle Felting with Nicole Bachand. Join Nicole to learn the basics of needle felting, and make a fuzzy creation! Materials provided. Please contact fairfaxlibrarian@gmail.com or 802-849-2420.

Tuesdays, February 6, 13, 20 & 27, 5:30 PM: Mandarin Club with Keyuan Xiang. Interested in learning Mandarin, or just want to know more about Chinese culture? Join Keyuan Xiang at the library for lessons! You don't need to come to each club meeting, but registration is required for the day or days you would like to attend. Please contact fairfaxlibrarian@gmail.com or 802-849-2420.

Thursday, February 22, 4:00 PM: Library Book Club. The book this month is The 100 Year Old Man Who Climbed out the Window and Disappeared by Jonas Jonasson. Book club will meet in the library. A Zoom link will be available for anyone who wants to attend remotely. If you would like to borrow a copy of the book or request the Zoom link, please contact fairfaxlibrarian@gmail.com or 802-849-2420. All are welcome!

Hours: Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays 10:00 AM – 5:30 PM (Fridays, 4:15 PM); Tuesdays and Thursdays 9:00 AM – 7:00 PM; and Saturdays 9:00 AM – 1:00 PM.

For up-to-date info about programs, visit our website www.fairfaxvtlibrary.org, where you can also find a link to the interactive Google calendar. 75 Hunt Street, Fairfax; 802-849-2420.

RICHMOND LIBRARY

Seeking Artists and Collectors — RFL is currently scheduling art shows for our walls and display case in 2024. If you have framed pieces (art, photography) and would like to schedule a show, contact us to choose your month. No professional experience is necessary, just a willingness to share your talent. We're also seeking interesting collections for our foyer display case. If you are a collector of thimbles, old books, feathers, nutcrackers, or anything else that would fit in our case that you would be willing to share, we would love to hear from you. Call or email the library, 802-434-3036 or library@richmondvt.gov.

Children's Art from the Ukraine: On loan from The Fermata Arts Foundation in Avon, CT, we will be displaying 16 drawings done by students of the Vasylykivskiy Children's Art School in Izyum, Kharkiv region, Ukraine. Ranging in age from 9-14, students created a piece in support of Fermata's mission of promoting peace through arts and culture.

Saturday, February 3, 11:00 AM: Staycation in Space! NASA Solar System Ambassador Bridget Kimsey will be at the library on for the first in a series of three interactive space programs as we explore our universe and get ready for the big 2024 Total Solar Eclipse. Staycation in Space focuses on our solar system and includes live visuals from NASA's Eyes and fun take-home activities. The second program will be Friday, February 23 at the Huntington Public Library and the third on Sunday, March 3 at Richmond Free Library. These programs include activities for kids, teens and adults. No registration necessary.

Wednesday, March 13: Vermont Reads: Last Night at the Telegraph Club. RFL joins libraries and community groups around Vermont in a big community facilitated discussion of this novel by Malinda Lo. The book is suited for teens and adults and focuses on a Chinese American older teencoming of age in 1950s San Francisco. Copies of the book are available to take home (to keep or to borrow) now. There will be a free swing dancing lesson on Friday, April 5 and community art with Radiate Art Space later in April. Join us as we explore themes of Chinese American immigrant experience, McCarthyism, and queerness in mid-century America.

Saturday, February 24, 11:00 AM: The Great Puzzle Challenge. Make a team of up to three to four people and compete to see who can assemble their fun 500-piece jigsaw puzzle fastest! Register in advance, 802-434-3036 or library@richmondvt.gov.

Monday-Tuesday, February 26-27, 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM: MMCTV Video Workshop for Middle School Students. We are once again partnering with local community media center MMCTV to offer the ninth annual video workshop for middle school students during the February school vacation. This year the theme will be It Happened at the Library. We will imagine plausible and fanciful scenes set in the library and produce short videos using a variety of filming techniques. Students ages 10-14 are invited to register for this fun, free workshop offering hands-on filming and editing experience. Time will be split between the

library and the television studio. Space is limited so call or email the library to register, 802-434-3036 or library@richmondvt.gov.

Saturday, February 10, 12:00 PM: Cookbook Club. Meets monthly on second Saturdays. The group will discuss and eat recipes from Ethiopia, by Yohanis Gebreyesus. Space is limited and registration is required; contact Suzanne, skrohn@richmondvt.gov, for information.

Tuesday mornings, February 6-April 9: AARP Volunteer Tax Preparers. Volunteers working with AARP are meeting with seniors to prepare tax returns in the library community room. Call the library (802-434-3036) to schedule an appointment.

Tuesday, February 13, 6:00 PM: (Mostly) Fiction Book Group. Join us in the Mezzanine Lounge to discuss Such a Fun Age by Kiley Reid. Contact Gwen Landis (802-434-5012; gwennie1972@yahoo.com) for information on joining this group.

Thursday, February 15, 7:00 PM: Mystery Book Group. Join us in the Mezzanine Lounge to discuss Man in the Queue (Alan Grant, #1) by Josephine Tey. Contact Maureen Parent (802-434-2055, msparent@gmavt.net) with any questions.

Wednesday, February 21, 4:00 PM: Climate Action Book Discussion: The Heat Will Kill You First. Richmond Free Library and Richmond Climate Action Committee invite you to read and discuss The Heat Will Kill You First: Life and Death on a Scorched Planet by Jeff Goodell. This book focuses on the global impacts of heat and offers advice on how we as individuals and communities can adapt. Books are available now.

Weekly/Monthly Children's Programs

Weekly programs at the RFL run from September-May and follow the MMUUSD schedule for vacation days and weather closure days.

Wednesdays, 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM: Storytime/Playgroup. The good times kick off with stories and action songs in the Library Community Room and then the toys come out for free play with friends new and old. Co-sponsored by the Library and the Lund Center. Kids infant-five years and their grownups are invited to join the fun.

Mondays, 10:30 AM: Baby Laptime. This short, active story time is for our youngest little book lovers and their grownups. We'll look at picture books, sing simple songs, do some rhyming and bouncing and sometimes get out the shakers and scarves. This program is designed for infants and early toddlers.

Third Saturday (February 17) of every month, September-May, 10:30 AM: Hora del Cuento (Spanish Storytime). Join native Spanish speakers Chichi and Eva in the Community Room for 30 minutes of picture book stories and rhymes. This program is a great introduction to Spanish for young children and a nice way for parents of older children placed in the Spanish Immersion Program to hear the language.

Snowshoes to Lend — Patrons with valid library cards from Richmond or Huntington may now borrow snowshoes at the Richmond Free Library for a week at a time. Adult and youth sizes as well as poles are available. Snowshoes were purchased by the Richmond Recreation Committee (comprising members from Huntington, Bolton, and Richmond) through a grant from Rise VT. Call or email the Library for more details (802-434-3036 or library@richmondvt.gov), or stop by to borrow some, and get out and enjoy the winter trails with your family.

Trustees Meetings are on the second Monday of the month (February 12, March 11) via Zoom until further notice. All meetings are open to the public.

What can you borrow from the Library? Borrow books (fiction, non-fiction, memoir), magazines, DVDs, Playaways, early readers, board books, graphic novels (for all ages, audiobooks on CD, Spanish language books for kids, chapter books, comic books, Vox books (picture books that talk!), STEAM kits, storytime bags, a sewing machine, a blood pressure monitor, lawn games, snowshoes and poles, a firewood moisture meter, and an appliance voltage meter.

Library hours: open for in-person browsing and pick-up at the circulation desk on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday, 10:00 AM – 5:00 PM; Wednesday, 10:00 AM – 8:00 PM; and Saturday, 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM. Contact us at 802-434-3036 (leave a message after hours) or rfl@gmavt.net.

Richmond Free Library, 201 Bridge St., P.O. Box 997, Richmond, VT 05477; 802-434-3036; fax 802-434-3223; <http://richmondfreelibraryvt.org>.

BROWNELL LIBRARY, ESSEX JUNCTION

Through Saturday, February 3: Community Cookbook Challenge. Share a favorite family recipe and a short, three- to five-sentence story which includes the preparation or sharing of that food, or the importance of that food to your family and/or culture. The best story wins a set of cookie cutters and cookie decorations. Submit stories at <https://forms.gle/Qx78GLoRm69nviYB6> or in the events calendar. Submissions

will be included in a community cookbook to be shared in the library. This challenge is inspired by this year's Vermont Read, Last Night at the Telegraph Club by Malinda Lo. You can pick up a copy of this book in the library. All ages.

Contact us at frontdesk@brownelllibrary.org or 802-878-6955.

Brownell Library, 6 Lincoln St., Essex Junction. Contact Main Desk 802-878-6955, Youth Desk 802-878-6956, Reference Desk 802-878-6957, or frontdesk@brownelllibrary.org.

ESSEX FREE LIBRARY

State distribution of at-home COVID-19 tests has ended as of mid-December. Individuals may use this link to order tests: <https://special.usps.com/testkits>.

Free gun locks are available at the front desk while supplies last. Sponsored by the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Vermont. No library card or ID needed.

For all ages

Saturday, February 10, 10:00 – 11:00 AM: Meet Sled Dogs. Musher Milagro Turner is back with her beautiful and friendly sled dogs! Meets in the back garden.

Friday, Saturday, Monday, February 9, 10, 12, all day while supplies last: Free Book Giveaway in the Community Room. Did you know the library adds about 75 new items every month? Every so often we need to make room for new items to keep the collection fresh and relevant. These "weeded" books are not included in the Book Sale. Here's your chance to stock up on these discarded treasures — fiction, nonfiction, paperbacks, adult's and children's items. Take as many as you like!

DIY Puzzle Swap: puzzles must have all pieces and container must be taped closed. Check out the bench in the lobby for current selections!

Children's area

Exploration Station — ongoing. See the blue table for this week's challenge.

Mondays, 11:00 AM: Musical Mondays with Miss Noreen. Rock'n'read with Miss Noreen!

Wednesdays, 11:00 AM: Storytime with Ms. Emily. Stories and songs for young patrons.

Wednesdays, 3:00 – 4:00 PM: LEGO Club. Come and check out our great collection of LEGOs! No pre-registration necessary. Best for ages 9 and up, or 6 and up with an adult helper.

Thursdays, 3:00 – 4:00 PM: Pokemon Club. Open to grades 4-8. Pokemon decks available for kids to play the card games, as well as some themed crafts available. Participants are invited to bring their own handheld videogame devices or tablets to play their own Pokemon games or Pokemon Go.

Fridays while supplies last: Grab'n'Go Craft Kits.

Adult area

Thursday, February 1, 12:00 – 1:00 PM: Noontime Book Group in February. Trust by Hernan Diaz, Winner of the 2023 Pulitzer Prize. Trust engages the reader in a quest for the truth while confronting the deceptions that often live at the heart of personal relationships, the reality-warping force of capital, and the ease with which power can manipulate facts.

Saturday, February 3, 11:00 AM – 12:00 PM: Zentangle with Julia Davenport. For adults. Enjoy this beautiful art form that welcomes slowing down and tapping into your creativity. No prior art experience needed. Register through the website.

Monday, February 5, while supplies last: Noreen's Creative Card Kits. For adults. Makes two cards.

Wednesdays, 1:00 – 2:00 PM: French Club for Adults. Voulez-vous pratiquer le français ensemble? (Do you want to practice French together?) Designed for adults with some basic (Level 1) French skills who want to improve their French conversation skills and expand their French vocabulary. Meets in the Mezzanine.

Tuesdays, February 20, 6:00 – 7:00 PM: Evening Zentangle with Julia Davenport. For adults. Enjoy this beautiful art form that welcomes slowing down and tapping into your creativity. No prior art experience needed. Register through the website.

Tuesdays, 10:30 – 11:30 AM: Tech Time. Drop in with your device and your questions. We'll do our best to answer them! No appointment needed.

Tuesdays, 1:00 – 3:00 PM: Drop-In Needlecraft Group. Enjoy chatting with other crafters as you work on your project.

Fridays, 1:00 – 3:00 PM: Rummikub for adults.

Museum Passes are available for year 'round fun!

Digital resources: <https://essexfreelibrary.org/DigitalResources>

Social media: check us out on Facebook and Instagram for updates on events!

Essex Free Library, 1 Browns River Rd., Essex; 802-879-0313; @essexfreelibrary; website <https://www.essexfreelibrary.org/>.

Miscellaneous continued from page 9

LRSWMD operations in unpredictable weather

From Lamoille Regional Solid Waste Management District
As we're in this season of unpredictable weather, please be aware that Lamoille Regional Solid Waste Management District (LRSWMD) sites may experience delayed openings or unexpected closures. Given the frequent hazardous weather forecasts, some of our sites may be affected.

You can always check real-time operation updates by calling our Operating Status Line, 802-441-6639, checking our website www.LRSWMD.org, or checking our Facebook page, <http://www.facebook.com/LRSWMD>. You can also sign up for our email list by scrolling to the bottom of our homepage on the website.

Please note that we post information as soon as possible, accounting for time to assess the situation and for cell/internet service.

Thank you in advance for your patience and understanding, and please stay safe.

Vermont Master Naturalist program starting April 2024

Join a community of naturalists and learn to read the local landscape over a series of five place-based field trips, from geology and glacial history to plants and wildlife, human land use history, and more. New "Champlain Hills" VMN program (Underhill, Cambridge, Fletcher, Fairfax and Westford) runs on Saturdays, April 13, May 11, June 15, September 28, and December 7. Find applications and more information at <http://www.vermontmasternaturalist.org/champlain-hills>.

Another way to learn more and meet VMN instructors: Join the Champlain Hills Program Coordinator Sophie Mazowita for a winter wildlife tracking walk at the Krusch Nature Preserve on Sunday, February 18 at 10:00 AM. Email events@kruschnaturepreserve.org to pre-register.

Join us at the next Lamoille Legislative Breakfast February 5

By Pat Ripley, LEDC

With the 2024 Legislative Session in full swing, Lamoille Economic Development Corporation (LEDC) and Lamoille Chamber of Commerce are pleased to invite you to our next Legislative Breakfast event coming to Stowe on Monday, February 5, 8:00 – 9:30 AM at 67 S. Main St., Stowe.

To learn more and register, go online to <https://lamoilleeconomy.org/breakfast/>.

The Stowe breakfast is the second of four events offering an opportunity to hear from our Lamoille County representatives and learn about what they are working on at the Statehouse. Attendees will also be allowed a chance to ask questions about the topics on their minds.

Last year was the first time we held an event of this kind since before the pandemic. These breakfasts were well attended, and we expect good interest again this year. Be sure to register early!

The breakfast series continues Monday, March 11 in Johnson and Monday April 15 in Jeffersonville. Each event begins with a light breakfast and coffee from local restaurants, followed by a short briefing by the legislators and an audience Q&A.

VEC Board seat open for West Zone

Are you interested in making a direct contribution to an affordable and clean energy future? Vermont Electric Co-op is accepting petitions from eligible candidates for four board of directors' seats, including the West Zone At-Large seat, that are up for election in May.

In order to run for the board, a candidate must be a VEC member and may not be employed by the cooperative. Candidates must have a principal residence within VEC service territory and in the district or zone they are running to represent. Directors are elected to serve four-year terms. The board generally meets in the afternoon on the last Tuesday of each month, either at VEC's main office in Johnson or virtually via teleconference. Directors receive a stipend and mileage reimbursement for attending meetings and have training opportunities to learn more about energy issues and the cooperative utility model.

The West Zone At-Large seat that is open in 2024 represents Bolton, Cambridge, Essex, Fairfax, Huntington, Jericho, Johnson, Richmond, Underhill, Waterville, Westford, Williston, and more.

VEC welcomes a diversity of ideas and experience. To learn more or request application materials visit vermontelectric.coop/board-candidate-information or contact support@vermontelectric.coop or 800-832-2667.

Weathering winter's cold with heating assistance

From Vermont 211

If your plans for the winter include staying cozy inside but your budget can't quite make it possible, 211 can connect you to resources to help pay for fuel and/or heating system repair/replacement. Even though it's January, it's not too late to apply for assistance.

SEASONAL FUEL ASSISTANCE: If your household income is at 185% of the Federal Poverty Level or below, and you need help purchasing heating fuel, apply now through the Economic Services Division (<https://dcf.vermont.gov>/<https://dcf.vermont.gov/benefits>); or you can apply with the help of your regional Community Action Agency — find it here online at <https://vermontcap.org/find-help>. Applying later in the season means that you will get a smaller amount of assistance.

CRISIS FUEL ASSISTANCE: If you are running out of fuel, you can apply for Crisis Fuel Assistance if your household income is at 200% of the Federal Poverty Level or below. Applications are accepted through the last Friday in April, depending on funding availability. Information about it is online at <https://dcf.vermont.gov>/<https://dcf.vermont.gov/benefits/crisis-fuel> and you apply through your regional Community Action Agency: <https://vermontcap.org/find-help>. **IMPORTANT:** Don't wait until you run out of fuel to apply. Fuel dealers often charge a special trip fee for emergency deliveries.

CRISIS FUEL AFTER-HOURS EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE: If you are age 60 or older, or have a disability, or have a child under age 6 living in your household, you may call 1-866-331-7741 from 8:30 AM – 4:00 PM on weekends and holidays to apply for Crisis Fuel Assistance. Available until the first Sunday in April.

EMERGENCY HEATING SYSTEM PROGRAM: If your heating system is not operating and your household income is at 200% of the Federal Poverty Level or less, you can get emergency help by applying through your regional Community Action Agency: <https://vermontcap.org/find-help>. Applications are accepted through Monday, April 29. Your system will be repaired or replaced if necessary.

HEATING SYSTEM AFTER-HOURS EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE: You may call 1-877-295-7998 toll-free from 5:00 PM – 7:00 AM on weekdays and from 8:30 AM – 4:00 PM on weekends and holidays to apply. Apply through 12:00 PM on Friday, April 26.

In addition, some fuel providers offer direct programs for income-eligible customers, such as discounted gas and electric services through Vermont Gas Systems and Green Mountain Power, respectively.

United Way Volunteer Connection

GET CONNECTED TO VOLUNTEERING — United Way's Volunteer Connection site is set up to help connect agencies and volunteers. Go online to <https://unitedwaynmvt.galaxydigital.com/> to learn more about these and other opportunities.

ANIMAL CARE – ECHO invites volunteers to learn about and assist in the delivery of professional animal care. Volunteers can help care for native reptiles, fish, and exotic amphibians and have fun while supporting environmental stewardship. Minimum one four-hour shift per week with a full semester or summer commitment. Volunteers receive free admission to ECHO as well as a 20% discount at ECHO's gift shop. Contact volunteer@echovermont.org.

DRIVING NEED – Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired is seeking drivers in and around the St. Albans area to help get their clients where they need to go. Volunteers are reimbursed for mileage and for use of their vehicles. Flexible scheduling. For those who don't drive but still want to help, there is also a need for volunteers to read mail and other printed materials to clients, fill out forms, help with bills and correspondence, assist with clerical tasks, and help with special events. Contact Vicki Vest, 880-639-5851, Ext. 243 or vvest@vabvi.org.

PREP AND SERVE — COTS has a need for volunteers to help prepare and serve lunch to guests at their Daystation, its daytime drop-in shelter for adults on North Avenue in Burlington. Volunteers may use the Daystation kitchen or prepare the meal offsite and drop it off for staff to serve. Contact volunteer@cotsonline.org.

TECHIE SPECIAL — Dismas House is looking for volunteers, 18 years of age and older, to help residents develop computer literacy skills. Volunteers can offer one-on-one assistance, bolstering confidence and fostering relationships with community members. Volunteers are also needed to help residents gain financial literacy by helping them learn banking, money management, and budgeting skills. Contact Holly Rossi, 802-658-0381 or holly@dismasofvt.org.

JOIN THE OFFICE FORCE — The Brain Injury Association of Vermont is in need of office assistance for general and clerical tasks, regular mailings, fundraising planning, and more. For information, email support@biavt.org.

CSWD webinar: Thinking Outside the Blue-Bin

By Alise Certa, CSWD Marketing and Communications Manager

There is a new webinar being offered by Chittenden Solid Waste District (CSWD): Thinking Outside the Blue-Bin, on Wednesday, February 7 at 6:00 PM. It's not all about the blue-bin! Join Recycle Rhonda to discover the many different items that can be recycled, like plastic bags and mattresses — just not in your blue-bin. We will take 45-minutes to explore the what, where, why, and how non-blue bin recyclables — a.k.a. Special Materials — get turned into new things! Please register online at <https://cswd.net/tours-webinars/> (scroll down to the ZOOM link for this webinar).

Keep him safe – become a foster parent

From VT Department for Children and Families

I noticed his tattoo right away. It said, "stone settlement," and had a small but serious-looking boulder cantilevered underneath the writing. So, I asked him, "Hey Trey, tell me about your tattoo!"

He squinted, like he always does — especially when an adult engages with him. Trey hasn't had the best role models in his life, and said, "It's what my name means. Stone settlement."

I said, "'Trey' stands for 'stone settlement'? Cool!" "No," he said, "'Stone settlement' stands for 'Tremaine.' That's my full name... Tremaine."

That was our ice-breaker. Me as Trey's foster parent, and he as a still young but independent 15-year-old who'd had to stand on his own for a lot of his young life.

It took me a while to earn his trust but we're getting there and Trey is settling into school in a whole new way, feeling more confident, and, finally safe and, yeah, "settled."

Truthfully, I never saw myself as a parent but when I learned about fostering and that there was a real need for care of teens — not babies — I would be like a deer in headlights with a baby! — I checked it out and learned about Trey. He's been living with me and my partner for six months now, and while it's not effortless, it's worth it.

Oh, yeah, and sometimes, when I'm losing patience with him, yep, his full name "Tremaine" pops out of my mouth. He laughs and says, "It's stone settlement, dude, stone settlement!"

If you're ready to take the next step, we would love to hear from you. We'll help you determine if providing foster or respite

care to a child or youth is right for you. And, for those who might consider adoption, we can talk to you about the children for whom we are looking for an adoptive family. Maybe it's yours.

To learn more, go to <https://dcf.vermont.gov/fsd/foster>. Ready to start the process? Sign up here: <https://dcf.vermont.gov/foster-care-inquiry>.

Efficiency Vermont 2024 rebates

From Efficiency Vermont

For the New Year, consider making a home improvement — from sealing up drafts to upgrading your heating system, odds are there's an energy-efficiency project with your name on it.

To make getting started easier than ever, Efficiency Vermont has incentives to save you real money. Combine them with federal tax credits and additional rebates from your utility and you'll save even more. Here are a few rebates available:

- weatherization: 75% off project costs, up to \$9500;
- do-it-yourself air sealing and insulation: \$100 back on select DIY projects;
- smart thermostats: \$100 back on select ENERGY STAR models;
- ductless heat pumps: point-of-sale discounts starting at \$350, plus an income-based bonus of \$200-2200;
- Appliances: \$25-400 off select ENERGY STAR appliances.

Plus, we're extending our low-to-no (0%) interest financing on these projects into 2024. For additional details on qualifying products and eligibility, visit <https://www.efficiencyvermont.com/rebates>.

Lamoille FiberNet construction contract complete; fiber coming in 2024

Lamoille Fibernet Communications Union District (CUD) has finalized its construction contract with Fidium Fiber to bring high-speed broadband to more than 4000 unserved and underserved addresses in Lamoille County this year. The 2024 construction project, which is the first of two phases and will begin this spring, is funded by a Vermont Community Broadband Board (VCBB) grant and by Consolidated Communications Inc., the company that brings us Fidium.

2024 Project Scope

Phase I will reach 86% of the unserved and underserved (U/U) addresses in our service area by the end of 2024. The Phase I plan includes roughly 65% of the U/U addresses in Cambridge and Stowe. The 2024 plan includes all U/U addresses and incidental passings in Belvidere, Eden, Elmore, Johnson, Waterville, and Wolcott. It also includes all of Hyde Park except the northeast corner above Green River Reservoir, and all U/U addresses of Morrisville, except a few addresses on VT Rt. 15 on the Wolcott border.

In early 2024, Fidium plans to announce other areas it will serve completely at its own cost, including some areas already served by other carriers.

During 2024, Lamoille FiberNet will design and secure funding for the remaining U/U addresses in parts of Stowe, Cambridge, North Hyde Park and Morrisville, with a Phase II planned completion date of 2025. For a high-level depiction of Phase I and II, check out the map at page 6 of the CUD's annual report: <https://lamoillefiber.net/document/2023-annual-report>. When we finish our two-phase build, our service area in Lamoille County will have universal service.

Why aren't we building all Lamoille County addresses?

Our mission as a CUD is to ensure that all on-grid addresses have access to wired broadband with at least 100/100 mbps speeds. Because the majority of Lamoille County has broadband service, Lamoille FiberNet's responsibility is filling the gap — reaching those addresses that are unserved or underserved. Also, while Lamoille FiberNet's "service area" includes all of Belvidere, Cambridge, Eden, Johnson, Hyde Park, Morrisville, Stowe, and Waterville, it includes only the portion of Wolcott closest to Lake Elmore and does not include East Elmore. NEK Broadband, another CUD, currently has responsibility for those remaining portions.

For clarity, "unserved or underserved" (U/U addresses) are those with wired Internet speeds of less than 25 Megabits down/3 Megabits up, or only wireless connection of any speed. "On-grid" means the address is connected to the electric grid. The grant funding also allows Fidium to serve already "served" addresses that are enroute, or incidental to, the new fiber network, so residents and businesses will have a new competitive option.

When will this all happen?

Now that the Phase I contract is finalized, the team will review pole conditions, get permits and easements, and finalize the network's detailed design between now and spring of this year. Lamoille FiberNet will update each town as construction plans are finalized and will also post the schedule on the website. To stay updated on the progress, sign up for Lamoille FiberNet's mailing list.

Are you on the list?

To find out if your address will be in Phase I, please email Lamoille FiberNet's construction manager Fabian Bourgeois at fbourgeois@lamoillefiber.net. Remember, we won't know exactly when your address or road will be built until designs are finalized.

If you are not on the list: If you are not part of Phase I but you are interested in Fidium's services, you should still pre-order and encourage your neighbors to also pre-order. Pre-ordering provides an expression of interest that Fidium can take into account in its service planning, and it involves no commitment to you. When Fidium extends beyond the area served by this partnership, your level of interest could help them determine where to provide service.

To pre-order: Go to <https://www.fidiumfiber.com/> and enter your address in the box titled "Check your address for service availability." If your address does not show up, it may be due to an incomplete database. Contact fbourgeois@lamoillefiber.net.

Speed and cost of the new service

You can see Fidium's product and price information by finding your town on this website: <https://www.fidiumfiber.com/fiber-locations>.

ART / MUSIC / THEATER

Westford Red Brick Coffee House reboot

By Michael Kirick

I had put the Red Brick Coffee house on hiatus for the last several months due to lack of audience participation (and partial post-Covid burn out), most likely due to post-Covid changes to public perception and participation in the performing arts. Things are starting to turn around again, I perceive, and I have been asked from several different folks as to when the Coffee House will start back up again.

So I have decided to reboot the Coffee House starting this next month, on the first Friday in February, February 2 (known as Ground Hog Day), 7:00 – 9:00 PM, to see if this can be a regular thing again in Westford's public and musical heritage moving forward. Please put this on your social radar and calendar, ask musician friends to come join us, and plan to come out for another hang out with your neighbors and friends, to share some face time with others, and maybe enjoy some new music.

To all considering performers — all types of music styles are welcome to come out to play. I am aiming to help keep the volume level down so that all types of musical forms and skill levels can be presented, so that this can be both a learning and doing experience and atmosphere. Please come to participate, even if that means just bringing some snacks and beverages to hang out with and listening in on the vibe.

This will be what you make of it, always a work in progress. My role is just to be an enabler of a sharing live musical or performance art experience (public storytelling and stand-up routines encouraged as well). I can lead the band in a tune or turn the reins over to anyone wishing to lead their own renditions of performance art in their own making.

The goal is to have a shared, friendly, and open environment for all ages, in which a public performance can occur for all levels of skill, experience, and ambition. This is where unexpected magic can happen... and does.

Here's to the future of the Red Brick Coffee House... enjoy!

Call to all Artists and Creative People — Are you an artist or "creative" who is interested in leveraging your talents to support asylum seekers? The Chittenden Asylum Seekers Assistance Network (CASAN) is looking for creatives (artists, poets, writers, sculptors, musicians, photographers, etc.) to join us for our April fundraising event, Arts for Asylum Seekers. Creatives will produce and virtually share their creative work, preferably daily, throughout the month of April. CASAN and the Creatives will reach out to recruit sponsors who will donate to CASAN in exchange for receiving daily content. Funds will be used to help asylum seekers with housing, basic living expenses, transportation, legal fees, and other necessary support. The signup deadline is Tuesday, February 27. For more information and to sign up to participate, visit www.casanvermont.org. Any questions or want to sign up for an information session? Write to artsforasylumseekers@gmail.com.

The Underhill Arts Council is committed to inspiring the community by highlighting local art and craft. Our goal is to bring forward all forms of creative expression. All ages are welcome! Have something you'd like to share? Please contact John Connell, jc6greenmont@gmail.com, or Mary Hill, maryhillstudios@gmail.com.

Also, the Underhill Arts Council is looking for help painting and decorating the large hearts that are hung around town. This

is a fun project. No special artistic talent is required. If you have a desire to help or have questions, please contact the council via jc6greenmont@gmail.com or 802-881-5974.

Monthly Essex Art League meeting on the first Thursdays — Artists and art lovers are welcome to join Essex Art League (EAL) and participate in our year-round, weekly en Plein Air gatherings. We meet each Thursday to paint in a different and beautiful location in the area. Joining EAL also avails you of opportunities for field trips to shows and galleries as well as participating in workshops. The Essex Art League has been open to artists and art lovers from throughout Vermont for 50+ years. We meet the first Thursday of each month from September-June. The topics for our upcoming meetings are as follows — February 1: sharing your art and thoughts within small groups, intuitions, intentions and principles; March 7: nationally acclaimed VT artist Mark Boedges speaks about his work and composition; April 4: Annelein Boekenkamp, a Vermont watercolorist, speaks on her process and journey; May 2: metal artist Rebecca Nase Chomyn of Fairfield discusses her process; June 6: summer potluck kicks off EAL summer recess. Those looking for more information may go to our website <http://essexartleague.com/>.

Weekly Literature Group Meeting on Tuesdays Via Zoom: Michael Sevy of Jericho co-leads a weekly virtual book group, the Burlington Literature Group, and would welcome new committed readers to our sessions. The group originally met in person, but since Covid has changed to online Zoom sessions every Tuesday at 6:30 PM. We break down interesting, challenging books into weekly segments of 60-100 pages, and discuss form, content, and our impressions in a friendly online forum. Details can be found at <https://nereadersandwriters.com/> or by emailing info@nereadersandwriters.com. Authors in our schedule include Toni Morrison, László Krasznahorkai, Patrick Modiano, Iris Murdoch, David Foster Wallace, Colum McCann, Saul Bellow, and Thomas Pynchon.

SongFarmers, a community music jam — a place for friends and neighbors to play music just for the fun of it. SongFarmers meets on every third Wednesday of the month (February 21), 6:00 – 8:00 PM at the Jericho Community Center, Browns Trace, Jericho Center. For people of all ages who want to play folk, Americana, blues, bluegrass, Celtic, and more on acoustic instruments: guitars, banjos, mandolins, fiddles, ukuleles, bass, keyboard. No electronics except keyboard and bass. It's a circle gathering where everyone who wants to will have a chance to lead songs. Common tunes with simple chord progressions are encouraged so that everyone can play along. If you plan to lead, please choose a song that you can play at a steady rhythm and bring a chord chart for your song. Both songs and instrumentals are great. Please note this is not a performance, open mic, or lesson. Folks who want to sing, or just come and enjoy the gathering, are welcome too. Bring snacks and drinks if you like, but no alcohol. Free. Registration is appreciated; contact CommunityJamJUVT@gmail.com.

Weekly Community Choir — If you love to sing (or want to join in on the piano to help folks learn parts and play accompaniment), come join *Mountainsong!* We are a volunteer-run community singing group that harmonizes together in four parts on the second and fourth Thursdays (during the winter) of the month (February 8, 22), 6:30 – 8:00 PM at the Mount Mansfield Unitarian Universalist Meeting House, 195 VT Rt. 15, Jericho (across from Packard Road). Whether you sing in the shower, sing Karaoke, or just like to sing in harmony with others, bring your voice and join us! Do you learn by ear or read music? Either way, you'll be comfortable here. Our aim is to sing for



Award-winning sister duo Sibyl: Capital City Concerts in collaboration with the Unitarian Church of Montpelier are offering a free family concert on Sunday, February 4, 1:30 PM at the Unitarian Church of Montpelier, by the talented millennial sister act Sibyl. Their intricately harmonized folksongs over gossamer string lines creates a sound-world both intimate and intense, hopeful and haunting. Visit www.youtube.com/@sibyl5048 to sample their performances. The concert will include a performance of two fiddle tunes performed by local string students alongside the Holgate sisters. For more information go to www.capitalcityconcerts.org.

PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

the joy of singing (no performances except for one short one for family and friends at the end of the season). Come as often as you are able. Cost: \$1 a week toward space rental. We also ask for a contribution to purchase music for the group of \$7 per semester (fall and spring). Questions about the group? Contact Lynne Robbins, 802-899-2436 or lar.2436@gmail.com, or Doug Varney, 802-343-4513 or vthockeyman@gmail.com, or just show up!

The Westford Music Series concerts will be held once a month on a Sunday, from 4:00 – 5:00 PM at the Westford Common Hall, 21 Brookside Rd., Westford. The lineup for the 2023-2024 season continues on February 25: *Will Patton Ensemble*; March 24, *Dale and Darcy Trio*; April 7: *Heliand*; May 5, *Howling Waters*.

The Vermont Arts Council is now accepting applications for its annual Creation Grant, which supports artists or artist groups in creating new work. Grant funds may be used to compensate artists for time spent creating new work, to purchase materials, or to rent equipment or space for the process. This highly competitive program is reviewed by an independent panel of practicing artists and arts professionals. Both established and emerging artists are encouraged to apply. Examples of fundable projects: a multimedia artist creating a new video series; a writer completing the first draft of a novel; a dance ensemble developing choreography for a new piece; a visual artist creating art for exhibition that explores new subjects and techniques; and a musician composing music for a new album. Application deadline: Tuesday, April 9. Learn more and apply at <https://www.vermontartscouncil.org/grants/find-a-grant/artists/creation/>.

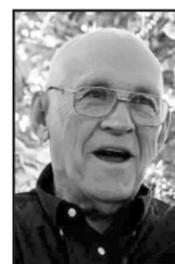
OBITUARIES



Damian Paul ("Danny") Audette of Deland, FL was born on May 14, 1957 at the base hospital in Port Lyautey, Morocco. He died peacefully on Wednesday, January 10, 2024 at the Halifax Health Hospice Center in Edgewater, FL at the age of 66. The first years of his life were spent traveling and living at USAF bases in Kansas, Nebraska, Mississippi, and New York. Upon his father's retirement from the military, the family moved to Burlington, VT, and then to Underhill, VT to a home built by his father. Danny's parents relocated to Daytona Beach, FL in 1989, where he was surrounded by many aunts, uncles, and cousins. He lived there until his parents' deaths in 2001. His sisters Melanie Young and Valerie Hall then assumed co-guardianship. Danny lived at Dove Villas (ALF) in Daytona Beach from 2001-2019, then moved to Star Rise Home Care in Deland, FL where they cared for him with love and dignity. Despite his Down's Syndrome, Danny had many interests and hobbies. He enjoyed tennis, cross-country skiing, karate, swimming, and a good joke or pun. He served as an altar boy at St. Thomas Church in Underhill Center, VT and Epiphany Church in Port Orange, FL. During his time in Daytona, he bowled for the Special Olympics, danced with the Yellow Rock Squares, and was an officer in the Aktion Club at ARC Volusia. Throughout his life, Danny loved all kinds of music, especially country and gospel, and was an avid fan of *Star Trek*, *Star Wars*, vampires, *Spiderman*, and other superheroes. He was infatuated

with anything Japanese and was able to say several phrases in Japanese, Spanish, and French. He loved animals, especially cats and dogs, and volunteered when possible at Journey's End Animal Sanctuary in Deland. He especially enjoyed visiting his sisters in Burlington, VT and Nantucket, MA. Danny is predeceased by his parents, Lt. Col. (ret.) JMR and Mary Margaret Moore Audette, and his brother John Anthony ("Tony") Audette. He is survived by his sisters and brothers-in-law Melanie and Michael Young of South Burlington, VT, and Valerie and Robert Hall of Nantucket, MA; his nieces Emily Abid (Faisal) of Sharon, MA and Catherine Potter (Corey) of Mendon VT; his nephew Jay Hicks of Boston, MA; his great-nephew Ahren Abid and his great-nieces Avia Abid and Mia Potter. Our special thanks go to William Gonzalez and the incredible caregivers at Star Rise Home Care, his Support Coordinator Diana Sanchez, and the amazing team at Halifax Hospice. There will be a graveside service in the St. Thomas cemetery in Underhill Center, VT in the spring. In lieu of flowers, Danny's sisters request that you send donations in Danny's name to Journey's End Animal Sanctuary in Deland, Special Olympics, or the National Down Syndrome Foundation.

Harold Degree left this world on Sunday, January 7, 2024. Harold was born on September 26, 1933, one of six children born to Delia and Frank Degree of Underhill, VT. After the family relocated the family farm to Williston, VT, Harold worked on the farm and studied machining and auto mechanics at Burlington (VT) High School. Harold was a U.S. Army reservist alongside his brother Wayne. Harold's career as an auto mechanic included working at Shearer Chevrolet as an accomplished technician, as



well as co-owning, with his brother Wayne, Degrees Auto Repair in Essex Center, VT. When IBM came to Vermont, Harold left the auto industry and found a rewarding career there from 1963 until his retirement in 1992. Harold met the love of his life, Gladys Provost, in 1953. They were married on October 24 of that year. Harold and Gladys purchased their family home in Colchester Village, VT, filling it with six children. Harold coached and umpired his children's Little League games. Harold proudly served his community as volunteer firefighter, eventually becoming chief of Colchester Center Volunteer Fire Co. Harold could fix just about anything, be it a car or home repair. After the passing of his wife Gladys in 2011, Harold found companionship with Arlene Degree. She was a steady and loving partner to Harold. Harold is predeceased by his wife Gladys; son Reginald; and his siblings. He leaves behind his partner Arlene Degree of Williston; his children Kathy Degree of Colchester, Sherry Pakulski (Mark) of Colchester, Bob Degree of Colchester, Mike Degree (Mindy) of Burlington, and Ken Degree (Lori) of South Burlington, VT; his daughter-in-law Valory Degree of Fairfield, CA; as well as many other beloved members of his extended family. A wake was held on Wednesday, January 17, 2024 at Corbin and Palmer Funeral Home, Essex Junction, VT. Funeral services took place on Saturday, January 20, 2024 at Our Lady of Grace Church, Colchester, VT, with luncheon following.

News briefs continued from page 5

MMCTV's Snowflake Bentley and Lead with Love videos

By Angelike A. Contis, MMCTV

Here are links to two great local events filmed by Mount Mansfield Community TV (MMCTV) recently:

Snowflake Bentley: His Life and Work, a talk by the Jericho photographer's great-niece Sue Richardson, sponsored by the Bolton, Richmond, Huntington Community Senior Center: <https://archive.org/editxml/SnowflakeBentley01132024>.

Lead With Love: Jericho Says No to Hate, a presentation featuring community thoughts, readings, and music by Last Minute Choir, Mountainsong, and Vermont's Freedom & Unity Chorus: <https://archive.org/details/lead-with-love-mmuuf-01152024c>.

Find out more about MMCTV and take our Viewer Poll at <http://www.MtMansfieldCtv.org>.

Jericho town updates

Visit the Town Hall Art Project between now and April to view the latest installation, *Farms and Fields*. The art exhibit, showcasing local artists, is in the main floor conference room and is open during regular business hours.

Town Administrator: The Town's Maintenance Facility needs to be replaced and voters will be asked to decide on a bond at Town Meeting in March. The town is holding a second public open house for residents to ask questions and tour the current facility. The date will be announced in the upcoming weeks. Read more at https://jerichovt.org/Highway-Department/news_feed/town-maintenance-facility-2.

Planning Commission: The PC is starting 2024 with a Work Plan to accomplish the goals from the new Town Plan. The PC will develop zoning updates, which will make it easier to create new homes, to expand walkable and bikable routes around town, and to better protect our natural resources. The PC is also helping

integrate the work of all the town committees, to help Jericho make faster and more efficient progress with all the Town Plan goals. Please share your thoughts with Linda Blasch, Town Planner.

Town Clerk: Dog Registrations are open for 2024. All dogs need to have a current Rabies vaccination and get registered with the town. The \$13 fee is waived if you register by April 2024. Get the forms here: <https://jerichovt.org/dog-registration>.

If you are considering running for office in Jericho, visit the Elections Page to see a list of open positions and download a nominating petition: https://jerichovt.org/elections/news_feed/elected-position-openings.

Neighbors: This month we feature Animal Control Officer Olivia Arent. Click here to read more: <https://jerichovt.org/Celebrating-Each-Other>.

News briefs continued on page 12

SENIOR NEWS

Bolton Age Well Grab'n'Go meals

Bolton will now have Age Well Grab'n'Go meals delivered to the Bolton Fire Station on the second Wednesday of each month — February 14, March 13 — pick up times between 11:00 AM – 12:00 PM. Age Well provides services to individuals 60+ and their spouse or caregivers, and a disabled person(s) living with the senior, regardless of financial status.

To order a meal, please contact Robin Pecor-Brunell, 802-434-3042 or rpecor@hotmail.com, by the Friday before the meal is to be delivered.

How to liven up a cold day**From the Central Vermont Council on Aging**

We want you and your loved ones to stay engaged, connected, and healthy! CVCOA's Helpline staff is here to support you. Call Monday-Friday, 8:30 AM – 4:30 PM, or leave a non-urgent message for us anytime at 1-802-477-1364 or toll-free at 1-800-642-5119.

Get moving — Drop into a free exercise class near you. Peruse all sixteen current offerings here: <https://cvcoa.org/exercise-and-wellness-classes>.

Eat healthy — Have lunch at your local nutrition program or learn about how you can receive home-delivered meals or assistance with your grocery budget: <https://cvcoa.org/meals-and-nutrition>.

Get online — Sign up for an in-person technology class: <https://cvcoa.org/senior-planet>, or join us online: <https://cvcoa.org/technology-training>.

Be creative — Join our creative aging program: <https://cvcoa.org/enhancing-social-connection-through-arts-and-technology>.

Take a break — Attend a dementia-friendly community event! We're hosting Memorable Times Online every week through the winter. Learn more here: <https://cvcoa.org/support-groups>.

Volunteer! We need people like you to keep these programs (and more) going in the community. Tell us what interest you and get started today at <https://cvcoa.org/volunteer-application>.

From storytelling to dance, Vermont elders dig into arts

Drama, storytelling, dance, drawing, and more are among the arts programming coming soon to Vermont seniors across the state through new programming supported by grants from the Vermont Arts Council.

Seventeen Vermont organizations received a total of \$72,100 in funding through the Council's Creative Aging grant program, which supports skill-based instruction alongside opportunities for social engagement and community building in and through the arts for older adults. Applicants are non-profits with 501(c)(3) status, such as arts organizations, libraries, senior centers, area agencies on aging, or social service organizations. Organizations could apply for up to \$6000 to support activities designed for older adults aged 60+ led by experienced teaching artists. A

total of 29 proposals were received, which were reviewed in two rounds by an external panel.

This year, the Council increased the amount applicants could request from \$3000 to \$6000, allowing applicants to expand their programming.

Among the funded projects are a series of workshops in clay, music, writing, and photography for Lamoille County residents; twice-weekly dance sessions for older adults through Quahog Dance Theatre in St. Johnsbury; a 10-week reader's theater program in Middlebury; and a creative and visual life-mapping program for seniors in Windham County.

The Vermont Arts Council received funding from the E.A. Michelson Foundation to support its Creative Aging grant program. The National Assembly of State Arts Agencies and Lifetime Arts also supports the Council in its creative aging efforts through coaching and sharing resources.

As a part of the Council's creative aging efforts, the Council will work with the Clemmons Family Farm and Teaching Artist Connect to provide support for Vermont teaching artists who are leading creative aging and culturally responsive activities.

"You're never too old to learn something new, and it's never too late to embrace your creativity. We're excited to be able to support these innovative programs focused on access and reaching underserved communities to develop artistic skills and deepen social engagement," said Vermont Arts Council Executive Director Susan Evans McClure.

For more information about Creative Aging Grants, visit <https://www.vermontartscouncil.org/grants/organizations/creative-aging>.

VT's Agencies on Aging work through VT Aging Network Consortium

Vermont's five Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) announce their new affiliation, called the Vermont Aging Network Consortium (VANC). Boards of directors from each of the AAAs have approved the affiliation.

This new consortium will positively impact the overall cost of health care by leveraging economies of scale, combining resources, and reducing duplication within the community-provider network of home- and community-based services. A focus on establishing future contracts with payers and healthcare systems is expected to further enhance financial sustainability for aging services as they evolve.

The Vermont Aging Network Consortium will be a separate nonprofit entity within which the individual AAAs will remain active and independent nonprofits as they continue to serve clients in their communities. It will help the AAAs create a sustainable financial model of service by leveraging their strengths, their buying power, and their high-quality systems of service. The AAAs trade association, the Vermont Association of Agencies on Aging (V4A) will continue to separately serve as the lobbying, advocacy, and educational organization for the AAAs.

"We are coming together as AAAs to ensure we are prudent financial stewards for our future, which is the central focus of all of our strategic plans. Our mission is to serve more clients in the future, with a sustainable operations model at each agency, and this is a way to help us create an efficient and integrated system to help each other do just that," says Susan Gordon, Vermont Aging Network Consortium's Board President.

This initiative will support the Vermont area agencies on aging as a unified entity providing a high standard of services throughout the state. It will promote the pursuit of best practices within our case management, nutrition, and caregiver support programs, to list just a few, and will strengthen the role of the AAAs as community partners in delivering critical services that reach a growing population of older Vermonters.

The leaders of the five AAAs have been diligently collaborating with their respective boards of directors to conclude agreements for the establishment of the consortium. This includes finalizing the governance structure through the formation of a new ten-member board of directors and overseeing the recruitment process for the new VANC executive.

Online health aid presentations

High Blood Pressure Management, Thursdays through February 8, 2:00 – 3:30 PM, online. Presented by My Healthy Vermont and North Country Hospital. Learn the basics of controlling your high blood pressure through eating healthier, becoming more active, and more. Register online at https://www.myhealthyvt.org/workshop_dates/online-or-in-person-high-blood-pressure-3/.

Vision and Aging Well Videos, online at <https://www.nei.nih.gov/learn-about-eye-health/outreach-resources/vision-and-aging-resources/vision-and-aging-videos>. The National Eye Institute's videos explain dilated eye exams and age-related eye conditions and promote eye health. Remember to wear sunglasses to avoid cataract-producing damage caused by the sun!

MyMobility Plan, online (as a PDF) at https://www.cdc.gov/transportationsafety/pdf/older_adult_drivers/CDC-MyMobilityTool.pdf. The MyMobility planning guide from the CDC is a tool to help us plan for mobility changes as we age and take action now. Plan today; stay independent tomorrow.

Caring Conversations, online, with more information at <https://www.mcgill.ca/dementia/support-groups/caring-conversations>. The McGill Dementia Education Program provides virtual support to care partners — with social worker Lucy Barylak and educator Joanne Besner. Season 2, Ep.1, Hygiene and Dementia: what care partners can do when the person they support refuses daily hygiene care; Season 2, Ep.2, Dementia and Sexually Inappropriate Behaviors: how care partners can manage inappropriate behaviors.

Stay Safe During a Winter Storm, information from the CDC presented online at <https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/winter/duringstorm/indoorsafety.html>. Winter storms can be dangerous, with cold temperatures, power failures, loss of communication services, and icy roads. The CDC offers suggestions for staying safe indoors and outdoors on this webpage.

COLLEGE NEWS

Ari McKennedy of Jericho, VT has been named to the Fall 2023 President's List at Plymouth State University, Plymouth, NH.

Jack Messier of Jeffersonville, VT has been named to the Fall 2023 Dean's List at Roger Williams University, Bristol, RI.

Aidan Poulin of Waterbury, VT has been named to the Fall 2023 President's List at Southern New Hampshire University, Manchester, NH.

Brenna Redmond of Jericho, VT has been named to the Fall 2023 Dean's List at Hofstra University, Hempstead, NY. Redmond is a member of the Class of 2025 studying Forensic Science.

Emily Tanski of Waterbury, VT has been named to the Fall 2023 President's List at Southern New Hampshire University, Manchester, NH.

Aidan Woods of Jericho, VT has been named to the Fall 2023 President's List at Plymouth State University, Plymouth, NH.

Jada Diamond of Jericho Center, VT has been named to the Fall 2023 Dean's List (Distinguished) at the College of Charleston, Charleston, SC. Diamond is majoring in Psychology.

Zachary Fisher of Waterbury, VT has been named to the Fall 2023 Dean's List at Stonehill College, Easton, MA. Fisher is a member of the Class of 2024.

Colby Garrapy of Underhill, VT has been named to the Fall 2023 President's List at Mississippi State University, Mississippi State, MS.

Thatcher Johnstone-Wright of Underhill, VT has been named to the Fall 2023 Dean's List at the University of Rhode Island, Kingston, RI.

Lily Korczykowski of Jericho Center, VT has been named to the Fall 2023 Dean's List (Distinguished) at the College of Charleston, Charleston, SC. Korczykowski is majoring in Exercise Science.

Mason Remington of Jericho, VT has been named to the fall 2023 Dean's List at Russell Sage College, Troy, NY.

Reilly Stevens of Jericho Center, VT has been named to the Fall 2023 President's List (Highly Distinguished) at the College of Charleston, Charleston, SC. Stevens is majoring in Psychology.

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News briefs continued from page 5

Westford Recreation registration deadlines

By Amanda Gifford, Westford Recreation Coordinator

This is just a friendly reminder of Westford Recreation Department (WRD) policies that have been neatened up, particularly regarding registration deadlines.

- Registration deadlines for all programs will be a minimum of seven (7) days before the program starts. For pick-up or drop-in programs, registration will be ongoing.

- Participants who register late must be approved by the Coaches and verified by the Recreation Coordinator before participating.

- There will be a \$10 late registration fee after the program deadline.

For more information on WRD policies, please contact recreation@westfordvt.us and we will happily share them all!

Please feel welcome to come to any WRD Committee Meeting to see how the Department sets these policies!

Upcoming Krusch Preserve closure

Sometime in the next few weeks, the Krusch Preserve parking lot will be closed for hazardous tree removal work.

We will post the date here when it is arranged, though we may not be able to give any advance notice at all.

The Preserve's website <http://KruschNaturePreserve.org> will be kept up to date, and we will post to the Cambridge, Jeffersonville, and Waterville Facebook pages.

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coverage area of Bolton, Jericho, Underhill, Cambridge, Jeffersonville, Westford, plus Hinesburg, Huntington, Richmond, Essex and Essex Junction.

SPORTS NEWS

Cornell Set for Foley Oil & Propane Late Model Rookie of the Year run

N. Woodstock, NH — Longtime White Mountain Motorsports Park supporter Colin Cornell is looking to take the next step in 2024. After several successful seasons behind the wheel of a Fisher Auto Parts Flying Tiger, and a Dad's 4 By Tool & Supply Kid's Truck before that, Cornell will be making the move to the Foley Oil & Propane Late Models in hopes of capturing the coveted Rookie of the Year title at New Hampshire's Favorite Short Track.

Colin will pilot a car owned by his father Paul Cornell that the two recently purchased from a Seekonk Speedway regular in Massachusetts. Keeping the off-season rolling, Cornell has already signed up with a new primary sponsor in TBC Towing out of West Burke, VT. Looking at the season ahead, the team has goals to hit while playing it day-by-day with the challenge of a whole-new machine.

"Rookie of the Year is top of our list for sure," said Colin, "But consecutive top-10 or top-5 finishes is up there too, obviously a first career Late Model win would be ideal. I can honestly say I'm nervous but we're all looking forward to the new challenge. I'd also like to thank my Dad and TBC Towing for jumping on

board to make this Late Model run a possibility."

While the East Burke, VT driver mentioned his priority is weekly racing at White Mountain Motorsports Park for the 2024 Rookie of the Year honors, he also made it clear that he wasn't ruling out an American-Canadian Tour event or a possible visit to the Vermont Milk Bowl in October.

Cornell and the rest of the White Mountain Motorsports Park faithful will return for some Thunder in the Mountains on HK Powersports Opening Day, Saturday, May 18. Opening weekend is also complete with a Pro All Stars Series double-header on Sunday, May 19 that includes the first leg of the all-new ACT Tri-State Flying Tiger Series!

After Thursday, February 1, the deadline to renew their ACT Licenses and keeping their 2023 numbers, 2024 season car numbers will be first come, first served.

For more information, contact the White Mountain Motorsports Park offices at 802-244-6963, media@acttour.com, or visit www.whitemountainmotorsports.com. You can also follow us on Facebook at @WhiteMtnMotorsports.

**Grooming at Tomasi Meadow in Underhill**

Happily, people are enjoying the groomed cross-country skiing in Tomasi's Meadow, the conserved land at the foot of Casey's Hill in Underhill Center. The Mansfield Nordic Club grooms the Meadow on a volunteer basis, on behalf of the Town of Underhill.

The Meadow is groomed as needed; for the current grooming status check the club's website, <https://www.mansfieldnordic.org>.

Enjoy the skiing!

Cambridge Spring Soccer registration is open

By Sarah Hart, Cambridge Youth Soccer

Spring Soccer Registration is OPEN! Registration for 2024 Spring Soccer is now open for the following ages: girls, birth years 2008-2015; and boys, birth years 2012-2015.

Practices will start mid to late April with Sunday games starting the first weekend in May.

Please go to the following link to register: https://system.gotSPORT.com/programs/3C6688487?reg_role=player.

Registration closes on Sunday, February 4; fees: \$90 for each player, free for Coaches and Board Members.

Uniform shirts will be provided at the beginning of the season and will need to be returned after the last game. You will need to provide black shorts and black socks for games.

We have limited teams and roster space available during the spring season. Spots will be awarded on a first-come, first-served basis, so sign up ASAP.

If you are interested in coaching or have any questions please contact Sarah Hart, cysregister@gmail.com.

MMU Sports photos: hockey, Nordic skiing, basketball

By Terry Healy

Four new batches of photos of Mount Mansfield Union High School (MMU) have been uploaded; I hope you like them.

• MMU Varsity Boys Ice Hockey vs. Burlington, Wednesday, January 3: <https://lostinvermont.com/mmu-varsity-boys-ice-hockey-vs-burlington>

• MMU Boys Varsity Nordic Skiing (Rikert), Friday, January 5: <https://lostinvermont.com/mmu-varsity-boys-nordic-skiing-rikert>

• MMU Girls Varsity Nordic Skiing (Rikert), Friday, January 5: <https://lostinvermont.com/mmu-girls-varsity-nordic-skiing-rikert>

• MMU Girls Varsity Basketball vs. Colchester, Saturday, January 6: <https://lostinvermont.com/mmu-girls-varsity-basketball-vs-colchester>

Browns River 2024**Farm League registration open**

Registration is open through Thursday, February 15 for 4- to 8-year-old Farm League baseball players (this includes both girls and boys). Register online only, at www.brownsriverlittleleague.com.

We also need lots of help from you all to make this season a success! If you're interested in being part of our great youth sports program, please reach out to brownsriver1@gmail.com, or send league president Casey Knudsen an email at caseyknudsen@gmail.com.

Underhill Ice Rink: mind the open/closed sign!

Skaters of Underhill: Please, please pay attention to the open/closed sign at the rink! People have been consistently ignoring the sign, which causes footprints in slush, cracks the ice, and generally causes problems and makes it much harder to maintain the ice.

So please, stay off the ice if the CLOSED sign is up! If the rink is closed, it is closed for for a reason!

JES Ice Rink update

By Glenn Steinman, PE teacher, Jericho Elementary School

The ice rink at Jericho Elementary School is now open. Thank you to all those who contributed to this project!

We are still working on lighting and improving the ice. The rink is open to the public during non school hours until dark.

Please be respectful, kind and caring.

Fitness classes at Jericho Community Center

Join your friends and neighbors for an hour of movement, fun and laughter as you discover your best body and calm mind. Whether you are an elite athlete or just beginning, we are all the same when it comes to having fun and learning to find our best personal fitness practices.

Trish Densham, long time fitness professional, certified personal trainer and advocate of all things in motion, is offering the *Your Best Body Movement Class*, at the Jericho Community Center on Browns Trace in Jericho Center on Tuesdays and Thursdays, 6:00 – 7:00 PM. The classes began Tuesday, January 9. A six-class punch pass is \$48, or a 12-class punch pass for \$80; drop-in classes are \$10 each. Punch passes are good through Tuesday, April 30.

This class melds core concentrations for stability and safe movement with muscular strength and endurance gains that ease joint pain and enhance all your indoor and outdoor fun and games.

To cap off the session, we will introduce and practice Pilates and Yoga techniques that stretch your muscles and soothe your mind.

To sign up or to find out more, contact Trish at tdmover@gmail.com or 802-999-1265.

Westford Recreation registration deadlines

By Amanda Gifford, Westford Recreation Coordinator

This is just a friendly reminder of Westford Recreation Department (WRD) policies that have been neaten up, particularly regarding registration deadlines.

- Registration deadlines for all programs will be a minimum of seven (7) days before the program starts. For pick-up or drop-in programs, registration will be ongoing.

- Participants who register late must be approved by the Coaches and verified by the Recreation Coordinator before participating.

- There will be a \$10 late registration fee after the program deadline.

For more information on WRD policies, please contact recreation@westfordvt.us and we will happily share them all!

Please feel welcome to come to any WRD Committee Meeting to see how the Department sets these policies!

Young skiers in Vermont get a break

Numerous ski resorts across the state offer complimentary skiing experiences for children. Dive into the (partial) list below to discover where kids can hit the slopes for free or at significantly discounted rates. For the full list, see <https://skivermont.com/kid-deals>.

It's all about fostering the next generation of skiing enthusiasts:

Bolton Valley (<https://skivermont.com/bolton-valley>) Children 5 and under: free day ticket, but requires an RFID card like everyone else to pass through automatic gates (\$5 for the initial card). General information about lift tickets and prices at <https://www.boltonvalley.com/winter/tickets-passes/lift-tickets/>.

Burke Mountain Resort (<https://skivermont.com/burke-mountain-resort>) Kids 5 and under ski free; all midweek skiers (Monday-Friday during non-holiday periods, Christmas week is a holiday period; cannot be combined with any other ticket deal or promotion) ski for \$45. For more details, see <https://www.skiburke.com/skiing-and-riding/tickets-and-passes/day-tickets/>.

Cochran's Ski Area (<https://skivermont.com/cochrans-ski-area>) Kids 5 and under ski free with an adult; youths 6-17 also receive deals on tickets. For more details on all ticket times and categories, see <https://cochranskiarea.com/tickets-passes/tickets/>.

Jay Peak (<https://skivermont.com/jay-peak>) A toddler pass is FREE when purchased at the same time as an Adult pass in the same category. One free Toddler pass per Adult pass purchase.

Smugglers' Notch Resort (<https://skivermont.com/smugglers-notch-resort>) Kids 5 and under ski free. Youth 6-18 get lift ticket deals throughout the season, as well as deals on season passes (youth 6-18 and young adult 19-26). For more details, see <https://www.smuggs.com/pages/winter/skide/lift-ticket-rates.php>.

Waterfowl blinds must be removed

Waterfowl hunters who did not remove their hunting blinds from the waters of the state earlier must do so before Thursday, February 15 on Lake Champlain, or Wednesday, May 15 on inland waters, according to a reminder from the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department.

State law requires removal of the blinds before these deadlines to protect natural areas and to prevent boating accidents after the ice melts.

"Removal of the blinds and any posts that may be below the surface of the ice is important because of the danger they present when boaters are on the water in the spring," said State Game Warden Colonel Justin Stedman.

Stedman says wardens annually record names and addresses of blind owners and will follow up with inspections.

**GOTRVT announces coach recruitment for spring 2024**

Girls on the Run Vermont (GOTRVT), a nonprofit organization (<https://www.gotrvt.org/>) that uses a research and physical activity-based curriculum to inspire girls in grades 3-8 to be joyful, healthy, and confident, is excited to announce that coach registration for GOTRVT's 25th anniversary spring season is now open statewide. Utilizing a fully updated and refreshed curriculum, GOTRVT coaches will empower participants to develop critical life skills, build confidence, cultivate positive connections with peers, and stand up for themselves and others.

The ten-week season begins March 18, with teams meeting twice a week for 90 minutes. The 20-lesson curriculum covers topics such as positive self-talk, friendship, managing emotions, and more, all created to nourish participants' social, emotional, and physical well-being. The program culminates with teams participating in one of two non-competitive, celebratory 5K events — one on June 1 at the Champlain Valley Expo in Essex Junction, and the other on June 8 at the Manchester Recreation Fields — bringing together family, friends, and community members to celebrate the participants' growth throughout the season.

All coaches will be trained in-person and will receive the materials and resources necessary to facilitate lessons for the season. Coaches do not need to be runners but are required to be a minimum of 18 years old. Students in high school may register to be a Junior Coach. All volunteer coaches must complete a background check and online training modules prior to in-person training. Coach trainings are offered at three locations statewide: Saturday, February 3 in Brattleboro; Sunday, February 4 in Castleton; and Saturday, February 10 in Essex. GOTRVT needs over 500 volunteer coaches to host teams in 2024.

GOTRVT Vermont has inspired and impacted the lives of c.38,000 girls in Vermont over 24 years. This season, GOTRVT celebrates its 25th anniversary and will be offered at over 110 locations across Vermont starting the week of March 18.

To learn more or to register to be a coach mentor, visit <https://www.gotrvt.org/>.

Send your news to
mtngazette@gmavt.net

Mountain Gazette 2024

deadlines and publication dates

The Mountain Gazette publishes on the 1st and 3rd Thursday of each month. The deadline for receiving copy is Thursday, a week before publication, at 12:00 PM; the advertising deadline is Thursday, a week before publication, at 5:00 PM.

(Note exceptions, below, due to Monday holidays before publication dates.)

DEADLINE DATES:

THURSDAY

December 26 - note Tuesday deadline

January 9 – note Tuesday deadline

January 25

February 8

February 29

March 14

March 28

April 11

April 25

May 9

May 30

June 13

June 27

July 11

July 25

August 8

August 27 - note Tuesday deadline

September 12

September 26

October 8 - note Tuesday deadline

October 31

November 14

November 28

December 12

PUBLICATION DATES:

THURSDAY

January 4 - early deadline (New Year)

January 18 - early deadline (MLK Day)

February 1

*February 15

*March 7

March 21

April 4

April 18

May 2

*May 16

*June 6

June 20

July 4

July 18

August 1

*August 15

*September 5 - early deadline (Labor Day)

September 19

October 3

*October 17

- early deadline (Indigenous People Day)

*November 7

November 21

December 5

December 19

Please note: there are 3 weeks, not 2, between the *indicated publication dates. Note early deadlines: Tuesday, December 26, due to New Year's Day on Monday, January 2; Tuesday, January 9, due to Martin Luther King Jr. Day on Monday, January 15; Tuesday, August 27, due to Labor Day on Monday, September 2; and Tuesday, October 8, due to Indigenous Peoples Day on Monday, October 14.

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Phone: 802-453-6354 mtngazette@gmavt.net

www.mountaingazetteofvermont.com

SCHOOL NEWS

Lamoille North 2024 Annual Meeting February 19

Join Lamoille North for our 2024 Annual Meeting! We are planning an exciting evening filled with community spirit, food, presentations, and valuable information!

The Mount Mansfield Unified Union School District is pleased to announce that Jenn Cote has accepted the MMUUSD Director of Special Services position for our District.

Jenn Cote earned her Bachelor of Science Degree from the Philadelphia College of Textiles and Science and her Master of Education in Special Education from Saint Michael's College.

Currently serving as the Principal at Underhill Central School since 2019, Jenn previously held the position of principal at Underhill ID School for one year and was a special educator in our District for 10 years.

Jenn is excited to transition into this new role within our school community and to continue her efforts in supporting MMUUSD staff, students and families.



February 19, 2024, from 6:00 – 7:30 PM at the Community Education Center at Green Mountain Technology and Career Center in Hyde Park.

This is your opportunity to be a part of the decision-making process that shapes the future of our schools. Join us as we present the district reports and FY2025 school district budgets, giving you an in-depth look at the plans and priorities for the upcoming academic year.

Join us for dinner, hear from students, and learn about our FY2025 school budgets.

The evening is totally free and we'll have childcare available on-site. We just ask you to register at this link: https://www.lnsd.org/departments/news/details/~board/updates-content/post/lamoille-north-2024-annual-meeting (or visit www.lnsd.org).

Poker Hill School fundraiser with VT Cookie Love

Do you love cookies? Love cookie dough? Want to help out a local business and preschool? Poker Hill School has teamed up with Vermont Cookie Love to bring you some delicious treats for our current fundraiser!

Flavors available in 1-pound tubs, \$11: Chocolate Chip, Triple Chocolate Chip, Peanut Butter Chocolate Chip, Oatmeal & Dried Cranberry, Sugar, Oatmeal/Coconut/Chocolate Chips/dried Cranberries/Almond, Pumpkin Chocolate Chip, Mocha Chocolate Chip.

Flavors available in 2.5 pound tubs, \$23: Chocolate Chip, Chocolate Chip with Butterscotch chips.

Flavors available in 2.5 pound tubs, \$25: Wheat-Free Chocolate Chip, White Chocolate chip and Dried Berries.

All proceeds directly benefit Poker Hill School, and will be directed towards buildings and grounds, and a new furnace! Cookie Dough will arrive at Poker Hill School on Wednesday, February 21, and can be picked up; we will contact you once it is at school. Local delivery is possible, if set up in advance.

Girls on the Run Vermont needs coaches for these area schools: Brewster-Pierce Memorial School, Browns River Middle School, Jericho Elementary School, Mater Christi School, and Westford Elementary School. Girls on the Run (GOTR) is a physical activity-based, positive youth development program that inspires students in grades 3-8 to be joyful, healthy, and confident.



The ten-week program incorporates movement into its curriculum to empower participants to develop critical life skills, build confidence, cultivate positive connections with peers, manage their emotions, and stand up for themselves and others. Volunteer coaches utilize a curriculum to engage teams of girls in fun, interactive lessons. The spring season begins the week of Monday, March 18. Teams meet twice a week for 90 minutes and the program culminates with all teams participating in one of two non-competitive, celebratory 5K events in Essex. Coaches do not need to be runners! Girls on the Run Vermont (GOTRVT) provides training so volunteers have all of the tools needed to facilitate the season and to have a positive coaching experience. All volunteer coaches must complete a background check. GOTRVT welcomes high school students to volunteer as Junior Coaches. Please visit www.gotrvt.org/coach for full details or email info@girlsontherunvermont.org. GOTRVT is celebrating 25 years in 2024 — a very special season for coaches to participate! Participant registration opens on Wednesday, February 21 for Northern teams attending the Essex 5K and Wednesday, February 28 for Southern teams attending the Manchester 5K. Join us for a virtual Q&A session on Thursday January 25th at 6:30pm! For more information about the program and registration: https://www.gotrvt.org. PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Poker Hill school book club February 8

Did you know Poker Hill School (PHS) has a book club?! We read books (or listen to podcasts) related to caregiving for young children and get together to talk about it and how it might impact us and the kiddos we're responsible for.

For our next book club book we'll be reading a classic: Children: The Challenge by Ruddolf Dreikurs and Vicki Soltz. This book may have been published nearly six decades ago, but it apparently still holds true for modern parenting/child rearing. Let's read it and find out! Podcast interview option will be announced soon (need to do some digging as podcasts weren't a thing back then).

PHS is extending the invitation to interested community members! If you're interested in the book and want to talk about it with others, please join us! Parents, teachers, grandparents, caregivers of all kinds are welcome.

We'll meet Thursday, February 8, 7:00 – 8:00 PM, Poker Hill School, Poker Hill Rd., Underhill to discuss. Please join! You can direct any questions to Emily Piazza at piazza.emily@gmail.com.

MMUUSIC students audition for VT All State Fest

Kudos to these MMUUSIC students for their hard work and dedication! On Saturday, January 13, they auditioned at CVU for the Vermont All State Music Festival: Tessa Nowell/French horn; Kurt Moore/clarinet; Abram Alexander/piccolo and flute; Owen Lahiff/percussion; Simon Voyer/cello; Grace Courville/voice; Carter Whitman/voice; Sonnet Lawson/voice; Sonya Klinger/voice; Ella Bushey/voice; Torin Tracey/voice; Sam Acus/voice; Kay Rose/voice; Flora Jean Hart/voice; Zoe Rosen/voice; Lillian Brace/voice; and Emmeline Dodd/voice.

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