

MMUUSD FY2026 proposed budget

By Stephen Diglio, Mount Mansfield Unified Union School District School Board member (Bolton)

The Mount Mansfield Unified Union School District School (MMUUSD) school board will be reviewing the proposed annual budget for the 2026 fiscal year at the next school board meeting on Monday, January 13. The total proposed budget being reviewed by the full school board is \$61,290,046, which is a 1.94% increase from the prior year.

Additional information regarding the MMUUSD proposed budget development can be found on the budget page per the link below, and the also within the minutes/documents from the Finance and Facilities Committee Meeting on December 12, 2024, which can be found on the school board webpage also linked below:

<https://www.mmuusd.org/cms/One.aspx?portalId=474722&pageId=541253>

https://www.mmuusd.org/school_board

Please feel free to contact me (stephen.diglio@mmuusd.org) with any feedback, questions, comments, or concerns. Please also note that there will also be an opportunity to provide community comments at the beginning of the January 13 meeting.



During an idea-gathering session on the morning of October 5, 50 people met at the Mount Mansfield Union High School library to brainstorm and discuss ideas for the Jericho Town budget. Pictured above, Dave Barrington, long-time moderator for Jericho Town Meetings past and co-chair of the Town Meeting Reimagined Task Force, leads the opening discussion and process description at the October 5 idea-gathering session. PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Jericho Town Meeting Reimagined: next steps

Jericho has reimagined its approach to Town Meeting and the new three-step process has already piqued the imagination of many in the town. Jericho residents voted at the 2024 Town Meeting to move Town budget votes and other important measures to Australian ballot, rather than continuing their tradition of holding a voice vote on the floor on Town Meeting Day in March. Residents also voted to add an interim hybrid meeting where residents could directly influence the budget presented for the final vote in March.

During an idea-gathering session on the morning of October 5, 50 people met at the Mount Mansfield Union High School library to brainstorm and discuss ideas for the Town budget. Pictured above, Dave Barrington, long-time moderator for Town Meetings past and co-chair of the Town Meeting Reimagined Task Force, leads the opening discussion and process description at the October 5 idea-gathering session.

After hearing their input, the Jericho Selectboard is crafting a draft budget and will bring it to the citizens on the evening of Thursday, January 23. At that meeting, Barrington will facilitate a discussion of budget items presented by the Selectboard. The reimagined meeting will be hybrid, making it more broadly accessible. Citizens can join the meeting either in person or online.

"The first meeting, in October, was a chance for citizens to talk about ideas with their neighbors," said Maria Rinaldi, a task force member. "We described how the process would work, heard support from the Selectboard, and then broke into smaller groups — in the room and online — to spur and collect ideas," she explained.

"Not all (the) suggestions will immediately end up in the Town budget," Rinaldi stressed. "The Selectboard needs to create a sensible budget, but they are very open to receiving input to create a budget that supports the vision of Jericho residents and also the priorities outlined in the Town Plan." The Selectboard continued to receive input at their meetings on the first and third Thursdays through October, November, and December as they prepared the initial draft budget.

The next step in the process is a discussion of the draft budget that will be presented by the Selectboard at the Mount Mansfield Union High School auditorium on Thursday, January 23, beginning at 6:00 PM. Doors will open at 5:00 PM. Residents will also be able to participate via Zoom.

Before the meeting, citizens will, in true Town Meeting tradition, be able to visit tables staffed by groups such as the Land Trust or the Conservation Commission to gain information. The



High water behind the Old Red Mill in Jericho.

PHOTO BY SUZANNE FREITAS

Masons and Lions Club are collaborating to offer dinner, starting at 5:00 PM, for a suggested donation of \$10. Future publicity will provide a sign-up process to help the groups plan an appropriate amount of food.

"This meeting will look very familiar to people who have attended past Town Meetings," Barrington explained. "We will go through each section of the budget, hold discussion, and then vote on suggested changes to the draft budget." In the week after the January 23 meeting (January 27 snow date), the Selectboard will post the budget to be printed in the Town Report and voted on by Australian Ballot on the first Tuesday in March.

Barrington noted that the major differences this year are the measures the task force is taking so that more voices can be heard: "The meeting will be hybrid, thanks to MMCTV, so people who are participating from their homes via Zoom can be heard and vote. We're also doing this during the evening, when fewer people are at work."

Most importantly, all Jericho voters will be able to cast a ballot for or against the final budget on the official Town Meeting Day in Vermont, March 4.

The upcoming steps in the process are:

Thursday, January 23 (January 27 snow date), 5:00 P)M: Budget discussion and action

Tuesday, March 4, 7:00 AM – 7:00 PM: Australian (paper) ballot vote

For more information, and to find the draft budget when it becomes available, go online to <https://jerichovt.org/jericho-town-meeting-2-0>.

Cambridge Selectboard meeting January 11

By Eric Boozan, Cambridge Town Administrator

The Town of Cambridge Selectboard is having a Special Selectboard meeting on Saturday, January 11, 8:00 AM in the Cambridge Elementary School Cafeteria.

During this Special Selectboard Meeting, the Selectboard will present the current budget for FY2025 and review the major changes, anticipated tax rate, current Capital Budgets, and other asset accounts.

The agenda can be found online at <https://bit.ly/4gEoLX7>.

Contact Eric Boozan, eric@cambridgevt.org, with any questions.

Westford Selectboard meeting January 9

By Holly Delisle, Westford Town Administrator

On Thursday, January 9, 6:15 – 9:00 PM, the Westford Selectboard will meet in person at the Town Office; the meeting can also be attended on ZOOM (<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89394132350?pwd=FDaQST9rNC8CSpZnHTwoumhKvngUWs.1>, Meeting ID: 893 9413 2350, Passcode: 7tu4TW; or dial +1 646 558 8656 – Meeting ID: 893 9413 2350, Passcode: 341753).

Agenda items include a Draft Audit Review (Sullivan & Powers); CCRPC UPDATE (Ben Bornstein); a review by the Highway Department of the Road Schedule and the FY25 highway budget status report; FY26 Town Budget Workshop and possible budget approval for Town Meeting; a 1705 update; a

review of the Selectboard Town Report; review FY25 General Fund budget status report; review and approve accounts payable and payroll warrants; and more.

Information about petition deadlines for Town Meeting Day will be available.

The next regular Selectboard Meeting will be held on January 23, 2025.

Bolton bond vote results

By Brian Roberge, Bolton Town Administrator

The Bond Vote passed at 108 Yes votes to 27 No votes cast at the Special Town Meeting on Tuesday, December 17, 2024 on the question:

"Shall general obligation bonds, notes or other debt instruments of the Town of Bolton be issued in an amount not to exceed Three Million and 00/100 Dollars (\$3,000,000.00) for a term not to exceed ten (10) years, subject to reduction by grants in aid and other state and federal funds then available to the Town, to fund the repair, restoration, or replacement of roads and bridges damaged by the weather events of July 2024?"

With the passing of this vote, the Town will be able to secure funding to pay for the disaster repairs until FEMA can reimburse the Town for the emergency response projects associated with DR4810, the declared disaster that resulted from the July storms.

The Town has pursued additional funding opportunities to address the repair costs. The Town has applied for and been awarded a loan for One Million and 00/100 Dollars (\$1,000,000) from the Vermont Bond Banks Municipal Climate Recovery Fund. This program is designed to support towns in emergency situations as Bolton is facing from the July storms. With this funding, the Town was able to propose a target of Three Million and 00/100 Dollars (\$3,000,000) to be requested in a bond. With these two funding resources secured, the Town can move forward with confidence we can pay the contractors who helped repair and rebuild Bolton's roads.

The Town Staff expresses their sincere thanks to all the residents who engaged, offered their perspectives, and who have supported the Town as it navigated another disaster.

Residents can visit the Town Website at <https://boltonvt.com/> to find more information regarding the bond vote. Additional details will be provided as updated invoices and documents are provided to the Town Office by contractors and other agencies.

Help save the Cambridge Community Center

By Jamie Gruol, Cambridge 360 Treasurer

Have you used or currently use the Cambridge Community Center? Do you want to help us save it? We want to hear why you love the CCC!

We put together an online form where we can gather how you use it and why it will be awful for you to lose it. Click here to complete our form: <https://bit.ly/cccvstory>.

We are grateful for you sharing your story so we can save the CCC!

Winter Fest sponsor list is growing!

From Carol Winfield, Westford

A huge thank you to the following sponsors of the Fourth Annual Westford Winter Festival, coming up on Saturday, February 8, 11:30 AM – 4:00 PM on the Westford Common, VT Rt. 128, Westford! This list is growing daily: The Book Barn; The Butcher Barn; Barb Peck Saddle Fitting; Ned Meehan Tree Service; Applied Solutions Consulting (ASC); Lori Johnson; Kirick Engineering; Town of Westford; Sunbelt Rentals; Meyers Container Services; Working Dog Septic Service.

We've got a long way to go to cover the Horse Drawn Wagon, the two musical performances, porta-potties, supplies, etc. Won't you join in supporting a day of fun activities for the whole family? Any donation, any size, will help make this day a success!

Please make checks payable to Carol Winfield, with "Winterfest" in the memo line. For more information, contact Westfordwinterfest@gmail.com.

Cambridge Rec sponsors Let's Do Lunch! in January, February

By Nanci Lepsic, Cambridge Recreation Board Clerk

All are invited to Let's Do Lunch!, a monthly community lunch sponsored by Cambridge Recreation with the support of the Second Congregational UCC, Cambridge Elementary School sixth grade class, Cambridge Village Market, and community volunteers. The upcoming events are on Friday, January 17 and Friday, February 21, 11:00 AM – 12:30 PM at the Second Congregational Church, Church Street, Jeffersonville.

While there is no charge for the meal, donations to help defray the cost of preparing the meals is appreciated. Bring a food shelf donation if you can.

Hope to see you there!

COMING EVENTS

Ongoing Events

It Takes a Village Women's Circle meets on the last Tuesday of the month, 6:00 – 7:30 PM at the Waterville Town Hall, 544 VT Rt. 109, Waterville. We will have a pot-luck, so if you can please bring something to share; if not, whatever the reason, just bring yourself! Also bring a journal and pen. Donation based; suggested donation \$5 goes to the upkeep of the Waterville Town Hall. But all are welcome, always! <https://www.facebook.com/events/1071704021631117?ref=newsfeed>

Come help Wood4Good help the community stay warm — Please join us weekly on Saturdays, 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM, through January 25, 2025. We process wood at the end of the Davis Farm on Cilley Hill Rd in Jericho. If you want to put it in your phone, use 151 Cilley Hill — which is the address just beyond the land we use to process the wood. Park on the opposite side of the street, off the road as far as you can and tight to the car in front of you. Wear boots, gloves, and hearing protection. Come join the fun! Also, we need help with grant writing and project management as well as community outreach — if anyone would like to help us with a non-physical job. Please contact Eric Axelrod, Wood4Good, 802-310-1949.

Square Dancing — Tuesdays, September-May, 6:00 – 8:00 PM, Tuttle Middle School, S. Burlington. Tuttle Middle School, S. Burlington. If you can walk to music, you can learn to square dance! Join the Lake Champlain Squares to exercise bodies and minds through square dancing. All ages and experience levels are welcome.

SongFarmers is a music jam for people of all ages who want to play folk, Americana, blues, bluegrass, Celtic, and more on acoustic instruments; no electronics except for 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. Novice or advanced, you can have fun in a music circle. 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. No alcohol. It's okay to come late if you can't make the start time. Free! Third Wednesdays (January 17), 6:00 – 8:00 PM at the Community Center in Jericho, Browns Trace, Jericho Center. Registration is appreciated; email CommunityJamJUVT@gmail.com.

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 (January 11) at 6:00 PM. Visit our website for more information or to request a zoom invitation: <https://www.jerichohistoricalsociety.org/events.html>.

The Underhill Historical Society meets at the Old Schoolhouse, 32 Pleasant Valley Road, Underhill Center, but is now closed for the season. Visit our website for more information about the Underhill Historical Society: <https://underhillhistoricalsociety.org/>.

Craft Group: meets twice a month on Thursdays (January 9, 23), 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 juliehhehir@comcast.net.

Waterville Country Church hosts a Community Meal the first Thursday of each month (February 6). Come enjoy a relaxing homemade meal with neighbors at the church or pick up meal(s) to go. Donations accepted. All donations will be given to a local nonprofit, charity, or community service organization. For information contact Susan Schill or Kim Pitt, watervillecountrychurch@gmail.com. Ask about delivery to shut-ins!

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.

RSVP Bone Builders program, Westford Common Hall, Wednesdays and Fridays, 10:30 – 11:30 AM. Free! Please wear comfortable clothing and bring water. This program focuses on balance and light weight training to protect against fractures caused by osteoporosis. Per studies by Tufts University published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, those who participated in the program just twice a week, gained muscular strength, balance, and increased bone density. Contact Jocelyn Chauvin, 802-999-6387.

Coming Events

Wednesday, January 8
Jericho-Underhill Food Hub Free Community Dinner, 4:30 – 7:00 PM, Browns River Middle School, River Rd., Jericho. Menu: Shepherds' pie, vegetable bean soup, roasted vegetables, green salad, and apple crisp, all including ingredients grown and produced locally. There will also be activities including a home micro-green growing kit demonstration and a raffle. For more information, contact jufoodhub@gmail.com.

Thursday, January 9
Indigenous Ethnobotany of Vermont: an Introduction, 7:00 – 8:30 PM, online. Join the Friends of Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge as they host Dr. Fred Wiseman for this first lecture in the winter and spring cultural history series on Native American plant use. This program will begin with a focus on the various aspects of Indigenous plant use throughout North

America from Mexico and the Southwest to the Northeast, and then focus on the Missisquoi Wildlife Refuge's environs. Registration required; visit <https://friendsofmissisquoi.org/calendar/> for registration details for this and other winter events.

Saturday, January 11
Backcountry Film Festival, 6:00 – 9:00 PM, Underhill Town Hall, Pleasant Valley Rd., Underhill Center. The Underhill Recreation Committee is proud to host the Backcountry Film Festival, a compilation of films celebrating the human-powered experiences through outdoor winter adventures! The films are presented by the Winter Wildlands Alliance. Tickets, \$10 (free under 18), are available at <https://bit.ly/4iZouWP> (short for <https://secure.everyaction.com/LJQxKlwKYkKn6UDuPx9Nyw2>). Note: Unsold tickets will be available at the door if the event does not sell out. Doors open at 6:00 PM. Showing from 6:15 - 8:45 PM. There will be a brief intermission at the midpoint for a sweet raffle. Trailer: <https://vimeo.com/ondemand/bcff20th>.

Tuesday, January 14
Old Growth Forest Characteristics: The What, The How and The Why, 12:00 – 1:00 PM, on Zoom. Free. Old Growth Forests dominated the New England landscape for thousands of years, prior to European settlement. Today, they occupy less than 1% of the region. Learn what old growth forests are, why they are valuable, and how we can get more old forests back on the landscape through a range of approaches, from passive Wildlands conservation to light management. Ecologist Liz Thompson and VLT forester David McMath will share stories on old growth protection and management from the Vermont landscape and will answer your questions. For those interested, forester continuing education credits (1.0 CFE credit) will be available through the Society of American Foresters (<https://www.eforester.org/>). For more information and to register: <https://vlt.org/events/old-growth-forest-characteristics/>.

Wednesday, January 15
Jericho Underhill Park District Annual Meeting, 7:00 – 8:00 PM, Deborah Rawson Memorial Library project room, River Rd., Jericho. For legal voters in Jericho and Underhill, this event is an opportunity to review and vote on the JUPD's (Mills Riverside Park) proposed budget of \$85,962 for 2026. A regular business meeting will be conducted after the vote. All board meetings are open to the public.

Thursday, January 16
Birdfeeding Basics, 6:30 – 7:30 PM; online. Join the Friends of Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge for this online event about feeding the birds in your yard. Maeve Kim will present information to help you enjoy birds in your backyard while keeping them safe. Learn what birds like what foods, how to keep your birds healthy, protected, and safe. Registration required; visit <https://friendsofmissisquoi.org/calendar/> for registration details for this and other winter events.

Friday, January 17
Let's Do Lunch!, 11:00 AM – 12:30 PM at the Second Congregational Church, Church Street, Jeffersonville. Sponsored by Cambridge Recreation with the support of the Second Congregational UCC, Cambridge Elementary School sixth grade class, Cambridge Village Market, and community volunteers. There is no charge for the meal, but donations to help defray the cost of preparing the meals is appreciated. Bring a food shelf donation if you can.

WORSHIP SERVICES

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. Calvary is located at 370 VT Rt. 15 in Jericho. The parish administrator can be reached at calvarychurchjericho@gmail.com or 802-899-0453. The Spirit is stirring in this little church. Come be a part of it!

Mount Mansfield Unitarian Universalist Fellowship

Sunday services at MMUUF are held at 9:30 AM on the second and fourth Sundays (January 12, 26) 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.

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://united-churchofunderhill.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

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.

St. Thomas Catholic Church

"Worshiping God in Spirit and in Truth in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass"
On Green Street in Underhill Center
Weekend Masses: Saturday 4:00 PM, Sunday 8:30 AM
Weekday Masses: Wednesday 6:30 PM, Friday 8:00 AM
Pastor: Rev. Domenico Pizzonia; Deacon: Peter Brooks
Religious Ed. Coordinator: Laura Lynch Wells, 802-899-4770
Parish Secretary: Theresa Gingras, 802-899-4632
email: office@stthomasvt.com; website: www.stthomasvt.com

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.

Act humbly, because the smartest person in the room is probably not who you think it is. — Ben Larson

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COMMUNITY COLUMNS

MMCTV's top three most-viewed

By Angelike A. Contis, Mount Mansfield Community TV
Happy New Year to the many amazing individuals Mount Mansfield Community TV (MMCTV) has worked with in 2024! Our staff and community producers have recorded/shared/archived 468 videos in the past year. Here are our top three most-viewed on YouTube:

- 1) MMCTV 2024 Eclipse Compilation (<https://youtu.be/MhaefogveqE?si=f4kazH8ss33cIZhD>)
- 2.) MMU Commencement (https://www.youtube.com/live/HTWG_nWk_Hs?si=SDJfrKnMecuWcRo)
- 3.) Underhill Development Review Board Meeting 8-19-2024 (<https://youtu.be/ucgc7fuUiuU?si=13QkJEpRkAC098tr>)

Trailing closely behind were lots of parades — including the Jericho Pet, Underhill Harvest Market, Underhill-Jericho Memorial Day, and Richmond Fourth of July parades!

Want to get involved with MMCTV in 2025? Donations and volunteers are always welcome! Find out more at MMCTV and our new fledgling WRUJ radio station at <https://mtmansfieldctv.org/>.

Introducing the 2025 Jericho Almanac

By Bernie Paquette, Jericho

Courteous reader,

I might in this place attempt to gain thy favor by declaring that I write this almanac with no other view than that of the public good, but in this I should not be sincere; and men and women are nowadays too wise to be deceived by pretenses. The plain truth of the matter is, I am excessively lonely for conversation, and my poor partner is excessively eager for me to find someone else to lay my verbosity upon. I have faith that you will find at least snippets of interest to you, a smidgen of reason, enough humor to crack a smile if not erupt a belly laugh, and if all else fails, tinder for your wood-stove.

Like most almanacs, this one covers a range of information and ideas for daily living and is meant to be browsed, skimmed over, and viewed throughout the year. This Almanac provides a comprehensive overview of events and activities for our community interspersed with witty sayings and a few predictions. The second half includes prompts for more in-depth thought and discussion. It ends with photos of Jericho including a monkey giving me a hug — hey, you get them where you can!

I predict this 2025 almanac will spark actions, activities, and thoughtful analysis. Also, a few laughs. P.S. — I am confident my one weather prediction is as accurate as the Farmer's Almanac predictions!

"Here comes the orator! With his flood of words and his drop of reason." — Benjamin Franklin

View the Jericho Almanac at <https://jerichovermont.blogspot.com/2024/12/2025-jericho-vt-almanac.html>.

Whether you are a lifelong resident of Jericho, a relative newbie like me, or brand-new to Jericho, may you feel welcome, secure, consoling and supporting each other when hardships arise, one of many caring for each other; having fun and laughing together, sharing ideas and learning together in 2025.

The three Hs: housing, hunger, and healthcare

By Bill Schubart

A basic goal of civil government is that its citizens should have a secure place protected from the elements in which to live and perhaps raise a family.

The latest statewide count for unsheltered Vermonters is 3458, a 5% increase over 2023, the second highest rate in the country, and this is deemed by experts to be a significant undercount.

Meanwhile, discussions of homelessness are overshadowed by our Governor's headline focus on "affordability," which has led to steep cuts in the motel voucher program. Legislators authorized some \$44 million for the motel program this fiscal year. Before new restrictions on the program went into effect earlier this fall, around 1400 households had motel vouchers. With the \$80 per day rate cap on motel rooms, the program cost is about \$112,000 per night. And we're talking about building a new \$70M prison. How much permanent housing shelter would \$114 million fund?

If we take a broader look at the root of the problem or better yet the hierarchy of causation, we will see a more intelligent and cost-efficient strategy.

Homelessness is primarily caused by poverty, mental illness, and substance-use disorder. Over the decades, we've made largely ineffectual efforts to thoroughly deal with these drivers. We've made marginal progress but will continue to come up short until the homeless struggling with poverty, mental illness, or substance-use disorder are safely housed.

Our neighbor Canada is pioneering a way to provide housing with the necessary support systems to meet these complex health needs. The "highly supportive housing" project has been a resounding success, and plans are underway to expand it to other areas.

Across the pond, Finland has become the Euro leader, virtually eradicating homelessness within its borders with its "Housing First" policy. The model is based on the belief that decent, safe housing is a basic human right — like universal healthcare — commitments we in the U.S. seem loath to consider. Instead, we choose to believe healthcare and housing should be lucrative businesses, even as their accelerating costs make them increasingly out of reach for our average citizens.

The Finnish theory is founded on the view that if a person does not have a stable home, it's virtually impossible to make significant improvements in other areas of life. This approach sets "Housing First" apart from the "treatment-first" models, which have been shown to have little long-term impact in reducing homelessness. Finland learned that the requirement that potential occupants be intoxicant-free and able to take control of their lives has proven to be an insuperable barrier for many homeless people with multiple problems and that the pathway to help in fact comes with a secure place to live with wrap-around services — the "housing first" principle. Housing is understood not as a reward for getting one's life back on track but rather a precursor to doing so.

It should go without saying that housing is a matter of survival as well. The recent deaths of Lucas and Tammy Menard in Wolcott, although undetermined as to cause, highlights the lethal danger of "living rough" in the Vermont cold. Another unidentified person has been found dead as well in an encampment in Berlin.

We should start by committing to a "no homeless in Vermont" strategy now. Does this mean we will achieve that goal immediately? No. It means we will do whatever is necessary over the next two legislative sessions to achieve that goal.

We can start by surveying all available shelter space to get people inside over this winter. We have empty dorm space at several colleges. There are many of us older folks living in houses designed for our younger families who are now gone and on their own. Could some of us share living space with those who are otherwise healthy but cannot afford housing? Might HomeShare Vermont be a resource to expand options for the healthy homeless? We have a young couple living with us in their school bus parked on our lawn.

One solution to the cost problem would be to create a voluntary income tax for high-income Vermonters to fund construction of energy-efficient "wrap-around-support housing" in our larger communities.

Vermonters rebel at the idea of paying higher taxes when they're unclear as to what the money raised will pay for. When a clear, humane goal that directly benefits one's community is within their reach, the benefits of which they see immediately, the popular resistance to taxes, especially voluntary ones, subsides. Look at the success of "gofundme" to support specific families in need in our communities.

We Vermonters like to imagine ourselves as outgoing, caring, and focused on the well-being of our friends and neighbors. Our "better angels" go to work during calamities such as severe weather events. But in the chronic, gradual erosion of community well-being exemplified by the "Three Hs," housing, hunger, and healthcare, we're often mystified while looking to our government to provide solutions.

The plaint of "affordability" that our governor applies to any solutions brought forth to solve our larger problems doesn't relieve us of our obligation to our communities and neighbors to alleviate suffering here at home, especially in housing. Nor does it eliminate neighbor-to-neighbor solutions. Do we really want to leave these problems to fester unsolved forever?

Seventy-three countries, comprising 69% of the world's population, have declared healthcare a universal right. Others of our peer nations are finding ways to eliminate homelessness. Solutions are possible. But here at home, the \$4.5T healthcare business is apparently too lucrative for the few elites who benefit from it to declare it a universal right.

Meanwhile, private equity is slurping up housing around the country and raising sales and rental rates in a market that is increasingly unaffordable to many. Is family housing now so lucrative that we're willing to tolerate homelessness to support its profits as well?

Meanwhile, access to housing, healthcare, and education as well as opportunity are proven to be three drivers of economic growth.

Perhaps we could start to tackle our own housing crisis here in Vermont by learning from other societies that have done it successfully. A focused "voluntary community-housing tax" funded by better-off Vermonters who care about their neighbors in need would enable us to begin building public housing with support services and achieve a shared goal of eliminating homelessness in Vermont.

Are we really okay with our neighbors freezing to death in winter?

News briefs continued from page 1

News from Jericho Town Office

This month we feature Jericho Food Hub Member, Laura Markowitz. Read more online at <https://jerichovt.org/Celebrating-Each-Other>.

Town Budget discussions: The Selectboard is discussing budget items for Fiscal Year 2026 at each of their regular meetings. The budget topics are posted in the agenda and all are invited to participate in the discussion. A more comprehensive timeline of the budget process can be found online at https://jerichovt.org/selectboard/news_feed/fy26-budget-discussion-timeline-tentative-dates. On Thursday, January 23, 5:30 PM, there will be a community meeting in the MMU auditorium. This meeting will have all the primary features of our traditional Town Meeting Day and we hope to have a great turnout. There will be a remote option for those who cannot be there in person. Stay tuned for additional details.

The Planning Commission is juggling a few balls in the air, which were discussed at the PC meeting on December 17, 2025, at Town Hall and on Zoom:

Zoning changes are needed to accommodate construction of a new Town Garage and Maintenance Facility in the current location which is in the Open Space District as part of Mobbs Farm. The PC will hold a public hearing and hopes to finalize the zoning amendments at the PC meeting that same evening, to forward to the Selectboard for their consideration.

The PC will discuss a different set of zoning changes to enable "Missing Middle Housing" in the Village Centers and the nearby village growth areas. The PC determined that increasing the density limits in these districts could open up more opportunities for small scale multi-family housing, particularly for up to four-unit buildings.

The PC will discuss the Wastewater Feasibility Report, which the Selectboard commissioned in 2023 and is close to completion. The Town Plan tasks the PC to review the report and provide feedback to the Selectboard in the context of the Town Plan.

In January, the PC looks forward to tying up these projects and then resuming work on comprehensive zoning changes designed to enable housing and growth based on Smart Growth principles and the Vermont Guide to Better Neighborhoods.

Dog license fees for Cambridge

By Dana Warren, Cambridge Town Clerk

As of January 1, there has been an increase in the dog license fees.

January 1-April 1: neutered/spayed \$11; non-neutered/non-spayed \$15.

April 2-October 1: neutered/spayed \$13; non-neutered/non-spayed \$19.

October 2-December 31: neutered/spayed \$9; non-neutered/non-spayed \$11.

LIBRARY NEWS

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.

All programs are held at the library and open to all, unless otherwise noted.

Adult programs

Mondays, January 6, 13, 20, 27; and Wednesdays, January 8, 15, 22, 29, 10:00 – 11:00 AM: Seated Tai Chi for Health & Balance. This starter-level course in person and on Zoom is for older adults and people with chronic health conditions. There is no charge for classes, but donations to Age Well are appreciated. Registration required. Email instructor Jo Osborne at joannosborne2@gmail.com

Third Tuesdays, January-April, 6:30 – 8:00 PM, Deborah Rawson Memorial Library Fireplace Room: book discussion series on *The Anxious Generation, How the Great Rewiring of Childhood is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness* by Jonathan Haidt. ReConnect is a growing group of families from the Mount Mansfield Unified Union School District (MMUUSD) working to build community around the impacts of smartphones and social media on our kids. In the spirit of fostering in-person connections and conversations on the topic, we will be hosting a four-part discussion series focused on the book *The Anxious Generation* by Jonathan Haidt. Please join us for one or all of the gatherings as we discuss what these topics mean for us in our homes and as a larger community. There will be podcast options as well, so feel free to join even if you don't have time to read the chapters. The meetings are as follows: January 21, parts 1 and 2 (*A Tidal Wave* and *The Backstory: The Decline of a Play Based Childhood*); February 18, part 3 (*The Great Re-Wiring: The Rise of the Phone-Based Childhood*); March 18, part 4 (*Collective Action for Healthier Childhood*); and April 15, *Recap and Looking Ahead: What's next for our community?* If you don't have time to read the whole book but would like an overview, here's an interview with the author you can listen to: <https://www.goodinside.com/podcast/7065/the-anxious-generation-with-jonathan-haidt/> We welcome everyone to come and share their perspectives and experiences. We look forward to coming together as a community and hope you will join the conversation — Kate Yeh and Andrea Parikh

Tuesday, January 7, 7:00 PM: *Common Ground*: A Jericho Energy Task Force Movie Presentation. The film *Common Ground* "unveils the dark web of money, power, and politics behind our broken food system," and provides "a hopeful and uplifting movement of farmers who are using alternative 'regenerative' models of agriculture." Erica Campbell, co-founder of InCommon Group, will answer questions.

Tuesdays, January 7, 14, 28, 7:00 – 8:00 PM: French Conversation Chez Henry. All levels of French speakers are welcome to this informal conversation group.

Wednesday, January 8, 7:00 PM: DRML Building Committee Meeting. Share your input for the library's future needs. To attend remotely, email Holly at drawsonmemlib@gmail.com.

Thursdays, January 9, 23, 6:00 – 8:00 PM: Crafters' Group. 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 juliehhehir@comcast.net.

Thursday, January 9, 6:30 – 8:30 PM: Mah-Jongg. Players of all levels are welcome.

Tuesday, January 14, 7:00 – 8:30 PM: Deborah Rawson Book

Library news continued on page 5

MAKING VALENTINE'S DAY
SWEET SINCE 1986



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The Mountain Gazette

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Must be signed for attribution with writers address and phone number. Send your news to mtngazette@gmavt.net

HEALTH NEWS

Fit and Strong Moms to meet in Essex

At Fit and Strong Moms, you can bring your kids to work out with you and join a community of mothers who offer support and friendship! We do body weight exercises along with using resistance bands and sandbags so that our workouts are safe for kids of all ages.

You have a choice of days and times in the new year! Our workouts will be run Mondays, Wednesdays, and Saturdays from 9:00 – 10:00 AM at Maple Street Park in Essex. You can choose to just attend Saturdays or just attend Mondays and Wednesdays or to attend all three days!

Fit and Strong Moms is run through Essex Junction Parks and Rec and you can register online at <https://vtsexsexjctweb.myvscloud.com/webtrac/web/search.html?module=AR&primarycode=270401>.

Scholarships are available on a needs basis. You are always welcome to come and try out a fitness session for free before committing.

If you have other questions, please feel free to reach out to Sarah Roberts, fitandstrongmoms@gmail.com.

Make this your year to quit smoking with 802Quits — free

From the VT Department of Health

Whatever your reason for quitting tobacco, you can boost your chance of success with 802Quits' FREE services and support. Choose the path that works best for you and receive a customized quit plan, coaching, and nicotine replacement options such as gum, patches, or lozenges. You may even qualify for up to \$250

in gift card rewards just for trying!

Visit <https://802quits.org/> or call or text 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669). Translated services are available.

Frostbite

Parents have been asking me some cool questions about frostbite and how to recognize it in their children. Let me see if I can warm things up and provide some information on this topic.

Frostnip and frostbite: risk and treatment

Frostbite is literally frozen body tissue. It is usually skin but sometimes it can involve even deeper tissues.

Since kids lose heat more rapidly than adults, they are at greater risk for frostbite to occur — especially when they are reluctant to stop playing out in the cold and come inside to warm up.

The mildest and earliest form of frostbite is frostnip. This affects small areas of the exposed body such as the cheeks, nose, ears, fingers, and toes leaving them red and tingly.

Treatment is fairly simple. It involves bringing your child inside, removing all wet clothing, and putting the chilled body parts in warm (not hot) water. This means no more than 100 degrees Fahrenheit for 15-20 minutes until normal sensation returns.

Full-blown frostbite requires medical attention and is characterized by white, waxy skin that feels numb and hard.

Here are some things you can do while you are in the process of heading to the Emergency Department or waiting for an ambulance:

- get your child into a warm environment and dry clothing;
- don't rub frostbitten areas — treat them gently;
- do not try to thaw out frostbite unless you are in a warm place — ideally the Emergency Department;

- don't use dry heat and don't break any blisters;
- if their feet are affected, carry your child and don't have them walk;
- give them a warm drink to help them warm up.

Prevention tips and warning signs

Of course, the best way to deal with frostbite is to prevent it from occurring. Here are some best practices:

- have your child dress in lots of layers and remove layers if they are too hot;
- choose fabrics other than cotton since cotton does not keep you very warm — thermal or woolen underwear is a great first layer;
- heavy socks and waterproof boots are a must;
- keep your child's head covered to prevent loss of lots of body heat off the top of their head — along with scarves, face masks, and earmuffs, mittens or gloves;
- keep your child hydrated to keep blood circulating to the end tissues like fingers and toes and don't forget to set time limits on outdoor play in the cold to avoid frostbite and hypothermia.

Here are some warning signs to share with your child when they are outside and do the following:

- begin to shiver or teeth chattering;
- feel dizzy or appearing clumsy;
- are unable to feel their fingers, toes, cheeks, ears or nose.

If any of the above occurs, they need to come inside and warm up.

Hopefully, tips like these will melt away any concerns you have when it comes to knowing more about frostbite.

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 REPORTS

Housing – give your feedback

By Theresa Wood, State Representative
Washington-Chittenden House District

The legislative session gets underway on Wednesday, January 8, so watch for my legislative updates starting next week.

In the meantime, you have an opportunity to give feedback on two important surveys on housing from the Department of Housing and Community Development. Here is a bit of information and the links to the surveys.

Affordable Housing Survey: Weigh in on the future of affordable housing in Vermont by taking this 10-minute survey. You'll be asked about permitting, subsidies, and other vehicles that could help expand options in and around Vermont's state-designated areas. The answers will be incorporated into a report for the Legislature.

HUD Citizen Survey: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/7MZT9VS>.

Department of Housing and Community Development is working on a federally-required Consolidated Plan for 2025-2029 for U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) that will determine how \$14M in annual funding for Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), the HOME Investment Partnerships Program, and Emergency Solution Grants (ESG) is spent.

Please take this Citizen Participation Survey today: <https://forms.office.com/g/TE08KuUx3w>.

Free residential career training for youth, ages 16-24

By Irene Wrenner, 2023-2024 State Senator
Chittenden-North Senate District

The new year is an ideal time to make a change.

Would someone you know consider learning a trade in a two-year, debt-free training program?

Northlands Job Corps Center offers successful applicants on-campus learning and living, including free housing, meals, medical/dental care, and allowance, for up to two years. The job training provided can lead to "blue collar jobs at white collar wages," said Ken Grant, advanced welding instructor at this career technical school in Vergennes.

I visited this hub of activity in mid-December. Students aged 16-24 from all over Vermont and the U.S. find their way to Northlands and receive an education tailored to their needs and goals. Job Corps students polish their academic skills while earning certifications in one or more fields.

Currently, Northlands offers the following career technical training:

- auto tech;
- culinary arts;
- building construction / facilities maintenance;

- medical assistant;
- office administration;
- urban forestry;
- welding;
- advanced welding.

Northland's team of counselors help youth select a career path, stay on track, and shepherd them into the working world during the year after graduation, including assistance finding transportation and housing.

Northlands is the only Vermont-based Job Corps Center of the 124 sites run by the U.S. Department of Labor. New students are welcome year-round.

Applicants must meet income eligibility requirements and be free of substance use. Learn more at <http://northlands.jobcorps.gov> and www.dub.sh/NorthlandsJCC.

Thank you for electing me to serve you in Montpelier these past two years. Being a legislator has allowed me to discover several of Vermont's best-kept secrets, including the living and learning opportunities at Northlands!

While I won't return to the Senate in 2025, I will continue working to improve communication, minimize nonsense, and resolve problems in state government.

Please get in touch any time via imvwren@aol.com or 802-338-2247, as my legislative email account will soon be retired.

MISCELLANEOUS NEWS

SOSVT: free support for Vermonters impacted by flooding

From the VT Department of Mental Health

Starting Over Strong Vermont (SOSVT) offers free, anonymous emotional support and guidance to Vermonters impacted by the 2024 flooding. SOSVT's outreach workers connect you with local resources and support your recovery within your community. You can contact outreach workers by phone, in-person, or even at your home to help navigate the recovery process.

Disasters can have lasting emotional effects, and it's normal to feel overwhelmed, anxious, or uncertain. SOSVT is here to help because emotional recovery is a crucial part of your overall well-being.

Learn more and get support by calling 802-651-1767 or visiting <https://mentalhealth.vermont.gov/sosvt>. You don't have to face recovery alone.

United Way volunteer opportunities

MAKE VOLUNTEERING A NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION — United Way's Volunteer Connection site is set up to help connect agencies and volunteers. Go online to the link for the Volunteer Connection — <https://unitedwaynwvt.galaxydigital.com/> — to learn more about these and other opportunities.

HEALTHY TOGETHER — Burlington Partnership for a Healthy Community believes every young person deserves a chance to live and thrive in an environment free from the harm of substance abuse. They have a number of volunteer opportunities available, everything from helping to make Nicotine Quit Kits to serving on their Board of Directors. To learn more contact Mariah Flynn, mariah@burlingtonpartnership.org.

A CHANCE TO LEARN — Vermont Adult Learning asks: Do you have teaching experience you would like to put to good use?? If so, VAL has an ongoing need for volunteers to serve as one-on-one tutors, teachers, and advisors. Current specific needs include English Language Learning Tutor to help non-native English speakers at various levels of proficiency; GED Preparation Tutor to assist students studying to take the GED in Language Arts, Math, Science, and Social Studies; Adult Basic Ed Tutor to help students acquire reading, math, and writing skills to meet their career goals; Computer Skills/Digital Literacy Teaching to

lead basic computer skills workshops; and College and Career Transition Advisor to assist students finishing their high school credentials programs and planning next steps. Contact Forrest Gardner, 802-275-4933 or fgardner@vtadulthoodlearning.com.

SNAKES AND TOADS — ECHO Leahy Center for Lake Champlain is looking for volunteers to assist in the delivery of professional animal care of fish, reptiles, and exotic amphibians. Have fun learning about habitat design, animal behavior, diets, and much more. A full semester or summer commitment (three to four months) is desired, with a minimum of one four-hour shift per week. Contact Billy Ernest, 802-864-1848 Ext. 149 or volunteer@echovermont.org.

END THE HUNGER — Feeding Champlain Valley needs volunteers, age 18 and older, to fill a number of needs: stock shelves, refrigerators, and freezers with fresh food; prep/serve breakfast and lunch for the Hot Meal Program; help clients sign in to receive groceries, prep and/or deliver groceries to stay-at-home clients, and more. Volunteer opportunities are available across Chittenden, Grand Isle, and Franklin Counties. Contact Ansley Laev, 802-829-5797 or alaev@cvoeo.org or braimes@cvoeo.org.

CSWD winter webinars

From the CSWD Board

CSWD's Winter Webinar Series has started — tune in on the second Thursday of every month at 6:00 PM to learn about different waste-related topics, from recycling and reuse to food waste prevention and composting. Register online at https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_4sVCzqVeSj-6bbJHkOhCnw#/registration:

- January 9: Vermonters Going Zero-Waste;
- February 13: Reducing Wasted Food;
- March 13: Methods to Manage Food Waste;
- April 19: Composting.

Lamoille County Legislative Breakfasts begin January 6

By Pat Ripley, Lamoille Economic Development Corporation

With the start of the 2025 legislative session, Lamoille Economic Development Corporation (LEDC) and Lamoille Chamber of Commerce are sponsoring our 2025 Legislative Breakfast Series, began on Monday, January 6 in Hyde Park.

The Hyde Park breakfast was the first 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.

These breakfasts have proven to be popular with Lamoille County residents and we expect good interest again this year. Be sure to register early!

The breakfast series continues Monday, February 3 in Stowe; Monday, March 3 in Johnson; and in April (date and location TBA). 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.

"With continued support, we expect to be able to offer these longtime community staples to Lamoille County residents well into the future," LEDC and Lamoille Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Patrick Ripley said. "We hope to continue creating a space for engaging, respectful community dialogue. Public participation is the key to ensuring these events can continue to take place for years to come!"

Register online at <http://www.lamoilleconomy.org/breakfast>.

Lamoille Fibernet announces expanded long drop funding

From Lamoille FiberNet Communications
Union District Board

For most of us, having Fidium bring fiber to the premises (the "drop") is free. However, some sites need extra work before fiber can be installed — this post is about new funding that is available for eligible addresses and what you can do next.

Lamoille FiberNet is expanding its Long Drop Program to help Lamoille residents and businesses afford long (non-standard) drops. Not only do we have more funds available, but also, we will be expanding support to all 10 towns.

This program is administered by Lamoille FiberNet, NOT Fidium Fiber. Please do not call Fidium about how to sign up for funding assistance. They will not be able to help. We have set up a dedicated email — drops@lamoillefiber.net — to take your questions and verify whether your address is eligible. Please read this post carefully so you consider your options.

Library news continued from page 3

Lovers (DRBL). Instead of meeting over a particular book, all who attend are invited to discuss the best book(s) they read in 2024.

Thursday, January 16, 7:00 PM: Deborah Rawson Library Board of Trustees Annual Meeting and Budget Vote. Jericho and Underhill registered voters are encouraged to attend the meeting and vote on the library's fiscal year 2025-26 budget. Copies of the proposed budget are available at the library, and on the library's website at <https://www.drml.org/about/trustees/>.

Tuesday, January 28, 6:00 – 7:00 PM: Legislative Update. State representatives Edey Graning of Jericho and Trevor Squirrel of Underhill will provide an update on Vermont's legislative session.

Tuesday, January 28, 7:00 PM: Mystery Book Group. Call or visit the library to reserve your copy of *Devil in a Blue Dress* by Walter Mosley. To attend the book discussion via Zoom, email Holly at drawsonmemlib@yahoo.com.

Youth programs

For events that require registration, please visit or call the library, or email youth_librarian@drml.org.

Tuesdays, 10:30 AM: Baby Toddler Story Time. For kids ages birth to Pre-K, with a caregiver.

Fridays, 11:00 AM: Stories and Songs with Beth and David London. For kids ages birth to five, with a caregiver. If schools are closed on any Friday, this program is cancelled for that day.

Wednesday, January 8, 3:00 – 4:00 PM: Warrior Cats Book Club [ages 8+] Join other fans to talk about the books, explore the Warriors app, and make some cat crafts.

Friday, January 10, 3:00 – 4:00 PM LEGO Club [registration required; ages 6+]

Tuesday, January 14, 4:00 – 5:30 PM Magic: The Gathering [ages 8+] Beginners to experienced players, bring your cards or deck and come play and talk MTG. We have a deck or two, if you don't have your own.

Wednesday, January 15, 3:00 – 4:30 PM: Read to Wyatt [all ages] Wyatt, a four-year-old Bernese Mountain Dog, hopes you will drop in to read him a story and give him some belly rubs.

Tuesday, January 16, 3:00 – 4:30 PM: Minecraft Social [registration required; ages 8+] Spend some time together in various realms across the world of Minecraft. The library has a few devices to borrow, but please bring yours if you have one.

Tuesday, January 21, 3:00 – 4:00 PM: Wings of Fire Club [ages 8+] We'll have a dragon craft, some official Wings of Fire activities, and personality quizzes.

Tuesday, January 28, 3:00 – 4:00 PM: Snowman Stretch STEM Challenge [ages 6+] Using only copy paper, tape, and a few decorative items, build the tallest "snow" person you can.

Thursday, January 30, 3:00 – 4:00 PM: Crafternoon: Marbled Paper [registration required; ages 6+] Make beautiful marbled paper for use as cards, bookmarks, or whatever else you can think of.

For complete details on these programs and all that the library offers, please visit our website at <https://www.drml.org/>.

Deborah Rawson Memorial Library, 8 River Rd., Jericho. Please visit drml.org or call 802-899-4962 for the most up-to-date information. Contact information: rawsonlibrary@drml.org; [802-899-4962](tel:802-899-4962).

JERICHO TOWN LIBRARY

Hours: Tuesdays 10:00 AM – 7:00 PM; Wednesdays, Thursdays, 10:00 AM – 6:00 PM; Fridays 12:00 – 6:00 PM; Saturdays 9:30 AM – 2:30 PM.

Weekly events

Mondays, 6:30 – 8:00 PM, January 27-April 21: The Artist's Way Creativity Group. If you're feeling blocked, stuck, or adrift in your artistic endeavors, or curious about ways to live a more creative lifestyle, consider joining us for a 12-week journey through *The Artist's Way*, the landmark book by Julia Cameron about the creative process. Cameron's tried-and-true techniques of daily freewriting and weekly solo "Artist Dates" combined with the readings and exercises in the book will guide us along a path to higher creativity. Gathering as a group of supportive peers, let's work through the course together and share our inspirations and challenges along the way. All adults are welcome to join the group. Whether you're a seasoned practitioner of your craft and looking to get out of a rut, someone who has shied away from calling yourself an artist, or a curious creative seeking inspiration, *The Artist's Way* is for everyone. You will need a copy of *The Artist's Way: A Spiritual Path to Higher Creativity* by Julia Cameron (often available inexpensively through online used book retailers), a notebook, and an open mind. Register online at <https://forms.gle/ZLAH9MPGGX81ZJFW7>. Contact Amy (amy@jerichotownlibraryvt.org) with any questions. Read about the book online at <https://www.npr.org/2023/09/05/1193447515/the-artists-way>.

Tuesdays, 8:00 – 9:00 AM: Gentle Yoga, a donation-based class for adults taught by local instructor Deanna Bartlett. Donations are optional. Second floor.

Tuesdays, 10:00 – 11:00 AM: Story Explorers Playgroup, a read aloud and loosely structured playgroup for kids ages 0-5 and their grown-ups. Second floor.

Wednesdays, 6:00 – 7:00 PM: Embodied Wisdom Women's Group. Please join Project All Together Now (ATN) and Deanna Bartlett for a weekly multi-generational Women's Yoga Circle! This group grew out of ATN youth intern work and ideas, and is meant to serve women of all ages in building connection with themselves and each other. Gather up your friends, moms, aunts, grandmothers, mentors, and any female-identifying people in your life that could use some more spaciousness in their weeks and explore how restorative yoga can support you in rest and connection. Second floor.

Thursdays, 9:30 – 10:00 AM: Move and Groove, a movement-based storytime for kids ages 0-5 and their grown-ups. We'll sing, play with scarves and shaker eggs, pretend to be animals as we practice some yoga poses, and read a story together before ending with a bubble dance party. First floor.

Fridays, 6:00 – 7:00 PM: Restorative Yoga, a donation-based class taught by local instructor Deanna Bartlett. Donations are optional. Second floor.

Saturdays, 9:00 – 9:30 AM: Romp and Rhyme, a storytime for babies, toddlers, and their caregivers. First floor.

Monthly or twice-a-month

Early Release Days in Jericho (usually the second Wednesday of the month): 1:00 – 2:00 PM: Crafternoon, followed by a movie screening. Registration is required due to limited space: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/1005405995397?aff=oddtcreator>.

Building accessibility note: We are working hard on a project

to make our library accessible to all, but our historic building is not yet fully accessible; a set of steps leads up to our front entrance. Please reach out to discuss accessibility needs; we may be able to offer programs in a hybrid format or move them to an alternate location with advance notice.

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

VARNUM MEMORIAL LIBRARY JEFFERSONVILLE

In an attempt to mitigate some challenges we are still facing around staffing, the library has decided to adopt new hours that began January 2. We realize it can be an added challenge for some with this shift, but our intention is to offer the most out of what we currently have the capacity for. Please know we will continue to do everything we can to accommodate all requests, suggestions, and needs, and we ask for your continued understanding as we keep evolving into the best version of our little library!

New hours: Sunday/Monday — closed; Tuesday 9:00 AM – 6:00 PM; Wednesday/Thursday 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM; Friday 9:00 AM – 1:00 PM; Saturday 10:00 AM – 1:00 PM.

Join the LRSWMD for a three-part winter book discussion □

As always, all programs are free and open to the public.

Programs for January:

Wednesday, January 8, 12:00 PM: Aging in Place.

Thursdays, 10:00 AM: Coffee and Conversations.

Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 10:00 AM: Story Time.

Wednesdays, 1:00 – 3:00 PM: Winter Writers Workshop.

Thursdays, January 9 and 30, 4:00 – 5:00 PM: LRSWMD

Winter Book Series Parts I&II.

Saturday, January 11, 10:30 AM – 2:00 PM: Nora's Beads.

Various Saturdays, 2:00 – 4:00 PM: Canadian Cultural

Diversity □

Friday, January 17, 10:00 AM: Homeschoolers Meet-up.

Saturday, January 18, 11:00 AM – 1:00 PM: Vision Boards

with Jess.

Find program descriptions and more details on our website <http://www.varnumlibrary.org>.

Please check our website for details regarding our other programs: www.varnumlibrary.org.

We're always happy to see you at the library! www.varnumlibrary.org, 802-644-2117.

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.

The Westford Food Shelf is now open twice a month, on the first Wednesday of each month (February 5), 4:30 – 5:30 PM, on the third Saturday (January 21, February 15), 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.

New Art is up at the library through February! Long-time Westford resident and visual artist Thomas Wolfe will be exhibiting his abstract digitally created images printed on aluminum.

A big thank you to all who donated to the Library this Holiday Season! We are so lucky to serve such a generous community!

Book Giving Tree items due Friday, January 17! If you donated a book from our book giving trees, make sure to have those purchased and left at Phoenix Books or brought in to the library by January 17.

Thursdays, 11:25 AM: Early Literacy Storytime. We sing songs, read stories, move and do crafts! No sign up needed, all ages are welcome. January 9: Mittens; January 16: Dragons; January 23: Bears; January 30: Dinosaurs. New time to accommodate WES preschool schedule.

Tuesdays, 10:30 – 12:00 PM, Coffee and Cards. Meetup 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, but especially looking to connect with seniors.

Wednesdays, January 8, 15, 22, 3:00 – 7:00 PM: Tech Help w/ Bree. Don't know how to download FREE eBooks and audiobooks to your iPad, phone or tablet? Have you figured out Biblio+, our FREE new streaming video service? Did you get a new device for the Holidays? The Library can help with that! Make an appointment with Bree. Call, email or stop by to schedule a 30-minute time slot to work one-on-one. Be sure to bring your charged device and passwords. Signup required.

Wednesday, January 8, 7:00 – 9:00 PM: Trustees Meeting.

Thursdays, January 9, February 13, 6:30 – 8:00 PM: Writer's Group. Meets the second Thursday of each month. Facilitated by J Bruscini: "My best intention for the group would open itself to writers in the area of any genre, style, and level of experience. I have been part of writing groups and workshops fairly frequently since college and have more than a handful of strategies and exercises to offer as a facilitator when needed. I would like to encourage experimenting with style and open time for feedback for anyone wanting it. Come if interested in any type of writing."

Tuesdays, January 14, 21, 28, 4:00 – 5:00 PM: Crafting with Marianne, for grades 3 and up. Signup required (call or email). Kids will ride the bus with a note from home to the library each week. Snack and supplies included. Local crafter Marianne Bassford has created a variety of projects using a variety of mediums. Projects may include pom-pom making, acrylic painting, easy beading, simple sewing, and/or paper folding. Perfect for kids who are focused on arts and crafts. Space is limited, so sign up soon!

Friday, January 17, 2:00 – 3:00 PM: Shakespeare Group, reading *Macbeth*. First meeting was December 6; this second meeting will discuss the entire play and pick then next play to discuss. All materials will be provided. To read or not to read? Come join a new group that is interested in learning and enjoying the written word. No need to be a scholar — the Bard wrote for everyone!

Wednesday, January 22, 7:00 – 8:00 PM: Adult Book Group discussing National Book Award Finalist *Gather* by Kenneth Cadow. A resourceful teenager in rural Vermont struggles to hold on to the family home while his mom recovers from addiction



Are you a Puzzler — a jig saw puzzler? The Westford Public Library will host its First Ever Library Puzzle Race on Saturday, February 15, 12:30 – 2:00 PM! Gather your team of two to four people to race each other and the clock to see who can complete the same 500-piece puzzle first! The team that finishes first wins the prize: a \$25 gift card to Phoenix Books for each team member! Team registration is required, only six teams allowed to compete. Call or email the library to sign up. Team names, outfits/costumes, good natured ribbing encouraged! Thank you to the Trustees for supplying the puzzles and prizes!

PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

in this striking debut novel. Ian Gray isn't supposed to have a dog, but a lot of things that shouldn't happen end up happening anyway. And Gather, Ian's adopted pup, is good company now that Ian has to quit the basketball team, find a job, and take care of his mom as she tries to overcome her opioid addiction. Despite the obstacles thrown their way, Ian is determined to keep his family afloat no matter what it takes. And for a little while, things are looking up: Ian makes friends, and his fondness for the outdoors and for fixing things lands him work helping neighbors. But an unforeseen tragedy results in Ian and his dog taking off on the run, trying to evade a future that would mean leaving their house and their land. Even if the community comes together to help him, would Ian and Gather have a home to return to? Available in print at the library or as an ebook on Libby. This is VT Humanities *VT Reads* selection for 2024/25.

Wednesday, January 29, 7:00 – 8:30 PM: Therapeutic Herbs for Topical Use. Presented by: Bohème Botanika Herbs. Join herbalist Amber Kennedy to learn about herbs and botanicals for skincare and body care. Discuss some favorite therapeutic herbs used in beauty and skin care formulations, like Lavender, Rose, Comfrey, Calendula and more, and discover their benefits for topical applications. Make a jar of soothing sea salt and herb tub tea, foot soak or facial steam to bring home! Space is limited! All materials and hot tea provided! Signup required by emailing or calling the library.

Saturdays, February 1, March 1, 10:30 – 11:30 AM: Saturday Story Time. There will be elements of Spanish to the songs, stories, and crafts. We are excited to try out this pilot program for the year. All ages welcome to attend; always the first Saturday of the month.

Thursdays, February 6, 6:30 – 8:00 PM: Makers' Group. Meets at the library the first Thursday of each month. All types of crafters are welcome to attend. Bring projects to show off, share expertise, and enjoy each others' company.

Saturday, February 15, 12:30 – 2:00 PM: First Ever Library Puzzle Race! Gather your team of two to four people to race each other and the clock to see who can complete the same 500-piece puzzle first! The team that finishes first wins the prize: a \$25 gift card to Phoenix Books for each team member! Team registration is required, only six teams allowed to compete. Call or email the library to sign up. Team names, outfits/costumes, good natured ribbing encouraged! Thank you to the Trustees for supplying the puzzles and prizes!

The Westford Public Library, 1717 VT Rt. 128, Westford; 802-878-5639; www.westfordpubliclibrary.org; westfordpubliclibrary@gmail.com, Bree Drapa, Librarian. Find us on Facebook (www.facebook.com/westfordpubliclibrary) and Twitter (www.twitter.com/WestfordVT_pl).

FAIRFAX COMMUNITY LIBRARY

Wishing a happy new year to all of our patrons! With January, we are hoping to get back into the swing of things at the library now that we're back home, and we're looking forward to reintroducing the library to everyone! As a reminder: there is currently no direct entry to the library; patrons will have to buzz in at the elementary school entrance, and one of us will guide you through the school to the library. If you would prefer to quickly duck in to pick up books, just send us your library list! We'll check out your items for you and have them bagged and ready to be picked up at the elementary school entrance. — Elizabeth LaRosa, Public Library Assistant

Library hours: Monday-Friday, 10:00 AM – 4:00 PM. Please sign up at least one week before the program date! All events are free unless noted. Pre-registration required; call or email libraryfairfax@gmail.com.

Youth events

Wednesdays, January 8, 15, 22, 29, 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! This event takes place at The Fairfax Town Offices at 12 Buck Hollow Rd.

Tuesday, January 7, 3:00 PM: LEGO Club. Kids ages 6+ enjoy themed LEGO play after school. Please register! This event takes place in the library.

Wednesday, January 8, 3:00 PM: Glue and Glass Suncatchers. Make a unique suncatcher, with only glass cabochons and glue! Materials provided. Ages 8+ Please email libraryfairfax@gmail.com or call 802-849-2420 to register! This event takes place in the library.

OBITUARIES



Patricia Ann "Patti" Jacobs of Underhill, VT passed away after a brief illness on Monday, December 9, 2024 at McClure Miller Respite House in Colchester, VT. She was born in Burlington, Vermont to the late Gerald and Mary Irish on Tuesday, July 10, 1951. Patti is survived by her husband Mike Jacobs, son Scotie Jacobs and his daughters Kinsley and Hailey; son Shaun Jacobs and his partner Brittany Garland; her adopted children Larry and Liz Lamphere and their boys Mathew, Skylar, and Atticus; her sister Linda Ravenelle and husband Jim Ravenelle; sister-in-law Susie Piche; brothers-in-law Bernie Ravenelle, David Jacobs and

wife Jackie, Timothy Jacobs and wife Becky; niece and nephew Nichole Swanson and husband Charlie; and by Chris Doucas and wife Erin; along with many other special nieces and nephews. There were many others she loved and considered family, and she was loved by many in return. Patti started working at the Ethan Allen Medical Center in Colchester for Dr. Morrison when she was 18, she left to have her two boys in 1975. In 1984 she and her husband Mike purchased the Underhill Country Store, where they made numerous friends throughout the community! They ran the store together for 16 years and finally sold it in 2000. After selling the store, she and Mike took a year off to build their dream home in Underhill. Patti then had a short stint of working at Snowflake Chocolates (Jericho, VT), her favorite chocolate, before going back to work for Dr. Morrison at the Ethan Allen Medical Center, where she stayed until she retired

in 2017. While working and raising a family she also belonged to and volunteered at the Vermont State Guard and the ladies' church group at St. Thomas Church in Underhill Center, VT. She was also the Auditor for the Town of Underhill. Patti loved sitting on her deck, reading, watching the birds, looking out at the mountain, and going for summer car rides up north with Mike. She enjoyed her family tremendously and cherished time spent together. She loved her indoor plants but left the outdoor gardening to Mike. She was selfless to her friends, family, and community. She always had a positive outlook and tried to see the good side of every situation. Visiting hours were on Friday, December 27, 2024 at A W Rich Funeral Home – Essex Chapel. A Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated on Saturday, December 28, 2024 at St. Thomas Church in Underhill Center.

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Option 1: The newly expanded long drop program. Due to savings in construction costs, Lamoille FiberNet is able to expand its Long Drop Program to make non-standard drop assistance more widely available in all 10 Lamoille County towns. These State grant funds can be used only for addresses included in our approved grant plan.

This program will be administered by Lamoille FiberNet — customers will not have to hire their own contractor or seek reimbursement from Lamoille FiberNet. We expect the maximum amount available to each individual address will be well above the average cost typically needed for this work. We are also exploring how to support a limited number of exceptions, using funds donated by seven of the towns. We expect to publish updated criteria and timelines soon and open applications for the new program early in 2025, to be ready for the Spring construction season.

In the meantime:

- If your drop is less than 500' or you have usable conduit,

we recommend you contact Fidium to schedule an installation. Based on our experience this fall, fewer than 1% of addresses are non-standard. A non-standard drop requires more than 500' of new poles or new conduit to carry the fiber from the distribution network to the home or business. The drop does NOT include the installation of the fiber to the premises or activation of services.

- If you schedule an installation and discover that your address is a long drop or needs conduit, your Fidium order will be cancelled. You will be able to reschedule with Fidium when you notify them that the "drop" path has been constructed. If you have a long drop and you want to explore funding assistance, contact drops@lamoillefiber.net, NOT Fidium.

- Please don't call Fidium about this program. Our drop program is unique to and administered by Lamoille FiberNet, and Fidium call center personnel do not have information about this long drop program. They will not be able to help.

Again, to determine if your address is a grant-funded address built in 2024 or scheduled for 2025, please email drops@lamoillefiber.net

lamoillefiber.net and don't forget to provide your service address and contact information. And please be patient — we are primarily a volunteer-driven organization.

Option 2: Earlier Long Drop Program. The application period for our initial program closed November 1, 2024, and we are pleased to report that we anticipate funding almost all of the eligible applicants — we have notified all those applicants of their eligibility status and next steps. Our initial program was limited to grant-funded addresses in Belvidere, Cambridge, Eden, Hyde Park, Johnson, Waterville and Wolcott because those seven towns donated funds.

If you applied for assistance under the prior program and have not received an email from us, please send an email to info@lamoillefiber.net.

Option 3: Do It Yourself. You can always pay to have the conduit installed yourself, but unfortunately our State grant funds are not currently eligible to reimburse individuals. We will continue to explore solutions to maximize opportunities and access to broadband.

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Wednesday, January 15, 1:00 PM: Make Your Own Ice Cream. Learn how to make your own ice cream! Materials provided. Ages 8+ Please email libraryfairfax@gmail.com or call 802-849-2420 to register! This event takes place in the library.

Wednesday, January 22, 3:00 PM: Egg Carton Animal Portraits. Repurpose old egg cartons into cute 3-D portraits! Materials provided. Ages 8+ Please email libraryfairfax@gmail.com or call 802-849-2420 to register! This event takes place in the library.

Wednesday, January 29, 3:00 PM: Collage. Turn magazine cuttings and other paper scraps into art! Materials provided. Ages 8+ Please email libraryfairfax@gmail.com or call 802-849-2420 to register! This event takes place in the library.

Adult events

Saturday, January 18, 10:30 AM: Junk Journaling. Got old holiday cards you're not sure what to do with? Spare craft materials you can't figure out what to use for? Learn how to use them up, with junk journaling! It is designed to put the scrap in scrapbooking and use up all kinds of odds and ends that would otherwise be thrown away. We encourage you to bring your scraps, but it is not required — some materials will be provided. Please email libraryfairfax@gmail.com or call 802-849-2420 to register! This event takes place at the Fairfax Community Center at 1210 Main St.

Thursdays, January 23, 30, 2:00 PM: Library Book Club. The book this month is *A Good Year* by Peter Mayle. 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 the library at fairfaxlibrarian@gmail.com or call us at 802-849-2420. All are welcome!

Library hours: Monday-Friday, 10:00 AM – 4:00 PM.

Fairfax Community Library, 75 Hunt St., Fairfax; 802-849-2420. 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.

RICHMOND LIBRARY

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.

Free Coffee and Tea — warm yourself with a free cup of hot coffee or tea during the cold but festive month of December. The beverage table is to the left of the circulation desk on the ground floor. Help yourself and sip while you browse, read, work, or gather with friends.

Trustee Meetings are on the second Monday of the month (February 10), 6:30 PM, at the library. All meetings are open to the public. Individuals may also join via Zoom.

COVID-19 tests are available at the circulation desk. We also encourage you to visit <https://covidtests.gov/> to order a set of four free at-home tests through the mail, and to check the expiration date on your existing tests. Many tests have an extended shelf life, so check before you throw any away.

Seed Library now accepting seeds! If you're a seed saver or are looking for a home for your unused seeds, consider donating them to the library. Seed donations must include the following information: plant type and varietal, harvest date, and location. If you are saving your own seeds, please note that we can only accept open-pollinated (non-GMO/hybrid) seeds. Email skrohn@richmondvt.gov with any questions.

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 or stop by to borrow some, and get out and enjoy the winter trails with your family.

Children

Weekly/Monthly Children's Programs at the library run from September-May and follow the MMUUSD schedule for vacation days and weather closure days.

Mondays, 10:30 AM: Baby Laptime. This short, active Storytime 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. For infants and early toddlers.

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 from infant-five years and their grownups are invited to join the fun.

Adults

Winter Reading Bingo for Adults — stop in to pick up a bingo card or show us your completed lines and pick up a ticket. Then pop your ticket(s) into one of four buckets for a chance to win a stack of books.

Wednesdays, 6:30 – 8:00 PM: Knitting & Stitching Group. Drop in to knit, embroider, or otherwise needlecraft with your neighbors.

Tuesday, January 14, 6:00 PM: (Mostly) Fiction Book Group. Join us in the Mezzanine Lounge for discussion of *Under the Whispering Door* by T.J. Klune. Contact Gwen Landis, 802-434-5012 or gwennie1972@yahoo.com, for information on joining this group.

Thursday, January 16, 7:00 PM: Mystery Book Group. Join us in the Mezzanine Lounge for discussion of *A Gentleman's Murder* by Christopher Huang. Contact Maureen Parent, 802-434-2055 or mspavent@gmavt.net, with any questions.

Saturday, January 25, 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 750-piece jigsaw puzzle fastest! Recommended for adults or families with children over 8. Register in advance: library@richmondvt.gov or 802-434-3036. 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

Ongoing drop-in programs

Community Puzzle: spend some time working on a puzzle in the library. Puzzles rotate as they are completed.

Community Loom: collaborate on our community loom!

Pattern Swap, Puzzle Swap, Magazine Swap, Coupon Swap
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

Hours: Monday/Wednesday/Friday 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM; Tuesday/Thursday 9:00 AM – 8:00 PM; Saturday 9:00 AM – 2:00 PM.

Wednesday, January 8: closing at 2:00 PM for a town employee event.

Monday, January 20: Closed for Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

We still have free COVID tests and gun locks!

All library programs are free and open to the public.

All ages

Through Saturday, January 11: the Giving Season Collection for Aunt Dot's. Collecting diaper sizes: 4-6, diaper wipes, and feminine incontinence pads. If you can, please support this community resource and those who depend upon it!

Renew your library card! Stop by the Front Desk with your card (not keytag), review/update the information we have on file, get a new date sticker — and you're good-to-go for another three years! Some cards expired on December 31 and will turn off Libby and Hoopla access unless renewed.

Cache Odyssey: Essex Free Library is proud to be Vermont's Cache Odyssey site, a nationwide geocache adventure with a unique letterbox-hybrid cache in every state. Great for families and seasoned explorers. Each cache is fully accessible. See www.cacheodyssey.com for more information.

For children and teens

Mondays, 11:00 AM: Musical Storytime: Rock'n'Read with Miss Noreen!

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

Wednesdays (except January 8): LEGO Club, 3:00 – 4:00 PM. Grades 1-5; grades 4 and younger need to come with an adult.

Thursdays: Pokémon Club, 3:00 – 4:00 PM. Grades 1-8. Decks available for card games. Themed crafts. Participants may bring gaming devices for Pokémon Go and other Pokémon games.

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

Ongoing: Exploration Station. Check out the blue table for this week's challenge.

Saturdays, January 4, 18, 11:00 AM – 1:00 PM: Dungeons and Dragons. For grades 9-12. Do you yearn for adventure? And free food? The Essex Free Library wants you to join our program! Every other Saturday.

Thursday, January 9, 4:00 – 5:30 PM: Read to Chewy the Therapy Dog! Kids and families can sign up for a 15-minute slot and choose a book to read to Chewy and his human in our community room. If you sign up and cannot attend, please reach out to library staff so we can open the spot to someone else. Sign up on the website.

Thursday, January 23, 4:30 – 6:30 PM: Perler Bead Open Studio. Come and hang out in the community room to make a perler bead creation! No registration needed, ages 7 and up.

Saturday, January 25, 10:00 – 11:30 AM: Read to Chewy the Therapy Dog! Kids and families can sign up for a 15-minute slot and choose a book to read to Chewy and his human in our community room. If you sign up and cannot attend, please reach out to library staff so we can open the spot to someone else. Sign up on the website.

For adults

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.

Saturday, January 11, 11:00 AM – 12:00 PM: Zentangle with Julia Davenport. For adults. This art form welcomes slowing down, taking your time, and seeing what happens. Sign up on the website. If you register and can't attend, please call to open the spot for someone else.

Tuesday, January 14, 2:00 – 3:30 PM and 6:00 – 7:30 PM: Noreen's Creative Card Class. For adults. Come and learn how to make two different cards. Register on website.

Wednesday, January 15, 2:00 – 3:00 PM: Scrabble/Conversation Francais. French conversation and Scrabble. Open to ages high school and above; for levels Elementary II and above. Improve your French while enjoying a friendly game of (French) Scrabble!

Thursday, January 16, 6:00 – 7:00 PM: Trivia Night. For adults and teens. Join us at the library for some fun and friendly trivia competition. Light refreshments provided.

Tuesday, January 21, 6:00 – 7:00 PM: Zentangle with Julia Davenport. For adults. This art form welcomes slowing down, taking your time, and seeing what happens. Sign up on the website. If you register and can't attend, please call to open the spot for someone else.

Tuesday, January 28, 6:00 – 7:30 PM: Board Games for Ages 18+. Bring your friends and enjoy the library's growing board game collection (or bring your own to share with the group). Light refreshments provided.

Thursday, February 6: Noontime Book Group: *Gather* by Kenneth M. Cadow. Vermont Humanities' Vermont Reads 2024 Selection, 2024 Kirkus Prize Winner, and National Book Award finalist. Debut novel by a Vermont writer and educator portrays a challenging coming-of-age. A resourceful teenager in rural Vermont struggles to hold on to the family home while his mom recovers from addiction.

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](https://www.essexfreelibrary.org); <https://www.essexfreelibrary.org>.

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Memorial contributions can be made in Patti's memory to St. Thomas Parish Renovation, P.O. Box 3, Underhill Center, VT 05490. Please visit <https://www.awrichfuneralhomes.com/book-of-memories/5525761/Jacobs-Patricia/index.php> to share your memories and condolences.



Wally Stone (Charles Wallace Stone), born July 24, 1937, passed away on Sunday, December 8, 2024 surrounded by loving family and friends in Underhill, VT. Wally's wit, wisdom, and unwavering kindness will be deeply missed by many including to name but a few: wife Patricia; children Bridget and Robert; grandchildren Tressia, Daniel, and David. He loved his daughter-in-law Nicole and former son-in-law Paul Allard as his own. First cousins Charles, Donald (Sonny),

Elizabeth (Betty), Frances (Dutchie), and Robert (Bobby), were like siblings to him. Dear friends Tommy Bourgeois, Les Lashway, and Wes Little eternally hold a special place in his and his family's heart. The family extends their heartfelt gratitude to Raphael and George, who provided the most tender care at dad's end of life, and are forever thankful to the family and friends who walk the journey with us. Calling hours and a wake were held on Friday, December 20, 2024 at A. W. Rich Funeral Home, Essex Junction, VT, with a vigil and reading of the rosary. A funeral Mass was held on Saturday, December 21, 2024 at St Thomas Catholic Church, Underhill, VT, with a reception immediately following. In lieu of flowers, contributions may be made to the St Thomas Parish Hall Renovation 2025 Fund, the Underhill Jericho Fire Department Pleasant Valley Fire Station Fund, the Humane Society of Chittenden County, or to an aspiring young scholar in need of support.



James "Jim" Earl Kinney of Cambridge, VT passed away unexpectedly on Monday, December 30, 2024 after a brief illness. Jim was born on March 29, 1951 to Eleanor Nora (Smith) and Earl E. Kinney. He grew up in Cambridge where he attended Cambridge Borough School and began high school at Cambridge High School. Jim soon attended the newly established Lamoille Union High School in Hyde Park, VT and graduated in its second graduating class of 1969. Jim was

a very caring, loving, and dedicated father, grandfather, and community member. He loved to sit on his front porch in the village, watch the birds, and wave to the neighbors. Jim also had a passion for restoring furniture and was always wheeling and dealing through his antique business. Jim also had an obsession for collecting Vermont milk bottles and had a group of friends that often got together to trade them. He was also a regular at the Waterbury Flea Market, where he had another group of collectors he considered family. Jim continued to share his love of history and local lore with his many acquaintances at the Waterbury Flea Market. Alongside his antique business,

Jim worked at Cambridge Elementary for a number of years. During his employment at the elementary school, Jim shared his humor, was respected for his integrity, and was well known for his kindness. Jim had a deep knowledge of local history. In fact, he was an ongoing presenter of the local Cambridge history unit when it was taught to the third grade class. He enjoyed passing on stories and events about the town he cherished and loved. Jim was also a steward of his town by volunteering for over 35 years to ensure that the village water system ran smoothly while serving as a trustee for the Village of Cambridge. One of Jim's biggest accomplishments, that he had much pride about after retiring, was hiking the Long Trail in the summer of 2017 with his best friend Roger. The trek took them 39 days, and many new friends were made. His family joined them on several sections to help them refuel, always greeted with a warm smile and hug. Jim is survived by his children Karen (Kinney) Tibbits (Jason), Kevin Kinney and partner Beth Brown; grandchildren Hayden and Ashton Tibbits and Ella Kinney; best friend Roger St. Cyr (Maggie) and special friend Nicky Ford; his niece Carmen (Rooney) Fuller; his Aunt Shirley Maynard and extended family in Bakersfield, VT; and great-nieces Amanda and Heidi Fuller. He was predeceased by his father Earl; mother Eleanor, sister Nancy, and niece Pam (Rooney) Fuller. A Celebration of Life will be held on Sunday, January 12, 2025, from 12:00 – 2:00 PM at the Cambridge Elementary School Gymnasium. A private committal service will be held at the family's discretion in the spring in Binghamville, VT. Arrangements are in the care of the A.W. Rich Funeral home in Fairfax. The family invites you to send online condolences by visiting <https://www.awrichfuneralhomes.com/>. In lieu of flowers, donations in Jim's memory may be given to the Green Mountain Club, specifically the Laraway Mountain section that he loved; or to the Lamoille Area Cancer Network, P.O. Box 828, Morrisville, VT 05661.



On Friday, December 13, 2024, **Roland R. Vautour**, 95, a longtime Jeffersonville, VT resident, passed away peacefully with family by his side. Born to Arthur and Yvonne (King) Vautour in Berlin, NH on January 20, 1929, Roland enjoyed all the activities the North Country offered including hiking, skiing, and ski jumping with the Nansen Ski Club. He especially enjoyed spending time in the summers at the family camp on Cedar Pond. Receiving a scholarship from the University of New Hampshire (UNH) to ski and jump, Vautour graduated with a degree in Business Administration in 1952. At UNH he met the love of his life, Sally Liden; they were married June 16, 1951. Vautour held a series of management roles at Montgomery Ward in New York, Connecticut, and Maine, before becoming Director of Development for the City of Waterville, Maine. He was recruited to become Vermont's Commissioner of Development in 1960 by Governor F. Ray Keyser. During most of the 1960s Vautour was the General Manager of what was then Madonna Mountain Ski Area, now known as Smugglers' Notch Resort. During most of the 1970s he and his wife were local business owners. Vautour

was a volunteer leader in numerous community and State civic and charitable organizations. Long active in state and national politics, in 1981 President Ronald Reagan appointed Vautour Director of Farmers Home Administration for Vermont, New Hampshire, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. In 1986 Reagan nominated Vautour to be Under Secretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and he was unanimously confirmed by the U.S. Senate. Vautour was at the center of solving the massive farm credit crisis of the 1980s, overseeing the Farmers Home Administration, the Federal Crop Insurance Administration, the Rural Electrification and Telecommunications Administration, and the Commodity Credit Corporation. President George H.W. Bush asked Vautour to continue in his role throughout his Presidency. Vautour was a lifelong sports enthusiast, especially skiing. Being a competitive skier and jumper at UNH, he passed along his love of skiing, golf and biking to his children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Widowed in 2007 by the death of his wife of 56 years, Vautour is survived by his brother and sister-in-law, Lawrence and Jean Vautour of Wayne, ME; his four children Victoria Vautour and her husband Mark Delaney, Gregory Vautour, Andrea Sheredy, and Eric Vautour, all of Jeffersonville; four grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. A celebration of life will be held at a future time. In lieu of flowers or other remembrances, he asked that donations in his name be made to "The Nansen Ski Club" (please put on memo line "For Roland"), 658 Cross Country Rd., Pembroke, NH 03275. Please visit <https://www.awrichfuneralhomes.com/> to share your memories and condolences.



Rosalie G. (Smith) Arguin of Jeffersonville, VT, 62, passed away at UVM Medical Center, Burlington, VT after a brief illness, on December 9, 2024 with her family by her side. She was born on April 30, 1962 in Lowell, MA to Rose and Charles Smith. Rosalie was the beloved wife of Dennis Arguin and a loving mother to Kristopher and David Arguin. Later, she became mother to the late Adam Arguin, who held a special place in her heart. She was also a proud grandmother to seven

grandchildren, who brought her immense joy. The youngest of five, Rose leaves behind three brothers and a sister — Chuck, Tom, Heidi, and Al. A cherished member of the Jeffersonville community, Rosalie loved to spend time riding around on her motorcycle or playing pickleball with friends at the community center. She could often be seen walking through town with her dog Lily by her side. She also enjoyed reading a good book with a glass of wine, watching the sunrise from her hot tub and pool. Rosalie's memory will live on in the hearts of those who knew her for her compassion and selflessness. Even in her final days, she remained more concerned about the well-being of others rather than herself. She will be laid to rest in the spring alongside her youngest son, Adam. May her memory bring comfort to all who loved her. Please visit <https://www.awrichfuneralhomes.com/> to share your memories and condolences.

ART / MUSIC / THEATER

The weekly virtual Burlington Literature Group welcomes new committed readers to our sessions. The group has been in existence for years meeting in a physical space but, since the pandemic, has changed to online Zoom sessions occurring every Tuesday at 6:30 PM. We break down interesting, challenging books into weekly segments of 60-100 pages, 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.

Backcountry Film Festival, Saturday, January 11, 6:00 – 9:00 PM, Underhill Town Hall, Pleasant Valley Rd., Underhill Center. The Underhill Recreation Committee is proud to host the Backcountry Film Festival, a compilation of films celebrating the human-powered experiences through outdoor winter adventures! The films are presented by the Winter Wildlands Alliance. Tickets, \$10 (free under 18), are available at <https://bit.ly/4iZouWP> (short for <https://secure.everyaction.com/IJQxKlwKyKn6UDuPx9Nyw2>). Note: Unsold tickets will be available at the door if the event does not sell out. Doors open at 6:00 PM. Showing from 6:15 - 8:45 PM. There will be a brief intermission at the midpoint for a sweet raffle. Trailer: <https://vimeo.com/ondemand/bcff20th>.

Artists and AI Survey — The unprecedented growth of generative artificial intelligence (AI) presents both transformative opportunities and significant challenges for artists. Generative

AI is capable of producing original content (text, photos, audio, video) based on inputs. The Vermont Arts Council would like to know how artists feel about AI. Please take the survey, online at <https://bit.ly/4gDO6XF> (short for https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeVssX8cXiXriE9TU1ZOAYShhhRrpxIGLCOVvuEU0JNPCT_oQ/viewform). Only five questions!

Spruce Peak upcoming events: Friday, January 10, 7:00 PM (unplugged): folk singer-songwriter Dar Williams, known for poignant lyrics and captivating melodies; Thursday, January 16, 7:00 PM (unplugged): Rachael & Vilray features Rachael Price, the lead singer of Lake Street Dive, and Vilray, composer and performer, will captivate you with their unique blend of jazz-infused melodies and timeless vocal harmonies; Friday, January 17, 7:00 PM (unplugged): Dispatch and State Radio singer Chadwick Stokes and Guster's Ryan Miller live in concert for Epic Pass holders with reservations and tickets; Saturday, January 18, 7:00 PM: Jazz at the Peak from Louis to Dizzy with Pete Malinverni and featuring Bruce Harris; Sunday, January 36, 3:30 PM: Doktor Kaboom: Under Pressure! brings equal parts interactive science, comedy, and personal empowerment messages with a show that illustrates physical science concepts — which are also metaphors for real-life mental and emotional pressures; Saturday, February 8, 7:00 PM: Brooklyn Rider, an innovative string quartet known for their adventurous spirit and captivating performances, redefines the boundaries of chamber

music; Friday, February 14, 7:00 PM: Celebrate Valentine's Day with the romantic melodies of pianist, composer, and recording artist Robin Spielberg, known for her expressive, lyrical performances that bring traditional, classic, original, and popular music to life. For more information and tickets, go online to <https://www.sprucepeakarts.org/events/>.

Let the Fabric Speak! Howard Center Arts Collective, in partnership with the Fleming Museum of Art at the University of Vermont, presents the exhibition *Let the Fabric Speak!* on display through May 17, 2025. One of the featured works at the Fleming Museum is *Tied*, a collaborative piece by Lydia Littwin, created from donated fabrics like baby clothing, dresses, and curtains, symbolizing shared community experiences and showcasing art made from repurposed materials that tell both personal and collective stories. *Let the Fabric Speak!* begins with *A Symphony of Us*, a collaborative, site-specific work featuring repurposed compact discs. The exhibition continues with sixteen additional works, where artists reflect on the significance of everyday materials and the memories they hold. Howard Center Arts Collective's mission is to create opportunities in the visual arts for people impacted by mental health and/or substance use challenges. "The exhibit showcases the personal and universal human desire for our stories to be heard, held, and carried on in community," said Kara Greenblott, Howard Center Arts Collective coordinator.

SCHOOL NEWS

EWSD Board Meeting January 7

By Ben Dickie, Essex Westford School District

The Essex Westford School District (EWSD) Board will meet on Tuesday, January 7, 6:30 – 9:00 PM in the Essex High School Library. The full meeting will also be available to watch on Facebook Live thanks to the Media Factory (<https://www.facebook.com/BTVMediaFactory>).

Agenda items for the meeting include:

- Superintendent Search Update
- FY26 Budget Landscape
- FY26 Announced Tuition
- Set High School Choice Capacity
- C29. Equity Policy Monitoring
- RTI Coaching Model

For the latest information on the search for a new superintendent, please visit www.ewsd.org/superintendent-search.

To learn more about the EWSD Board, please visit www.ewsd.org/page/schoolboard.

MMUUSD FY 2026

Proposed Budget

By Stephen Diglio, Mount Mansfield Unified Union School District School Board member (Bolton)

The Mount Mansfield Unified Union School District School (MMUUSD) school board will be reviewing the proposed annual budget for the 2026 fiscal year at the next school board meeting on Monday, January 13. The total proposed budget

being reviewed by the full school board is \$61,290,046, which is a 1.94% increase from the prior year.

Additional information regarding the MMUUSD proposed budget development can be found on the budget page per the link below, and the also within the minutes/documents from the Finance and Facilities Committee Meeting on December 12, 2024, which can be found on the school board webpage also linked below:

<https://www.mmuusd.org/cms/One.aspx?portalId=474722&pageId=541253>
https://www.mmuusd.org/school_board

Please feel free to contact me (stephen.diglio@mmuusd.org) with any feedback, questions, comments, or concerns. Please also note that there will also be an opportunity to provide community comments at the beginning of the January 13 meeting.

Cambridge Elementary
Preschool screening schedule

From Cambridge Elementary Early Childhood Program
Preschool Developmental Screening

Will your child be turning 3 or 4 by September 1, 2025? Cambridge Elementary Early Childhood Program invites families with eligible preschool students to call 802-521-5613, to make an appointment for a developmental screening at the Cambridge Elementary School/ Preschool.

The screenings will take place on Wednesday, March 26, 1:30 – 2:30 PM; Wednesday, April 16, 4:30 – 5:30 PM; and Wednesday, May 21, 1:30 – 2:30 PM.

Please contact Erin Vaillancourt (802-521-5613) by Saturday, March 1 to reserve a time for your child.

Screenings will take approximately 60 minutes. During this time, parents will fill out a brief developmental questionnaire about their child while educators interact with the children to gain information about each child's development in the areas of speech and language, social/emotional, motor, and cognitive. This is also a time for parents to ask questions about their child's skills and about our preschool program.

Saxon Hill School

open house January 11

Join Saxon Hill School for an open house, Saturday January 11, 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM — come meet the teachers, see the classrooms, and learn how to register your preschooler for the 2025-2026 school year. Saxon Hill School is located at 10 River Rd., Jericho.

For more information, please visit www.saxonhillschool.org or email Registrar@SaxonHillSchool.org

Saxon Hill School is a family-run, cooperative preschool that combines the Reggio Emilia approach, expert teachers, and active family participation to honor the natural curiosity of our children. We serve children from ages 3-6 from Chittenden and surrounding counties and are Act 166 approved, 5 STAR, and NAEYC accredited.

SENIOR NEWS

Activities in Cambridge for seniors and their neighbors

By Nanci Lepsic, Cambridge Recreation Board Clerk

On Wednesday, January 8 from 1:00 – 3:00 PM at the Second Congregational Church in Jeffersonville, come to a workshop on Cooking for One or Two on a Budget. CVCOA is providing this workshop for us free of charge, but you must pre-register with name and phone number at 802-343-2372.

LET'S DO LUNCH! at the Second Congregational Church in Jeffersonville on Friday, January 17 — beginning at 11:00 AM with speaker on AARP's tax preparation assistance program, followed at 11:30 AM by a brunch buffet featuring quiche, salads, soups, scones, muffins, etc. Come back again on Friday, February 21 for an 11:30 AM lunch with chili, salads, and breads, followed at 12:15 PM by prize bingo!

Come to these Lunch & Learn sessions at the Varnum Library! All sessions meet from 11:00 AM – 12:00 PM on the Thursday dates listed: February 6 — HomeShare Vermont; March 6 — Wills, Trusts, and other stuff; and April 3 — UVMDC Dementia Family Caregiver Center.

Questions? Please call or text Nanci Lepsic, 802-343-2372.

Your older neighbors

Need your support this winter

By Leanne Hoppe, Central Vermont Council on Aging

This month, Central Vermont Council on Aging looks to you to help sustain our diverse selection of free services for older adults. Donations are crucial, allowing us to offer innovative programming we wouldn't otherwise be able to support, such as our *Creative Aging* and *Helping Paws* programs.

One of our *Creative Aging* participants recently told us, "I don't have much energy, but I do love my art... it makes me forget all my issues, makes me cheerful. I can see why it's good for seniors, it gives them something to look forward to. I think it's just the most wonderful program."

A participant who accessed free veterinary care through our *Helping Paws* partnership with the Mitzvah Fund said, "They performed \$2200 worth of services on my 13-year-old cat, including a partial thyroidectomy, the removal of four teeth, and all the mats on her coat... She's 13 years old and without the Mitzvah Fund, I don't know what would have happened."

Another client told us what her *Good Neighbor* volunteer means to her. "I don't have any help except for my fabulous friend here from Council on Aging, who helps me with little things and big things, mental things and physical things... whatever I need, if I have questions or problems, this person is here to help."

Public support for our programs connects thousands of older Vermonters to services that enable them to live and thrive in the communities they love. Help us to meet our fundraising goals!

Watch this video to hear more about what our services mean to our clients: <https://youtu.be/JGPBIGwxifs>.

To make an impact today, visit <https://cvcoa.networkforgood.com/> or email us at volunteer@cvcoa.org to join a community that cares.



Battery collection drive by UCS class

Mrs. Bernier's grades 3-4 class at Underhill Central School (UCS) is partnering with Call2Recycle to lead a battery collection drive from Monday, January 20-Tuesday, February 18! This is a fantastic opportunity to recycle old batteries, to help protect the environment, and to compete against other schools and classrooms around Chittenden County — to collect the most pounds of batteries! We're also in the running for a pizza party and a special prize!

Here's how you can help:

- collect old batteries from your family, friends, coworkers, and neighbors;
- drop them off at Underhill Central School in our designated collection bin starting on January 20; and
- help us spread the word — every battery makes a difference!

Need ideas or want to help? We'd love assistance with placing collection boxes at local businesses to gather even more batteries. If you have suggestions or are able to help coordinate, please reach out!

Thank you for supporting Mrs. Bernier's class. Let's recycle, protect the planet, and aim to win the top spot in the competition!

SPORTS NEWS

Westford Rec Basketball Open Gym for grades 5-8

From Westford Recreation

Basketball Open Gym is for youth in grades 5-8. This will be a true open gym, not pick-up games. For those who want to play games, you will need to use the small court and leave space for those who just want to shoot.

Two background checked adults will need to be in the gym any time youth are participating. Please email recreation@westfordvt.us to volunteer! If most of the parents are checked, every parent will only need to cover an occasional time. Responsible parties will need to check that youth are on the roster before allowing them to participate. Other details will be conveyed once we have a list of volunteers.

This program is free, though registration is required at <https://bit.ly/4fAw3jS> (short for https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeWCiK_6A02LSSjrv9feJL2qEvtiVNBux5aCSR1DNI RYsFGbQ/viewform); this will be drop-in as well. A potential schedule:

- Saturdays, 12:30 – 2:00 PM;
- Tuesdays 7:00 – 8:00 PM;
- Thursdays 7:00 – 8:00 PM.

The program will start as soon as a group of background-checked adults is available.

If you need help submitting the registration form, have questions, or would like to request more information, please contact recreation@westfordvt.us.

Thank you, Westford residents (and residents in nearby towns), for your participation in our programs. We appreciate you and look forward to seeing you enjoy this event!

Browns River Little League registration open

By Casey Knudsen, Browns River Little League

Registration is open for the 2025 Browns River Little League season for both boys and girls aged 4-12 in Jericho and Underhill, including both Baseball and Softball! Register online (only) at <http://www.brownsriverlittleleague.com>.

Registration is open until Friday, January 31 for 9-12 year old Baseball and Softball minor and major league players, and through Saturday, February 15 for 4-8 year old farm league baseball players (both girls and boys). Early registration is important for league planning, so don't delay.

We also need lots of help from you all to make this season a success! If you're interested in being part of our excellent youth sports program in any capacity (especially as a farm league coach), please reach out to us at brownsriverll@gmail.com, or send league president Casey Knudsen an email at caseyknudsen@gmail.com. The Board of Directors is also specifically looking for someone to help out by taking the lead on field maintenance.

Thank you everyone and go BRLL!

Using VT State Parks in the off season

Contrary to what you might think, Vermont State Parks stay open for use all year long. Parks are great places to go for skiing, snowshoeing, ice skating, sledding, fat biking, snowmobiling, and more. Here are some guidelines to make your trip more enjoyable:

- Park only in a manner that allows access by others, and drive only on established roadways or parking areas.

- Water supply, restroom or refuse removal services or facilities are closed for the season.

- Leave No Trace: Carry in and carry out. Please clean up after your pets.

- Have a plan. Snow plowing arrangements vary by location. Be prepared to dig yourselves out in the event of inclement weather.

- Check the off-season access and parking information (<https://www.vtstateparks.com/winter-activities.html>, scroll down) before your visit. Access is mostly by foot. Most gates are locked for the season.

- While hunting is not permitted in developed recreation areas like state parks during the regular operating season, hunting is allowed on most state lands in the parks off-season.

- Access is free of charge.

Park staff are only present sporadically during the off season. We invite you to be our "eyes and ears" by please reporting to parks@vermont.gov anything you notice or discover amiss or out of the ordinary (vandalism, break-ins, inappropriate facility use, etc.).

Here are some suggestions for activities in nearby VT State Parks:

Cross-country skiing: Little River State Park, Waterbury; Smugglers' Notch State Park, Jeffersonville.

Snowmobiling: Green River State Park, Hyde Park; Little River State Park, Waterbury.

Snowshoeing: Underhill State Park, Underhill Center; Little River State Park, Waterbury.

For more information, go online to <https://www.vtstateparks.com/winter-activities.html>.



Family
like branches on a tree
we all grow in different directions
yet our roots remain as one.

Find a place
to take root...
...moving across town
or
across the country...
Rely on,

**Your partner
in SUCCESS.
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Stephan Griffiths Jr. - Owner

Fully Insured

allphase87@email.com

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HANDYMAN/CONSTRUCTION

Jay and Jeremy

HANDYMAN

emeryj1882@gmail.com

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