



Cambridge Community Food Shelf holiday hours

The Cambridge Community Food Shelf will have modified hours during the holiday season.

We will be closed on Tuesday, December 24 and Tuesday, December 31.

We will be open on Monday, December 23 and Monday, December 30, 2:00 – 6:00 PM. Note the hours change in addition to the day of the week change.

Please make a note of these changes and pass it along to anyone that may need this information.

Have a safe and happy holiday season!

UVM collecting data about ticks on farms

Are you a farmer?

UVM is conducting research about ticks on farms (all commodities) in Vermont. Please help them understand how ticks affect humans, pets, and livestock within this context.

The brief, 5-10 minute survey can be found online at https://qualtrics.uvm.edu/jfe/form/SV_00nshllEvEdmldc.

Funding for this study is provided by the Northeast Extension Risk Management Education: USDA/NIFA, under Award Number 2023-70027-40447.

Please share with others who may be interested! Thank you.

Brewster Uplands Pond Loop Trail, parking lots upgrade in 2024

By Laird MacDowell, Jeffersonville

The volunteer Cambridge Trails Committee (CTC) has worked closely with the Vermont Land Trust (VLT) to make significant upgrades to the one-mile-long Pond Loop trail and the two connecting parking lots located off West Farm Road in Jeffersonville.

The Brewster Uplands consists of 634 acres of VLT-conserved property with seven miles of public accessible trails including the popular Pond Loop trail, which is a flat, circular trail through a mature forest that includes a side trail that leads to an overlook of a large pond, hence the name.

In 2022, the CTC built a picnic table shelter off the upper Pond Loop trail parking lot by salvaging the roof frame and picnic table from a degraded picnic table shelter located at the VT Rt. 108 Dorothy Smith Access Area. A new green metal roof was added and the wheelchair-accessible picnic table was painted with an epoxy-based paint.

In 2024, the VLT hired local contractor Alan Cary to widen the driveway to the upper parking lot and remove dead trees around the perimeter of the parking lot and a large tree located in the middle of the lot. VLT then hired Greg Fatigate of Rabbit Tracks Trail Works to completely rebuild the Pond Loop trail to make the trail fully wheelchair-accessible. The work including fixing several lifted culverts and adding a new layer of compacted fine gravel to create a consistent trail width and flat surface. VLT later added four Leopold design wood benches, one every quarter mile. Greg also widened and added new gravel to the pond overlook side trail.

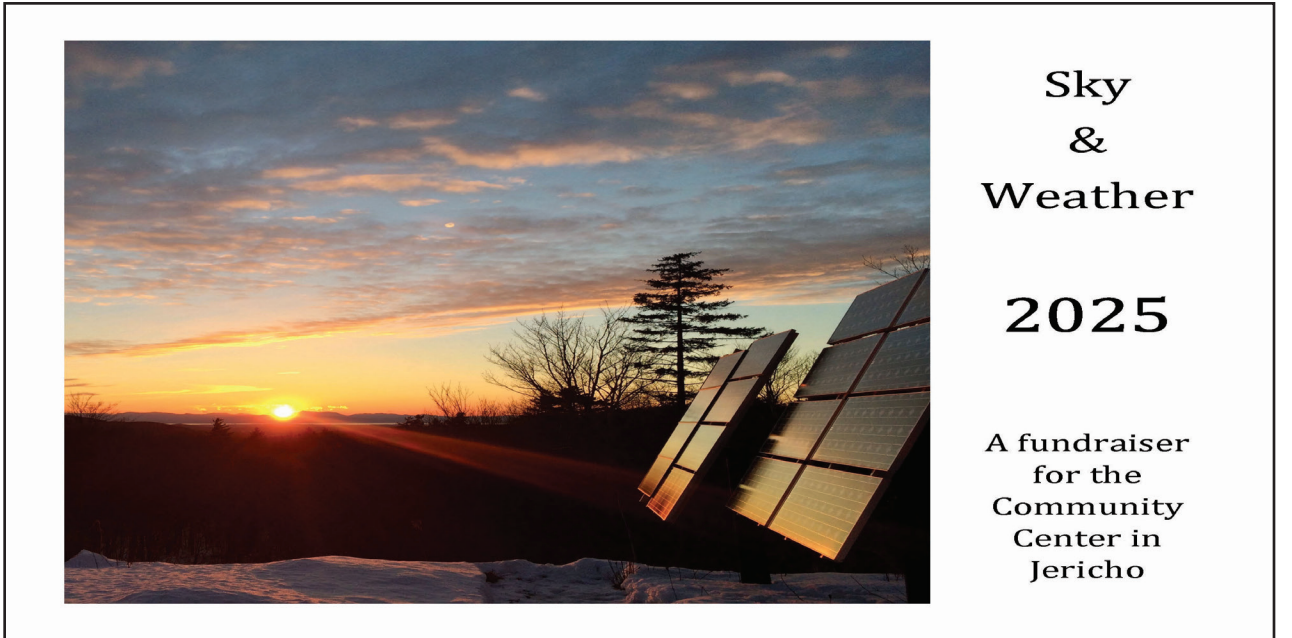
Once the trail work was completed, Greg applied a new layer of compacted gravel to the smaller parking lot and added two handicap designated parking spots next to the picnic table shelter. Drainage ditches along one side of the parking lot were filled with field stone donated by Angus Baldwin of the West Farm.

The short path that connects the larger parking lot off West Farm Road to the Pond Loop trail includes a 26' long x 5' wide wooden bridge over a deep ravine. The bridge was built by Rick Fletcher about ten years ago using two telephone poles for the main bridge support and then two layers of 2" x 10" hemlock boards for the bridge deck. Recently the bridge was showing signs of major degradation of the deck surface and a decision was made to replace both layers of hemlock boards. VLT purchased the hemlock boards from LSF Forest Products and members of the CTC and other volunteers removed all the degraded decking and replaced with the new wood and added safety railings on each side of the bridge using pressure treated 2" x 4"s.

VLT has added new directional signage on Canyon Road for the parking lots along with new trail map displays. New trail signage was also installed at the start of the Alden Bryan Brewster River trail, also located off Canyon Road, just past the covered bridge.

Please note that both the Vermont Land Trust and the Town of Cambridge require that dogs be leashed when on any of the Brewster Uplands trails and property and that the Alden Bryan Brewster River Trail will be closed for the winter from Canyon Road to Clif Reynolds road to protect the deer yards.

Here is a link to a WCAX report of a VLT-sponsored Pond Loop trail celebration that was held onsite on Tuesday, October 15: <https://www.wcax.com/2024/08/20/effort-make-more-vermont-trails-accessible-all/>.



Sky
&
Weather

2025

A fundraiser
for the
Community
Center in
Jericho

Calendars and more calendars for 2025! So many choices to keep track of your activities, but a very beautiful one — which most importantly supports the vital Community Center in Jericho — is the colorful SKY and WEATHER one. The 8x11" photos are by local residents and the \$20 cost helps keep the Center thriving. Supplies are down and won't last much longer. The Old Red Mill Craft Shop, Jeri-Hill Hardware, the Jericho Country Store, and the Emile Gruppe Gallery have them for sale. Please help make this a successful fundraiser — one you can enjoy for the next 12 months!

ORIGINAL PHOTO BY SARA RILEY

Jericho town news

Community news: This month we feature Mount Mansfield Community Television Executive Director Angelike Contis. To read more, go online to <https://jerichovt.org/Celebrating-Each-Other>.

The Mobbs Committee will meet on Monday, December 16 instead of Monday, December 23.

Town Clerk: With the closure of the Jericho Center Post Office boxes, some of you were forced to change your mailing address. Some have let the Town know the new address because the mailed November ballot did not get forwarded to you. If you still need to let the Town know about a mailing address update, please contact Jessica in the Town Clerk's Office and we will get your address updated for voter registration, dog registration, tax bill mailing and other communications from the Town. You can contact 802-899-4936 x 100 or jerichovermont@yahoo.com, or stop in the Town Clerk's Office.

If you have a November Election ballot that was received at your address and the person no longer lives there, read more online at https://jerichovt.org/Elections/news_feed/voter-address-change.

Town Meeting Reimagined: The first-ever Town Budget and Business Review and Action Meeting will be held on Thursday, January 23 starting at 5:30 PM at the MMU High School auditorium and on Zoom. Led by our Town Moderator, folks will discuss and make amendments to line items in the draft budget and Selectboard public questions. Any amendments will be voted on in the room and on Zoom. A report of the Meeting and the proposed changes will be included in the Town Report alongside the Final Budget — with plenty of time for voters to inform themselves before casting their ballot on the Town's Budget at the polls on the first Tuesday in March.

The Planning Commission is in the midst of responding to an urgent request from the Selectboard to change zoning regulations to permit construction of a new Highway Maintenance Facility at the same location as the existing Town Garage. The Town Garage property is part of the Mobbs Farm in the Open Space District. The Open Space District is not zoned for development, so the PC was asked to create a special conditional use for the Town Garage in the district. The PC held a public hearing on Tuesday, December 17, 2024, to review the proposed regulation changes, before forwarding a recommendation to the Selectboard for their consideration. Read more online at <https://jerichovt.org/proposed-bylaw-amendment-town-garage-maintenance-facility>.

Vacancy on JUPD Board of Trustees

By Livy Strong, Chair, Jericho Underhill Park District Board

There is a vacancy on the Board of Trustees from the Town of Jericho. If you enjoy Mills Riverside Park, live in Jericho, and would like to be more involved in the care and management of this exquisite land, just let us know. We meet on the first and third Wednesday of every month at 7:00 PM in the Deborah Rawson Memorial Library's project room.

You can contact us with any questions at jupdistrict@gmail.com or 802-899-2693. For more information about the park, please visit our website at www.millsriversidepark.org. Thank you!

Dog license fee increase in Bolton

In the 2024 session, the Vermont Legislature increased by \$2 the fee to be collected for the rabies control program as part of licensing dogs and wolf-hybrids, effective January 1, 2025.

This raised the total that the Bolton Town Offices must collect to \$11 for neutered or spayed dogs and \$15 for unneutered ones registered by April 1, 2025. Fees after April 1 are \$13 for neutered or spayed dogs and \$19 for unneutered.

Family Forest Carbon Program

By R Kirsten Tyler, Westford Conservation Commission

An opportunity for Westford landowners: the Family Forest Carbon Program provides financial and technical resources to help you improve the health and value of your woodland.

The program was developed by two national nonprofits, the American Forest Foundation and The Nature Conservancy, to help forest owners implement sustainable forest management practices that result in healthier forests, higher-quality timber, improved wildlife habitat, and increased carbon storage.

The Family Forest Carbon Program enables private forest owners across 19 states to access the voluntary carbon market, a growing market that has been traditionally inaccessible to smaller forest owners, providing landowners with income they can use toward forest management costs or to help pay property taxes.

To qualify, landowners must own 30 acres or more of non-planted, naturally regenerating trees, and have the legal right to harvest on their land.

Learn more on their website, <https://familyforestcarbon.org>.

Jericho Underhill Food Hub information

By Nate Goldman, Jericho Underhill Food Hub

Jericho Underhill Food Hub is a network supporting local foods, local economy, and local agriculture.

In November we mailed a flyer to all Jericho and Underhill residents with information about farms in our area, what products they provide our community and how you can contact them directly. A digital copy of the publication can be downloaded at <https://bit.ly/3VIDUKH> (short for https://drive.google.com/file/d/1bkV_S2NwkHlf2fpxQMzFTV8-Bew5csAY/view?usp=sharing).

Coming up Wednesday, January 8, 4:30 – 7:00 PM: A Free Community Dinner at the Browns River Middle School. Some of the items featured on the menu will be Shepherd's 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.

Our next planning meeting is Wednesday, December 18, 6:00 – 7:30 PM at the United Church of Underhill. All are welcome!

For more information, contact jufoodhub@gmail.com.

Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah, and Happy New Year

COMING EVENTS

Ongoing Events



Do snowmen do cartwheels?

PHOTO BY SARA RILEY

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 (December 18; January 17), 6:00 – 8:00 PM at the Community Center in Jericho, Browns Trace, Jericho Center. Registration is appreciated; email CommunityJamJUVT@gmail.com.

Mountainsong Community Chorus — Thursdays, 6:30 – 8:00 PM, at the Mount Mansfield Unitarian Universalist Meeting House, 195 VT Rt. 15, Jericho (across from Packard Road). If you love to sing, come join Mountainsong, a volunteer-run community singing group which harmonizes together in four parts on Thursday evenings! However you like to sing, bring your voice and join us! Whether you learn by ear or read music, you'll be comfortable in our group. You don't have to be a "great" singer — our aim is to sing for the joy of singing. We have almost no performances, except maybe to sing a few songs for a local assisted living facility and one short event for family and friends at the end of the season. We sing most weeks, although you can come as often as you are able, and if you miss the first one or two (or more), no worries! Cost: \$1 a week for using the space. We also ask for a small contribution for purchasing music (to be announced when we have our first meeting). Questions? Contact: Lynne Robbins, 802-899-2436 or lar.2436@gmail.com, or Jean Archibald, 802-899-5219 if you have questions, or just show up on a Thursday evening! We look forward to singing together!

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 (December 19; 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 (January 4). Come enjoy a relaxing homemade meal with neighbors at the church or

Coming events continued on page 3

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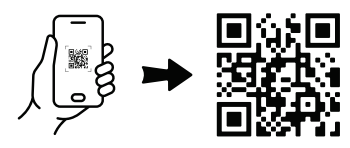
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Learn More — Use your phone's camera to scan.

WORSHIP SERVICES

For holiday worship dates and times, see page 5

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.

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. On Sunday, December 15, Calvary worships at St. James in Essex at 10:00 AM. The next Soup/Supper will be held Thursday, December 19, 5:00 – 7:00 PM. 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 (December 22) 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://unitedchurchofunderhill.com/joining-worship-from-home/>.

Second Congregational Church, Jeffersonville

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

Jericho Congregational Church

"An Historic Church Proclaiming an Eternal Message"

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

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.

Coming events continued from page 2

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

Thursday, December 19

Take a Break with Neighbors Coffee Hour, 10:00 – 11:30 AM, Ale and Bean, VT Rt. 15, Jericho Corners. Thanksgiving is over. Christmas Crunch isn't far behind. Truly an exhausting time. Take a mini-vacation. Join your neighbors for coffee or cocoa or whatever and a little conversation. It's only 90 minutes. Your crazy schedule is begging you to take a tiny time out and refresh. Looking forward to seeing you there.

Calvary Episcopal Church Soup and Bread Supper, 5:00 – 7:00 PM, Calvary Episcopal Church, 370 VT Rt. 15, Jericho. This is an alternate date, due to this month's holiday dates. Look forward to seeing you there!

Saturday December 21

Tri-County Winter Bird Count, all day. Over a hundred years ago, people around the U.S. started counting birds in mid-winter. This survey involves birders and folks who watch their backyard feeders all over North American and in more than a dozen other countries who drive, walk, sit, snowshoe, ski, canoe, and even bicycle, while looking for and counting birds. The yearly "bird census" provides scientists with invaluable information about avian populations and locations. This year, during the 125th Audubon bird count, a local group of bird-lovers will be doing a Tri-County census in parts of Chittenden, Franklin, and Lamoille counties. You might see slow-moving cars and/or folks with binoculars in Cambridge, Westford, Milton, Fairfax, Fletcher, Underhill, Jericho, and Jeffersonville. All in those areas are invited to flag us down and tell us about interesting birds they've seen in towns and fields, forests and backyards, rivers and lakes. All sightings and reports will be compiled and sent to Audubon

and made available online. There are two ways to participate: travel and count birds along a predefined route in our circle, or count birds on your feeder at home. If interested in our routes contact Judy, grgis@gmail.com; if interested in a feeder count contact Jason, mwongera@hotmail.com.

Monday, January 6

Lamoille County Legislative Breakfast, 8:00 – 9:30 AM at the Green Mountain Tech & Career, VT Rt. 15, Hyde Park. The Hyde Park breakfast is the first of four events; it begins with a light breakfast and coffee from local restaurants, followed by a short briefing by the legislators and an audience Q&A, offering an opportunity to hear from our Lamoille County representatives and learn about what they are working on at the Statehouse and to ask questions about the topics on their minds. To learn more and register, go online to <https://lamoilleeconomy.org/breakfast/>.

Tuesday, January 7

Winter movie/lecture series "Common Ground," 7:00 PM, Deborah Rawson Memorial Library, River Rd., Jericho. The Jericho Energy Task Force in collaboration with the Underhill Energy Committee presents the first of the winter movie/lecture series, "Common Ground," a sequel to "Kiss the Ground." The presentation also aims to complement the Food Hub's community dinner on Wednesday, January 8 featuring local farmers and their products. "Common Ground" continues the presentation of regenerative agriculture featuring independent farmers following historic indigenous practices to demonstrate how changing practices can improve the soil and climate. Erica Campbell, cofounder and partner of the InCommon Group, will be available to speak to the movie, answer questions and their 100 Million acre project.

Mount Mansfield Community Television

Hyperlocal public access television since 1997.
Serving Jericho, Richmond, and Underhill

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The Mountain Gazette

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Editor - Sara Riley

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One letter per writer, per calendar month.

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

HEALTH NEWS

Cambridge Fire Department blood drive January 4

Please join the Cambridge Fire Department, 153 Church St., Jeffersonville, at our annual blood drive! Give the most important gift this holiday season! The blood drive will be held from 9:00 AM – 2:00 PM.

Please sign up at <https://www.redcrossblood.org/give.html?drive-results?zipSponsor=alexthefighter> to reserve your spot today.

Weekly fitness classes at CCJ

This holiday season, say yes to feeling good, feeling better, and give yourself the gift of a lifetime. This isn't just a class, it's a getaway — a chance to reconnect with friends, neighbors, and yourself. Give it a try! First class free to check it out.

We meet every Tuesday and Thursday evening, 6:00 – 7:00 PM, at the Community Center in Jericho (CCJ) on Browns Trace in Jericho Center. Drop-in rate is \$10 per class. Discounted to \$8 and less per class when you sign up for a 6- or 12-class virtual punch card, good through March 27.

For more information, call or text fitness professional/personal trainer Trish Densham, 802-999-1265, or email tdmover@gmail.com.

VT has new patient financial assistance rules

From Northwestern Medical Center, Saint Albans

Vermont has new rules for hospital Patient Financial Assistance. Many Vermont residents will now qualify. Whether you have applied for financial assistance in the past and were denied, or are applying for the first time, this is a good opportunity to see if you can get help.

Contact Northwestern Medical Center's billing office if you need help filling out and submitting an application, or if you need free language support, at Pfcustomerservice@nmcinc.org or 802-524-1048.

Cambridge Regional Health Center — gratitude

By Jeanne Hutchins, Cambridge Regional Health Center

The Board of Directors of the Cambridge Regional Health Center wishes to express our gratitude and extend a heartfelt thank you for the support we received to help with recovery from the 2023 flood. The Health Center was able to reopen fairly quickly thanks to the hard work and financial contributions from individuals and organizations in the community, plus several flood recovery grants. We would especially like to thank the Cambridge Area Rotary Club, the Vermont Community Foundation, Vermont Electric Co-Op, several private donors, Union Bank, and the Phish Donor Advised Fund.

Flood water impacted the walls, flooring, furniture, and files on the entire first floor medical offices, as well as the HVAC system and the elevator. We immediately engaged a professional restoration company to ensure proper remediation, including replacement of walls, flooring, and cabinetry, and we had the HVAC system and elevator repaired to allow our health care providers to return to seeing their patients as quickly as possible.

We are fortunate to have flood insurance, which covered much of the repair cost, but our expenses far exceeded these funds. Reopening the Health Center quickly was imperative, so we used most of our small cash reserve and borrowed the balance. Community support and grants are helping us pay for the balance of the flood-related expenses so we can begin addressing other building issues.

The Cambridge Regional Health Center is a community-based non-profit organization (ID#23-7372901) whose mission is to provide office space for health providers to ensure there is access to medical services for the residents of Cambridge and the surrounding communities.

The Health Center building is managed by a small local volunteer Board which leases space to a family practice medical office (Lamoille Health Partners), a dental practice (Pleasant Valley Dental), and a counselor (Mind Movement Counseling, LLC). If these medical services were not located in Cambridge, many residents would not have access to basic medical and preventative care.

We appreciate and are grateful for the support from our community and from the grants we received, which are helping us keep health care local.

Cambridge Regional Health Center Board Members: Jeanne Hutchins, Tricia Hogan, Greg Johnson, Chris Pratt, Greg Smithers, and Demi Lyons

Lions thank blood donors

The Jericho-Underhill Lions club thanks everyone who gave the gift of life and donated blood at our blood drive on Thursday, December 5. The Red Cross was very pleased to collect 39 units of much needed blood, six more units than their goal of 33!

We wish the entire community wonderful holiday season and a happy, healthy New Year. We look forward to seeing you at our blood drive in February.

Howard Center offers resources for a sober holiday season

The holiday season is a time for joy and connection, but it can also be a period of heightened stress, making it especially challenging for those affected by substance use disorder (SUD). SUD, which includes alcohol and other substances such as opioids, impacts millions of Americans and their families. However, celebrating sober can benefit anyone, not just those in recovery. This holiday season, Howard Center encourages everyone to prioritize their well-being and consider the benefits of a substance-free celebration. For more information, contact pdetzer@howardcenter.org or visit howardcenter.org.

Howard Center offers resources and support to help individuals and families make the most of the season while prioritizing health and well-being.

Why celebrate sober? For individuals with SUD, staying sober is a vital step in their recovery. However, those without SUD may also find benefits in choosing substance-free celebrations, such as clearer connections with loved ones, reduced risks, and an overall sense of control and wellness during a busy time of year.

Tips for celebrating sober:

- Plan ahead: Anticipate potentially stressful or triggering situations and develop a strategy to navigate them.

- Choose substance-free activities: Spend time with friends and family in settings that focus on connection rather than alcohol or drug use.

- Take care of body and mind: Get enough rest, eat well, and prioritize movement to maintain emotional and physical well-being.

- Have a support system: Surround yourself with people who support your choice to celebrate sober.

Support is always available — whether you're in recovery or seeking a healthier way to celebrate, help is here. Access our Intake line at 802-488-6000, Monday-Friday, 8:30 AM – 5:00 PM (except December 24, December 25, and January 1). For immediate assistance, our 24/7 First Call for Chittenden County crisis hotline is available at 802-488-7777.

Pine Street Counseling offers individual and group therapy, education, impaired driver rehabilitation, care coordination, psychiatric consultation, and office-based spoke services including medication for opioid and alcohol use disorder. This program promotes wellness and recovery in all areas and through all phases of a person's life. Clinicians help clients focus on their strengths and encourage self-care, connections to others and the community, and independence. Walk-in hours are Monday-Friday, 8:00 – 8:30 AM; or phone 802-488-6100.

Safe Recovery is a safe place for people to come to for support, even if they are currently using substances. Safe Recovery provides harm reduction services including syringe services,

low-barrier buprenorphine treatment, fentanyl and xylazine test strips, Narcan kits, and HIV and hepatitis testing. Walk-in hours are Monday-Friday: 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM and 1:00 – 5:00 PM; phone 802-488-6067.

Chittenden Clinic offers comprehensive outpatient treatment for opioid use disorder, including medications (e.g. methadone and buprenorphine), counseling services, and care coordination. Walk-in appointments Monday-Friday for intake start at 7:30 AM or call to schedule, 802-488-6450.

Mental Health Urgent Care (MHUC) offers immediate support for adults facing mental health concerns or distress. MHUC can provide compassionate care and help connect you with ongoing supports and resources. No appointment needed; walk-ins are welcome. Free parking and easy access by public transportation. Monday-Friday, 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM. Learn more at howardcenter.org/mhuc.

Howard Center helps people and communities thrive by providing supports and services to address mental health, substance use, and developmental needs. To access services, call 802-488-6000.

Holiday food safety

With the holiday season here, parents have been cooking up lots of questions about food safety, so let me see if I can provide a few safe ingredients on this topic.

Nothing can end a joyous holiday visit from friends and family quicker than if your guests or your own family members get sick from the foods you have cooked or served to them. Therefore, the name of the game is food safety. Here are some best practices:

- Wash your hands frequently and have your children do the same if they want to help you with the cooking.

- Always cook meats and poultry fully and wash all raw vegetables and fruits with running water to remove any pesticide residue, dirt, or bacteria.

- If buying packaged meat, poultry or fish, check the expiration date on the label and make sure the dates are still valid.

- In your refrigerator, keep raw foods and cooked foods separate and use separate utensils when preparing them.

- Meat should always be thawed in a refrigerator and not on the countertop and foods that require refrigeration should never be left out at room temperature for more than two hours.

- Never put cooked meat in a dish that was holding raw meat, poultry, or fish. Don't let raw eggs sit at room temperature for more than two hours to reduce the risk of salmonella.

- Use a paper towel and not a dish towel after handling raw meat, poultry, fish, or eggs. Bacteria could spread from one person to another using dish towels.

- If young children are around when you are cooking, keep hot foods away from edges of tables or counters so they are not accidentally knocked over. Turn pot handles toward the back of the stove to avoid a scald or burn injury.

- As to leftovers, eat them within three to four days or throw them out if they have been around longer than that.

- Hopefully, tips like these will not spoil your holiday and lead to safe cooking so the ho-ho-hos do not become food poisoning woe-woe-woes.

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

LEGISLATIVE REPORTS

Statement from Reps. Wood and Stevens on education finance

**By Thomas Stevens, State Representative
Washington-Chittenden House District**

Representative Wood and I are reaching out to let you know about the release of the "December 1" letter. This letter is a precursor to our work in the Legislature concerning education spending, and we expect it to predict an increase in property tax rates that is unacceptable.

This concerns us, as we know it concerns you. Between high housing costs, high healthcare costs, and high costs of living, far too many families are very concerned about paying their bills. And while the expected reasons listed below indicate that a substantial percentage of the increase is due to circumstances, like an increase in health insurance rates, we know that any increase will create hardship for many Vermont families.

This letter, released by the Tax Commissioner, communicates what the administration expects will be our average statewide property tax next year, based on:

- expected revenues;
- expected property values;
- the budgets school boards are proposing to local voters;
- other currently existing costs in the education fund;
- any funding gap created by decisions the prior year.

Why will this tax rate estimate be high? As school boards build their budgets, all the fundamentals that drove high spending last year are still in place. These increases include cost pressures boards cannot fix on their own, including:

- double-digit increases in healthcare premiums (last year, increases in teacher healthcare and mental health costs drove total spending up about \$100 million, or ten cents on the tax rate);
- our extraordinary shortage of housing paired with our aging population means we have fewer school-aged children, which means higher costs per kid to maintain our same basic programs;
- school districts are responsible for more social services, including for an unprecedented number of unhoused children this year; it is unclear how much upward pressure this will put on school budgets, and whether this is the most efficient and effective way to address child poverty;
- we need a new funding formula that appropriately directs resources to make sure every district has what it needs to educate its children.

To bring down the burden on property tax payers, we have to address some of these fundamentals that are driving up spending.

We will be working to make sure every child has the opportunities they need at a price taxpayers can afford. That may mean we have to do a few things differently. We believe all options should be on the table. We are open to some hard

tradeoffs to protect what we care about most for our children, while protecting people from cost increases they cannot afford.

We appreciate those of you who shared your concerns and priorities over the last several months. We will bring your hopes and concerns to our conversations in the Legislature. We have great faith in Vermonters' ability to work together and compromise to solve hard problems, once we put our hearts and minds to it.

As always, please reach out (tom@stevensvermont.com, twood@leg.state.vt.us) with questions.

New retirement savings program

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

In 2023, the Legislature created a new retirement savings program for people not covered by an employer-sponsored plan, and the Treasurer's office has announced that it is open for enrollment. See the details below.

Why Vermont Saves matters

- Workers with access to an employer-sponsored retirement plan are 15 times more likely to save.
- Nearly 100,000 Vermont workers currently lack access to such plans.

- Vermont Saves addresses this gap, empowering Vermonters to save for a secure retirement at no cost to employers.

How it works

- Employers with 5+ employees who don't already offer a retirement plan must enroll by February 2025.
- Employees are automatically enrolled in a Roth IRA with flexible contribution options.

- Participants can set their own contribution rate (default is 5%), select investment options, or opt-out at any time.

Early success and strong support

- Treasurer Mike Pieciak highlighted bipartisan support for the program, which passed unanimously in 2023.
- A successful pilot has already been in place, and the program is ahead of schedule thanks to the Treasurer's team and partnerships with other states.

- Similar programs in other states have seen significant success, with over \$1.6 billion in assets and participants averaging about \$2000 per year in savings

Eligible employers have begun receiving information by mail or email. If your workplace qualifies, make sure to check your inbox and help spread the word!

Find out more about how Vermont Saves can help you or your workplace here: <http://www.vermonttreasurer.gov/vermont-saves>.

Legislative Reports continued on page 5

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CHRISTMAS HOLIDAY INFORMATION

Christmas Services 2024

Good Shepherd Lutheran Church

273 VT Rt. 15, Jericho

Come share the joy of this Christmas season. All are welcome!

Tuesday, December 24, 4:00 PM

Family Candlelight Service

The story of Jesus' birth through story and song, as led by our children. Enjoy carol singing and good cheer for all ages.

Tuesday, December 24, 7:00 PM

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

This lovely service with Holy Communion celebrates the good news of Christmas with candlelight and choral music. Worship is in the beautiful post and beam sanctuary.

Sunday, December 29, 9:00 AM

Christmas Lessons & Carols

This festive service with Holy Communion celebrates the birth of Jesus through a series of Bible readings interspersed with carol singing.

A potluck Holiday Brunch follows. All are welcome, there is plenty for all!

Calvary Episcopal Church

Calvary Episcopal is a welcoming, caring, Christian community located at 370 VT Rt. 15 in Jericho. Our Christmas Eve worship with Communion will be held at 6:30 PM, with the Rev. Kim Hardy presiding. 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!

Blue Christmas service at the Jeff Church

Not feeling holly jolly or merry? Grieving or stressed? The Jeff Church is having a Blue Christmas / A Longest Night worship service on Saturday, December 21 at 7:00 PM. A Longest Night or Blue Christmas worship service is a time to connect with your deepest self, neighbors, and higher power / God. This worship service acknowledges that while this time of year is advertised as jolly and joyful, that simply is not true for everyone. This worship service honors the emotions of grief, fear, and anxiety that can make the season of Christmas so very difficult. The purpose of this special worship service is to invite all who attend to seek the holy and the sacred in which to sit, to rest, to be. We will have prayer, readings, music with Irving Payne, candle lighting, quiet, peace, community. Second Congregational United Church of Christ, 16 Church Street, Jeffersonville. Questions? Please contact Pastor Sally May, 802-644-5533 or revsallyjeffucc@gmail.com.

United Church of Fairfax

Please join us at the United Church of Fairfax for a joyous hour of hope as we celebrate the Christmas Story with a Christmas Eve Candlelight Service. The service will include the singing of your favorite Christmas hymns and the Sunday School pageant. We will conclude with a candlelit singing of *Silent Night*. All are welcome to the United Church of Fairfax, 8 Fletcher Rd., Fairfax, Tuesday, December 24, 4:30 PM.

MMUUF Christmas Eve candlelight service

The Mount Mansfield Unitarian Universalist Fellowship welcomes the community to a Candlelight Service, 4:00 – 5:00 PM, on Christmas Eve at the MMUUF Meeting House — the barn at 195 VT Rt. 15, Jericho. The theme of the Christmas Eve service is Coming Together and will feature readings and songs of the season, ending with Silent Night and candle-lighting.

For more information, please go online to <https://mmuuf.org/about-us/contact/>.

Why the holidays are a time of complexity and emotion for foster youth

The holidays can be a difficult and overwhelming time for foster youth. For many, the season is filled with mixed emotions, as they navigate being away from their families for the first time or trying to adjust to new family dynamics. It's a time that should be filled with joy, connection, and warmth, but for foster youth, it can often feel like a stark reminder of what they've lost.

I'll never forget my first holiday season after entering DCF custody. I had been placed in a high-security residential program, and it felt like the world around me had shifted. I had just entered the system and was struggling to come to terms with being away from my family. The holidays made it all the more difficult, as they only emphasized the fact that I was separated from everything familiar to me.

I remember the sadness and anxiety I felt, knowing I wouldn't be with my family for the first time. My parents sent a bunch of gifts to the residential program, and while that might sound like a kind gesture, it was awkward and uncomfortable for me. I had more gifts than most of the other kids in the program, which made me feel embarrassed. I could see how much it hurt the others who didn't have the same experience. And deep down, I felt a rush of anger and frustration. The gifts were nice, but what I really wanted wasn't presents, it was to be with my family. It was a longing I couldn't shake.

However, there is one moment from that first holiday that I hold dear. One of the staff members at the facility saw how difficult that time was for me and another friend I had made there. She allowed us to stay up late to bake and decorate cookies with her. It might seem like a small gesture, but for me, it felt like a piece of normalcy, a brief moment where I could pretend things were as they once were, celebrating the holidays with family. It was a memory I cherished, as it gave me a taste of the connection and comfort I had longed for.

As I moved through the system and spent the next few years in different placements, the holidays never got easier. There was always anxiety, never knowing what the holiday season would look like or where I would be. Would I be in a residential program again? Would I be with a new foster family or in respite? With each new placement came a new set of traditions, and it was hard to find my place in them. The holidays were filled with sadness, especially when I thought about the traditions I used to have, those things I had lost after entering the system. I missed being with my friends and family, and I missed the sense of stability and routine that came with those traditions.

Though my foster families did their best to make the holidays special, there was always a deep ache. Sometimes, DCF partners helped make sure my wish lists were fulfilled, and I'd receive gifts that brought small moments of joy. But no matter how kind my foster families were, nothing could fully fill the void of being away from my family during such a significant time. The holidays only seemed to magnify the emptiness I felt.

This emotional complexity is something that's often overlooked when it comes to foster youth, and it's crucial that foster care providers, DCF/FSD staff, and community partners understand just how challenging the holiday season can be. It's

Christmas tree sales — support Troop 627

Please consider supporting Underhill/Jericho Scout Troop 627's annual Christmas tree fundraiser at the Jericho Jolly on VT Rt. 15! Trees are freshly cut from Craftsbury, ranging from 7-10 feet, priced at \$60.

Sales take place on Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday evenings from 5:00 – 7:00 PM, and on weekends from 10:00 AM – 6:00 PM. Saturday and Sunday will also have Mt. Norris Maple Syrup for sale!

This annual event supports the Troop activities for the year to develop our leaders of tomorrow. Please come and support the Scouts of Troop 627.



Every voice in foster care matters. Our youth correspondent provides a deeply thoughtful and caring look at life through the eyes and experience of one young adult who has navigated the world of foster care. We are grateful for her eloquence and compassion. She wishes to remain anonymous.

PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

easy to assume that, because the holidays can bring gifts and good intentions, the foster youth must feel okay. But the reality is much more complicated. One of the biggest challenges is feeling like an outsider in a new family. It's essential to include foster youth in holiday traditions, like decorating, cooking, or gift exchanges, to help them feel like they belong. At the same time, it's important to give them space to process their emotions. If they feel sad or angry, that's okay. Providing a safe space for them to sit with these feelings without pressure to "just enjoy the holidays" can help them feel understood.

Foster youth may also experience grief, especially if it's their first holiday away from their biological families. Acknowledging their losses and validating their emotions is key. Simple acts like incorporating traditions from their past or taking time to listen to their feelings can make a big difference. It's also helpful to maintain some stability during the holidays. While everything else may feel unfamiliar, keeping routines as consistent as possible can provide a sense of security.

Each foster youth is unique, so it's important to be flexible. Some may want to dive into every holiday activity, while others might prefer some quiet time. Being responsive to their needs and offering support in a way that feels comfortable to them can help ease the emotional strain. Ultimately, the holidays are about connection and belonging, which can be difficult for foster youth to find. By being mindful of their emotions and providing a caring, supportive environment, we can help make the holiday season a little easier for them.

United Church live Christmas Eve day Nativity seeking animals

By Julianne Nickerson, Underhill

United Church of Underhill, 7 Park St. in Underhill, invites the community for carols and stories for our outside Live Nativity, 11:00 AM – 12:00 PM.

To make the experience even better we are looking for several animals to join the stable. If you have any cows, sheep, or goats you would be willing to bring over, please reach out to jcdnicker@gmail.com and let's talk!

Otherwise, see you at the stable Christmas Eve morning!

Christmas continued on page 7

Legislative reports continued from page 4

From Montpelier: \$88M boondoggle goes full speed ahead

By Irene Wrenner, State Senator
Chittenden-North Senate District

Who doesn't love a bargain? Especially with the holiday shopping season in full swing.

How about a quantity discount? Count me in, said the State of Vermont back in May 2022, as it sought a cloud-based replacement for its aging mainframe-based HR, Finance, Budget, Labor and Transportation systems.

Vermont, among several other states, worked through a third party to examine the available integrated software systems to help their governments function better.

State officials signed a contract with WorkDay ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning), a suite of applications to help optimize business operations and processes, for \$28.875M over the next 10 years.

Just one problem: The purchase didn't abide by the state bid process, in which multiple vendors and products are measured against defined business needs.

Therefore, this software-as-sold may or may not address Vermont's needs. Before it can be installed, someone will have to define what are expected to be sizable gaps in functionality. They will also need to estimate the cost of adapting WorkDay to our way of working, and how we store and manage existing data.

That someone is called a Preferred Implementation Vendor (PIV), and their services will cost additional money. If the PIV determines WorkDay won't work for Vermont, we start over, having wasted millions of dollars on software with no benefit over several years. If the PIV determines that at least part of WorkDay is viable, the process of tweaking this complex system begins.

I serve on the five-member Joint Information Technology Oversight Committee (JITOC), which is charged with reviewing such projects and releasing money that the Legislature has allocated toward the larger ERP installation.

Four days before my November 25 JITOC meeting — our first since June — I received a 33-page document detailing the dilemma we're facing. It estimated a total cost of nearly \$72M to get this system up and running by 2031.

The author who reviewed the situation summed up her findings as follows:

1. Project Justification (Is the project necessary and beneficial?): STRONG
2. Clarity of Purpose (Is the definition of success established?): POOR
3. Organizational Support (Does the business fully support the project?): WEAK
4. Project leadership (Does the project have strong and effective leadership?): WEAK
5. Project management (Is the project management staff appropriate and will they conform to state standards?) POOR
6. Financial Considerations (Is funding secure and sufficient for the anticipated life of the system?) POOR
7. Technical Approach (Are the proposed technical solutions achievable, realistic, and appropriate for the project?) POOR

I noticed this was an internal review, not the outside independent review I expected. That arrived a day later, after a pointed request. A consulting firm from Michigan seems to have done a thorough job in their 69-page report, which offers its own red flags, and a higher cost estimate: \$88M.

I must say: For a Governor who rails about affordability, I'm not seeing frugality from some of his administration. I do see statutory requirements skirted by staff and consultants who have each other's backs on a variety of technology projects.

Then there are the rules, such as providing us independent

reviews within three days of release, that staff breach. JITOC received that 69-page report, published in April, just three days before, affecting our ability to thoroughly attend to it.

At our meeting, JITOC members were expected to make a decision on short notice, about paying a PIV and moving forward with WorkDay, in a small meeting room with more than a dozen stakeholders present.

There's no clear path to getting this computer system transition done right, no matter how much cash the state spends. And it pains me to type those words. I know residents are reeling from tax increases.

The person(s) who didn't follow statutory guidelines and signed this WorkDay contract in 2022 has moved on. Those who remain are left with few viable choices. Legislators are being handed a dilemma about an ERP that, like the yield bill that funded school budgets, will make no one happy.

I asked about sunk costs. Less than \$4M, we were told by the Secretary of the Administration and the Secretary of Digital Services.

Total expected cost through 2031, for a system that is not guaranteed to work as expected: \$88M.

Going forward, the state estimates we would pay another \$5M per year in operating costs post-2031.

I voted No on proceeding.

Four members voted Yes, and a fifth was absent.

I serve on two other "summer committees" that met in November.

Find out what we've accomplished by reading the rest of my report (and prior updates) at <http://www.theislandernewspaper.com/cnsenate.html>.

I'm still your Senator until January 8, when the new team takes over!

Feel free to get in touch any time at imwren@aol.com.

Thank you for the honor of representing you.

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.

The library is closed Tuesday-Thursday, December 24-26, for the holidays. We will close early at 4:00 PM on Tuesday, December 31 for New Year's Eve. We are closed on Wednesday, January 1, for New Year's Day.

Thursday, December 19, 7:00 PM: Library Board of Trustees Meeting. The meeting is open to all. Those who wish to attend remotely may email Holly at drawsonmemlib@gmail.com to receive a link.

Adults

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

Thursdays, December 19, 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.

Monday, December 23, 7:00 PM: Mystery Book Group. This month the group is reading Death Comes to Marlow by Robert Thorogood, book two in the Marlow Murder Club series. Call or visit the library to reserve your copy. If you'd like to attend the book discussion via Zoom email Holly, drawsonmemlib@yahoo.com, for the link.

Youth programs

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

Tuesdays except December 24 and 31, 10:30 AM: Baby Toddler Story Time [birth to Pre-K] This program resumes on Tuesday, January 7.

Thursday, December 19, 3:00 – 5:00 PM: Animation Club [ages 8+; registration required]

Friday, December 20, 11:00 AM: Stories and Songs with Beth and David London. [ages 0-5]

Friday, December 20, 3:00 – 4:00 PM: LEGO Club. For kids ages 6 and older. To register, please visit or call the library, or email youth_librarian@drml.org.

Saturday, December 21, 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM: Gift Crafts [families, and kids of all ages] Drop in to make a holiday gift for someone special. Making keychains, pins, and magnets.

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; www.drml.org; 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 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

First and third Wednesdays (December 4, 18), 3:15 – 4:15 PM: Comic Capers, an after-school club for graphic novel enthusiasts in grades 2 and up. First floor.

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>.

Third Thursday (December 19), 7:00 – 8:00 PM: Speculative Fiction Book Club. Email catherine@jerichotownlibraryvt.org for more information.

Fourth Saturday (December 28), 2:30 – 3:30 PM: Beginning Spanish Conversation Group for adults.

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.facebook.com/jerichotownlibrary)) for regular updates on our programs, services, and collections. 802-899-4686, library@jerichotownlibraryvt.org, www.jerichotownlibraryvt.org.

VARNUM MEMORIAL LIBRARY JEFFERSONVILLE

Hours: Sunday-Monday, closed; Tuesday-Thursday, 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM; Friday, 9:00 AM – 3:00 PM; Saturday 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM.

In observance of holidays, the Varnum will be closed Tuesday-Thursday, December 24-26 and Wednesday, January 1, 2025. Our hours on Tuesday, December 31 will be 9:00 AM – 1:00 PM.

Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 10:00 AM: Story Time for all ages.

Thursdays, 10:00 AM: Coffee and Conversations.

Friday, December 20, 10:00n AM: Homeschoolers Meet-up.

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

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.

Book Giving Trees are up again at the Westford Public Library! There are still plenty of stars left! Stop by the library or sign up online. Choose a star from one of our Book Giving Trees. Each star contains the name of a book that the Library would like to have. There is also an online list (<https://bit.ly/4gwRfJh>, short for <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/60B0449A9AD2BA1F49-53209540-book>) if you cannot make it in to the library. Books can be dedicated to a special person or family. Purchase the book anywhere, or Phoenix Books (Essex location) will give patrons 20% off the book if you bring in the star. Books purchased at Phoenix will stay there. Purchase/deliver books by Friday, January 17. Thank you for helping us out!

The Westford Food Shelf is now open twice a month, on the first Wednesday of each month (January 3), 4:30 – 5:30 PM, on the third Saturday (December 21, January 21), 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.

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

We are finally going to be moving back to the school, and we expect to have our doors to have opened around the second week of December.

While we will be back in our old location, it won't quite be back to business as usual just yet. Because of the surrounding construction, there will be no direct entry to the library, and patrons will have to buzz in at the elementary entrance, and one of us will guide you through the school to the library. We understand that this setup is not the easiest for most people, so, to make picking up books easier, we are going to be bringing back curbside pickup! Just send us your library list, and we'll check out your items for you and have them bagged and ready to be picked up at the elementary entrance. Additionally, our programming will still be held outside the library — either in a BFA classroom, the Town Office, or the community center — so make sure to check the location of each program. Looking forward to seeing everyone back at our old location! — Elizabeth LaRosa, Public Library Assistant

Please sign up at least one week before the program date — all events are free unless noted. Pre-registration required; contact 802-582-3071 or libraryfairfax@gmail.com.

Youth events

Wednesday, December 18, 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.

Wednesday, December 18, 3:00 PM: Ornament Workshop [ages 8+] Learn how to make a selection of different ornaments! Materials provided. Pre-registration required; contact 802-582-

3071 or libraryfairfax@gmail.com. This event takes place at BFA Fairfax, in room 260.

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.

Library hours are now 10:00 AM – 5:00 PM Monday-Thursday, 10:00 AM – 4:00 PM Friday, and 9:00 AM – 1:00 PM Saturday.

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.

We will be closed on Wednesdays, December 25 and January 1. Make sure to stock up on books prior to the holidays!

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 (January 6), 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.

Seeking Artists and Collectors We are currently scheduling art shows for our walls and display case in 2025. If you have framed pieces (art, photography) and would like to schedule a show, please contact us. No professional experience is necessary, just a willingness to share your talent. We're also seeking interesting collections for our foyer display case. If you are a collector of thimbles, old books, feathers, nut crackers or anything else that would fit in our case that you would be willing to share, we would love to hear from you. Call or email the library.

December Art Show — During the month of December we will be showing the wildlife photography of Sue Morse. Sue is highly regarded as an expert in natural history and one of North America's top wildlife trackers. Since 1977, she has been monitoring wildlife, with an emphasis on documenting the presence and habitat requirements of bobcat, black bear, Canada lynx, and cougar. When not in the field conducting research, leading training programs, or photographing wildlife, Sue can often be found presenting her findings and award-winning images to a wide range of audiences, including the public, conservation leaders, and students of all ages.

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.

Throughout December: Snowman Scavenger Hunt. Kids will have fun hunting throughout the library looking for jolly snowmen wearing scarves of all colors, but one of them is missing. Figure out which one and collect a small prize at the youth desk.

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.

Saturday, December 21, 10:30 AM: Hora de Cuento (Spanish Storytime) in the Community Room. Join native Spanish speakers Chichi and Eva for a time of stories, songs, and learning activities — all in the Spanish language. This program is a great opportunity for students in the Spanish Immersion Program to hear the language out in the community and for parents to learn alongside their student. Younger children and their caregivers are also encouraged to attend. It is never too early to be exposed to a new language. Join the fun on the third Saturday of the month.

Adults

Winter Reading Bingo for Adults will start in January. 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.

Saturday, January 4, 12:00 PM: Cookbook Club. We will discuss Mi Cocina: Recipes and Rapture from My Kitchen in Mexico by Rick Martinez. Stop by to check out a copy of the book to register, then pick a recipe to prepare and bring to the meeting. During the meeting, we'll try the dishes and talk about the reading, cooking, and eating experience!

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 gwenmie1972@yahoo.com, for information on joining this group.

Christmas continued from page 5



Burlington City Arts has released the full lineup of *Highlight*, the City of Burlington's official New Year's Eve celebration that focuses on supporting Vermont artists and the local creative community. Throughout downtown and the waterfront, BCA has programmed dozens of events appealing to all ages and interests. The "citywide revelry of art and ideas" begins at 12:00 PM and runs well past midnight. All-access *Highlight* buttons are \$18. Kids aged five and under can enjoy *Highlight* for free. Learn more and purchase your button at <https://highlight.community/>. PHOTO CONTRIBUTED



Save the Date: Join MMCTV for Cocoa/Cookies and a special screening of *Crowdsourced Cinema VT: Home Alone* at MMCTV on Thursday, December 19, 5:00 – 8:00 PM. The lights dimmed one last time at the Roxy on November 7 and Vermont's very own version of *Home Alone* came on the screen — with a verdant, soggy summer and many different Kevins. Some of summer July TV camp's participants and families were in the audience at this event presented by Media Factory. Mount Mansfield Community Television's camp made two of the segments of the film and they were so proud of their performances and work transforming Richmond Town Hall into a winter wonderland in July. PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

United Way holiday volunteer opportunities

Give the gift of time this holiday season – volunteer! United Way's Volunteer Connection site is set up to help connect agencies and volunteers. Go online to <https://unitedwaynwvt.galaxydigital.com/> to learn more about these and other opportunities.

COOK A MEAL – Burlington Dismas House is looking for volunteer cooks to prepare and join residents for a Christmas dinner. Volunteers bring part of the meal, or a group can bring a whole meal, and then enjoy it with the residents. Contact Holly Rossi, holly@dismasoftvt.org.

SERVING DINNER – Turning Point of Chittenden County is looking for volunteers to help celebrate recovery, resilience and hope by serving a Christmas Dinner and helping to spread holiday cheer. Volunteers are also needed for other upcoming events. For information and to volunteer, go online to <https://turningpointcentervt.org/volunteer-application/>.

RING THE BELL – Salvation Army is seeking volunteer bell ringers for shifts through Tuesday, December 24. Locations available in Burlington, South Burlington, Essex Junction, St. Albans, and more. Contact stacylee.liskey@use.salvationarmy.org.



This holiday season, gather your loved ones and experience *A Charlie Brown Christmas Live in Concert* at Spruce Peak, Stowe — join us throughout December 2024 for this special concert production that celebrates Charles Schulz's iconic Peanuts comic strip, the timeless 1965 animated classic, and Vince Guaraldi's unforgettable jazz score. Set in the heart of Vermont's beautiful Green Mountains, this heartwarming show captures the spirit of the holidays, making it the perfect tradition for families and friends of all ages. The Peanuts gang will delight audiences with scenes from the original holiday special, along with festive carols and holiday music. Tickets are on sale at <https://www.sprucepeakarts.org/events/a-charlie-brown-christmas/>. PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Please join us for our

Live CHRISTMAS NATIVITY

Saturday December 21

Two showings: 2 p.m. and 4 p.m.

presented by

Cambridge Christian Fellowship

Your whole family will enjoy hot chocolate, mulled cider, cider donuts and a roaring bonfire as we celebrate the Reason for the Season.

And please join us December 24 at 6 p.m. for our Christmas Eve Service

154 North Main Street • Cambridge

Live Nativity December 21 in Cambridge

Cambridge Christian Fellowship will be presenting a Live Nativity at the Church, located at 154 N. Main St., Cambridge on Saturday, December 21. The New Testament cast will include Mary, Joseph, shepherds, angels, wise men, a donkey, and sheep.

There will be two showings, 2:00 and 4:00 PM. To keep warm, mulled cider, hot chocolate, and cider doughnuts will be provided to share around a bonfire.

The whole family is invited — especially the kids. This is the reason for the season!



Community Bank gives back — Community Bank branches across our four-state footprint are once again helping spread holiday cheer by lending a hand and giving back to their local neighbors and communities. The bank is spreading joy this holiday season by sponsoring or hosting charity drives for local nonprofits to benefit neighbors in need. Each branch has chosen its own activities based on the specific needs of its community. Donations range from food baskets and children's gifts to holiday dinners for families and much more. This year, local activities include the Waterbury branch collecting food for the Duxbury Elf Shelf and Waterbury Area Food Shelf; the South Burlington branch on Williston Road organizing a food drive for Feeding Champlain Valley; and (pictured above) the Jericho branch collecting children's toys for Toys for Kids — from left: branch Manager Kelly Kimball and Senior Customer Service Representative Bianca Wyskiel. PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

We have room for your ad.

Call Brenda Boutin at 802-453-6354 for more information or email mtngazette@gmavt.net

Make this Christmas gift special with prints framed by

Jon's Darkroom & Frameshop

(802)-879-4485 159 Pearl Street Essex Junction, Vermont 05452 www.jonsdarkroom.com

Hours: 11:00 AM - 4:00 PM Monday-Friday
11:00 AM - 2:00 PM Saturdays

COMMUNITY COLUMNS

Jericho Select Board: expand to five members?

By Sarah Macleod, Jericho

Seventeen years ago I moved to Jericho. A few years after we moved in, a question was put to the voters: Should the Select Board expand to five members? I am ashamed to admit that I voted “no.” My main objection was that I don’t like big government, and I didn’t feel it necessary to expand the paid positions in our town of just over 4300 registered voters.

After six and a half years as a volunteer member of the Jericho Planning Commission, I have learned four things:

1. We are at a tipping point due to unaffordable housing, an inhospitable environment for business, and a lack of infrastructure and services. Other towns are seeing healthy growth while our school populations decline, our seniors are unable to remain in our community, and we watch the old lumber yard sit vacant year after year with only a new bank and grocery store to show for it. No matter how we update the Zoning Regs to encourage growth, it cannot occur without infrastructure — which the Select Board must spearhead.

2. The Select Board in its current state with just three Members can only meet publicly — because two or more members is a quorum, and a quorum has to have all discussions in the public as a recorded and warned meeting. This means two members cannot discuss any ideas with each other, brainstorm about town business topics, or meet with experts unless it’s in a public forum. This seriously limits the amount of work they can accomplish in their twice-monthly public meetings.

3. Select Board members are elected, they are not staff positions, and pay is about \$1867/year. A pittance.

4. Jericho is the only town in Chittenden County which still has a three-member Select Board — even our neighbors to the east in Underhill expanded to five last year, seeing this as the obvious path forward.

Today I am putting forth a petition to increase the Select Board from three to five members. The cost to our town will be negligible and the results could be spectacular. The Select Board is the only vehicle for expanding infrastructure and building our future — and we need to give them the resources to do that.

Please find this FAQ page to educate yourself on the finer points of this question: <https://bit.ly/4ir0Dir> (short for <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1sjxLVqBxYD-VI2QOk2-HXSaSCJci3PFC/view>).

Talk amongst yourselves. This requires a petition signed by 15% of our registered voters — around 650 people — in order for it to be put to a vote.

I will be circulating the petition at locations including Jericho

Town Library, Deborah Rawson Library, Jericho Ale & Bean, and Jericho Town Offices.

I have removed myself from the Planning Commission so that there is no perceived conflict of interest.

If you would like to receive a copy of the petition to collect signatures, please reply to macleodsarah7@gmail.com and I will provide you with a copy.

Thank you for your consideration and be well.

December is the start of bird feeding seasons

“Winter bird feeding is a great way to observe and learn about our year-round bird residents such as black capped chickadees, nuthatches, and blue jays. It’s also a great time to learn about winter visitors such as evening and pine grosbeaks.” said Jillian Kilborn, Vermont Fish and Wildlife’s bird project leader.

Here are some basic bird feeding tips from Vermont Fish and Wildlife.

Make your own feeding mixture to maximize the number of species visiting your yard. Black oil sunflower seed is a favorite of many birds, but when mixed with “thistle” (or “nyjer”) or cracked corn you will be sure to attract a wide variety of species. Don’t forget the suet to attract woodpeckers and even chickadees.

Mix up the type of feeders you use. Hopper feeders are great for large birds such as blue jays, while tube feeders are best for smaller birds. Elevated tray feeders will attract birds that usually feed on the ground including juncos and larger bodied winter visitors such as evening grosbeaks.

Place your feeders near natural habitat, or even add a habitat for birds to hide. A Christmas tree is a great addition to a snowbank next to your feeder to provide quick cover.

Keep your feeders clean. Only put out enough food for a day, and wash feeders every couple of weeks in a 10% bleach solution and let dry to prevent the spread of bacteria and disease.

If you decide to feed birds, remember:

Feeding can expose birds to hazards they might otherwise avoid. The risks of predation are higher close to people, especially from domestic cats — the leading cause of bird deaths in North America. Keep cats inside, and take feeders down if predators become

frequent visitors. Also, we recommend placing feeders within three feet of windows to minimize high speed window strikes.

Don’t feed birds when bears are active. Most bears are in dens from December 1-April 1, but some will delay hibernation or re-emerge to feed during periods of warmer weather. Remove bird feeders immediately if you see signs of bears or know a bear is active in your community. Bears that learn to associate food with a house will continue to return, potentially leading to property damage and dangerous encounters with people. Further, it is illegal to feed bears in Vermont.

Once you’ve started feeding the birds, keep your feeders stocked. Although wild birds are not entirely dependent on bird feeders, they can become accustomed to this easy food source. If you wish to stop feeding during winter months, gradually taper off the amount of food you provide rather than stopping abruptly, giving the birds a chance to find other food sources. This is especially important when food is scarce in late winter or during periods of extreme weather.

Immediately remove feeders if there are reports of HPAI (Avian Influenza) or even a bacterial infection outbreak. Concentrating birds at a feeder only contributes to the spread of diseases. If you find a dead bird, visit the Avian Influenza Wildlife Health Bulletin (<https://vtfishandwildlife.com/learn-more/living-with-wildlife/wildlife-diseases/avian-influenza-wildlife-health-bulletin>) on the Vermont Fish and Wildlife website for more information on when to report, and what to do.

Finally, report your observations. While watching your bird feeders, you can participate in one or more bird monitoring projects by looking up the Audubon Christmas Bird Count (<https://www.audubon.org/community-science/christmas-bird-count>), the Great Backyard Bird Count (<https://www.birdcount.org/>), and Project Feeder Watch and eBird (<https://feederwatch.org/>) — all collect important information for understanding bird populations.

Community columns continued on page 9

Library news continued from page 6

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 mparent@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

Age recommendations for youth programs are a rough estimate of skill and maturity levels appropriate for the task, but parents and guardians know what’s best for their children. Please reach out with any questions about age appropriateness or accommodations. You can reach us at youth@brownelllibrary.org.

Programs

Fridays, through December 20, 1:00 – 2:30 PM: Learn to Play Mah Jongg. A six-week series to learn Mah Jongg in partnership with the Essex Area Senior Center. Please try to commit to the entire six weeks. Space is limited; please sign up with Julie Shorter, Program Director for Older Adults EJRP at JSHORTER@EJRP.ORG or 802-878-1375 x1553.

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.

Closed Wednesday-Thursday, December 25-26 and Wednesday, January 1.

Closing at 5:00 PM on Tuesdays, December 24 and 31.

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!

Beat the year-end rush and renew your card early! Stop by the Front Desk with your card (not key tag), review/update the information we have on file, get a new date sticker — the renewal is good for three years! Current cards expire December 31 and will turn off Libby and Hoopla access unless renewed.

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: 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.

Exploration Station: ongoing. Check out the blue table for this week’s challenge.

New Storywalk @ in the Back Garden – *Lady Pancake* and *Sir French Toast* by Josh Funk.

Saturday, December 21, 11:00 AM – 1:00 PM: Dungeons and Dragons. For grades 9-12. Do you yearn for adventure? And free food? Join our new program! Every other Saturday.

Thursday, December 19, 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, December 28, 10:00 – 11:45 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. 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.

Thursday, December 19, 6:00 – 7:00 PM: Trivia Night for adults and teens. Join us for some fun and friendly trivia competition. Light refreshments provided.

Tuesday, December 31, 3:00 – 4:30 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.

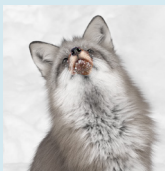
Thursday, January 2, 12:00 – 1:00 PM: Noontime Book Group: BYO Book. Bring a book you’ve read and spend three minutes telling the group about it, or just listen if you prefer.

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>.

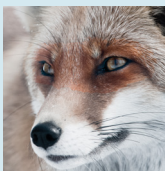


Sly Tips for Gas Safety this Winter

How to Detect a Gas Leak



Natural gas is normally odorless. VGS adds an odorant similar to the smell of rotten eggs, so it can be easily recognized.



You may see a white cloud, mist, fog, bubbles in standing water, or blowing dust. You may also see vegetation that appears to be dead or dying.



You may hear an unusual noise like a roaring, hissing, or whistling.

If you suspect a leak:

Move immediately to a safe location. Call VGS at 800-639-8081 or call 911 with the exact location. Do not smoke or operate electrical switches or appliances. These items may produce a spark that might result in a dangerous condition. Do not assume someone else will report the condition.

Protect Meters and Vents from Ice and Snow

Don’t push or pile deep snow around meters and ensure whoever removes snow from your property knows meter and appliance vent locations. Use extreme caution when clearing snow and large icicles near meters and vents. If your meter gets encased in thick ice, please call us.

More safety information here:



Have a happy and safe holiday season!



MISCELLANEOUS NEWS

Westford Winter Festival coming February 8

By Carol Winfield, Westford

The Westford Winter Festival is coming — Saturday, February 8, 11:30 AM – 4:00 PM — many favorites are returning:

Horse Drawn Wagon! Chili Cook-off! Historical Society Open House! Raffle at WCH! Passports to pick up at the Library! Music at the WCH! Campfires and Marshmallows! Bonfire! Nature Walk! X-C ski/ snowshoe lesson! And some exciting new additions! Winter Harvest Market at the RBMH! Beverages from 14th Star Brewery! And more!

Watch for updates in the near future!

(Donations and Volunteers needed! Checks made out to Carol Winfield, with Winter Festival in the memo line.)

For more information, contact Westfordwinterfest@gmail.com.

Innovative approach to forest management in GMNF

The U.S. Forest Service (USFS) on Tuesday, December 3 issued its final decision on the Telephone Gap Integrated Resource Project in the Green Mountain National Forest (GMNF). The plan adopts an innovative approach to national forest management that can serve as a model for national forests.

“The plan selected by the Forest Service sets a new precedent for ecologically-oriented forest conservation and management. It protects all the remaining old-growth forests in the project area; uses ecological forestry practices on thousands of acres of middle-aged forests to restore more old forest conditions; and — appropriately — allocates some middle-aged forests to a variety of other uses. This is exactly the kind of holistic model we need for old forest conservation and restoration on public lands. National forests around the country are likely to follow suit, and this was a real win in terms of public comment dramatically moving the needle,” said Dr. William Keeton, Professor of Forestry at the University of Vermont.

The Forest Service’s original proposal for the project, which covers a project area of 72,250 acres, would have harvested close to 12,000 acres, including areas that had old forest conditions and characteristics. During the public comment period, Vermont Natural Resources Council, Audubon Vermont, and Dr. Keeton submitted detailed comments encouraging the Forest Service to develop one or more alternatives to better promote ecological forestry and diverse management goals while protecting and expanding late-successional/old-growth forest characteristics.

Based on an initial review of the final decision, we are pleased that our recommendations for implementing climate smart practices related to conserving and promoting late successional and old growth forests were incorporated into the Forest Service’s final decision. More specifically, our recommendations proposed a completely new model approach for (1) protecting existing old-growth stands, (2) supporting retention and active restoration and recruitment of additional old growth forests, and (3) promoting ecological forestry management practices on the GMNF, in addition to implementing water quality protection measures. As a result of our recommendations and input from the public, the Forest Service set aside 661 acres due to their old forest characteristics, reduced the overall harvesting to less than 7743 acres, and will now practice ecological forestry on 3611 acres through methods that will enhance late successional and old forest conditions.

Read the USFS final decision online at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=60192>.

VT Fish and Wildlife has online license gift certificates

Finding a gift that will continue to give for a full year is a challenge, but the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department has a solution on their website — a license gift certificate for hunting and fishing licenses.

“You can go to our website, fill out the gift certificate and pay for it online, and then print the certificate to present to your recipient,” said Fish and Wildlife’s Director of Outreach Alison Thomas.

The license section (<https://vtfishandwildlife.com/licenses-and-lotteries/license-center>) of Fish and Wildlife’s website has a link to the gift certificate. The person who receives the certificate must go to the website to redeem their certificate and purchase their licenses.

“If you have a friend or relative who hunts or fishes, this is an easy gift-giving solution,” said Thomas. “The gift certificate will cover licenses for 2025 or for licenses in future years.”

Westford Public Library annual appeal

By Bree Drapa, Librarian, Westford Public Library

Please consider donating to the Westford Public Library. Your support helps us complete special projects, enrich programming, and expand services — like our new digital services — Mango Languages and Biblio+. Donations allow us to be creative and pilot new services to fit our patrons’ changing needs.

We realize this might not be the year to give, and we understand. The best way you can support the library is to use it and encourage others to do the same.

If you wish to make a donation, please make checks payable to “Westford Public Library.” You can mail them (P.O. Box 86, Westford, VT 05494), bring them in to the library, or drop them off in the bookdrop.

With gratitude, The Library Board of Trustees, Library Director Bree Drapa, Library Technical Assistant Niquette Bergeron

Bishop installs new pastor at Good Shepherd

The Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd in Jericho, best known for the community food shelf, has called the Reverend Chelsea Page to be their next pastor.

Local community members, together with ecumenical friends and partners, gathered with the New England Synod Bishop Nathan Pipho for a service of installation on Sunday, December 15 that featured Advent Lessons and Carols, with a reception following.


Pastor Page was raised Roman Catholic and was a faith-based activist prior to discerning her call to the ministry. She earned her BA at the University of California Berkeley and continued her theological education at Episcopal Divinity School, Cambridge and Pacific School of Religion, Berkeley. She was ordained in the United Church of Christ in 2019 and has served as Associate Pastor at a UCC church in Salt Lake City and Pastor at an historic ELCA Lutheran Church in Ogden, UT.

“Chelsea is well-versed in Lutheran theology and fully embraces it. She also appreciates and enjoys the richness of our liturgy and variety of our worship settings,” said church treasurer Paul Ruess.

Chelsea is a native of northern California and has a sister who lives in Burlington. She and her spouse Pegasus have two young children, Lyra and Kinley, and are grateful to be joining our community.

Miscellaneous news continued on page 10

Deborah Rawson Memorial Library Discussion Series



THE ANXIOUS GENERATION

How the Great Rewiring of Childhood is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness

By Jonathan Haidt

Please feel free to attend just one or all of the gatherings!

Presented in Partnership with ReConnect

1/21 2/18


3/18 4/15

6:30 - 8pm

8 River Rd. Jericho

Works with: PeterWVWall.com

Have you been thinking about how to approach smartphone and social media use with your kids? Wondering what other parents are doing and thinking about this topic in our community? Let's get together and talk about it!



Community columns continued from page 8

As winter sets in, find a comfortable spot inside where you can watch the birds visiting your feeders. Figure out what birds they are, observe how they interact with each other, and see what they prefer to eat. It's a perfect way to get to know the birds around you better.

A letter to the future

By Bernie Paquette, Jericho

VTdigger reports “Montpelier delays costly PFAS solution for wastewater plant. The decision means the city still has a PFAS problem.” (<https://vtdigger.org/2024/11/10/montpelier-delays-costly-pfas-solution-for-wastewater-plant/>)

We all share that problem.

Who to look to for a fix? Town and state governments are short of funds. Federal government regulators are failing to catch up with the influx of new chemicals. Corporations are driven by short-term profits and quickly find loopholes in regulations.

The largest leverage for protecting our lives from dangerous chemicals being released into our air, soil, and water and then absorbed into the bodies of invertebrates and vertebrates,

including humans, is in our pockets.

Purchase decisions matter.

As consumers we purchase the products that are built or grown with these chemicals — PFAS, neonics, glyphosate... therefore we hold the tightest, most direct grip of influence over those who originate and distribute harmful chemicals that are pervasive in a range of consumer products.

We can address the problem at its source — our consumption decisions.

PFAS and other harmful chemicals are everywhere. *No body* is free from their exposure. The list of health concerns from this exposure is long, and the damaging effects are expected to grow.

Yes, we must address these slow-to-break-down chemicals already in our soil, water, and air. More importantly, we need to address the problem at its source — a much more cost-efficient way to protect our health and longevity.

We can change our own view of our consumptive culture.

We can scrutinize the products we purchase.

We can find ways to use our consumption leverage to influence corporations.

We know what is happening and what needs to be done.

We know that we as consumers have the greatest leverage to fix the problem. Will we make our purchase choices with our eyes wide open, or will we make them with our eyes closed? Will we choose to ignore our part and our leverage, delaying fixing the problem at its source, or will we choose to recognize our power to influence the actions of large corporations and their impact on our health and environment?

A letter to the future:

We watched our health (from birth and on) decline, we watched whole species decline and many go extinct. We watched our soil and water become poisoned many times more than from DDT of the past. We watched as the post-treatment (after chemicals entered the earth or our bodies) costs became astronomically expensive, if even feasible. We know what is happening and what needs to be done.

Only you will know if we used our leverage to do it.

Miscellaneous news continued from page 9



Wallace Stegner said that a “brook would lose its song if we removed the rocks.” He also said, “Whatever landscape a child is exposed to early on, that will be the sort of gauze through which he or she will see all the world afterwards.”

In the world of adoption, life is both a brook and the rocks, and the gauze through which children see the world forevermore. And when that child is wrapped in the fabric of a family that was carefully planned or one that may have evolved out of a surprise invitation, the result can be a beautiful symphony.

—from *The Geography of Adoption* by Mary L. Collins for VT DCF, November 28, 2024

Fostering Happy Holidays

By Corinne Rivers, www.necco.org

The holidays are a time for gathering with loved ones and creating memories. For foster children across the country, though, the holiday season can be a bittersweet reminder of the challenges they’ve faced and the sense of belonging they may long for. Whether you’re a seasoned foster parent or considering it for the first time, here are some casual tips to make the holidays extra special for both you and the children and youth in your care.

Share traditions: Traditions are like the glue that holds the holiday spirit together. Sharing family traditions, and inviting your foster child to share their own, can help create a sense of familiarity and warmth. Consider blending these traditions or creating new memories altogether.

Prepare friends and family: Let anyone you may see during the holidays know that you will have your foster child with you. If you are traveling to others’ homes, this may help with preparation beforehand. If possible, try planning a casual meeting beforehand so that your child can put names with faces and have a level of comfortability and preparedness once the holiday travels approach.

Holiday prep together: Get all of your children involved in the holiday preparations. Whether it’s decorating the tree, wrapping gifts, or baking cookies, including everyone in the process allows children to take responsibility in the holiday magic and experience a sense of normalcy they crave.

Understand sad feelings or regressive behaviors: The holiday season can be emotionally challenging for everyone. Foster children may feel an increased feeling of grief, stress, or anxiety. Your foster child might distance themselves or withdraw during the holidays, even if you’re providing excellent care. It’s important to understand that their behavior doesn’t reflect on your capabilities as a foster parent. If this season becomes stressful or you just want a better understanding of your foster child, reach out to your district staff support team for guidance.

Tri-County Winter Bird Count December 21

Over a hundred years ago, people around the U.S. started counting birds in mid-winter. The Audubon Christmas Bird Count (CBC) — or in some circles known as Winter Bird Count (WBC) or other inclusive titles — now covers most of North American and has expanded to over a dozen other countries, and the yearly data has provided scientists with invaluable information about bird populations and locations.

This year, on the 125th Audubon CBC, Vermonters of all ages will be counting birds as they drive, snowshoe, hike, walk, and watch backyard feeders.

On Saturday, December 21, 12:00 AM – 11:59 PM, you may see slow-moving cars and/or folks with binoculars inside a designated 15-mile circle including parts of Cambridge, Westford, Milton, Fairfax, Fletcher, Underhill, Jericho, and Jeffersonville. Feel free to flag us down and tell us about interesting birds you’ve seen in your towns or fields or forests or backyards! The local organizer and compiler of information for this area is Jason Crooks of Westford — if you’re interested in participating, contact him at mwongera@hotmail.com.

Check it out and learn more at <https://vt.audubon.org/audubon-christmas-bird-count-0>.

Color and beauty for the New Year

By Julia Blake, Jericho

Support the Jericho Center Store, Jeri-Hill Hardware, and the Old Red Mill because, out of community spirit, they are graciously selling the Community Center in Jericho’s 2025 calendar, a fund-raiser.

Buy one of these awesome wall calendars for a holiday gift, or yourself. Support our local stores and our Community Center. The lovely photos, taken in Jericho and Underhill by your neighbors, will not disappoint. The Emile Gruppe Gallery also sells these calendars, plus other beautiful gifts and artwork.

Do your holiday shopping early. Calendar supplies are limited!

CSWD emergency updates by text

By Beth Parent, Chittenden Solid Waste District

Winter weather is here and that means we are at the mercy of Mother Nature. To ensure you don’t miss out on any emergency closures, we recommend signing up for our text message alerts.

To sign up, please text CSWDAlerts to 802-305-5070 on your cell phone. A message from CSWDAlerts will be sent to you that verifies you are signed up.

To opt out of our alerts, please text the word STOP to 802-305-5070 at any time.

Also, the holidays are just around the corner, we encourage folks to check out our holiday schedule before heading out to our facilities: <https://cswd.net/about-cswd/calendar/>.

Branch Out Burlington Tree Sale now open

Pre-order now for Spring pick up. Branch Out Burlington! is offering bare-root trees at affordable prices. Choose from many varieties of beautiful trees for shade, fruit, flowers, and fall color. All the trees are five to six feet tall, branched. Don’t delay — these trees always sell out very early.

For tree photos, descriptions, and to order online, go to <https://www.branchoutburlington.org/annual-tree-sale>. Questions call or text Kyle 802 825 4505 or email BOBtreesale@gmail.com.

Proceeds from the sale support tree donations to schools and non-profits, in Vermont, and to produce trees in the community for planting along Burlington’s streets.

Planting a tree will outlast anything else you buy and will be a beautiful addition to nature. Always wanted to plant a fruit tree or two? Growing a fruit tree ensures that you are growing an organic food source for you and your family. How about planting an entire orchard? Starting with these tall beauties is a perfect start.

United Way volunteer opportunities

Give the gift of time this holiday season – volunteer! United Way’s Volunteer Connection site is set up to help connect agencies and volunteers. Go online to <https://unitedwaynwvt.galaxydigital.com/> to learn more about these and other opportunities.

SCORE A SUCCESS – SCORE mentors advise individuals and small businesses attain their goals by providing free business advice and education to aspiring entrepreneurs and existing business owners. Help clients solve problems, manage employees and projects, make their businesses more efficient, and develop long-term business plans. An ideal opportunity for those with marketing, finance, accounting, management, and technology skills. Contact 802-764-5899 or recruiting0284@scorevolunteer.org.

PRESENTER NEEDED – National Alliance on Mental Health (NAMI) Vermont invites volunteers, age 18-35, in recovery from a mental health condition, to make a difference for Vermont youth as an Ending the Silence presenter. Work in a team to educate middle and high school students, their parents and school staff about the warning signs of mental health conditions and where to turn for help. Presentations are about 50 minutes long and include one young adult sharing a recovery experience. Register for NAMI Vermont’s next training session at <https://namivt.org/form-2/>.

TELL THE STORY – Vermont Kin as Parents is looking for volunteers to help tell the compelling personal stories of kinship caregivers and children who have been raised in kin care. Volunteers should be good listeners with the ability to write up stories for VKAP’s newsletter and to share with legislators and journalists. Contact Jeana Lavalley, 802-391-8849 or jeana@vermontkinasparents.org.

I-89 Richmond construction schedule

Richmond-U.S. Rt. 2 Bridge #29 Replacement

Project type: complete bridge replacement

December 5

Traffic impacts:

- U.S. Rt. 2 Monday-Friday, 6:30 AM – 4:00 PM will have traffic control present near the Richmond Fire Station, allowing for intermittent stops to let trucks in/out of the project site.
- I-89 No traffic impacts.

Project update: continued with the removal of the old U.S. Rt. 2 roadway on the west end of the project; continued with project site restoration.

Construction activities: the following was the anticipated work schedule for the week that began December 9: Monday-Friday, 6:30 AM – 4:00 PM:

- continue with the removal of the old U.S. Rt. 2 roadway;
- continue with extending the drainage pipes on the west end of the project.

Please use caution while traveling through the construction zone and follow the posted speed limits!

CSWD winter webinars

From the CSWD Board

Chittenden Solid Waste District (CSWD) facilities will be open regular hours.

View our full schedule online at <https://cswd.net/about-cswd/calendar/>.

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 2025 legislative session right around the corner,

Lamoille Economic Development Corporation (LEDC) and Lamoille Chamber of Commerce are pleased to announce our 2025 Legislative Breakfast Series coming on Monday, January 6, 8:00 – 9:30 AM at the Green Mountain Tech & Career, VT Rt. 15, Hyde Park.

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

The Hyde Park breakfast is the first of four events offering you 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>.

VCRD Climate Catalyst Innovation Fund supports local projects

The Vermont Council on Rural Development (VCRD) has announced the awardees for the fourth competitive round of the Climate Catalyst Innovation Fund. The funding supports projects that make a meaningful, community-scale impact. VCRD received more than \$224,000 in requests and was able to fund 24 projects to support local climate solutions in Vermont.

In collaboration with generous funders including Vermont Low Income Trust for Electricity (VLITE), the Vermont Community Foundation, the Sunflower Fund, EastRise Credit Union, Ruth H. Brown Foundation, and Ben & Jerry’s Foundation, VCRD is supporting local innovators in developing solutions that move Vermont closer to its climate and energy goals. Projects are practical and creative efforts that expand community resilience, reduce energy use, and create new approaches to challenging problems. Projects funded this year include solar generators, a farmer resilience network, youth climate projects, and many more. This year, the Climate Catalyst Innovation Fund grew to \$85,000 following three successful prior rounds. An interactive map is available (<https://bit.ly/49vVbqD>) showcasing recipients, location and project descriptions. Project outcomes and photos from the previous rounds are available on the VCRD website: <https://www.vtrural.org/climate-economy/climate-catalysts-innovation-fund/>.

“To date, this fund has awarded 92 local innovators with over \$285,000 in support of community-led climate and energy projects,” said Laura Cavin Bailey, the Climate Economy Program Manager of VCRD. “This provides exciting opportunities to launch ideas into action at the community level.”

The Climate Catalyst Innovation Fund award amounts range from \$500-4000, are selected by a panel of partners, and are based on demonstrating a mix of innovation, equity, resilience, replicability, collaboration, leverage, and meeting climate and energy goals. VCRD anticipates opening a new round of applications in the fall of 2025.

2025 project recipients and projects include:

- Architend, LLC. to develop three high performance home prototypes to be constructed utilizing a locally manufactured straw panel wall system;
- Community Resilience Organizations (CROs) to adapt existing CROs tools like the Community Resilience Assessment into curriculum to better support community-led resilience efforts, and to deepen their work toward creating a decentralized resilience network;
- Elderly Services, Inc. to make a model composting site at their adult day center.
- Healthy Roots Collaborative/Feeding Champlain Valley to purchase an EcoFlow DELTA Pro Portable Power Station to expand access to fresh local food.
- Rich Earth Institute to develop and implement a site planning tool for establishing urine collection depots across Vermont, and streamlining Rich Earth’s ability to foster and support this work.
- Salvation Farms Inc to expand year-round gleaning services to the communities of the Lamoille Valley and Northeast Kingdom.
- Vermont Center for Independent Living to support a three-week training series for Vermonters with disabilities and provide home preparedness kits for 16 households.
- Vermont Energy Education Program to support youth teams as they plan and implement climate action projects.
- Vermont Garden Network to support the six-month long Food, Housing and Land Access program: Gardening Education at Affordable Housing Sites.

To learn more visit <https://www.vtrural.org/climate-economy/climate-catalysts-innovation-fund/> or contact Laura Cavin Bailey, laura@vtrural.org or 802-234-1646.

Westford Winter Festival coming February 8

By Carol Winfield, Westford

The Westford Winter Festival is coming — Saturday, February 8, 11:30 AM – 4:00 PM — many favorites are returning:

Horse Drawn Wagon! Chili Cook-off! Historical Society Open House! Raffle at WCH! Passports to pick up at the Library! Music at the WCH! Campfires and Marshmallows! Bonfire! Nature Walk! X-C ski/ snowshoe lesson! And some exciting new additions! Winter Harvest Market at the RBMH! Beverages from 14th Star Brewery! And more!

Watch for updates in the near future!

(Donations and Volunteers needed! Checks made out to Carol Winfield, with Winter Festival in the memo line.)

For more information, contact Westfordwinterfest@gmail.com.

Miscellaneous news continued on page 11

Miscellaneous news continued from page 10

Rebates for VT households, businesses hit by 2024 floods

Rebates for heating systems, weatherization, and appliances extended to households and businesses impacted by this year's flooding

A suite of Efficiency Vermont flood recovery rebates are now available (see <https://www.efficiencyvermont.com/floodRebate>) for households and businesses impacted by Vermont's 2024 summer floods.

The Vermont Emergency Board and Governor Phil Scott authorized the Vermont Public Service Department (PSD) to extend the rebates first launched in response to the catastrophic 2023 summer flooding. Previously, only households and businesses affected by floods in July 2023 (and, for Addison County, August 2023) were able to access the rebates.

The change allows income-eligible homeowners and renters impacted by 2023 and 2024 flooding to access up to \$29,500 per household in rebates to replace critical heating/water heating systems and appliances, upgrade or replace a home electric panel, and incorporate weatherization into rebuilding efforts. Flood-impacted businesses can also get up to \$16,000 cash back on eligible heating systems and commercial kitchen equipment like freezers, refrigerators, dishwashers, and more.

Support now available to low- and moderate-income households damaged by flooding includes:

- Free Virtual Home Energy Visits to assess recovery options: A 90-minute video assessment of a home by an Efficiency Vermont energy expert, providing guidance on each home's specific needs. See <https://www.efficiencyvermont.com/rebates/list/home-energy-visit>.

- Up to \$10,000 to replace home heating systems and appliances: Covering new or replacement heat pump heating system (ducted or ductless) or central wood or pellet boilers/furnaces and stoves, plus ENERGY STAR-certified replacement appliances like refrigerators, clothes washers/dryers, and more. See <https://www.efficiencyvermont.com/rebates/list/flood-recovery-rebates-appliances-heating-water-heating>.

recovery-rebates-appliances-heating-water-heating.

- Up to 100% cash back for buying and installing a heat pump water heater: Low-income households can receive 100% of the equipment and installation costs of a new heat pump water heater, while moderate-income households can get 90% cash back. Projects over \$5,000 require additional review. See <https://www.efficiencyvermont.com/rebates/list/heat-pump-water-heaters>.

- Up to \$9,500 to weatherize your home as you rebuild (see <https://www.efficiencyvermont.com/rebates/list/flood-recovery-rebates-weatherization>): Adding or replacing flood-damaged air sealing and insulation during rebuilding improves a home's comfort, safety, and energy efficiency. Weatherization projects can also take advantage of up to \$15,000 through Efficiency Vermont's Home Repair program (<https://www.efficiencyvermont.com/rebates/list/home-repair>) to address underlying issues in a home that need to be fixed before weatherization can happen. Low-income households can also get free weatherization through the state's Weatherization Assistance Programs (<https://dcf.vermont.gov/benefits/weatherization>).

- Up to \$10,000 for home electric system updates: Electric panels can be replaced upgraded to 200 amps panel, restoring electricity or adding capacity for heat pumps, electric vehicle chargers, and more. The offer can also be used to move an electrical panel to a more flood-safe area. See <https://www.efficiencyvermont.com/rebates/list/flood-recovery-rebates-appliances-heating-water-heating>.

- 0% interest on up to \$30,000 for a Home Energy Loan: No-interest loans for terms of 5 years or less for all customers recovering from flood damage, including health and safety repairs. Longer terms are also available with low interest rates. See <https://www.efficiencyvermont.com/services/financing/homes/home-energy-loan>.

Rebates are available for eligible products purchased on or after July 10, 2023. Qualifying ENERGY STAR-certified fossil fuel boilers, furnaces, and water heaters are also supported by these rebates. Purchases must be on Efficiency Vermont's Qualifying Products List (<https://qualifiedproducts.efficiencyvermont.com/evt/searchgroups>).

Households that received flood incentives for damages incurred due to 2023 flooding, and were damaged again by 2024 floods, are eligible for these rebates. Those households can receive an incentive up to the amount that brings their 2023 and 2024 flood incentive total up to \$10,000 per household for qualifying appliances, heating, and water heating systems.

Businesses impacted by flooding can access rebates including:

- Up to \$10,000 in rebates per unit for rental property owners: Based on rent levels, low- and moderate-income rental units are eligible for rebates for water heating, appliances, ductless heat pumps, and central heating systems damaged by flooding. Property owners can also get up to \$4,500 for heat pump water heaters. See <https://www.efficiencyvermont.com/rebates/list/flood-recovery-rebates-for-rental-property-owners>.

- Up to \$16,000 in equipment rebates: Flood-impacted businesses can now recoup 100% of their costs on eligible heating systems or commercial kitchen equipment, up to \$4,000 per piece of equipment. Each business qualifies for up to four pieces of equipment, for a maximum award of \$16,000. See <https://www.efficiencyvermont.com/rebates/list/bizflood>.

- Support for ENERGY STAR-certified fossil fuel boilers and furnaces. These items qualify for 100% of the rebate, up to \$4,000 each (provided they are on the qualifying products list). Larger fossil fuel boilers system projects must be individually evaluated by Efficiency Vermont to qualify for an equipment rebate.

- Up to \$9,000 back on weatherization projects: Air sealing and insulation products used to improve a building's envelope or mechanical ventilation can get 100% of the product costs back, up to \$4,000. Combined with Efficiency Vermont's Building Performance program, businesses can get up to \$9,000 back on eligible weatherization projects. See <https://www.efficiencyvermont.com/rebates/list/building-performance>.

Rebates for businesses are in addition to existing point-of-purchase offers, which can provide hundreds of dollars in additional rebates. Businesses are encouraged to contact Efficiency Vermont's Customer Service team to find additional products their businesses need that may be eligible for these rebates.

Innovative approach to forest management in GMNF

The U.S. Forest Service (USFS) on Tuesday, December 3 issued its final decision on the Telephone Gap Integrated Resource Project in the Green Mountain National Forest (GMNF). The plan adopts an innovative approach to national forest management that can serve as a model for national forests.

"The plan selected by the Forest Service sets a new precedent for ecologically-oriented forest conservation and management. It protects all the remaining old-growth forests in the project area; uses ecological forestry practices on thousands of acres of middle-aged forests to restore more old forest conditions; and — appropriately — allocates some middle-aged forests to a variety of other uses. This is exactly the kind of holistic model we need for old forest conservation and restoration on public lands. National forests around the country are likely to follow suit, and this was a real win in terms of public comment dramatically moving the needle," said Dr. William Keeton, Professor of Forestry at the University of Vermont.

The Forest Service's original proposal for the project, which covers a project area of 72,250 acres, would have harvested close to 12,000 acres, including areas that had old forest conditions and characteristics. During the public comment period, Vermont Natural Resources Council, Audubon Vermont, and Dr. Keeton submitted detailed comments encouraging the Forest Service to develop one or more alternatives to better promote ecological forestry and diverse management goals while protecting and expanding late-successional/old-growth forest characteristics.

Based on an initial review of the final decision, we are pleased that our recommendations for implementing climate smart practices related to conserving and promoting late successional and old growth forests were incorporated into the Forest Service's final decision. More specifically, our recommendations proposed a completely new model approach for (1) protecting existing old-growth stands, (2) supporting retention and active restoration and recruitment of additional old growth forests, and (3) promoting ecological forestry management practices on the GMNF, in addition to implementing water quality protection measures. As a result of our recommendations and input from the public, the Forest Service set aside 661 acres due to their old forest characteristics, reduced the overall harvesting to less than 7743 acres, and will now practice ecological forestry on 3611 acres through methods that will enhance late successional and old forest conditions.

Read the USFS final decision online at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=60192>.

OFFICIAL WARNING

ANNUAL MEETING JERICHO UNDERHILL PARK DISTRICT

The legal voters of the towns of Jericho and Underhill in the County of Chittenden and the State of Vermont are hereby warned and notified to meet at the Deborah Rawson Memorial Library (project room) in Jericho, Vermont on Wednesday, January 15, 2025 at 7:00 PM to act on the following articles:

- Article 1. Election of a Moderator
- Article 2. Act on Report of Trustees
- Article 3. Shall the District authorize the Trustees to borrow money for the temporary needs of the District?
- Article 4. Adoption of a budget
- Article 5. Other business thought proper when met.

Dated at Jericho, Vermont, December 4, 2024

- Livy Strong Chair
- Dave Williamson Vice-Chair
- Donna Pratt Treasurer
- Bruce Blokland Secretary
- Kim Spaulding
- Paula VanDeventer

TOWN OF JERICHO- DEVELOPMENT REVIEW BOARD

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

The Jericho Development Review Board will hold the public hearing at 7:00 pm on WEDNESDAY January 8, 2025, at the Jericho Town Hall to consider the following applications

- A request to the DRB by the Town of Jericho for a conditional use review. The property is located at 508 Browns Trace which is in the Open Space Zoning District.
- A request to the DRB by VRMT4 for a preliminary/final plat review for an 8-lot major residential Subdivision/PUD including open space lot. The property is located at 91 Governor Peck Road which is in the Rural Agricultural Residential Zoning District.

All interested persons may appear and be heard. Additional information related to this application may be viewed at the Jericho Planning and Zoning Office during regular business hours.

Chris Flinn
Zoning Administrator
cflinn@jerichovt.gov

We have room
for your ad.
Call Brenda Boutin
at 802-453-6354
for more
information
or email
mtngazette@gmavt.net

OBITUARY



Richard W. Becker, 87, of Underhill, VT passed away peacefully on Sunday, December 1, 2024 in the comfort of his home, surrounded by his loving family. Born on August 27, 1937 in Springfield, NJ, Richard was the son of the late Walter and Dorothy (Beavers) Becker. He was a natural storyteller, often reminiscing about his lively youth and adventurous 20s. Summers spent at his Uncle Howard's farm left a lasting impression; he cherished memories of sleeping in an attic bedroom where the comforting scent of curing ham lulled him to sleep. Richard excelled in athletics during high school, earning four varsity letters — two in pole vaulting and two in football. Shortly after graduation, he was drafted into the U.S. Army, where he proudly served as a medic in the First and Fifth Army Divisions from 1962 to 1964. Following his military service, Richard attended trade school and built a career as a skilled electrician. In his younger years, he also had a passion for motorcycle racing, competing on dirt tracks along the East Coast and earning several trophies. Known for his daring spirit, he was undeniably "the cool guy" of his day. While stationed in Boston, MA during active duty, Richard met Gretchen Austad — rumored to have been on a blind date. Her attraction to his wild charm and his readiness to settle down led to their marriage in 1965. Together, they built a life in Underhill, raising three children: Rachel, Rebecca, and Joseph. Their partnership spanned 49 years before Gretchen's passing in 2014. Richard embraced Vermont's rural lifestyle, taking pride in "living off the land." He tended to a large vegetable garden and heated his home exclusively with wood he chopped himself until 2019, when his children convinced him to add a secondary heat source. A renowned outdoorsman and master trapper, Richard's passion for trapping endured throughout his life, and he delighted in sharing his knowledge with others. He also loved stock car racing and spent many memorable days spanning 30 years at Thunder Road as a crew member for the Richard Greene #16VT car. A proud veteran, Richard was deeply committed to honoring those who served. As a long-time member and former Commander of American Legion Post 35, he organized the Underhill/Jericho Memorial Day parade for many years and ensured that every veteran's grave in Underhill was marked with a fresh American flag. He was also a member of the Sons of the American Revolution and a dedicated Mason. Richard is survived by his children, Rachel Becker, Rebecca Lemire, and Joseph Becker, as well as his grandson, Zachary Lemire. He was predeceased by his wife Gretchen Becker, and by his brother Barry Becker. Richard's legacy of resilience, dedication, and love for his family and community will be cherished by all who knew him. Visiting hours were held Monday, December 9, 2024 at Goss Funeral Home, Enosburg Falls, VT; a funeral service was held Tuesday, December 10, also at Goss Funeral Home. Interment followed at the Underhill Cemetery, Park St., Underhill. Very casual attire was requested at all events as Richard always wore jeans and wasn't a big fan of fancy dress, although he was buried in the suit he was married in, at his request. In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to a veterans' charity of your choice. The family also invites you to share your memories and condolences by visiting www.gossfs.com.

**Holiday
Greetings
from
Brenda Boutin
and Sara Riley
Mountain
Gazette staff**

ART / MUSIC / THEATER

Support local artists at the Emile Gruppe Gallery, 22 Barber Farm Rd., Jericho, currently showing the original paintings of watercolorists Adrienne Fisher and Thomas Rand in a show titled *Jericho and Beyond: Two Artists' Escapes*. This collection of paintings, offering glimpses of familiar places and evoking a love of the Vermont landscape, will be on display through Sunday, December 22. Also on display in the Gallery are the original works of other local landscape painters, including Gretchen Alexander and Tom Waters, as well as prints and cards of many more local Vermont painters, and photographers like the snowflakes of Stu Hall and the starscapes of Bernard Wunder. You can find many giftable items like handcrafted jewelry, pottery, wooden vessels, metal sculpture, artistic calendars and more. The Gallery is open Thursday-Sunday, 10:00 AM – 3:00 PM and anytime by appointment — call 802-899-3211.

Underhill Winter Art Show — calling all artists — This winter there will be an art show at Underhill Town Hall. Any artist in the Underhill community is invited to share their work in our local art show, which will run January-March. Please email Julianne Nickerson, jcdnicker@gmail.com, to let me know of your interest. Details to be emailed to participants soon. Last call for interest!

Entries are open for the 2025 Vermont Writers' Prize, which is awarded each year in two categories: prose and poetry. This is the 35th year of the prize, which celebrates all things Vermont. The prize is open to Vermont residents and your poem, short story, essay, or play should explore Vermont — its people, places, values, or history. Prizes awarded by Green Mountain Power and *Vermont Magazine*. Winning entries in each category are published in the summer issue of *Vermont Magazine* and receive \$1250. The Writers' Prize is open to all Vermont residents and students, but employees of Green Mountain Power and *Vermont Magazine* are not eligible. "Vermont is always changing, and it is so inspiring to read the entries and see how writers express the Vermont experience," said Kristin Carlson, a GMP vice president who serves as a judge for this prize. "Vermont means so many things to different people — and we invite everyone to share their story or poem." Learn more details and submit your writing for the 2025 Vermont Writers' Prize online at <https://vermontwritersprize.submittable.com/submit/296839/vermont-writers-prize-accepting-entries-for-2025>. The deadline to enter is January 1, 2025 at 11:59 PM.

The Bryan Memorial Gallery in Jeffersonville in their 40th season presents the Legacy 2024 Collection (through Sunday, December 22 in the East Gallery) features the works of 17 contemporary artists and includes selected works by Mary Bryan and Alden Bryan. Gallery Hours: Wednesday-Sunday, 11:00 AM – 4:00 PM or by appointment Mondays and Tuesdays. Additional information: Stephen Gothard, Director, 802-644-5100 or info@bryangallery.org or www.bryangallery.org.

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.

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.

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SCHOOL NEWS

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) no later than Friday, December 20, 2024 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.

Westford Robotics FTC and FIRST teams thank sponsors

By Mark Drapa, Westford

Thanking Mathieu Enterprises

Westford School's four FIRST LEGO League teams has prepared for state qualifiers on Saturday, December 14, while our grade 7-8 FIRST Tech Challenge team continues to refine their robot for February competition.

You may have seen these students around town proudly wearing their new team shirts featuring all sorts of Panda-based names. On the back of each shirt you will find a logo from Mathieu Enterprises, a Westford-based transportation provider.

I'd like to extend an enormous thank you to Mathieu Enterprises for sponsoring team shirts for all our teams! We are incredibly proud to represent the Westford community and value your sponsorship support. This helps keep our program running and gives mentors more time to concentrate on working with students.

Thank you!

Thanking Applied Solutions Consulting

Good news comes in pairs.

The Westford Robotics grade 7-8 FTC team recently received a very generous donation of materials from Applied Solutions Consulting, a Westford-based safety/OSHA compliance training consultancy. You could not imagine the excitement that teenagers could have for opening boxes to reveal linear slides, motors, motor controllers, and metal stock. This opens up some new

capabilities for the team to continue learning and innovating. One student commented afterwards that "this is the kind of stuff I love to do."

Thank you Applied Solutions Consulting!

We are incredibly proud to represent the Westford community and value your sponsorship support. This helps keep our program running and gives mentors more time to concentrate on working with students.

STEAM After School at Poker Hill Arts

STEAM After School at Poker Hill Arts has a few spots available starting in January 2025 (maximum 15 students). There are spots available on both Wednesdays and Thursdays. Ages are grades K-3 on Wednesdays and grade 4-5 on Thursday. If you have a child who is interested and you'd like them to attend the day that doesn't correspond with the age/day, that is totally okay. Just reach out to me and we can check in! My contact is below. Also, if you'd like to come and check out the STEAM program you can come and visit before you sign up.

Dan DiFranco leads this fun and diverse after school enrichment program. Dan has led many after school programs over the past 15 years in both South Burlington and Middlebury as the program director and program administrator. He also led the YMCA summer program at UCS three years ago.

The core of the STEAM program will continue to be teaching music from many angles. Students will learn to play various instruments, learn about different types of music around the world, play fun and immersive games related to music, as well as helping students find their creative sides when playing and listening to music through arts and crafts. Note that there is no requirement for previous musical knowledge or lessons.

After School STEAM will also offer hands-on activities that revolve around nature, art, science, and technology, like birdwatching and identification, science experiments such as creating a milk jar xylophone, leaf breathing (shows how leaves breathe with bubbles they produce underwater), learning about gardening and tree planting (easy DIY projects that students can take home), creating gliders, making a solar oven, sundials, looking at the world of science in both an inquisitive and artistic mindset, and many more activities throughout the year. Technology-related activities will also be offered in creating music, digital art, and computer building.

Most days there are multiple choices of activities for students. Outside play time is also a big part of this program, as being outside and getting out energy is one of the most crucial elements for child development.

If you are interested in signing up, or having your child(ren) come for a trial day in December 2024 before the new semester, please contact Dan DiFranco, timbolandusa@gmail.com or 802-404-7626.

We have room for your ad.
 Call Brenda Boutin at 802-453-6354
 for more information
 or email mtngazette@gmavt.net

SPORTS NEWS

Registration for Cambridge Rec Winter Swim Lessons at Smuggs

Join in on the fun! Learn how to swim at Smugglers' Notch Resort! Smuggs' American Red Cross Certified Water Safety Instructors will teach your child how to have fun and be safe in the water!

Instructors will confirm your child's swim lesson level in an assessment on the first day of class. Lesson level adjustments may be necessary and discussed with you prior to any changes. Space is limited and registration is on a first come, first served basis.

On Wednesdays, January 8-February 12, instructor Mindy will teach levels 2-4 for age groups 4-6 and 7 and up. On Fridays, January 10-February 14, instructors Suzanne and Ruby will teach classes for parent and child ages 6 months to 2 years, preschool levels 1-2 for ages 3-5, preschool level 3 for ages 4-6, and level 1 for ages 6 and up. For a more detailed description of the classes, and to fill out the online registration forms, please see <https://bit.ly/3ZSQfZO> (short for https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfO76bttsPiyf1t36fa6kQgRW2E_iQW5-j0LsMC_k3jXqPIMQ/viewform).

All classes will be held at the Courtside Pool at Smugglers' Notch Resort. The cost to Cambridge/Jeffersonville residents (after recreation board subsidy), \$60; for non-residents, \$80; for dependents of Smuggs' employees, free. Please postal mail a check made out to the "Town of Cambridge" and send it to Smugglers' Notch Resort, Attn: Suzanne Hoepfner, Aquatics, 4323 VT Rt. 108 South, Jeffersonville, VT 05464-9537.

Questions? Please contact Suzanne Hoepfner at shoepfner@smuggs.com.

Browns River Little League 2025 registration open

By Casey Knudsen, Jericho

Registration opened on December 1 for the 2025 Browns River Little League season for both boys and girls in Jericho and Underhill aged 4-12, including both Baseball and Softball. Register online only at www.brownsriverlittleleague.com.

Registration is open through Friday, January 31 for 9-12 year old baseball and softball players, and through Saturday, February 15 for 4-8 year old Farm League baseball players (this includes both girls and boys).

Early registration is important for league planning so don't delay.

Softball is also coming back again this year for its fourth season for 9-12 year old girls. (Tee ball/coach pitch baseball is available to 4-8 year old girls. We also need lots of help to make this season a success (Farm League head coaches will receive a free registration for one player).

If you're interested in being part of our great youth sports program, please reach out to brownsriverll@gmail.com, or contact league president Casey Knudsen, caseyknudsen@gmail.com.

Smugglers' Notch Ski & Snowboard Club

By Seth Friedman, Underhill Recreation Committee member

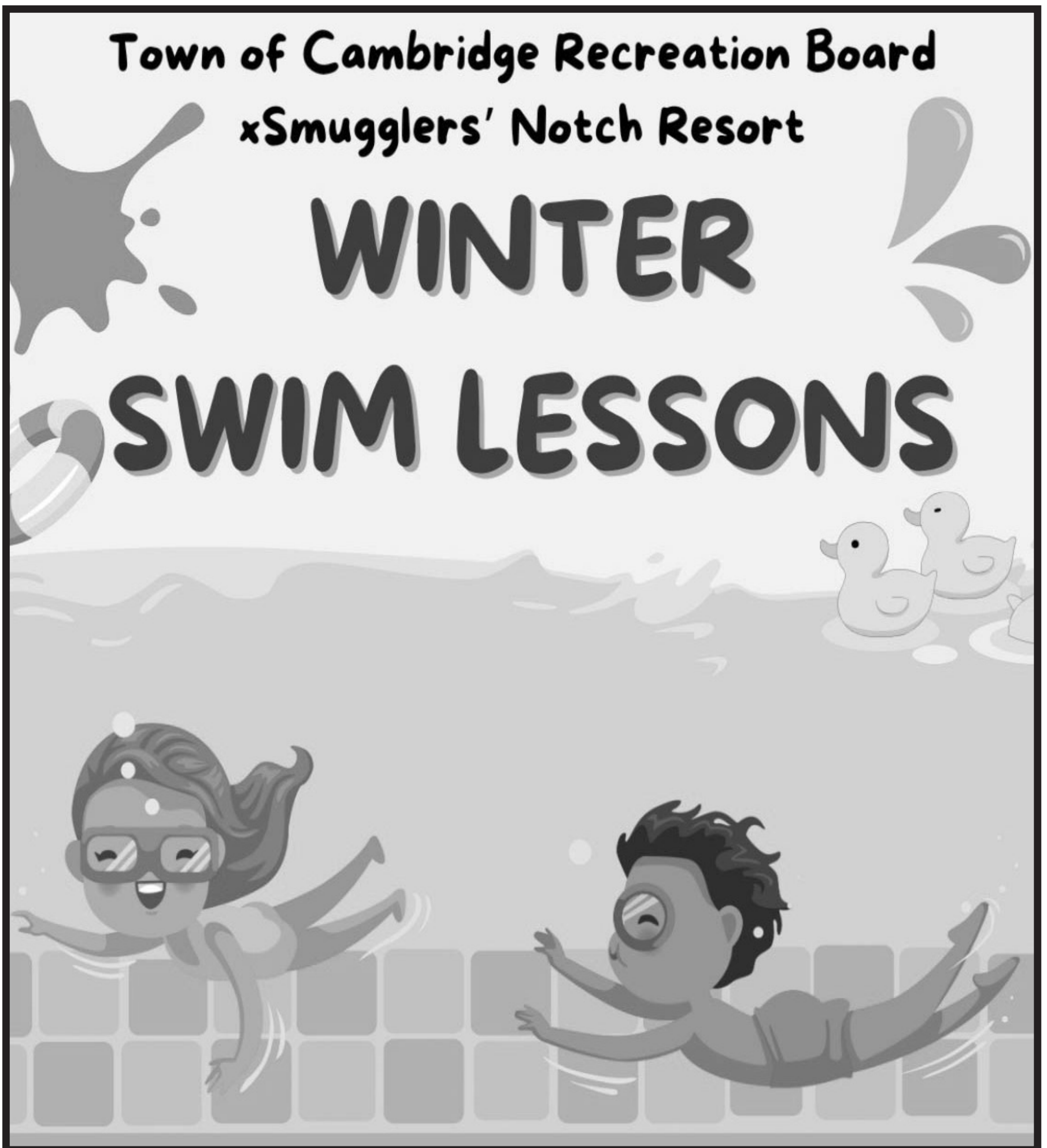
As a board member, athlete parent and coach... I highly recommend the Smugglers' Notch Ski and Snowboard Club (SNSC)! Please reach out to me (seth123@fastmail.com) with any questions you might have.

SNSC still has openings in some of our programs. SNSC is a great community that focuses on creating a positive environment for athletes to succeed in sport and life as well as create a lifelong passion for the mountains.

Programs with space remaining include our High School Racing Program, which allows athletes who might already race for their high school team to get some extra training on the weekends with SNSC coaches. Our new Freeski Mountain Team Program in which participants will gain knowledge in backcountry travel, first aid, and avalanche awareness, with guest lessons on additional topics.

SNSC's Snowboard programs also have openings. The Snowboard programs focus on skill development as well as returning to the roots of the sport and utilizing the terrain that Smugglers' Notch Resort can offer.

More information about SNSC can be found on our website (www.snsct.com), our Facebook page, and by contacting our director, Ryan Sheredy at director@snsct.com.



Christmas Coloring Contest



**Have fun coloring
then send your
entry to:**

**Mountain Gazette
6558 VT Rte 116
Starksboro, VT 05487**

**Include name, age,
address, phone number
with your entry.**

**Entry ages
3-5,
6-9,
10-12**

**Prizes:
First in each category \$15.00
Second place in each category \$10.00
Third place in each category \$5.00
Deadline: 5:00 PM
December 23, 2024**

SENIOR NEWS

Let's Do Lunch Jeffersonville, Holiday Edition

Join us on Friday, December 20 for the "Let's Do Lunch" holiday edition, 11:00 AM – 12:30 PM at the Second Congregational UCC, Community Room, Jeffersonville. Music will start at 11:00 AM, with lunch served at 11:30 AM: pork loin with seasonal sides, and Christmas cookies for dessert. A Tea Cup Auction will follow — please bring something to auction off and an item for the community Food Shelf, if you can. Auction tickets are 10 for \$1, and auction proceeds will also benefit the Food Shelf.

Age Well brings holiday cheer to Vermont seniors through DoorDash

This winter season DoorDash is highlighting Project DASH partners who are broadening food access in their community.

Age Well, a non-profit located in Northwestern Vermont, depends on a network of over 1000 volunteers to deliver essential meals to seniors. To meet an increased seasonal need for home delivery, Age Well is partnering with DoorDash Project DASH to ease the burden on the incredible volunteers who already give so much to their community.

Age Well provides home delivered, tailored meal options, as well as texture modification to help people manage their chronic health conditions. Additionally, Age Well utilizes Project DASH to inform them immediately when clients do not accept their meals so that they can support the safety and wellness of their clients.

Age Well's partnership with Project DASH is part of DoorDash's broader partnership with Meals on Wheels America, and will deliver 500 meals to older Vermonters through its partnership with Project DASH.

"We are deeply grateful for DoorDash's support, which allows us to serve our community without placing additional burdens on our dedicated volunteers," says Erica Marks, Director of Volunteer Services at Age Well. "This partnership is truly a gift to us, enabling us to continue our mission with greater ease and impact."

Upcoming Age Well Grab-and-Go Meals in Richmond

Age Well Grab-and-Go Meals in Richmond are scheduled for the first Thursday of the month (January 2) and are open to anyone age 60 and over who completes a yearly registration form, and their spouse of any age, at the Richmond Congregational Church, 20 Church St., Richmond. Meals must be picked up between 11:00 AM – 12:00 PM. Please arrive just before pick-up time to ensure meals go out quickly.

Suggested donation of \$5 per meal.

Forms are updated each fiscal year, which begins on October 1. Please contact Maggie Gordon, 802-434-3155, to register.

Cambridge Community Food Shelf open Tuesdays

The Cambridge Community Food Shelf, located at the Second Congregational Church ("white church") in Jeffersonville, is open on Tuesdays, 1:00 – 7:00 PM.

For more information contact 802-644-8911.

Mountain Gazette Rate Sheet 2025

6558 VT RTE 116, STARKSBORO, VT 05487
802-453-6354 mtngazette@gmavt.net
www.mountaingazetteofvermont.com

The *Mountain Gazette* is the hometown newspaper
for Bolton, Cambridge, Jeffersonville, Jericho, Underhill and Westford, Vermont.

We store deliver copies of the paper in Bolton, Cambridge, Jeffersonville, Jericho, Underhill, Westford, Hinesburg,
Huntington, Richmond, Fairfax, Essex and Essex Junction.

Total regular circulation 3500

OPEN RATE

\$8.25 COLUMN INCH
Column width 1 7/16"

Listings below are measured width x height

Business card - \$33.00
3 1/4" x 2"

1/16 page - \$49.50
3 1/4" x 3"

1/12 page - \$66.00
3 1/4" x 4"

1/8 page
3 1/4" x 6" or 5" x 4 - \$99.00

1/4 page - \$170.00
3 1/4" x 12"
5" x 8"
6 1/2" x 6"

1/2 page - \$290.00
10 1/4" x 8" or 5" x 15 1/2"

Full page - \$390.00
10 1/4" x 15 1/2"

Business directory ads: \$18 each, must buy 5 consecutive issues (\$90.00 pre-paid)
No changes. Size 3 1/4" x 1 1/2"

Classified ads: \$6.50 for 25 words, 10 cents for each additional word

Prepaid contracts available - Save up to 20%.

Purchase six ads of any size and run within 12 months.

Call Brenda Boutin, advertising manager at 802-453-6354 for details

Subscriptions \$35.00 per year - 24 issues

Inserts 1-4 pages, 8 1/2" x 11" Cost \$45.00 prepaid per 1000

Must purchase full circulation

Publication: First and Third Thursday/Month

Deadlines: Thursday before publication

Copy - 12:00 Noon

Advertising 5:00 PM

The *Mountain Gazette*, 6558 VT RTE 116, Starksboro, VT 05487

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

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MansfieldPlaceVT.com
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Uniform Consumer Disclosure is available upon request.



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across the country...
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we all grow in different directions
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- Barbara Swiatlowski

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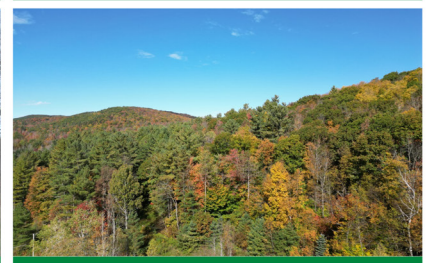
Charlotte - \$1,150,000



Underhill - \$595,000



Hinesburg - \$395,000



Hinesburg - \$260,000

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