

Westford Music Series presents special holiday concert



Westford Music Series presents a special holiday concert featuring the Fairfax Westford Band on Friday, December 22, 7:00 – 8:00 PM at the Westford Common Hall (21 Brookside Road, Westford). A favorite local band of talented musicians from Fairfax, Fletcher, and Westford will perform a variety of popular, traditional holiday music — familiar tunes for a special band concert at the Westford Hall. The Fairfax Westford band, led by Aaron Doane as music director, along with community band members of all ages will create a joyous tone for the upcoming holidays. Free will donation. Call 802-879-4028 for more information. PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Cambridge Rescue Squad: at a crossroads

By Cody Marsh, Cambridge Selectboard member
marshcd3@gmail.com

I wanted to take some time and share some information and statistics regarding our in-town rescue service, Cambridge Rescue Squad, and to start a discussion in our town about how Cambridge should move forward.

Part 1 of 3: calls and call volume, what is billable, and payments

For the fifth consecutive year, Cambridge Rescue Squad (CRS) is proposing an increase to their Town of Cambridge appropriation. In 2019, the appropriation was \$135,000. In 2023 it was \$233,950. As of today, they are anticipating an almost \$28,000 deficit at year's end. As taxpayers, it is important you have all pertinent information about budget request increases and what is contributing to these increases.

For those who are not aware, CRS is a private, 501c3, non-profit organization that receives funding in several different ways. It receives income from billing for its services (i.e., transporting patients to the hospital), it receives an appropriation from the towns it covers (Cambridge and Fletcher), and it also receives money from grants, donations, and fundraisers. But it is the service billing that I wanted to specifically highlight in this post.

Here are some statistics to consider:

Over the four-year period from January 1, 2019 to December 31, 2022:

- There were a total of 1847 rescue calls (an average of 462 per year);

- CRS responded to 1669 of those calls (~90%);
- 49% of calls responded to were billable (~818);
- 68% of the billable calls were Medicare or Medicaid patients (~556);
- 6% of bills went unpaid (~49).

What are the takeaways from these stats?

- Roughly half of all 911 calls are billable. The reality is, if a patient is not transported to the hospital, there is nothing to bill. Examples of non-billable calls include: minor/non-life threatening injuries, lift assists, fire/carbon monoxide/medical alarms, minor car accidents, health assessments, overdoses reversed with Narcan, patient does not want care, etc.

- Almost two-thirds of billable calls are Medicare or Medicaid patients. The State of Vermont and the U.S. government cap the total amount that a rescue service may charge Medicare/Medicaid patients. For a Basic Level Service (BLS), CRS charges \$850, but Medicare and Medicaid cap the charge at roughly \$437. No matter what any rescue agency charges for its services, they will be capped at this rate determined by the government.

- Of the 6% of unpaid bills, about 2.5% were uninsured and roughly 3.5% were insured, but just did not pay their bills.

None of these three takeaways are unique to CRS. These are challenges that rescue agencies nationwide are dealing with. Unfortunately the result of this situation is, the Town of Cambridge is ultimately on the hook for making up this difference. We as taxpayers have some critical decisions to make. But before we do that, I'd like to share more information that is important to consider.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to myself or Acting Chief Michael Curtin.

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Jericho tennis player receives award

Beatrice "Bea" Molsen, a young tennis player from Jericho, received a prestigious New England award on Saturday,

November 4. She earned the Good Sport of the Year award during New England's largest tennis conference and awards ceremony in Natick, MA. Bea works extremely hard, competing at a high level in tennis. She won the Vermont individual state championship in 2023 and led her Mount Mansfield Union High School team to a state title in the same year, both firsts for the school. Additionally, she shares her passion for tennis with others by coaching at Burlington Tennis Club in her free time. For more information, go online to <https://www.usta.com/en/home/stay-current/newengland/2023-annual-award-winners-announced.html#tab=tournaments>.

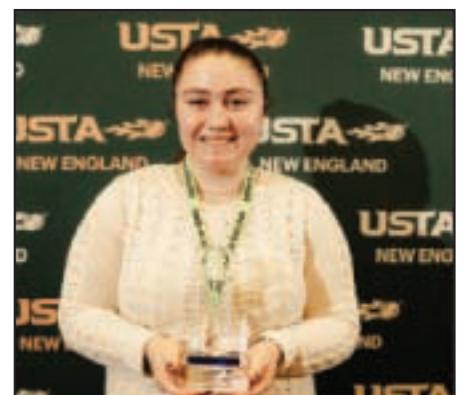


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NEWS BRIEFS

Jericho Town Meeting discussion — input requested

By Brian Walsh, Jericho Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Committee

Back when I was teaching, I framed U.S. History as a constant struggle between progressive forces and reactionary interests over freedom, equality, and democracy. Quite obviously, that struggle continues today.

However, for a long portion of our history, the traditional New England town meeting has stood as an exemplar of democratic practice. Residents have been able to meet on relatively equal terms and decide local issues through direct democratic procedures.

But times have changed. Whereas meeting the first Tuesday in March was a convenient ritual for over two centuries since colonial times, especially in rural/agricultural communities such as Jericho, those days are over for most of us. Since then, attendance at town meetings has plummeted, and the ideal of democracy, decision-making by the majority of an area's residents, has been replaced by decision-making by those able to show up. In Jericho, this means that decisions affecting us all have been decided by a minority of less than 10% of registered voters since at least 2013.

So, what to do?

Jericho's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Committee's mission is to explore ways to make Jericho a more inclusive community. Currently, we are studying the extent to which Town Meeting is accessible to all residents. We recognize the value of public participation to the Town's budget process and that changing the way this feedback is incorporated is a complicated question.

The DEI Committee believes that reflecting on our current Town Meeting practices is important. While we don't have answers to all of our questions, we believe it is important to start the conversation.

We invite you to participate in this conversation by:

- Attending the Monday, December 4 DEI Committee meeting (7:00 PM via Zoom) to listen to a presentation by Kate Larose, Pandemic Equity Coordinator with the Vermont Center for Independent Living. She will share her experiences and those of other disabled Vermonters in being unable to participate in local government due to inaccessibility. The link will be found in the agenda when that is posted closer to the meeting date.

- Completing a survey about your experiences with Town Meeting. You can access the survey here: <https://jerichovt.org/embeds/projects/17327/survey-tools/19268>.

- Reading this FAQ to learn more current Jericho's Town Meeting practice: <https://jerichovt.org/diversity-equity-inclusion/widgets/73297/faqs>.

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Next, I will discuss some call data and the staffing challenges at CRS and what that means for 2024 proposed CRS budget.

Part 2 of 3: staffing and more data on rescue calls

It is probably not surprising to hear that the Emergency Medical Service (EMS) industry, much like many other labor industries here in Vermont, has been struggling to find qualified staff. CRS has historically been staffed by volunteers, much like our fire department. But over the years, volunteer numbers have been falling. Once again, this is not specific to just CRS. Volunteerism is declining across the country, and fire and rescue departments are not immune to this growing challenge.

The net result is the need to hire paid staff. With so much need for paramedics, Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) and Advanced EMTs (AEMTs), throughout Vermont, there is a need to provide competitive wages and benefits to attract and retain qualified staff. Payroll expenses account for more than two thirds of CRS' budget, as does with any paid emergency service.

CRS has not had a full-time chief since the Spring of 2020. In fact, since that time, they have had four part-time chiefs. Being the chief of a rescue squad is not an easy job. It is a demanding job and requires strong leadership skills and dedicated time. Not to mention the ability to stay on top of billing, certifications, training, scheduling, and many other duties. CRS will be proposing in their 2024 budget hiring a full-time chief. This chief will not only serve as CRS' leader, but also be able to run calls when needed in the field.

From 2019-2022, Cambridge Rescue received an average of 462 calls. That is an average of 1.3 calls per day, or almost nine calls per week. When looking at the call data by day of the week, the number of rescue calls are almost the same Sunday-Saturday. But when you look at the time of day that a call occurs, 68% of calls occur between the hours of 7:00 AM – 7:00 PM. With only one or two calls per day, on average, it might be difficult to justify staffing the station 24/7 for one, maybe two or possibly zero calls on any given day. Is it even economically reasonable? How do we assign this value in our community? That is the real question.

What are the takeaways?

- There are less and less qualified volunteers, requiring CRS to hire paid staff to cover shifts;

- CRS has not had a full-time chief leading the squad for a number of years;

- The relatively low number of calls per week, make it economically challenging to staff the station 24/7.

Once again, some of these issues are not unique to CRS, but are important to really understand the collective issue at stake here in our community.

Part 3 of 3: pulling everything together

Why am I telling you all this?

I think there is a reasonable expectation that if we call 911, that trained and qualified personnel will show up to help us in our moment of need in a reasonable timeframe. But on occasion, calls do get missed. In the past few years, CRS has missed anywhere from 3%-16% of their annual calls. Calls are missed for two main reasons. Either there is no crew available to respond, or the only available crew is already on a call, and therefore, unavailable.

This is certainly not something unique to CRS and does happen to most rescue agencies in our region. That is why

- Sharing your personal story, either at the meeting or via email: DEIChair@jerichovt.gov.

For more info regarding Jericho DEI: <https://jerichovt.org/diversity-equity-inclusion>.

Willing to serve as Cambridge Town Meeting Moderator

By Joel Page, Jeffersonville

Following Jerry Cole's announcement that he will not seek reelection as Moderator for the Town of Cambridge, I want to let the community know that I am willing to serve as Moderator.

Having served 33 years as Lamoille County State's Attorney, and eight years as Lamoille County Assistant Judge, I have considerable experience speaking before groups and working with complicated sets of rules. I have been a Cambridge resident for over 40 years, and president of the Cambridge Historical Society for many years, so I think I have a pretty good feel for the community.

The Town needs a Moderator, I believe I have the skills, and I'm willing to do it. I have started to attend Selectboard meetings, and am arranging for training with the Vermont League of Cities and Towns. Jerry is willing to provide guidance.

All that being said, if anyone else is interested in the position, I would encourage them to step up. I have no great desire to be Moderator, I just want to be sure there is a qualified Moderator ready for Town Meeting in March.

Thank you. And a special thanks to Jerry Cole for his amazing 43 years of service to the Town of Cambridge as Moderator!

Camp firewood needed for Westford Winter Fest

From Carol Winfield, Westford Winter Festival

Before the snow piles up too high, thought I should put the word out — we will need about a pick-up truck full of firewood for the campfires at the Winter Festival on Saturday, February 17.

If you have any to donate, please contact westfordwinterfest@gmail.com. Pine is fine, or any older wood that isn't suitable for your stove anymore. 16" or smaller will fit the fire pits nicely, split small enough to burn easily.

Let us know if you're a s'mores / marshmallow fan! This is your chance!

rescue agencies have mutual aid agreements. When one agency is not available, a neighboring agency will cover. But during the winter of 2022/2023, the number of missed calls at CRS skyrocketed to more than 60% due to no staffing, which led to neighboring squads to start billing CRS \$750 per missed call. To solve this problem, CRS hired several new EMTs, AEMTs, and paramedics, and ensured staffing the station 24/7. Since that time, the number of missed calls has dropped significantly, to around 4%. Unfortunately, this increase in coverage had a side effect and CRS is on track to have a \$28,000 deficit by the year's end.

This is where YOU, the residents, voters and taxpayers of Cambridge come in.

This is our community. This is our rescue service. We would like your thoughts. What sort of value do we place on our local rescue squad?

- Do we want or expect 24/7 coverage by a staff of EMTs ready on standby at the station waiting for our call?

- Do we staff the station only part time, and HOPE there are enough volunteers available to pick up vacant shifts?

- Do we explore inter-facility transports as a supplemental revenue stream to offset the tax burden?

- Do we explore dissolving Cambridge Rescue completely and subcontract out to an entirely different EMS Service?

It should be noted, that at this time, none of these alternate options have been completely vetted. Any substantial change would need to be fully explored and researched. All of these options have different costs and risks associated with them.

All it takes is a quick online search of some other Vermont towns to see that we are far from alone in tackling EMS industry issues: Brattleboro, the Essex Rescue towns of Underhill, Jericho, Westford, and Essex, Missisquoi Valley Rescue Service in Jay, Troy, Lowell, and Westfield, just to name a few. I have spoken to a few of our local senators and representatives about trying to get some help at the state level. But that is a slow process.

The Selectboard has been working with Cambridge Rescue now for several years to better understand the rising appropriation requests. It has taken a long time to get where we are today. We still do not know everything. But we do know one thing.

We need to hear from the residents of Cambridge about what they would like to see and what value they place on our hometown rescue squad. The million-dollar question really is, how much do we want to spend on rescue? Cambridge Rescue will need our support if they are to continue.

The budget process for 2024 has already begun. The finance committee will be meeting with Cambridge Rescue to review their 2024 request.

As of right now, CRS is requesting an increase of \$250,000 from last year, bringing the total request to \$488,000. This would result in an increase of roughly \$25 for every \$100,000 in assessed property value (homestead rate). This increase would include a salary for a full time chief and 24/7 coverage.

I am happy to answer any questions that you have. If you have comments that you would like the Finance Committee, Cambridge Rescue Squad, or the Selectboard to consider with regards to CRS' 2024 budget, please share them with me and I will present them to each group. Please do not hesitate to reach out to myself or Acting Chief Michael Curtin, mcurtin67@yahoo.com.

Town of Cambridge multiple positions open

By Jonathan DeLaBruere

Cambridge Town Administrator

The following positions in the Town of Cambridge are vacant and we are looking to fill these seats:

- Dog Control Officer (hourly wage position)
- Lamoille County Planning Commission Board of Directors (stipend position)
- Cambridge Planning Commission (volunteer position)
- Cambridge Community Equity Committee (volunteer position)

If you have questions about any of these positions or are interested, please contact Town Administrator Jonathan DeLaBruere at townadmin@cambridgevt.org or 802-644-2251.

Wood4Good covered on the Today Show

From the Axelrod family

Four years ago, the Eric Axelrod and his family began Wood4Good in Jericho, a Wood Bank teaching higher purpose and community involvement. The Today Show recently featured them on *Dad's Got This!* which aired Wednesday, November 22. Take a few minutes to watch (<https://www.today.com/video/dad-and-kids-donate-firewood-to-heat-homes-for-those-in-need-198492229839>) and appreciate all the hard work these volunteers and supporters have done for Vermonters!

We'd love for you to consider joining *Mobilizing For Good* to expand our impact and get essential equipment. End-of-year donations will receive a matching grant from Waterwheel — share and make our cause viral!

Learn more about Wood4Good online at <http://www.Wood4GoodVT.org>.

Jericho news and meetings

The Town wishes to thank Wayne Howe for his service to the community over the years and wishes him well on his next retirement journey. Wayne joined the Selectboard winning the 2016 Town Meeting election after years of service, including a period as chair, on the Planning Commission. His thoughtful questions as well as moments of passion will be missed. Wayne during his tenure served as Jericho's alternate to the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC) and represented Jericho on the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC). In addition, he represented Jericho on the Tri-Town Transportation Committee working to try to bring more public transportation to Jericho, Underhill and Cambridge. Wayne also took it upon himself as a project to make sure the Town's policies and procedures were current and organized.

Welcome, Joe Flynn, to the Jericho Select Board!

Volunteers make a difference! Welcome to our newest volunteer committee members:

- Brad Malouin — Jericho Trails Committee;
- Nathan Ellison — Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Committee;
- Justin Willis — Development Review Board.

Thank you for giving your time to help make Jericho a wonderful place to live and work.

The *Jericho Development Review Board* (DRB) is looking for a member and two alternates to join their board. The Development Review Board is primarily responsible for reviewing development proposals, which include conditional uses, site plans, subdivisions, appeals of administrative decisions, and requests for waivers and variances. Meetings are held on the second and fourth Wednesdays at 7:00 PM (as needed). If you are interested in joining the DRB please contact Chris Flinn at cflinn@jerichovt.gov.

Jericho Energy Task Force: Although the name says energy, the task force also discusses climate and other related topics since energy use and climate are connected. Learn more about our work and consider joining us at <https://jerichovt.org/JETF>. The JETF and Conservation Commission would like feedback on whether or not there is interest in the formation of a Book Group with themes around sustainability/climate/ecology/nature. Take a quick survey — thanks — <https://jerichovt.org/embeds/projects/2501/quick-poll/19256>.

Art in Town Hall: The latest installation, *Trees for All Seasons*, is available for viewing during regular Town Hall hours.

Westford Recreation Committee Meeting draft minutes

From Amanda Gifford, Westford Recreation Coordinator

Tuesday, November 7] meeting called to order 7:09 PM Eastern Time (U.S. and Canada) by George Elliott. Members present: Amanda Gifford, Andrew Katz, Ben McElvany, George Elliott, Lori Miller, Maria Olson. Guests: Jay Morgan, Nicole Sener, Cally Ruess, Leafy Pante and the Girl Scouts. Members absent: Elizabeth Ploof.

Agenda: Review October minutes; schedule next meeting: December 5, 2023, 7:00 PM; public comment.

Finances: no budget requests for FY 2025. Greg added a budget code for equipment, which is the -\$4500 for soccer goals.

Summer events: -\$850.00 is for the archery. We lost \$240 on it, but that doesn't account for the rest of the money. It seems there is a coding problem. Email MJ for the budget code to find out what went where. There is a lot getting lost in translation between people paying Rec, the Westford Town Office, and the Westford Rec accounts. We're negative \$400 for yoga and we shouldn't be losing ANY money on that.

Discussion:

Gender Equity in WRD programs: We will address this as it comes up.

VT Parks and Rec Survey: Amanda will fill it out and solicit advice as needed.

Review of recent programs and events, limited to sharing changes to be made or problems to be addressed.

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COMING EVENTS

Ongoing Events

The Jericho Historical Society meets at the Old Red Mill, VT Rt. 15, Jericho on the second Thursday of each month (December 14) at 6:00 PM. Visit our website for more information or to request a zoom invitation: <https://www.jerichohistoricalsociety.org/events.html>.

Craft Group: meets twice a month on Thursdays (December 14 and 28), 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.

Cribbage Group: meets the first Tuesday of the month (December 5; January 2), 10:30 AM – 12:00 PM in the meeting room at Deborah Rawson Memorial Library, 8 River Rd.,

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Bike Park Grand Opening was good — problems? another in the spring? The grand opening was great. Table that discussion about having another event until next month.

Halloween events: pumpkin painting, Halloween Walk, Haunted Forest; any changes for next year? George motions that Westford Rec support the Westford School Haunted Forest Walk under its umbrella as long as it's not cost to Rec. Motion seconded and carried unanimously.

P/U Basketball: any problems? none.

Futsal: Age limit? Preferably older than high school, although we have used high school students (family members) as subs. Gender limit? Our women's futsal group would like to remain just women.

Upcoming programs and events: door code to the school has changed. Hide the keypad when you code into the school.

Youth Basketball: Jay Morgan attended to offer the EJRP league opportunity. Upon further discussion, Rec feels it would be beneficial for Westford kids to have a local option that isn't as expensive and doesn't necessarily involve games. Motion made to have a ½ program and a ¾ program, co-ed, \$25.00 for the session, somewhere between 5-8 sessions. Time and coaches TBD. Motion seconded and carried Unanimous.

Santa Letters: fix the mailbox, anything else? Amanda will check with previous volunteers to see who will help with letter writing. We will probably need more stamps and stationery.

Community Holiday Tree: Leafye and Girl Scout Troop 51841 hoping Rec can help with the tree, hoping to increase community involvement by having Rec sponsor it. Don't have a tree donation this year, don't have resources to get tree and put it in town, have donation of lights. Potential tree lighting event activities George suggests including an ornament creation project for kids. Needs: advertising, transportation of the tree — Rec can help with these, Girl Scouts will reach out to tree farms to identify a donor. Date TBD, potential dates December 2 or following weekend.

Turkey Trot: 155 registered, 15 volunteers (need more), just shy of 90 donations for the raffle valued \$1300 so far.

Rink: No one responded to Rink Master request.

Nordic ski rental program: It is a good program to run, but it requires people to hand out and pick up the equipment. We will table for next meeting since there is not likely to be enough snow to x-country ski before then.

Community suggestion: Babysitting Course. Safesitters course for anyone in the public who wanted to take the babysitting course; Girl Scouts have three girls who would want to participate. Amanda will review costs and make a proposal.

Miscellaneous:

Communication: emailing vs. texting. Any decisions and discussion need to go through email because they need a paper trail.

Town Report: publish it.

Pack the Gut: Yes, please advertise it.

Milton Family Center: Nicole Sener, Executive Director wants to hear more about what is happening in Westford rec, what are community needs, and to share more about what is happening in Milton. 1 of 15 parent child centers in Vermont, mandated to provide core services, focus on kids 1-6 and older kids 1:3 of parent child centers in Chittenden County. programs provided listed on website catchment area is northern Chittenden County WRD suggested collaboration with interested parties in Milton to partner on Rink willingness on MFCC's part to host programming in Westford. Nicole will share flyers for us to advertise.

MVP Health Care grant proposal: the link to the campaign video is <https://www.nationalfitnesscampaign.com/watch>. Rec members will watch the video then get back to Amanda.

Respectfully submitted: Lori Miller

Rep. Graning office hours December 21

Edye Graning, VT State Representative for Underhill/Jericho, will be holding open office hours on Thursday, December 21, 10:30 AM – 12:00 PM, at Jericho Ale & Bean on VT Rt. 15, Jericho. Please stop in with any questions you may have, or just to introduce yourself.

If you are unable to attend and you would like to set up another time to chat, please email Edye.Graning@gmail.com.

Beginning in January, Representatives Graning and Trevor Squirrel will be holding community meetings at the Deborah Rawson Library once a month through May. Keep an eye out for those dates and times.

Jericho. It's okay if you're a little rusty — come join us for a friendly game.

Calvary Episcopal Church Soup and Bread Supper, on the last Thursday of the month (December 28; January 26), 5:00 – 7:00 PM, Calvary Episcopal Church, VT Rt. 15, Jericho. Come and enjoy some great soups and fellowship with your friends and neighbors.

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

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

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

Weekly Community Choir on Thursdays — We are a volunteer-run community singing group that harmonizes together in four parts on Thursday evenings, 6:30 – 8:00 PM at the Mount Mansfield Unitarian Universalist Meeting House, 195 VT Rt. 15, Jericho (across from Packard Road). Whether you sing in the shower, sing Karaoke, or just like to sing in harmony with others, bring your voice and join us! Do you learn by ear or read music? Either way, you'll be comfortable in our group. You don't have to be a great singer — our aim is to sing for the joy of singing (no performances except for one short one for family and friends at the end of the season). We sing most weeks; come as often as you can. Cost: \$1 a week toward space rental. We also ask for a contribution to purchase music for the group of \$7 per semester (fall and spring). Planning to come? Please email Doug Varney so that we have enough copies of music. Questions? Contact Lynne Robbins, 802-899-2436 or lar.2436@gmail.com, or Jean Archibald, 802-899-5219, or just show up on a Thursday evening!

Coming Events

Wednesday, December 6

Red Cross Blood Drive, 12:00 – 5:00 PM, Covenant Church, 1 Whitcomb Meadows Lane, Essex Junction. Hosted by the Covenant Church at 1 Whitcomb Meadows Lane, Essex Junction. Please consider giving the gift of life this holiday season. As always, the Lions Club will be serving pie with ice cream after you have donated. Appointment times can be scheduled at <https://www.redcrossblood.org/>, code: COVENANT.

Richmond blood drive, 11:30 AM – 5:00 PM, Richmond Congregational Church, 20 Church St., Richmond. Please note the earlier start and stop times. Appointments are required. Call 1-800-RED CROSS (1-800-733-2767) or go online to <http://redcrossblood.org> for more information and to make an appointment. Or contact dthomas@gmavt.net or 802-434-3654 for assistance.

Thursday, December 7

Public meeting on Brewster Uplands trails, 5:00 – 6:00 PM, Cambridge Town Office (second floor), Cambridge. Come to a talk about trails at **Brewster Uplands** in Jeffersonville, and give input as we plan for the future. If you are able, gather at 29 West Farm Road at 3:00 PM to see the trails.

Friday, December 8

Let's Do Lunch, 11:30 AM – 12:30 PM, Second Congregational Church, Church St., Jeffersonville. Join us for a festive holiday — Let's do Lunch. Come and join your neighbors for good food and conversation. This event is sponsored by the Cambridge Recreation Board and there is no charge. Donations are accepted.

Saturday, December 9

MMV Holiday Social, 12:00 – 3:00 PM, Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, VT Rt. 15, Jericho. MMV members, volunteers, family, and friends come together for great food and good cheer!

Wednesday, December 13

Age Well Grab'n'Go Lunch, 11:00 AM – 12:00 PM, Jericho Community Center, Jericho Center. Please register by Friday, December 8. Suggested donation is \$5. To register and get more information, including menu, contact Jen at cjvermont@gmail.com or 802-274-4024.

Thursday, December 14

Coffee Hour, 10:00 AM, Ale and Bean, 51 VT Rt. 15, Jericho Corners. Come join Underhill and Jericho residents for an hour of good coffee, conversation, and getting to know one another or seeing old friends. The Community Center of Jericho encourages all to come!

Friday, December 15

You and the Future of Hemlock in Vermont, 12:00 – 1:00 PM, online. The hemlock trees we love for their majesty, strength, and incredible value to wildlife (think winter deer yards, brook trout habitat, and nesting for many warblers) are being endangered by a tiny exotic insect. Join us to learn how climate change is driving the spread of Hemlock Woolly Adelgid (HWA) and what you can do to help keep this keystone species a part of our forests. Panelists Savannah Ferreira, Forest Health Specialist, VT Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation; and Pieter van Loon, Lead Forester, Vermont Land Trust. Free; donations welcome. To register and for more information, go online to <https://vt.org/events/you-and-the-future-of-hemlock-in-vermont/>.

Saturday, December 16

Jeffersonville Holiday Parade, 5:00 PM, Jeffersonville. The parade will start at 5:00 PM from Tatro's and go into Jeffersonville. Parade route: Tatro's down VT Rt. 15 to Church St.; Church St. to Maple St.; Maple St. to Depot St.; Depot St. across to School St.; around the school to Carlton Ave.; Carlton Ave. to Main St. back to the Roundabout. If you would like to be in the parade or have any questions, please contact Rod Kelley, 802-760-8426.

Sunday, December 17

Working & Learning with the Land: Vermont Youth Conservation Corps and the East Monitor Barn, 2:00 PM, Pickering Room, top floor, Fletcher Free Library, 235 College St., Burlington. The Chittenden County Historical Society presents Breck Knauff, Executive Director, The Vermont Youth Conservation Corps (VYCC), and Eliot Lothrop, Principal, Building Heritage, at the Fletcher Library, for a talk on the history of this organization, as well as an in-depth look at the restoration of the East Monitor Barn. Since its founding in 1985, VYCC has enrolled over 6500 youth and young adults in paid service experiences that focus on outdoor projects that benefit all Vermonters. They'll also give us an inside look at the current restoration of the East Monitor Barn in Richmond. Earlier this year, Building Heritage, in partnership with VYCC, began restoration of this historic structure that was built in 1901. Eliot and Breck will offer a slide show of VYCC over the years, as well as restoration progress. Breck Knauff joined the VYCC team in 2008, becoming its Executive Director in 2015. Prior to that, Breck was a teacher and administrator in secondary and post-secondary education. He lives with his family in Huntington. Eliot Lothrop is principal of Building Heritage, a Huntington-based company that specializes in structural timber repairs of historic buildings. He started the company in 2004, after graduating from UVM in Historic Preservation and working for several years in the field. Free and open to the public; refreshments served. For more information, go online to www.cchsvt.org.

Wednesday, December 20

Yule Lore-A Wheel of the Year Workshop, 6:00 – 8:00 PM, 10 Apple Tree Lane, Underhill. Join herbalist Amber Kennedy of Boheme Botanika in her home and apothecary for this cozy, candle lit, old-fashioned, winter celebration. This festive workshop honors the pagan celebration of Yule, which coincides with the Winter Solstice. Enjoy hot tea, cider wassail, and gingerbread; hear yuletide folklore of days gone by; listen to traditional folk carols; make an orange and clove pomander ornament to take home; learn the history of some of our favorite holiday symbols, like the wreath and holly garlands; discover the medicine, myth, and magic of some of the most beloved yuletide herbs, spices, and botanicals; take part in a yule log burning ritual to usher in the return of the sun! Space is limited and pre-registration is required. For more details including cost, go online to <https://www.bohemebotanika.com/events/yule-lore-a-wheel-of-the-year-celebration>.

Wednesday, December 27

Age Well Grab'n'Go Lunch, 11:00 AM – 12:00 PM, St. Thomas's Church, Underhill Center. Please register by Friday, December 22. Suggested donation is \$5. To register and get more information, including menu, contact Teri at office@stthomasvt.com or 802-899-4632.

Saturday, February 17

Third Annual Westford Winter Festival, 11:30 AM – 4:00 PM, Westford Town Common, VT Rt. 128, Westford. Save the date!



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HEALTH NEWS

NAMI Vermont to host mental health advocacy training

The National Alliance on Mental Illness of Vermont (NAMI Vermont) is offering free NAMI Smarts for Advocacy trainings on Saturdays, December 9, 2023 and January 13, 2024, with both sessions scheduled for 12:00 – 4:00 PM. The NAMI Smarts program provides participants with the knowledge and practice they need to share their story of mental health lived experience as an individual, family member, or advocate in a powerful, moving way to effect legislative change.

The training sessions will both be held virtually via Zoom to ensure that advocates from across the state are able to attend. They will be led by Margie Lemay, Office Manager of NAMI Vermont, and Amy Collins.

Module 1 (Telling Your Story) will teach participants: why mental health advocacy is so important; how to tell a compelling personal story that is inspiring and makes an “ask” in 90 seconds; and how to write and share your own personal story in seven steps.

Modules 2 and 3 (Contacting and Meeting Your Policymaker) will take place in the same session on January 13 and will train participants on how to: contact your policymaker; write an effective email; give an elevator pitch; make an impactful phone call; meet with your policymaker; orchestrate a successful meeting with an elected official.

Separate registration is required for each day of training, and participants may attend one or both sessions. Visit <https://namivt.org/advocacy/#advocacy-training> to learn more and register to attend.

Lions sponsor blood drive December 6

The Jericho-Underhill Lions Club is hosting a Red Cross Blood Drive on Wednesday, December 6, 12:00 – 5:00 PM. The drive will be held at the Covenant Church at 1 Whitcomb Meadows Lane, Essex Junction.

Please consider giving the gift of life this holiday season. As always, the Lions Club will offer a treat after you have donated. We will be serving slices of pies, eggnog, and have a treat from Snowflake Chocolate.

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

Richmond blood drive December 6

The next blood drive in Richmond will be held Wednesday, December 6, 11:30 AM – 5:00 PM at the Richmond Congregational Church, 20 Church St., Richmond. Please note the earlier start and stop times.

Appointments are required. Call 1-800-RED CROSS (1-800-733-2767) or go online to <http://redcrossblood.org> for more information or to make an appointment. Or contact athomas@gmavt.net or 802-434-3654 for assistance.

All types of blood are needed, especially those with Type O. Please consider locking in your appointment as soon as possible. We have a long way to go to fill the schedule.

Howard Center news and announcements

Howard Center needs your help — more people are visiting the emergency room with suicidal thoughts and dying from drug overdoses across the state, and it is no secret that many in our communities are struggling now more than ever. Please consider donating to Howard Center in support of our critical services for mental health, substance use, and developmental needs. Gifts of any size make a positive difference in the lives of the more than 19,000 people we help each year, and we are grateful to all who contribute. Visit our giving page to send your support today: <https://howardcenter.org/community-education/howard-center-giving>.

Celebrate Sober Tips — as holiday festivities approach, Howard Center offers support and resources for those choosing a sober celebration:

- Be prepared: plan for challenging situations and alcohol-centric events.
- Sober socializing: opt for substance-free activities and gatherings.
- Wellness focus: balance rest, nutrition, and mindfulness practices.
- Set boundaries: communicate your sobriety decision with loved ones.
- Community connection: seek support groups for shared experiences and strength.

Howard Center offers programs to support substance use treatment and recovery:

- The Bridge Program provides short-term stabilization and detoxification in a non-medical setting for individuals 18 and older who are experiencing problematic alcohol or other drug use. For screening, please call 802-488-6425 between 8:00 AM – 5:00 PM.
- Chittenden Clinic offers hub services including medications for the treatment of opioid use disorder, individual and group counseling, psychiatric consultation, care management, and coordination with other medical and therapeutic providers. 802-488-6450.
- Pine Street Counseling Services offers individual and group therapy, education, impaired driver rehabilitation, care management, psychiatric consultation, and office-based spoke services including medication for the treatment of opioid use disorder. Walk-in hours 8:30 – 9:00 AM. 802-488-6100.
- Safe Recovery provides harm reduction services including syringe exchange, low-barrier buprenorphine treatment, fentanyl and xylazine test strips, Narcan kits, and HIV and Hepatitis testing. 802-488-6067.
- Northern Vermont Outpatient and Spoke Services provides comprehensive outpatient substance use and mental health counseling, and medication for the treatment of opioid use disorder to residents of Grand Isle and Franklin County. Walk-in hours 8:30 – 9:00 AM. 802-524-7265.

If someone is in immediate danger, call 9-1-1 or bring them to the Emergency Department. For more resources on celebrating sober, visit Howard Center Celebrate Sober.

Need help or services? If you need support or information,

please contact our Access and Intake main number 802-488-6000; Monday-Friday, 8:30 AM – 5:00 PM. Our staff will help you to find supportive resources and services. If you or someone you know is experiencing a crisis, our crisis line, First Call for Chittenden County, is available 24/7/365 at 802-488-7777.

Health myths

Recently I have received a lot of questions on whether something is fact or fiction when it comes to dealing with your child’s health. This week I shall tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth about several health myths.

The usual suspects

Wet hair — For example, many parents believe that if you go outside with wet hair, you’ll catch a cold. Cold weather and wet hair do not cause colds. You catch colds from viruses which are spread more easily indoors. This is where your children and their friends with colds tend to be when it’s cold outside, making it easier to pass germs from one to another.

Thumb sucking — Some parents also believe that too much thumb sucking causes buck teeth or forward pushing of the front teeth. Well, this one is true and false. As long as the habit stops before age 5, and the permanent teeth are not yet in, then there is no good evidence that thumb sucking will affect the shape of the teeth. After this age, the habit could contribute to the permanent teeth pushing outward as they come in.

Coffee and chocolate — Will chocolate cause acne? and will coffee drunk by your older child or teenager stunt their growth? Neither is true.

No food has been proven to cause acne. Acne is caused by overactive oil glands in the skin, stimulated by your child’s overactive hormones.

Excess caffeine will not stunt growth but may prevent the absorption of calcium and other nutrients in your child’s diet, and thus should be avoided. Not to mention that it may rev up your child’s level of activity and stimulation.

Spicy foods — Another food myth is that spicy foods will cause ulcers in your child. Actually, ulcers may be aggravated by spicy foods, but are not caused by them.

Ulcers (wearing away of the stomach lining) are caused by a bacterial infection or by overuse of pain medications such as ibuprofen.

Crossed eyes — Finally, what about that rumor that if you cross your eyes, they’ll stay that way?

This is also untrue. If eyes appear crossed, the condition is called *strabismus*; it is due to weakening of some of your child’s eye muscles and is not due to your child doing this consciously to irritate you or others.

Hopefully, tips like these will allow you, and in turn others, to not myth out when it comes to knowing what is myth and what is the truth if you want to understand the facts about your children’s health.

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

LIBRARY NEWS

DEBORAH RAWSON MEMORIAL LIBRARY

The library will be closed Sunday-Tuesday, December 24-26; and Sunday, December 31 and Monday, January 1. All other days are our regular hours.

Fall 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.

Our featured artist of the month is Kathrena Ravenhorst-Adams, who says, “I wish through my art to celebrate the wonder and beauty of nature, call attention to its intricate details, infinite variety, power and fragility. My expression of nature through art reflects the joy and peace and beauty of the natural world and my concern for it under the hand of humankind. It is my hope that through my art others may gain a similar appreciation for all of creation and realize and accept their responsibility for the care and protection of it.” Kathrena Ravenhorst-Adams works in watercolor, pastel, and oil. Scenes of nature, flowers, birds and the landscape are her favorite subjects. Kathrena is the proud grandmother of three Underhill children.

Adult programs

Mondays and Wednesdays, 10:00 – 11:00 AM: Seated Tai Chi. Age Well and DRML are sponsoring Seated Tai Chi for Falls Prevention for those 60+ or those who have limiting conditions who would like to improve their balance, strength, and well-being. We will learn the Sun Style Form and also through mindfulness we will learn ways to reduce stress and tension for you to apply when needed. The form can be adapted to your personal needs so all can participate fully. Join in person at DRML or on Zoom

from the comfort of your home. Registration required; please contact Certified Instructor Jo Osborne, joannosborne2@gmail.com.

Tuesday, December 5, 10:30 AM or whenever you would like to leave: Cribbage. Underhill/Jericho Cribbage Group meets in the program room at DRML on the first Tuesday of the month. All levels are welcome, we will split up into pairs, singles, and three-hand depending on the turnout. Please bring your own deck and board in case we need them.

Tuesday, December 12, 7:00 PM: Deborah Rawson Book Lovers. DRBL is a monthly adult book discussion group. This month’s selection is *The girl on the train* by Paula Hawkins. New members are always welcome to drop in on any meeting, which is always the second Tuesday of the month at 7:00 PM. For more information on how to join, contact Christine@staffa.com.

Thursdays, December 14, 28, 6:00 – 8:00 PM: Crafters’ Group. Join us at DRML in the fireplace room for a couple of hours of crafting and conversation with your neighbors. All are welcome, beginner to expert, in any craft you can transport. Hope to meet you there! For questions please contact Amy Tower, 802-355-9671 or atowerinvt@gmail.com, or Julie Hehir, 802-343-0034 or juliehhehir@comcast.net.

Sunday, December 17, 1:30 PM: Some Ghosts of Christmas past: an Underhill Historical Society Talk with Stephen Nissenbaum. Why is Christmas celebrated on December 25? For that matter, when — and why — was it first celebrated at all? What did the different Gospels say about the nativity of Jesus? What caused the Puritans of New England to place a ban on the holiday? And how, for so many people, did Christmas later come to replace Easter as the central holiday of the Christian year? (Hint: Handel’s oratorio *Messiah* can help explain that transformation.)

Thursday, December 21, 7:00 PM: The Board of Trustees meeting, held in-person. A virtual meeting is available for those who wish to remain remote. Please contact Holly (drawsonmemlib@gmail.com) to receive the link.

Tuesday, January 30, 7:00 PM: Mystery Book Group. We are taking a holiday break. Our next meeting is in January We will be discussing *Dog on it* by Spencer Quinn. If you need a copy call the library or request a copy on our online catalog using your library card. Additionally, please read a mystery of your choice and we will share what we read at that meeting also. We will meet in person in the program room.

Youth programs

Ongoing

Here is what’s going on this month! All programs meet in person at DRML, unless otherwise specified.

Tuesdays, 10:30 AM Baby Toddler Storytime [birth to PreK] This roughly half-hour story time is focused on babies and toddlers. We will play finger games, do lap bounces, sing, dance, and read a story or two. No registration necessary.

Fridays, 11:00 AM: Stories and Songs with Beth and David London [birth to PreK] Beth and David will be back to sing, dance and play on December 8, and maybe on December 15.

Keep an eye on Front Porch Forum and our website for up-to-date details.

Thursdays, December 7, 21, 3:00 – 5:00 PM: Animation Club [ages 10+] Curious about stop motion animation? The library has all the tools and software needed for you to make your own mini movies. Space is limited, and this is a really popular program so make sure you sign up when you call, visit or email youth_librarian@drml.org.

Fridays, December 8, 22, 3:00 – 4:00 PM: LEGO Club [ages 6+] Build a wintry scene, a snowflake, or super sleigh for Santa. There’s no wrong way to LEGO! Sign up and when you call or visit the library, or email youth_librarian@drml.org.

Saturday, December 9, 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM: Gift Crafting: Ornaments [all ages] Come make something for someone you love this holiday season. Drop in to make ornaments! Fill an ornament ball or make a fragrant and long-lasting cinnamon dough ornament.

Tuesday, December 12, 3:00 – 4:30 PM: Sled and Slope STEAM Challenge [ages 6+] Using some supplies from the craft closet, can you create a ramp and a sled that will travel the furthest through the program room without losing its cargo or riders? Come test your skills and see how far your sled can go. Space is limited, so please sign up when you call, visit or email the library.

Wednesday, December 13, 3:00 – 4:30 PM: Read to Wyatt [all ages] Cozy up with therapy dog Wyatt and share some stories with him. Please sign up for a 15-minute spot when you call, email or stop by the library.

Thursday, December 14, 3:00 – 5:00 PM: Gift Crafting: Button machine [all ages] Drop in to use our button machine to make pins, magnets, or keychains. We will have pre-printed images, things to cut out from magazines, and blank pieces for your own art.

Saturday, December 16, 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM: Gift Crafting: Tote Bags [ages 8+] Supplies are limited so sign up to make tote bags with iron-on designs cut by our Cricut machine and applied with our heat press. Ages 8 and up. Sign up by calling, emailing or visiting the library.

Thursday, December 28, 11:00 AM – 12:00 PM: Taylor Swift Friendship Bracelets [age 6+] Swifties unite! Let’s get together and listen to our favorite music from Taylor Swift and make beaded friendship bracelets. We’ve got loads of alphabet beads, pony beads, and more so you and your besties can be outfitted in style. No registration necessary, just drop in!

Friday, December 29, 10:30 – 11:30 AM: Nintendo Switch [ages 10+] Catch up with friends after the holidays and play some Switch basketball, skateboarding, Mario Kart, or Mario Party. No sign up needed. If there are more than four players, we’ll take turns. No need to bring your personal switch or controller.

Tuesdays, 10:30 AM: Baby/Toddler Storytime [birth to PreK] This roughly half hour story time is focused on babies and toddlers. We will play finger games, do lap bounces, sing, dance, and read a story or two. No registration necessary.

Library news continued on page 5

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Library news continued from page 4

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

JERICHO TOWN LIBRARY

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

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

A wonderful gift for the holiday season! 13 spectacular photos taken in the Jericho-Underhill area by local photographers, all on a wall calendar, with room to write in your events of the day. It's a fund-raiser for the Community Center in Jericho and costs only \$20. Support of this effort will be appreciated. Calendars can be bought at Jeri-Hill Hardware, Jericho Center Country Store, Old Mill Craft Shop, the Emil A Gruppe Gallery, Jericho Town Hall, and Jericho Center Library.

Saturday, December 9, 1:00 – 2:00 PM: Make Your Own Snow Globe. Crafters of all ages are invited to our upstairs Maker Space to capture their own winter wonderland in a mason jar! We will create scenes with figurines of animals and trees, then add plenty of sparkles. Children 10 and up are welcome to attend unaccompanied, and younger children should be accompanied by an adult. Please visit <http://jerichotownlibraryvt.org> to register for this event so we can be sure to have enough materials for all crafters. Email amy@jerichotownlibraryvt.org with any questions.

Adults' events

Wednesdays through December 27, 9:00 – 10:00 AM: Adult Knitting Group. Calling all those who like to knit, crochet, hand sew, or craft with their hands! Join us for some crafting and conversation. We meet on the first floor of the library; drop in anytime! Bring your own yarn/ needles/ hooks/ crafting supplies or reach out to us at library@jerichotownlibraryvt.org ahead of time if you would like to borrow materials for the program.

Children's events

Wednesdays through December 6, 10:30 – 11:00 AM: Read with Miss Emma! She is back at Jericho Town Library for the fall (and early winter) months — join us on the first Wednesdays for some Music & Movement. This musical storytime is fun for the whole family but designed for kids aged 0-5. Expect songs, rhymes, scarf dances, and much more! We'll meet outside, weather permitting.

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

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

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

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

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

VARNUM MEMORIAL LIBRARY JEFFERSONVILLE

We have some amazing new art going up in December. The Kindergartners at Westford School created an animal alphabet based on the art style of Vermont artist Chris Gluck. This is a great time to bring your kindergartner into the library to see their art and check out some "just right" books while you are here.

Though December may bring slight changes to routine, we're sure you'll find many, merry diversions at the Varnum this festive month. Be sure to check our website <http://www.varnumlibrary.org> for the most up-to-date offerings and information.

We have a fresh shipment of extended-expiration COVID tests free for distribution, please come help yourself to what you need.

Tuesdays (except December 26), 10:00 AM: Story Time.

Tuesdays (except December 26), 3:00 – 4:00 PM: Crafternoon.

Wednesdays (except December 27), 10:00 AM: Story Time.

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

Wednesdays (except December 27), 3:00 – 4:00 PM: Crafternoon.

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

Thursdays, 10:00 AM: Coffee and Conversations.

Saturday, December 9, 1:00 PM: Eric Nuse recounts some of his most memorable stories of serving as our county Game Warden for over 30 years!

Saturday, December 9, 9:00 – 11:30 AM: Teens Teaching Technology.

Sunday, December 10, 1:00 – 3:00 PM: Teen Advisory Board. Join us for a taco party!

Saturday, December 16, 10:00 PM: Make-Your-Own Beeswax paper is back by popular demand.

Sunday, December 17, 3:00 – 4:00 PM: 4H Localvores Club meeting. This club requires pre-registration; see website.

Saturday, December 23, 1:00 – 2:30 PM: Holiday Cookie Decorating Party.

Thursday, December 28, 12:00 – 1:00 PM: Kids Cooking Club.

Friday, December 29, 12:00 – 1:00 PM: Kids Cooking Club.

Saturday, December 30, 10:00 – 11:00 AM: Pomander craft for all ages.

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

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

WESTFORD PUBLIC LIBRARY

The library hours of operation (meaning come in and browse the shelves, use the computer, grab a DVD, etc.): 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 — 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 on our Facebook page and on FPF if you cannot make it in to the library.

Books can be dedicated to a special person or family. Purchase the book anywhere; or at Phoenix Books (Essex location) which will give patrons 20% off the book if you bring in the star. Books purchased at Phoenix will stay there. Purchase/deliver books by Wednesday, January 17.

We have some amazing new art going up in December. The Kindergartners at Westford School created an animal alphabet based on the art style of Vermont artist Chris Gluck. This is a great time to bring your kindergartner into the library to see their art and check out some "just right" books while you are here.

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

Thursdays, 11:30 AM: Early Literacy Storytime. We sing songs, read stories, move and do crafts! No sign up needed, all ages are welcome. December 7: Cookies. December 14: The Sun (Solstice). December 21: Holidays. December 28: New books.

We sing songs, read stories, move and do crafts! No sign up needed, all ages are welcome.

Thursdays, 6:30 – 8:00 PM: Maker Group. Fiber Arts is back as the Maker Group, now open to all makers — whether you knit, crochet, make jewelry, sketch, paint, paper craft, or any other art — or if you are a tinkerer — all are welcome!

Tuesdays, December 5, 19, 10:30 AM – 12:00 PM: Coffee and Cards. Whatever your game, we will play it. Meet with folks at the library for coffee, conversation, and cards — a great opportunity to socialize and keep those card playing skills sharp. Open to anyone, especially looking to connect with seniors. Please be prompt so we can include all in play.

Wednesday, December 13, 7:00 – 9:00 PM: Trustees Meeting.

Thursdays, December 14, 28, 6:30 – 8:00 PM: Tabletop Game Night. Hosted by avid table top gamers Bill & Martha McClintock. Bill and Martha will bring games from their extensive home game collection to share with those who come. This is a new group, so we will see how it goes. Please come to make things like this possible. Snacks provided. Bring your own beverages.

Friday, December 15, afterschool until 5:00 PM: Leather Bookmarks. Kids ride the bus from school w/ note from home. Snack and all supplies included. Grades 3 and up. Space is limited; sign up required (call or email to sign up).

Local crafter, Helen Sterling, will teach us how she makes her cool leather bookmarks - and we will get to make one and take it home. Perfect introduction to working with leather, die cutting, and more.

Saturdays, December 16, 30, 10:30 – 11:30 AM: Sunny Saturday (weather dependent). Swing by for a look at the sun! We will have a solar telescope set up to safely view the sun. We will also have several pairs of sunoculars and a sunspotter. Thanks to S.E.A.L and VTLIB for this opportunity. Participants at this event can sign up for guaranteed eclipse glasses to be distributed in April.

Wednesday, December 20: 7:00 – 8:00 PM: Adult Book Group. Discussing our favorite reads of the year.

Tuesday, December 26: closed.

Wednesday, December 27, 3:00 – 5:00 PM: Drop in LEGOs. Drop in to the library for some fun! Plan to meet up with a friend or two and play. This is not a drop off event; families are encouraged to play together. There will be a younger kid area set up in the kids' area and an older kid area set up in the main area.

Wednesday, December 27, 7:00 – 9:00 PM: Get Excited about Space Series. All about eclipses and star viewing (cloud dependent). Solar eclipse ambassador and avid space enthusiast Molly Drapa will explain all about eclipses. Her presentation will cover what they are, why they occur, and teach you all about this upcoming, one-in-a-lifetime event. Great for all levels of learners, older kids to experts. The presentation will last about an hour. Then, if the weather cooperates, we will head outside for a tour of the night sky. Be sure to dress warmly for night sky viewing. Participants at this event can sign up for guaranteed eclipse glasses to be distributed in April.

Friday, December 29, 3:00 – 5:00 PM: Drop-in Blocks. Drop in to the library for some fun! Plan to meet up with a friend or two and play. This is not a drop off event; families are encouraged to play together. There will be a younger kid area set up in the kids' area and an older kid area set up in the main area.

The Westford Food Shelf is now open twice a month, on the first Wednesday of each month (December 6), 4:30 – 5:30 PM, on the third Saturday (December 16), 8:00 – 9:00 AM. With increased openings, they need more inventory! The Westford Public Library has food collection bins at all curbside pickups from now on. These bins are for non-perishable food and household items.

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

FAIRFAX COMMUNITY LIBRARY

Please sign up at least one week before the program date; all events free unless noted. Please contact libraryfairfax@gmail.com or 802-849-2420 to register for events!

For up-to-date information about programs, visit our website www.fairfaxvtlibrary.org where you can also find a link to the interactive Google calendar.

Youth Events

Tuesday, December 5, 3:00 PM: LEGO Club. Kids ages 6+ enjoy themed Lego play after school. Please register.

Tuesdays, December 5, 19, 5:30 PM: D&D Club. Dragons! Danger! Dice! The library is now hosting a middle school D&D club. Join our DM Nic and create a character to take on exciting magical adventures! No prior Dungeons & Dragons knowledge is necessary, and players of all experience levels are welcome. Materials provided. Grades 5-8. Meets every other Tuesday. Please email libraryfairfax@gmail.com or call 802-849-2420 to register.

Wednesday, December 6, 3:00 PM: Recycled Book Trees. Repurpose an old book into a decorative pine tree! Materials provided. Ages 8+ Please email libraryfairfax@gmail.com or call 802-849-2420 to register.

Wednesdays, December 6, 13, 20, 27, 10:30 AM: Preschool Story Time. Join us for stories and songs! Children's books will be available to check out as well. Before you leave, pick up an activity to make at home.

Wednesday, December 13, 1:00 PM: Ornament Workshop. Learn to make a variety of simple, cute ornaments! Materials provided. Ages 8+ Please email libraryfairfax@gmail.com or call 802-849-2420 to register.

Wednesday, December 20, 3:00 PM: No-Sew Pillows. Make a cozy pillow without a needle and thread! Materials provided. Please email libraryfairfax@gmail.com or call 802-849-2420 to register.

Adult Events

Saturday, December 16, 11:30 AM: DIY Mason Jar Oil Lamps. Learn how to make beautiful yet simple oil lamps out of mason jars! Materials provided. Please email libraryfairfax@gmail.com or call 802-849-2420 to register.

Tuesdays, December 5, 12, 19, 5:30 PM: Mandarin Club with Keyuan Xiang. Interested in learning Mandarin, or just want to know more about Chinese culture? Join Keyuan Xiang at the library for lessons. You don't need to come to each club meeting, but registration is required for the day or days you would like to attend. Please email libraryfairfax@gmail.com or call 802-849-2420 to register.

Family Events

Saturday, December 30: Puzzle Swap. Do you have old puzzles you'd like to trade for new ones? Want to grab a few new puzzles for the slow winter evenings? Come to the library puzzle swap! We've got plenty of puzzles to choose from, so you can feel free to either bring a puzzle to swap, or just pick out one of ours. No registration required.

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

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

RICHMOND LIBRARY

Trustees meetings are on the second Monday of the month via Zoom until further notice.

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.

Holiday books — Our large collection of holiday picture books are on display and waiting to go home with you for some cozy winter reading. From your favorites like *The Polar Express* and *How the Grinch Stole Christmas* to some brand-new offerings for this year, including books celebrating the winter Solstice, Hanukkah, and the New Year ahead.

Help Chart the Library's Future. Do you believe in intellectual freedom and the public's right to information? Do you support programs that build literacy, foster curiosity, and provide enjoyment for all members of our community? Are you interested in ensuring a library collection that reflects the needs and interests of our community? Run for the Library Trustee Seat in March! Trustees are elected by Richmond voters to a five-year term. Candidates must submit a petition to the Town Clerk, signed by 5% of voters, no later than Monday, January 22, 2024 to be on the ballot. If you are interested or would like to learn more, contact Laurie Dana, Chair, Richmond Free Library Trustees, at rldana@gmavt.net, or Rebecca Mueller, Director, Richmond Free Library at the library or email her at rmueller@richmondvt.gov.

December Art Show: Radiate Art Studio presents the *Wolf to Wool* art show. This community art project explores different art techniques and media while also exploring the history of dogs. Come check out what your friendly, neighborhood artists-of-all-ages have come up with.

Free COVID tests: Free at-home Covid antigen tests are available at the library thanks to the VT Department of Health. Individuals may pick up four kits (eight tests) per person. Ask for them at the circulation desk.

Take and Make Craft Kit (Holiday Candle): Pick up a kit containing everything you need to make a seasonally appropriate, simple cardboard candle decoration for your windowsill. Kits are available throughout December or until supplies run out. Stop by the library inner foyer during open hours to get a bag for your little person. Appropriate for kids ages 4-8.

Storywalk and Scavenger Hunt: *Go, Sled! Go!* A combined Storywalk and scavenger hunt will be set up in the library for the month of December. Kids of all ages can hunt for the next pages of the book *Go, Sled! Go!* by James Yang, and add stickers and stamps to their game sheet. Completed game sheets can be turned in at the youth desk for a small prize.

Weekly/monthly children's programs at the Library run from September-May and follow the MMUUSD schedule for vacation days and weather closure days.

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

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. This program is designed for infants and early toddlers.

Friday, December 8, 3:00 – 5:00 PM: Sculpey Pens. Youth ages 8-12 are invited to register for this fun holiday activity. Mold some oven-bake Sculpey clay onto a pen, bake it and you have a colorful, functional, one-of-a-kind work of art suitable for personal use or gift-giving. This event is free but participants must register and space is limited. To sign up, contact the library at 802-434-3036 or library@richmondvt.gov.

Tuesday, December 12, 6:00 PM: (Mostly) Fiction Book Group. Join us in the Mezzanine Lounge to discuss *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens. Contact Gwen Landis, 802-434-5012 or gwenie1972@yahoo.com, for information on joining this group.

Saturdays, December 16, January 20, February 17, March 16, April 20, May 18, 10:30 – 11:30 AM: Hora del Cuento (Spanish Storytime). Join native Spanish speakers, Chichi and Eva for 30 minutes of picture book stories and rhymes. This program is a great introduction to Spanish for young children and a nice way

COMMUNITY COLUMNS



Foliage and seed-bearing cones of the red spruce, the most common spruce species in Vermont.

PHOTO BY ETHAN TAPPER

Red spruce: a profile

By Ethan Tapper

Chittenden County Forester

Red spruce (*Picea rubens*) is one of three species of spruce trees native to Vermont. While the other two species — white spruce (*Picea glauca*) and black spruce (*Picea mariana*) — are common in the northeastern part of our state, in Chittenden County if we're talking about "spruce," we almost certainly mean red spruce.

While red spruce is the most common spruce in Vermont, it is the least widespread of our three native spruces, with a range limited to northern New England and eastern Canada (as well as small island populations at higher elevations in the Appalachians). The ranges of white spruce and black spruce, by contrast, extend across northern New England, the Northern Lake States and most of Canada, all the way to Alaska. In general, spruces are extremely hearty and rugged trees, capable of surviving where few others can.

In northern New England, northeastern Vermont, and higher elevations in Chittenden County, red spruce (along with balsam fir), is an important component of Spruce-Fir Forest, a common boreal forest type. At lower elevations in Chittenden County I usually see red spruce scattered throughout warmer, dryer forests — particularly on south-facing slopes — and in and around wetlands.

Red spruce bark is purple-black, broken up into roundish chips. Their trunks are almost always arrow-straight, tufted with dense, olive-green foliage. Spruce needles are short and slightly curved, with unmistakably pointy tips. They are the only conifer with needles that are angular in cross section, which allows you easily roll them between your fingers. By contrast, our other common short-needled conifers — hemlock and fir — have flat needles with rounded tips.

Prior to European colonization, our three native spruces accounted for around 15% of all the trees in northern New England and New York (in Chittenden County it was a more

minor component of our forests, about 2% of the trees). While white pine was the tree species targeted in first waves of European timber exploitation in the 1600s and 1700s, by the end of the eighteenth century the majority of the white pine timber in the region had been exhausted. It was soon discovered that red spruce, while smaller in stature than white pine, produced similarly strong, light, straight-grained lumber, perfect for many different uses.

In New England, logging of red spruce began in earnest in the early 1800s, targeting the largest and most valuable trees. Around 1870, it was discovered that wood fiber could be used to make paper (previously, paper was made from cloth rags), a discovery that incited much more widespread and intensive logging of spruce throughout its range. Technological advances and market demand drove the cutting of smaller and smaller trees, until spruce trees of virtually any size were being cut for pulp. The aggressive logging of spruce in the late 1800s and early 1900s, and the massive forest fires that sometimes followed, led to red spruce being virtually extirpated from many parts of its range, especially at lower elevations.

The 1960s found remaining populations of red spruce in steep decline. The species was one of the "canaries in the coal mine" that helped scientists (in particular Dr. Hubert "Hub" Vogelmann at the University of Vermont) unearth and understand the pervasive impacts of acid rain on trees and forests in our region. Vogelmann's research connected the decline of spruce and other tree species to air pollution, which contributed to important revisions to the Clean Air Act in 1990.

Recent research has shown that spruce is recovering in Vermont, even spreading into lower-elevation forests. Besides benefiting from reductions in acid deposition as a result of the Clean Air Act, it is suspected that red spruce is also recolonizing its historic range, spreading back into forests in which it was once common but from which it was lost as a result of logging

Community columns continued on page 7

Library news continued from page 5

for parents of older children placed in the Spanish Immersion Program to hear the language. Join us in the Community Room on the third Saturday of every month, September-May.

Saturday, January 6, 11:00 AM: Learn about Dog Sledding. Families and friends of all ages are invited to join us on the library lawn to learn about dog sledding and meet some hard-working Siberian Huskies. Milagro Amaya Turner of Siber Sled Dogs will have her friendly pups on site for pats and pictures! No registration is required, just drop by.

Tuesday, January 9, 6:00 PM: (Mostly) Fiction Book Group. Join us in the Mezzanine Lounge to discuss *Ask Again, Yes* by Mary Beth Keane. Contact Gwen Landis (802-434-5012; gwenie1972@yahoo.com) for information on joining this group.

Thursday, January 18, 7:00 PM: Mystery Book Group. Join us in the Mezzanine Lounge to discuss *The Third Victim (Robin Lockwood Mystery, #1)*, by Phillip Margolin. Contact Maureen Parent (802-434-2055, mparent@gmavt.net) with any questions.

Tuesday, January 23, 3:00 PM: Dog Cartoons. Come learn how to draw a cartoon dog with youth librarian and comic artist L.J. Kopf. Kids ages 8-14 are invited to sign up for this fun hour-long program. Call or email the library to register. (802-434-3036/ library@richmondvt.gov).

Thursday, January 25, 4:00 PM: Gardening Roundtable. Get together with fellow gardeners to start planning for the 2024 growing season. Conversation will be facilitated by Hannah Harrington of Richmond Community Garden and Vermont Garden Network. No registration required.

Wednesday, January 27, 11:00 AM: Woof! What's the Dog Saying? dog behavior workshop. Learn what your dog is telling

you in this fun, interactive workshop from Deb Helfrich at Gold Star Dog Training. No dogs will be present, and no registration is required.

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

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

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

BROWNELL LIBRARY, ESSEX JUNCTION

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

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

ESSEX FREE LIBRARY

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.

The library will close at 2:15 PM on Wednesday, December 13

for a Town employee event.

The library will be closed Monday-Tuesday, December 25-26, for Christmas.

Free Covid test kits are available for pickup in the library lobby while supplies last. No need to reserve! Up to four kits per person. Tests expire on December 20, 2023. No library card needed. Free gun locks, too.

All ages

Ongoing through January 6, 2024: The Giving Season. The Library is collecting diapers (size 4, 5, 6), wipes, shampoo, and toothpaste for Aunt Dot's. If you can, please support this important community resource and the people who depend upon it! Thanks!

DIY Puzzle Swap extended through December! Puzzles must have all pieces and container must be taped closed. Check out the bench in the lobby for current selections!

Childrens' area

Tuesday, December 19, 3:30 – 4:30 PM: Afterschool Rock Painting with Laurel Clark. For children and families. We encourage you to bring rocks, but there will be some available. Paint provided; you bring the creativity!

Thursday, December 21, 9:00 AM – 7:30 PM: Creative Craft Station: Season of Giving Workshop. Check out our kids' open craft station in the Community Room! Kids can grab a project like a wooden bookmark trinket box, or flower pot, and use our decorating supplies to create a gift to give someone this holiday season. Supplies available until 7:30 PM or while they last.

Ongoing for children

Exploration Station; see the blue table for this week's challenge.

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

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

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

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

Storywalk ® along the back garden fence.

Adult events

Monday, December 11: Noreen's Creative Card Kits, for adults, while supplies last. Makes two cards.

Thursday, December 7, 12:00 – 1:00 PM: Noontime Book Group, reading *On the Rooftop* by Margaret Wilkerson Sexton. A stunning novel about a mother whose dream of musical stardom for her three daughters collides with the daughters' ambitions for their own lives — set against the backdrop of gentrifying 1950s San Francisco.

Friday, December 8, 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM: Labor on Location by the VT Department of Labor (DoL). Career resources, job search support, business services — check out how DoL can help you! No sign-up required.

Tuesday, December 12, 6:00 – 7:00 PM: Zentangle with Julia Davenport. For adults. Enjoy this beautiful art form that welcomes slowing down and tapping into your creativity. No prior art experience needed. Register through the website.

Tuesday, December 19, 2:00 – 3:00 PM: Rock Painting with Laurel Clark. For adults. Enjoy a "crafters' afternoon!" We encourage you to bring rocks, but there will be some available. Paint provided; you bring the creativity! Limited space available.

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

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

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

Museum Passes are available for year 'round fun! State Parks, ECHO, Shelburne Museum and more! <http://Essexfreelibrary.org/MuseumPasses>.

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

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

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

Mount Mansfield Community Television

Comcast Channels 1076 & 1086

Online at bit.ly/MmctvVideos and YouTube @MMCTV

Learn more, take our poll, and donate, at our website

MtMansfieldCtv.org

HOLIDAY INFORMATION

'Tis the season for giving in Westford

By Holly Delisle, Westford Town Administrator

As it has been done in years past, the Town of Westford is collecting monetary donations to purchase Hannaford gift cards for Westford residents in need during the December holiday season. The gift cards provide recipients with the ability to purchase food and household items as needed and according to their personal preferences.

Monetary donations will be accepted through Friday, December 15. If you prefer, you can purchase the gift cards (ones that prohibit tobacco and alcohol purchases) yourself. Please mail or deliver your donation to the Town Office. The gift cards will be mailed on Tuesday, December 19 to Westford residents only.

Give the gift of life on Wednesday, December 6

Red Cross Blood Drive, 12:00 – 5:00 PM, Covenant Church, 1 Whitcomb Meadows Lane, Essex Junction. Hosted by the Covenant Church at 1 Whitcomb Meadows Lane, Essex Junction. Please consider giving the gift of life this holiday season. As always, the Lions Club will be serving pie with ice cream after you have donated. Appointment times can be scheduled at <https://www.redcrossblood.org/>, code: COVENANT.

Richmond blood drive, 11:30 AM – 5:00 PM, Richmond Congregational Church, 20 Church St., Richmond. Please note the earlier start and stop times. Appointments are required. Call 1-800-RED CROSS (1-800-733-2767) or go online to <http://redcrossblood.org> for more information and to make an appointment. Or contact dthomas@gmavt.net or 802-434-3654 for assistance.

Holiday concerts

Brian McCarthy Jazz Orchestra Holiday Concert with Ray Vega, Saturday, December 9, 7:30 PM, McCarthy Arts Center, Saint Michael's College, Colchester. The saxophonist directs an 18-piece ensemble in a selection of seasonal hits. Free admission.

Joint Chorus: Counterpoint and St. Mike's College Singers, Wednesday, December 13, 7:30 PM, McCarthy Arts Center, Saint Michael's College, Colchester. *Counterpoint* joins student singers at St. Michael's College for a free concert featuring Christmastime favorites.

A Country Christmas concert, Saturday, December 16, 2:00 – 3:30 PM, Waterville Country Church, 440 VT Rt. 109, Waterville. Waterville musician Edna Lafountain and her fellow folk musicians will entertain with Christmas favorites, holiday songs, and carols, all with a country flair. Free event and refreshments served.

Sing We Now Noel, a celebration of Christmas carols and seasonal songs, will take place on Sunday, December 17, 2:00 PM, in the Chapel at St. Michael's College, Colchester. Professor William Tortolano, Emeritus Professor and College Organist, will present the 63rd annual festive concert with the classic two manual, 14-stop Casavant pipe organ in the acoustically acclaimed chapel. The program is designed to cover a variety of musical compositions to encourage the audience to participate. Among the compositions are carols from several countries,

including Austria, England, France, Portugal, and American traditions. These will include American music, including *The Little Drummer Boy*, *Go Tell It On The Mountain*, Vermont's carol, *We Three Kings*. Jerry Proulx, a St. Michael's graduate with extensive theater credentials, will sing four famous Italian carols, in Italian. The organ, designed in 1966 and dedicated to Dr. Tortolano, will be played for organ compositions by Pietro Yon, Pachelbel, Bach, and Brahms. A 50-year faculty member, "Dr. T." holds degrees from Boston University and the New England Conservatory of Music, and his Doctorate from L'Universite di Montréal. He was a Visiting Fellow at four different Colleges at Cambridge University in the U.K. and held a Fellowship at Yale University. Tortolano, who will turn 94 in January, will continue the tradition of the St. Michael's College carol concerts. Free; optional free will offering.

MMU Winter Chorus Concert, Wednesday, December 20, 7:00 PM, Mount Mansfield Union High School auditorium, Browns Trace, Jericho. This free concert celebrates the holiday season and features our talented and dedicated high school students. To be live streamed at MMCTV 2.

Holiday events and activities

Thursday, December 7

Wreath making, 5:00 PM, Jericho Ale and Bean, VT Rt. 15, Jericho Corners. Izzy from Riot Arts Crafting will be running a wreath making class.

Saturday, December 9

MMV Holiday Social, 12:00 – 3:00 PM, Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, VT Rt. 15, Jericho. MMV members, volunteers, family, and friends come together for great food and good cheer!

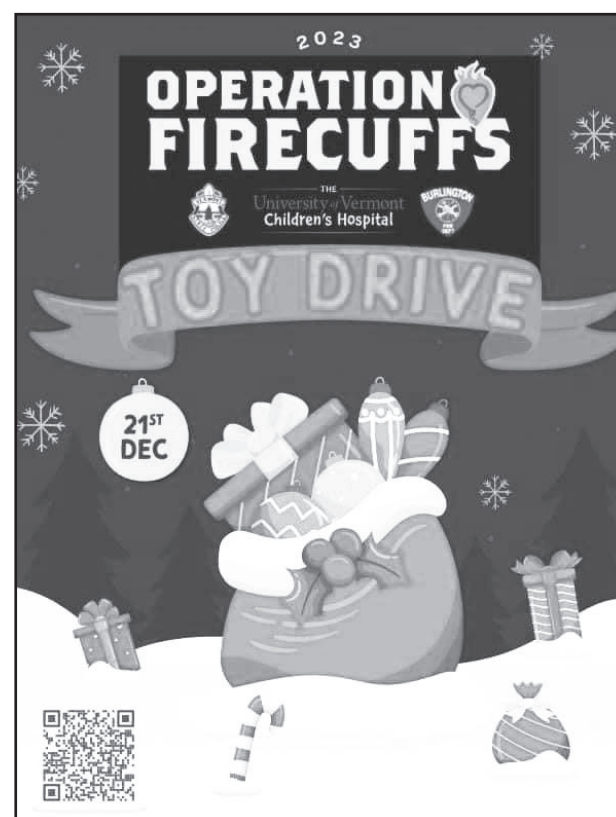
Saturday-Sunday, December 9-10

Holiday Mini-Markets featuring Vermont crafters and vendors, 11:00 AM – 4:00 PM, Jericho Ale and Bean, VT Rt. 15, Jericho Corners. On Saturday, crafters include Wild Mountain Crafters with pottery, Raised Grain Epoxy with wood and epoxy projects, Champlain Provisions with fishing lures, Made by Dee Marie with jewelry, Kelly Lawsone with handmade crafts, and Blue Bear Crafts with knit mittens. December 10 crafters include Sylvan Maia with nature-based jewelry, Noah Burke with woodworked products, Jennifer DeGeorge with knit crafts, Green Mountain Cozy Customs with embroidered goods, Dee's Whimsy with macrame and other crafts, and Chickadee Lane with crochet goods and wood crafts. If our parking lot is full, please head to the Town Hall right up the road.

Wednesday, December 20

Yule Lore-A Wheel of the Year Workshop, 6:00 – 8:00 PM, 10 Apple Tree Lane, Underhill. Join herbalist Amber Kennedy of Boheme Botanika in her home and apothecary for this cozy, candle lit, old-fashioned, winter celebration. This festive workshop honors the pagan celebration of Yule, which coincides with the Winter Solstice. Enjoy hot tea, cider wassail, and gingerbread; hear yuletide folklore of days gone by; listen to traditional folk carols; make an orange and clove pomander ornament to take home; learn the history of some of our favorite holiday symbols, like the wreath and holly garlands; discover the medicine, myth, and magic of some of the most beloved yuletide herbs, spices, and botanicals; take part in a yule log burning ritual to usher in the return of the sun! Space is limited and pre-registration is required. For more details including cost, go online to <https://www.bohemebotanika.com/events/yule-lore-a-wheel-of-the-year-celebration>.

More holiday information on page 13



Community columns continued from page 6

and land clearing centuries ago.

While I don't get a lot of opportunities to manage for red spruce in Chittenden County, I do promote it in the forests that I manage whenever I get a chance. To support red spruce, the most important things we can do are to retain seed-bearing trees and to "release" established spruce regeneration – finding areas of young spruce trees and cutting the trees overtopping them.

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

Ken Squier: a personal reflection

By Bill Schubart

On Wednesday, November 15, Ken Squier, a much-loved Vermonter, ascended into the Green Mountains above his home in Stowe. Ken was the last of his family to manage one of the few remaining "heritage radio" stations in the region — Radio Vermont, WDEV (<https://wdevradio.com/>).

I grew up in Morrisville listening to Lloyd Squier and Rusty Parker on my Bakelite Zenith radio: "The Hermit of Hunger Mountain," "Green Mountain Ballroom," "Music to Go to the Dump By," "The Pony Boys" (<http://www.upstreetproductions.com/DonFields.html>) and "The Trading Post." One could hear on The Trading Post phoned-in offers for anything from cars to tools, to animals... "for sale cheap, two guernsey heifers, good milkers, best offer."

Before the "sanitary landfill" came into fashion, "Music To Go To the Dump By" broadcast live from local dumps, airing bluegrass, down-home country, and live interviews with people about what they were dropping off and why.

I remember being at the Morrisville dump behind our house as a kid one Saturday when WDEV was broadcasting and being asked why I was there on my bike? "Gonna pop rats with my .22 when they close," I answered proudly into the mic.

Most nights I fell asleep listening to The Green Mountain Ballroom, and Dad would come into my room later, kiss me goodnight, and turn off my radio. The only other station I ever listened to was a "border radio" station out of Mexico that played "hillbilly" music.

This was the Vermont I knew as a child. I enjoyed a lifelong friendship with and reverence for WDEV's owner Ken Squier, even when I chaired the board of his arch-enemy, Vermont

Public Radio (VPR).

Licensed in 1931, WDEV was acquired by Lloyd Squier in 1935. Since then, the Squier family has contributed to and enriched the larger community of Vermont. When Lloyd died in 1979, ownership passed to his son Ken, who managed or oversaw it continuously since that time.

Citing his age, Ken put the station up for sale in 2017, but it continued under the management of Steve Cormier who had been WDEV's ad salesperson. Ken maintained his office on the first floor of their cramped headquarters on Stowe Street in downtown Waterbury, offering a guiding hand while Cormier has continued to manage the station. Now a sale appears imminent.

WDEV is one of the few remaining "heritage radio" stations left in the region. When historical artifacts are deemed relevant to the wellbeing of a culture, society makes an effort to preserve them for their current and future value. I hope and trust this will be the case with Radio Vermont. Whether its sale will perpetuate its rich heritage for so many Vermonters or it will be acquired as a "media influencer" tool to promote the right or the left is up in the air.

WDEV was never a partisan tool of tribal politics. It's been a community commons that carried information of all political stripes akin to London's Hyde Park Speakers Corner. One can hear Amy Goodman's "Democracy Now" or Bill Sayre's "Common Sense Radio" and I learned from listening to both. I especially appreciated the civil discourse that free and open discussion generated.

I am known as a liberal and have many times been a guest on Bill Sayre's show. Bill, a wise conservative Vermonter, has always had a commitment to open dialogue. Our mutual respect for a wide spectrum of ideas and opinions generated a rich friendship and an abiding respect for one another's often differing opinions.

We could agree to disagree or, as often happened, agree. But without our on-air banter, we would never have discovered how many opinions we shared. There's far too little of this in our social media world today where people can hurl anonymous insults at one another from a computer and say things they would never say in a town meeting, much less on air.

I would always stop by for a visit with Ken after leaving Bill's show, and I'd tell the receptionist I needed to meet with "Dr. Squier." She would ask, "May I tell him your complaint?" To which I would answer, "I'm suffering from acute liberalism." She would pick up the phone and then announce to me that "Dr. Squier will see you now."

The ownership of Radio Vermont has every right to sell to whomever they please. I just hope that the rich tradition of community radio that two generations of Squiers served up to Vermonters doesn't disappear in this sale. More than ever, we need less partisan posturing and more civil community discourse to heal the deep tribal wounds that affect our communities and our country today.

Nationally, there's an emerging understanding of the importance of local news, with many regional efforts now collaborating to sustain local media.

But there's a voracious appetite for news media among private-equity groups, many of whom have a clear political agenda. I have grieved in a prior column the steep loss of Vermont local news, radio, and television sold off to private equity and conservative family-owned companies looking to expand their media influence. Many private-equity acquisitions gut local editorial and real-estate costs and infuse their own syndicated news, often with a political agenda.

The Martin family's WCAX/Channel Three was recently sold to Gray Television owned by the Gray family, which owns 180 stations in 113 markets and, not unlike Sinclair Broadcasting, has a decidedly conservative agenda.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996, "An act to promote competition and reduce regulation in order to secure lower prices and higher quality services for American telecommunications consumers and encourage the rapid deployment of new telecommunications technologies," enabled a single company to greatly expand the number of broadcast stations it owned.

By way of example, in 1995 Clear Channel Communications owned 43 radio stations; currently they own some 1200, claiming an American audience of 130M listeners. Their tactic to streamline expenses was to drop local news gathering, local commentary, and event calendars, play syndicated music, and sell regional advertising.

I have left to other wiser commentators to remind us of Ken's rich history with car racing, his founding and ownership of Thunder Road Speedbowl in Barre and his meteoric rise as an announcer and promoter of NASCAR. I urge you to look at Montpelier native Lukas Huffman's film *Youth Drivers at Thunder Road*, which aired on Vermont Public's "Made Here" series in May. It will give you a sense of Thunder Roads' relevance to Vermonters.

We can only hope that the rich Squier family broadcast heritage is perpetuated by its next owner in the interests of all Vermonters.

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for seniors and their families

Families deserve peace of mind knowing their loved ones are well cared for, at an affordable price. There may come a time when day-to-day tasks that were once enjoyable are a challenge or that conditions become unpredictable.

At Mansfield Place, residents enjoy the best of both worlds, a wide range of amenities and activities, as well as excellent services and support as needed.

Call Laurie today to schedule your visit
(802) 871-5808

MansfieldPlaceVT.com
18 Carmichael Street, Essex Junction, VT 05452

   Uniform Consumer Disclosure is available upon request.



MMCTV



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Watching MMCTV in late 2023

Community Media Toasts and Treats: We have great neighbors in the building, including Our Community Cares Camp, Richmond Historical Society, Community Senior Center, Radiate Art Space, and Richmond town staff! In October, several of us held an Open House, and on Halloween, celebrated with many bags of candy for many trick-or-treaters as MMCTV did the biggest "haunting" of the Town Center building, with animations in 10 windows, courtesy of MMCTV Digital Supervisor Madeline Daly. Here's a recap of that event, online at <https://archive.org/details/Halloween2023Recap>.

In November, the board and staff celebrated retiring board members Ron Rodjenski and Peter Wolf. We are grateful for their decades of service.

Catch meetings fast on YouTube: Going forward, all municipal/school board meetings will be published on our YouTube channel, <https://www.youtube.com/c/MMCTV/streams>. The meetings (and all non-meeting content) will still be on Internet archive (<https://archive.org/search?query=MMCTV&sort=-publicdate>) for downloading and archiving purposes, but for casual viewers, YouTube will make it easier to search and find the meetings you need.

How can you find the meeting you want? There are a lot of them, and we upload them daily! One way is by going to our website (<https://mtmansfieldctv.org/>) and finding your town's playlist (January 2023 onward). Another way is to hop to our YouTube channel, <https://www.youtube.com/c/MMCTV/streams>! (And hit subscribe to help reach our goal of 1000 subscribers!) You can also just go to [YouTube.com](https://www.youtube.com) and search by town, board/committee and date. (Typing in "MMCTV" will make sure you don't get random results.)

The bigger picture, ACM-NE: MMCTV was among the community media centers from Maryland to Maine attending the Alliance for Community Media-Northeast (ACM-NE) Region's annual conference in Burlington, November 15-17. In a time of cord-cutting when we are all seeking alternate funding sources to future-proof our work, it was great to compare notes with our colleagues from around the region on their legislative efforts. Vermont Secretary of State Sarah Copeland Hanzas, Lt. Governor David Zuckerman, and Barre Rep. Peter Anthony were among the local leaders who voiced their ardent support for the work we do. As Chair of the Vermont Access Network, MMCTV director Angelike Contis provided an update on short-term and long-term funding efforts, as we head into the next legislative session.

The bigger picture, Crowdsourced VT: A lighter, Vermont-wide collaboration is Crowdsourced Cinema VT. Don't miss a screening of this year's film, Toy Story, which was made by 24 filmmakers from around Vermont (and New England) — including the MMCTV TV camp crew — which premiered on the silver screen on November 30 at the Roxy Theater in Burlington. We will also be airing the film on MMCTV Channel 1076 soon.

Other new and exciting projects: Looking for more fun content? Check out Cristine Hammer's presentation on her travels to Sri Lanka (<https://archive.org/details/cscsri-lanka-11082023>). The presentation is brought to you by the Community Senior Center. Ever wonder how the roads got their names? Tune into Paul Alexander's presentation about Jericho road history, <https://archive.org/details/JerichoHowRoadsGotTheirNames10242023>. You're sure to learn something new!

MISCELLANEOUS NEWS

Share your ideas about what VT youth need to succeed

From the Vermont Council on Rural Development

Do you have ideas for how to improve youth opportunity and aspiration in Vermont? Whatever your age, background, or experience, your ideas about education, jobs, recreation and activities, community connection, mental health, youth voice, mentoring, and more are needed! Take the survey to let us know what you think needs to be done to help Vermont youth succeed: <https://forms.gle/wurG6Y895qv5jYcy8>.

The Vermont Youth Opportunity Initiative is engaging youth, community members, businesses, educators, and more in a deep discussion on the future of youth opportunity and aspiration in our state. The process, led by the Future of Vermont Action Team and facilitated by the Vermont Council on Rural Development, is collecting ideas from hundreds of people across the state through regional forums, stakeholder interviews, and the survey and will result in concrete policy and program recommendations for the Action Team to move forward. Learn more about the initiative at www.futureofvermont.org.

Thanking volunteers for Cambridge Food Shelf Thanksgiving Baskets

Even though Thanksgiving is behind us, the Cambridge Community Food Shelf has some "Thank you recognitions" to be made. The Cambridge Community Food Shelf assembled all the makings of a Thanksgiving dinner to 67 families so they could have a traditional Thanksgiving Dinner. Fifty-eight clients stopped by the Second Congregational Church in Jeffersonville the Sunday before Thanksgiving to pick up their "groceries." This included a turkey, dressing, gravy, rolls, cranberry sauce, sweet potatoes, as well as potatoes for mashing, canned vegetables, and it was topped off with either a pumpkin or apple pie for dessert!

The Food Shelf was able to provide this thanks to the generosity of our community. With the help of donations we were able to purchase some items for the dinner. The Vermont Food Bank offered many of the canned goods at a reduced cost with no delivery fee. And two neighbors got together to purchase and donate about 50 pounds of butter for the mashed potatoes and rolls.

Smugglers' Notch Resort came through in stellar fashion with 62 frozen turkeys to be distributed. Thank you Smugglers' Notch Resort!

We thank the Fraternal Order of Eagles for your delivery of dinners as well. These food items may provide Holiday Meals in December.

Thank you to the volunteers who sacrificed time on Saturday and Sunday before Thanksgiving to organize bags with ingredients that would facilitate distribution. This is an amazing generous group of people.

The Cambridge Community Food Shelf would not be here if it weren't for this dedicated munificent community. Thank you all!

2023 VT Maple Conference offers online and in-person events

The 2023 Vermont Maple Conference, Tuesday-Saturday, December 5-9, will offer options for both online and in-person learning with informative and engaging sessions led by maple industry experts and maple producers.

University of Vermont (UVM) Extension and the Vermont Maple Sugar Makers' Association (VMSMA) will host the hybrid conference, which is co-sponsored by the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food, and Markets. Daily sessions will be of interest not only to sugar makers but also to foresters who work with maple producers and forest landowners looking to lease to a producer. Forestry credits will be available for the online and in-person sessions of the entire conference.

For details and to register, go to www.vermontmaple.org/maple-conferences. Attendees can register for online sessions or a full conference pass and have access to all days of the conference.

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All sessions will be recorded for registrants' future enjoyment and learning.

Conference week kicks off with a full day Maple Quality School on Tuesday, December 5, featuring Mark Isselhardt from UVM Extension and Jason Lilley from UMaine Extension. This hands-on, in-depth session will cover the science behind great and off-flavored syrup, the best measurement tools and how to use them, and will offer plenty of hands-on activities to refine your skills.

The online portion of the Conference kicks off on Wednesday, December 7 at 9:00 AM with the first of eight online sessions over a three-day period. The Conference "grand finale" occurs on Saturday, December 9 with a full day of sessions, guest speakers, and a tradeshow at the Vermont State University's Randolph campus.

VTrans project update

November 30

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

Project type: Complete bridge replacement.

Traffic impact: U.S. Rt. 2 traffic control will be present allowing for one-lane of alternating travel. The southbound and northbound right shoulders will be closed within the project.

Project update: Continued support of excavation wall for Abutment #2; continued forming and tying rebar and placed concrete for Abutment #2 backwall; installed utility duct bank on the east side of the bridge.

Construction activities: The following is the anticipated work schedule for the week beginning Monday, December 4, Monday-Friday, 6:30 AM – 6:00 PM:

- continue support of excavation wall for Abutment #2;
- remove construction signs and barrels from the southbound lanes on I-89;
- project clean up.

Please use caution and follow the posted speed limits.

Please email sbarrett@coibsinc.com, reference Bridge#29, Richmond, if you would like to receive weekly project updates via email.

Completion date: September 2025

CSWD holiday schedule

From Chittenden Solid Waste District Board

Just a reminder that our holiday schedule is now online to help with your holiday planning, to help Chittenden County residents plan ahead.

Chittenden Solid Waste District (CSWD) facility hours for Christmas/New Years (Friday, December 22-Monday, January 1) are now available on our website. Please check the hours for the facility you use, as we are on modified schedules during those weeks.

Our full holiday schedule is available on our website at https://cswd.net/holidays/.

Community workshops with VEEP

Are you a part of an energy committee, community organization, library, or other local group interested in helping your neighbors save money and energy?

The Vermont Energy Education Program (VEEP) is bringing hands-on community workshops to adult audiences in order to amplify collective efforts to conserve energy, save money, and increase climate resilience. We'll bring the equipment, lead an engaging exploration, and help you connect with an action partner to further local efforts. Workshop themes include home heat transfer, transportation, modeling climate science, electricity generation and the grid, and home electrification.

Contact info@veep.org to learn more.

Sam Lotto, Cambridge representative to Lamoille FiberNet CUD Board

From Lamoille FiberNet Communications Union District Board

Lamoille FiberNet has a very active board, and we will occasionally offer profiles of our volunteer board members to help you get to know who's working to help bring high speed internet to Lamoille County.

The board's Cambridge representative, Sam Lotto, served as the Chair of the Partnership Task Force Committee at Lamoille FiberNet. A resident of Cambridge for more than 30 years, Sam has served on numerous Cambridge boards, including the Cambridge Elementary School Board and Planning Commission, and is an active member of the Cambridge Area Rotary.

As an original member of the Lamoille FiberNet governing board, Sam's professional background has been an asset from the beginning, with his 30 years of experience in IT project management and consulting. In his past, Sam has done IT work for numerous local organizations including the State of Vermont Department of Health and Copley Hospital.

When he was Chair of the Partnership Task Force, Sam was instrumental in driving the broadband connectivity initiative forward. Through his leadership and the work of numerous other board members, Lamoille FiberNet identified Consolidated Communications as the right partner to bring fiber internet to the CUD (Communications Union District) territory. Lamoille FiberNet recently received approval from the Vermont Community Broadband Board to move forward with the partnership and network buildout. We sat down with Sam to learn about the driving factors that led to this partnership.

Q: What were the specific goals or "guiding principles" you kept in mind as the Partnership Task Force decided on a partner for the CUD buildout?

Sam: If we do what's best for the CUD communities and make sure we are spending public funds wisely, the rest will take care of itself. "Community and our residents first" is another way to

say it. Additionally, rural residents can no longer wait three to five years, so we needed to find a pathway to roll broadband out with the shortest timeline and best use of dollars.

Q: What were you looking for in a partner? Do you feel we got everything you were looking for in Consolidated?

Sam: Being an ethical entity to work with that has a "customer-first" focus was key. Yes, Consolidated is for-profit, yet I think they do care about customer satisfaction. They demonstrated the ways they are improving customer service with Fidium, and they want to sunset the DSL network as much if not more than we do.

We got 90% of what we wanted. What I am most excited about is the substantial financial investment and engineering expertise they are bringing to the table. They also bring a skilled workforce ready to do the buildout of the network and are participating in recruiting and training more Vermonters. I sleep better knowing Consolidated — with their technical and back-office infrastructure — will operate and maintain the network. I had worried about our CUD having the capacity to morph into an ISP, so partnering with Consolidated is a great solution.

Q: What aspect of your work on the Partnership Task Force are you most proud of?

Sam: I am most proud of the group of people — Randy, Andy, John, and Stephen — with Lisa's and Fabian's countless hours of help too! This group really hung together. They were great to work with, and always listened and respected all points of view. The agreement with Consolidated is a testament to how well the group worked together and the countless hours/days/months of effort they put in.

All 10 Lamoille County towns are represented on Lamoille FiberNet's board. You can find more information about the board or the CUD at http://www.lamoillefiber.net/.

Winter is a wonderland when everyone is included

From the VT Department for Children and Families

Most children and youth in foster care have experienced trauma. Providing the care that supports their individual well-being is our obligation and hope for every child in care. Sometimes just being included in family activities helps. Maybe that's something you can do? Even if becoming a full-time foster parent isn't right for you at this time, being a friend, mentor, community resource, or respite care provider would be a huge benefit to a child in foster care. Consider supporting children in your community.

To learn more about giving back to a child in your community, go to https://dcf.vermont.gov/fsd/foster.

United Way Volunteer Connection

GET CONNECTED TO VOLUNTEERING — United Way's Volunteer Connection site is set up to help connect agencies and

Miscellaneous continued on page 11



Chittenden Solid Waste District



scan for details

We Can Take It!







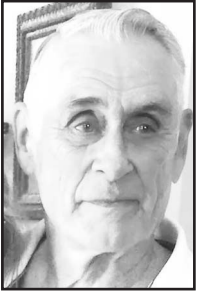


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OBITUARIES



It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of **Burton H. Shangraw Jr.**, 86, of Huntington, VT, on the morning of Tuesday, October 24, 2023, with his family by his side. Burt worked for the City of Burlington (VT) for 36 years, first with Parks and Recreations, and then retiring in 1998, after receiving The Cemeterian of the Year Award, as Superintendent of Burlington, VT Cemeteries. A private graveside service will be held at a later date. To view a complete obituary and leave on-line condolences for the family please visit <https://www.vtfuneralhomes.com/>; arrangements are in care of Corbin and Palmer Funeral Home, 9 Pleasant St., Essex Junction, VT.



Julia Smith Northrop of Underhill, VT, age 95, passed away on Sunday, October 22, 2023. Julia, born on April 15, 1928, was the youngest child of Charles P. and Dora F. Smith of Burlington, VT. She was the mother of four children: Patricia Boutilier, William Salmon, Grace Freeman, and Charles Salmon. In 1963, she married Robert P. Northrop of Underhill Center, VT. There, they blended their families in a home where she lived for 60 years. Julia was a lover of life. Music, gardening, farming, friends, and family filled her days. She loved all animals and was an avid reader. She taught us to overcome life's struggles, to work hard, to respect and embrace the natural world, and to always enjoy a good party! Mom will be greatly missed by her children, seven grandchildren, eight great-grandchildren, and her great-great-granddaughter. Per Julia's wishes, there will be no services at this time. Her family will be holding private services at a later date. For those who wish, contributions in Julia's memory may be made to Audubon Vermont: Green Mountain Audubon Center, 255 Sherman Hollow Rd., Huntington, VT 05462. Condolences, photos and favorite memories may be shared through www.gossfs.com.

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ART / MUSIC / THEATER

Essex Community Players production: *A Christmas Chaos* — If you want to kick off this holiday season with lots of belly laughs and support community theater, then get your tickets now for Essex Community Players' hilarious holiday show, *A Christmas Chaos*, featuring four performances during the second weekend of December. A world-renowned traveling theater company hasn't arrived as promised to perform their stirring rendition of *A Christmas Carol*, so our intrepid band of hapless actors and technicians must put together their own production in only seven hours! The story focuses on these poor but dedicated thespians doing their best while chaos is all around them. This fast-paced play is a delightful backstage comedy that pokes fun at the classic novel and everything that can go wrong with a theatrical production. Written by Michael Wehri, directed by Don MacKechnie, produced by Cindy MacKechnie, and starring 16 talented performers. Presented at Essex Memorial Hall, 5 Towers Rd., Essex. Ticket prices \$16-18. All seats reserved. Performances: Friday, December 8, 7:30 PM; Saturday, December 9, 2:00 and 7:30 PM; Sunday, December 10, 2:00 PM. Tickets and information: <http://www.essexplayers.com>.

The Foreigner at Hyde Park Opera House — Lamoille County Players are delighted to present *The Foreigner* at the historic Hyde Park Opera House in Hyde Park Village. *The Foreigner* is the story of a shy man who, to avoid conversation, is introduced as being from an exotic land and doesn't understand English. Thus, much is said in front of him which fuels the hilarity of the play. This comedy examines the transformation of a painfully shy man into a hero, because his friends believe in his inherent goodness. Shows are December 8-10: Friday and Saturday at 7:00 PM, and Sunday at 2:00 PM. Adults \$20, student/senior \$15. To purchase tickets, go to www.LCPlayers.com. Tickets will also be available at the door.

Vermont Blues Society Documentary/Band and Meeting — You are invited to join us at the Vermont Blues Society Annual Meeting on Thursday, December 14, 6:00 PM at the Lake Lobby of Main Street Landing, 60 Lake St., Burlington. The meeting is free, open to all, and light refreshments will be served. Then stick around for a very special ticketed event at 6:30 PM in the Film House (same address): a showing of the award-winning documentary *Bonnie Blue: James Cotton's Life In The Blues*, followed by a 45-minute live performance featuring blues legend James Montgomery and the award winning, mega talented Dave Keller and Chad Hollister. Tickets are \$25 at <https://sevendaystickets.com/> or at the door if any are left.

The Westford Music Series is honored to welcome cowboy musician Skip Gorman to Vermont at the Westford Common Hall on Sunday December 17, 4:00 – 5:00 PM. Author E. Annie Proulx, now of Centennial, WY, says, "Skip Gorman's voice and fiddling fits close to the bone... These traditional cowboy songs, unadorned, openly sad, sometimes lively, or gritty, carry the distance and solitude of the West in them." For over 50 years Gorman has enjoyed singing and performing an impressive and varied palette of traditional American and Celtic folk music. As an accomplished singer, guitarist, fiddler and mandolinist, Gorman has completed over 18 recordings of old cowboy songs with fiddle, mandolin, and bluegrass. Filmmaker Ken Burns used Skip's original music on five of his celebrated documentaries, and Gorman has appeared on *A Prairie Home Companion*. Free will donation. Pie raffle included for extra fun.

Call to artists for Farms and Fields, a new exhibit for the New Year at the Jericho Town Hall. Vermont's bucolic landscape has changed over the years with smaller numbers of dairy farmers, climate change needing new practices, different crops, now with a younger generation taking on the challenges. Established and emerging artists are invited to submit one or two pieces of artwork in any medium including photography capturing their view of *Farms and Fields* in any season. This exhibit is scheduled for January 2024 through April 2024. The main requirement is that the work must be able to hang by wire on a gallery hanging bracket and not a photo picture frame hook. Registration forms are due by Friday, December 22. For registration materials and information contact Catherine McMains, catherine.mcmains@gmail.com. Registration materials and other information can also be found on the Jericho Town website <https://jerichovt.org/town-hall-art-project>. This exhibit is one of an ongoing series of shows that are part of a collaborative effort between the Town of Jericho and a committee of volunteers involved in the arts. Committee members include Select Board member Catherine McMains, Jericho gallery owner Emilie Alexander, and Jericho artists Carla Hochschild and Adrienne Fisher.

Westford Music Series presents a special holiday concert featuring the Fairfax Westford Band on Friday, December 22, 7:00 – 8:00 PM at the Westford Common Hall (21 Brookside Rd., Westford). A favorite local band of talented musicians from Fairfax, Fletcher, and Westford will perform a variety of popular, traditional holiday music — familiar tunes for a special band concert. The Fairfax Westford band, led by music director Aaron Doane along with community band members of all ages will create a joyous tone for the upcoming holidays. Free will donation. Call 802-879-4028 for more information.

Brian McCarthy Jazz Orchestra Holiday Concert with Ray Vega, Saturday, December 9, 7:30 PM, McCarthy Arts Center, Saint Michael's College, Colchester. The saxophonist directs an 18-piece ensemble in a selection of seasonal hits. Free admission.

Joint Chorus: Counterpoint and St. Mike's College Singers, Wednesday, December 13, 7:30 PM, McCarthy Arts Center, Saint Michael's College, Colchester. *Counterpoint* joins student singers at St. Michael's College for a free concert featuring Christmastime favorites.

A Country Christmas concert, Saturday, December 16, 2:00 – 3:30 PM, Waterville Country Church, 440 VT Rt. 109, Waterville. Waterville musician Edna Lafountain and her fellow folk musicians will entertain with Christmas favorites, holiday songs, and carols, all with a country flair. Free event and refreshments served.

MMU Winter Chorus Concert, Wednesday, December 20, 7:00 PM, Mount Mansfield Union High School auditorium, Browns Trace, Jericho. This free concert celebrates the holiday season and features our talented and dedicated high school students. To be live streamed at MMCTV 2.

Emile A Gruppe Gallery presents the work of Betsy Chapek, an unconventional artist with a varied and eclectic style — but seriously grounded in the natural world. Using a variety of

mediums including monoprint, colored pencil, and collage along with three-dimensional forms, Betsy introduces the natural world with a new interpretation. The show will run through Sunday, December 17; on Sunday, December 10, Betsy will be at the Gallery demonstrating her work techniques from 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM. Gallery hours are Thursday-Sunday, 10:00 AM – 3:00 PM, or by appointment (802-899-3211). The Gallery is located at 22 Barber Farm Road in Jericho.

Weekly Literature Group Meeting on Tuesdays Via Zoom: Michael Sevy of Jericho co-leads a weekly virtual book group, the Burlington Literature Group, and would welcome new committed readers to our sessions. The group 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, and discuss form, content, and our impressions in a friendly online forum. Details can be found at <https://nereadersandwriters.com/> or by emailing info@nereadersandwriters.com. Our current book, Laurence Sterne's *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*, is an innovative, digressive, challenging, humorous, and philosophical investigation into the relationship between literature and life. Sterne's rambling text — comprising nine volumes published over the course of several years, from 1759 to 1767 — is also an experiment in form and structure containing nested narratives and self-reflexive textual jokes, as well as bold innovations in tone and style. Schedule: December 5: Volumes 8 and 9. After Sterne we have scheduled César Aira and Roberto Bolaño.

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

Also, the Underhill Arts Council is looking for help painting and decorating the large hearts that are hung around town. This is a fun project. No special artistic talent is required. If you have a desire to help or have questions, please contact the council via jc6greenmont@gmail.com or 802-881-5974.

The Underhill Arts Council is hosting an Art Show of local talent at the Underhill Town Hall on Saturday January 13, 2024. Please stay tuned for details.

SongFarmers, a community music jam — a place for friends and neighbors to play music just for the fun of it. SongFarmers meets on every third Wednesday of the month (December 20), 6:00 – 8:00 PM at the Jericho Community Center, Browns Trace, Jericho Center. This is a music jam for people of all ages who want to play folk, Americana, blues, bluegrass, Celtic, and more on acoustic instruments: guitars, banjos, mandolins, fiddles, ukuleles, bass, keyboard. No electronics except 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. Please note this is not a performance, open mic, or lesson. Folks who want to sing, or just come and enjoy the gathering, are welcome too. Bring snacks and drinks if you like, but no alcohol. Free. Registration is appreciated; contact CommunityJamJUVT@gmail.com.

Weekly Community Choir on Thursdays — If you love to sing (or want to join in on the piano to help folks learn parts and play accompaniment), come join *Mountainsong!* We are a volunteer-run community singing group that harmonizes together in four parts on Thursday evenings! We meet from 6:30 – 8:00 PM on Thursdays at the Mount Mansfield Unitarian Universalist Meeting House, 195 VT Rt. 15, Jericho (across from Packard Road). Whether you sing in the shower, sing Karaoke, or just like to sing in harmony with others, bring your voice and join us! Do you learn by ear or read music? Either way, you'll be comfortable in our group. You don't have to be a great singer — our aim is to sing for the joy of singing (no performances except for one short one for family and friends at the end of the season). We sing most weeks, and you can come as often as you are able; if you miss the first one or two (or more), no worries! Cost: \$1 a week toward space rental. We also ask for a contribution to purchase music for the group of \$7 per semester (fall and spring). Planning to come? Please email Doug Varney so that we have enough copies of music for our first meeting. Questions about the group? Contact Lynne Robbins, 802-899-2436 or lar.2436@gmail.com, or Jean Archibald, 802-899-5219, or just show up on a Thursday evening!

The Westford Music Series concerts will be held once a month on a Sunday, from 4:00 – 5:00 PM at the Westford Common Hall, 21 Brookside Rd., Westford. The lineup for the 2023-2024 season is as follows: December 17, *Carol Ann Jones and Friends*; January 21, *FREVO*; February 25: *Will Patton Ensemble*; March 24, *Dale and Darcy Trio*; April 7: *Heliand*; May 5, *Howling Waters*.

Bryan Gallery in Jeffersonville continues in the Main Gallery, highlighting the timeless allure of landscapes in *Land & Light & Water & Air*. This year (2023) marks 16 years of Land & Light exhibitions with *A Testament to Tradition and Innovation* in a signature exhibition that pays homage to this storied tradition. Showcasing the works of over 90 talented artists, the exhibition presents an array of Vermont, New England, and Northeastern traditional landscape paintings that capture the interplay of land and light in their most picturesque moments. *Land & Light* runs through Saturday, December 23. Bryan Memorial Gallery is delighted to welcome back our annual GEMS exhibition featuring small artworks (8"x10" or smaller) by gallery members. GEMS is a visitor favorite for the holiday season, making wonderful gifts for the art lover. GEMS will be displayed in Bryan Memorial Gallery's Middle Room Gallery at their location at 180 Main St., Jeffersonville. Artworks range from landscapes to abstracts, from florals, portrait, and still-life. The exhibit will conclude on Saturday, December 23. The Gallery's hours are Wednesday-Sunday, 11:00 AM – 4:00 PM, or by appointment. To learn more about the exhibitions visit www.bryangallery.org. For more information, contact Stephen Gothard at 802-644-5100 or info@bryangallery.org. The Bryan Memorial Gallery, 180 Main St.,

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Jeffersonville; open Wednesday-Sunday, 11:00 AM – 5:00 PM or Monday-Tuesday by appointment. For more information contact Stephen Gothard, 802-644-5100 or info@bryangallery.org.

Submit a poem, short story, or essay for the VT Writers' Prize: Green Mountain Power (GMP) and *Vermont Magazine* are encouraging writers to get their entries ready for one of the state's top literary contests, the Vermont Writer's Prize. The Prize was launched in 1989 to celebrate writing about Vermont and Vermonters, while honoring the literary legacy of the late Ralph Nading Hill Jr., a Vermont historian and writer and a longtime member of GMP's board of directors. Entries are being accepted now; the deadline is January 1, 2024. Winners will be selected in prose and poetry, and each winner receives \$1250 and their works will be published in *Vermont Magazine's* Summer 2024 issue. Submissions can be essays, short stories or poems that focus on *Vermont — Its People, Its Places, Its History or Its Values*. Entries must be unpublished, poems have a 40-line limit, and prose entries must be less than 1500 words long. Individuals may submit only one work. Entrants may be amateur or professional writers. Employees of *Vermont Magazine* or GMP and previous winners are ineligible. More details, including how to submit, are available online at <https://vermontwritersprize.submittable.com/submit>.

Artist Development Grants support artists at all stages of their careers. Grants can fund activities that enhance mastery of an artist's craft or skills or that increase the viability of an artist's business. Funding may also support aspects of the creation of new work when the activity allows the grantee to accept a rare and important opportunity. For Artist Development Grants, you may apply for any amount up to \$2000. We strongly encourage applicants to apply for the *least* amount of funding necessary for their request. Money is limited, and we want to be able to support as many artists as possible. While we will do all that we can to fully fund as many projects as possible, some proposals may be partially funded. Grant amounts are dependent upon federal, state, and private funding and are subject to change. Eligible expenses for such activities include, but are not limited to: advanced study of technique or practice with a mentor; attending a professional conference to build business or artistic skills or knowledge; contracting professional services including photographic documentation of work, contract preparation or business incorporation, creation of accounting systems, developing e-commerce on a website, creation of marketing materials, etc.; marketing, planning, purchasing some materials, or renting studio space (outside of your home) to create new exhibitions or performances; travel within the United States. The application deadline is January 30, 2024, 1:00 PM; apply at <https://www.vermontartscouncil.org/grants/find-a-grant/artists/artist-development/>.

Miscellaneous continued from page 9

volunteers. Go online to <https://unitedwaynwvt.galaxydigital.com/> to learn more about these and other opportunities.

BUY A BOOK – The Fletcher Free Library is kicking off its annual *Books for Children* gift campaign to help low-income families support young children's learning. To participate, purchase a children's book at 20% off from Crow Books or Phoenix Books and put it in the store's collection bin. There is also a bin for books purchased elsewhere. The books collected will go to youngsters in community organizations, including Head Start. Contact ffvolunteer@burlington.gov.

A GOOD YARN – Vermont Works for Women staff are collecting yarn to be used by women in the Chittenden Regional Correction Facility to craft hats and gloves for needy community members. Yarn must be new and in the original packaging. To donate and coordinate pick-up/drop-off, contact Heather athnewcomb@vtworksforwomen.org.

BE A SPORT! – Vermont Adaptive Ski and Sport is seeking energetic volunteers with a passion for sports to help share that passion with others. Volunteers dedicate free time to helping individuals with disabilities achieve their dreams through sports and recreation. Flexible scheduling. Contact advancement@vermontadaptive.org.

GLEAN AND FEED – Intervale Center invites volunteers, age 12 and older, to help harvest surplus food from their partnered farms on and off the Intervale and to help pack food baskets for distribution to income eligible community members. Volunteers should be comfortable standing or kneeling for extended periods of time and enjoy working with people from different backgrounds and life experiences. Contact kylie@intervale.org.

Send your news
to
The Mountain
Gazette
at
mtngazette
@gmavt.net

The Westford Music Series is honored to welcome Skip Gorman, the cowboy musician, coming to Vermont at the Westford Common Hall on Sunday December 17, 4:00 – 5:00 PM. Free will donation. Pie raffle included for extra fun. Author E. Annie Proulx, now of Centennial, WY, says, "Skip Gorman's voice and fiddling fits close to the bone... These traditional cowboy songs, unadorned, openly sad, sometimes lively, or gritty, carry the distance and solitude of the West in them". For over 50 years Gorman has enjoyed singing and performing an impressive and varied palette of traditional American and Celtic folk music. As an accomplished singer, guitarist, fiddler and mandolinist, Gorman has completed over 18 recordings of old cowboy songs with fiddle, mandolin, and bluegrass. Filmmaker Ken Burns used Skip's original music on five of his celebrated documentaries, and Gorman has appeared on A Prairie Home Companion.



Celebrating the holidays with foster youth: do's and don'ts

From *Alternative Family Services/www.afs4kids.org*

The end-of-year holiday season, which usually stretches from around Thanksgiving in late November to Christmas and New Year's Day, is typically associated with cheer, family, food, and joy. And while the holiday season is positive for most of us, that's not always the case for current or former foster youth.

The holidays are commonly associated with family and togetherness and bring up — and out — a lot of conflicting feelings and emotions for those not being cared for by their biological parents. In one recent informal poll of foster youth, over 80% of them said they miss their families during the holiday season, while another 8% said that the time of year can be hard when it seems like everyone else has their families around.

"The meaning behind the holidays is more than stuffing your face with grandma's homemade pecan pie, getting the year's hottest toy, or even enjoying the music. What it's all about is coming together as a family and enjoying and treasuring each other's company. As a foster kid, I used to hate the holidays because I wasn't with my family," Daniel Knapp, a former foster youth, has written.

So what can foster parents (now called Resource Parents) and others do to make foster youth feel more comfortable around the holidays? Consider heeding these do's and don'ts this season.

Do: Talk to foster youth before the holidays kick off.

Before anything kicks off, it can be incredibly beneficial to let them know what is about to happen and who they will meet. As a Resource Parent, while you may be used to the hustle and bustle of a relative's house or the behavior of a loved one, such a situation will all be new and overwhelming for foster youth. Beforehand, let them precisely what to expect and what will likely happen, so they are not caught off guard.

Similarly, be sure others you're celebrating the holidays with know about the foster youth and are not surprised by their presence. Recruit those you're spending the holidays with to do what they can to welcome and include foster youth as much as possible in the festivities.

Don't: Ignore their feelings or mental health. As we've already established, the holiday season can be a conflicting and emotionally draining time for some foster youth. It may bring out new feelings or behaviors, or exacerbate existing ones. Understand that foster youth often have a lot to process during the holidays — and year-round. Respect their mental health, know that their feelings about the holidays can be complex, and provide help if asked for or required.

Do: Incorporate their traditions and customs. No two families celebrate the holidays in the exact same way. While certain traditions are certainly more common than others, everyone has their own unique and satisfying spin on the holidays — and the families foster youth come from are no different.

When possible, incorporate as many of their traditions and customs into your celebrations. Even adding in little things can make foster youth feel more comfortable and accepted in your holidays. Also respect that foster youth may celebrate holidays you don't, and vice versa.

Don't: Make them feel unequal or unwelcome. During the holiday season, many foster youth feel like outsiders or a burden.



For example, Daniel Knapp noted that although his foster family was warm and welcoming, he recalls feeling like a burden and dwelling on minute differences — like how other family members received more presents than he did some years.

"We remember what it used to be like and know how it is now. For most kids, all they want is to go home and the holidays are a painful reminder that going home is not an option. It's especially hard when everyone else is shopping for their moms, dads, and siblings, and you can't because you are not allowed to see them," notes Krista, a former foster youth.

For Resource Parents, try to take steps big and small to ensure foster youth are completely and totally welcome as an equal part of the family, while always being sure to respect their emotions no matter what.

Do: Include their wider community. For many, the holidays don't stop and end at family. Often, a wider community will be on hand in festivities and in making the holiday what it is.

Resource Parents should aim to include this wider community whenever possible in holiday celebrations. In addition, when permissible, allow foster youth to spend time with relatives and close friends.

"There are just some things in life we can't control. I can't control my foster care history and I can't control other people's behavior, but I can control how I react to life's circumstances. During the holiday seasons past I missed out on so much because I was so focused on issues that were really out of my control. I had every right to feel those feelings but it caused me to miss out on what the holidays are really about. I still struggle with some of those feelings today that I felt when I was younger and still in foster care, but I don't let them rob me from enjoying the holiday seasons," Daniel says.

Celestial Kiss By Kimberly Madura

Cloaked in auras
of emeralds and sapphires,
resplendent angel,
lighting up the night.
You are beautiful when
You're cosmic.
Come back to me.
I loved how you used to be.

WORSHIP SERVICES

Mount Mansfield Unitarian Universalist Fellowship

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

Jericho United Methodist Church

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

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/>.

SCHOOL NEWS

MMU Chorus students to present winter concert

The Mount Mansfield Union High School (MMU) chorus presents its Winter Chorus Concert on Wednesday, December 20, 7:00 PM at the MMU school auditorium, Browns Trace, Jericho. This free concert celebrates the holiday season and features our talented and dedicated high school students. The concert will also be live streamed at MMCTV 2.

Saxon Hill School Winter Art Walk

Enjoy our Winter Art Walk! Saturday, 12/9 - Saturday, 1/6. The families of Saxon Hill School have organized a Winter Art Walk at Mills Riverside Park as a fundraiser to support our school.

The start/end point is just past the bridge in Mills Riverside Park, VT Rt. 15, Jericho. Donations are not required to participate, but any donation amount is welcome. The fundraiser will take place Saturday, December 9-Saturday, January 6.

For more information and donation details, go online to <https://saxonhillschool.org/winter-art-walk.html>. Please email secretary@saxonhillschool.org with any questions.

Underhill/Jericho Playgroup on Wednesday mornings

Come join us at the Underhill/Jericho Playgroup! This open playgroup is held in the UID building (the old Underhill ID School, between Browns River Middle School and the Deborah Rawson Memorial Library) in the multipurpose room at 10 River Rd., Jericho every Wednesday from 9:30 - 11:00 AM. We follow the MMUUSD calendar.

Geared toward children from birth through age 5, this is a great opportunity for kiddos and caregivers to socialize and create connections within our community. There is no registration required. Bring your own snack. We will also play outside on the playground when possible, so please dress for the weather.

Email underhill.playgroup@gmail.com to sign up for reminders and updates. Hope to see you there!

We have room for your ad.

Call Brenda Boutin

at 802-453-6354

for more information

or email

mtngazette

@gmavt.net.

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 10:30 AM. 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, Peter Anderson

Sunday School at 8:30 AM for all ages

Fellowship at 9:30 AM

Worship Service at 10:00 AM

Nursery care provided

Youth group 6:15 PM Sundays in our Sunday school building

~

Lessons & Carols Service, December 17 at 10:00 AM

Christmas Eve Worship Service, December 24 at 10:00 AM

Christmas Pageant, December 24 at 5:00 PM

Christmas Candlelight Service, December 24 at 9:00 PM

802-899-4911; officejcc@comcast.net; www.jccvt.org

All are welcome at Good Shepherd, Jericho

You are invited to worship at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church on VT Rt. 15 at 9:00 AM every Sunday. The building is accessible — all are welcome! There are varied musical styles in worship services, including Folk, Contemporary, Celtic, Latin American, and traditional. Weekday online offerings include Centering Prayer. We are an open-minded Christian community with a focus on social justice issues, where people from different faith traditions, along with those who aren't sure where they belong or what they believe, seek the support of a spiritual home. We welcome you in the name and love of Christ. More information is at www.goodshepherdjericho.org or contact Pastor Arnold Isidore Thomas at 802-899-3932 or pastorthomas@goodshepherdjericho.org.

Myra Flynn**to speak at Good Shepherd**

Occasionally, Good Shepherd Lutheran Church will invite noted individuals, regardless of their religious affiliation, to share their spiritual perspective and journey. We will be pleased to welcome singer-songwriter Myra Flynn on Sunday, December 10, also at 9:00 AM. All are welcome to join us!

Calvary Episcopal Church

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

St. Thomas Catholic Church

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

Covenant Community Church — "Come As You Are!"

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

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

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

Waterville Union Church

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

SENIOR NEWS

MMV Holiday Social December 9

On Saturday, December 9, join Mount Mansfield Villages (MMV) for a Holiday Social, 12:00 - 3:00 PM at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, VT Rt. 15, Jericho. MMV members, volunteers, family, and friends come together for great food and good cheer!

Become an Age Well volunteer

Do you have some extra time on your hands? Would you like to make a difference in the life of an older Vermonter? If so, please consider volunteering for Age Well. Volunteers are needed in our community — please consider giving your time! Help spread the word that Age Well is seeking 100 new volunteers to provide regular social interaction and assistance to seniors in their homes. Help older Vermonters by volunteering in your community for any of the following: providing friendly visits, going grocery shopping, running errands, assisting with medical appointments, organizing, bill paying, providing respite to caregivers, delivering Meals on Wheels, doing minor home repairs, and more.

Time commitment is based on your availability — it can vary from one day a week to two days a month (Monday-Friday, 8:00 AM - 4:00 PM). Volunteers tell us that they feel an incredible sense of satisfaction and reward seeing the impact they have on those they support. Please contact our Volunteer Department at 802-662-5249 or volunteer@agewellvt.org for more information and to sign up to volunteer.

HUD older adult home modification program

Are you an older Vermonter in need of modifications to your home to help you live more safely and independently? Examples of modifications include bathroom accessibility, stair rails, entryway improvements, lighting, and more.

The Older Adult Home Modification Program funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development is 100% free to those who qualify. You must be 62 years or older, own your home, and have an income of less than \$53,700 for one person or \$61,400 for two people.

Call Carolyn Gipson at 802-488-0734 to see if you qualify.

Age Well Grab'n'Go Lunches

Age Well offers Grab'n'Go Lunches for seniors 60 and over. Register for the meal(s) with Age Well; if needed, request a meal delivery from Mount Mansfield Villages. The suggested donation is \$5.

Wednesday, December 13, 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM, Jericho Community Center, Jericho Center. Please register by Friday, December 8. To register and get more information, including menu, contact Jen at ccjvermont@gmail.com or 802-274-4024.

Wednesday, December 27, 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM, St. Thomas's Church, Underhill Center. Please register by Friday,

December 22. To register and get more information, including menu, contact Teri at office@stthomasvt.com or 802-899-4632.

Local food shelf information

The next Essex Jericho Underhill Food Shelf distribution Saturday, December 16, 9:00 - 10:30 AM at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, VT Rt. 15, Jericho. For more information contact 802-899-3932.

Cambridge Community Food Shelf has distributions on Tuesdays, 1:00 - 7:00 PM at the Second Congregational Church ("White Church"), Jeffersonville. For more information contact 802-644-8911.

Online health aid presentations

High Blood Pressure Management, Thursdays, December 7-February 8, 2:00 - 3:30 PM, online. Presented by My Healthy Vermont and North Country Hospital. Learn the basics of controlling your high blood pressure through eating healthier, becoming more active, and more. Register online at https://www.myhealthyvt.org/workshop_dates/online-or-in-person-high-blood-pressure-3/.

PD Solo: Living Alone While Living with Parkinson's Disease, Tuesday, December 12, 1:00 PM or 7:30 PM, online. Presented by Parkinson's Foundation. This is a virtual network for those with Parkinson's disease (PD) who live alone, by choice or circumstance. The purpose of this group is to create a community of support, share ideas, and brainstorm strategies. Register online at <https://secure3.convio.net/prkorg/site/Calendar?id=110329&view=Detail>.

Healthy Eating: Irritable Bowel Syndrome and FODMAPs, Wednesday, December 20, 2:00 - 3:00 PM, on Zoom. Presented by Dartmouth Aging Resource Center. Registered dietitian Jean Copeland will present FODMAPs and their effect on bowel function in individuals with Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS). Register at <https://events.dartmouth-hitchcock.org/event/virtual-healthy-eating-irritable-bowel-syndrome-and-fodmaps/>.

Creative Caregiving for Alzheimer's, Thursday, December 21, 1:00 - 2:00 PM, by phone. Presented by Wellmed Charitable Foundation. Join gerontologist Dr. Natalee Oliver, DSW, and learn strategies, tips, and techniques to find solace, humor, and positivity amid this complex journey. Registration and information are online at <https://www.wellmedcharitablefoundation.org/caregiver-support-caregiver-teleconnection-events/creative-caregiving-for-alzheimers/>.

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

Senior news continued on page 13

HOLIDAY INFORMATION

You can make a difference with Bolton Crates of Cheer

How can you make a difference in the world and spread some cheer?

We are seeking cash donations to support the Bolton Crates of Cheer. Donations will be used purchase packaged and fresh food to fill up the crates.

Each year, a group of volunteer "elves" deliver handmade wooden crates full of packaged food, fresh veggies, and craft items to seniors and folks who need a bit of cheer in Bolton. Some are recovering from an illness or the death of a loved one, some were impacted by the summer floods, and some are valued elders in our community.

If you would like to donate towards the purchase of food items: Checks should be made out to the Town of Bolton with "Crates of Cheer" in the memo and can be dropped off at the Town Office or mailed to 3045 Theodore Roosevelt Highway, Bolton, VT 05676. Every donation makes a difference!

Fear of Santa

With the holiday season approaching, parents have been anything but fearful to ask me for tips about visiting Santa. They don't want their children to be scared when they visit Santa in a mall or other event in the weeks ahead. Well, let me try to put the ho ho hos in those fearful woe, woe, woes.

Why the worry?

Let's face it — to a small child, Santa Claus can be overwhelming. Maybe it's his size, his booming voice, his gloves, his bright red suit and big white beard — it may be that he is simply a stranger and sitting on a stranger's lap is not something any child should be eager to do. For a small child, visiting Santa can be quite scary.

How to help

You can gradually help your child overcome the fear with practice, practice, and more practice.

First, ask your child to talk about why they're afraid of Santa and that may help. Talk positively about Santa and the good things he does before you go to meet him.

If you celebrate Christmas, have some toy Santas up for decoration so your child can get used to what he looks like.

If your child is old enough to tell you what they want from Santa for Christmas, that can also give them better control and something to talk about when they meet the big guy.

A good idea is to have your child watch other children their age and size meet Santa. When your child sees those children smiling and enjoying their visit, your child may be ready to try as well.

Another idea is for you as a parent to go first to get a picture with Santa — shake his hand — and that may be all it takes.

Don't force it

What if your child is just not ready?

Respect the fear, acknowledge that it is hard to meet someone new, and reassure your child they are safe around Santa and that you are right there.

It's also not a good idea to do anything that would ruin the magic that is Santa at this young of age — thinking it will make things easier in meeting him — so don't stop helping your child believe in that magic.

If your child overcomes the fear and has a successful visit with Santa, praise them, and if not, don't add to the stress by criticizing them or denying the fear exists.

Hopefully, tips like these will not be scary ones to think about when it comes to helping your child not fear going to see Santa.

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

Christmas tree sales support Troop 627

Planning to buy a Christmas tree? Please consider supporting Underhill/Jericho Scout Troop 627's annual Christmas tree fundraiser at the VT Rt. 15 Jericho Jolly! Trees are from Craftsbury, VT ranging from 7-10' and are all priced at \$60.

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.

Sales are weekday evenings from 5:00 – 7:00 PM and weekends from 10:00 AM – 6:00 PM.

Balsam fir Christmas trees — Scouts BSA fundraiser

Come support Essex Boy Scout Troop 635 and make your holiday extra-special knowing a beautiful balsam fir tree you purchase will also support quality youth programming in our community. It's a win-win! Come get your 6-8' (for \$65) or 8-10' (for \$80). Beautiful Balsam from BSA Troop 635! The Girl's BSA Troop will also have wreaths for sale for \$30.

Trees and wreaths are on sale with helpful scouts to assist you from 9:00 AM – 7:30 PM on weekends, and 5:00 – 7:30 PM on weekdays, at the Essex Discount Beverage, 76 Center Rd., Essex Junction.

Holiday services

Services at Jericho Congregational Church, on the Green in Jericho Center: Lessons & Carols Service, December 17 at 10:00 AM; Christmas Eve Worship Service, December 24 at 10:00 AM; Christmas Pageant, December 24 at 5:00 PM; Christmas Candlelight Service, December 24 at 9:00 PM. For information: 802-899-4911; officejcc@comcast.net; www.jccvt.org.

Yule Lore-A Wheel of the Year Workshop: Wednesday, December 20. 6:00 – 8:00 PM, 10 Apple Tree Lane, Underhill. Join herbalist Amber Kennedy of Boheme Botanika in her home and apothecary for this cozy, candle lit, old-fashioned, winter celebration. This festive workshop honors the pagan celebration of Yule, which coincides with the Winter Solstice. Enjoy hot tea, cider wassail, and gingerbread; hear yuletide folklore of

days gone by; listen to traditional folk carols; make an orange and clove pomander ornament to take home; learn the history of some of our favorite holiday symbols, like the wreath and holly garlands; discover the medicine, myth, and magic of some of the most beloved yuletide herbs, spices, and botanicals; take part in a yule log burning ritual to usher in the return of the sun! Space is limited and pre-registration is required. For more details including cost, go online to <https://www.bohemebotanika.com/events/yule-lore-a-wheel-of-the-year-celebration>.

Jeffersonville Holiday Parade December 16

It is the time of year again and Saturday, December 16, 5:00 PM will be our holiday parade in Jeffersonville.

The parade should start at 5:00 PM from Tatro and go into Jeffersonville at this time. I'm sorry to announce that we will not be able to do Jeff Heights and Cambridge; it's very hard for the trucks too travel a long distance to Cambridge with decorations and lights, and Jeff Heights is very hard to go up the hill and turn around, with some trucks too big to make the hill.

Here is the parade route:

Tatros down VT Rt. 15 to Church St.; Church St. to Maple St.; Maple St. to Depot St.; Depot St. across to School St.; around the school to Carlton Ave.; Carlton Ave. to Main St. back to the Roundabout.

If you would like to be in the parade or have any questions, please contact Rod Kelley, 802-760-8426.

Mountain Gazette 2024 deadlines and publication dates

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

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

DEADLINE DATES:

THURSDAY

December 26 - note Tuesday deadline

January 9 – note Tuesday deadline

January 25

February 8

February 29

March 14

March 28

April 11

April 25

May 9

May 30

June 13

June 27

July 11

July 25

August 8

August 27 - note Tuesday deadline

September 12

September 26

October 8 - note Tuesday deadline

October 31

November 14

November 28

December 12

PUBLICATION DATES:

THURSDAY

January 4 - early deadline (New Year)

January 18 - early deadline (MLK Day)

February 1

*February 15

*March 7

March 21

April 4

April 18

May 2

*May 16

*June 6

June 20

July 4

July 18

August 1

*August 15

*September 5 - early deadline (Labor Day)

September 19

October 3

*October 17

- early deadline (Indigenous People Day)

*November 7

November 21

December 5

December 19

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

mtngazette@gmavt.net • www.mountaingazetteofvermont.com

For information: Brenda Boutin • 802-453-6354

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

Senior news continued from page 12

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

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

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

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Winter Safety Tips

How to Detect a Gas Leak

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

Sight: 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.

Sound: 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.



Have a happy and safe holiday season!





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EdgeRealtyVermont.com

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The first 25 words for \$6.50
and ten cents
for each additional word.

Contact Brenda Boutin
at *mtngazette@gmavt.net*
to reach readers in our regular
coverage area of
Bolton, Jericho, Underhill,
Cambridge, Jeffersonville,
Westford, plus
Hinesburg, Huntington,
Richmond, Essex
and Essex Junction.

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

BUSINESS DIRECTORY

PROPERTY MAINTENANCE

This space costs \$18.00, must purchase 5 no-change ads, total cost \$90.00

WELL DRILLING SERVICES

MOUNTAIN GAZETTE RATE SHEET 2024

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.
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Subscriptions \$35.00 per year - 24 issues

Inserts 1-4 pages, 8 1/2" x 11" Cost \$50.00 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

www.mountaingazetteofvermont.com

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Wunderhill Lights is a Christmas pixel light show for the holiday season. Come check them out for some holiday fun and spirit at 38 Upper English Settlement Road in Underhill (access is from Poker Hill Road). The lights come on at 5:00 PM. Each show has a handful of songs that last about 45 minutes. After that the lights just twinkle until they restart the songs over again on the hour. Each set of songs starts on each hour 5:00, 6:00, 7:00, 8:00, and 9:00 PM, respectively. Tune in to 96.5-FM on your car radio to keep warm. Feel free to park in the driveway; just make sure you leave access in and out for others, as well as us! For more information or questions, contact Geoff Markowski, gm16sw@yahoo.com. Also check out the FB page Wunderhill Lights (members only) for updates.

PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

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 presents **George Frideric Handel**
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Featuring Mendelssohn Award-winning period instrument orchestra with internationally acclaimed soloists

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"The Messiah directed by Eric Miller at the Vermont Choral Union Hall was one of the best of the Christmas season, with many others to come. But we'll never see the singing and playing that all other Messiahs this year could ever approach!"
 Jan Swartzell, THE NEW YORK TIMES

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Crematory Charge	\$390.00
Medical Examiner Permit	\$25.00
Certified Death Certificate	\$10.00
Transit Permit	\$5.00
Total Direct Cremation Charges:	\$1,495.00

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