

# The Brandon • Pittsford • Proctor • West Rutland • Lake Dunmore • Leicester • Whiting • Sudbury • Goshen REPORTER

A community supported newspaper

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\$1



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The Electrostatic Cats bring an 80s/90s vibe to Brandon Town Hall Theater on Saturday, January 21.

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State Rep. Butch Shaw of Pittsford lets his constituents know what he's been up to in Montpelier.

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## OUR CREATIVE KIDS

We're debuting a new feature showcasing the artwork of local students. Go to see the work of our first artist: Olivia Gibbs of OVUMS.

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## BEAVER POND

The Beaver Pond Committee in Proctor ties into local history with a new marker on one of its hiking trails.

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## Truck controversy at Brandon Fire District meeting

BY STEVEN JUPITER

BRANDON—The Brandon Fire District No. 1 held its annual meeting on Monday, January 9, at the Brandon Fire Department (BFD). It was standing room only, a big departure for a meeting that's often sparsely attended. According to frequent attendees, these meetings usually take under an hour and are simply a series of motions and approvals that cause barely a ripple in town. This year was different.

The difference is that this year, BFD had signed a contract for a new fire truck that will cost \$769,542 and will be partially financed by the sale of the BFD's newest vehicle, a 2015 model that cost \$375K when new and which sold for \$325K this fall. The sale of Engine 1, as it was known, leaves BFD with 4 other trucks, all of which are older and some of which, it is claimed, are functionally impaired. One truck,

for example, is leaking hydraulic fluid from its ladder.

There were harsh words in the room for both the Prudential Committee, which oversees the Fire and Water Districts and which approved the purchase, and for BFD itself. Town residents, some of whom were attending specifically because of this issue, expressed anger, frustration, and a great deal of skepticism about the purchase.

"As a board, you should watch out for the best interests of the taxpayers of this town," said one attendee.

"Irresponsible," said another. When asked why the Prudential Committee approved the sale of BFD's newest truck rather than one of the older vehicles, Committee member Natalie Steen said, "It was part of a multi-year plan to downsize the fleet."

"[Engine 1] was the best bang for our buck," said BFD Chief Tom Kilpeck. "Everything else



BRANDON FIRE DISTRICT No. 1 held its annual meeting on January 9 at the Brandon Fire Department. A standing-room only crowd expressed skepticism over the recent sale of a fire truck to pay for a new one.  
Photo by Steven Jupiter

is worth substantially less."

Committee Chair Bill Moore added, "When the Fire Chief says what he needs, we're here to support them."

Committee member Dennis

Reisenweaver noted that the vote to approve the sale was not unanimous. He and member Jon Wyman voted against it, while members Bill Moore, (See Fire District, Page 3)



BRANDON IDOL CONTESTANTS (l to r): Peggy Sue Rozell, Venus Diamondis, Baker LaRock, Shannon Wright, Suzi Watters, and Irene Simons.  
Photos By Sue Campbell Danforth

## Brandon Idol rocks Town Hall in triumphant return

BY WILL ROSS

BRANDON—Brandon Idol made a triumphant return on the evening of Saturday, January 14 after a 2-year hiatus. The local singing competition put on by the Brandon Town Recreation Department brings

in talent from across the state to compete for fame, prestige, and a grand prize of \$1,000. The event features vocalists who come to showcase their skills over a five-month competition. The shows take place at the Brandon Town Hall The-

ater and the public is more than welcome to come join the audience and show support for local artists.

First launched in 2019, Brandon Idol was intended to be an annual event but, because of (See Brandon Idol, Page 14)

## Beating the Winter Blues

BY GEORGE FJELD, M.D.

BRANDON—Holy cow, winter sure is long! I get up in the dark and come home from work in the dark! I feel so trapped inside during the winter. What can I do?

The "winter blues" are a common syndrome here in Vermont. We live far from the equator and have months of limited daylight. Combine that with cold weather and cloudiness and you have a recipe for isolation and limited activity. Many folks get up and leave for work in the darkness only to return home in the dark after working inside all day. Just talking about it is depressing.

Common winter-blues symptoms are mild sleep disturbance, low energy, and feelings of sadness that occur for 2 weeks or less. They can also include feeling more down than usual with less interest in usual activities. Lots of people have them for a few days to a week at a time.

If symptoms are more severe, (See Winter Blues, Page 7)

## Local musicians at the Brandon Town Hall

# The Electrostatic Cats bring an alternative vibe to Brandon



**JONATHAN CZAR AND Gayle Malinowski of The Electrostatic Cats.** The duo will perform covers and original songs, with an emphasis on 80s/90s alternative rock, at Brandon Town Hall Theater on Saturday, January 21.

**BY STEVEN JUPITER**

LEICESTER—Anyone who came of age in the 1980s and 90s will immediately recognize the music: Souxsie and the Banshees, U2, Muse, the Pretenders, Garbage, the Killers... all staples of the alternative scene of those decades. Leicester's own Electrostatic Cats—a duo made up of Jonathan Czar and Gayle Malinowski—grew up in the era and still cherish that sound. And they're planning to bring it to Brandon's Town Hall Theater on Saturday, January 21.

Czar, who was raised in Poultney, has been playing music since he was a teen. He was part of the "borderline punk" scene in Rutland in the 80s, centered around the Valley Club, which is now Strangefellows, near the Amtrak station. He plays guitar, bass, and keyboards.

Three years ago, he persuaded Malinowski, a longtime friend and coworker in the IT

department at Castleton University, to give drumming a shot. She had no prior experience but got hooked. "I'd been a dancer," she said. "I had a sense of rhythm and timing."

"Her arms used to get tired really quickly," joked Czar. "But she's one of the few drummers who can sing and play at the same time."

And now they're the Electrostatic Cats, named for Malinowski's cat, Mario. A cartoon of his face graces Malinowski's hot pink kick drum.

The Rutland scene tends to feature mellower music these days. "Bluegrass, a lot of acoustic," said Czar. "People in Rutland County aren't used to hearing alternative music live."

"A lot of times when we're playing restaurants, people stop what they're doing to listen," said Malinowski. "The music catches their attention."

In their practice space at Malinowski's home in Leicester, she and Czar launched into a

solid rendition of "Brass in Pocket" by the Pretenders, with Malinowski on drums and vocals and Czar on guitar and keyboard.

"We heard the song recently and both of us immediately wanted to perform it," said Czar.

The duo also write original songs. They indulged a request for a sample with a catchy, acerbic tune called "Things to Do," which features the memorable lyric "I've got things to do and none of them include you." "It's on our set list for Brandon," said Czar, "along with Souxsie and the Banshees, the Killers, Tragically Hip, even some Fleetwood Mac."

Whether you grew up listening to alternative rock or are a younger fan of the 80s/90s vibe, the Electrostatic Cats' show at the Brandon Town Hall Theater on Saturday, January 21 promises to satisfy your craving.

## Proctor selectboard: skeeters, snake oil, and school tax

**BY STEVEN JUPITER**

PROCTOR—The Proctor selectboard met on Monday, January 9.

A standout in an otherwise routine meeting, Proctor resident Philip Anderson rose during public comment and expressed his frustration with the town's approach to mosquito control. Anderson stated his impression that the representative from the Mosquito District who had been at the previous meeting was "peddling snake oil" and that the rep's exhortations for Proctor to join the Mosquito District were "a scam" designed to benefit selectboard members personally.

Board Chair Judy Frazier countered that the benefit to joining the Mosquito District is that Proctor would gain a seat on the District board and therefore a vote on District matters. Currently, as a non-member, Proctor has no say in District management. The town can pay for spraying but cannot vote on policy. Later in the meeting, the board voted to ask for \$17,500 for funding of the Mosquito District in the proposed budget for fiscal year 2024.

Anderson also questioned the town's expenditures on engineering firms for large projects

when there were many small projects around town that are being neglected. He claimed that a culvert near his house has been broken since Irene, for example.

Town Assessor Lisa Wright then presented to the board the results of the 2022 Equalization Study, which compares the town's assessed property values, as seen in the Grand List, with the fair market value of those properties. The Common Level of Appraisal (CLA) for Proctor in 2022 was 88.90%, which indicates that the assessed value of property in Proctor is only 88.9% of its fair market value. Since property taxes (including school taxes) are based on assessed value, a CLA below 100% means that property owners are paying taxes on less than the fair market value of their properties, as determined by the state.

The CLA for Proctor was 99.87% in 2020 and 95.25% in 2021. The drop of 6.67% in the CLA from 2021 to 2022 indicates that property values have increased in Proctor over the last year but the town's assessed values have not kept pace. The drop in CLA will result in a tax increase to reflect the rise in property values. If a town's CLA drops below 85%—meaning that

the assessed value of property in the town is only 85% of the fair-market value—the state will require a townwide reappraisal to try to get the Grand List in line with the local real estate market.

Other business:

The town will contract with Aldrich & Elliot engineering firm to perform a lead and copper management plan to comply with a federal rules revision regarding lead and copper in drinking water. The plan will be funded by the Drinking Water State Revolving Loan Fund.

Plans are underway to clean up the site of the house fire on West Street.

The board approved a motion to list tax delinquencies in the 2021-2022 town report.

The board approved a motion to provide a letter to Zion Growers to support their application for a Community Recovery and Revitalization Grant.

The board certified the 2023 mileage certification, which determines the town's share of state aid for highway maintenance.

The full minutes of the meeting are available on the town's website: [www.proctorvermont.com](http://www.proctorvermont.com).



## Otters girls' basketball gains first win of season

**BY ANDY KIRKALDY**

BRANDON — The Otter Valley Union High School girls' basketball team on Saturday broke through for its first win — at the expense of visiting Vergennes in overtime.

By defeating the visiting Commodores, 61-56, Otters picked up their first win in 10 outings.

As well as OV improving to 1-9, the big story was the performance of Otter senior Elena Politano. Held scoreless in the first half, Politano scored 17 points in the second half and then 13 more in overtime after regulation ended in a 46-46 tie. Among her points were six three-pointers.

"It was an unbelievable performance," said VUHS Coach Billy Waller.

Waller credited all of OV

Coach Ray Counter's Otters for their effort.

"Ray's kids wanted it badly," he said.

Also scoring for OV were Emily Peduto (13 points) and Anna Lee (eight). Waller also said OV guard Ryleigh LaPorte (six points) submitted a strong all-around game.

Kyra Bradford excelled for the Commodores, with 24 points, 15 rebounds, six assists and six steals. Ashtin Stearns scored 13 points, and Kaelin Sullivan and Finnley Jacobson added six apiece.

On Monday, host Burr and Burton Academy toppled the Otters, 57-30, in Manchester. The Bulldogs bolted to a 29-9 halftime lead.

Peduto led OV (1-10) with 11 points. Lee added eight, and LaPorte chipped in seven points.



# Fire district

*(Continued from Page 1)*  
Natalie Steen, and Michael Markowski voted to approve. Reisenweaver later reiterated that he did not feel that the sale of Engine 1 “was in the best interests of the community.”

When an attendee asserted that “a lot of people haven’t been informed” with regard to the sale, Moore replied, “our meetings are open to the public and the minutes are available within days online.”

BFD used the proceeds of the sale of Engine 1 as a 50% down payment on the new truck. The remaining 50% is due on delivery of the vehicle, which is expected in December of 2024.

In a later conversation, Chief Kilpeck stated that Engine 1 had been a “demo model”—it was used by the manufacturer for demonstrations to potential buyers—and proved insufficient to BFD’s needs.

“There was some unusable space [in Engine 1],” Kilpeck said. “The new truck will have three times the storage capacity. Our plan is to consolidate the fleet. Fewer but better trucks.”

“If we hadn’t sold that truck,” he added, “we would’ve been asking for financing.”

According to Kilpeck, BFD receives \$105,000 per year for vehicle replacement. Money that isn’t spent in one fiscal year rolls over into the next. Thus, by the time the remaining 50% on the new truck is due in 2024, BFD will have at least \$210,000 on hand toward that obligation. The balance on the new truck, however, will be \$384,726.

“The Committee may have to take out a small loan,” Kilpeck conceded. But with \$105,000 coming in every year for vehicle replacement, he didn’t see a problem being able to pay it off.

Regarding BFD’s readiness to fight fires in the meantime, with its fleet of 4 older trucks, Kilpeck insists that the Department is completely capable. “We have fully operational equipment,” he said. “And we

have mutual aid agreements with Pittsford and Salisbury. If we need assistance, those departments will be automatically dispatched.”

“The people who were complaining weren’t at any of the [prior] meetings,” Kilpeck added. “They were there with incomplete information.”

Reached for comment after the meeting, Chair Bill Moore said, “[The purchase of the new truck] was part of a six-month process that spanned many regular and special Prudential Committee meetings. A vehicle committee,

headed by our chief engineer, made a rational argument for a vehicle replacement plan that included the sale of Engine 1 and purchase of new trucks for the fleet.”

“It has been anticipated that there will be enough in the vehicle replacement fund by the time the new engine is delivered...to satisfy the remaining payment,” Moore continued. “However, if there were to be a shortfall, that amount would be within the statutory amount allowed for the Prudential Committee to commit via a vehicle bond (less than \$100,000) or from budget surplus funds.”

After the debate surrounding the truck, the Committee continued with its agenda, proposing for approval by attendees the creation of 3 reserve funds to hold monies currently

held in accounts known as the “Fern Lake” and “Tank” funds. By statute, monies that are not used for expenses or to offset the amount needed from taxpayers must be held in reserve accounts.

“These accounts [Fern Lake and Tank] were basically being used as slush funds, in my opinion,” said Reisenweaver. “We’re just cleaning things up and complying with the law.”

The motions to create a fire reserve, a water reserve, and a general emergency reserve all passed.

The Prudential Committee then called for elections of Officers of the District.

Kristy Pinkham was re-elected as both Clerk and Treasurer.

Amber Lee and Scott Trask were elected Auditors.

Sue Gage was elected Collector of Taxes.

Before the meeting, the composition of the Prudential Committee was Bill Moore, Dennis Reisenweaver, Jon Wyman, Michael Markowski, and Natalie Steen. Moore, Reisenweaver, and Wyman were all at the end of their terms; they’d have to be re-elected to remain on the Committee. After several ballots, including one tie, the composition of the Committee is now Dennis Reisenweaver (re-elected), David Snow, Jon Wyman (re-elected), Michael Markowski, and Natalie Steen.

Note that Bill Moore had already planned to step down at the end of his term. He did not run for re-election, citing heavy commitments elsewhere. “We are in a good place and it is time for other community members to get involved,” he said.



## Green Mountain Conservation Camp registration is open

MONTPELIER, Vt. -- If you are 12 to 14 years old and want to learn about Vermont's wildlife and gain outdoor skills, consider attending one of the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department's Green Mountain Conservation Camps this summer. If you are a GMCC alum, 16 or younger, consider coming back for another summer.

The one-week camp programs are held at Lake Bomoseen in Castleton and Buck Lake in Woodbury. Campers participate

to the fullest,” said Fish and Wildlife Education Specialist Hannah Phelps. “An important take-away message and common theme during the week is that conserving and managing habitat will help ensure Vermont will have fish and wildlife in the future.”

“We would love to have all of the advanced sessions filled for campers who have already attended a basic session,” added Phelps. “Advanced sessions are for campers who have completed a basic session in a previous summer and who are 16 years old or younger. Advanced sessions include more in-depth activities about backpacking, camping, natural resources, and unique hunting and fishing techniques.”



in hands-on learning about fish and wildlife conservation, ecology, forestry, orienteering, safe firearm and archery techniques, swimming, canoeing, fishing and more. Natural resource professionals come to the camp to share information on their programs and take campers out for field activities.

“Whether kids come alone or with friends, they are guaranteed to meet new people and form new bonds while experiencing Vermont’s natural resources

in hands-on learning about fish and wildlife conservation, ecology, forestry, orienteering, safe firearm and archery techniques, swimming, canoeing, fishing and more. Natural resource professionals come to the camp to share information on their programs and take campers out for field activities.

Conservation Camps open June 18 and continue until August 18. Tuition is \$250 for the week, including food, lodging and equipment, and financial assistance is available.

Information and registration are available at [www.vtfishandwildlife.com](http://www.vtfishandwildlife.com).

For more information, contact [FWGMCC@vermont.gov](mailto:FWGMCC@vermont.gov) or call 802-522-2925.

*“Our meetings are open to the public and the minutes are available within days online.”*

*—Bill Moore, former chair of Prudential Committee*

See page 17  
**Sharpen your mind with our puzzles.**

## READER COMMENTS

**A reader from Brandon writes:**

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The REPORTER

## BRANDON REPORTER

## Editorial

## More than Town Meeting: attendance at mundane meetings is crucial

BY STEVEN JUPITER

BRANDON—This past week, I attended the annual Brandon Fire District meeting, along with dozens of other folks from town. It was my first time attending this particular meeting since I moved to Brandon in 2016. It was also the first time for several other people in the room, even for some who've lived

here for decades.

I attended this year because there was a particular issue on the agenda that warranted attention from The Reporter (see Fire District article in this issue). Many of the other folks in attendance were there primarily to discuss that same issue. And many ended up frustrated that this meeting was the first time they'd become aware of the details of it.

"We hold open meetings. Our minutes are available to the public," said Bill Moore, chair of the Prudential Board, gently admonishing those who claimed they'd been unaware of specific decisions the board had recently made. And he's right: these meetings, like those of the selectboard and school boards, are public. The

agendas are posted ahead of time. Their minutes are generally available online within days. Many of them are recorded and uploaded to PEGTV. Anyone who wants to stay on top of what's happening in town is free to attend any of these meetings or access the minutes and recordings.

Yet most of us don't. At least not until there's a particular issue that irks us. But often, by the time we've been irked, the decisions have been made and can't be undone, leaving us feeling angry and powerless.

We all lead busy lives. We have jobs, kids, and other obligations. It's hard to make time to attend meetings on weeknights when so many other things compete for our energy. It's also true that many of these meetings are boring, even for the people running them. It can be tough to stay focused on dull material at the end of a long day, especially in winter months when most meetings start after dark.

But, if we don't attend, we have no one to blame but ourselves when these various boards

(See *Mundane meetings*, Page 5)

*But Town Meeting isn't enough. We need to voice our opinions throughout the year, even when we're tired. Even when it's boring. We need to ask questions. We need to demand information. Not to be gadflies but rather to have a say in how our town is run and how our tax dollars are spent.*



### Shhh. What's that sound?

**CEDAR WAXWINGS LOVE fruit.** To attract waxwings to your yard, plant native trees and shrubs that bear small fruits, such as dogwood, serviceberry, cedar, juniper, hawthorn, and winterberry.

Photo by Sue Wetmore

## Community Forums

### Community Care Network launches text line for crisis support in Vermont

RUTLAND—Community Care Network (CCN) and its Rutland Mental Health Emergency Services Team today announced the implementation of a 24-hour a day, 7 day a week crisis text line available to anyone needing support during a mental health emergency.

"It's become increasingly clear that many people, especially young individuals, are reticent to pick up the phone and make

phone calls when they need help," said Loree Zeif, LICSW, Director of Emergency Services with Community Care Network. "We've implemented the text line as a way to offer an alternative initial engagement with our crisis team for people to reach out in a way that might be more comfortable to them."

CCN's crisis text line, made possible by a \$10,000 grant from the Vermont Community Foun-

ation which covered a portion of the training and start-up costs, is monitored around-the-clock and features a simple, user-friendly process for individuals seeking support.

Individuals who contact the crisis text line will typically be connected with a CCN crisis clinician in less than five minutes, though this may vary during high-traffic times. From there,

(See *Crisis support*, Page 7)

## We have more in common than we think

BY SUSAN JOHNSON

BRANDON—Martin Luther King, Jr. Day this week reminds us of the efforts Dr. King and so many others have made to evolve and protect civil rights. Most well-known for his use of nonviolent resistance toward achieving racial equality, Dr. King's ideas supporting this focus are also noteworthy. He stated:

Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects

one directly, affects all indirectly. Regardless of our differences—race, gender, wealth (or lack thereof), profession, political or any other characteristic—we are all connected. What one does or experiences out in the community shapes that community, which, in turn, impacts all of us.

Another notable truth: despite our differences, we have more in common than not. We want our families to be healthy. We only want the best for our kids. We've all had someone we love die of cancer. All of us have had

personal struggles. We may have common interests. Democrats, Independents, and Republicans may be united when drinking beer, enjoying music or art, hunting or hiking.

Most of us are much more than a political, racial, or any other kind of label, though our social circles tend to share various labels with us. We are complex, mixed bundles of thoughts, feelings, and opinions. We all have opinions, for example, on what would make the ideal com-

(See *More in commen*, Page 7)

## The REPORTER

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Current board members are Steven Jupiter, president; Dr. George Fjeld, treasurer; Barbara Ebling, secretary.

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# Letters to the Editor

## A look at the OVUU budget

With the holiday season over, it's time to start looking at the budgets of our towns and school district for the coming year. After sitting on the OVUU school board for the last year, I've witnessed a great turnaround in the district. With a new district-wide superintendent, new principal at OV, another one at Otter Creek Academy, plus a new director of curriculum, not to mention all the new staff throughout the schools, the district seems to be reborn.

This new administration has countless fresh ideas of how to create a better learning environment for the children of our communities. After the last two years of COVID, it will be necessary for the district to rebuild, this new administration is poised to do that in a positive and effective way. After a month of work, with some lively discussions and an interesting split vote, the OVUU board has approved a budget for the 2024 school year.

As one of my fellow board members pointed out during our discussions, the concept of level funding, where overall spending is kept at existing levels despite increased costs, is in truth a bad idea. Because without further investment, the school district will only fall behind. Particularly when the schools are asked to do extra every year to help our children in more ways than basic education. If we are honest, we all have been affected in an

adverse way from the pandemic. Our children and their education have been negatively affected the most. Therefore, increased spending on that education is so very important for the next several years.

This year's spending increase for the OVUU budget is one that will benefit the most important investment we can make in the future of our communities: our children. The largest increase in the budget is the typical increase we see every year, salaries, and benefits for staff, which is the largest cost of any organization. It was pointed out to the board during the budget process that benefits include not only health and dental insurance and retirement programs but also mandated unemployment insurance and continuing education for school staff. All these benefits create a positive impact on the education of our children.

Another increase in this year's budget is support services for students as they begin to recover from adverse effects on their education from the COVID pandemic, this too will have a positive impact on our children's lives and education. We see an increase in the basic cost of doing business, supplies, electricity, fuel, etc. It is also important to know that though student enrollment is declining in Vermont overall, OVUU enrollment is staying consistent or increasing.

The goal of the OVUU board

was to provide a budget that will increase the educational opportunities for students in every stage of their academic growth. From pre-kindergarten to students that are more geared toward industrial arts. With a \$175,000 increase toward the OV industrial arts program, the board is showing the need to not only encourage students toward a university path but a pathway toward working in the trades and new innovative carriers that are constantly evolving. Though most of us don't like to see our taxes go up, we should all be able to agree that the best investment we can make is a positive one in a robust, creative, and consistent education for the youth of our communities.

It's important to remember that a school-district voting ballot will only be mailed to you if you request one from your town clerk. So, you can vote two ways: either vote in person or request a ballot be sent to you by mail. Finally, there will be a OVUU budget presentation on March 1st at Otter Valley High School to give people a chance to ask questions so that they can better understand that this budget is in the best interest of our children and our communities.

*Devon Fuller  
Member, OVUU School Board*

# Mundane meetings

*(Continued from Page 4)*  
carry out their duties without our observation and input. And even when the paper shows up, all we can do is report what has already happened. Citizens have to be involved in order to have a say.

There are, of course, people who do regularly attend meetings and speak up and try to influence outcomes, as is their right as members of the community. But most of us wait until something comes to a head to start asking questions, and one of the most common is "Why haven't I heard about this before?" The answer is often simply that we weren't paying attention.

I want to make clear that I am absolutely not accusing any board of any wrongdoing. We're lucky to live in a community where people volunteer for these positions in order to make a positive difference. But we won't agree with every decision they make, and sometimes we might even vehemently oppose some course of

action that a well-meaning board has approved. If we want influence, we have to show up.

In a few short weeks, we will have a Town Meeting, a wonderful tradition that harkens back to colonial times. Where I grew up in New York, such meetings did not take place. It's a truly special thing to be able to gather with your neighbors to plot the course of your town, to voice your opinions, to demand explanations from town officials. That sense of local democracy is one of the things I love about living in New England.

But Town Meeting isn't enough. We need to voice our opinions throughout the year, even when we're tired. Even when it's boring. We need to ask questions. We need to demand information. Not to be gadflies but rather to have a say in how our town is run and how our tax dollars are spent.

We need to show up.

The Brandon Area Food Shelf would like to thank St. Thomas/Grace Episcopal Church for their food drive, Saturday January 14th.

Special thanks goes to Cassie Root and George Howard for Spearheading this project.

Many folks will benefit from the non-perishable items donated, as well as the gift cards to Hannaford with were purchased with the funds collected. Know that your kindness is greatly appreciated.

*Kathy Mathis, Director*

## FROZEN SALE! BRRRRR!

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**2020 TOYOTA TUNDRA**  
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## Local scholars receive college honors, Fall 2022

### THREE LOCALS ARE NAMED TO THEIR PRESIDENT'S LISTS

July Alexander of West Rutland was named to the President's List at Southern New Hampshire University in Manchester, NH.

Nathan Depatie of Brandon was named to the President's List at SUNY Potsdam in Potsdam, NY.

Christina Wiles of Brandon was named to the President's List at Southern New Hampshire University in Manchester, NH.

### DANFORTH AND PARSONS MAKE DEAN'S LIST

Jedidiah Danforth of Salisbury was named to the Dean's List at Stonehill College in North Easton, MA.

Devin Parsons of Proctor was named to the Dean's List at Southern New Hampshire University in Manchester, NH.



## Legislative Report

BY BUTCH SHAW

### Biennium officially starts

PITTSFORD—From the “Journal of the House” of Wednesday January 4, 2023: “Pursuant to the provisions of the Constitution and Laws of the State of Vermont, the member-elect of the House of Representatives convened in the State House in Montpelier on the first Wednesday after the first Monday, being the fourth day of January, two thousand and twenty three.”

Therefore, “at 10 o'clock in the forenoon the Honorable Chris

Winters, Deputy Secretary of State, called the House to order for the seventy-seventh biennial session”

These two simple paragraphs signal the “official” start of the biennium for the Vermont House of Representatives. Having served in the legislature for the past thirteen years, this new session represents a “new beginning” for me as I have been elected to represent a new legislative district consisting of the towns of Pittsford and Proctor. I’m looking forward to representing my new district. However, I will miss representing the folks of Brandon and Sudbury and please be assured that if you have any questions or need answers to any questions, I’ll still be available to help you in any way I can. I’m sure Representative Jerome in Brandon and Representative Andriano in Sudbury will represent their communities well.

The first two weeks of a new biennium consist of pomp, circumstance, ceremony, and housekeeping in the Hall of Representatives. The members of the house are sworn in and elect a Speaker of the House and a House Clerk. Representa-

tive Jill Krowinski has been re-elected Speaker and has assigned members to their respective committees. I have been reassigned to the House Committee on Transportation, where I will serve as Vice Chair. I take the appointment to committee leadership seriously and appreciate the Speaker’s trust in me, especially as a member of the minority party. I have also proudly been re-elected as Chair of the influential tri-partisan Rutland County Legislative Delegation.

*I take the appointment to committee leadership seriously and appreciate the Speaker’s trust in me, especially as a member of the minority party.*

—Butch Shaw

An important note and unusual happening is the record number of 51 new members to the House. The “freshmen” promise to bring new thoughts and ideas to the body and I’m looking forward to working with them as they gain legislative experience. It is also interesting to note that now two-thirds of the House of Representatives have less than four years of service. I’m sure the next session will be an interesting journey for all as we navigate the legislative process together.

Constituent services are the most important part of being a State Representative and I can be reached any time by email at [bshaw@leg.state.vt.us](mailto:bshaw@leg.state.vt.us), by phone at 802-483-2398, or by mail at PO Box 197, Pittsford, VT 05763. I am always available to have a conversation with you concerning our Legislative District and your Vermont State Government.

*Representative Butch Shaw  
Pittsford-Proctor  
Vice Chair-House Committee on Transportation  
Chair-Rutland County Legislative Delegation*

## Show your sweetheart some Valentine's sugar

### We're running a Valentine's Day special feature in Feb 15th issue of The Reporter!

For only \$10, you can take out a 2.25" x 3" ad with a message of up to 20 words and your choice of vintage, modern, floral, or playful graphic.

Please send your message and a check to **Brandon Reporter, 294 Wheeler Road, Brandon, VT 05733**. You may drop off your message & check at that address as well. Please include a phone number or email where we can reach you if we have questions.

Messages received after 2/13 will not be included. Messages without payment will not be included. Messages with profanity will not be included. Keep it wholesome, folks!

**LOVE LOVE LOVE**  
**LOVE LOVE LOVE**

### Dearest Pookie,

My favorite place to be is together with you.

Wherever you are is where I want to be.

Love,  
Schmoopie

### Sample valentine

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Modern sample



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# Crisis support

*(Continued from Page 4)*  
crisis clinicians invite the individual to share their concerns at their own pace, help them sort through their feelings by asking questions, empathizing and actively listening, provide them with the option to move to phone, video or in-person communication at any point, and offer referrals for additional help if desired.

“The text line is another support access point for anyone struggling with a mental health crisis – whether it be thoughts of suicide, abuse, sexual assault, depression, bullying or a range of other potential scenarios,” said Zeif. “We anticipate the line may be utilized more by at-risk

communities such as youth and young adults, marginalized and underserved populations, and individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities, but it is available to anyone needing help.

“Ultimately, the goal of the system and resulting conversations is to get individuals seeking help to a calm, safe place – sometimes that means providing them with a referral for further help, and sometimes it means just being there and listening,” Zeif added.

Individuals can reach the Community Care Network – Rutland Mental Health Crisis Text Line at **802-214-2553**.

# Winter Blues

*(Continued from Page 1)*

prolonged, and interfere with daily activities, they may indicate seasonal affective disorder or SAD. SAD is a form of depression and can benefit from medical intervention. If you're having significant and prolonged symptoms, see a health professional.

So, what can you do to help yourself?

Get active. Walk, run, ski, snowshoe, or go sledding. Exercise with weights, or swim in an indoor pool (lake swimming is not recommended in winter although it is easier to float on the ice!). Other indoor activities such as bowling, basketball, and indoor tennis are also helpful. Be creative, do things you like!

Sleep is important. Set a schedule of bedtime and wake-time and stick to it. Some people find that using a “dawn light” to wake helps. These lights simulate dawn in your bedroom with progressively increasing light. Establish a bedtime ritual to help yourself get ready to sleep. Skip or limit naps to 20 minutes or less; they can make it more difficult to fall asleep at night. Some folks find supplementing with melatonin before bed can help with sleep onset.

Laugh! Watch a comedy show or movie. Get together with friends and tell jokes, even groaner Dad jokes! Laughing can help fight low mood. Have a festive party perhaps with an island theme. Play board games with friends and family. Go listen to live music or see a show.

Get some sun. I know it's not available all the time but when the sun is out, show it your face! Even a few minutes can make a

difference. Sit in front of a bright window. There are also artificial lights available to sit in front of during the morning to get some light stimulation. Pick one that has some clinical studies that prove its effectiveness.

You may benefit from supplemental Vitamin D. Vitamin D is made in your body when you are exposed to the sun without sunscreen. This happens a lot in the warmer months when we wear less clothes and see more sun. Longer days and warmer temperatures are key. However, these are not readily available during Vermont winters. How much should you take? Vitamin D is fat soluble and can build up in the body to harmful levels, so it is important not to overdo it. 800 to 1,000mg a day is a reasonable dose and can be taken once a week (6,000-7,000mg at a time). Don't overdose because you think more is better. Remember, too much can harm you. Consult a medical professional if you have questions.

Drink water and limit alcohol. Water helps your body in lots of ways. Alcohol has a short-term effect to improve mood but is actually a depressant to the brain. It's not that you shouldn't drink alcohol, but you should limit your daily amount. Just enough to enjoy!

Here's my favorite: think like a Norwegian! Embrace winter, think of it as fun and change your mindset! Plan activities and gatherings outside. Gather friends and family around a fire outside. Make an indoor space that feels cozy, good, and comfortable. Scandinavians call this feeling “hygge.” Live it!



## Life in a snowglobe

**CENTER STREET, BRANDON, in a recent snow flurry. St. Thomas & Grace Episcopal Church is visible in the background.**

Photo by Steven Jupiter

# More in common

*(Continued from Page 4)*

what would make the ideal community. Many opinions differ. Unfortunately, we often segregate ourselves into “us” versus “them.” Instead, could we find a way to harness the power of our common humanity to talk about issues with community members who are different from us?

Changing another's mind, which is very unlikely, should not be the goal. Perhaps we

could learn a little about someone, what we have in common, and why they may have different viewpoints. Overcoming community challenges in a sustainable way can only come from understanding each other.

So, this week's MLK day not only reminds us of equality and civil rights, it raises questions about how we can continue efforts to make our community stronger. How could we facilitate

discussions, perhaps starting out small, among community members with different viewpoints? I don't have the answers, but I'm guessing there may be some good ideas out there. If you have any, please write a Letter to the Editor or slip them in the suggestion box in the Brandon Town Office. Anonymous or not, your ideas matter.

## Stafford Technical Center ATE

### COMMERCIAL DRIVERS LICENSE TRAINING PROGRAM

A high-paying and in-demand career as a professional truck driver is waiting for you just down the road in West Rutland. Convenient, in-person Saturday classes and flexible behind-the-wheel scheduling time lets you keep your current job while turning winter training into a new professional career. And we now offer an online classroom-theory option for students who want to complete this FMCSA requirement completely online. Seats fill quickly, so act now to reserve your spot in our professional driver training program. We have rolling admission so students can go from application to enrollment in just ten days!

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# Calendar of events

## January

### Tuesdays

#### Maclure Library Story Time Playgroup

Looking for a fun, educational playgroup for your 2-5 year old? Look no further! From 10 a.m. – 12 p.m. join Miss Allie, a certified teacher, for a weekly FREE literacy-based playgroup. Light snacks will be provided, along with stories, crafts, songs, games, and more. To register, please email [allie.griffiths@rcpcc.org](mailto:allie.griffiths@rcpcc.org) with your child's name, age, and contact information for your family

### Wednesdays

#### Ping Pong

The Green Mountain Table Tennis Club would like to announce the beginning of its new season!

The club has begun play on Wednesday evenings starting at 7 p.m. It will meet nearly every Wednesday year-round in the gym at the Rutland Area Christian School in Rutland, located at the corner of Melrose Ave. and Lincoln Ave. in Rutland, a block from the intersection of Route 7 and Melrose Ave. (110 Lincoln Ave., Rutland, VT 05701).

Being a part of this unique and exciting club offers a variety

tournaments.

If you are interested in table tennis as a recreational or athletic activity, we're interested in you! There is a modest membership fee of only \$30, although you can come twice free as our guest. Bring your sneakers and paddle (or use ours) and have some fun playing a great game of "Pong!"

For further information about the Green Mountain Table Tennis Club, call club representative Ronald Lewis at 802-247-5913, or visit our club's website at [www.gmttc.com](http://www.gmttc.com).

#### Trouble with math? Free tutoring is offered!

Free math tutoring is available in downtown Brandon on Wednesday afternoons from 2:45-4 p.m. at Fellowship Hall — the smaller brick building next to the Brandon Congregational Church.

Larry Rowe is offering help to any Otter Valley students who have questions or difficulties with mathematics or would like help with their math homework. Rev. Sara Rossigg will be in her office — 20 feet away from the worktable — during these sessions to ensure everyone feels comfortable and is safe.

Call 802-236-9130 for more information.

(Please note that Wednesday, Nov. 23 and Wednesday, Dec. 7 are days Larry has other commitments and will not be available.)

#### Yoga Prana Shakti Zoom & Studio Chair Yoga, Gentle, Wednesdays

From 10:30-11:30 a.m. at 155 Woodstock Avenue in Rutland

Lina Cloffe Hanson (Parvati) offers an Earth Conscientious, Spiritual, Gentle Physical Yoga Practice. We meet on Mondays via zoom. Contact for Zoom link. (There is also a Monday Zoom only class)

Not everyone can get up and down off of the floor easily making traditional yoga classes difficult. If you have physical limitation or a health issue this might be the ideal class for you. With the help of a chair most people can practice yoga and reaping the benefits of increased circulation, balance, flexibility, mobility, strength and more.

We spend a fair amount of the time exercising in a seated position in the chairs but if possible, we also do exercises standing, using the chairs for support. The exercises can be adjusted for individual needs and we move at a comfortable pace. I think will soon notice a difference once you start. Looking forward to seeing you in class!

Lina (Parvati) has 20 plus years of experience teaching and a lifelong personal practice.

To stay tuned if there are any cancellations, follow on Facebook and get on email list.

\$15/class

### Sundays

#### Brandon Town Hall Painting with Crystal

Crystal Ketcham leads an all ages painting event!

Yes, you CAN paint! More info, contact Crystal at [ceastman88@gmail.com](mailto:ceastman88@gmail.com)

### Wednesday 18th:

#### RNESU School Board Meeting

Starting at 5:00 p.m. at the Lothrop School & Online/Dial In - All board information, including a link to participate are available at [www.rnesu.org](http://www.rnesu.org).

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#### Otter Valley Unified Union School Board Meeting

Starting at 6:00 p.m. at the Lothrop School & Online/Dial In. All board documents and a link to participate remotely can be found at [www.rnesu.org](http://www.rnesu.org).

3447 US-7  
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#### Deppman Law Estate Planning Presentation

Everyone has an estate, consisting of everything you own: your car, home, other real estate, checking and savings accounts, investments, life insurance, furniture, personal possessions. Estate planning is making a plan in advance, naming the people or organizations you want to receive the things you own after you die, and taking steps now to make carrying out your plan as easy as possible later.

The presentation begins at 3:30 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall of the Shoreham Congregational Church.

While some websites can suggest steps in creating an estate, it is good to have the information from some professionals first hand, and to learn if your own plans should be reviewed. So come and learn from these professionals. This presentation is free and open to the public -- all are welcome and urged to attend.

### Thursday 19th:

#### "The Most Costly Journey" Latin American migrant workers, health care, and collaborative non-fiction comics in Middlebury

Starting at 6 p.m., at the Ilsley Public Library, 75 Main St. Andy Kolovos from the Vermont Folklife Center and Julia Grand Doucet from the Open Door Clinic will provide an overview of the goals of the El Viaje Más Caro Project, the collaborative methods that define its approach, and insight into the lives and experiences of the workers whose labor supports the continued viability of dairy farming in Vermont.

#### Cornwall Community Coffeehouse

Acoustic guitarist plays with local talent in Cornwall from 7-9 p.m., at the Cornwall Congregational Church, Route 30. The Cornwall Community Coffeehouse presents Mark Sikora who will play with Henry Romp on the upright bass, Dan Whittemore on drums and Kai Stanley on lead guitar. Refreshments provided by the Friends of Cornwall School. No entry fee, but free-will cash donations are graciously accepted.

### Saturday 21st:

#### Electrostatic Cats!

First time on the Brandon Town Hall Stage, the Cats from Leicester play a wide variety of covers plus some originals! The smallest band with the biggest sound!

\$5 admissions fee at the Brandon Town Hall, 7p.m.

#### Green Mountain Club hike in Ripton

Join us at Spirit in Nature, Goshen Rd. Snowshoe or hike along beautiful trails by the Middlebury River, just off the Goshen Road. Inspirational readings posted along the way. Contact Liana Merrill at [Merrill.liana@gmail.com](mailto:Merrill.liana@gmail.com) for information or to register. More at [gmbreadloaf.org](http://gmbreadloaf.org).



## Chaffee Art Center kids' painting class, January 19

Acrylic on 4x4" canvas  
\$25  
Instructor: Dale Bills  
Pre-registration required 802-775-0356,  
[info@chaffeeartcenter.org](mailto:info@chaffeeartcenter.org)  
Prepay: <https://chaffeeartcenter.square.site/>  
Min 5 students

16 South Main Street  
Rutland  
05701

of activities, including regular practice, a challenge board, clinics for beginner and advanced play, singles and doubles, inter-club events with other table tennis clubs, and even

**Chinese New Year Celebration in Middlebury**

From 9:30-11 a.m., at the Ilsley Library, 75 Main St. Join May Poduschnick and Miss Tricia for storytime, crafts, snacks and fun to celebrate Chinese New Year. This all-ages event is free.

**Sunday 22nd:**

The Shoreham Congregational Church will host a Soup and Sandwich Lunch and Board Games Afternoon. Join us from 12 noon to 3 p.m. for fellowship and lunch fol-

lowed by an afternoon of playing cards or board games.

Come and play your newest or favorite board game while enjoying a cup of hot soup and a sandwich.

Soups: Chicken, Split Pea, Vegetable, and Chili.

Sandwiches: Cold cuts and sliders to go with the soup.

Drinks: Hot Chocolate, coffee, and tea

**The majestic natural beauty of the Grand Tetons, January 24**



Follow Sue and Marv Elliott, long-time Rutland birders and Audubon members, as they visit and photograph The Grand

Tetons. Learn some of the history, flora and fauna of this beautiful American natural area. Presented by Rutland County Audubon.

7:00 pm in the Fellowship Room of the Grace Congregational Church. For more info: [birding@rutlandcountyaudubon.org](mailto:birding@rutlandcountyaudubon.org).



**Sip N Dip at the Chaffee Art Center January 26**

From 6-8 p.m.  
Instructor: Heather Wilson  
Are YOU ready for some fun!

Perfect for a date night or just out with friends! Attendees follow along with an instructor and leave with a finished painting

\$35 per person includes all supplies  
Min: 5  
Must RSVP to reserve your spot  
Contact: [info@chaffeeartcenter.org](mailto:info@chaffeeartcenter.org)  
802-775-0356

*Note: Sip n Dips are offered monthly. Private classes available. We can also host your friends and family for a special event (bridal shower, birthday, etc.)*

Dessert: Cookies  
\$5.00 for soup and sandwich  
Playing Board Games is Free!  
All proceeds go to the

Church Building Fund.

Bring your own game or try one of those already here. So, mark your calendar, invite your friends, and come join with others to try your hand at Connect-4, Uno, Cribbage, Trivia, or more!

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# OUR CREATIVE KIDS

ARTIST: Olivia Gibbs

GRADE: 7

SCHOOL: Otter Valley Union  
Middle School

TEACHER: Dasha Kalisz



This week we begin a new feature: artwork by students around our district. We asked the art teachers at our elementary, middle, and high schools to submit student works that display creativity and talent. We hope the students will enjoy sharing their work as much as we will enjoy seeing it! If your children are homeschooled but would like to participate, please email [news@brandonreporter.com](mailto:news@brandonreporter.com) for more information.

First up, a charming forest scene drawn in pencil by Olivia Gibbs of Brandon. Olivia is in the 7th grade at Otter Valley Union Middle School. Here's what her art teacher, Dasha Kalisz, had to say about Olivia's drawing:

"Olivia created a scene about the Vermont forests to be entered in the Vermont Wildlife Art Contest. Olivia did a wonderful job showing perspective as the trees become smaller as they recede to the background. Olivia captures some aspects that all Vermonters can relate to, like catching an owl in a tree, startling a deer in the woods, and the old-fashioned buckets indicating maple season."

Great job, Olivia! Good luck in the contest!



THE BEAVER POND Committee in Proctor has marked the line where Rutland used to meet Pittsford before the founding of Proctor in the 1880s.

Photo by Dale Christie

## Beaver Pond trail in Proctor ties into history with new marker

BY STEVEN JUPITER

PROCTOR—Vermont was the last of the New England states to be settled by Europeans. Whereas its neighbors saw permanent European settlement in the 1600s, Vermont was still “unclaimed” Abenaki land well into the 1700s. It wasn’t even “Vermont” until after the Revolution. Before then, it was a disputed “wilderness” between New York and New Hampshire, with these two states vying for control.

In the mid-1700s, New Hampshire’s governor, Benning Wentworth, began issuing land grants in what is now Vermont. The state’s current configuration, wherein most town boundaries are surprisingly square, is the result of this intentional parceling of the territory into roughly equal pieces.

And then there’s Proctor.

Proctor is an oddity among Vermont’s mosaic of rectangles, a jagged-edged sliver of land along Otter Creek, nestled among Pittsford, Rutland, and West Rutland. It owes its unique shape to its unique history as a company town, founded by the owners of the Vermont Marble Company in 1886 and named after Redfield Proctor, the company’s president at the time.

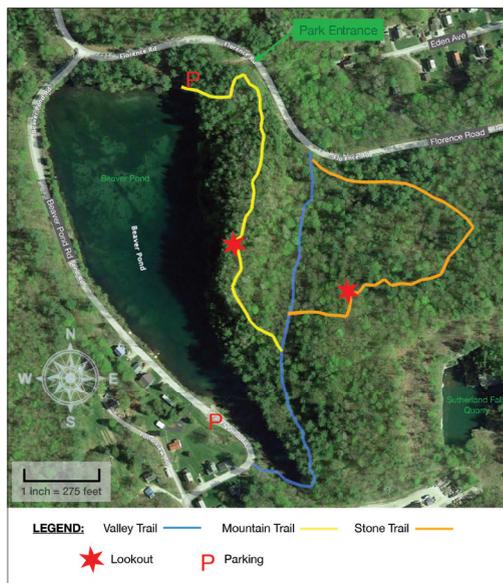
The area that eventually became Proctor had previously been part of Pittsford and Rutland. Recently, the Beaver Pond Committee (BPC) in Proctor planted a marker along one of their Beaver Pond hiking trails at the spot where it crosses the former boundary line between Pittsford and Rutland, as a reminder of Proctor’s unique history.

Dale Christie, a member of BPC, says, “I’m confident the new sign’s location and content is correct.” There’s an old stone wall at the site that Christie believes delineated the old boundary. “There’s a woman

in Proctor, probably in her 80s now, who remembers a stone ‘jail marker’ at that spot as well,” Christie added.

The “jail markers” were marble posts erected along the boundary between Rutland and Pittsford to alert debt prisoners on work furlough from Rutland jail that they were about to leave the territory they were required to stay within. Though no trace of a marker remains at the site of BPC’s new sign, anecdotal evidence suggests that it’s possible that one stood there at one time.

Anyone interested in hiking along BPC’s trails, and experiencing a bit of history as well as nature, can find the trailhead on Florence Road in Proctor (see photo). The new marker is on the Stone Trail.



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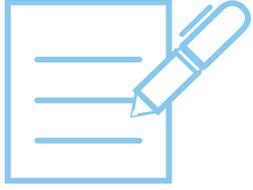
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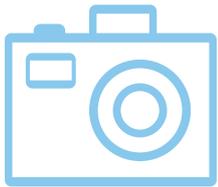
While we will hire a reporter to cover hard news, we'll need "community correspondents" to also cover clubs and organizations (Lions, 4-H, Rotary, American Legion and others), as well as town news for each community and elementary school news (PTA meetings, social outings, and the like).

## PROVIDE SPORTS COVERAGE:



We'll need interested parents and others to cover some of the school's sports teams. So if you're a parent who attends most of a team's games, we're eager to train you to write brief game summations and take a few pictures. We'll still strive to cover home varsity sports, when we can, but extra hands will provide the much better news coverage.

## TAKE PHOTOS:



If you're a good photographer with a single-reflex lens camera, perhaps with a telephoto lens, we're always looking for good scenics, sports and other special event coverage.

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# Brandon Idol

(Continued from Page 1)

Covid-19, this is the first year the show has been back since it was cut short in early 2020. The feedback in previous years was “overwhelmingly positive,” as Town Recreation Director Bill Moore put it. The hosts, Moore and Colleen Wright, have been waiting for an opportunity to bring back this event. The first year there was a tremendous response as reflected in the number of contestants who signed up, and though there are fewer performers this year, the level of talent is very high. Brandon Idol has been called the greatest singing competition in Vermont, and after watching the performances on Saturday, we can see why.

The competition showcases a wide variety of talented artists, performing songs from vari-

Additionally, all finalists will have the possibility to get paid to perform at the “Brandon Idol Night” at this year’s Brandon Carnival.

Upcoming shows will not only feature a live band as accompaniment but will bring in a special guest performer each night. Moore noted that the format of the competition lets the performers audition in a manner they are comfortable with, singing over a pre-recorded track, then pushes them out of their comfort zone into playing with a live band. This is a great

an organized event like this that is dedicated to music. Irene Simons felt that these opportunities don’t come around very often. “It is kind of hard around here because of Vermont’s

low population; there’s not much opportunity,” said Simons. It is easy to see why these folks were so excited to have a chance to share their talent with an audience.

This kind of performance was very new to some of the artists. Gunnar Timsman typically plays in a band with a guitar in hand, which is much different from performing solo with only a microphone. Baker Larock noted that the unfamiliar hardware alone can have an impact on a performance, and hearing your voice from a monitor can sometimes drown out the music underneath. Regardless of the unfamiliar territory these artists stepped up to the plate in a big way for Saturday’s show.

Many of these performers have sung their whole life, but for some it was the first time singing in front of an audience. Regardless of the experience level, it can be intimidating for anyone to perform for a crowd. On top of this, some of the performers had limited time to prepare due to short notice or sickness. But each of these artists was compelled to get on stage and share their voice with the world for many reasons.

Irene Simons had hoped to do the competition in 2019 alongside her sister-in-law but was unable to commit due to scheduling conflicts. When the opportunity didn’t work out in 2020, Simons vowed she would jump on the next chance to be a part of the competition, regardless of the monthly commute from New Hampshire where she lives.

Peggy Sue Rozell grew up surrounded by music and it soon became her primary passion. Unfortunately, due to medical circumstances, she nearly lost her ability to sing. But this didn’t stop Rozell: through lots of vocal training Peggy Sue has maintained her voice and was thrilled to be able to perform for the first time in over two years. “I just love to do it. I just love to sing

*This is a great opportunity for artists to gain experience in various performance settings and can really contribute to their growth.*



**IRENE SIMONS SINGING “Heart like Mine.”**

ous genres, each with their own unique style. Similar to previous years, the competition will feature one show per month, each with a specific theme. January was an audition with open genre, February will focus on country music, March will be the 50s and 60s, April will bring around some 80s tunes, and the final competition will be held in May, where finalists will pick their own songs.

opportunity for artists to gain experience in various performance settings and can really contribute to their growth.

Prior to the show, some of the artists shared their excitement about the opportunity to perform in this event. Shannon Wright noted that in the past few years, the only real opportunity has been busking, troubadour style, at small local venues, saying it is nice to have



**BAKER LAROCK SINGING “When I Was Your Man.”**

for people,” she said.

Performers on Saturday got to select their own piece to sing as an audition. There was a wide variety of talent brought to the stage. The show started off with an enchanting performance from Suzie Watters. Her charming, smooth rendi-

tion of “God Bless the Child” captivated the audience immediately. Next, Baker LaRock delivered a rich, soulful cover of “When I Was Your Man.” This chilling performance was followed by Venus Diamondis, who sang an inspired version of

(See *Brandon Idol*, Page 15)



**SHANNON WRIGHT SINGING “He Stopped Loving Her Today.”**

# Brandon Idol

*(Continued from Page 14)*

“Happier Than Ever,” in a thrilling and passionate, yet touching style. The next artist up was Shannon Wright, whose charismatic, baritone rendition of the country classic “He Stopped Loving Her Today,” won the audience’s heart, not to mention their votes for crowd favorite.

After a brief intermission, Peggy Sue Rozell put on a stellar performance of “Mama He’s Crazy,” once again serenading an audience with her soothing, hypnotic voice. Irene Simons followed this with an upbeat cover of “Heart Like Mine,” which was beautifully enthralling. Gunnar Timsman closed out the auditions with a riveting performance of “Waltz #2 (XO),” executing the dramatic rhapsody with fluidity and grandiose.

The performances were followed by a vote for crowd favorite. During this time, Bill Moore took the stage to sing a surprise number of his own. The votes were tallied and Shannon Wright walked away as the crowd favorite on Saturday. As the time came to determine which artists would be eliminated, there was another surprise as Moore announced that all the performers would be moving on past the audition stage.

The first performance in the Brandon

Idol series was a rousing success with around 75 audience members in attendance. Moore and Wright expect to see more engagement as the competition continues. It is certainly a community-driven event, noted Colleen Wright; everyone inspires everyone else. Moore pointed out that the past three years were tough for everybody, and that it is nice to have people come back out to see old friends and familiar faces. One couple in particular Crystal Sears and Jim Russo, have been coming to the Brandon Idol events since day one in 2019. The two are big fans of the Brandon Rec events and always try to come out to show their support for the talent. This is the kind of community that makes events like this possible.

Moving forward, the seven artists from Saturday’s show will be accompanied by 3 others who were featured in the 2020 competition that was cut short due to covid. The next show in the series will take place on February 18th at 7:00 in the Brandon Town Hall. So, dust off your old leather boots and don your ten-gallon hats, as you come to join the community and watch these local artists compete in next month’s country music showcase.



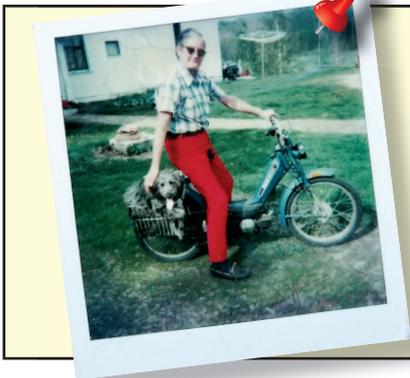
**VENUS DIAMOND SINGING “Happier than Ever.”**



**GUNNAR TIMSMAN SINGING “Waltz #2 (XO).”**

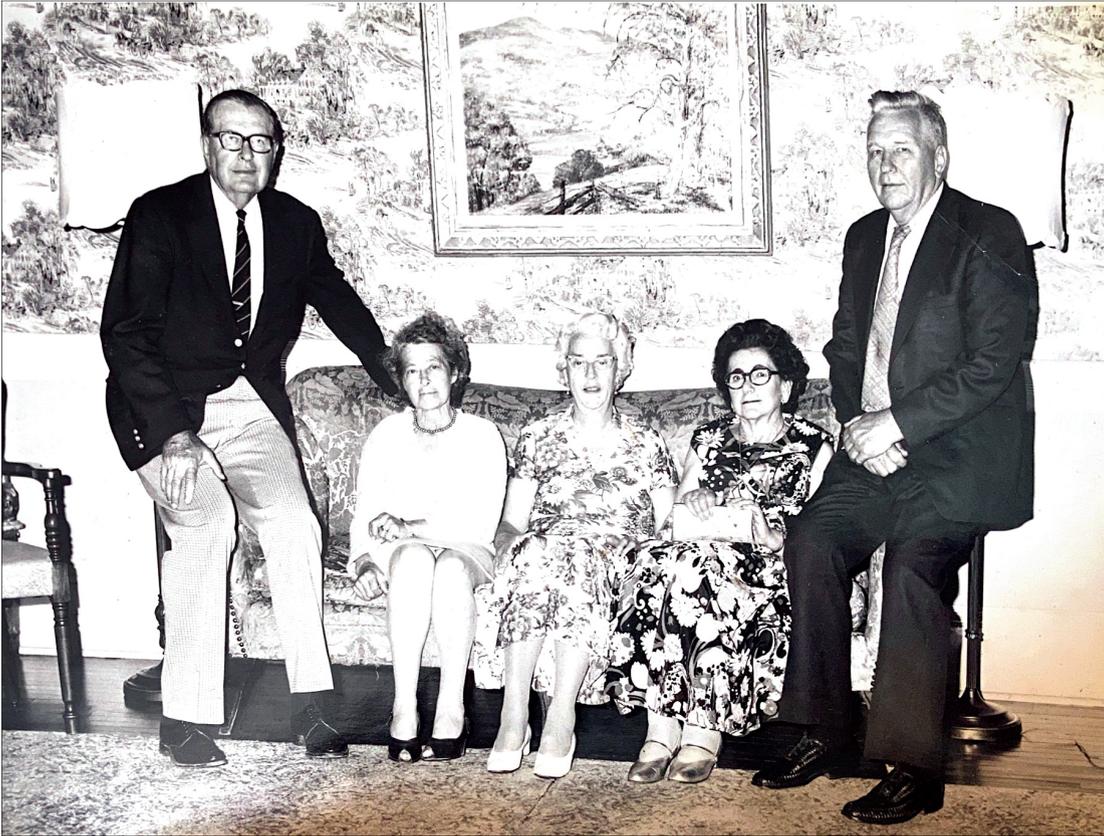


**SUZI WATTERS SINGING “God Bless the Child.”**



# Mim's Photos

Can you identify any of the people in these vintage photos from Mim Welton's Dateline Brandon newspaper archives? Let us know!



## Recognized



Phyllis Torrey of Brandon recognized Crystal (Phillips) Cole. She lives in Leicester now.



Bert Tortenson of Brandon identified the young man dressed as a pirate as his son, Robert, who was 5 or 6 years old at the time. Robert is now 51 and lives south of Toronto and works for a firm in Buffalo.

E-mail  
[ads@brandonreporter.com](mailto:ads@brandonreporter.com)  
if you can identify someone in  
these photos.

Or call us at 247-8080

# Crossword

## CLUES ACROSS

1. Not invited
6. Whale ship captain
10. One point south of southwest
14. Small cavity in a rock
15. Recidivists
17. City of Angels hoopster
19. A way to mark with one's signature
20. OJ trial judge
21. Rice cooked in broth
22. One point east of due south
23. One point east of southeast
24. Complements an entree
26. Grouped by twos
29. Disfigure
31. Woods
32. Political action committee
34. Longer of 2 bones in the forearm
35. Kin groups
37. Philippine Island
38. Contrary to
39. Bluish-gray fur
40. Comprehend the written word
41. Natural depressions
43. Felines
45. Breathe noisily
46. Taxi
47. Pancake made from buckwheat flour
49. Swiss river
50. Foot (Latin)
53. Have surgery
57. Formal withdrawal
58. Monetary units of Peru
59. Greek war god
60. 2,000 lbs.
61. High points

## CLUES DOWN

1. Green and yellow citrus fruit
2. A bright color
3. Thicket
4. Journalist Tarbell
5. A place to work or relax
6. Sharp mountain ridge
7. Helicopter
8. Mimic
9. Suggests
10. More musty
11. Large, flightless rail
12. Make beer
13. Soviet Socialist Republic
16. People who can account for you
18. Taunt
22. South Dakota
23. Cover the entirety of
24. Kids' favorite visitor
25. A way to save for retirement
27. Fencing swords
28. C. China mountain range
29. Type of sandwich
30. Team
31. Paddle
33. Partly digested food
35. Most cagey
36. Shoppers make one
37. Cathode-ray tube
39. Food supplies
42. Backbones
43. Concern
44. Blood group
46. Broadway songwriter Sammy
47. Dutch colonist
48. Full-grown pike fish
49. Deity of a monotheistic cult
50. Type of bread
51. S. Nigerian people
52. Scottish tax
53. Young women's association
54. Brazilian city
55. Hide of a young animal
56. Midway between north and northeast

1	2	3	4	5		6	7	8	9		10	11	12	13	
14						15				16					
17						18									
19						20				21					
					22					23					
			24	25						26			27	28	
29	30								31				32	33	
34						35	36					37			
38					39							40			
	41		42							43	44				
					45					46					
	47	48						49					50	51	52
53								54				55	56		
57												58			
59						60						61			

# Sudoku

Here's how a sudoku puzzle works: Sudoku puzzles are formatted as a 9x9 grid, broken down into nine 3x3 boxes. To solve a sudoku every row, every column and every box must contain the numbers 1 through 9. Each number must appear only once in each row, column and box. Figure out where to fill in the missing numbers by using the numeric clues already provided in the boxes. The more numbers that are filled in, the easier it gets to solve.

9						5		
			1		9			
		7			4		3	
	7				3			9
	1	6	7			2		
5	2							
		5					6	
							4	8
		8	6		1			

Level: Intermediate

## PUZZLE SOLUTIONS

S	K	A	P	N	O	I	S	S	E	H	A	R	E	S
S	I	L	I	N	O	I	S	S	E	C	E	S	S	E
E	F	I	N	K	H	E	R	T	E	R	D	N	O	G
S	P	E	S	P	A	V	A	N	I	N	I	B	L	O
D	V	R	E	C	O	V	A	R	I	N	I	S	B	R
U	B	E	C	S	N	V	L	C	V	N	T	L	U	
C	A	V	C	K	A	V	O							
D	E	I	R	E	S	I	D	E	S	I	S			
M	V	L	P	I	O	I	K	I	N	K	I	N	I	
H	E	K	L	S	L	E	G	N	V	S	O	L		
S	H	E	R	A	V	A	R	E	R	E	O	D	E	G
S	W	S	B	A	V	H	A	V	I	D	I	B	N	U

5	9	7	1	2	6	8	3	4
8	4	1	5	3	6	2	9	7
2	9	3	7	4	8	5	6	1
3	7	8	9	1	4	6	2	5
4	5	2	8	6	7	9	1	3
6	1	9	3	5	2	4	7	8
1	3	6	4	9	5	7	8	2
7	2	4	6	8	1	3	5	9
9	8	5	2	7	3	1	4	6

## Make Your Pet a Part of Your 2023 New Year's Resolutions

The new year is the perfect time for setting goals and starting fresh, and that includes your pets! The Rutland County Humane Society (RCHS) would like to offer some ideas on how to make it the best year yet for your pet! It's very easy for your pet's weight to increase gradually over time, so make sure you are measuring out their food daily and choosing an age-appropriate diet. Incorporate more play time into their routine or try a new activity to keep your pets active and help maintain that healthy weight. Don't forget to schedule regular check-ups with your veterinarian. Your vet can also offer tips on practicing good oral hygiene and grooming habits with your pet as well! And don't forget their mental health. Teaching new tricks or replacing old toys with new ones can help with your pet's mental stimulation. Lastly, make sure to update your pet's identification information. Whether it's new contact information or their tag is just worn down and can't be read, make sure they are updated in case of an emergency. For more information contact the Adoption Center.

### I COULD BE THE NEW FRIEND YOU'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR!



#### MEET MAC - 2-YEAR-OLD. NEUTERED MALE. BORDER COLLIE MIX. BLACK WITH WHITE.

This handsome pup is Mac. Mac is a very sweet boy who has a lot of love to give. Mac arrived at RCHS on May 19 from a busy shelter down south. He has since been living in foster as he was being treated for Heartworm. Now he is heartworm free and ready to go home! Since he has been living in a home environment, we have been able to learn a lot about him. Mac has a very chill personality, and absolutely LOVES attention! He will nose your hand to let you know he would like you to keep petting him. He loves to swim, and when he gets excited, he will pick up a toy and run around with it and throw it in the air. Other than that, he really has not shown much interest in toys, but that certainly can change as he gets settled into a new home. He is true to the herding breed as he will be your shadow and be at your feet wherever you go. We feel he would do best as an only child, meaning no cats, dogs, or young children.

#### MEET DASHER - 1-YEAR-OLD. SPAYED FEMALE. DOMESTIC SHORT HAIR. TORBIE WITH WHITE.

This sweet little lady arrived at RCHS on December 10th as a stray. She is lovely but pretty timid at first. She is currently in our Community Cat Room where she is able to socialize with other cats, and she is doing very well. She would do well in a home with other confident cats. If she sounds like an excellent addition, please call the Adoption Center today at 802-483-6700.



## RUTLAND COUNTY HUMANE SOCIETY

802-483-6700 • WWW.RCHSVT.ORG  
765 STEVENS RD. • PITTSFORD



**ADOPTION CENTER OPEN BY APPOINTMENT ONLY.**



# Off the Shelf

New books at the Brandon Free Public Library

Here are some of our most circulated books and DVDs from last year!

## Adult Fiction

**Shadows Reel: A Joe Pickett Novel**  
by C.J. Box

Retired Game Warden Pickett investigates murders seemingly connected to a nazi's stolen photo album while his friend Nate Romanowski is hunting the man who stole his falcons and attacked his wife.

**The Paris Apartment** by Lucy Foley

When her brother goes missing while she's visiting him in Paris, Jane investigates his eclectic neighbors who all seem to be harboring secrets.

**Wish You Were Here** by Jodi Picoult

Diane's life takes an interesting turn when she's stranded during the early days of the Covid pandemic, and must move out of her comfort zone to connect with the locals.

**The Diamond Eye** by Kate Quinn

Based on the true story of a librarian turned sniper during

### Did you know?

We have two fun events coming up- **Pokemon Commander deck battles** 1/21 from 1-3pm (all ages) and **Advanced Book Making (teens)** 01/27 from 3:30-5pm.

World War II, known as Lady Death.

## Kids

**I broke my trunk!**  
by Mo Willems

Gerald the Elephant tells Piggie the long, crazy story about breaking his trunk.

**Clifford the Big Red Dog: The Big Leaf Pile**  
by Josephine Page

Clifford, Cleo, and T-Bone have fall fun with a pile of leaves.

**Fancy Nancy, Poison Ivy Expert**  
by Jane O'Connor

Nancy catches poison ivy after picking wildflowers for Ms. Glass's surprise party. So unfancy!

**There was an Old Astronaut Who Swallowed the Moon!**  
by Lucille Colandro

The Old Lady turns into an Old Astronaut who travels through space, swallowing a moon...a star, a planet, and more!

## DVDs

### Dog

Two army former rangers, Ranger Briggs and Lulu, a Belgian Malinois dog are paired against their will driving down the pacific coast to make it to a fellow ranger's funeral.

### Belfast

A working-class Irish family in 1969 faces strife and hard decisions as The Troubles rise throughout the country.

**Everything Everywhere All at Once**

A woman goes on a journey through the multiverse and the lives she could have led to save the worlds and everyone she loves.

### Encanto

Mirabel goes on a journey of self-discovery and uncovering family secrets to find out why she didn't inherit a magical gift when she was a child.

# No Sherlock Holmes: Out of State P.I.s not so subtle

BRANDON — In a week dominated by mostly traffic violations and fingerprinting, Brandon Police were alerted to a suspicious vehicle that had been observed in the area of Morning Doe Lane on two separate occasions. The investigating officer determined that the suspicious vehicle belonged to a private investigation company out of North Carolina that had been in the area looking for a vehicle that a finance company needed to repossess. The company was strongly advised to contact the police department in the future to avoid raising concerns with area residents observing unknown cars and individuals in their neighborhood. The next day police were called to two separate mental health issues on Grove Street. The first involved a welfare check on a male at the residence that was having a mental health crisis. After locating the person in question, officers offered him some options to get help moving forward. The individual was cooperative but indicated that he did not want any help at this time.

In the second instance police assisted Vermont State Police and Rutland Crisis with executing a Warrant for Immediate Examination at a residence on Grove. The subject was taken into custody safely and without incident and was subsequently transported to the Rutland Regional Medical Center for further care and treatment.

After being alerted on Jan. 13 by an employer that one of their employees came into work earlier with injuries and may have been involved in a domestic assault, officers responded to a residence on Champlain Street Upon further investigation, the investigating officers placed Brittany Dumas, 33, of Brandon under arrest for Domestic Assault. Ms. Dumas was later released on a citation to appear in the Rutland County Superior Court-Criminal Division for arraignment on Jan. 17, at 11 a.m.

In other police activity, Brandon Police:

**On Jan. 9**

- Responded to a report of suspicious activity on Forest Dale Road.
- Took fingerprints for school employment and foster grandparent program.
- Stopped car on Franklin Street a cell phone violation and Forest Dale Road for speeding. Warnings issued

## Brandon

### Police Report

- Received a report of a road rage incident on Route 7 heading into Brandon.
- Helped restore a dog found in Plymouth to its Brandon owners.

#### On Jan. 10

- Responded to a report of suspicious activity on Morning Dove Lane.
- Conducted a Ride-A-Long with a young female interested in a career in law enforcement.
- Made traffic stops on Grove Street for speeding, on Pearl Street/Conant Square for cell phone violation, and on Conant Square for defective equipment. Three tickets issued.
- Took fingerprints for a nursing license.
- Enforced speed limit on Grove Street, issued one warning and one ticket.
- Assisted Brandon Area Rescue with a medical emergency on Church Street.
- Investigated suspicious drone activity at Mulcahy Drive/Arnold District Road.
- Stopped a vehicle on Arnold District Road for speeding and issued a warning.
- Checked on an open door at Nifty Thrifty on Conant Square/Prospect Street. The building was secured and the owner was notified.

#### On Jan. 11

- Enforced speed limit on Grove Street
- Stopped a vehicle on Park Street for no turn signal and issued a warning.
- Took fingerprints for nursing license.
- Responded to mental health crisis on Grove Street.
- Assisted the Vermont State Police and Rutland Crisis with executing a Warrant for Immediate Examination at a residence on Grove Street.

#### On Jan. 12

- Took fingerprints done for school employment, school coaching, and nursing license.
- Assisted Addison County Sheriff's with attempting to locate a vehicle that had been involved in a pursuit in Salisbury.
- Investigated a report of an erratic driver of Franklin Street.
- Responded to a false alarm on Grove Street.

(See Police report, Page 19)



## WEEKLY HOROSCOPE

little more wiggle room to explore your creativity and what makes you happy.

**LEO July 23-Aug. 23**  
Your open and outgoing nature may lead many people to think they know all about you, Leo. Instead, you can be quite a mysterious person. Show others only what you want.

**VIRGO Aug. 24-Sept. 22**  
Believing someone is flawless can set you up for disappointment when you realize no one can live up to that standard, Virgo. Be realistic when assessing partners or other people.

**LIBRA Sept. 23-Oct. 23**  
Being available to other people is admirable, Libra. Make sure this is not at the expense of your own well-being. You may need to dial back and prioritize your own needs.

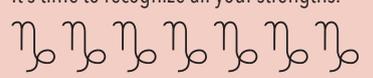
**SCORPIO Oct. 24-Nov. 22**  
Living in your comfort zone may lead to missed opportunities, Scorpio. You may need to let your risk-taking side show this week. Enjoy the ride.

**SAGITTARIUS Nov. 23-Dec. 21**  
You might start to notice you are losing some traction in your love life, Sagittarius. Figure out a way to talk and spend more time together in the days ahead.

**CAPRICORN Dec. 22-Jan. 20**  
You may believe you can think your way out of a situation this week, Capricorn. But sometimes logic just doesn't cut it. You may have to use your heart to get to the root.

**AQUARIUS Jan. 21-Feb. 18**  
Take a second look at your talents and your abilities, Aquarius. You may have been selling yourself short for some time. But you can accomplish anything with some effort.

**PISCES Feb. 19-March 20**  
Don't make assumptions about how others see you, Pisces. You have a lot to offer. It's time to recognize all your strengths.



### FAMOUS BIRTHDAYS

Jan. 19 Dolly Parton, singer/songwriter (77)

Jan. 20 Federico Fellini, director (d)

Jan. 21 Hakeem Olajuwon, basketball player (60)

Jan. 22 Sam Cooke, singer/songwriter, producer (d)

Jan. 23 Derek Walcott, poet and Nobel laureate (d)

Jan. 24 Edith Wharton, writer (d)

Jan. 25 Volodymyr Zelenskyy, President of Ukraine (45)

# Police report

(Continued from Page 18)

## On Jan. 13

- Investigated a possible domestic assault at a Champlain Street residence.
- Conducted a welfare check for an individual on Carver.

## On Jan. 14

- Enforced traffic laws on Conant Square, stopped two vehicles and issued one ticket.
- Made traffic stops on Champlain Street for a stop sign violation (ticket issued), Conant Square for speeding (warning issued), and Park Street for stop sign violation (warning issued).
- Investigated a report of fraud on Franklin Street.

- Responded to a complaint of erratic driving on Grove Street.
- Patrolled on foot during Otter Valley basketball game.

## On Jan. 15

- Patrolled Grove Street for traffic violations
- Investigated motor vehicle complaints on Grove Street and a similar complaint on Park Street Extension.
- Mediated a landlord/tenant dispute on Carver Street.
- Stopped a vehicle on Park Street for a stop sign violation on Park Street and issued a warning.

## REAL ESTATE

### Views in All Directions



**BRANDON: Mt. Pleasant Building Lots**  
Plan for tomorrow by securing your future home site now. 16 lots ready for your new 'energy efficient' home. 3/4 to 1 A± with all utilities & enjoying gorgeous mountain & pastoral views. Located in the quaint village of Brandon with art galleries, shops, shopping & professional services. Convenient to Middlebury & Rutland & 45 min. +/- to Killington, Pico & Middlebury Snow Bowl. Ski, hike, bike & enjoy nearby lakes. Owner/Broker/Developer. Prices starting at \$49,000. Top view to West. Bottom view to East.



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\* \*2023 Calendars are here.  
Stop at 14 Mt. Pleasant Dr. or  
give a call and we'll deliver.  
Happy New Year!

CHECK OUT OUR LISTINGS ONLINE



This home has everything! Just a short walk to town, it sits on a scenic and featured 2-acre lot. The spacious screened porch overlooks a circular stone driveway and mature hardwood, softwood, and fruit trees. Inside there's a cozy living room and an open living-dining room with a wood stove and brick hearth. The primary bedroom has an en suite bath and plenty of closet space. Several outbuildings offer lots of options. There's a 2-car garage, a one-car garage with attached workshop, and an outbuilding perfect for an art studio. There is so much to like about this property! **\$425,000**



802-247-3449  
Marty@RoweRealEstate.com  
RoweRealEstate.com



## Red, White, and Blue Landscape

**THIS BARN PROVIDES a pop of color in the grey winter landscape.**

Photo by Steven Jupiter

## 4-H educator hired for SW Vt.

RUTLAND—Tracey Stubbins of Rutland has been hired as the University of Vermont (UVM) Extension 4-H educator for Bennington and Rutland Counties. She is based in the UVM

goals is to recruit more adult volunteers to serve as organizational club and project leaders and to assist with 4-H activities at the county level including quiz bowls, horse shows and clinics and hippology contests.

In addition to coordinating these and other local events, she will oversee 4-H activities at the Vermont State Fair in Rutland and organize the annual Southwest Regional 4-H Night, a showcase of local 4-H talent.

According to Sarah Kleinman, the UVM Extension 4-H state program director, "Tracey

as the founder and director of a homeschool co-op while also volunteering for a variety of community organizations, many of which support equity and social justice causes."

Stubbins is no stranger to 4-H, having served as an adult 4-H volunteer for the past six years after being introduced to the organization through her daughter's interest in the 4-H horse project. She is currently the organizational leader of the Wind Riders 4-H Club in Rutland, whose members participate in the unmounted horse project and acquire life skills through experiential learning and community service.

Bennington County has five active 4-H clubs and Rutland County, eight. More than 70 youths are members of these clubs, learning about everything from robotics and shooting sports to sewing, livestock and public speaking. One club, the Young Explorers Club of Bennington, offers activities for the youngest 4-H'ers, ages 5-7, known as 4-H Cloverbuds.

To learn how to join a 4-H club or become involved as a 4-H volunteer in Bennington or Rutland County, contact Stubbins at (802) 773-3349, ext. 276, or (800) 281-6977 (toll-free in Vermont) or by email at tracey.stubbins@uvm.edu.



TRACEY STUBBINS

Extension Office in Rutland. Stubbins plans to grow the 4-H program in both counties by helping to establish new clubs and support existing ones. One of her immediate

has a wealth of experience in a number of different areas including event planning, curriculum development and youth development, to name a few. Most recently, she served

# With property values soaring, most Vermont towns need reappraisals. But experts are in short supply

BY ETHAN WEINSTEIN/  
VtDIGGER

Two-thirds of Vermont's 254 municipalities can expect a reappraisal order this year, according to the state's Department of Taxes. And with so many townwide reappraisals in order, the state faces another issue: a lack of resources to handle the demand.

"There're not enough firms to go around to do this; that's a huge problem," Jill Remick, the tax department's director of property valuation and review, told the House Ways and Means Committee on Thursday.

Even towns with full-time assessors almost always contract with a company to perform townwide appraisals, which estimate the value of each property. Those valuations form the basis of property tax bills.

In Vermont, where there have been an average of 16 re-

appraisals a year over the last decade, there simply aren't enough appraisers to handle 165 towns.

Unlike many states, Vermont does not mandate that towns update their property values on a regular basis. With the real estate market ballooning in the last two years, towns' grand lists no longer reflect reality. Now, municipalities up and down the state will have to find contractors to perform reappraisals, fighting over a dwindling pool of expert assessors.

"Since Covid, we've seen a gangbusters real estate market," Jake Feldman, a senior fiscal analyst in the department, said in the presentation to lawmakers Thursday. Feldman, along with Remick, delivered a presentation on the Common Level of Appraisal, or CLA — a percentage applied to a town's education property

## How have CLAs changed over the past five years?

Equalization Study Results: Number of Towns by CLA Bracket by Year					
	2018 (FY20)	2019 (FY21)	2020 (FY22)	2021 (FY23)	2022 (FY24)
Less than 85%	3	4	5	24	137
85 to 100%	112	150	176	203	110
100 to 115%	142	105	79	33	13
115% or More	3	1	0	0	0

First year listed is the year of the equalization study, second year is the fiscal year impacted

Equalization study results are superseded by a reappraisal CLA, if applicable

CLAs below 85% or above 115% trigger a reappraisal, per 32 V.S.A. § 4041a

Graph provided by VtDigger.

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tax rate, which serves to correct the town's grand list property values.

If a town has a low CLA, it means houses are selling for more than their grand list value.

If a town's CLA dips to 85% or rises above 115% — signaling a significant change in property values — it triggers a mandatory reappraisal. And according to the state's 2022 equalization study, 137 municipalities have fallen below the 85% threshold, though they still have the opportunity to appeal their CLA before this spring.

Even the statewide CLA — a metric the tax department calculated to emphasize its point — fell to 83.1%.

"That's like saying, maybe the whole state needs to reappraise," Feldman said.

But Vermont lacks the experts required for the statewide demand.

"Not only are there limited numbers of contract reappraisal firms, but many towns have already and are about to transition from elected boards of listers to appointed contract assessors," Lisa Wright, president of the Vermont Assessors and Listers Association, told VtDigger, "and there is a very limited pool of qualified individuals for that role as well."

With few firms to choose from, towns risk sacrificing quality, she suggested, by working with people who lack sufficient experience for the job.

According to Wright, the field suffers from "graying,"

and many qualified assessors are on their way toward retirement. Part of her job is figuring out how to recruit more people to the profession.

Ed Clodfelter, a senior appraiser with the Franklin County-based firm New England Municipal Resource Center, says the firm has already hired extra staff and is continuing to hire to meet the increased demand.

"This is a niche employment career that many do not know about," he said. "We are always looking for qualified staff," adding that the company is currently booked through 2025 for projects.

Many states require towns to reappraise on a regular basis, Remick, the property valuation director, told lawmakers on Thursday, calling a four-to-six-year schedule a "national standard." In Vermont, some towns haven't reappraised since 2005. More than 100 of the towns that need reappraisals haven't done so for more than eight years, according to the tax department's data.

In all likelihood, towns triggered for reappraisal might not be able to book a contractor for several years, and the tax department has never punished a municipality for failing to perform a reappraisal fast enough, Remick said. But every year, towns are required to submit a plan regarding their ordered reappraisal.

Financially, reappraisals shouldn't burden towns, but that's not always the case. According to Remick, the projects

typically cost about \$100 per parcel. Each year, towns receive \$8.50 per parcel from the state that they're supposed to save toward hiring an appraisal firm, but the legislation does allow leeway, and some towns spend the money elsewhere, she said. Plus, with reappraisal firms in hot demand, some towns prove less desirable customers than others.

"There are smaller towns that can't even get a contractor to reply" to their request for proposals, Remick said. She also pointed out that multiple municipalities can band together to hire a firm, which can solve the conundrum for small towns.

In theory, reappraisals don't significantly impact the tax burden on homeowners despite the widespread undervaluing of property. If a property rises in value similarly to other properties in town, there should be little effect on an individual's taxes. Next year, Vermonters can expect to pay 3.7% more in property taxes, even though the statewide CLA dropped more than 8%, according to the tax department.

Next week, the House Ways and Means Committee will reconvene to discuss reappraisals in further depth, according to Rep. Emily Kornheiser, D-Brattleboro, the committee's chair.

"I know it's a really hot topic for constituents," she said. "I'm going to encourage us to learn about it thoroughly, and then do the hot topic-ing next week."

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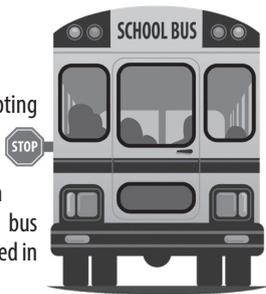
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# GARDENING CORNER



RED CHARM PEONIES

## Gardens can make liars of us all...

BY LYN DESMARAIS

Happy 2023. I don't know about you, but I'm getting 2 to 3 gardening catalogs every

answer 'oh yes, I did everything I was supposed to', then GOLD STAR. I'm completely impressed. If, however, the answer is 'hell no, who has time for all that?' then you're in good company, with me. Luckily for us plants are pretty forgiving, even if our pocketbooks aren't. I'm not going to tell anyone that you're buying plants AGAIN. That is, as long as you don't tell on me.



CORN POPPIES.

Photo by Lyn Desmarais

single week with beautiful covers, enchanting flowers, and words like 'specials,' 'sales,' 'buy one get one free,' 'plants ship free' and 'supplies are limited' splashed all over the front and back covers. I'm hooked. Aren't you? Sign me up: when and where do I start?

Where we started last year, of course. Do you know your budget? Have you amended your soils? Do you know how much sunlight your garden gets in the growing season/ what about the plants watering needs? Do you have an area that's ready to plant? If you have an area that's ready to plant, do you have in your mind what you'd would like to see in that area? If you

I found my gardens were too big this past year. I could not get all the plants weeded thoroughly. Therefore I spent time organizing my garden into borders, using walkways, cardboard, and mulch. I asked for, and received, scores of cardboard boxes. I removed all tape from them and any other non cardboard materials. I flattened them and stacked them 6 inches high. Then I spread mulch over that. I will still get weeds. Creeping Charlie will grow happily right on top of the mulch. But I know Creeping Charlie. I fight him every year. He'll end up on the compost heap.

I noticed that my gardens

were becoming too dominated by yellow. I decided that I need more red in my garden May through September. So here's what I am planning on adding to my gardens.

Early season flowering reds : Columbine (*aquilegia canadensis*) and Harlem oriental poppies

Mid-season flowering reds: Red charm peonies and corn poppies

Late season flowering reds: Scarlet lobelia and midnight marvel hibiscus.

I will buy the poppies, peonies and hibiscus as plants. They come bare root and I will plant them in repeating patterns. Since they will need a few years to mature and get established I'll add annual geraniums in and around them. A friend has given me some red Calla Lilies. I'm going to pot them up next to the geraniums for height. They should be sensational. Papaver orientale Harlem is a deep red poppy with a black center. The peonies I have my eye on are Red Charm. They are a true red with an exploding center of ruffled booms. I love peonies and poppies despite their short flowering season. The geraniums and lilies will cover for them and bloom all summer long. The

midnight marvel hibiscus has large blooms with a darker red purple ring and yellow pistil at its throat. It will bloom in late summer. Again I'll have to be as patient as I can. LI of these will take years to mature and bloom.

The other three I will start from seed outside after June first. Annual red corn poppies, columbine (red and yellow) and scarlet lobelia. The

Judith Irvine taught me how to keep a garden bed ready for spring sowing. She covers her beds with tarps in the autumn, and removes the tarps in the spring- ready to plant! I don't even need a rototiller; all I do is lightly rake the ground and scatter the seeds, water and I'm done!

For me, and most of my gardening friends, we are trying to limit and get rid of flowers. That is

---

*Luckily for us plants are pretty forgiving, even if our pocketbooks aren't. I'm not going to tell anyone that you're buying plants AGAIN. That is, as long as you don't tell on me.*

---

columbine and scarlet lobelia are perennials. Double white columbine and red and yellow columbine are sensational at the edges of the woods. Let them go wild. They do need some sun. The lobelia like moist soils and sun. They may take a year or

until we get together. It starts so innocently. Wwe sit, discuss the weather, then perhaps the past growing season, then we begin to say the same things: too much weeding, not enough time to sit and enjoy. We're definitely cutting back this year. We aren't planning to buy a thing. and then it happens. One of us says 'hey what kind of lilies were those I saw at your place?' 'Which ones?' Those pink ones with the dark stripe.' 'Oh weren't they marvelous? I just love them. They are Lady Pettigrew's Peppermint Patty.' 'They're amazing where can I get them.' And we're off acquiring the catalog and more plants. A dear friend likes to remind me that I said I'd never buy another plant. I broke my pledge hours later. Gardens can make liars of us all.



SCARLET LOBELIA'S.

three, so be patient. Judy Bunde taught me this mantra about perennials: in year one they sleep, in year two they creep, and in year three they leap. Poppies I use as fillers everywhere, I throw the seed amongst perennials and hope for the best. I always get good results. I do also reserve a few small beds for annual flowers from seed.

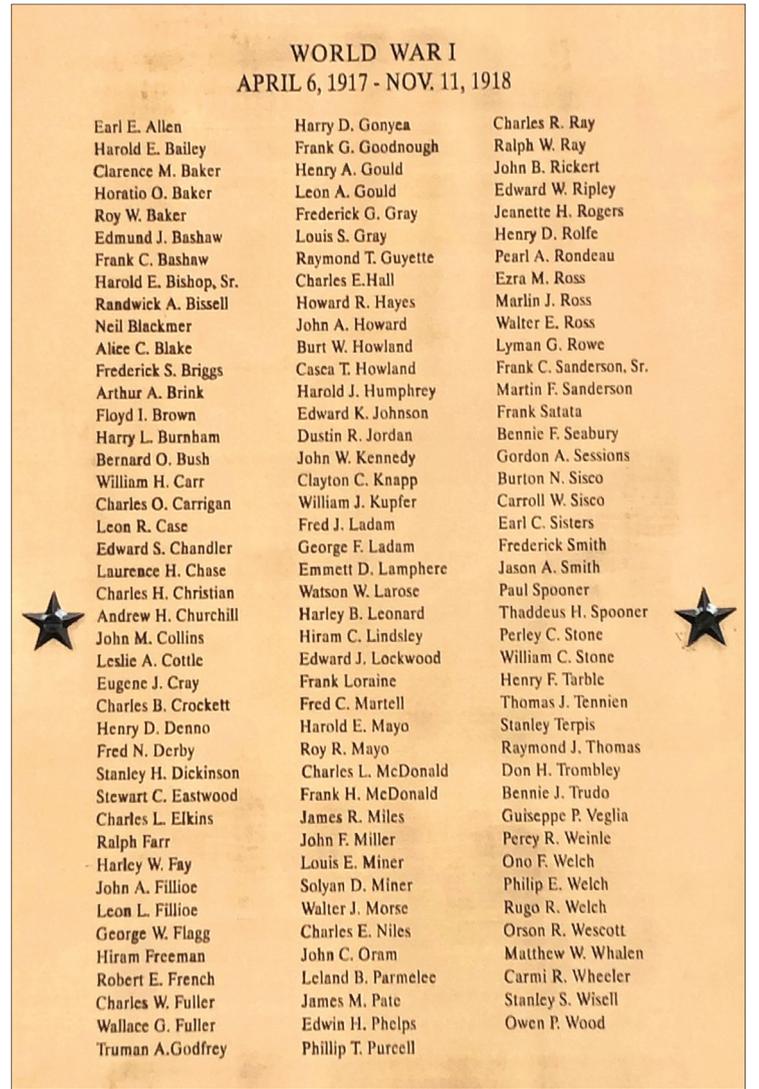
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