

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

A community supported newspaper

Vol. 29, No. 1

Wednesday, January 3, 2024

\$1



STILL REMEMBERED

Local historian Kenneth McFarland traces the history of one of Brandon's fallen Civil War soldiers: John Plude.

PG. 2



NOT SNOWY, BUT STILL FUN

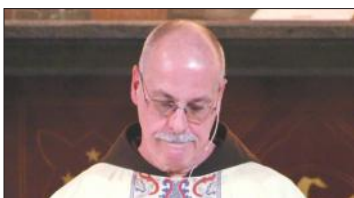
Winners of the Brandon Chamber/Rec Dept's Xmas decorating contest!

PG. 3

SERVICES LACKING

A student's death raises questions about health support services at Middlebury College.

PG. 5



A LIFE OF SERVICE

Father Moe celebrates 25 years in the priesthood.

PG. 8

LOCAL LORE

Learn the story of the scallop truck that was stolen in RI and buried in Goshen.

PG. 16



Winter Wonderland

THE LAWN BEHIND Brandon Inn was all decked out in its holiday best by the Brandon Rec Dept on Saturday, December 23. Young and old came from near and far to stroll through the display, which included a Snoopy on a chopper.

Photo by Steven Jupiter

As ESSER funding ends, OVUU Board discusses budget and Pre-K funding

BY STEVEN JUPITER

BRANDON—The Otter Valley Unified Union (OVUU) School Board convened for its regular meeting on Tuesday, December 19 at the Neshobe School.

The Board spent time reviewing the second draft of its proposed budget, which will be put before district voters in March. As it now stands, the proposed budget contemplates a 16% increase over the current budget, coming in at \$27,234,000. This is not a final budget and does not necessarily represent the figure that the Board will propose to voters in March.

Much of the increase is due to the expiration of ESSER (Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief) funding that was provided by the federal government during COVID to help schools weather the pandemic. Now that the funding is reaching its end, schools have to decide which ESSER-funded resources to retain and which to eliminate.

Additionally, some positions that were funded by the OVUU budget will be shifted to the Rutland Northeast Supervisory Union (RNESU) budget in order to keep the OVUU budget within

the "guardrail" that caps property tax increases at 5%. The current proposal is \$215 per student over that limit, which means that the 5% increase cap would not apply for the next 4 years. The current tax rate is \$1.21. With a 5% increase, it would rise to \$1.27. Without the 5% protective cap, it would likely rise to \$1.36.

The currently proposed shifts from OVUU to RNESU represents \$898,000 in the total budget. At the elementary level, those shifts represent \$589,000. At the secondary level, they represent \$309,000.

Some positions have been eliminated entirely, including a paraeducator at Neshobe and the dean of students at OV.

The proposed RNESU budget envisions an increase of 11.85%, which will become an assessment to both OV and Barstow. The District decided against hiring a School Resource Officer at this time for budgetary reasons.

The next version of the proposed OVUU budget will be presented at one of the Board's January meetings.

The Board also discussed student councils
(See OVUU, Page 23)

Life after OV: Tanner Romano, class of 2000, builds big at Naylor & Breen

BY STEVEN JUPITER

BRANDON—Naylor & Breen (NB) is one of the largest and most successful firms of its kind in Vermont. Since 1978, when the company was founded by Rob Naylor and Peter Breen, NB has been involved in major residential and business construction throughout New England. NB has constructed dorms for Middlebury College, multimillion-dollar homes, and event spaces for landmarks like Hildene in Manchester, for example. The firm is currently overseeing the renovation of the Brandon Library.

By 2016, the company was seeing more than \$40 million in annual revenues. A success by any measure, the triumph is even sweeter as a local company founded by locals and now run by Tanner Romano, an Otter Valley grad who worked his way up from carpenter to owner.

Romano grew up in the profession.

"My father was a residential builder in Brandon," Mr. Romano said at NB's yellow-painted offices overlooking Route 7 just south of Brandon village. "I grew up in Brandon and the surrounding towns. My dad would buy and renovate houses all around the area. We lived in a lot of them, too."

"Dad brought us to work sites when we were very young. I worked with him in high school," Romano recalled.

(See Tanner Romano, Page 23)



TANNER ROMANO



TRACING THE PAST: THE STORY OF JOHN PLUDE OF BRANDON

BY KENNETH MCFARLAND

The short name “John Plude” on Brandon’s Civil War monument belies a long, fascinating, and sad story of a Vermonter who, like many others, went to war and never returned. It’s also a tale of those who came back forever scarred physically and emotionally. In addition, John Plude was one of many thousands of immigrant Union soldiers. In this case, he came to Vermont from Quebec, born there Antoine Napolian Plude in January 1823. (The earlier spelling of the name was Plourde.) In July 1841, Plude married Quebec native Louisa LaClair King, born in 1827. Wed in Brandon, the couple began their family with sons Jennis and Lewis, born in 1845 and 1849, respectively. Census records show John’s occupation as “laborer,” while Lewis was a carpenter, and army records show Jennis as a “farmer.”

Life changing moments first for the father and later the two sons came when the three joined the 2nd Battery, Vermont Light Artillery, a Brandon unit mustered in originally in December 1861. John served longest and saw the most action, joining the battery in January 1862. It was only in November 1863 that Jennis and Lewis enlisted. Meantime, Louisa was left with six more children.

The 2nd shipped out from Massachusetts to the Gulf Coast in February 1862. Soon they were involved in numerous operations, being the first Federal artillery troops to enter New Orleans. The battery would then spend the remainder of

the war primarily around Port Hudson, Louisiana.

The lifting and jostling of artillery service were demanding for privates like John Plude, especially one nearing forty whose previous life surely involved hard physical work. Soldiering took such a toll that Plude spent weeks in the fall of 1862 hospitalized in New Orleans suffering “lumbago,” an early term for low back pain. As well, lumbago was then associated with rheumatism and linked to cold and damp conditions, typical of army camps.

A fate worse than hard duty, however, befell John Plude. Following a Union defeat at Jackson, Louisiana on August 3, 1863, Plude was captured by Confederate cavalry. Like thousands of fellow soldiers, he ultimately found himself at Andersonville prison camp in Georgia. And as with thousands of comrades, he did not survive confinement in this the most notorious of all Civil War POW camps. The subject of a Pulitzer Prize-winning novel by MacKinlay Kantor, Andersonville (aka Camp Sumter) was crowded to 300% over capacity, lacking proper food and medicines, and characterized by unimaginably poor sanitation. Survivors described the camp as a place of filth beyond belief, with prisoners continually plagued by lice and various diseases.

In total, nearly 13,000 Andersonville prisoners died, chiefly from diarrhea, dysentery, scurvy, and gangrene. Amazingly excellent records identified most of the deceased, however, and they are now neatly buried in marked graves. And there



A LIGHT ARTILLERY battery similar to the one that John Plude of Brandon served in during the Civil War. Plude died in a Confederate POW camp in 1864, having been captured in Louisiana in 1863.

Photo provided.

lies John Plude, who passed on July 11, 1864, owing to “rheumatism,” a determination quite different from the more common disorders. Whether this related to his earlier lumbago diagnosis, with Plude being totally disabled by back issues, is a question that must remain unanswered.

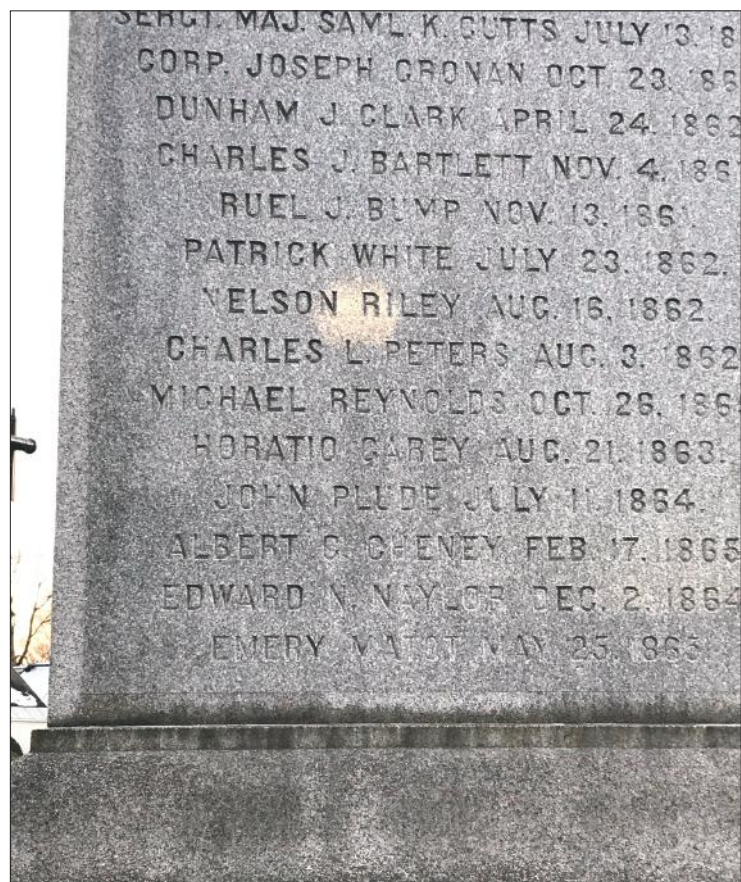
John Plude would never have seen his sons, given his capture in August 1863 and their 2nd Vermont enlistment in November. Both volunteered for three years, Jennis being the legal enlistment age of eigh-

teen, while the younger Lewis must have misstated his age by three or four years. Their exact arrival time in Louisiana is not clear. Like his father, however, Jennis was plagued by physical ailments beginning with “Rubeola” (measles) leading to a Brattleboro army hospital stay from January 26 until February 16, 1864. Fortunately, Jennis did not join the over four thousand soldiers who died of measles during the war, though it can be wondered if after-effects lingered. Surely, however, the hard conditions of artillery ser-

vice echoed his father’s. Jennis was ultimately “mustered out” in June 1865 after nearly three-months at the Baton Rouge army hospital because of “inflammation of the knee joint.”

Though apparently healthy, Lewis Plude also had a sad story. It’s a tale recounted in court martial records from July 1864, as young Plude was charged with stealing a sergeant’s “pocketbook” containing approximately \$70, a hefty amount in the 1860s. In brief, the pocket-

(See *Tracing the past*, Page 6)



JOHN PLUDE’S NAME is memorialized on the Civil War monument in Brandon, which was erected in 1888 in honor of Brandon’s fallen soldiers.

Photo by Ken McFarland



ANDERSONVILLE NATIONAL CEMETERY in Georgia, the resting place of 13,000 Union soldiers, including John Plude.

Photo provided

Brandon Christmas decoration contest winners light up the winter nights



WINNERS OF THE Chamber/Rec Dept Xmas Decoration contest, clockwise from top left: The Deputies of Carver Street for the best "Griswold" festive decorations; the Quigley residence of Park Street Extension for the classiest decorations; Ace Hardware on Grove Street for best commercial decorations; and the Brandon Fire Department for best Civic Building. The winners will receive subscriptions to The Reporter. Congrats, all!

Spotlight On Business NANCY LEARY DESIGN LLC



BRANDON AREA
CHAMBER
of Commerce

Nancy Leary Design LLC has been designing new homes, additions & renovations to existing and interior design around New England in her downtown Brandon Office since 1997. Nancy works with clients to establish a program for their project which leads to schematic designs, construction documents and construction visits. Nancy Leary Design also does business



as **The Home Shop**, located in the Conant Block above the Bakery, which is a retail shop selling rugs, cabinet hardware, light fixtures, and other "jewelry" for the home.

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Editorial

A year in, The Reporter needs support from the community

In our last issue of 2023, which marked our one-year anniversary as an independent nonprofit, we ran an ad that got a good bit of attention, at least as far as I can tell by the number of comments I've received about it around town. In the ad, we let it be known that we're looking for writers and editors to take on some of the responsibilities of putting the paper together. It's been an exhilarating and exhausting year, but the team needs to expand in order to keep this endeavor going. We'd like to explain.

When George Fjeld, Barbara Ebling, and I took this project on over a year ago, it was with the intention of creating a community-supported newspaper that reflected the breadth and depth of the communities we serve. There was a very real possibility at the time that if someone didn't step up and assume responsibility for the paper, it would disappear. We believed then, as we do now, that the paper is too valuable a resource to let slip away. We believe that the paper is a crucial element in maintaining a sense of community cohesion. Without it, it would be very easy for the various segments of our communities to drift apart.

We didn't jump into this blindly. But we've found over the past year that relying on a team of essentially three people (myself, Mr. Fjeld, and Sepi Alavi, our graphic designer) is not a sustainable business model, for several reasons.

First, if any one of us were to become unavailable, the paper would cease to function. We sometimes joke that if any one of us were hit by a car, the paper would fold. We made it through the first year without missing an issue, but there were some close calls and we did have

to delay publication by a day once or twice because of challenges that popped up unexpectedly. It doesn't make sense in the long run to rely entirely on just the three of us to put the paper out every week. We need a bigger team in order to provide the necessary redundancies.

Second, it's often impossible for us to cover all the meetings and events that should be covered. We can't be everywhere we'd like to be, and we often have to make decisions about what to cover based on whether we can get to the event. On occasion we've had to miss events and meetings that we'd like to have covered. Though we do often get material from outside contributors—and are very appreciative—we need a bigger team in order to provide adequate coverage of the towns we serve. We need writers who are willing to attend Select-board and other municipal meetings in addition to the more exciting stuff. Folks rely on us to keep abreast of what's going on in our towns and we'd like to be able to provide that service reliably.

Third, it's not wise for the bulk of our content to be produced by just one or two people. We try to provide quality material every week, but the demands of the schedule sometimes don't allow us to spend the time we'd like on every story. And it's probably healthier to have a wider range of voices in the paper. As much as I enjoy writing, I never intended the paper to become primarily a showcase for my own work.

And, lastly, Mr. Fjeld and I cannot perform these services indefinitely, especially since neither of us is receiving any compensation (nor is either of us seeking any). We took on this responsibility because we

(See *Community support*, Page 6)



A farewell to rodents

THIS PEREGRINE FALCON has had a recent meal. Note the blood on its talon.

Photo by Sue Wetmore

Community Forums Open enrollment period for Vermont Health Connect ends January 15

The Open Enrollment period for Vermont's health insurance marketplace, known as Vermont Health Connect, is ending soon, but there is still time for eligible Vermonters to enroll or make changes to their plan. January 15 is the last day to enroll for qualified health plan coverage in 2024. Any eligible Vermonter can enroll via Vermont Health Connect by January 15 for coverage starting February 1.

This year, the Department of Vermont Health Access is excited to announce that online self-service is available through the end of Open Enrollment! In most cases, Vermonters can complete the application – from start to finish – online at www.VermontHealthConnect.gov. Additionally, any customer currently enrolled in a qualified health plan can change their plan during this time. The Plan Comparison Tool is a resource available to Vermonters to help select the right plan for their

needs.

Vermonters can save money on the amount they pay for plans, called premiums, if they qualify and sign up on the health insurance marketplace. Over 90% of people who are enrolled through Vermont Health Connect qualify for financial help. Thousands of Vermonters now pay less than \$25 a month for coverage through the marketplace.

Customers eligible for financial help can apply the savings to the plan of their choice. It's important that customers shop to see which plan is best for them. All qualified health plans available include the same essential health benefits. For Vermonters who have recently transitioned off Medicaid or other health coverage, these qualified health plans provide a way to regain or maintain continuous health insurance coverage at a low cost. If eligible for Marketplace subsidies, people who no longer

have Medicaid coverage may find health plans that, like Medicaid, have zero (or near-zero) monthly premiums.

"We're proud of the work the Department has done during this time to help Vermonters access coverage for 2024. It's an especially important year with the restart of Medicaid renewals resulting in loss of coverage for some. We're encouraging all uninsured Vermonters to explore plan options and enroll in coverage before the January 15 deadline," said Addie Strumolo, Acting Commissioner of the Department of Vermont Health Access, which operates Vermont's health insurance marketplace.

January 15, 2024 will be the final day of the Open Enrollment period. While January 15 is a holiday, Vermonters can still make plan selections or edits online that day via www.VermontHealthConnect.gov. Once Open Enrollment is over, (See *VT Health Connect*, Page 7)

The REPORTER

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

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Current board members are Steven Jupiter, president; Dr. George Fjeld, treasurer; Barbara Ebling, secretary. Graphic design by Sepi Alavi

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A student's death sparks questions about support services at Middlebury College

BY AUDITI GUHA/
VTDIGGER

Megan Sorensen sleeps with her daughter's ashes so that she can be close to her at the end and the start of each day.

Three months after 20-year-old student Evelyn Mae Sorensen died from an accidental overdose on the Middlebury College campus, her mother is still seeking answers. Megan Sorensen has become increasingly frustrated with the response of college administrators and alleges that the school failed to support her daughter, a transgender woman who struggled with mental illness and substance use.

Faculty members and friends of Evelyn have also been demanding answers from college officials. In a letter to the administration weeks after Evelyn's death, 11 faculty members asked a series of pointed questions — about the circumstances of the third-year student's death and the state of on-campus support services for mental health and substance use disorders, especially for marginalized groups such as LGBTQ+ people. Through a protest and social media posts, students have also been calling on the college to do more.

Middlebury spokespeople declined to discuss details of Evelyn's case, citing privacy laws, and did not respond to repeated requests for interviews with college leaders. But they have disputed allegations that the school doesn't provide enough support to students.

As she grieves at home in Oregon, Megan Sorensen has grappled with regret. She said she wishes her daughter had pursued higher education elsewhere — somewhere less elite and closer to home.

"You don't expect to send your kid to college to come home in a coffin," Sorensen said, through tears, during an interview with VTDigger earlier this month. "You expect (school officials) to be supportive if they are depressed. You expect them to be supportive if there is drug involvement. You expect that the college is going to take care of them."

A DIFFICULT SUMMER

Sorensen and other people close to Evelyn described her as a bright, caring student who was active in the mountaineering, bicycling and queer communities on campus. She enjoyed photography, nature and working at local cafes.

The summer, her mother said, was full of opportunity — but also significant challenges. Evelyn was earning straight A's in her pursuit of a double major in geology and gender, sexuality, and feminist studies. She was also looking forward

to working as a research assistant in earth and climate sciences, collaborating on projects with NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center. And as a person who struggled with mental health issues and substance use disorder, Evelyn had achieved "an extended period of sobriety," Sorensen said.

But Evelyn was also "struggling with the possibility of relapse," her mother said, as is common among people in recovery, and had been "open to her providers at the college about her use." She was working to stay healthy through an opioid treatment program, a local addiction support group and services through the college's Disability Resource Center, Sorensen said. She said Evelyn disclosed to her medical providers on campus that she was "looking at ordering a package of fentanyl."

According to Sorensen, Evelyn told her mother she bought the fentanyl, having it delivered to herself on campus sometime in late May, but threw it away without using it because she was on suboxone, which is used to treat opioid dependence.

In messages Evelyn sent her mother and a faculty advisor, Evelyn said that Derek Doucet, the associate vice president and dean of students, showed up at her summer dorm room days later, early in the morning of May 30. She said in the messages that Doucet gave her a short period to pack up and vacate her room and handed her a plane ticket to fly home to Oregon later in the day.

In an email sent to a professor, Lizz Ultee, on May 30, Evelyn wrote, "I am so sorry but I'm not going to make our 11am meeting and don't even know if I will continue with the plans of having me as a research assistant. Derek Doucet told me this morning at 8:30am that I am being kicked off of campus effective at 1pm today so I need to pack and get on a flight back to Oregon. I don't know if I could still continue my research remotely and would be incredibly thankful if I could."

Ultee, an assistant professor in earth and climate sciences who had hired Evelyn for the summer, said in an interview that Evelyn told her the school wanted to put her on a forced medical leave of absence because of "a substance use disorder for which she was already in treatment, with a program overseen by a medical doctor." According to Ultee, Evelyn "said that the dean of students did not understand medication-assisted treatment and wanted her to go to inpatient rehab."

Ultee emailed Doucet the same

day and Doucet confirmed to her via email that Evelyn had been required to depart campus but had access to telemedicine services. He said he could not share more because of "significant privacy considerations."

Evelyn chose to stay in Vermont because, she said in texts to Sorensen, her health care team thought it would be the most stable option, given that she was on medication-assisted treatment for substance use.

Despite a severe shortage of options, Evelyn found temporary housing at a Middlebury homeless shelter. There, she told friends and family, other residents, mostly older men, encouraged her to take drugs.

Evelyn appealed Doucet's decision, according to Sorensen and faculty. Emails shared by Sorensen show at least two concerned faculty members agreed that the college had put her in "grave danger" during a housing crisis in Vermont with very few emergency beds available.

"I honestly feel like we're fighting for her life," Sorensen wrote in a June 8 email in response to the faculty. "(Homelessness) is a death sentence either by drugs or suicide. Coming home is better than that, but it would just be prolonging the struggle, and there would be great doubts of whether she would ever return to Middlebury. The college holds her life and future literally in their hands."

Evelyn sent her mother a series

of texts outlining her condition during that time. One, sent from the homeless shelter in June, reads: "I haven't slept a whole night since Derek kicked me out. I'm sick, weak, lost so much weight my ribs are showing. My mental health is the worst it's ever been."

"Every day I get more depressed and closer to wanting to die," Evelyn wrote in another text to her mother on June 11.

Following the appeal, Evelyn was allowed back into a dorm room

on June 16, according to Ultee.

Even as she struggled, Evelyn was open about mental health and substance use challenges evidently related to depression, anxiety and other issues. In a July TikTok post, she wrote, "Over 5 weeks without f3nt, c0ke, and x@ns," referring to fentanyl, cocaine and xanax. "I know I have a long way to go and everyday is difficult but I finally feel like I have my life back." The post logged more than 800 likes and

(See Evelyn Sorensen, Page 18)

BINGO
at the Senior Center in Brandon

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Beginning Saturday, January 6th from 1-3.

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Obituaries

Tammy Lynn Platt, 51, Brandon

Tammy Lynn Platt, age 51, passed away on Saturday, December 30, 2023, at her home in Brandon. Tammy was born in Middlebury on June 1, 1972. She was the daughter of Wayne and Charlotte (Greeno) Platt. She grew up in Brandon, where she received her early education and graduated from Otter Valley Union High School. She afterwards attended Champlain College and later earned her Registered Nurse Degree from Castleton State College. She began her working career as an R.N. at Porter Nursing Home in Middlebury and later worked at Albany Medical in Albany, N.Y. She continued in her career, as a traveling nurse serving in several states. She was forced to retire due to illness. She loved to play the piano, enjoyed cooking, family gatherings, and animals. She is survived by 4



TAMMY LYNN PLATT

sisters: Judy Kilpeck (Bob) of Brandon, Susan Reed (David) of Wells, Brenda Currie (Jim) of Leicester, and Pamela Bruce of Brandon. Many nieces, nephews, & cousins also survive her. She was predeceased by her parents.

A gathering "In Celebration of Her Life" will take place on January 13, 2024, from 11 AM until 1 PM, at the Brandon American Legion.

A private graveside committal service and burial will take place at a later date in the family lot at East Shoreham Cemetery.

Memorial gifts in lieu of flowers may be made, in her memory to; Rutland County Humane Society, 765 Stevens Road, Pittsford, VT 05763.

Arrangements are under the direction of the Miller & Ketcham Funeral Home in Brandon.

Community support

(Continued from Page 4)

care deeply about our community, but it's not a project that we can sustain by ourselves in the long run. We need to train others to take over the management of the paper so that its survival isn't completely dependent upon us.

Over the course of the year, we have taken on more and more of the responsibilities that our former parent company, the Addison Independent, was providing for us. Doing so has prompted us to hire an assistant to help manage these new tasks as well as alleviate some other pressures. But we still need writers, and we still need someone willing to learn the editorial operations so that I can begin to transition to a more supervisory role rather than the week-to-week management I've

been doing.

We also need an advertising manager to help us grow our advertising revenues in order to support a larger team. It's a position that requires interpersonal and organizational skills.

Although George and I have not drawn salaries, we recognize that this is not a possibility for the vast majority of people who might be interested. Our means are limited but we do intend to make these paid positions to the best of our ability.

We spent the first year getting our sea legs and establishing good will with our readers. We now need to spend the next year making sure that The Reporter can continue beyond the participation of its current staff. If we're unable to build a long-term team, we cannot guarantee the

survival of the paper. We would not have given so much of our time and energy to this project if we had any intention of shutting down, but the reality is that we cannot support the entire operation ourselves indefinitely.

Anyone who is interested in exploring editorial/writing positions should contact me at sjupiter@brandonreporter.com. Anyone interested in ad management or operations should contact George Fjeld at george@brandonreporter.com.

Anyone who'd like to talk about other ways that they can support the paper, whether through donations or other services, should please feel free to contact either of us as well.

The first year was, from our perspective, a great success. We hope you've enjoyed The Reporter will help us find a way to keep it going.

Thank you.

Tracing the past

(Continued from Page 2)

book was found and returned containing only \$40. The court quickly found Plude guilty. Attempting redemption, he penned a letter seeking forgiveness and promising repayment of stolen funds. Despite heart-tugging references to his "Poor Mother" who was suffering "trouble Enough," Lewis was drummed out of camp and given a dishonorable discharge. In his defense, Lewis Plude was then age fifteen, still a boy in a very adult world. For several years, moreover, he had lacked a father's guiding hand.

Lewis's welcome in Brandon was surely cold...except maybe in his large family's arms. Rejoining the family too was Jennis, who continued suffering painful effects from service, the 1870 census listing him as "lame." Sadly, Jennis was fated for a short life, succumbing to an undefined "fever--sore" on May 18, 1871. Adding to Louisa's woes, Lewis followed his brother in death by less than a year, drowning in January 1872.

Although we've looked chiefly



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(802) 483-2811 Christopher Book/Director

For five generations the Barnard family has assisted families in Pittsford, Proctor, Chittenden and the surrounding area getting through one of life's most difficult times.

Also operating the Birch Grove Crematory

at three soldiers, this story's central character is clearly wife and mother Louisa. Even after her older sons enlisted, she was still raising six children...not easy, though she received a pension after husband John's 1864 death. Yet, "soldier on" she did, guiding her children to adulthood, some remaining in Vermont and others building lives in Bridgeport, Connecticut. There Louisa died on April 26, 1898, living with family. Today, however, a trip to St. Mary's Cemetery in

Brandon is all that's needed to visit Louisa's grave, where she rests quietly with beloved sons Jennis and Lewis.

(Many thanks to Stephen Bunovsky, a John and Louisa Plude direct descendant, who inspired this article during a recent Brandon visit with his wife Elizabeth. A history teacher in Connecticut, he and his aunt Linda Kohler also provided much of the source material needed for the narrative.)

The Governor's Institutes of Vermont welcomes Brandon's Gary Marini as a new Trustee

The Governor's Institutes of Vermont (<https://giv.org>), 40-year-old nonprofit inspiring high-school students to envision meaningful careers in topics from healthcare to engineering to graphic design, recently welcomed three new trustees: Sue Bentlage, Gary Marini, and Dan Mullen.

Bentlage, of Essex Junction, is currently a Senior Director at Marvell Technology in Burlington. Prior to joining Marvell, she held engineering management positions at GlobalFoundries and IBM. Her daughter was inspired from her summer at the Governor's Institute on the Arts to explore music, and now is a professional, Grammy-nominated musician in part due to that experience.



GARY MARINI

Marini, of Brandon, joined New England Woodcraft in 2013 as the CFO and has been President since 2017. He is a Vermont CPA and brings over 35 years of financial and operational experience.

Mullen, of Richmond, works as Corporate Counsel for Scientific Certification Systems, Inc. d/b/a SCS Global Services, an environmental and sustainability services company.

They join a thriving board in overseeing this 40-year-old nonprofit as it enters its fifth decade.

GIV Institutes take place on Vermont college campuses and give attendees the opportunity to dive deep into a topic of interest for an intensive 1-2 weeks. Each Institute is focused around a career-oriented

topic including Arts, Engineering, Entrepreneurship, Environmental Science & Technology, Global Issues & Youth Action, Health & Medicine, Mathematical Sciences, and Technology & Design.

The Governor's Institutes of Vermont is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization that welcomes business sponsorships and individual donations to help fund GIV's efforts to deliver high-quality programming to all interested Vermont students, regardless of their family's finances. In 2023, nearly 80% of students needed financial assistance. If you are in a position to give, please call 802-865-4448 or visit www.giv.org/support.

VT Health Connect

(Continued from Page 4)

customers can only change their 2024 plan if they qualify for a Special Enrollment Period.

It's easy to sign up:

Create an account and apply. Tell us about your household. You will be screened to see if you are eligible for subsidies to help pay for a health plan.

The easy-to-use Plan Comparison Tool for 2024 health plans is designed to help you choose a plan to best meets your financial and medical needs.

Assisters are professionals who are trained and certified by the Department of Vermont Health Access to help Vermonters enroll and maintain health coverage. They can answer questions and walk you through an application. Assisters work for various agencies in the community, such as hospitals, health care providers, and community-based organizations.

Learn how to calculate if employer-sponsored insurance is affordable or if you can get financial help through the marketplace with this online tool.

In order to assist as many Vermonters as possible through the end of Open Enrollment, the Customer Support Center (1-855-899-9600) will extend its hours. In addition to normal operating hours, the call center will also be open on January 11 and 12 from 8:00AM – 6:00PM and over the weekend on January 13 and 14, from 8:00AM – 12PM.

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Legislative Report

BY STEPHANIE JEROME

Looking forward to getting to work for Vermont

I am looking forward to starting the second half of the 2023/24 biennium. This is my third term in the legislature, representing the wonderful town of Brandon. In the legislature, I am the vice-chair of the Committee on Commerce and Economic Development, a legislative member of the University of Vermont Board of Trustees, a member of the Rural Caucus, Women's Caucus, and Climate Solutions Caucus, among other responsibilities. There are so many issues to address that are important to Brandon, Rutland County, and Vermont - at the top of my list are workforce, housing, climate resiliency, and data privacy.

Workforce: I am proud of the work that I have done to build our workforce in Vermont. Last session, we allocated \$40 million to enhance programs to increase workforce participation – programs that educate, train, and help businesses hire and retrain workers. We funded forgivable loan programs, scholarships, and certificate programs. We made financial commitments to our teachers, adult education and training, graduates of Vermont colleges and universities, the trades, up-skilling certifications, criminal justice, technology, critical occupations, mental health

practitioners, EMT, nurses, human services, the arts, and rural economic development. I will continue this work and focus on a bill to expand technical education for both students and adults.

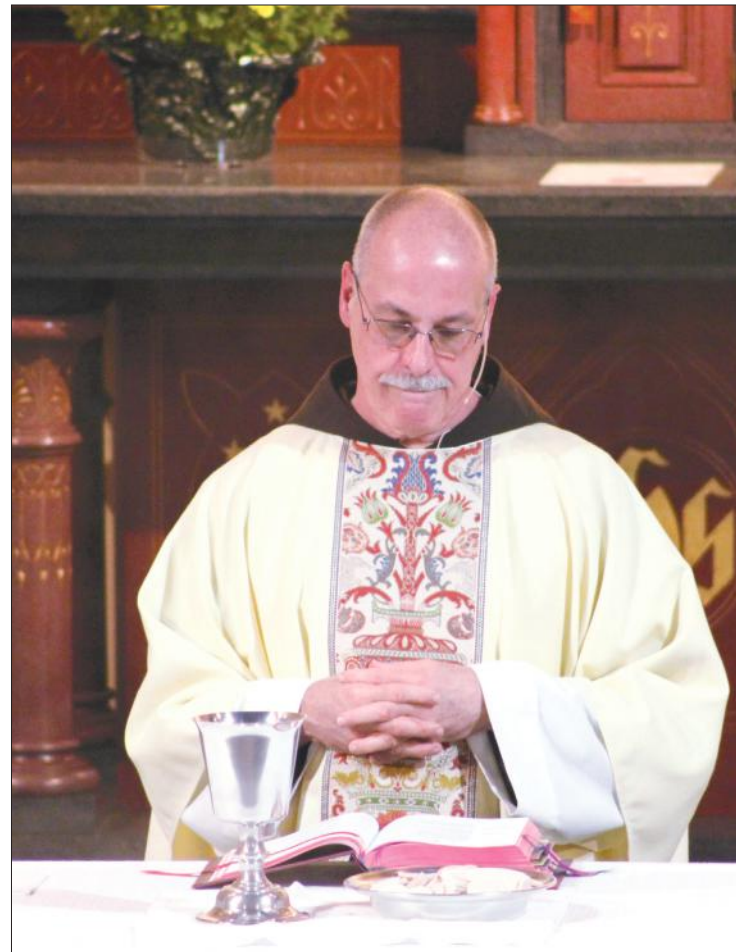
Housing: Vermont is facing a housing crisis across the economic spectrum. Last session, S.100 addressed goals to help alleviate the crisis, including increasing the availability of affordable housing, promoting homeownership, and expanding housing opportunities. Major changes were made to municipal zoning and Act 250 to allow for denser developments in our designated downtowns and villages. This bill balanced the need for development while preserving our natural environment and rural character. More work will be done to address Act 250 and sensible growth this year and create more opportunities for housing. In a small town like Brandon, each unit of housing is important.

Climate Resiliency: I will continue to advocate for energy efficiencies, EV infrastructure, and clean water and air. This year, we saw catastrophic damages caused by the July and December floods. Across the state, our towns and villages must be able to withstand these storms. Bran-

don generally fared well this summer, due to the work done to upgrade our infrastructure after Hurricane Irene. Vermont has made significant investments in water, sewer and stormwater infrastructure, weatherization, and other climate change mitigation - but more needs to get done. This work must continue, to ensure our future health and safety.

Data Privacy: I will continue work on H.121, an act relating to enhancing consumer privacy. Many other states have already passed significant bills to protect personal identifying data - including CA, CT, VA, CO, and MT. This bill will update our privacy laws with regards to personally identifying information, biometric data, data minimization, and the right of consumers to sue businesses that violate their privacy, and other provisions including safety of children's data. This bill protects Vermonters.

*Rep. Stephanie Zak Jerome
(Rutland-9) Brandon
Vermont House of
Representatives
Committee on Commerce and
Economic Development,
vice-chair
802-683-8209*



FATHER MAURICE MOREAU recently celebrated his 25th anniversary in the priesthood. "Father Moe" leads congregations at St. Mary's Catholic Church in Brandon and St. Alphonsus in Pittsford. Congratulations, Father Moe.

Photo provided

Father Maurice Moreau "Father Moe" celebrates 25 years in the Priesthood

BY MARGE MUNGER

On November 15, 2023, Father Maurice Moreau, OFM Cap celebrated his 25th anniversary in the Priesthood. He is the Pastor at Our Lady of Good Help (St. Mary's) in Brandon and St. Alphonsus in Pittsford. "Fr. Moe" concelebrated a Mass at Our Lady of Good Help with several priests, brothers, and deacons,

which included Monsignor Peter Routhier from Burlington. The organist and folk groups from both parishes performed beautiful hymns for the occasion. Following the Mass, the Otter Valley Catholic Community joined Father Moe for a potluck supper at St. Alphonsus Hall. About 150 parishioners from both parishes celebrated with him.

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Can you guess the street?

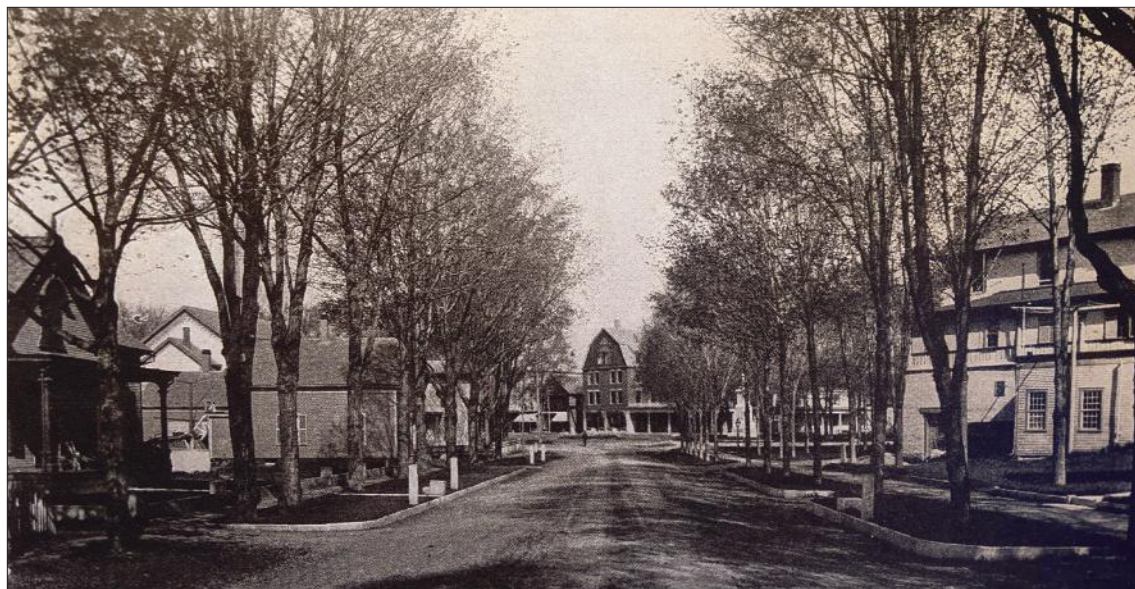
BY LAURA PETERSON

"Trees have been shown to calm traffic and reduce vehicle speeds by appearing to narrow the width of the roadway. Without trees, the open space gives drivers the illusion that they have more control to drive faster – when in reality, that's exactly how accidents occur. Reminder: If a street looks like a highway, people will treat it like a highway. In an area where streets were widened and trees were not present, accidents increased by 500% within an 8-year period." Taken from Hester, Christina,

"Trees for Traffic Calming", Casey Trees, January 17, 2023 <https://caseytrees.org/2023/01/trees-for-traffic-calming>

Can you figure out what street in Brandon is depicted in the photo? Though the street has changed greatly since the photo was taken circa 1900, certain aspects should make it relatively easy to identify. But the trees along the roadside certainly help keep it looking residential.

We will reveal the name of the street next week and be back with another vintage photo.



Adventures of Starship Bean #6 Grand Isle, Louisiana

BY GEORGE FJELD

Carol, Milo, and I left Biloxi, Mississippi (without gambling) with Bean in tow behind Bull. We were headed for New Orleans, or more accurately, Grand Isle, which is 55 miles south of the city. Prior to planning this trip, I really didn't have a clue that there was land that far south of New Orleans. We didn't have to swim or take a ferry, just a slew of elevated roads surrounded by the bayou. Along the way, there were a few islands with towns/ports which had a variety of oil drilling and shrimp-fishing boats docked. It was a really different ride through a very unusual environment. Eventually, we reached our destination, the little island of Grand Isle, 8 miles long and 1 mile wide, home to 1,000 people.

In 2021, Hurricane Ida's eye wall hit the island and damaged all of Grand Isle's 2,500 buildings, with 700 destroyed. The campground had been closed since but reopened in the spring of 2023. Locals wonder why Mississippi's barrier island state campgrounds opened earlier than Louisiana's Grand Isle and with more improvements and amenities thanks to federal recovery funds. They wonder what the government did with the money

in Louisiana, a state known for its graft and corruption.

The campground is set parallel to the beach behind the dunes and the "Burrito Levee," a miles-long artificial tube of geotextile fabric filled with 760,000 yards of sand. The 8.5-foot diameter tube is visible in a few places where recent storms have disturbed the covering sand and foliage. On the other side of the levee is a marvelous flat sand beach with stone breakwaters about 150 feet off the shore. There were lots of pelicans flying back and forth along the coast. I sighted a couple of dolphins following fishing boats headed into the Gulf. They are a sure sign of a good marine environment.

We set Bean up in a spacious pull-through site and connected up the water and electricity. After setting up the awning, we explored the campground. There wasn't much to see. The pier that had run out into the Gulf hadn't been rebuilt and the east end of the area was just the way Ida had left it. However, we did meet some of our neighbors and were soon snacking on a few fresh shrimp they offered us. Those shrimp were surely the best campground snack we ever had!

A week earlier, I had met a fella

in a bar in Apalachicola, Florida and he recommended a particular fishing technique after I informed him I was after a big redfish. He grew up in coastal Louisiana and knew Grand Isle. "There's plenty of bull reds there" he claimed. A little information on fishing

vernacular: small fish of a particular species are called "dinks," medium-sized fish are "good fish," and large fish can be called "bulls." Honestly though, most large fish are females so would be more appropriately called "cows." This wording has been

adopted by many Northeast stripper fisherman, myself included. Back to the technique... This fella claimed that fishing a small 1.5-inch spoon in the shallow coastal waters from shore would catch a "bull." I was skeptical and I let him know that. But he retorted, "Elephants eat peanuts." So, a little spoon will be my presentation.

The next morning in Grand Isle saw me wading in the shallow Gulf waters and casting repeatedly. I wandered up and down about a mile of beach without any success. I tried changing lures without any bites. I contemplated switching to bait which I hardly ever do. Talking to one of the 2 other fishermen on the miles of beach, I found out that bait will really only attract the sharks. I had no interest.

After a break for lunch and a short conversation with a camping neighbor, I headed back. Carol came along for the walk and to do some shell collecting. I moved further west down the beach after noticing a little irregularity in the beach. I worked that spoon hard and was about to move on when the big hit came! My 8-foot surf rod doubled over and the line started screaming off my open-faced spinning reel. I worked the
(See Starship Bean, Page 11)



GEORGE FJELD HOLDS the massive bull redfish he caught in Louisiana. The realization of a longtime dream, Mr. Fjeld held the trophy long enough to snap a photo and then released it back into the ocean.
Photo by Carol Fjeld



Stay Healthy This Winter

"This is viral season so having great hand hygiene is key. We want to encourage everyone to stay healthy by washing their hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water and avoid touching their face at all costs. We also encourage community members to get vaccinated for influenza and COVID. People 60 or older should consult with their provider for the RSV vaccine."

Nkiruka A. Emeagwali, MS, MD, PhD
Pulmonary & Critical Care Medicine

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OUR CREATIVE KIDS

ARTIST: Zaidyn McGraw

GRADE: 3

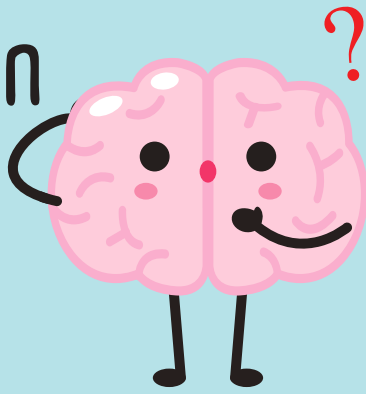
SCHOOL: Sheldon Academy

MEDIUM: Paint

TEACHER: Ms. Stephanie



Brandon Brain Buster



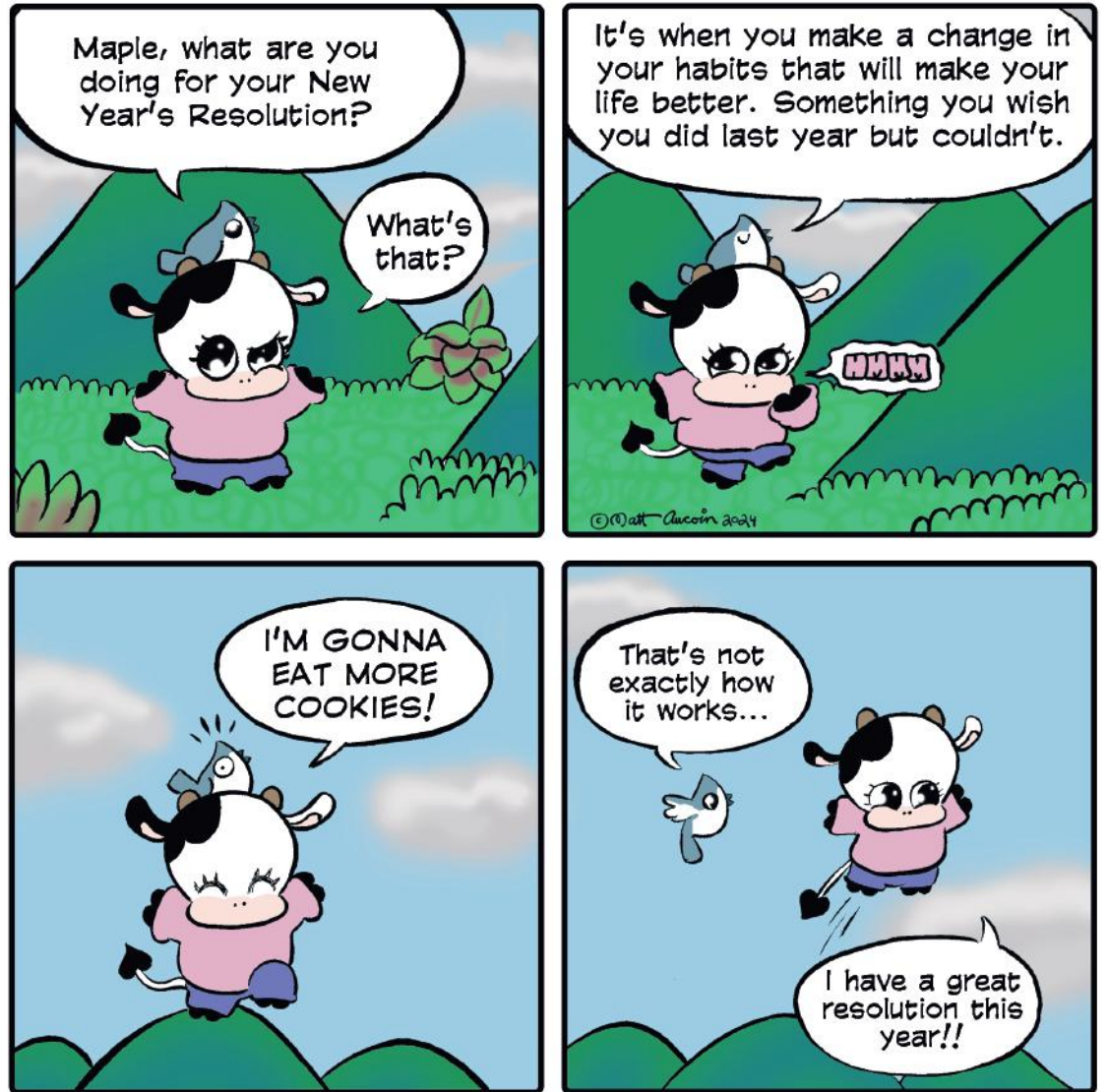
Annie and Bobby are standing at opposite ends of a perfectly straight, perfectly level road that's 100 miles long. At exactly the same time, they begin traveling toward each other on the road. Annie is traveling at 22 miles per hour on a moped. Bobby is traveling 11 miles per hour on a bicycle. If they continue to travel toward each other at their respec-

tive constant speeds, without stopping or deviating from the road, how long will it take until they are exactly one mile from each other?

- A) 6 hours
- B) 5 hours
- C) 4 hours
- D) 3 hours
- E) 2 hours

Answer on pg. 21

MAPLE^{the} COW™ by Matt Aucoin



BLOODROOT GAP ENTERTAINS the crowd at Red Clover.

It was a great week for local music in Brandon

BY GEORGE FJELD

Holiday week saw local musicians strumming their strings and filling the air with originals and covers at Red Clover Ale Company. Thursday saw singer/songwriter Breanna Elaine entertain an enthusiastic crowd with many original songs includ-

ing "I'm Unstable," which may be her first hit single. On Friday, Bloodroot Gap members Rob and Jim McCuen and Freeman Corey welcomed local talents Walter Stone (banjo) and Ethan Nelson (guitar and vocals) to accompany them.



BREANNA ELAINE PERFORMS at Red Clover Ale Company in Brandon. She enthralled the audience with her song "I'm Unstable."

Photos by George Fjeld

Starship Bean

(Continued from Page 9)

fish back in not once but three times after drag pulling runs. I could feel the fish tiring and started yelling to Carol to get the camera out. She was way ahead of me, as usual, and had been filming the whole time! My fish came to the shallows and I was finally able to see her! A massive bull red! I landed her on the beach and after a quick picture and measurement, I returned her to the gulf. She was 41 inches long. You can't keep the big ones, they are important for breeding and replenishing the stock of fish. Keepers are 18-27 inches only. However, I was not disappointed, really, mostly elated. A giant! It fulfilled my wildest dream! I left on this trip with a wish to catch my first redfish and then if possible, a big redfish. Wishes do come true. I kept fishing for another couple of hours but after only one more bite. I headed back.

To get to the camper, I had to cross the levee. There I ran into a wall of bugs. Mosquitos, huge (even by Vermont standards) and plentiful. Not too bad in the middle of the day with a good breeze but in the evening when the air

is still, they came out in droves. I hustled right along, swatting madly as I went. When I was fixing the tarp outside the camper and slapped at my leg when I felt a bite. Boy, was I surprised when I looked down and saw 5 dead bugs! And blood! Man, they are terrible in coastal Louisiana.

Back at the campground, I ran into the same neighbor, and let him know about my catch. After congratulating me, he related that he had been on the professional redfish tour years earlier. Many stories later, he gave me a lure which he promised would catch me another big red. I retired to the camper to rest up and have a little dinner before heading back out for a little evening fishing. Unfortunately, that

little lure didn't produce. But those mosquitos were ferocious!

We didn't stay long in Grand Isle, mosquitos have a way of making a place less than fun to hang out. Plus, I'd already had my wish fulfilled and we were headed to Texas.

Bean chimes in: I've never been around so much water! All the way south there was nothing but water. I began to wonder if



GEORGE FJELD ENJOYING a great day fishing on the Gulf Coast of Louisiana.

we were going to get on a boat. I've heard about a kind of boat that cars and trucks drive onto and think it might be fun. But mostly scary! I can't swim!

Calendar of events

January Mondays

Brandon Rec offers Aikido classes

Come to Brandon Town Hall for Youth classes at 5 p.m., and adult classes at 6 p.m. Beginners and spectators welcome. Visit www.aikidovermont.org for more information, including fees.

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 with your child's name, age, and contact information for your family.



Friends Zone

The Friends Zone will be initially open 3 hours per week at the Brandon United Methodist Church on Tuesdays from 12-3 p.m. at 1 Franklin Street, Brandon. Socialize with old friends, make new ones. Sip some soup while you sip a drink. Be puzzled for a bit, sorting out a puzzle, or hold an Ace in the hole until the right moment to play it. If so inclined, you can bring to the table a struggle of your own to work on or your thoughts on developing the Friends Zone or improving our lives.

The door is open. Our minds are open. Our hearts are open.

All are welcome in.

For more information contact pastors Reverend John Hardman-Zimmerman (hzm@hotmail.com or (802) 282-7532) or Vicki Disorda (vqueenoftheearth@gmail.com or (802) 345-4125).

Pins & Needles Craft Club at the Brandon Free Public Library

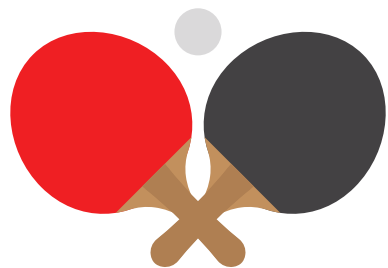
Drop in from 5:30-7:00 p.m., and bring your projects to work on.

Wednesdays

Ping Pong

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

The club has begun playing 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 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 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, visit our club's website at www.gmttc.com.

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 reap 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 you 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

Thursdays

Ukulele Group

Free at the Chaffee Arts Center from 12-1 p.m., for adults & 12+. This is not a class but a group enjoying playing the ukulele together. Must pre-register. There are a limited amount of in-house instruments to reserve.

Attendees will be led through specific sheet music by musician Steven Wilson. All levels are welcome.

Open Mic at Red Clover in Brandon

Join us starting at 6 p.m. for a rousing good time!

Fridays

Chaffee Arts Center All About the Arts Free Class for kids 3-5

From 11am-Noon...FREE! Students will have fun creating and doing activities with art, music, literature,

and more!

One free book per student will be given weekly (while supplies last) thanks to our partners at Rutland Free Library. Adult must accompany children under age 4. Must pre-register by Wednesday each week.

Instructor: Lori Sullivan; Minimum 3.



Maclure Library Knitting Circle
Come join us weekly to share projects from noon – 2:00 p.m.

Corn Hole at the Godnick Adult Center

By request, we will have drop-in cornhole in the Rec Hall on Fridays from 2-4 p.m.

Play with whomever shows up each time or just practice your cornhole skills!

Saturdays

Bingo at the Brandon Senior Center

First Saturday of each month from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. Bring lunch, and the Center will provide beverages, desserts, and a good time. A great way to pass a Saturday afternoon. Please direct any questions to Kathy Mathis at 247-3121.

Storytime at the Brandon Free Public Library

Join us every Saturday at 10:30 for picture book storytime. All ages welcome.

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

"The study of art is the most important study a garden designer can pursue."

Saturday 6th

Chaffee Arts Center Kids Make and Take Saturday Activity- Wooden Necklaces

Let's Paint Wooden Necklaces! Each kit in-

cludes materials needed to create the special project. Plus, an Ann Clark Ltd Cookie Cutter with recipe (value \$5) to bake as a family or group!

It also can be used to trace and draw with. 3 wood circles with attached string, 3 paint colors, paint brush, and cookie cutter

Sheldon

The elaborate model train layout at Henry Sheldon Mountain in Middlebury, Vermont is an annual tradition delighting all ages. The assemblage stands on levels high, with running Lionel O trains, Lionel O27 trains, and an upper running HO train layout is complete. A backdrop of the Green Mountains painted by local artist Gayl Brantley and in 2018, an open gondola ski lift, snowboarders, and climbers were added.

The new gondola lift!

New last year's entire remake of the mountain including a gondola ski lift, skier climbers, and through the mountain.

Aikido Classes through Brandon Rec

Winter Registration is open on the Rec website.

www.brandonvt.myrec.com Beginners and spectators are always welcome.

Visit www.AikidoVermont.org for more information.

Saturdays 10:30-11:30am
Ages: 6-12

Next Stage Arts Project and Twilight Music present roots, ragtime, and jazz quartet DiTrani Brothers plus Jatoba's multi-instrumentalist /singer Jason Scaggs

Museum Holiday Train Exhibit Through January 13, 2024

Lio- show off the HO train. features skiers, snow-
at the Popular Gabe the Lamp- boarders, and rock
useum Gabe the Lamp- lighters, and rock
ermont lighter will be back this climbers. The layout is
ermont year. Push the button made possible by a team
dition, and watch Gabe climb of volunteer engineers
s. The tower and turn on the who install and operate
s three floodlights! Come this the trains Ends January
tracks year to see what's new! 13, 2024.

The new mountain



at Next Stage on Saturday, January 6 at 7:30 pm at 15 Kimball Hill in downtown Putney, VT. Tickets are \$20 Advance / \$25 At the Door / \$10 Livestream. Next Stage will provide a beer, wine, and cocktail cash bar. Advance tickets are available at nextstagearts.org. For information, call 802-387-0102 or visit nextstagearts.org.

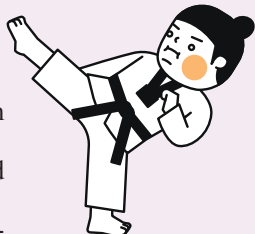
Michael Chorney's ensemble Freeway Clyde at Burnham Presents

"Every moment is urgent and new~ A shifting landscape of styles and sounds, from orchestral indie folk to mountain music to avant-garde jazz, melding together brilliantly and beautifully".

A Tony Award-winning composer and arranger, Michael Chorney is one of Vermont's most prolific and collaborative artists. After working for years on the score for the Broadway hit, Hadestown (winner of eight Tony Awards in 2019), he longed to develop a collective, ensemble approach to music making. He found it back in Vermont and put together a group of the region's most intuitive players. Freeway Clyde took off.

"Every moment is urgent and new~ A shifting landscape of styles and sounds, from orchestral indie folk to mountain music to avant-garde jazz, melding together brilliantly and beautifully. -Vermont Seven Days

"The orchestrations are simultaneously rich and spare, deftly echoing the sounds of traditional folk



rough
c

the Brandon

eginners and

for more in-

music while also having an indie-pop flair." -New York Times

Tickets available now at: <https://www.burnhampresents.org>. From 7:30 pm-10:00 pm at Burnham Hall, 52 East River Road, Lincoln. \$20.00.

Wednesday 10th

NXT Rockumentary Film Series: Hype! (1996)

This rock documentary by director Doug Pray focuses on the explosion of grunge music that took place in the Pacific Northwest during the early 1990s.

While the film features the most popular bands of the movement -- namely Pearl Jam, Nirvana and Soundgarden -- it also presents lesser-known acts such as the Melvins, Mudhoney and Seaweed. Incorporating concert clips, interviews and behind-the-scenes footage, the movie paints a dynamic picture of this highly influential scene.

From 7:00- 8:30 pm at Next Stage Arts Project, 15 Kimball Hill, Putney. \$10.00.

Thursday 15th

The Stones and Brian Jones presented by MNFF selects

Featuring revealing interviews with all the main players and incredible unseen archive footage released for the first time, The Stones and Brian Jones explores the creative musical genius of Jones, key to the success of The Rolling Stones, and uncovers how the founder of what became the greatest rock and roll band in the world was left behind in the shadows of history.

Directed by Nick Broomfield

7:00

Individual Ticket:

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Includes \$2 fee

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PM



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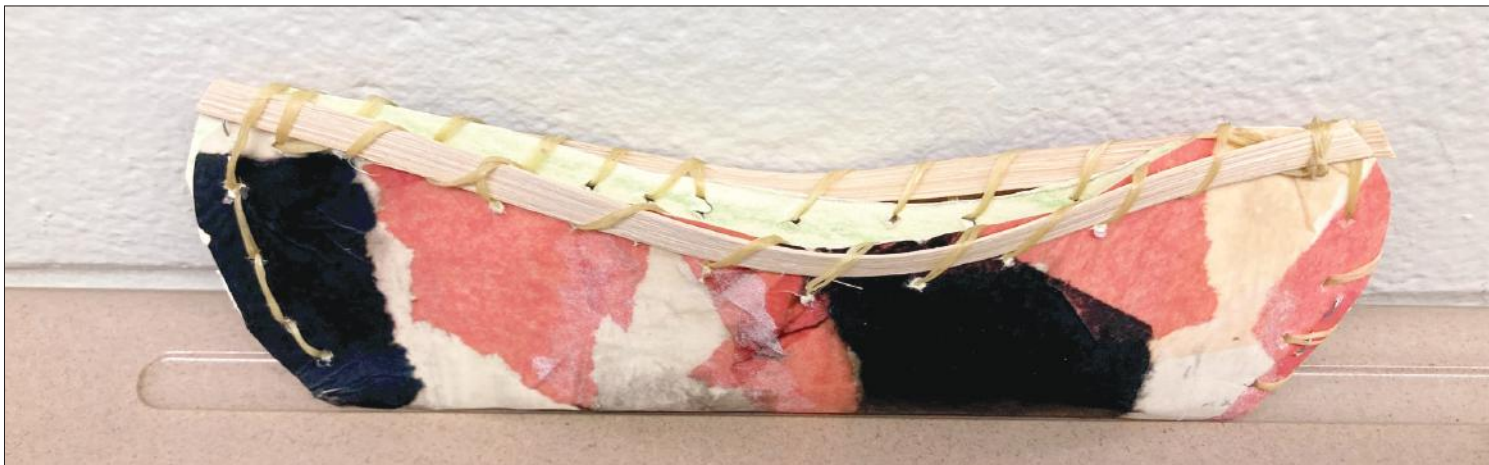
Otter Valley 8th-grade history class learn Abenaki art techniques

BY DASHA KALISZ

With the help of funding from the Brandon Artist Guild, history teacher Matthew Clark and art teacher Dasha Kalisz hosted visiting artist Judy Dow on December 12 and 13 for an enriching interdisciplinary basket making tutorial with the 8th-grade history class. Students learned about the special, natural qualities of birch bark and how the Abenaki and others used the bark for storage containers to preserve food. To get ready for Mrs. Dow's visit, students created maps of Vermont illustrating features that have personal significance to them. Using a papier mâché technique, students glued tissue paper to the backs of their maps to mimic birch bark. Ms. Dow and two helpers led the students through the process of making a traditional Wabanaki basket from their maps. Some students also had time to create small cannons and wove yarn baskets as well. Mrs. Dow also demonstrated how to use an atlatl, a spear-throwing tool that is used to leverage a spear to achieve greater velocity. The 8th graders enjoyed their experience throwing the atlatl as well.

About Judy Dow from the Vermont Art Council Website:

"I am an Abenaki educator. I teach science, history and math through art. Currently I've been working with Gedakina and the University of New Hampshire through a National Science Foundation grant." (See Abenaki art, Page 24)

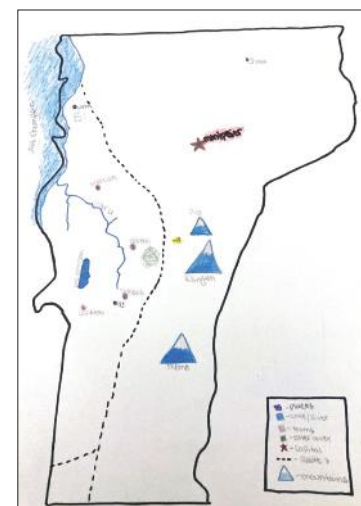
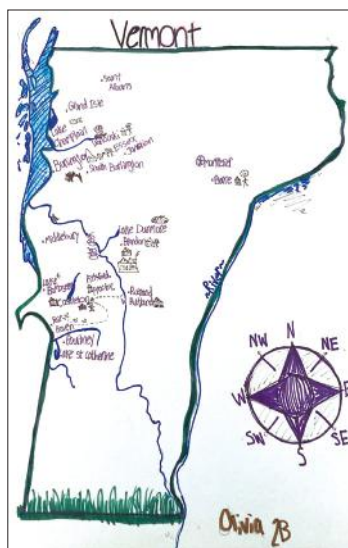


AN EXAMPLE OF the basketry that Dasha Kalisz's art students learned to make with the guidance of Abenaki artist Judy Dow.

Photos provided



JUDY DOW EXPLAINING aspects of traditional Abenaki technique to the students at Otter Valley Middle School.



MAPS OF VERMONT created by the students



New England Woodcraft 1st Annual Sweater Contest!

NE WOODCRAFT HELD its first-ever sweater contest on Friday, December 22. Employees got into the holiday spirit with all sorts of creative, festive, or downright ugly sweaters. The winners, as chosen on site by The Reporter, were (l to r) Robyn Stevens ("ugly" category), Scottie Sheret ("festive"-note the glittered beard!), and Toby "2.0" Alger ("creative"). The three winners each received a gift basket full of goodies. The contest was followed by pizza from Brandon House of Pizza. Fun was had by all. Can't wait 'til next year's contest!

Photos by Steven Jupiter



Housing crisis could interfere with Vermont efforts to resettle 550 refugees by next fall

BY TIFFANY TAN/
VTDIGGER

Vermont officials have expressed willingness to accept 555 new refugees by next fall, though they said the number could decrease due to the state's housing crisis.

By September 2024, some 330 refugees are expected to be resettled around Colchester, Montpelier and Rutland, and another 225 in the Bennington and Brattleboro areas, Tracy Dolan, Vermont's state refugee office director, told VTDigger.

we do have a housing crisis and it may need to change," Dolan said, referring to communication with the U.S. Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration.

Last fiscal year, Dolan said, Vermont received a little over 400 refugees, a broadly used term that includes humanitarian parolees, asylum seekers and holders of special immigrant visas, such as Afghans who'd worked with the U.S. military. The previous year, the state accepted 387 refugees, according to a January 2023 report to the state Legislature.

forts.

"We need people here in Vermont, and we have the jobs for people here in Vermont, but we don't have the housing they need to be here," he said in an interview Thursday. "It's a very frustrating dynamic, and we're going to do everything we can."

Scott said his administration will be introducing a package of housing proposals in the upcoming legislative session.

Vermont has consistently had some of the lowest housing vacancy rates in the nation, according to the Vermont Housing Finance Agency, which relied on U.S. Census Bureau data for its analysis.

As of 2022, the statewide rental vacancy rate stood at 3.2%. To meet expected demand and normalize the extremely low vacancy rate, the housing finance agency said in January, the state needs 30,000 to 40,000 new homes by 2030.

Meanwhile, the median housing rental cost as of 2021 was \$1,070, an amount that included utilities.

When refugees arrive in the U.S., each person in a household receives \$1,325 from the federal government to be used for their critical needs during the first 90 days, such as housing rent, food, clothing and furnishings.

Clark, of the development council, said people who resettle on their own have the hardest time making ends meet. For housing alone, they need the usual outlay of first and last month's rent and security deposit. Some people, he said, have decided to seek housemates among fellow refugees to make their expenses more manageable.

To help defray the refugees' initial living expenses, the development council collects donations for basics such as clothes, shoes, toiletry, household goods and furniture. Clark said development council staffers also help those who qualify to apply for government aid such as Medicaid, food benefits and cash assistance while they look for jobs.

The U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants' director in Vermont, Amila Merdzanovic, didn't respond to an interview request about her agency's current

relocation plans and challenges.

Under the current state government budget, the State Refugee Office is allotted \$1 million for

employment assistance grants. Dolan, the office director, said the money goes to organizations such as nonprofits, which help refugees prepare to find local employment.

"Those employment rates are very high," she said, estimating that

around 80% of work-eligible refugees find jobs within their initial months in Vermont.

Dolan said the state contributes a small amount into a fund that resettlement agencies use to pay for hotels or motels if their clients can't immediately find rental housing. The pot of money, she said, is primarily made up of federal funds, with private donations mixed in.

Clark said the development council also has been building relationships with landlords to help their clients find housing. The work, he said, includes explaining to landlords that refugees, being new to the U.S., don't have a credit history and that the background checks they've undergone through the Department of Homeland Security, FBI and CIA should suffice.

"We don't want our clients to ever become homeless," he said.



PEOPLE AND CHILDREN walking away. U.S. Air Force loadmasters and pilots assigned to the 816th Expeditionary Airlift Squadron, load passengers aboard a U.S. Air Force C-17 Globemaster III in support of the Afghanistan evacuation at Hamid Karzai International Airport in Afghanistan on Aug. 24, 2021.

Photo by Master Sgt. Donald R. Allen via U.S. Air Force

If the effort is successful, the new arrivals will represent the biggest number of refugees resettled annually in Vermont in almost a decade. The plans align with the state government's desire to integrate more refugees into the workforce and the fabric of Vermont life while responding to the global refugee crisis.

At the end of last year, according to UNHCR, there were 35.3 million refugees worldwide, more than half of whom originated from Syria, Ukraine and Afghanistan.

"I'm hoping that we're able to continue to resettle, and resettle at the numbers that we need," Dolan said in an interview. "Our workforce absolutely needs these folks, and communities have found it to be a very positive experience."

But she acknowledged that Vermont's projected refugee resettlement number for this federal fiscal year was "aspirational," given the state's low housing stock coupled with high housing costs.

"I wrote that to the feds, that I support this, but recognizing that

Dolan said the two federally contracted resettlement agencies in Vermont — the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants and the Ethiopian Community Development Council — inform the federal government the number of refugees they can relocate after consulting with the State Refugee Office and the host communities.

The development council's Vermont branch, which is resettling refugees in the Bennington and Brattleboro areas, is already considering cutting its current projected number from 225 to 150 because of the statewide housing crisis.

"We have some concerns about our ability to resettle as many people as we thought, given the current state of housing," said Mark Clark, the agency's Vermont resettlement program manager. "We can get people employed, but we just can't get access to safe and affordable housing."

Gov. Phil Scott, who has advocated for Vermont to accept more refugees, acknowledged that the state's lack of housing is a major problem for its resettlement ef-

REAL ESTATE



Brandon Village home with surprising privacy and a country feel! Entry through the oversized and well-lit carport. The cozy living room has a pellet stove and plenty of natural light. The newer side porch looks out to the landscaped and terraced yard, enclosed by a wooden picket fence. Lots of room for pets, kids, and gardening! The finished basement has full sized windows, a 3/4 bathroom, a private entrance, and could be converted to a nice rental. A great combination of comfort and convenience. \$395,000



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Brandon, VT 05733
PH: 802-247-6633

WhittakerRealEstate.com
Tom@WhittakerRealEstate.com



**Happy
New Year
to All
-Tom &
Carolyn**

* **2024 Calendars are here. Stop at 14 Mt. Pleasant Dr. or give a call and we'll deliver.

Become a fan of Whittaker Real Estate on



Mim's Photos

Recognized



This week we are devoting Mim's page to the story of the Stolen Seafood Truck. The truth is stranger than the legend that grew up around the theft.



The Fish Story of the Seafood Truck

A couple of weeks ago, The Reporter's George Field scanned a few of Mim's photos to run for the upcoming issue. Little did we know that he was about to unearth a local scandal! We got many IDs of the truck that came in, which follow, and these IDs lead me to unearth a bit more about this mysterious truck.

The truth of the matter was quite scandalous in fact. It seems that one Ralph Junior Gilpin, an out

of work fisherman from Rhode Island, hijacked the "Carter's Seafood Co." truck by kidnapping the driver at gun point. Gilpin then drove the truck through Massachusetts where he tied the basically unharmed driver, John Ledsworth, to a tree. He then drove the truck to Brandon where he offloaded \$46,000 worth of scallops—the equivalent of \$178,000 in today's money—then buried the truck in Goshen on the Dragon property.

If anyone has more detailed information about the "Great Scallop Heist," we'd love to hear it!

Recognized:

Robert Cappio of Leicester identified the stolen seafood truck from back in the 1970s.

Sue Wetmore said that the wrecked truck could possibly be the one involved in the big scallop caper. She remembers that someone stole the truck and hid it in Goshen.

Sue Gage alleged that it was Bucky Dragon et al who allegedly stole a truck of scallops and ended up burying it in Goshen. She also said that Peter Langrock writes of this in one of his books.

Robert Cappio wonders if the wrecked truck body in the mud could be the aftermath of the heist that may have been hatched right in Brandon, at "LaDuques" the local watering hole. The plot starts with the highjacking of a truck full of seafood and driven from RI or MA back to VT, where the contents of the truck are distributed and the truck is buried to escape detection. Until it was detected and dug up!

10B **Jury Indicts R.I. Man for Scallop Heist**

By **JOE MAHONEY**
Free Press Staff Writer

A 31-year-old Rhode Island man has been indicted by a federal grand jury for the alleged hijacking in November of a scallop truck dug up in Goshen last month and for kidnapping the truck driver in Rhode Island.

Ralph Junior Gilpin, also known as Ralph Long and Jay Long, was charged in the indictments handed down in Providence, R.I., with forcibly abducting the driver and with interstate transportation of a stolen vehicle and goods.

A grand jury in Rutland began probing the hijacking last month after the FBI, state and local police unearthed the truck from property rented to Clifton Dragon, 31.

That panel "will not be affected" by the indictment, said Assistant U.S. Attorney Jerome Neidermeier. Gilpin, an unemployed fisherman, is being held in the Middlesex County jail in New Jersey on unrelated charges. Police in Portsmouth, R.I., said they will issue arrest warrants for him and an unidentified teen-age girl in connection with the truck heist.

The indictments say that Gilpin took \$46,400 worth of stolen scallops to Brandon, the truck to Goshen and the driver of the Carter Seafood Co. of Portsmouth truck to Oxford, Mass.

Kidnapped at gunpoint, the driver, John Ledsworth, was found unharmed, tied to a tree, investigators said.

Gilpin is scheduled to be arraigned in U.S. District Court in Providence May 30.

The Burlington (Vt.) Free Press, Thursday, May 22, 1980

Crossword

CLUES ACROSS

1. Bleated
6. Snake-like fish
9. Database management system
13. Russian-American violinist
14. Wendy's founder Thomas
15. Ancient Italian-Greek colony
16. Negatives
17. Rescued
18. Self-immolation by fire ritual
19. Assigns tasks to
21. Island nation native
22. Trade
23. Detergent brand
24. Famed NY Giant
25. Before
28. Split pulses
29. Extremely angry; highly incensed
31. Body part
33. American state
36. David ___, US playwright
38. Move one's head slightly
39. Secret rendezvous
41. Improved
44. A place to exercise
45. 18-year astronomical period
46. Automobile
48. You can take it
49. A radio band
51. Jaws of an animal
52. Short-billed rails
54. Chinese province
56. Shameless and undisguised
60. Horizontal passage into a mine
61. Adult males
62. Fail to entertain
63. Dried-up
64. City in north-central Utah
65. Southern U.S.
66. German river
67. Oxygen
68. Make law

CLUES DOWN

1. Curved segment
2. Wings
3. From pentane (Chemistry)
4. Gradually gets into
5. Commercial document (abbr.)
6. Overhang
7. Christmas and New Year's have them
8. Type of bulb
9. Lacking a plan
10. Tattle
11. Rockers like it "heavy"
12. One who's been canonized
14. Indicate time and place
17. Nobel Prize winner in physics
20. The voice of Olaf
21. Fragmented rock
23. They ___
25. Master of Philosophy
26. Backside
27. Landmark house in L.A.
29. An act of undue intimacy
30. From which a later word is derived
32. Equal to 10 meters
34. Neither
35. Computer language
37. Sacred book of Judaism
40. A woolen cap of Scottish origin
42. A way to dedicate
43. Challenges
47. British Air Aces
49. Large, influential bank
50. Portended
52. Cavalry-sword
53. Vaccine developer
55. Napoleonic Wars general
56. Italian Seaport
57. Hip joint
58. ___ Clapton, musician
59. Insect repellent
61. Decorative scarf
65. Delaware

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					62		
63						64				65			
66						67				68			

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.

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

Level: Intermediate

PUZZLE SOLUTIONS

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

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

Thank you from the Rutland County Humane Society!

The Board of Directors, staff, and animals at the Rutland County Humane Society would like to send out a special "thank you" to our community for being so supportive of us! Whether it's volunteering your time and talents, adopting an animal, or supporting us with donations, you're always there for us, and we couldn't do what we do without you! May the new year bring you good health, open up new horizons, and make promises of a brighter tomorrow for all creatures. Our best wishes for a wonderful holiday season and a happy new year!

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



MEET JOHNNY CASH - 2-YEAR-OLD. NEUTERED MALE. CATAHOULA MIX. BLUE MERLE.

This handsome boy may not be able to sing, but he can entertain! Johnny Cash came to RCHS from a busy shelter in Texas, and makes friends everywhere he goes. He is a busy boy who will need an active family. He needs to work on his manners but picks up on new things quickly. Johnny loves the outdoors and would make a great hiking partner. He gets along with other dogs and loves everyone he meets. If you want to meet him, stop by the Adoption Center Tuesday-Saturday 11 am-4 pm.

MEET ARIES - 4-YEAR-OLD. MALE. GERMAN SHEPHERD. BLACK/TAN.

Do you have Shepherd experience and are looking for a handsome boy to join your family? Aries is your guy! This boy was surrendered to RCHS along with several other dogs because their previous owner was unable to care for them. He is very sweet and needs to go to a home with Shepherd experience. He will need guidance on basic manners as he can be a little pushy. He is available as a foster-to-adopt. If you would like to learn more about him or are interested in the foster-to-adopt program, please call the Adoption Center at 802-483-6700.



RUTLAND COUNTY HUMANE SOCIETY

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765 STEVENS RD. • PITTSFORD



OUR ADOPTION CENTER IS OPEN TUESDAY-SATURDAY FROM 11AM-4PM. NO APPOINTMENT NEEDED.

OFF THE SHELF



Books you may have missed in 2023!

Violeta: A Novel by Isabel Allende

Violeta, born in 1920 as the Spanish Flu hits the shores of her home in South America, tells the story of her 100-year long life through a letter to a loved one.

Birnam Wood by Eleanor Catton

When a landslide cuts off the town of Thorndike and a large, abandoned farm in New Zealand, a guerrilla farming collective takes over the land but finds themselves pitted against a local millionaire who also wants the land for an end-times bunker.

The Skin and its Girl: A Novel by Sarah Cypher

In the Pacific Northwest, a stillborn baby's miraculous transformation links a Palestinian family's soap-making legacy to a fateful choice for one woman, Betty, who unearths hidden family secrets as she grapples with her own sexuality and identity, all against the backdrop of their ancestral history and an enduring cycle of exile.

Ripe: A Novel by Sarah Rose Etter

A year into her Silicon Valley dream job, Cassie becomes unexpectedly pregnant while her boss' demands slip into illegal territory. Cassie must then decide if the job, and lifestyle, are really worth it.

Maddalena and the Dark by Julia Fine

Venice, 1717. 15-year-old violinist Luisa finds an unlikely friend in Maddalena, a new girl with a scandalous secret at Ospedale della Pietà. When Maddalena invites Luisa in on her plan to escape, they embark on a dangerous journey to pursue their dreams. But as they venture beyond Pietà's walls, they must confront the cost of their desires and the choices they're willing to make.

Enter Ghost: A Novel by Isabella Hammad

After years away, stage actress Sonia Nasir returns home to Palestine to visit her sister and soon finds herself roped into a production of Hamlet. But as opening night draws closer, it becomes clear just how many invasive and violent obstacles stand before the acting troupe.

Of Manners and Murder by Anastasia Hastings

1885, London, England. When Violet's Aunt Adelia decides to run off with her newest beau, she leaves her role as the most popular Agony Aunt in London, Miss Hermione, in Violet's hands. And of course, the first letter Violet receives is full, not of prissy pondering, but of portent: Ivy Armstrong is in need of help and fears for her life. But when Violet visits the village from which the letter was posted, she finds Ivy dead. Soon Violet discovers that when you represent the best-loved Agony Aunt in Britain,

DID YOU KNOW?

We now have a portable DVD player with a screen in our Library of Things that you can use in the car or hook up to your TV!

both marauding husbands and murder are par for the course.

American Afterlife by Pedro Hoffmeister

On the heels of a devastating 9.2 earthquake on the Pacific Coast, 15-year-old undocumented immigrant Leilo stays behind in her Oregon River valley town to find her missing mother, who she fears may be dead. Meanwhile the cult The Collection of Redeemed Souls, with whom her mother was involved, has also chosen to stay and forcibly make other survivors join them. Leilo must avoid the growing violence and the cult as she desperately searches for her mother's remains.

A Brief History of Living Forever by Jaroslav Kalfar

Facing a terminal illness, Adéla leaves her Czech village to reunite with her long-lost daughter, Tereza, in a dystopian 2030 America. Tereza, star researcher for a biotech company researching immortality, is overjoyed and immediately connects with her mother. But their time is cut short by shocking events, leading Teresa on a daring journey to find the brother she's never met, all while Adéla's spirit guides the narrative from the beyond.

Evelyn Sorensen

(Continued from Page 5)

65 comments.

On Sept. 11 — a couple months after she was readmitted on campus and days before her death — Evelyn suffered a bicycle accident that totaled the beloved bike she had saved up to buy, according to Sorensen and a Middlebury Police Department report. She was hospitalized at Porter Medical Center with a concussion and a broken tooth.

Sorensen, faculty members and friends of Evelyn said they were upset that no one from the college administration checked in on her after she returned to her dorm.

A single mother of three, Sorensen said she became worried when, a few days after the bike accident, she stopped hearing back from her daughter. On Sept. 19, she called the college's public safety department, asking it to check on her daughter. The call was logged at 10:05 p.m., according to a Middlebury Police Department report.

Within a few minutes, a security officer from the college's public safety department conducted a wellness check at the Forrest Hall dorm room, found no response and forced entry at 10:13 p.m., according to the report.

Evelyn's body, already in rigor mortis, was found lying on the bed, face down, according to the report. There was drug paraphernalia around the room, including needles, snorting straws, a spoon, Narcan and drug testing kits. Seven minutes later, Middlebury police responded and declared Evelyn dead.

College authorities confirmed that she had last entered the building three days earlier, at 10:21 p.m. on Sept. 16, according to the police report.

The 20-year-old's death certificate showed she died from an accidental fentanyl overdose after using cocaine.

DEMANDING INFORMATION

On Oct. 11, a group of 11 faculty members sent a letter to the Faculty Council to request "crucial information about Evelyn's treatment at Middlebury and the handling of her death."

In the letter they ask why she was asked to leave campus in May, whether there was a reentry plan in place, why no wellness checks occurred between the bike accident and her death, and what systems failures occurred to allow her to die and not be found for as many as three days.

The letter also poses broader questions about the availability of in-person mental health support, caseloads for resident assistants, whether health care staff are trained in dealing with substance use disorder and when a psychiatrist will be made available to students.

"We ask this not only because

we know demand is high, but also because some of Evelyn's friends heard from her that she was not able to access the resources she needed," the letter states.

The Faculty Council, an elected executive committee representing faculty, backed the letter with a note to the administration on Nov. 1 encouraging it to respond to the concerns. (The council also voted in November to extend academic deadlines in light of two student deaths on campus, including Evelyn's, The Middlebury Campus newspaper reported.)

Michelle McCauley, interim executive vice president and provost, emailed a response to the faculty letter-writers on Dec. 12 that did not answer the questions. "Middlebury cannot share students' confidential health, medication or counseling information with the faculty as a whole, or a subset that requests it," she stated.

McCauley further wrote, "Our colleagues have consistently gone above and beyond for our students and our community. To suggest otherwise is simply inaccurate."

"We have had a horrific, sad fall semester," McCauley wrote. "Many of us will have questions that are never fully answered around why two amazing young adults are gone. I have two children approximately the ages of Evelyn and Ivan and I am personally struggling to understand the challenges these young adults are balancing."

NOT ENOUGH SUPPORT?

When families visited Middlebury College during Fall Family Weekend, which took place Sept. 27-29, a small group of students with black tape across their mouths held up black and white handmade signs outside the chapel with various slogans referring to Evelyn and the questions surrounding her death.

"How long until you find the next kid dead?" read one.

After Evelyn was found deceased on Sept. 19, another student died on campus. Ivan Valerio, a 19-year-old Filipino American from Florida, died by suicide on Nov. 7, according to a death certificate obtained by VTDigger.

A November editorial in the The Middlebury Campus, titled "Student death is now part of the routine at Middlebury," cited these deaths, as well as that of a third student — Yan Zhou of China — who died of an apparent suicide in 2021, according to the student newspaper. Another student, William Nash, died after drug use in 2020. Middlebury Police confirmed that four deaths have been investigated on campus since 2019. The causes were accidental asphyxiation, accidental drug overdose and two suicides.

(See Evelyn Sorensen, Page 19)

SPREAD THE WORD!
Have an upcoming event that you'd like to have added to our calendar?
LET US KNOW BY EMAIL AT NEWS@BRANDONREPORTER.COM

Evelyn Sorensen

(Continued from Page 18)

Middlebury Police Chief Jason Covey said in an email this week that the mental health struggles evident from these incidents are reflective of society at large. The school and the town “are not immune to the state and nationwide impacts of mental health and drug use. As a police department, we find ourselves routinely dealing with related matters.”

The department, Covey said, recognizes “the evolving nature of the law enforcement profession to one where officers serve many functions,” including filling gaps to act as social workers.

Students recently created an Instagram page — No More Dead Kids at Middlebury — in which they anonymously share their experiences and thoughts.

“I believe that if the college was better equipped to meet the needs of marginalized students in this rural, socially isolating, elitist pwi (predominately white institution), student death might not be normal as it is now,” one person identifying themselves as a current student wrote in November. They added that they had “tried and failed to find a counselor on this campus.”

“If I were to speak, I would say that addiction is terrifying, and that this school does not put enough attention to mental health and providing resources for students to have access to regular therapy,” Annika Raiha Vikstrom, one of Evelyn’s friends, told VTDigger in an email.

Sorensen said it took almost a year for Evelyn to get set up with a local doctor, counselor and psychiatrist. Instead, the school repeatedly referred her to online therapy modules that involved short conversations with a new person every time, Sorensen said.

“As a professional, I’m disgusted,” said Sorensen, who is a nurse practitioner in child and adolescent psychiatry in Oregon. “The college has not adapted to the mental health needs of their students, especially in the pandemic.”

Nationwide, rates of anxiety, stress and depression among young people have skyrocketed since the onset of Covid-19, with suicide rates of people ages 10-24 climbing, according to a 2021 advisory from U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy. LGBTQ+ and other marginalized populations are particularly affected.

In an email to VTDigger, Julia Ferrante, associate vice president for public affairs, wrote, “While we can’t share information about any specific student’s use of campus supports and resources, we can confirm that Middlebury takes a comprehensive approach to student support and identifying students with needs.”

Ferrante declined to answer specific questions about Evelyn’s situation but shared general information outlining Middlebury’s approach to “harm reduction resources and educational programming about the risks of opioids.”

In a section about opioids, Ferrante said there are harm reduction stations that stock Narcan. She pointed to the availability of a 30-minute online course on “other drugs” and how students can access four 60-minute sessions “with a provider from Health and Wellness Education to explore your personal relationship with substance use, get individualized feedback, and learn about support services.”

And she said that the college was planning to open a LG-BTQIA+ resource called the Prism Center for Queer and Trans Life at Middlebury that “will focus particularly on student empowerment and center on the experiences of queer and trans people of color.”

It was slated to open in 2021, according to a press release on the college website.

SPEECH CENSORED?

Sorensen’s criticism of Middlebury extends to how it handled the aftermath of her daughter’s death. Sorensen flew in for an Oct. 5 vigil and ceremonial bicycle ride in honor of her daughter, she said. But before her speech, Sorensen said, the chaplain told her she couldn’t include comments about the administration and how it had treated her.

“He said, you can’t say this stuff at a vigil and if you’re going to say that stuff we are not holding a vigil for everyone tonight,” she said. “So I had to completely rewrite my vigil remarks 45 minutes before the vigil occurred to align with what Middlebury wanted me to say.”

More than 300 people showed up at the vigil, which she said was beautiful.

Smita Ruzicka, the vice president for student affairs at Middlebury College, informed Sorensen the next day that Evelyn’s room had been packed up and sanitized, Sorensen said. “So we didn’t get the chance to say goodbye to her in her room or to pack up any of her be-

longings,” she said.

Sorensen was directed to the Scott Center, a religious and spiritual building on campus, to pick up Evelyn’s things, she said. Many of the items were damaged, she alleged, and several were missing, including some of Evelyn’s journals, a roller suitcase, and two fish fossils that Sorensen had given her daughter when she went home last year.

After she followed up with Middlebury again this week about the missing items, the school’s general counsel, Hannah S. Ross, invited her to a phone meeting.

Sorensen responded to say she was too upset for another meeting and had lost all faith in the college after three months of waiting.

“I want my daughter’s belongings back, and I want to know what happened to them. I don’t need to go through

another traumatic experience of the College giving me no answers, and a bunch of excuses of why they have not been sent to me,” she

wrote back.

‘A TERRIBLE TRAGEDY’

Yumna Siddiqi, associate professor of English, said in an email that Evelyn was in one of her advanced classes as a first-year student. “She was extraordinarily thoughtful and bright, and pushed herself very hard,” Siddiqi said.

Evelyn also worked part time at local cafes. Caroline Corrente of Haymaker Buns said Evelyn worked on and off there since her first year at Middlebury. Corrente described Evelyn as “a quiet, kind individual who was a talented barista and a hard worker.”

“She shared her dislike of the college from year one, which I do remember at one point sparked a conversation between us where I asked her why she didn’t think about transferring because it was so much money to spend on something that she did not like. She said she was going to give it some more time,” Corrente said in an email. “I unfortunately think her time at Middlebury never improved and she did not or could not get to a school that was a better fit.”

Though Evelyn endured many challenges, Corrente said, Evelyn came to work with a positive attitude every day and described Haymaker “as a safe space where she felt the environment and her coworkers were really supportive.”

Corrente attended the vigil and bike ride. She said she felt very sad and was still in the dark about what actually happened.

Sorensen has created a Facebook page called The Evelyn Project that focuses on mental health

and substance use struggles on the Middlebury College campus. It is modeled after the Elis for Rachel nonprofit formed by students and alumni at Yale University after first-year Rachael Shaw-Rosenbaum died by suicide in 2021.

The nonprofit claimed in a class-action lawsuit that the university limited her access to care and discriminated against students with mental health disabilities. This August it won a historic settlement that has set off a series of reforms to better serve students with mental health needs.


Sorensen said she hopes The Evelyn Project will force similar changes on campus for students struggling with mental health and substance use disorders.

Grieving has been “lonely and exhausting” for Sorensen, who has two younger kids at home. Between digging for information and her exchanges with Middlebury College, she’s reading books about grief, connecting online with other parents who have faced similar situations, and poring over the ways in which she thinks she somehow failed Evelyn — a trauma faced by many parents of youth lost to suicide or overdose.

“I cope by trying to keep Evelyn’s legacy alive,” she said. “I can only hope I can make her proud and find how to honor her in the time I have left here on earth, if only for my kids so they will go on the remainder of their lives remembering her.”



EVELYN SORENSEN



WEEKLY HOROSCOPE

LEO July 23-Aug. 23
Leo, even if it seems the way to be the most productive, burning the candle at both ends is only going to make you tired and less efficient. Ask for help if you need it.

VIRGO Aug. 24-Sept. 22
Virgo, your innate humility means you’re often content with being behind the scenes and not in the limelight. However, this week you may want a little extra fanfare.

LIBRA Sept. 23-Oct. 23
Libra, after a season of partying and letting other tasks fall by the wayside, it is time to get back to focus. You must take out your financial account records and track spending right now.

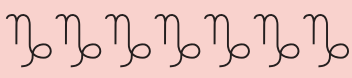
SCORPIO Oct. 24-Nov. 22
Take an inventory of the things you want to change about yourself, Scorpio. There is always room for improvement, especially if you feel you have not been your best self lately.

SAGITTARIUS Nov. 23-Dec. 21
Hopefully you have met your quota of parties and social events because now is the time to take a break, Sagittarius. The invitations will cease, but that can be a good thing for you.

CAPRICORN Dec. 22-Jan. 20
Hopefully you have met your quota of parties and social events because now is the time to take a break, Sagittarius. The invitations will cease, but that can be a good thing for you.

AQUARIUS Jan. 21-Feb. 18
Aquarius, you are the zodiac’s team player, so you may have to give the troops a pep talk to get everyone working together this week. Smooth down any ruffled feathers as needed.

PISCES Feb. 19-March 20
If you have any unfinished business that needs to get wrapped up, Pisces, the clock is ticking. Make a strong attempt to finish by Wednesday or Thursday.



FAMOUS BIRTHDAYS

Jan. 5	Hayao Miyazaki, filmmaker (82)
Jan. 6	Joan of Arc, heroine of France (d)
Jan. 7	Zora Neale Hurston, writer, anthropologist (d)
Jan. 8	Cynthia Erivo, actor (36)
Jan. 9	Paul Cezanne, artist (d)
Jan. 10	Rod Stewart, singer (78)
Jan. 11	Naomi Judd, singer (d)



The 4th article in a series of 6: Segment 6 Gardens continued

BY LYN DESMARAIS

Sarah Pattis showed perspicacity when she decided to have local gardeners adopt the new gardens created by Segment 6. She managed to find 20 willing and able gardeners. Among them are Nancy Leary, Nancy Ness Spaulding and Nan Meffe. The crowning touch? Getting lo-

merlyy Gourmet Provence), and Neshobe Insurance. As my office is just above the garden, the request gave me the opportunity to occasionally take a break from the 'drafting board,' get my hands dirty, and get outside, two of my favorite things. Thank you, Sarah Pattis, for joining many hands together to make much

Green Block is, so people refer to it as Green Park. It was a real community effort to establish it. The Town still has to finish repairing the stone sitting wall from Irene. All the gardens are planted according to the Segment 6 plan: hostas, lemon, daylilies, purple cornflowers, a yellow potentilla, and evergreens. What we are constantly in awe of is just how beautiful Brandon looks these days. Where once the sidewalks matched the blacktop on Route 7 with few trees, and in great need of reviving, the planning, community input and strong leadership during Segment 6 has led to a warm, welcoming downtown. The construction was not easy for any of us, but the outcome is fantastic!

Besides getting my hands dirty, I am compelled to rearrange things. Gardening combines both of my skills. Next spring, I plan to divide and rearrange the plants. I grew dahlias this summer and their tubers multiplied, so I hope to spread these throughout both sets of gardens to add more color. Like the creation of the Green Block Park, this Brandon gardening group is another great community effort typical of this little town. I am also very grateful for the phone apps that identify a plant from a photo and tell you how to keep it alive."

Nancy Spalding-Ness

"By the time I answered Sarah Pattis' email regarding the town gardens, most had volunteers. A couple of smaller gardens and the garden around the Central Park Fountain were still available. I love gardening. I have perennial gardens all around my house, so I figured why not add another? The Central Park fountain garden was a challenge I could not



cal artist Robin Kent to paint the garden signs. The gardens are thriving, there is a waiting list to take over the care of the gardens, and downtown has never looked better.

Nancy Leary

"It was so nice to be asked to tend the garden in front of Red Clover Ale, Morningside Bakery and wood-fired pizza (for-

lighter work and for considering me worthy of being included as a town gardener. Jim and I tend both the garden in front of the Conant Block as well as the two little ones in the Green Block Park. For some reason, we could not call it a park when it was constructed back in 2002. So, it was called the Green Block. Many people do not know where the



pass up.

The garden is a work in progress, but I decided annuals were the way to make showy plantings. Mary Shields from Virgil & Constance has been a great resource on eye catching plantings. The gold flowers are giant marigolds and Mary has already made recommendations for accent flowers for next summer. The tulips are a fun welcome to spring and hopefully this year's bulb mixture will be a nice surprise. The two different tulip mixes are called My Three Suns and Margaritas. How can that not be fun?"

Nan Meffe

"Gary and I are proud to be a part of the Brandon community and always try to help out where and when we can. The mini-garden idea is brilliant, and it has been fun contributing to what makes Brandon look great all year. So many visitors and locals comment on the flowers and the program that helps them beautify our downtown. No-fuss yellow perennials like coreopsis and daylilies are favorites, but the tulips and daffodils steal the show for sure."

In addition to these wonderful gardeners the following all take care of the 27 downtown gardens created by Segment 6 in Brandon:

Amanda Berry, Jean and Gene Childers, Bob Clark, Jessica Doos and Jay Merluzzi, Carol

Fjeld, Warren and Sandy Foster, Tracy Holden, Stephanie Jerome, Lucas Montgomery, Sarah Pattis and Louis Pattis Mitch and Maureen Pearl, Joan Rowe, Cecil Reniche-Smith, Cindy and Ed Thomas, Ellen Walter.

The Garden Signs

Robin Kent was asked by Ed and Cindy Thomas if she would design and decorate signs for the town gardens. "I love to make outdoor signs and I love to help out with town projects as much as I can. I received white signs and tried to keep the decoration on the outside edges leaving the largest possible spaces for the names to be painted in. Then I went to work. I always think about my subject matter so in this case I thought about gardens, plants, flowers and creatures found in gardens: pollinators, flowers, frogs, toads and gardeners, of course. I did not know which sign would get which name. I use exterior house paint. It works beautifully. After I finished, I handed them back only to receive them back again with the list of names of the gardeners. It was a really fun project. I'm so happy I was asked. I'll keep doing it for as long as I can, if and when the gardens change hands, and if they still want me to do it!"

More to come. Next installment: Part 5, Rain and Pocket gardens.



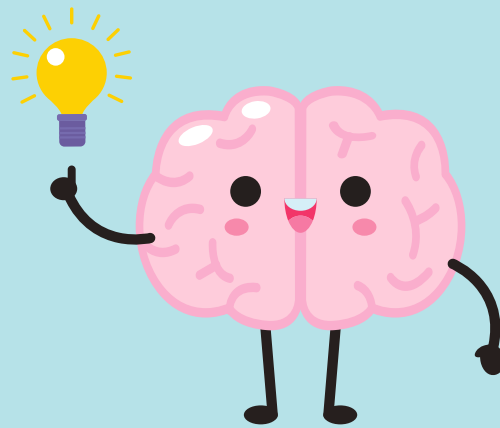
Trains run through The Sheldon Museum

BY GEORGE FJELD

Model trains are running through the Sheldon Museum from 1-3:30 pm on Wednesday to Saturday until January 14th. Both HO and Lionel scale trains run on 3 tracks surrounded by mountains and other scenery including a functioning ski lift. It's an up-close and personal view of a train modeler's dream. The train's engineers are enthusiastically running their engines briskly around the track to the delight of children and adults alike.



Brandon Brain Buster Answered



Answer: D

If Annie and Bobby must end up one mile apart, we know that they have together covered a total of 99 of the 100 miles. By far the easiest way to solve this is to test the choices one by one and see which number of hours would result in Annie and Bobby having covered a total of 99 miles.

In 6 hours, Annie would travel $6 \times 22 = 132$ miles. She would already have reached the end of the road. We know choice A is incorrect.

In 5 hours, Annie would travel $5 \times 22 = 110$ miles. Again, this is too far. Choice B is incorrect.

In 4 hours, Annie would travel $4 \times 22 = 88$ miles. But in 4 hours, Bobby would travel $4 \times 11 = 44$ miles. $88 + 44 = 132$, which is greater than 100. Therefore, choice C is incorrect.

In 3 hours, Annie would travel $3 \times 22 = 66$ miles. In 3 hours, Bobby would travel 3×11

$= 33$ miles. $66 + 33 = 99$. So, in 3 hours, the two of them would have covered 99 of the 100 miles and, therefore, be one mile apart. Bingo. Choice D is correct.

In 2 hours, Annie would travel $2 \times 22 = 44$ miles and Bobby $2 \times 11 = 22$ miles, for a total of 66 miles. Choice E is incorrect.

Alternatively, we can look at this as Annie and Bobby working together to cover 99 miles. With Annie covering 22 miles per hour and Bobby covering 11, it's equivalent to a single person covering 33 miles per hour. So we need to ask how long it would take a single person traveling at 33 miles per hour to cover 99 miles. $99/33 = 3$. Therefore, it would take 3 hours for Annie and Bobby to cover 99 miles traveling at their respective rates.

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This ordinance includes the Town of Pittsford enactment, definition, prohibition, 15 MPH limits, 25 MPH limits, 30 MPH limits, 35 MPH limits, Specifications for Kendall Hill Road, West Creek Road, and Whipple Hollow Road, incorporation of US Route 7 into Speed Limit Ordinance, bridge speed limits, signs, police and fire vehicle speed limitations, enforcement, effective date, and the repeal process. A full copy of the ordinance is posted on the town website. Please reach out to the Town Manager with questions at PO Box 10 Pittsford, VT 05763 or by telephone at (802) 483-6500 ext. 200. Citizens have a right to petition pursuant to 24 V.S.A. § 1973 for a vote on the Ordinance.

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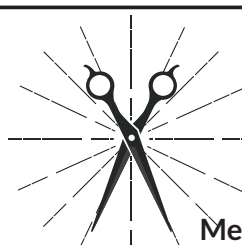
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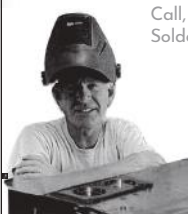


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Tanner Romano

(Continued from Page 1)

But like many young men, Romano often clashed with his father—“We didn’t work well together,” he laughed. “We both have very strong personalities”—and he left his father’s business to attend Vermont Technical College (VTC) in Rochester, where he studied construction management.

When he graduated from VTC in 2003, he applied to several construction firms but felt an immediate connection with Rob Naylor of NB.

“Rob was incredibly sincere and different from other folks,” said Romano. “He told me ‘You can take this job as far as you want.’ I graduated VTC on Sunday and started work at NB on Monday.”

Starting out as a carpenter, Romano worked on

buildings throughout the area. His first project was the medical clinic on Stratton Road in Rutland. Once promoted to supervisor, he oversaw the construction of the Heritage Family Credit Union drive-thru on Route 7 in Brandon.

The experience in the field was invaluable preparation for the next step in Romano’s career: after 5 years working on site, Rob Naylor asked him to join the office team as an operations supervisor, managing the company’s extensive slate of projects.

“This was just before the 2008 recession,” Romano said. “Everything was crashing. The housing market was crazy. But Pete Breen

had retired in 2006 and Rob and I started talking about my eventually taking ownership of NB.”

It didn’t happen overnight. Romano and Naylor worked out a 10-year plan for Romano to gradually increase his stake in the company until he achieved complete ownership.

“I plan to maintain who we are,” said Romano. “We’ve always grown at a steady, controlled pace and I will continue that. I’ll also continue bringing on good people.”

However, a major challenge in finding good people these days is housing. Vermont just does not have enough of it to accommodate the population it needs to sustain its economy. And the lack of suitable housing has affected NB’s ability to attract

and retain workers.

“This is something near and dear to my heart,” said Romano. “We’re losing our workforce because we aren’t building enough housing for them. There’s been a lot of money going into low-income housing. We’re starting to see more being invested in workforce housing, but it’s still not enough. The state is putting \$40 million into it, but when a single unit of housing costs \$400k to \$500k, that money goes extremely fast.”

NB hasn’t sat by and waited for a solution. The firm has been active in providing affordable housing for its employees, buying and renovating houses that it then rents

or sells to its workers. NB has completed 6 of these projects so far.

“Our employees can’t compete with buyers who are coming into our housing market with all-cash offers,” said Romano. “Outside of Chittenden County, there’s not a lot of development. The middle of the market really is missing. We tried to hire a great prospect from New Jersey. It looked like it was all set, but he couldn’t find housing and ended up not taking the job. Vermont is losing out.”

“It’s tough to do business here,” Romano continued. “The regulatory process here is very strict and labor is expensive here because the number of workers is limited. It’s a perfect storm of factors making things tough in Vermont.”

But Romano and NB are committed to their home. Many of NB’s 125 employees are Vermont natives and roughly 30% are Otter Valley grads.

Miles Krans, NB’s Senior Estimator (responsible for determining the projected costs of projects), is an OV grad, for example.

“I really love seeing people I went to school with having kids and building families in this community,” said Krans. “It’s amazing seeing everyone growing up together.”

Josh Letourneau is a 2018 OV grad, just beginning his career at NB. “I grew up in Brandon and started working at NB during my final semester at Castleton,” he said. “There are great opportunities here and that’s something I wanted to be part of. My advice to current OV students is to soak up as much as you can and learn from the ‘old guys.’ They have a wealth of knowledge to share. Work hard.”

Now a father of three (Aleah,

Jackson, and Connor), Romano lives with his wife, Lindsay, in Brandon and still maintains a strong connection to Otter Valley. He coaches 5th and 6th grade basketball as well as the AU Valley Elite basketball team.

“Sports were huge for me at OV,” he said. “It taught me leadership and teamwork, skills that I use every day at NB and that I try to foster in the office and in the field.”

Romano believes it’s important for kids to know that there are good career paths that don’t require college. NB works with Hannaford Career Center in Middlebury and the Stafford Technical Center in Rutland to show local kids that success is possible with or without a college degree.

“We’re committed to our community,” he said. “We’re trying to contribute and held right the ship.”

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OVUU

(Continued from Page 1)

at OV and Neshobe. Brendan McLoughlin and Jasmin Rivera, of OV’s Student Council, offered an overview of the council’s efforts to increase student engagement. Much of the efforts involve student activities, such as dances, rallies, and fundraisers. Shauna Lee of the Neshobe Student Council offered a presentation on that council’s efforts at Neshobe, which include the Kindness Committee, which is tasked with promoting kindness at school, and the Poster Committee, which creates and displays posters around the building emphasizing kindness and gratitude. Members of the OVUU Board expressed their appreciation for the students’ efforts.

OV student Savannah Cook and Susannah White of RNESU

presented to the Board an update on the Up for Learning program at OV, which seeks to promote better relations between students and teachers. About 40 students participate in the program. Students have responded positively to the program, feeling as if their concerns were being heard.

Sarah Crossmon, Supervisor of Pre-K programs, spoke to the Board about the District’s work in this area. The programs will offer expanded hours, which in turn will make them eligible for increased Essential Early Education (EEE) funding. There are programs at Neshobe and Otter Creek Academy (OCA) at Whiting. The programs for three-year-olds operate twice a week for 6 hours each day. The programs for four-year-olds operate 3 days per

week for 6 hours each. Currently there are 98 in-district students and 21 out-of-district students (their home districts are billed for these students).

OV Principal Michael Ruppel provided the results from a facilities survey that sought to determine priorities for facilities upgrades. The results of the survey indicate that the priorities, for those who answered, were 1) physical security of both interior and exterior; 2) renovation of the middle school; 3) creation of additional storage facilities; 4) renovation of locker rooms. There were 171 responses to the survey (149 students and 22 staff). The Board will revisit the issue this month.

Abenaki arts

(Continued from Page 14)
Foundation grant documenting sustainable land use practices with Indigenous youth in New England. This documentation has allowed us to create some of the most amazing maps and art projects. I also continue to teach basketry and beading. These skills often get lost in today's fast pace world where it is easier to just buy a kit. Understanding the land helps to learn the basketry process. Using basket making to teach both science and

math is such a great hands-on way to learn. My work has been on exhibit throughout the US and Canada including displays at the National Museum of the American Indians in Washington DC, McCord Museum and Botanical Garden in Montreal, the University of Vermont and New Hampshire, some of my baskets were part of a three year tour with Honor the Earth Impacted Nations visiting, NYC, Minneapolis, Santa Fe, Portland, Chicago and more.”



8TH-GRADERS LEARNED TO incorporate Abenaki techniques as they constructed baskets with birch bark, as led by Abenaki artist Judy Dow at Otter Valley Middle School.



Thank You, Fred!

After 32 years of dedicated service to G. Stone Motors, its customers, and our communities, Fred McAtee has decided to retire. We wish Fred all the best in his retirement and are forever grateful for his years of service and friendship to all!



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