

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

A community supported newspaper

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\$1



HEATING UP

Boston Comedy Club spices up the Brandon Inn. The audience wasn't expecting the hot sauce these comedians dished out, but they ate it up.

PG. 2



SAY YES TO THE WEDDING

The Rutland Regional Bridal Show comes to Brandon on Sunday, Jan. 21. Read a bit about the show and just a few of the many vendors who will be on hand to help engaged couples make their big day special.

PG. 3

BEAUTIFYING BRANDON

Lyn Desmarais chats with Pat Wood about Wood's extensive volunteer efforts to keep Brandon looking beautiful.

PG. 14



TAP ALONG

Jeff Sacks recounts some of the myriad music making in the area this past weekend.

PG. 14

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

State Rep. Stephanie Jerome brings her Brandon constituents up to date on her work in Montpelier.

PG. 21

Vermont's covered bridges have local fan club

BY STEVEN JUPITER

BRANDON—Few existing structures trigger nostalgia for days of yore like covered bridges. They evoke horse-drawn buggies and farmers carting their wares to market. They're romantic and picturesque remnants of an earlier time.

These structures have a fan club here in Vermont: the Vermont Covered Bridge Society (VCBS), a nonprofit "dedicated to the promotion and preservation of Vermont's remaining covered bridges." The VCBS has about 200 members.

Scott and Barbara Scribner moved to Brandon from Florida in 2022, taking over the proprietorship of the Inn on Park Street. They're also now enthusiastic members of VCBS, with Scott now the organization's

(See Covered bridges, Page 3)



THE SANDERSON BRIDGE on Pearl Street in Brandon straddles the Neshobe River. Once part of the Sanderson farm, the original bridge had deteriorated to the point where it had to be rebuilt in the early 2000s to be usable. The Vermont Covered Bridge Society's Rutland Chapter, headed by Sudbury resident Beth Brown, decorates the bridge (along with all the others in Rutland County) every holiday season.

Photo by Steven Jupiter



A MAJESTIC MAPLE at the corner of Park and Marble in Brandon met its fate during the weekend's violent wind storms. This particular tree made it onto local NBC news, as a news van just happened to be passing by soon after it fell.

READ MORE ABOUT the wind damage on page 8.

OVUU Board ok's 13% budget hike amid stressful cuts and tax increases

BY STEVEN JUPITER

BRANDON—The Otter Valley Unified Union School Board (OVUU) approved a proposed FY25 budget of \$27,247,823 at its meeting on Tuesday, January 9. This budget represents a 12.71% increase over the current year's budget of \$24,174,395. The vote came at the end of a tense meet-

ing during which OVUU and the Rutland Northeast Supervisory Union (RNESU) were criticized for the cost-cutting decision to eliminate foreign-language instruction at the elementary level.

The proposal will be presented to district voters in March.

The vote to approve was 7 yes
(See OVUU, Page 23)

Total eclipse of the heart: Brandon seeks involvement for April's solar eclipse

BY STEVEN JUPITER

BRANDON—On Monday, April 8, the skies above Vermont will grow dark. The folk below will gape in awe and wonder. Is it a harbinger of prosperity? An omen of doom? Nope. It's just

a total eclipse, and it's the last one we'll be able to see from the contiguous 48 states until 2044.

And Brandon is wasting no time in organizing for the event. Even though Brandon is
(See Solar eclipse, Page 6)



Boston Comedy Club's racy show gets big laughs at Brandon Inn

BY STEVEN JUPITER

BRANDON—The Brandon Inn was the setting for some raucously racy humor on Saturday night as the Boston Comedy Club brought a three-comic show to town.

The evening was sponsored by Foley Brother's Brewery, who donated all the money it made on beer sales that evening to the nonprofit Brandon Children's Music Fund. Foley Brothers has sponsored the Boston Comedy Club at its Quechee location, but this was the club's debut in Brandon.

The show got off to a tentative start as the first comic, Rollin Atkinson, tried to read the sold-out room. Just how far could he push this small-town crowd? Atkinson started his set with a few tepid jokes about the long trip from Boston to Vermont, but soon enough he threw caution to the wind and jumped right into the raunch. Fortunately, the (majority of the) audience jumped right in with him, and we were off to the racy races. Not much of what he said is even printable here, though if you ask anyone who was at the show, they'll likely remember a favorite line or two. Just don't ask if you're the blushing kind.

Next was Tim Champa, who dialed back the bawd a notch or two. A self-professed nerd, there was a geekier cast to his humor. One of the few bits that can be recounted here revolved around Champa's love for action figures and frustration with kids who don't play with them logically. But Champa didn't sanitize his set completely. He definitely waded into some pretty blue wa-

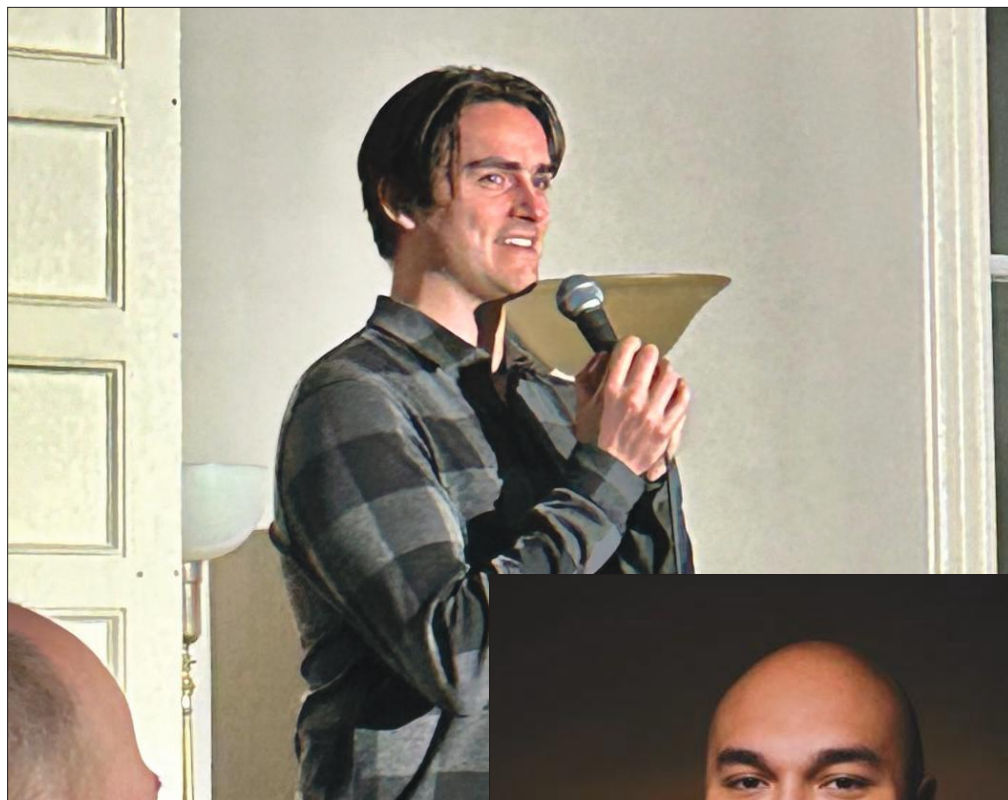
ters as well. And again, the audience happily went along for a swim.

But the third act, Franco Danger, took things to another level of lewd. By the time he came onstage, we'd already heard some pretty colorful stuff and were braced. Danger tiptoed into it, though, with some amusing yet tame observations about Vermont culture (he's originally from New Jersey). He teased the audience about all its flannel and then discovered, with amazing luck, that two of the people sitting right up front were a cheesemaker and a barn builder ("That's the most Vermont thing I've ever heard").

But after that safe entrée, Danger let it fly. He touched on race (he's Latino), politics, and, of course, sex. A comedian can tell they've landed a good joke when the audience repeats it to themselves in disbelief. Danger scored a few of those moments...none can be repeated in these pages. By the end of his set, even the most resistant members of the audience were laughing along at jokes they'd never dare tell themselves.

For those who like randy laughs, the show was a riot. For those who prefer their yuks with less salt, it would not make much sense to attend the Comedy Club's next presentation at the Inn, which is scheduled for March. If the shows continue to sell out, it may well become a monthly event at the Inn, according to Sophia Bloomer, Inn manager.

The Inn now has a full bar and a restaurant, both of which were open the night of the show.



TOP TO BOTTOM: Rollin Atkinson, Franco Danger, and Tim Champa. These three comedians rocked the Brandon Inn on Saturday night. Their bawdy humor took the audience by surprise but by the end of the night, everyone was laughing along. The show was put on by the Boston Comedy Club and sponsored by Foley Brothers. The next one of these events will be held at the Brandon Inn in March. Get your tickets when they're available—this show sold out fast.



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Put a ring on it: the Rutland Regional Bridal Show comes to Brandon

BY STEVEN JUPITER

BRANDON—So, you've decided to tie the knot...congrats! But after all the initial excitement of the proposal and engagement, the reality of planning the actual event begins to sink in: it's a lot of work. There are so many moving parts, so many details, so many decisions. It can feel overwhelming.

That's where Judy Risteff and the Vermont Wedding Association (VWA) come in. For 22 years, Ms. Risteff, who lives in Proctor, has been organizing wedding shows around Vermont to introduce the betrothed couples to vendors who can make their big days feel special and unique. Dress boutiques, venues, musicians, photographers, florists, hairdressers...all of them attend these VWA events to talk with prospective clients about their services.

And one will be held at the Brandon Inn on Sunday, January 21,

starting at 11:30 a.m.

"We started doing these shows in Middlebury and Killington in 2001," said Ms. Risteff. "We started hearing that people wanted more of them, so now we run 3 to 5 of them every year. We usually run the show in Rutland. Moving the show to Brandon was a tough call but our goal has always been to work with and help grow the host's wedding business! It was a no brainer after talking with the new owner, Sid, along with Sophia and Carson, the Inn's managers. We're all on the same page, working together to increase weddings and events at the Brandon Inn! After much consideration, we determined to add a word to define it as beyond Rutland: the 37th Annual Rutland Regional Bridal Show. It continues to be the longest continuously running bridal show in Vermont!"

Ms. Risteff noted that most proposals occur between Thanks-

giving and Valentine's Day, often when couples have been visiting friends and family and start thinking about settling down. But a wedding in the spring, summer, or fall should still be planned the previous winter in order to guarantee location and date.

"You don't have a date until you have a venue," said Jim Carroll of Overtime Events, which will be at the event in Brandon. "A lot of times couples pick a date before they've even figured out what venues are available. You really want to reach out to venues early."

Overtime offers DJ services, microphones, photobooths, memory books, and lighting.

"My job is to say 'yes,'" Carroll laughed. "I want to make the couple happy. I don't care if I have to hike to the top of a mountain. You own me for the day." Just remember to book well in advance! A year to 18 months ahead of the event is



ENGAGED COUPLES LOOKING for vendors or just ideas should consider a visit to the Rutland Regional Bridal Show at the Brandon Inn on Sunday, January 21. Doors open at 11:30.

not unreasonable, he said.

Carroll suggests that couples earmark \$2,000 to \$4,000 for the DJ and features like a photobooth, which has become a standard fix-

ture at weddings over the last few years. The booth not only takes photos for the couple, but guests also receive copies of their photos.

(See Bridal Show, Page 11)

Covered bridges

(Continued from Page 1)

membership chairperson.

"We love history and architecture," said Scott in the parlor of their B & B. "When we drove up here from Florida to find a B & B to buy, we went on a covered bridge tour in Vermont and New Hampshire."

"We saw a sign for a covered bridge and followed it," added Barbara. "We just kept googling 'covered bridge' and used GPS to find our way."

When they hosted an event for the Brandon Museum at their B & B last fall, the Scribners met Beth Brown, a volunteer for the Museum who is also Chair of the Rutland County chapter of the VCBS. They immediately connected over their shared love of covered bridges and the Scribners

Our immediate area is fortunate to have 5 of these bridges still standing, 1 in Brandon and 4 in Pittsford. All but 1 (in Pittsford) are still open to vehicular traffic. And all require care and maintenance to remain intact, sometimes even to the point of major reconstruction.

The Sanderson bridge on Pearl Street in Brandon, for example, had become so unstable by the 1990s that a temporary bridge was constructed to bypass it. In 2003, the present structure was erected to replace the dilapidated original.

Sometimes it's not even a bridge's age that's the issue: in the era of GPS—where the shortest route is always the "best" route—trucks often cause

damage when attempting to cross covered bridges. Trucks sometimes get stuck and require assistance as well.

In Pittsford, residents of residents have approached the Selectboard there about providing more space for trucks to turn around once they realize they won't be able to cross the Cooley Bridge that crosses Furnace Brook and the Gorham Bridge (rehabbed in 2003) that crosses Otter Creek and connects Pittsford and Proctor (each town owns its respective half of the bridge). Both of these bridges date to the 1840s. The other covered bridges in Pittsford are the Depot Hill bridge on Depot Hill Road and the Hammond bridge just next to Kendall Hill Road. Both of these bridges straddle Otter Creek. The Hammond bridge is not open to traffic.

"We need people and money," said Scott Scribner. "The towns that own the bridges are responsible for them, but if there isn't enough money, our group chips in. That's where the money from the organization goes."

VCBS also decorates the

bridges for the holidays. Beth Brown has overseen the decoration of all the covered bridges in Rutland County since 2022.

Anyone interested in helping to support and maintain Vermont's covered bridges can join the VCBS. Individual memberships are currently \$10/year

for individuals and \$15/year for families. You can find out more at vermontbridges.org, the VCBS's website.

For those interested in reading about Vermont's covered bridges, Beth Brown recommends the book *Spanning Time: Vermont's Covered Bridges* by Joe Nelson. The Scribners' favorites in the state include the covered bridges in Quechee and Arlington.

If you're looking for an excuse to get out of the house this winter, consider a driving tour of Vermont's covered bridges!



BARBARA AND SCOTT SCRIBNER

Spotlight On Business BRANDON SENIOR CENTER



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We are a Senior Center serving tasty meals, but socialization, at this point, is of utmost importance to us. We encourage people to stop by for a free coffee and chat. Game days with cards, board games, bingo, darts, jigsaw puzzles, or just reading a magazine or book. Toe Nail

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BRANDON REPORTER

Guest Essay

How baby bonds will strengthen VT's economy

BY MICHAEL PIECIAK
Vermont State Treasurer

Government exists to solve problems, and as State Treasurers, our offices are committed to supporting economic well-being for all.

Despite the opportunities in our states, we know our economies do not work for everyone. According to 2019 American Community Survey data from the U.S. Census Bureau, the top 20% of Vermont households had an average income of \$200,816, while the bottom 20% averaged \$15,054. These disparities are even more stark in Connecticut, one of the wealthiest states in the nation that also features one of the most significant wealth gaps.

Currently in the United States, the top 10% of households hold about 69% of the nation's wealth, while the bottom 50% own only about 2.5%.

Wealth not only affords choices and freedom, but it also provides economic security and a cushion against loss. Wealth also provides opportunities to build more wealth. Without access to capital, wealth-building opportunities like purchasing a home, earning a higher education degree or job training, or starting a business, are out of reach for the most vulnerable Americans, leaving many with little hope for their future.

We recently proposed an idea in Vermont to address these challenges - baby bonds, an innovative policy to address intergenerational poverty, foster rural economic development, and retain young people in Vermont.

Under baby bonds, babies born into the most impoverished families in Vermont would have \$3,200 set aside for them and invested by the State Treasurer's Office. These children could access their baby bond between ages 18 and 30, with the initial \$3,200 investment projected to grow to \$11,500 by age 18 and \$24,500 by age 30. The funds could be used for four wealth-building activities: (1) purchasing a home in Vermont; (2) starting or investing in a business in Vermont; (3) pursuing higher education or job training; and/or (4) saving for retirement.

Last year, Connecticut became the first state in the nation to implement a baby bonds program, highlighting the importance of investing directly in people. Over the long-term, the policy will unlock economic opportunity for a generation of young adults and spark investment in local communities. Since the CT Baby Bonds program saw its first eligible babies born on July 1, 2023, we've also seen how baby bonds can serve as a powerful message of state government's commitment to building a more equitable, prosperous future — one that includes economic participation for everyone.

Similar legislation has been proposed at the federal level by Sen. Cory Booker and Rep. Ayanna Pressley, and baby bonds proposals are currently moving forward in Massachusetts and Rhode Island.

This session in the Vermont legislature, baby bonds legisla-

(See *Baby Bonds*, Page 6)

**Buffet at the bird feeder**

THIS COOPER'S HAWK makes periodic visits to bird feeders. Of course it isn't there for the bird seed!

Photo by Sue Wetmore

Community Forums

Green Mountain Conservation Camp registration is open for summer 2024

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

The one-week camp programs are held at Lake Bomoseen in Castleton and Buck Lake in Woodbury. Campers participate in hands-on learning about fish and wildlife conservation, ecology, forestry, orienteering, safe firearm and archery techniques, swimming, canoeing, fishing and more. Natural resource professionals come to the camp to

share information on their programs and take campers out for field activities.

"Whether kids come alone or with friends, they are guaranteed to meet new people and form new bonds while experiencing Vermont's natural resources to the fullest," said Fish and Wildlife Education Specialist Hannah Phelps. "An important take-away message and common theme during the week is that conserving and managing habitat will help ensure Vermont will have fish and wildlife in the future."

"We would love to have all of the advanced sessions filled for campers who have already attended a basic session," added Phelps. "Ad-

vanced sessions are for campers who have completed a basic session in a previous summer and who are 16 years old or younger. Advanced sessions include more in-depth activities about backpacking, camping, natural resources, and unique hunting and fishing techniques."

Conservation Camps open June 16 and continue until August 16. Tuition is \$250 for the week, including food, lodging and equipment, and financial assistance is available.

Information and registration are available at www.vtfishandwildlife.com.

For more information, contact FWGMCC@vermont.gov or call 802-522-2925.

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Letters to the Editor

Brandon should save its police dog and refuse electric vehicles for the Police Dept.

On January 8, the Brandon Selectboard discussed and voted on the 2024/2025 town budget to be put before the voters on March 5. They approved a 13.4% spending hike with an increase in taxes of approximately 9.7%. Details of the decisions came out in the meeting that had some Selectboard members speaking in a way that was not supportive of the police department or police dog (canine officer). Selectboard member Tim Guiles said he did not want to pay an officer to feed a "dog." I felt that was an insensitive statement and called him out. The Reporter article conveniently left out the real reasons for the public's upset about what was said.

Brandon is lucky to have completely rebuilt its police department from 2 officers to approximately 7 officers in the past two years. If they all worked 40 hours a week, that's 280 hours of coverage, when there are 168 hours in a week. Typically, they need more than one officer in their work dealing with difficult situations, so even at 7 officers, they are on call often on hours they are not working. Many can't afford to

live in Brandon or find affordable rentals, so some commute.

The Brandon Police Department has had the opportunity and willingness to start a police dog program so we would have a certified canine officer. I'm told the community raised \$10,300 for the program. It has involved 8 weeks of narcotics detection training and 4 months of patrol school with an officer, and now requires 8 hours a month training in narcotics and 8 hours a month in patrol, out of state. This has been a tremendous commitment for an officer, the Department, the town citizens, and the donors. A local vet has donated veterinary services as well. The officer traveled out of state for training and stayed with someone in the area to reduce costs but did have to be paid overtime when working beyond 10 hours per day to comply with the police union contract. A NY sheriff's department certified the canine officer/police dog without fee. Now, Brandon has a 2-year-old trained canine officer who can smell drugs/narcotics when not in view, track lost and runaway people such as children, elderly, and criminals, can do evidence recovery,

finding lost keys, wallets, guns by scent, and is trained for community policing. Brandon has always had an illegal drug problem and recently our canine officer assisted with a large fentanyl recovery in a car stop. The skills this canine officer has are not the same skills as a trained human police officer. Both by the work of our canine officer and his trained police officer handler in police work and the word being out that we have this team reduces the threat of and existence of drugs in our community that could destroy young people and their families, as well as overall crime. Now our Selectboard wants to cut this program. What a shame!!!

The Brandon Selectboard discussed the police and highway budgets at the meeting. They have planned \$300,000 for paving in the budget, and there are no funds available from the 1% local option tax fund to reduce taxes, as it has been used to purchase a highway truck that wasn't budgeted for approximately \$250,000. We heard from our Fire Chief that the police need updated equipment to do their jobs. He mentioned that the

fleet of cars is old and so is some of their equipment. I later learned Brandon police have 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2018, 2020 and 2022 vehicles with mileage over 85,000 and over 100,000, with much spent on repairs. The budget includes replacement of 2 cars, but they will be electric at the insistence of some Selectboard members. My understanding is that the electric cars are not police certified, meaning that a police vehicle needs a high-output engine, enhanced electrical output for lights, sirens, radios, etc., heavy duty suspension and braking, heavy duty drive shaft, u-joints, frame mounts, wheels and exhaust system, run lock ignition, so lights and radio run efficiently while parked without draining battery, vehicle tracking if it is stolen, and video camera and recording devices. I've learned that gas cars would be not only more economical to purchase, but also would have the heavy-duty setup needed for police work safety and reliability to be certified. In addition, the Brandon police department generator system would have to be upgraded. There would be issues with charging at employees'

homes when they take cars home to be on call. Municipalities around the country are testing this and some are reporting out the issues with chargers, mileage span is less than advertised, repair stations are not near, all while major automakers are reducing production of electric cars due to reduced demand, and Hertz rental is abandoning 20,000 electric cars in their fleet.

Should we have a full-time Town Manager, Assistant Town Manager, Town Clerk, part-time Town Clerk in a town of 4,000 people, or should we invest in public service and roads? Please reach out to your Selectboard members and insist they fully fund our Police Department with the canine officer, and purchase (not lease) reliable police certified gas vehicles to preserve our investments. Or vote NO in March until our budget reflects less top administration and more public service. Mark your calendars for March 5! Vote NO!

Sharon Stearns
Brandon

Support Brandon's Police Dept by saying no to EV cruisers and yes to the K-9 unit

Now is not the time or place to experiment with electric police vehicles. Brandon is more than a small village; it encompasses

36 square miles. Police response may require activity requiring extensive traveling not only within our municipal border but also

to assist and support contiguous towns.

Sadly, lethal drug use and crime in general is increasing

exponentially. The support of K9 use is an important method to help prevent the import of illegal narcotics.

Please support our law enforcement officers.

Tom and Bev Sabatini
Richmond Road, Brandon

Free Midday Soup & Bread at Brandon Methodist Church

Beginning Monday, January 22nd : Sandy's Soup Bowl at Noon. Free Community Meal. Donated by the Community.

Enjoy a homemade bowl of

soup with warm bread.

Mondays 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m. at the Brandon United Methodist Church. 1 Franklin Street, Brandon, VT.

Rutland Audubon Presents Birds of Rwanda – Jan. 31st, 6:30 to 8:00 p.m.

Join the Rutland County Audubon society as we present: Birds of Rwanda. This engaging talk will focus on the amazing birds and big game animals who live in this small, Central African nation.

Hear from Rutland Audubon's long-time member, Mike Blust, about his recent trip to Rwanda and

the magnificent wildlife that call this place home. The event will take place at the Grace Congregational Church on Wednesday January 31st.

For more information, contact birding@rutlandcountyaudubon.com.

Can't wait to see you there!

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Baby Bonds

(Continued from Page 4) tion is being led by Sen. Keshia Ram Hinsdale and Rep. Dan Noyes with over 80 co-sponsors, representing a broad coalition of support among republicans, progressives, democrats, and independents. It's similar to the broad coalition that helped pass Baby Bonds in Connecticut that also included nonprofits, business groups, and local leaders.

A Vermont baby bonds program would ensure that Vermont children facing the toughest circumstances can build wealth and shape their own financial future. Enrollment in the program would be automatic for all Vermont children born on Medicaid.

With a higher percentage of Vermont births on Medicaid, the policy would disproportionately benefit Vermont's rural communities. Individuals would also have to be Vermont residents in order to access the funds, supporting the state's efforts to retain young Vermonters.

Baby bonds would support Vermonters' economic resilience for generations to come and relieve pressure on our state budget over time. By investing in our state's greatest resource—our children—we can support the health of our communities and create a more resilient, fair, and productive Vermont economy for all.

Obituaries

Neil Levi Johnson, 90, Brandon

Neil Levi Johnson, age 90, passed peacefully, surrounded by family, on Friday, January 12, 2024, at his home in Brandon.

Neil was born in Plymouth, Vermont on May 21, 1933. He was the son of Wilford and Avis (Derby) Johnson. He grew up in Plymouth, where he received his early education. He graduated from Black River High School in Ludlow, class of 1953. Neil worked for many years at the First National Store in Ludlow, as the produce manager. He relocated to Rutland Town and later to Wallingford and ran his own delivery truck route for various area grocery stores, delivering goods to area families. He had been a Brandon resident since 1998. He worked as a driver for General Electric, as well as a set-up man and benchman, for more than 25 years. He retired in 1993.



NEIL LEVI JOHNSON

He enjoyed hunting and fishing, working on clocks, and going to auctions.

He is survived by his wife, Phyllis (Bulley) Johnson of Brandon, whom he married in Ludlow on May 5, 1957; one daughter, Michelle Sherwin & her husband Brian of Leicester;

and one son, Andrew Johnson & his wife Loretta of Brandon. Six grandchildren, 3 great-grandchildren and many nieces, nephews, & cousins also survive him. He was predeceased by four brothers (Everett, Arthur, Donald, and Elson Johnson) and five sisters (Julia Johnson, Eliza Ward, Rose Barrett, Dorothy Johnson, and Carmen Stillings.)

The graveside committal service and burial will take place at a later date in the family lot at Pleasant View Cemetery in Ludlow.

Memorial gifts in lieu of flowers may be made, in his memory to Rutland Area Visiting Nurse & Hospice, 7 Albert Cree Drive, Rutland, VT 05701.

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

Solar eclipse

(Continued from Page 1) just outside the “zone of totality,” we’re only minutes from Middlebury and points north, where the sun will be completely blocked. The Chamber of Commerce, the Rec Department, and the Library are all working hard to make the 8th, and the weekend before it, as much fun possible for residents and visitors alike. There will be events all weekend long—the Chamber is even planning a “Zombie

Walk” up Park Street, ending in a “Thriller”-style street dance in front of the Brandon Inn. The Chamber and the Rec Department will have eclipse-protective glasses available for the actual event.

“Middlebury will be right in the zone of totality, so we’re hoping to make Brandon a convenient alternative for a home base that weekend. We need businesses to put their thinking caps on. This is a great opportunity.”

—Bernie Carr
Executive Director
of the Brandon Area
Chamber of Commerce

“But we still need local businesses to get involved,” said Bernie Carr, Executive Director of the Brandon Area Chamber of Commerce. “The eclipse is on Monday, which is a day a lot of restaurants and busi-

nesses are closed. We need them to stay open. We need them to help plan events for the weekend.”

Mr. Carr noted that local inns are already seeing reservations for that weekend. A fair number of eclipse chasers and astronomically curious are expected in Brandon.

“Middlebury will be right in the zone of totality, so we’re hoping to make Brandon a convenient alternative for a home base that weekend,” said Mr. Carr. “We need businesses to put their thinking caps on. This is a great opportunity.”

Any business interested in finding out more about how to help turn the eclipse into a big win for Brandon should contact the Chamber.

The Reporter will continue to relay information about the event as we get closer to the date.

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Sunday
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Simulator hours:
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BRANDON REPORTER

Sports

Big woods deer tracking: An old tradition faces new threats

BY K.FEIGENBAUM/
VTDIGGER

On the last Friday of muzzleloader season, Nick Fortin parked his truck in the snow on the side of a logging road in the Wenlock Wildlife Management Area, deep in the Northeast Kingdom. Donning waterproof muck boots, warm-and-quiet wool pants and a bright orange hat, he headed out on foot to track deer through the brush, mud, rivers and snow of the “big woods.”

While most know hunting in Vermont as sitting in a tree stand or a ground blind, a smaller number of residents practice the more ambulatory art of tracking deer through large swaths of forest, called the “big woods.”

“If I’m on a track all day long, and I never see a deer, that could still be a great day,” said Fortin, the Department of Fish & Wildlife’s head deer biologist. “At any moment that deer is in front of me: Your adrenaline’s up all day. You’re excited all day. Some of the coolest areas I’ve ever found, some of the coolest things I’ve ever seen, have only been because I was on a deer track.”

The practice has deep roots in the state. The late Larry Benoit of Duxbury was featured on the cover of *Sports Afield* in September 1970 with the headline “Larry Benoit — Is He the Best Deer Hunter in America?” The Duxbury hunter’s fame — and that of his whitetail-tracking sons, known as the “Benoit Brothers” — only escalated from there.

However, the landscape for this traditional way of hunting has changed since the Benois began traversing the state in search of trophy bucks. As more property owners close their land to hunting and climate change affects snow conditions, big woods deer trackers face new challenges.

The concept is simple. One locates a track and follows it over hills and valleys, hopefully finding the deer that made it. But in practice, tracking requires keen observation skills, a knowledge of the natural environment and a healthy dose of patience.

Once a hunter figures out which deer track to follow, a complex decision-making pro-

cess is set in motion. Hunters will spend time assessing how old the track is, if it was made by a doe or a buck and the animal’s approximate size to determine whether the prints are worth following.

Trackers often spend days walking in the woods — sometimes never coming upon a deer or even finding a track. Over the course of a day, they devise various plans based on conditions and previous

set about it,” he said. “The land ethics of when I was young, when the boys were young and right now — all three of those are completely different than they used to be. Walking through your neighbor’s property whenever you felt like it because you were doing your thing ... the culture has changed.”

While Elmer will sometimes hunt in smaller areas, he more often heads to Vermont’s pub-

Wildlife’s deer project leader since 2015 — grew up in Derby, hunting in the large stretch of land by the Silvio O. Conte Fish and Wildlife Refuge. His family still maintains a camp in the area, and Fortin returns often during hunting season.

As he walked through about half a foot of snow in the wildlife management area, it made an audible crunch, the noise traveling far — too far — through the calm woods.

crucial for tracking, and the amount and type of snow in Vermont in recent years has at times posed difficulties. However, he said he and his crew can sometimes circumvent the challenge, tracking even when the ground is bare by using previous years’ knowledge to head to places where they’re likely to find deer. However, they often head to other states that have better snow conditions.

Fortin admits that while the snow conditions may be slowly changing for the worse, winter still comes — especially at more northern latitudes.

“We’re still going to have some snow, at least in parts of the state,” he said. “(Deer tracking) may not be something we can do for the entire three weeks that we have to hunt, but a couple of days a year you’re going to be able to do it.”

Despite deepening barriers, tracking is still gaining new adherents.

Jennifer Gonye of Underhill, a nurse at the University of Vermont Medical Center, took up deer tracking during the 2022 season. She grew up around lots of hunting in Richford but did not develop an awareness of tracking until about a decade ago when she was living in Waterbury and came across a roommate’s book written by the Benoit family.

“I enjoy a lot of activities in the outdoors, but none make you slow down and take note of your surroundings like hunting does,” Gonye wrote in an email. “It absolutely demands you give as much attention as you possibly can to the natural world. You must take note of the wind, the elements, the signs, your surroundings, your own safety, and so on. It is quite an exercise in being present.”

Elmer also pointed to an appeal beyond just bagging a deer.

“It takes a lot out of your heart. It takes a lot of your legs, and by the end of the day, most people would say ‘I’d rather just go to Wisconsin and sit over a pile of corn and shoot one,’” he said. “But I’m looking for that adventure and the freedom of the space that I love.”



NICK FORTIN, OF the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department, demonstrates how he tracks deer through the woods of Ferdinand on Dec. 8, 2023.
Photo by Glenn Russell/VTDigger

knowledge of an area, including where other hunters might be tracking.

Rodney Elmer, a tracker and taxidermist based in Northfield, taught himself how to track big bucks in the backwoods of Maine during the early '90s.

“We just did what Vermont kids do, especially back then,” he said. “We started out small game hunting and, eventually, following rabbits around and chasing them turned into bigger rabbits with antlers.”

Elmer, who now has a podcast and films tracking videos with his hunting partner and his three sons, said that land access has changed dramatically over the more than three decades that he’s tracked in the state.

“It’s pretty hard to find any space where you can go and not walk through somebody’s property and have them get up-

lic lands or goes out-of-state to the bigger swaths of woods in New Hampshire and Maine.

According to Fortin, those who stay in Vermont are mostly relegated to large parcels of public land: the Green Mountain National Forest, state parks, and the Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge with its associated Wildlife Management Areas and commercial timberland with public access.

“In most of Vermont today, you really can’t track because you inevitably run into a property line that’s posted,” Fortin said. “Deer have big home ranges ... 10-plus miles a day is not uncommon on foot. Ten-plus miles in a place with 47 different property owners is not something you can do.”

Fortin — who has worked as the Department of Fish and

“Good tracking snow is quiet,” Fortin told the reporter he let tag along. “And a good tracking day — what most hunters call a ‘killing day’ — is a little bit of a wind which masks some of the noise.”

According to Fortin, decent tracking snow is becoming increasingly rare during the state’s hunting season.

“We’ve had very little snow in muzzleloader season,” Fortin said. “It’s been very, very weird. And rifle season — regular deer season — snow is a luxury at this point.”

Fortin said the Northeast Kingdom only had decent tracking snow on a handful of days during the most recent regular season, which ran from Nov. 16 to Dec. 1. Some days, he didn’t even bother trying to hunt.

Elmer agreed that snow is

Wind damage



THE INTENSE WINDS almost tore the flag off the pole in Central Park in downtown Brandon.



ALYSSA ZOLLMAN OF Prospect Street in Brandon sent us this photo of a GMP repair truck at work restoring power near her home. "Saturday's early morning windstorm caused damage and power outages throughout the region," Alyssa wrote. "Falling trees and branches took down power lines, and in this case, snapped a pole on Prospect St. in Brandon. It was a welcome sight to see this repair crew arrive before dark!"

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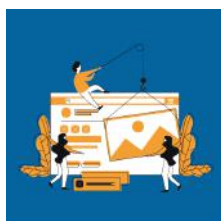
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TOGETHER WE CAN

LIGHT UP the Valley



YOUR GIFT WILL HELP US INSTALL PERMANENT LIGHTING ON MARKOWSKI FIELD AT OTTER VALLEY

Light Up The Valley is a fundraising campaign run by the Otter Valley Football Club with the goal of installing permanent lights on Markowski Field. In addition to football, the aim is to benefit our greater Activities Community through night games for as many sports as possible, theater events, graduation activities, and more!

OTTER VALLEY FOOTBALL CLUB IS A NONPROFIT 5013C. YOUR GIFT IS TAX DEDUCTIBLE. PLEASE MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO OTTER VALLEY FOOTBALL CLUB

Yes!

Count me in.

\$100 \$500 \$5,000

\$250 \$1,000 Other: _____

OUR GOAL: \$250,000

Or scan to donate through Paypal:



Name/Business: _____

Address: _____

Town/State/Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Please send form and check to: OV Football Club, PO Box 16, Brandon, VT 05733
Questions? Please email OVFC2023@gmail.com

OVFC MAKING HUGE STRIDES IN LIGHT UP THE VALLEY CAMPAIGN *COMMUNITY SUPPORT STILL NEEDED*

The Otter Valley Football Club officially started our campaign to put permanent lights on Markowski Field.

A small but hard-working club, we set out to do the seemingly impossible, to raise

nearly \$250,000 to light up Markowski Field. We want to bring future evening events to the students and to our town. This amazing community is not disappointing. We are currently nearing enough donations and pledges to

fund the purchase of the lights themselves. This means we will still need community help to reach our next milestone of installation and bring this project to fruition.

We ask that you please consider supporting us as we aim to have this project wrapped up by fall of 2024.

All donations are tax deductible and every penny counts.

Thank you to all who have donated.

The club would like to express our special appreciation to Tanner Romano for his expertise and assistance in kicking off this important project.

Super Bowl Level Donors (\$20,000+)

Brandon Trustees of Public Funds
Robert & Christina Naylor
Naylor and Breen

Champion Level Donors (\$5000 to \$20,000)

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Touchdown Level Donors (\$1000 to \$5000)

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Aaron & Laura Miner
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Fan Level Donors (up to \$500)

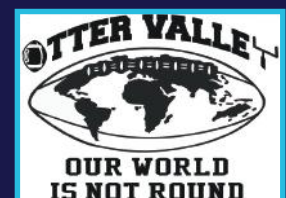
Jon Wyman/Wyman Timber
Aiden Blier

Warren Kimball
RPM Automotive/
Green Mountain Garage
Wimett Trading Company
Frank Romano
Sawyers Inn dba Lilac Inn
Brandon Scrap Metal
GE Aerospace Community
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Charles Kristen
Karen Phelps
Gale Quenneville
Russell Shannon
Cynceree Reid
Crosby Sales and Service Inc.

If you are interested in donating to this worthy cause please send donations to:

OVFC
PO Box 16
Brandon, VT 05733

Thank you,
The Otter Valley Football Club



OUR CREATIVE KIDS

ARTIST: Sonora Gildrien

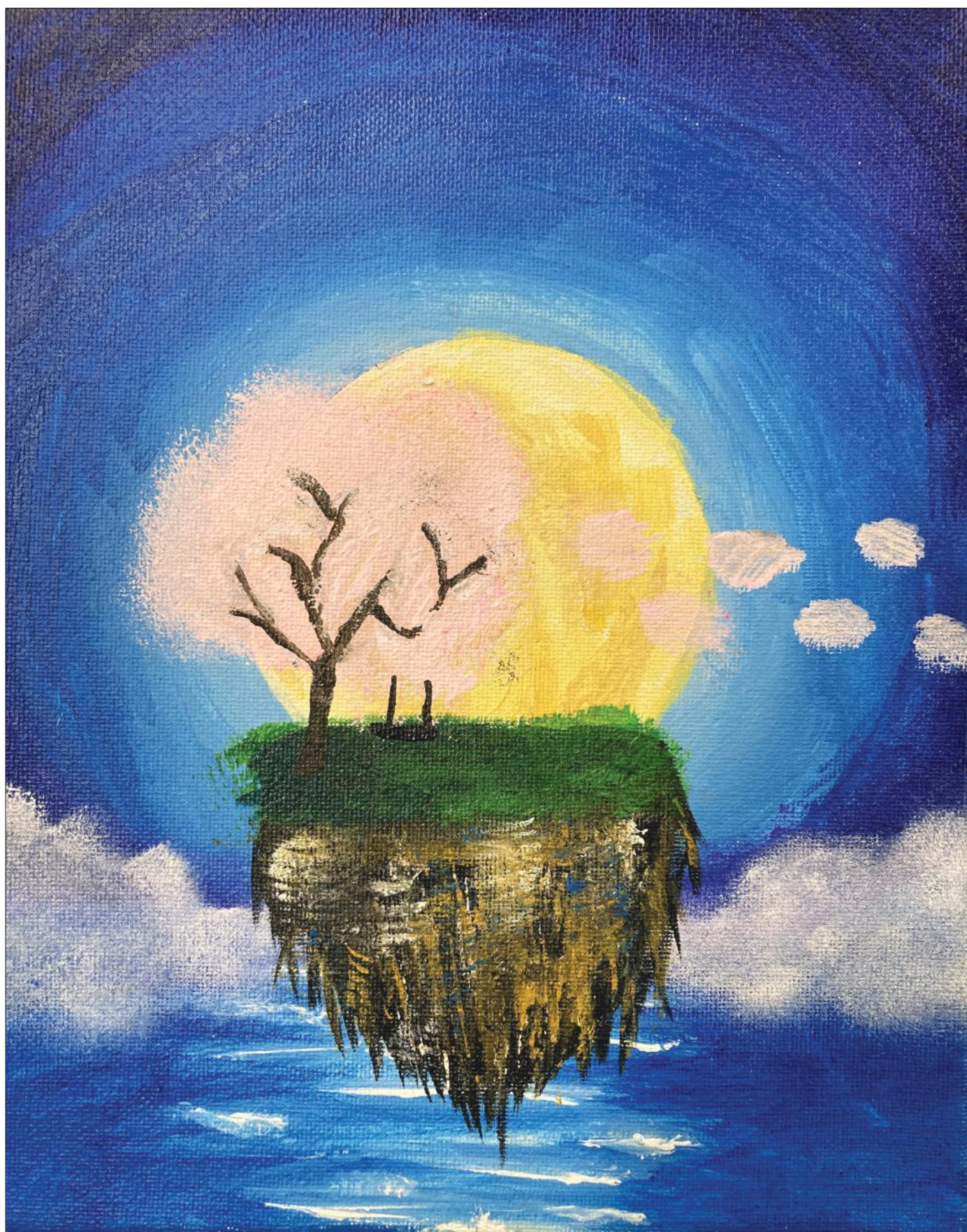
GRADE: 7

SCHOOL: Otter Valley
Union Middle School

TITLE: Floating Island

MEDIUM: Acrylic

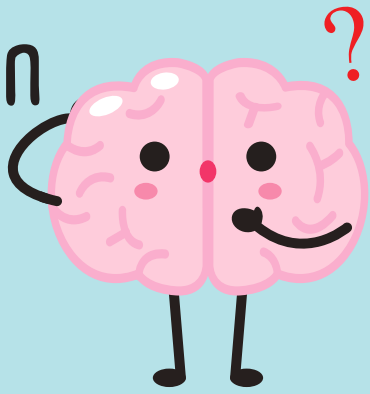
TEACHER: Dasha Kalisz



Statement from Sonora:

I made a floating island over water with a moon and a cherry tree. I used acrylic paint, paint brushes and a canvas.

Brandon Brain Buster



A certain square has sides of length A inches. If each side is increased by 1 inch, which of the following represents the difference in area between the original and the enlarged squares?

- A) 1
- B) $A + 1$
- C) $2A + 1$
- D) $A^2 + 1$
- E) $A^2 + 2$

Answer on pg. 21

MAPLE^{the} COW™ by Matt Aucoin



MORNINGSIDE BAKERY'S PUMPKIN cheesecakes...an example of the wide range of delectables the bakery can provide for your wedding's dessert table.

Bridal Show

(Continued from Page 3)

Carroll prides himself on reading the room at receptions, knowing what kind of music to play when in order to get people up and dancing.

"I pay attention to what's making people move in their seats," he laughed. The craziest request he's ever had for a wedding song was the Pokémon theme song.

"The couple were gamers. They were so into it. Twenty people got up and ran to the dancefloor when that song came on."

Jessica Saceric of Delilah's Hair Salon in Brandon will also be at the event. Ms. Saceric offers a full range of hair, makeup, and nail services and will have several consultations with the wedding party to make sure everything goes well on the big day.

"It's important to try out different hair and makeup well ahead of time," Saceric said. "Sometimes brides come in with a certain look in mind but once they see it on themselves, they change their minds. It's also very useful to already have the dress, so we can figure out a style that will work well with it."

Elaborate hairstyles with embedded flowers have given way to softer styles, Saceric said, with loose waves and braids especially

popular. Saceric's salon can also work with fillers and hairpieces if desired. They're also willing to travel to local venues.

But even if the styles are less ornate, you still need to book at least a few months ahead. Saceric already has weddings booked for October. And budget \$300 to \$400 for just the bride's hair and makeup.

Big, multi-tiered cakes aren't as popular as they used to be, said Risteff, although the "topper" (the top tier with the figurines) is still often requested for the couple itself. Instead, many couples are opting for dessert tables laden with individual-sized cakes, tarts, and pastries.

"It offers more variety," said Risteff.

Matt and Carrie Lewis at Morningside Bakery (formerly Gourmet Provence) in Brandon will be at the event and can help out with all this. They don't do traditional wedding cakes, but they have an extensive menu of desserts to create an impressive display: mini cheesecakes, lemon squares, flourless chocolate cakes, cupcakes, macarons, key lime pies, just to name a few. Prices range from \$2.50 for a bite-sized treat to \$50 for an 8" cake.

Morningside is also able to deliv-



JIM CARROLL OF Overtime Events (left) can help create the mood of your wedding with DJ services, lighting, and a photobooth. "You own me for the day," he said. Ashley Hayunga of Big Day Paintings (right) will capture your big day in a bright, beautiful painting. Both Carroll and Hayunga will be at the Bridal Show at the Brandon Inn on Jan. 21.



er to local venues (drop-off only, no setup) and suggests at least a month or two lead time.

After speaking with just some of the many wedding pros who will be at the show, the biggest takeaway seems to be "plan ahead."

"Find the venue first," reiterates Risteff. And budget \$20k to \$30k for a wedding with 100 or so guests at a rented venue.

"2024 is going to be a big wed-

ding year," said Risteff. "Last summer was slamming, but we've already been hearing that this past holiday season was huge for engagements." All those couples are going to be planning their weddings now. And VWA is here to help them.

Brides who pre-register get into the show for free. Otherwise, admission is \$8.50 per person. VWA shows are inclusive events and

same-sex couples are welcome. There will be prizes, including \$250 worth of services from various wedding vendors.

Whether you're recently engaged and just starting the process or have been shopping around for specific vendors for a while, the Rutland Regional Bridal Show will put you in touch with the wedding professionals who can help make the big day special.

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](mailto:allie@rcpcc.org).



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 (hzfm@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

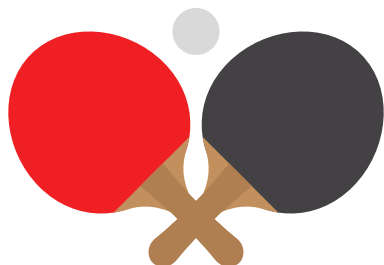
Drop in from 5:30–7:00 p.m., and bring your projects to work on.

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 Conscious, 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

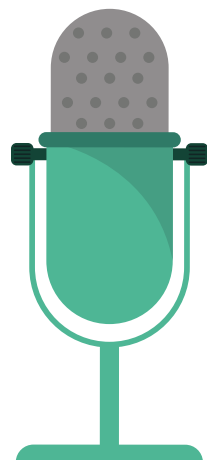
Crystal Ketcham leads an all ages painting event! Yes, you CAN paint! More info, contact Crystal at ceastman88@gmail.com

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

Friday 19th

The Underground - Listening Room: HIFI + DJ Sound Syndicate

Advance: \$14 // Day of show: \$17
Doors: 7:00 // Show: 7:30
BYOB



Brandon Town Hall

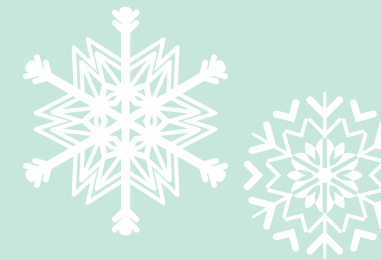
Brandon Idol begins Jan 26th, a \$1,000 first prize! Take your music to the next level in this competition for singers over 18 on each month!

Kennedy Park and End User Bands hit the stage with originals in a first local show in a hot minute, with a special performance!

Loud and Proud Sundays, 1-3 Jeff Ladd oversees future musical form bands!

Friday Night at the Movies—popular movies will be on the big screen with local groups in our community! The 9th grade class at OV, and is also on the same day over and over again! Ad

Kids Festival! Sat Feb 10th, 10-12 and families! Emmajeanne Hoops and Marek Heitman and a Cake Walk



HIFI was sparked by the love of Vintage house. With DJ Fidelma Wyse on the Maschine, Jofus on bass and Phil Carr on drums, we bring an original house music experience. Fidelma spent her 20's in the rave scene of London and is bringing that flavor and all original tracks to HIFI. Jofus and Phil have been playing there intuitive bad ass bass and drums together for 30 years. HIFI create an ambiance for all those who want to get lost in the music.

all Winter Series

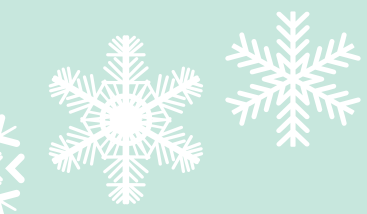
7pm, \$5. Talented singers vie for musical skills to another level with 16. Follow their path and cheer

Jan 27th, 7pm \$10. Local Rock and covers! Kennedy Park, in its with ever fav End User!

, Brandon Town Hall. Band Dad stars as they try instruments and

The First Friday of each month, screen! These will be put on by the first movie night is hosted by out a rodent who keeps living the mission by donation!

1am-3pm. Fun activities for kids at 11, Try It Drum Kit at 12:30 by at 2pm! Cake Walk is \$5 to enter!



BarnArts Community Contra Dance

BarnArts Community Contra Dances return this winter! The first dance will be Friday, January 19th at Barnard Town Hall (115 North Rd., Barnard) with music by Justin Park & Beth Telford with calling by Kevin Donohue. A potluck will begin at 6pm and the dancing goes from 6:30-9pm. No partners needed and all ages and experience levels are welcome! Dancers - please bring indoor shoes. This is a free event but we gladly accept donations to cover our costs. Reserve your spot at <https://barnarts.ludus.com/200447293>

Become a Hospice Volunteer, VNA & Hospice of the Southwest Region, Rutland

VNAHSR Hospice Volunteer Training will be held from 8 am-4 pm in

the Casella Conference Room at the Rutland office, located at 7 Albert Cree Drive. Free and open to the public.

Training is free and open to individuals 16 years of age and older. Volunteers need to pass a background

Goings on around town

check. No previous hospice and health care experience is required. Pre-registration and proof of COVID-19 vaccination are required.

At the VNA & Hospice of the Southwest Region (VNAHSR), volunteers play a critical role in enhancing the end-of-life experiences of people facing serious illness and their families. Volunteers represent all life experiences and are drawn to hospice for a variety of reasons, but the defining characteristics that unite them are compassion and the desire to help others. Their many skills are matched to important tasks within our mission.

Once training is complete, assignments and schedules are tailored to the volunteer's geographic and time commitment preferences.

Training Topics include

- Understanding the Hospice philosophy of care
- Knowing boundaries when interacting with patients and families
- Communicating with patients and families
- Understanding basic health and safety precautions
- Understanding patient confidentiality

The Benefit of Becoming a Hospice Volunteer: While our volunteers make a tremendous impact on the lives of our patients, families and staff, we hear time and again that they, too, benefit from their hospice experiences. Among the things they mention are:

- Increased appreciation for living life in the moment and defining what is really important
- Greater knowledge and more inner peace about the end-of-life experience
- Greater insight about diversity and the different perspectives among cultures
- Heightened sense of fulfillment and pride because of their contributions to patients and families and to the VNA & Hospice of the Southwest Region.

For more information or to register call Mary at 802.442.0540 or email at mary.pleasant@vnahsr.org.

Saturday 20th

Hocus Pocus Magic Show with Master Magician Blaine Goad

Master Magician Blaine Goad brings his energetic, fun, and funny magic show to the historic Vergennes Opera House for an afternoon of family fun.

The perfect antidote for cabin fever or the winter blues, Master Magician Blaine Goad has just what the doctor ordered. His fun, funny and energetic style of magic will surely amaze and delight audience members of all ages.

The Vergennes Opera House
120 Main Street, Vergennes, \$10.00.

Saturday 27th

Birds of Vermont Museum January Bird Monitoring Walk

Join our monthly monitoring walk to record birds at the Museum's trails, forest, and meadow. Learn something new, share what you know, or both! All birders —current, experienced, newbie and would-be— welcome! Most fun for adults, older children.

Please bring your own binoculars and dress for the weather. We recommend bringing tick repellent

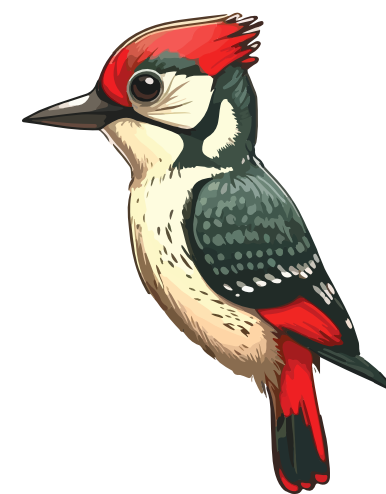
(seasonally) and a water bottle.

Max: 12 people
Free, suggested donation \$10
Register here of call 802 434-2167.

Outdoors

If the walk fills, we'll have a waitlist; we also offer these bird monitoring walks the last Saturday of every month.

From 8:00-9:00 a.m. at the Birds of Vermont Museum, 900 Sherman Hollow Road, Huntington.



Chaffee Arts Center: "The Art of Life" Art Exhibit featuring artist Robert Arthur Black

Opening Friday Jan. 19

The Chaffee Art Center, Your Center for Creativity, invites the community to the opening reception of our new exhibit "The Art of Life" featuring artist, Robert Arthur Black from 5-7 pm.

Stop by to meet the artist, and enjoy a glass of wine and nibbles while you explore the galleries full of art and history.

Chaffee artist members' works will be on display and for sale throughout the foyer and second floors, as well as in the Gallery Shoppe that is filled with handmade treasures and

gift ideas for any occasion. Be sure to browse the rest of the mansion and take in the 1890's architecture. There is no charge to attend. A donation would be appreciated. This exhibit will be on display until March 1st.

Check out www.chaffeeartcenter.org and the Chaffee Art Center Instagram and Facebook pages for updates on events, classes and more. Call 802.775.0356, info@chaffeeartcenter.org, or stop by the Chaffee Art Center at 16 South Main Street in Rutland, VT.

Next Stage Arts Project Workshop: Middle Eastern and Eastern Mediterranean Percussion- Styles and Techniques

A seminar that will take its audience on a journey through the sounds and rhythms of the percussion instruments used in the Middle East and Eastern Mediterranean regions.

World-recognized percussionist George Lennis will go over the origins, styles and techniques of those instruments by demonstrating and performing: riq (Arabic tambourine), darbuka (goblet shape drum), daire (frame drum with zills) and bendir (frame drum). George is a Cooperman endorser and will be presenting this workshop on Cooperman made drums. Participants are encouraged to bring their own drums, or use one of the drums provided by Cooperman for the duration of the workshop.

This workshop will be followed by a Jazz performance in the evening at the Next Stage theater. George Lennis's quintet will perform the music from his latest album "Between Two Worlds". The name of his album was inspired by the 15th century Turkish mystic Haci Bayram Veli's poem "Between Two Worlds" and depicts George's journey as an immigrant originally from Nicosia, Cyprus who eventually moved to the U.S. The music showcases George's bi-musicality, blending Jazz and Middle Eastern music in a tasteful and respectful manner to both of these rich musical traditions. Lennis's quintet features a stellar group of musicians including the wonderful Turkish vocalist, Heiraza AKA Burcu Gülec, Swedish born bassist Bruno Råberg, American trumpeter Emiel De Jaegher, and Turkish piano, oud, and ney player Mehmet Ali Sanlikol.

From 3:00-5:00 p.m. at Next Stage Arts Project, 15 Kimball Hill, Putney.





Beautifying Brandon Part 5 in a series of 6

BY LYN DESMARAIS & PATRICIA WOOD

It takes a village, doesn't it? In my gardening column we have visited private gardens, farms, and commercial nurseries. This ongoing series celebrates our public spaces and those who provide the gardening magic for them. Pat Wood grew up here in Brandon. She worked in Boston for 15 years and returned to Brandon in 2017, coming home to help her mom, beloved Sally Wood. Pat works as the Steward at the Brandon (formerly Stephen A. Douglas) Museum, is very active in the Brandon Chamber of Commerce, and drives canoe trips for Camp Keewaydin in the summer. In her 'spare' time, Pat can be found everywhere gardening is going on. She told me about the following gardens so that I could accurately show the kind of work that goes into creating new gardens for the townspeople to enjoy. Please forgive me (and tell me) if I've left anyone out.

Here's Pat in her own words:
17 Franklin Street — Kirk Thomas took down a decrepit house and then asked the Chamber of Commerce what we need in Brandon that would be suitable in that location. The things that we listed were not appropriate for that residential spot, or the timing was wrong for them. So, the Chamber reached out to the Greenways committee of the Downtown Brandon Alliance (DBA). Greenways suggested that we make it into a little park, adding some green space to the neighborhood. Robert Black, Joe and Melly Flynn, Tim Guiles, Lynn Wilson, Jack Schneider, and I picked up trash, dug out rubble and rocks and stacked them on pallets that Kirk supplied. The group brainstormed a design and worked with Kirk to refine it. Kirk took away the trash and rubble, then graded and

seeded the area. The DBA volunteers marked out garden areas with stones and lined up some marble blocks along the front to define the property.

We put out a call for some specific type of plants that Ellen Walters and Beth Wimett helped us to select, and many people donated them. Kirk brought in soil which we put into the gardens and then planted and mulched with mulch that Kirk dropped off. Sandy Mayo had some shrubs that she wanted out of her garden, so Joe, Melly, Robert, Jack, and I dug them up and transplanted them into this new park. I contacted Marion Gibson

to ask for some specific plants to fill in gaps. Susan Stone donated hydrangeas, and Sally Wood donated daffodil bulbs.

Nifty Thrifty donated some money, with which we bought trees from Miller Hill and from Virgil & Constance (both of whom pitched in with discounts). Tim Guiles donated a picnic table. Joe and Melly got a second table from a friend. We also got 3 benches from downtown that were in bad shape and were being replaced by Nifty Thrifty. Joe, Melly, and I bought materials to fix them up, and Joe and Melly did the work. Joe and



"BOB READ'S HILL" This rocky slope overlooking the upper falls in downtown Brandon, just below Bob Read's house, will hopefully soon be covered with flowers, thanks to all the volunteer efforts to beautify Brandon.



THE YURTBAGS PLAYED at Red Clover Ale Company in Brandon this weekend. The band is fronted by powerhouse, gravel-voiced singer Monique Monette, with Jim McCuen on bass, Rob McCuen on guitar, Matt Davis on drums, and Kenny Cifone on keyboards.

Photos by Jeff Sacks

Music on tap and on target in Goshen and Brandon

BY JEFF SACKS

JOLIE HOLLAND AT RUTH STONE HOUSE

Jolie Holland (<https://joliehollandmusic.com/>) blew into Goshen on Friday, January 12 for an intimate event at The Ruth Stone House (RSH), accompanied by Ben Boye on synthesizer. For those unfamiliar with Holland's stylings, she's "a warm lo-fi bluesy Norah Jones crossed with Lucinda Williams," and her smooth, generous tones were a welcome gift against the backdrop of the blustery winds that were only just beginning to howl.

Holland entertained revelers with her rich tapestry of songs interspersed with tales and inspirations for said songs, such as "Old Fashioned Morphine," which is based on a dream she had of William S. Burroughs, famed morphine addict and author of "Naked Lunch."

The event was limited to 30 donation-based tickets, with the proceeds going toward supporting the nonprofit national literary landmark RSH as well

as the musicians. The happening was recorded and will be posted online, so check back in at RSH's website (<https://ruthstonehouse.org/>).

RSH was established in 2013 and serves to fulfill the poet Ruth Stone's wish that her physical and literary estate be used for the furthering of poetry and the creative arts. The organization was created to both cultivate and celebrate the works and legacy of the poet herself and maintain her historic property in Goshen.

RSH creates and nurtures a community that supports making the literary arts, particularly poetry and bookmaking, a vital and enriching aspect of people's lives.

YURTBAGS AT RED CLOVER

After the overnight windstorm blew through town Saturday night with gusts as strong at 60-70 mph, one of Brandon's favorite local acts, The Yurtbags, generated its own musical fury for a few hours at Red Clover Ale Co.

The quintet, fronted by Monique Monette and backed by

(See Music on tap, Page 24)

Can you guess the street?

BY LAURA PETERSON

Last week the mystery street photo was of Carver Street. If you stood in front of #23 or #24 and look south toward the Catholic Church, this is what you would have seen at the turn of last century.

Today #25 Carver Street still has the distinctive front porch lattice work, spandrels, and railings. Someone on that side of the street had a Livery & Feed Stable, as evidenced by the sign. Does anyone know about that?

Look at those majestic trees. Even in the winter they make a statement.



CARVER STREET NOW, and circa 1900.



We have another one for you. Can you guess this street?

THE REPORTER NEEDS YOU!



What we need:

Writers

We need people who can attend Selectboard, School Board, and Committee meetings in Brandon and/or Pittsford and write up summaries of the proceedings. We will pay \$50 per meeting/-summary.

We need feature writers who are interested in going out into the community on assignment, interviewing people, attending cultural events, and writing about it all. We will pay \$75 per assignment.

Managing editor

We need someone to supervise the layout of the paper on Tuesdays in conjunction with our graphic designer. Duties include ensuring adequate content to fill each issue (including summaries of meetings), determining

placement in paper of the various stories, ensuring that content has been proofread. Will train in specifics of our process.

Must be available all day on Tuesdays and have access to the internet and Zoom. Hourly rate commensurate with experience.

Ad manager

1 or 2 days per week. Responsible for the solicitation and follow-up of advertisements.

Coordination with managing editor required. Hourly compensation (based on experience) or commission.

Sports reporters

Cover your local games! Whether your children are on the team or you're just a booster, send us photos and details of the games! Submit to news@brandonreporter.com with "sports submission" in the subject line.

We are looking for folks who appreciate community-based journalism and want to get involved.

REAL ESTATE



IN-TOWN LOCATION 6,000+ SQ. FT.

Impressive 2-story commercial building with 6,614 sq. ft. This meticulously maintained building was entirely renovated in 2007. Features a spacious commercial kitchen, office space, conference room, and a yoga/pilates room. All rooms are large and bright with ample lighting and natural light. The building is well insulated, with a state-of-the-art heating system with radiant heat and 3 separate Buderus Logamax furnaces. ADA compliant with a lift/elevator, 4 restrooms, ample paved parking, 3-bay garage and a spacious back yard. There are a multitude of potential uses for this building. Located in Historic Brandon Village. A great investment opportunity offered at \$425,000



802-236-9112
Wendy@RoweRealEstate.com
RoweRealEstate.com

SUBMIT YOUR BIRTH, ANNIVERSARY, OR WEDDING ANNOUNCEMENTS



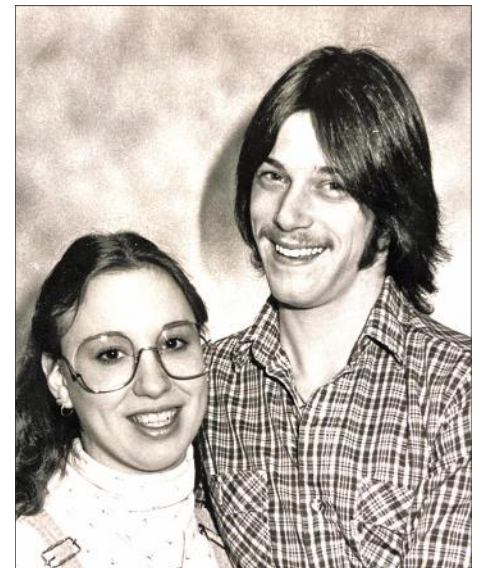
Mim's Photos

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

Recognized



Brud Leedom of Sudbury reached out to identify Joyce Cameron Humiston.



Brud also recognized this couple as Darlene Putnam Olsen with the son of Ed and Marie Olsen, but did not recall his first name.



E-mail
ads@brandonreporter.com
if you can identify someone in
these photos.

Or call us at 247-8080

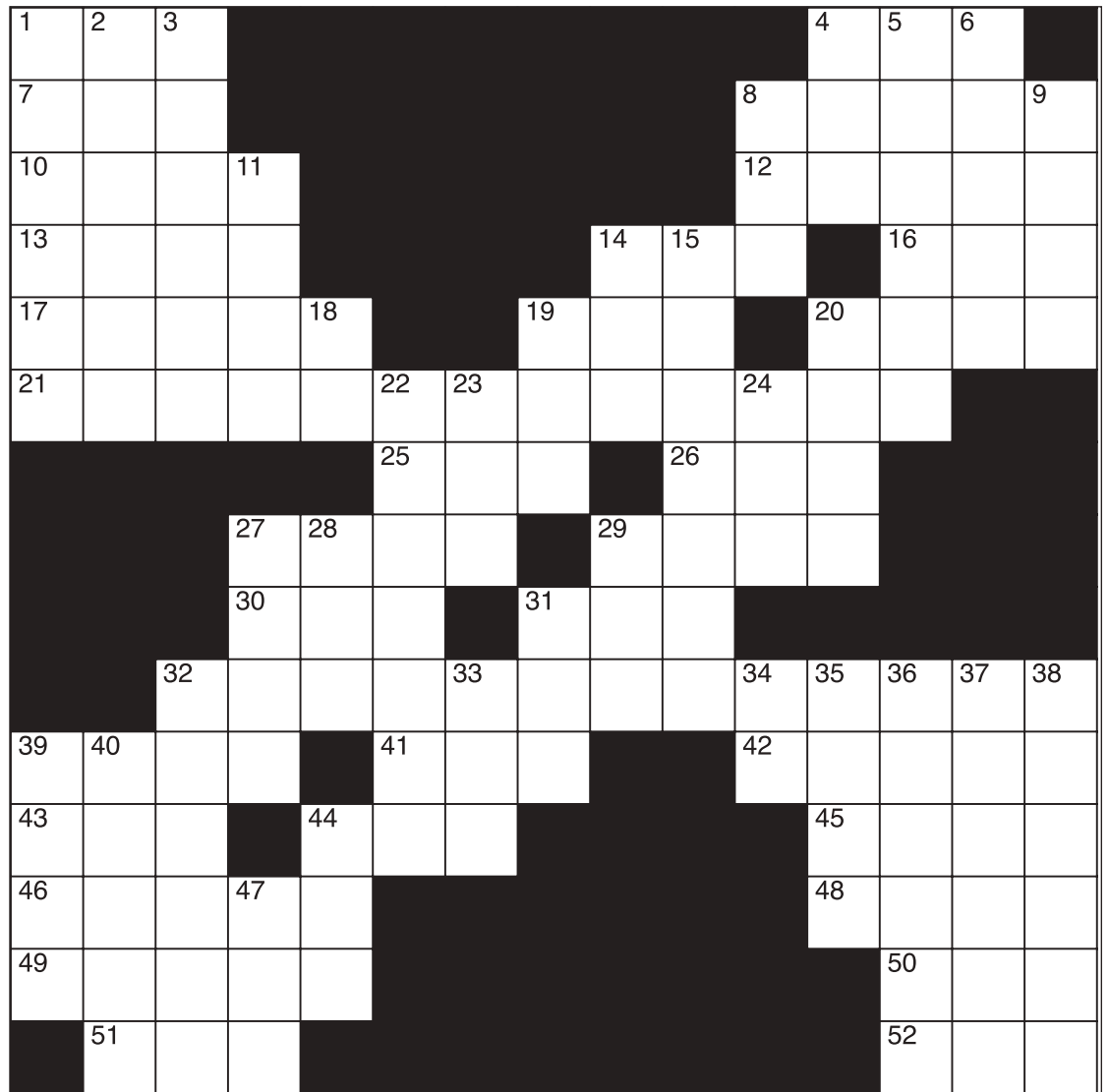
Crossword

CLUES ACROSS

1. Microgram
4. Where golfers begin
7. Each
8. Warm weather metropolis
10. Coat with sticky substance
12. Girl's given name
13. Myth (Spanish)
14. Ultrahigh frequency
16. Former NBAer Jeremy
17. Where rockers work
19. Your consciousness of your own identity
20. Soft-finned fishes
21. Localities
25. Paddle
26. Union
27. Member of religious community
29. Small shrill flute
30. Small constellation in the Milky Way
31. They ___
32. College kid on vacation
39. de Armas and Gasteyer are two
41. Part of the human body
42. A progressive grading
43. Sound unit
44. Noise some birds make
45. Abba __, Israeli politician
46. Portuguese city
48. Be extremely, uncritically fond of
49. Resembling old Norse poems
50. Ask for out of extreme need
51. Sino-Soviet block (abbr.)
52. Midway between south and southeast

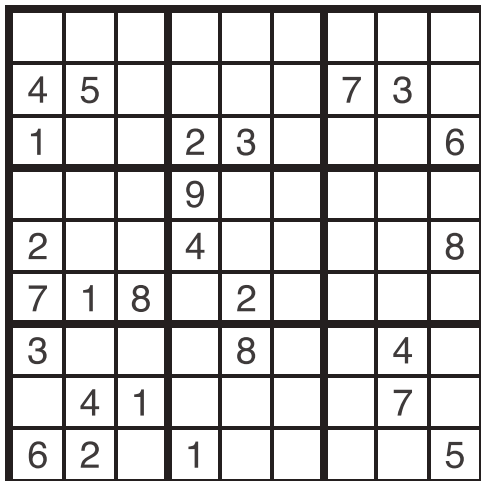
CLUES DOWN

1. An insane person
2. __ Boothe Luce, American author
3. Buttock muscles
4. Men's fashion accessory
5. "Hotel California" rockers
6. Electronic communication
8. Magnetomotive force (abbr.)
9. Hostelrys
11. A way to resound
14. Exclamation: yuck!
15. A resident of Indiana
18. Exclamation of surprise
19. Make a mistake
20. Boundary
22. Antilles island
23. It's used to make furniture
24. Clod
27. They indicate where places are
28. Bobby __, NHL champ
29. Prints money
31. Honorable title (Turkish)
32. Appetizers
33. Midway between north and northwest
34. Spanish be
35. Breezed through
36. Grilled dishes
37. In a way, excites
38. Change mind
39. A French abbot
40. Popular candy
44. Partner to cheese
47. Wood or metal bolt



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.



Level: Intermediate

RCHS Gets Support in Many Ways – Here Are Easy Ways You Can Help!

The Rutland County Humane Society (RCHS) is fortunate to get a lot of community support and many people want to help our organization and the animals we care for. Here are a few easy ways supporters can help RCHS. Donating supplies is a great way to help the animals stay healthy and happy. The complete wish list is on the Ways To Give page of our website. We also have Amazon and Chewy wish lists so you can shop online and have the items delivered right to RCHS. Donating gently used bedding, bath towels, blankets etc. helps us keep the animals cozy while they're with us. Donate a vehicle, or crypto, and consider including RCHS when doing your estate planning. Drop redeemable bottles and cans in the shed at the RCHS shelter in Pittsford or Green Mountain Bottle Redemption at the Howe Center in Rutland. Just tell them they're for RCHS. Donate your spare change in the dog banks many local merchants have on their counters. Your spare change can help save a life. Please thank the merchant for supporting the animals. To donate, you can Venmo us @rchsvt, donate online, or mail in a check. To learn more about any of these programs visit www.rchsvt.org or contact the RCHS Business Office at 483.9171.

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

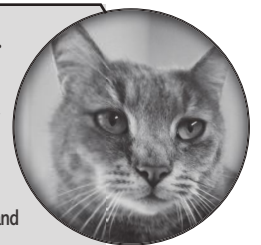


MEET SHADOW - 6-YEAR-OLD. SPAYED FEMALE. GERMAN SHEPHERD. BLACK.

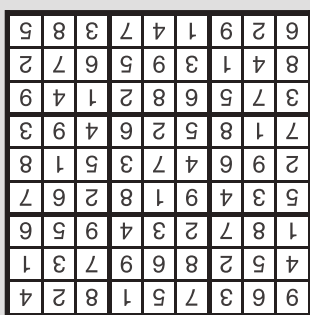
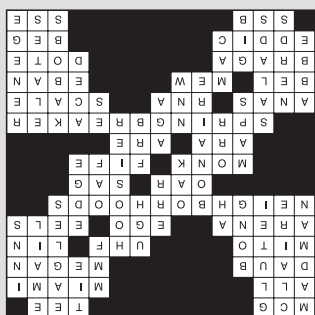
Do you have Shepherd experience and are looking for a sweet girl to join your family? Shadow is your girl! She was surrendered to RCHS along with several other dogs because their previous owner was unable to care for them. She has spent most of her life as a mother but has since left motherhood behind. She is ready to start the next chapter of her life as the center of someone's world. Shadow is a sweet girl, and needs to go to a home with Shepherd experience. She is very smart and loves to learn. She quickly warms up to new people and is eager to please. She is ready to find that person who will take her on adventures and give her all the love that she deserves. If you would like to meet her, stop by Tuesday-Saturday from 11 am-4 pm.

MEET SHADOW - 5 YEARS OLD. NEUTERED MALE. DOMESTIC SHORT HAIR. GRAY TIGER.

Shadow is such a handsome boy! He loves attention but, it must be on his terms. We have also noticed that he is not a huge fan of being picked up. He is a bit shy because he is still adjusting to life at the shelter. In a home environment he will blossom. With that being said, he has lots of love to give! He was surrendered to us on January 3rd with his friend Sunny because the previous owners were moving. Shadow and Sunny rely on each other. Therefore, they are a bonded pair and will need to go home together. We have no known history on how he will do with dogs or children. However, we do know that he likes other cats. He is currently adjusting in the community cat room and getting used to his surroundings. If this lovable goofball sounds like the right fit for you, please stop by and visit with him! He will be waiting. The Adoption Center is open Tuesday through Saturday 11am to 4pm.



PUZZLE SOLUTIONS



RUTLAND COUNTY HUMANE SOCIETY

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



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

OFF THE SHELF



The following Large Print books were donated by Brenda Whittaker:

Rock Bottom by Fern Michaels, donated in memory of Doris Whittaker (Sisterhood, Book 35)

Looking to start up a cafe, Izzy Flanders reaches out to her old friend Zoe Danfield, who's now VP of her construction firm. But Zoe's stressed—and for good reason. Following a string of bridge and building collapses, Zoe believes her firm may be at fault. So, she calls in the Sisterhood to investigate.

On the Way to Us by Carolyn Brown, donated in memory of Zula B. Sawyer

Mercy Spenser promised her friend and roommate she'd spend her vacation in west Texas for a charitable mission—but she didn't agree to the oppressive heat, massive spiders, or the rowdy cantina next door drowning out her gospel singing. So, when she clashes with the sexy-as-hell man who runs the place, her temper is hot enough to nearly burn down the entire town. Despite refusing to turn down his jukebox and inviting Miss Mercy to leave his cantina alone, Hunter Wilson can't get that gospel singer with the ice-blue eyes out of his mind. Finding her again in their tiny town isn't the problem. Convincing her that he's interested—well, that's another story. But if Mercy will

give Hunter one more chance to show his true feelings, they just might find the love of a lifetime.

New in YA Fiction

Percy Jackson & the Olympians: The Chalice of the Gods by Rick Riordan

Percy Jackson's hope for a normal senior year is shattered as the gods present him with three quests, beginning with the retrieval of Zeus's goblet, in order to get the necessary three letters of recommendation for college.

Gather by Kenneth Cadow

A Vermont teen struggles as his mother's opioid addiction means he needs to quit basketball and get a job to help take care of her, but at least he's got his dog Gather to keep him company. But an unforeseen tragedy has Ian and Gather on the run, trying to escape a future that would mean leaving their home and being separated.

New in Adult Fiction

Where You End by Abbott Kahler

When Kat wakes from a coma, the first face she sees is that of her identical twin, Jude. All Kat can remember is Jude's name and face, and nothing else before the accident. Seeing an opportunity, Jude decides to give her sister a new past and spins a tale of the perfect childhood, travels, and

DID YOU KNOW?

We've been adding lots of "things" to our Library of Things, including a portable DVD player (with screen, perfect for long car rides) and one for your TV!

a promising future. But who are the people following Kat and why is she prone to uncontrollable flashes of violent anger? Kat soon realizes that Jude's tales are merely that, and she has to unravel fact from fiction. But what she discovers will endanger them both.

The Parliament by Aimee Pokwatka

Madigan Purdy is stuck in her hometown library. When tens of thousands of owls descend on the building, brutally attacking anyone daring to try and leave (or enter), Mad must figure out a way to keep her students safe and distracted while trying to figure out a solution. Perhaps they'll find the inspiration they seek in her favorite childhood book, *The Silent Queen*. With food and fresh water in low supply, the denizens of the library will have to find a way out, and soon. But the owls don't seem to be in a hurry to leave...

We also have new issues of Good Housekeeping, Girls' Life, Sports Illustrated Kids, Consumer Reports, Smithsonian Magazine, Bird Watcher's Digest, HGTV, Yankee Magazine, Prevention, and Taproot.

Brandon Police Report

January 8

- Upon request, checked on the welfare of a woman and her child at a residence on Robin Bird Lane. Both appeared to be fine.
- Assisted with a civil standby at a residence on Newton Road so that an individual could pick up some personal belongings.
- Responded to a mental health issue on McConnell Road. The patient was transported to the hospital.
- Vehicle stop on Grove Street for stop sign violation. Warning issued.
- Vehicle stop on Grove Street for driving at night without any lights on. Warning issued.
- Received a report of a domestic violence situation from Addison County Counseling regarding individuals residing in Brandon. Investigation is ongoing.
- A found Apple iPhone was turned in at the Brandon Police Department (BPD).

January 9

- Responded to a residence on Mulcahy Drive for a report of a drug overdose, possibly involving cocaine. The individual was transported to Porter Hospital.
- Received a request to dispatch a wounded deer that had been struck by a vehicle on Route 73. The deer was dispatched, and Fish & Wildlife was notified.
- Responded to a residence for an untimely death. An investigation was conducted by the BPD and the State of Vermont Office of the Medical Examiner. The cause of death was believed to be due to natural causes.
- Vehicle stop on Franklin Street for a red light violation. Warning issued.
- Assisted Castleton Police with obtaining evidence from a Brandon resident.
- Directed traffic enforcement at Arnold District Road and Mulcahy Drive.
- Assisted Pittsford Police with serving a restraining order.

January 10

- Vehicle stop on Franklin Street. Warning issued.
- Vehicle stop on Franklin Street for display of plates. Warning issued.
- Vehicle stop on Town Line Drive for defective plate lights.

Warning issued.

- Assisted a motorist after they struck a deer on Grove Street.
- Vehicle stop on Conant Square. Ticket issued and the vehicle was towed.
- Vehicle stop on Grove Street. Warning issued.
- Conducted another vehicle stop on Grove Street. Warning issued.
- Responded to a report of a dispute on Conant Square. Upon further investigation, officers arrested a woman for unlawful mischief and disorderly conduct. She was issued a citation to appear before the Rutland County Superior Court for arraignment on 4/15/2024 at 10:00 a.m.
- Responded to a residence on Maple Street for a report of a domestic disturbance in which a woman involved was still inside the residence, but was attempting to leave. Upon investigation, officers arrested the woman. She was released on a citation to appear before the Rutland County Superior Court for arraignment on 1/11/2023 at 12:30 p.m. on the charge of Domestic Assault.

January 11

- Issued a woman on Wood Lane a citation regarding an active arrest warrant for Failure to Appear.
- Responded to a report of suspicious activity on River Street.
- Attempted to locate a wanted subject in the area of Deer Run Road. Numerous attempts were made to locate the suspect, but they were unsuccessful.
- Took fingerprints for a teaching license.
- Took fingerprints for a teaching position.

January 12

- Conducted a welfare check on Forest Dale Road. The individual was located and found to be okay.
- Responded to an apartment building on West Seminary Street for a welfare check. The individual was located and transported to the hospital by the Brandon Area Rescue Squad.
- Conducted a civilian ride-along.
- Vehicle stop on Union Street. Ticket issued.

(See Police report, 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

Flood risk

(Continued from Page 19)
 he anticipates pushback might come from homeowners concerned that disclosure could dampen their property values.
 “Is that fair to the seller, who might fear that by disclosing it, by mandate, that they’re actually lessening the worth of their house?” said Stevens, who chairs the House Committee on General & Housing.
 Realtors, already required through their code of ethics to disclose all “material facts” about hazards within their

knowledge to a prospective homebuyer, might also oppose it, Stevens said.
 But Peter Tucker, a lobbyist for the Vermont Association of Realtors, said he supports flood disclosure measures, even though he views them as somewhat redundant for buyers using realtors. While realtors are involved in the majority of real estate transactions, he said, for those not using agents, “it’d be nice to make sure those folks have that responsibility.”
 The Vermont Landlord As-

sociation did not respond to a request for comment.
 In a 2022 analysis of state flood disclosure laws, the Federal Emergency Management Agency rated Vermont on the weak end of the spectrum: The state didn’t have any of the 10 flood risk disclosure measures surveyed. FEMA found that states with stronger disclosure requirements — like Louisiana, Texas and South Carolina — often have higher rates of residents with flood insurance policies.
 Few Vermonters have flood insurance coverage, leaving many to rely on federal disaster



aid to recoup their losses after the July floods — which rarely pays out as much money.
 Rep. Conor Casey, D-Montpelier, a co-sponsor of the flood recovery omnibus bill, said flood disclosure requirements are a necessary part of planning for a future with more flooding.

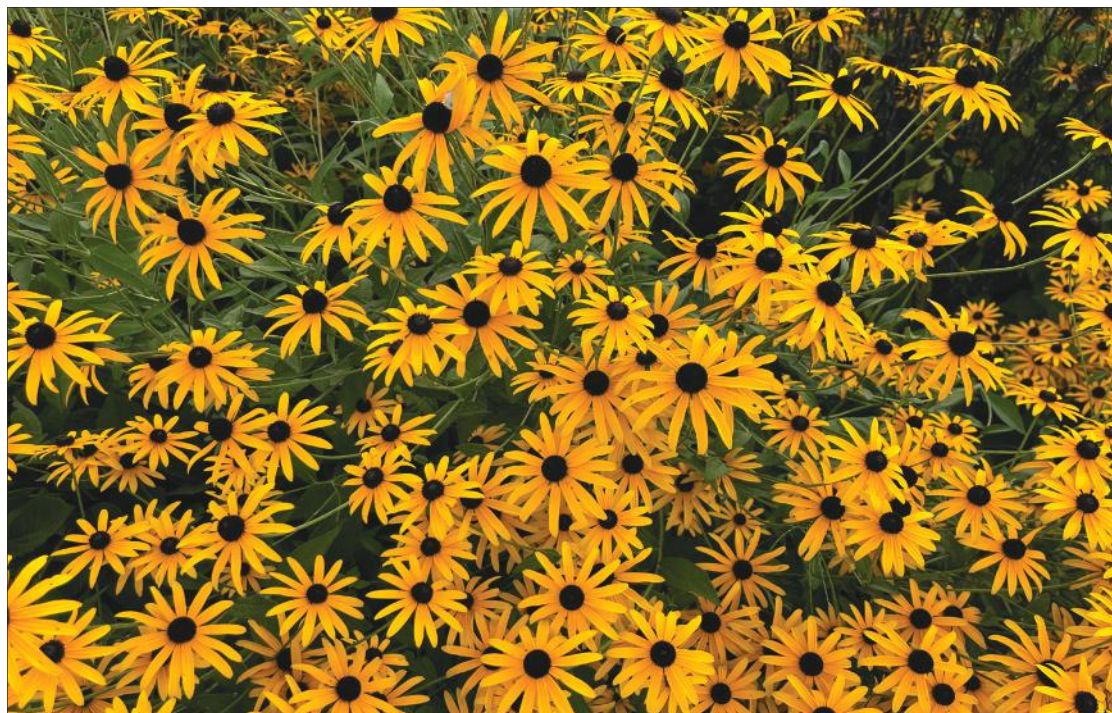
“The worst thing that could happen after a tragedy like this, you know, is not learning your lessons,” he said. “This is not a one-time event. This is going to be a part of our lives going forward here, so we have to have these protections in place.”

Restaurant guide

Robert's
Café Provence
 From Provence to You
De la Provence à Vous
 Wednesday – Saturday: 11:30 a.m. – 9 p.m.
 Sunday: 10 a.m. – 9 p.m.
 Want a reservation? Please book through the website <https://cafeprovencet.com> or call (802) 247-9997
 11 Center Street, Brandon, VT

Franklin's
 FOOD, FRIENDS & FUN
 Full Menu 7 days a week
 Eat In or Take Out
 Available for Parties
 Prime Rib Every Friday & Saturday from 4–9 p.m.
 25 North Street, Proctor 📞 802-459-3320

Ad design included in pricing
 Call 802 236-4662, or email george@brandonreporter.com
 for more information



Beautifying Brandon

(Continued from Page 14)
 Melly then built a little library and installed it, complete with books. They also built a chalk box and filled it with sidewalk chalk to be used on the paved section of the park. Neighbors across the street donated a bike rack. The park was then ready for use! A subset of the volunteers above, plus Wyatt Waterman and the next-door neighbor Michael (not sure of his last name) keep the park weeded and watered. Kirk keeps it mown and stores the furniture for the winter.
 Library- Kathy Clark got wildflower seeds and worked with Robert Black to plant them along the sidewalk in front of the

library, 17 Franklin Street, and in front of Town Hall. Others may have helped dig up and plant the library plot, I am not sure. Amanda Berry keeps it watered and weeded.
 Bob Reed’s Hill (overlooking the upper falls in downtown Brandon)—Joe and Melly Flynn, Sarah and Louie Pattis, Lyn Des Marais, and Pat Wood planted some plants there in the spring this year. Bob Reed kept them watered until the rains started. Many of them survived! Since then, Louie and I have built a lot of terraces, and all of us have planted flowers that Lyn, me, and others donated. Mitch Pearl gave us a box of daffodil bulbs

which should look great next spring. Lucas Montgomery answered an ad to adopt a garden (and has done a lot of work on Kennedy Park) and came to help lug dirt and plant large numbers of flowers. He also cut brush and dug up sumac that was overtaking the top of the hill.
 Note from Lyn: Pat asked me to give a shout out to every single person in this article. And I, in turn, want to acknowledge all the incredibly hard work Pat has put into every single garden she touches in Brandon. I have seen her spend forty or fifty hours on Bob Reed’s hill alone. Thank you, Pat. books. They also about build a chalk box and



Legislative Report

BY STEPHANIE JEROME

Off to a strong start this session

The Vermont Legislature is back in session. It is an honor to represent Brandon in the Statehouse for my sixth session. Each year, I learn more about the intricate workings of our little state, the complexities of democracy, our workforce, and economy. I spend my week in Montpelier, leaving Brandon on Tuesday morning and returning on Friday evening. The hours are long - I spend at least 12 hours each day working on issues (large and small) that can move Vermont forward. I continue to serve as Vice-Chair of the Commerce and Economic Development Committee, University of Vermont Board of Trustees (legislative member), and I have recently been appointed to the Vermont Economic Progress Council (VEPC), among other responsibilities. I believe that we are all working together to build a Vermont that is better for all of

us. The major issues continue to be housing, mental health, healthcare, workforce development, education, and economic growth.

H.158 BOTTLE BILL:

There was an exciting vote during the first week of session to modernize our decades-old bottle bill. The vote to override the Governor's veto of H.158 expands our long-standing bottle redemption system and will greatly reduce the litter that ends up polluting our roads, lands, and waterways. The override received support from Democrats, Republicans, Progressives, and Independents, indicating broad consensus. This was the first bill of the session, it passed out of the House and is now in the Senate for their decision.

H.72 OVERDOSE PREVENTION PILOT SITES:

This bill proposes to establish a pilot program for two over-

dose-prevention centers (Burlington and Brattleboro). All sites must be approved by the city before they can be started. The pilot project is being funded by Opioid Settlement money, not by tax dollars. This epidemic is a public health crisis, and we need to continue to act to save lives and help our communities. The first people to benefit will be individuals who are dealing with substance-use disorder, but the ripple effects of preventing overdose deaths extend to family, friends, communities, and state. H.72 will help save lives - we need to try as many options as available to curb this crisis in Vermont. The bill now heads to the Senate for additional consideration.

COMMERCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE:

The committee took testimony on Budget Adjustment Act

requests that impact community and economic development. This included testimony from the Adult Education and Literacy Network, United Way of Northwest Vermont on behalf of their Working Bridges program, as well as the Treasurer's request on VT ABLE Savings Accounts and Unclaimed Property.

We also took testimony on S.30, an act relating to creating a permanent sister-state program, to advance education, business, cultural, and governmental exchanges. This bill would create a more permanent sister-state program for Vermont, while setting up guardrails that allow the governing entity to terminate the program, such as war or armed conflicts. We are looking to build upon the current program and programs already established through the VT National Guard. Our current sister state is Tretori Prefecture, Japan.

House Commerce also worked on captive insurance worker's compensation housekeeping and technical fixes bills. Captive Insurance, although not widely known, brings in over \$31M to our state and employs over 400 people.

We also heard testimony on the impact of the Business Emergency Gap Assistance Program

(BEGAP) - which assisted businesses after the devastating July floods. We also learned more about the small-town municipal technical assistance program. The Regional Planning Commissions, Vermont Council on Rural Development and VT Historic Preservation Trust are assisting communities throughout the state in applying for ARPA grants - I want to see our small communities thrive and hopefully these funds can help with their infrastructure needs.

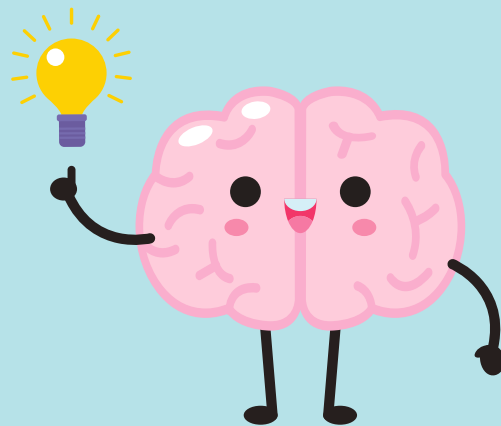
COMMUNITY:

I am assisting our town with two bills this session - the merger of Brandon Fire District #2 into Fire District #1 and adding water and wastewater workers as "first responders" during a time of emergency. I was happy to discuss these two bills at last week's Annual Meeting of the Fire District #1.

Throughout the legislative season and the off-session, I continue to support constituents with issues in state government. Please feel free to contact me at 802-683-8209 or sjerome@leg.state.vt.us.

*Rep. Stephanie Zak Jerome
(Brandon-6)
Commerce and
Economic Development
Committee - Vice Chair*

Brandon Brain Buster Answered



Answer: C

The easiest way to solve this is to assign a numeric value to x and work out the problem. If we say $A = 2$, then the area of the original square is $2 \times 2 = 4$ square inches. If we increase each side by 1 inch, then the new length is 3 and the area of the resulting square is $3 \times 3 = 9$ square inches. The difference between the new area and the original area is $9 - 4 = 5$. If we plug 2 in for A in all the choices, the one that gives us 5 is our answer.

We know this is wrong right off the bat.

$2 + 1 = 3$. This is incorrect.

$2(2) + 1 = 4 + 1 = 5$. This could be the answer. We need to keep checking the other choices, because we don't know if we just got lucky.

$22 + 1 = 4 + 1 = 5$. Hmm. This might also be the answer.

$22 + 2 = 4 + 2 = 6$. This is incorrect.

So, we know the answer is either C or D. If we say that $A = 3$, we can test both of these choices again and one of them should be the clear winner. If $A = 3$, then the area

of the original square would be $3 \times 3 = 9$. If we increase each side by 1, then the area of the enlarged square would be $4 \times 4 = 16$. The difference between these areas is $16 - 9 = 7$.

If we plug 3 in for A in choices C and D, the one that yields 7 is the answer. In C, $2(3) + 1 = 6 + 1 = 7$. This looks like it's the answer. In D, $32 + 1 = 9 + 1 = 10$. This is incorrect.

The answer is C.

If we look at it mathematically, we can say that the area of the original square is $A \times A$ or A^2 . If we increase A by 1, then the area of the enlarged square is $(A + 1) \times (A + 1)$. If you remember the FOIL (First Outer Inner Last) method from high school, $(A + 1) \times (A + 1) = A^2 + A + A + 1 = A^2 + 2A + 1$. The difference between the original and enlarged areas is then $A^2 + 2A + 1 - A^2 = 2A + 1$. This is choice C.

Mim's Photos are on page 16!
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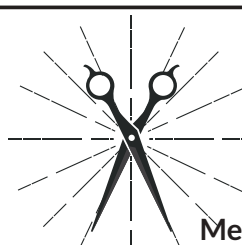
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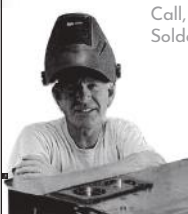


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OVUU

(Continued from Page 1)

and 3 no, with 3 absent. The nay votes were Paul Lathrop, Brett Mullins, and Brent Scarborough. It came after a tense meeting during which several Board members and attendees voiced disapproval of the decision to cut foreign-language instruction at the elementary level.

Board President Laurie Bertrand began the meeting by reading aloud two written comments the Board had received from the community.

Pittsford resident Rob Spensely had written to express discontent with the decision to eliminate foreign-language instruction at Lothrop. Teaching foreign languages encourages “open-mindedness” and is a “barometer of educational quality” in a school district. The decision to cut the program “misses the big picture.” Later in the meeting, Sybren Spensely, who was in attendance on Zoom, expressed similar frustrations with the decision, noting that she would not vote to approve any budget that did not fund instruction in foreign languages.

An anonymous resident had written to voice a similar complaint.

Several Board members echoed the complaints. Pajua Gamba, Barbara Ebling, Fernanda Canales, and Brett Mullins all voiced concern about the elimination of the programs.

Ms. Ebling stated, “that elementary principals thought it was expendable shows how we let [elementary foreign-language instruction] get to the point of failure.” Ms. Ebling added that the programs teach empathy and expand kids’ perspectives on the world. She also worried that foreign-language instruction is often seen as “elitist” and therefore becomes vulnerable to elimination.

“It’s not ‘elitist,’” Ebling said. “It’s a necessary pursuit and we should make this right.”

RNESU Superintendent Kristin Hubert expressed sympathy for the critics’ perspective but defended the decision.

“Foreign languages are not ‘expendable,’” said Hubert. “It wasn’t an easy decision, but we needed to cut \$540,000 to stay below the guardrail of Act 127 and there was no way to do that without cutting positions.” Ms. Hubert went on to explain that special-service positions could not be cut, because of statutory mandates, so other positions had to be eliminated. The foreign-language instruction was only 1 hour on 1 day per week, she said, and the positions were difficult to fill. In the region, only Rutland Town provides foreign-language instruction at the elementary level, noted Hubert.

“If circumstances change, we can always bring the programs

back,” Hubert added.

Board member Fernanda Canales asked whether the District had a concrete plan to bring the programs back. Member Brett Mullins said that the Board ought to heed “its owners” and provide the programs that the community says it wants.

Board member Kevin Thornton, however, pushed back against the complaints, stating that the process was already at “the 23rd hour” and the time for such negotiations had passed.

“One day a week doesn’t really do much good,” Thornton added. “We’re not cutting much. Let people push for [the programs] next year.”

Board member Natalie Steen agreed with Mr. Thornton’s stance.

“We’re just approving a number,” said Board President Laurie Bertrand. “We may be able to shift things around later on and bring these programs back later on.”

Ms. Hubert also noted that in the feedback solicited from parents over the past year, the priorities had been school safety and social/emotional learning. Foreign-language instruction had not been high on

the list.

Act 127, which is in effect for the first time this budget season, implemented new spending formulae to more equitably distribute education funds in Vermont. The act allows a district to cap its property-tax increase at 5% per year if its budget increase remains under 10%. The proposed budget for FY25 represents an increase of 12.71% in absolute dollars but because of adjustments made by the state to take into account the extra supports and service some students need, the state will deem the District’s budget to have increased by only 9.74%, below the 10% guardrail.

After the vote to approve the budget, Board member Brett Mullins explained his nay vote by saying that he felt that the budget process had “failed” and that he wasn’t sure that he had been given adequate time to digest the information that had been provided by the district.

The Board also discussed the need to reach out to the community to explain and advocate for the proposed budget ahead of the March vote. The increases in the OVUU budget come at a time when other

municipal increases are making taxpayers feel distress.

Specifically regarding the school budget, there is a confluence of several factors helping create taxpayers’ discontent.

First, the ESSER (Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief) funding that was provided by the federal government during COVID will no longer be available, forcing districts to make difficult choices about what to keep and what to eliminate.

Second, when the discrepancy between the Grand List value of a district’s real estate and the market value of those properties rises above a certain level, the state will take the difference into account when setting the tax rate. The percentage of market value represented by Grand List value is known as the Common Level of Appraisal (CLA) and this ratio has been declining in all of OV’s communities, meaning that assessed property values have not kept pace with the local real estate market.

According to current CLA calculations, the homestead tax rates in all of OV’s communities will rise in 2025. The percentage increase in the towns’ respective homestead rates range from a 17% increase in Whiting (from 1.417 to 1.658) to a 28% increase in Goshen (from 1.402 to 1.801). Brandon will increase from 1.431 to 1.693 (18% increase). Pittsford will increase from 1.417 to 1.741 (a 22% increase). Leicester will increase from 1.525 to 1.828 (a 20% increase). And Sudbury will increase from 1.288 to 1.606 (a 24% increase).

The 5% cap on property tax guaranteed by the 10% budget guardrail does not take into account whatever adjustments may be subsequently required by a change in CLA, potentially resulting in property tax increases above 5% even when the budget remains within the guardrail. Property owners whose tax rate is adjusted downward for income will see smaller increases in their tax liabilities.

PUBLIC NOTICES

TOWN OF BRANDON, VERMONT Notice of Public Hearing

Place: Brandon Town Hall (Basement Lobby)

Date & Time: Monday, January 29, 2024 @ 7:00PM

Attend Online: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2532794161>

Meeting ID 253 279 4161

(This option is available only if: You have a computer with a built-in or external camera and microphone (Zoom Software download required) or have a phone with a built-in camera (Zoom App download required)

- 1) The purpose of the hearing is to be accordance with 24 V.S.A §4385 in adopting the proposed Town of Brandon Town Plan.
- 2) The geographic area affected is all of the Town of Brandon.
- 3) Town of Brandon Proposed Town Plan – Table of Contents:
 - Section 1: Overview
 - Section 2: Community Profile
 - Section 3: Community Facilities and Services
 - Section 4: Educational Facilities Plan
 - Section 5: Energy
 - Section 6: Housing
 - Section 7: Childcare
 - Section 8: Recreation
 - Section 9: Historic and Cultural Resources
 - Section 10: Economic Development
 - Section 11: Natural Resources
 - Section 12: Flood Resilience
 - Section 13: Transportation
 - Section 14: Future Land Use
 - Section 15: Consistency with Adjacent Town Plans
 - Section 16: Conclusion and Implementation

4) The full text of the proposed Town Plan, including the Enhanced Energy Plan, can be reviewed in-person at the Brandon Town Offices, 49 Center Street, Brandon VT; at the Brandon Free Public Library (in the basement of Town Hall); or online at www.townofbrandon.com.

5) In addition to making public comments at the public hearing, one can email a written public comment to the Town Manager, Seth Hopkins, at shopkins@townofbrandon.com. The email must have a Subject Line “Brandon Town Plan – Written Public Comment” and be sent in by 5:00 PM on Friday, January 26, 2023. Any written comments will be read during the public comment period of this meeting and be submitted to the public record.

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Music on tap

(Continued from Page 14)

Jim McCuen on bass, Rob McCuen on guitar, Matt Davis on drums, and OVUHS's own Kenny Cifone playing trumpet and electric piano, were their usual tight selves, making anyone who could appreciate such skill wonder just how much they practice to sound that good.

Playing popular rock tunes from The Police's "Roxanne" to The Grateful Dead's "Fire on the Mountain" to Led Zepelin's "Ramble On," as well as some musical interpretations, every rendition earned raucous applause. The highlight of the night had to be their version of AC/DC's "Shook You All Night Long," whereby the youths in attendance got their locks a rockin' to the big, fun-loving beats.

OPEN MIC THURSDAY AT RED CLOVER

As if Holland's and The Yurtbags' performances weren't enough to entertain area folks, Red Clover's Open Mic kicked off all these musical festivities with local talent that would

make Seattle's rock scene in the 1990s jealous.

The night was sponsored by A Sound Space (<https://www.asoundspacevt.com/>), a full-service practice facility with a full backline and everything needed to rehearse. The studio is co-located with Be Music at 162 Woodstock Ave. in Rutland. They offer a wide variety of supports to artists, including one-on-one mentoring, EPK/content development/promotional supports, workshops and classes and connections to other area musicians. It's also a place where people can do DIY recording or video or work with house engineer Josh Cote of Aformal Audio.

If you've not been to Red Clover on Thursday night for Open Mic, you don't know what you've been missing, but you will be pleasantly surprised at just how much musical talent there is just around the corner if you give it a try. You might even make a new friend, enjoy an award-winning beer, or grab a bite to eat at any number of local purveyors.



JOLIE HOLLAND AND Ben Boyce perform at the Ruth Stone House in Goshen. "Norah Jones crossed with Lucinda Williams," Holland brought her blues-inflected tones to an appreciative audience.

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