

Art from Yonder Mountain String Band's newest album "Get Yourself Outside"

SUBARU WINTERFEST IGNITES THE FUN WITH MUSIC

Subaru WinterFest is a three-day celebration of music and mountain activities at Killington Resort featuring live music headlined by Yonder Mountain String Band.

Page 22



MAPLES AT RISK

Check maple trees for signs of the Asian longhorned beetle (ALB). Early detection is key.

Page 3



PUP PROTECTION

Windsor County K9 Kye will receive a bullet protective vest.

Page 4



By Victoria Gaither

A residential structure fire decimated one of the oldest houses in Killington last week.

Fire destroys Neil home in Killington, pets perished

By Polly Mikula

A fast-burning fire rendered one of the oldest houses in Killington a total loss early Wednesday morning, Jan. 24.

The Neil family lived at 202 Old Route 4, just east of Killington Road. It's a tucked away remnant of the old two-lane road over Sherburne Pass that preceded the 1960s highway improvements that created the present four-lane highway.

"Tabitha Neil, the primary homeowner, awoke to the smell of smoke and discovered the fire climbing up the wall and onto the ceiling of the first floor," reported Killington Fire Chief Paul Ginther. "She alerted the other occupants and they were all able to get out safely," he reported.

There were four adults and one teenager in the house at the time. The Neils also had many pets, not all of whom escaped the blazes.

"Tabitha had left the door open for them to try to escape. I believe they got the four dogs out, but lost multiple cats, a snake, a rabbit and a turtle," said Ginther.

Ginther said he believed there were 18 cats in the house when the fire broke out, but the only cats found on the scene were deceased.

Outside, the family also had chickens and goats, which were not displaced by the fire, and are still on property and being cared for.

The fire isn't considered suspicious, said Ginther. He said it was likely accidental in nature caused by a heating source, likely a pellet stove. The official cause is still under investigation. The house is considered a total loss.

Ginther said his department was dispatched after a 911 call came through at 1:47 a.m. from Tabitha Neil reporting the fire there. When firefighters arrived they were able to fight the fire from the first floor from the inside, but were forced after structural damage made it unsafe.

"It was a defensive battle from there," he said.

"From my understanding, it's one of the oldest houses in Killington, it had large dimensional lumber that was very old. Once the fire got hold of that, it was very difficult to get under control."

While Ginther said it was deemed under control about an hour or two hours after

Fire → 7



By Victoria Gaither

Dharma Neil (left) and Tabitha Neil (right) lost their Killington home in a fire last week.

Act 127: changes to state education financing make school budgets puzzling

By Ethan Weinstein/VTDigger

Conversations around education finance — often lamented as one of Montpelier's most complicated and least understood policy sectors — have taken on an alarmed tenor as lawmakers and Gov. Phil Scott's administration fear the latest changes to the system might be driving up education spending in unexpected ways.

Now, lawmakers must grapple with their most recent re-jiggering of education tax law during a uniquely challenging budget season.

Last year, the Legislature passed Act 127. Put simply, the law was meant to direct education money toward students who need it by providing schools with more money to educate students who are more expensive to teach. Ideally, that change in "pupil weighting" would create a more equitable funding structure.

As a result, wealthier, more urban districts with fewer English language learners saw their pupil weights decrease, which would require those districts to increase taxes to pass the same budget as the year before.

To soften that change, Act 127 capped increases to the homestead property tax rate at 5% for the next five years. (The cap does not consider the effects of the common level of appraisal, or CLA, which adjusts taxes based on current property value.) Through the new law, however, districts can increase per pupil spending up to 10% this year without triggering any further state-level review, regardless of Act 127's

Act 127 → 9

Superintendent Ryan Heraty called the law "one of the most detrimental and dangerous pieces of legislation in recent history."

Poultney to study municipal merger

The Dept. of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) recently awarded \$10,377 to the town of Poultney in state municipal planning grant funds for a municipal merger feasibility study, the town announced in a news release Jan. 26.

Poultney currently has two municipalities that govern the community: the town of Poultney and the village of Poultney. As the community continues its recovery from the loss of Green Mountain College in 2019, the desire to investigate municipal merger has increased. With the grant award, the town is acting on a directive from voters to investigate the feasibility of municipal merger.

The town's Select Board and Village Trustees will soon form a local steering committee to undertake the project with the assistance of a qualified consultant. The work plan asks the consultant to guide the steering committee through existing conditions analysis, to support public engagement through committee meetings and public presentations, and to create a merger feasibility report that will inform the community's next steps.

Merger study → 14



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William Lucci joins the CEDRR team as program director of The Hub CoWorks

Chamber & Economic Development of the Rutland Region (CEDRR) announce the appointment of William "Bill" Lucci as program director of The Hub CoWorks on Thursday, Jan. 25.

Most recently, Lucci was the assistant director for adult technical education at Stafford Technical Center, a position he held since 2007. While at Stafford, Lucci developed over 150 adult and continuing education courses, created successful partnerships with ed2go and Cengage Learning to offer 350 online courses and 64 certificate programs to Rutland County adult students. Lucci oversaw recruitment of highly skilled instructors for the evening division of Vermont's second-largest career and technical center. He established viable training programs for incumbent, unemployed, and underemployed workers in healthcare, manufacturing, construction, and truck driver training, among many other offerings.



Submitted
William "Bill" Lucci

In his new role at The Hub CoWorks, Lucci will develop and deliver high interest programming, classes, events, and social activities within The Hub CoWorks, Rutland's newest co-working space in downtown Rutland. The primary focus will be supporting tech economy startup businesses and current businesses in the region. He will specifically focus

on the development of partnerships with local and nationally recognized vendors, provide strategic direction for programming, support recruitment of mentors and investors, and serve as a liaison to the business community.

"We are excited to welcome Bill to the CEDRR team," said Lyle Jepson, executive director of CEDRR. "Bill's years of experience at the local technical center, as well as experience with curriculum research and development that supports business and industry, will enhance our work at CEDRR and for The Hub CoWorks' Startup Rutland Venture Studio and partnership with the gener8tor Accelerator."

Lucci lives in Poultney with his wife Kim who is an elementary school teacher in Castleton, and a tortie rescue cat named Coray. He has two grown sons, Alex and Sam, and a daughter Gabrielle who is a freshman at the University of Central Florida.

Maple trees at risk: Check for signs of ALB

By Ginger Nickerson

Editor's note: Ginger Nickerson is the University of Vermont extension forest pest education coordinator.

When working in their sugarbush this winter, maple producers are encouraged to be on the lookout for signs of the Asian longhorned beetle (ALB). This wood-boring insect, native to southeast Asia, will kill many hardwood trees. However, its preferred host is the beloved maple.

This highly destructive pest has not yet been confirmed in Vermont. However, there is an active infestation in Worcester County, Massachusetts.

The beetle threatens all species of maples, not just sugar maples. It is typically spread through nursery stock, infested wood products or by moving infested firewood.

While the summer and early fall are the best times to



By Joe Boggs, Ohio State University
The adult Asian longhorned beetle is 0.75 to 1.5 inches long with a shiny black body with white spots and antennae one to two times its body length.

spot the adult beetles, winter is an excellent time to examine trees for signs of ALB damage. Take photos of any signs and report suspicious trees to: vtinvasives.org.

Signs include multiple round, shallow indentations with rough edges in the bark. These are dime-sized spots that the beetles chew to lay their eggs.

The spots may ooze sap in the summer and fall when they are fresh.

Perfectly round, pencil- to dime-sized holes are another indication. These are left when the adults emerge in the summer. The exit hole will be straight and at least 1 inch deep.

Stick a pencil in the hole to determine if it is deeper than a tap hole. There may be bits of sawdust-like material around these holes, in branch crooks or at the base of the tree.

Adult beetles are 0.75 to 1.5 inches long with antennae

ALB → 7

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TOWN OF KILLINGTON VERMONT

TOWN OF KILLINGTON SELECTBOARD PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE TOWN OF KILLINGTON ZONING BYLAWS and KILLINGTON ZONING MAP

The Killington Selectboard will hold a public hearing on amendments to the Town of Killington Zoning Bylaws and the Town of Killington Zoning Map on Monday, February 12th, 2024, at 6:30 p.m. at the Public Safety Building, 800 Killington Road, Killington, Vermont. The hearing will also be held remotely via zoom. The link to join remotely will be posted on the Town of Killington calendar on its website: KillingtonTown.com/calendar.

The principal purpose of the proposed zoning bylaw amendments is to provide standards for permitting and regulating cannabis establishments within the Town of Killington. These amendments will affect the Killington Basin Commercial District and the Valley District of Killington. The Town of Killington Zoning Map has been amended to provide 2 Commercial Districts – one of which is labeled the Killington Basin Commercial District and one of which is labeled the Route 4 Commercial District.

The section headings affected by the proposed zoning bylaw amendments are:

- SECTION 120 – DEFINITIONS and SECTION 302 – CONDITIONAL USE - CANNABIS ESTABLISHMENTS.

The full text of the proposed Town of Killington Zoning Bylaw Amendments may be found at the Town Clerk's office, 2706 River Road, Killington and on the Planning Commission page of the Town's website at: KillingtonTown.com.

Amendments approved by the Planning Commission on January 10th, 2024 at a duly warned public hearing.

.....

Public Hearing warned by the Selectboard on this 22nd day of January 2024

Michael Ramsey,
Town Manager, Town of Killington, Vermont



Courtesy Windsor County Sheriff's Office

Windsor County Sheriff's Office K9 Kye to get donation of body armor

Windsor County Sheriff's Office K9 Kye will receive a bullet and stab protective vest thanks to a charitable donation from non-profit organization Vested Interest in K9s, Inc. K9 Kye's vest will be embroidered with the slogan, "Honoring those who served and sacrificed." Delivery is expected within 8-10 weeks.

"We are very thankful and appreciative for this wonderful and potentially life saving gift from Vested Interest K9s," said Windsor County Sheriff Ryan Palmer.

Vested Interest in K9s, Inc., established in 2009, is a 501(c)(3) charity whose mission is to provide bullet and stab protective vests and other assistance to dogs of law enforcement and related agencies throughout the United States. This potentially lifesaving

body armor for four-legged K9 officers is U.S. made, custom fitted, and NIJ certified. Since its inception, Vested Interest in K9s, Inc. has provided over 5,435 vests to K9s in all 50 states at a value of \$6.9 million, made possible by both private and corporate donations.

The program is open to U.S. dogs that are at least 20 months old and actively employed and certified with law enforcement or related agencies. K9s with expired vests are also eligible to participate. There are an estimated 30,000 law enforcement K9s throughout the U.S.

Each vest has a value of \$1,800, weighs an average of 4-5 pounds, and comes with a five-year warranty. For more information, visit: vik9s.org

Randolph man accused of arson

On Saturday, Jan. 27 at approximately 11:15 p.m. troopers from the state police Royalton Barracks received a call advising of a male trying to make entry into a dwelling at 10 Dudley St. in Randolph, carrying a flammable device.

Further investigation revealed that Clair Sherman, 40, was seen lighting a fire at the residence. Sherman was later located at his residence nearby in Randolph and taken into custody. He was transported to the Royalton Barracks for processing. He was lodged and held without bail at Southern State Correctional Facility and was scheduled to appear in Orange County Criminal Court Monday,



Courtesy VSP

Clair Sherman

Jan. 29 at 12:30 p.m. to answer to charges of first degree arson.

There were no immediate details on what prompted the arson or who the property belonged to. Police say the case remains under investigation.

Anyone with information about this fire is asked to contact the police at 802-234-9933.

People with information may also contact the Vermont arson tip award

Program at 800-32-ARSON. The arson tip award program, through funding from insurance companies, offers a reward of up to \$5,000 for information that leads to an arrest in this case.

Killington Resort supports local, national charities with a portion of annual profits through the Play Forever Initiative

Killington Resort has granted over \$300,000 in cash and in-kind charitable donations through its Play Forever commitment in 2023 to support environmental and community nonprofit organizations, according to a news release Jan. 28.

“At Killington and Pico Resorts, we are committed to ensuring that future generations have the same opportunities for an adventurous life that we enjoy today,” said Killington Director of Brand Marketing, Events & Special Projects Amy Laramie. “There are so many great organizations, both in the Killington area and nationally that deserve support, and having the opportunity to donate to them is an important part of being members of this community.”

In 2023, Killington and Pico Resorts introduced Play Forever Fridays, where \$1 of all tickets sales on Fridays at both resorts was donated to a selected cause. Each month’s beneficiary was chosen to be in line with events happening that month.

Charities supported included:

- January: The Snow Angel Foundation and its efforts

with the #RideAnotherDay campaign in alignment with NSAA’s National Safety Month

- February: The Vermont Professionals of Color Network in honor of Black History Month
- March: She Jumps aligning with International Women’s Day
- April: Vermont Farmer’s Food Center to fund its Rutland County Eats programs
- May: The Rutland Mental Health Community Care Network for Mental Health Awareness Month
- June: Rutland County Pride for Pride Month
- July: Killington Mountain Bike Club to help kick off the summer and rebuild trails
- August: The VMBA Major Storm Recovery Fund and the VT Flood Response and Recovery fund after torrential rains battered the state
- October: B4BC to support Breast Cancer research and awareness. Killington will also host a B4BC event on Satur-

day, March 30, 2024

- November: Play for Your Freedom to honor Veterans Day.
- December: The WSYB Christmas Fund benefitting local families in need.

A number of other individual organizations also received grants throughout the year. At the 2023 Killington Brewfest, \$1 for every can recycled at the event was donated to the VT Flood Response and Recovery fund, with the \$6,000+ total matched by Killington beer partner Anheuser-Busch. And as part of the Stifel Killington Cup, the resort again worked closely with the Killington World Cup Foundation to donate 100% of VIP ticket sales and a portion of all general admission and grandstand tickets to the foundation, which supports winter sports programming and infrastructure around the Northeast, and now has over \$300,000 available for the 2023/24 grant cycle. Killington Resort was also a Gold Sponsor of local community organizations including \$20,000 in contributions

Play Forever → 16

Chaffee mansion to receive \$20K historic grant

Governor Phil Scott, the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation (VDHP) and the Vermont Advisory Council on Historic Preservation recently announced grants totaling \$319,090 to 19 municipalities and non-profit organizations in six counties to facilitate the restoration and rehabilitation of Vermont landmarks and important historic buildings and structures. These grants will help to leverage more than \$1.5 million in additional efforts.

“This successful program continues to support local

projects and investments in communities across the state,” said Governor Scott. “This work employs skilled craftspeople, while also helping to preserve landmarks and monuments that are so important to the character of our state.”

“The projects funded in 2024 involve some of Vermont’s most iconic historic buildings and structures,” stated State Historic Preservation Officer Laura V. Trieschmann. “These places matter because they reflect our history and serve as the centerpieces of our communities. Preserving

historic sites starts at the local level and we applaud this year’s grant recipients for their commitment.”

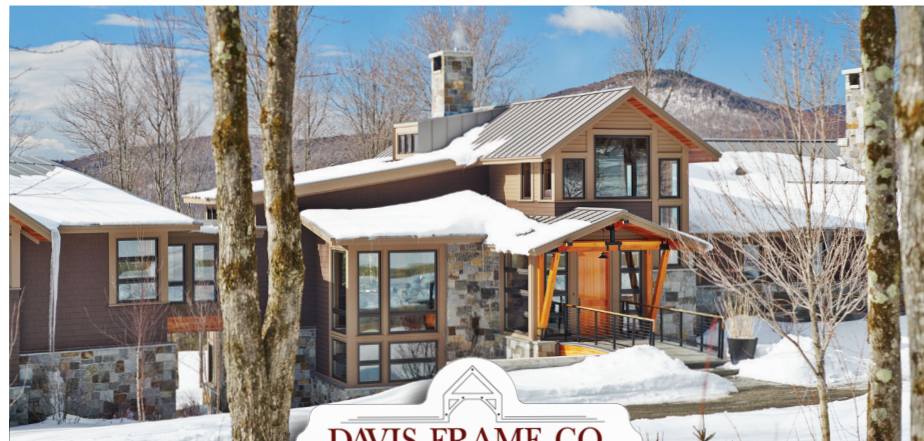
Grants awarded this year will support work on historic Vermont landmarks, including the chimney reconstruction at the Chaffee Center in Rutland, Rockingham Meetinghouse, Middlebury Congregational Church, the First Unitarian Universalist Church in Burlington, replacement of the slate roof at the Braintree Hill Meeting House, masonry repairs on the West Townsend Stone Arch Bridge, structural work on the tower of the Old First Church in Bennington, and window restoration at the Tenney Memorial Library in Newbury.

Rutland’s Chaffee Mansion received \$20,000 that will be used to complete major repairs to the building’s three large and ornate brick chimneys. George Thrall Chaffee built the Queen Anne-style mansion in 1895. After his death, the building was boarded up for over 30 years until the Rutland Area Art Association asked to use the building as part of 1961 Bicentennial celebrations. This success

Chaffee → 16



Courtesy Chaffee Center for the Arts
George Thrall Chaffee built the now historic mansion in 1895.



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Andrew Geida

For Killington Selectman



IT'S TIME FOR A CHANGE

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- Lower Taxes

Andrew Geida is an immigrant who moved to Killington from Belarus in 2004. This year, his family is celebrating 20 years in this community. A local business owner and property owner, he cares about the future of Killington and the direction it's going in. Andrew is running on a platform that is demanding change and doing it with integrity, honesty and professionalism.



Andrew Geida is pictured alongside his wife Maria and son Robert, a Kindergarten student at Killington Elementary.

Property values cause tax hike in Hartland

By Curt Peterson

The homestead education tax rate in Hartland will rise 23.95% this year – from \$1.816 per \$100 in assessed value, to \$2.251.

For a \$250,000 home, this change will add about \$1,087 to the FY2025 tax bill.

“Ouch!” cries are heard throughout the town’s listserv and around the coffee bar at Three Corners Market. And everyone’s focusing on the proposed Hartland Elementary School budget, which has increased 15.51%, to \$11,541,199.

The previous budget, FY2024, was \$9,991,128.

“Time to say ‘No!’” and “Cut the fat out of the school budget!” taxpayers shout, either aloud or on their laptops. As in most towns, the taxpayers get interested in the school budget when the tax rate is announced, but at budget meetings, where the expenses are analyzed and the budget is set, there are no taxpayers present to hear deliberations or offer input.

“And, there’s an open seat on the board, for which no one is running,” added Nicki Buck, school board chair.

The Mountain Times decided to go over the budget in detail with the long-time school board chair.

“We saw this coming and did the best we could to minimize the pain,” Buck said. “Much of the increase is beyond our control.”

There’s been a lot of discussion around health insurance premium increases, which are negotiated by the state, over 16% in the proposed budget. Those are outside of the board or voter control.

Buck said the biggest cause for the ed tax increase is the common level of appraisal (CLA) in Hartland. The CLA indicates the difference between the total value of Hartland’s Grand List of property assessments, and the calculated market value. Over the past three years, the town’s CLA percentage went from 100.6% of market value in FY2022 to 0.69% in FY2025.

Said another way, there has been a tremendous increase in property value in Hartland, such that the values on the town’s Grand List represent only 69% of true market value. The CLA is a mechanism to ensure everyone pays their fair share of taxes

based on the current value of property.

“If it wasn’t for our CLA, we’d be in good shape,” Bucks said. “Of the 42 cent increase in the tax rate, the school budget represents just 7 cents. The CLA adjustment makes up the other 35 cents.”

In the budget itself, two teaching positions, previously funded by Covid relief funds, are now included in the budget. “Title 1” funds for the coach position are also no longer available.

Smaller items in the budget include a fund for replacing 25-year-old playground equipment, which has deteriorated to the point some are taped-off so no one can get hurt using it.

“We are doing fundraising and grant writing to help fund the new equipment,” Buck said.

She hopes taxpayers realize the school board is very sensitive to their pain in the taxation environment, and that the school budget is not full of “fat” that might drive higher taxes.

“If we cut \$800,000 from our proposed budget,” she said, “it would reduce the tax rate only 1 cent — from 42 cents to 41 cents.”

← **ALB:**
from page 3

that are one to two times their body length. These beetles are shiny black with white spots and antennae with bluish-black and white stripes. They resemble our native whitespotted sawyer beetle. However, the latter has a white spot between its wing covers.

In addition to attacking all maple species, ALB also will harm healthy ash, poplar, birch, willow and elm. When ALB is found, all hardwood trees within a certain radius must be removed and destroyed by chipping or burning to stop the pest from spreading.

Checking hardwoods, especially maples, is key to early detection. For more info, visit: go.uvm.edu/beetle.



Submitted

Eleven town fire departments and 50 firefighters helped put out the blaze Wednesday, Jan. 24.



By Victoria Gaither

Tabitha Neil (right) and her son Leland Hall stand in the hollowed out house after the fire.

← **Fire:**
from page 1

they arrived, fire crews remained there until about 12:30 p.m. Wednesday— over 10 hours later — making sure there were no “hidden fire or smolderings in order to prevent a re-ignite.”

It took 11 fire departments, with 50 firefighters, and an estimated 40,000 gallons of water to put the fire out, which “although sounds like a lot, it’s actually a reasonable amount of water” for this type of fire, he said.

Seven tanker trucks carried the water to the scene from the 11 departments that responded.

Besides Killington, departments from Pittsfield, Bridgewater, Rutland Town, Rutland City, West Rutland, Clarendon, Pittsford, Proctor, Plymouth and Woodstock worked to put out the fire, said Ginther. Regional Ambulance was there, as were Kil-

lington Police, and Green Mountain Power cut the electricity.

“We had a good turnout for members and a great turnout from mutual aid,” he said.

This was Ginther’s first house fire as chief of the Killington Fire Dept. “The last structure fire in town was 13 months ago,” he said.

“Being new to town, I have to say, I’m extremely impressed with the community support,” he added. “The amount of response from supplies to well-wishes is very impressive.”

Police Chief Whit Montgomery helped to coordinate a supply drive with volunteer community member Patrick Cushing and they opened the community room in the public safety building to organize the

supplies.

“People have been very generous, people really stepped up,” said Montgomery.

“Patrick volunteered and has been there all day today organizing supplies and will probably be there this weekend, too,” Ginther said in an interview Thursday, Jan. 25. “Money, however, is going to be a need for a while,” he added.

To that end, Kate Austin-Avon and Patrick Cushing started a Go Fund Me appeal for the family. As of Tuesday, Jan. 30, \$30,275 had been raised.

“My friend and elementary school classmate Tabitha Neil just lost everything in a house fire last night,” Austin-Avon wrote on the fundraising page Wednesday, Jan. 24. “There is no insurance on the property and rebuilding takes funding. The GoFundMe

money should hit Tabby’s bank account in up to five business days so anything that can be brought to the fire house today for immediate help is appreciated,” she wrote.

The Neil family has also met with the American Red Cross for support. “In preparation for winter, it’s really important for people to make sure their heating sources have been serviced, their chimney cleaned, they properly store fuel and keep anything that can combust away from heat sources,” Chief Ginther said. “Also make sure smoke detectors are multiple and in working condition and everyone knows the plan to escape.”

For more information, updates or to donate to the Neil family, visit: GoFundMe.com/f/help-the-neil-family-recover-from-their-house-fire.

Gov. Scott says keep the lid on spending

By Sarah Mearhoff and Shaun Robinson, VTDigger

In his budget address delivered to the Legislature on Tuesday, Jan. 23, Republican Gov. Phil Scott once again implored lawmakers to refrain from increasing state taxes and fees on Vermonters, and keep state spending within current revenues.

And similar to his State of the State address earlier this month, Scott again threw up his hands, conceding that Democrats hold theoretically veto-proof majorities in both the House and Senate, “which means you don’t have to listen, or even consider, my priorities or objections.”

“But I bet many of you do hear, and maybe even share, some of my concerns. More importantly, I’m pretty sure the majority of our constituents certainly do,” Scott continued in the opening of his speech. “Let’s put them first by doing the hard work to fix — not just fund — the problems they face, put party labels aside, and listen to each other.”

Hard feelings over last year’s budget showdown — which ultimately resulted in Scott’s veto and the Legislature’s definitive override — loomed over not only the governor’s speech, but also Democratic legislative leaders’ reactions to it.

Speaking to reporters afterward, House Speaker Jill Krowinski, D-Burlington, criticized the governor for his tone and what she characterized as a lack of concrete policy solutions. “I think his speech was long on fear and short on hope,” Krowinski said. “We in the Legislature are ready to get to work... and we’ll do our work because we believe that this budget is a reflection of our

values. It’s not a political strategy.”

Last year, Scott made his objections to lawmakers’ fiscal year 2024 budget known to no avail, vetoing the \$8.5 billion spending plan — which marked a 13% increase in state spending from the previous year, a percentage that Scott deemed unsustainable. Lawmakers responded by overwhelmingly voting to override

The governor ultimately proposed an \$8.6 billion budget, divvied up over the state’s three major pots of money:

\$2.4 billion for education,
\$2.3 billion in the general fund and
\$353 million for the state’s
transportation fund.

Scott’s veto and dubbing it, in the words of Senate President Pro Tempore Phil Baruth, D/P-Chittenden Central, at the time, “the most flawed and harmful [veto] of any in recent memory.”

In his speech Tuesday, Scott once again harked back to that 13% increase in spending, drawing the ire of Sen. Jane Kitchel, D-Caledonia, who chairs the Senate’s influential Appropriations Committee. Yes, she told reporters after Scott’s speech, last year’s overall budget increased by 13% — but that was largely attributable to one-time funding, not ongoing spending. She pushed back against the implication that lawmakers were spending irresponsibly.

“I’m a Vermonter from way back, and I
Budget address → 11

After bracing for hard times, Vermont economists predict healthy state revenues

By Sarah Mearhoff/VTDigger

Despite last year’s hand-wringing over an anticipated downturn of Vermont’s economy, one year later, state economists on Thursday were notably optimistic about where the state’s finances stand.

“We have no recession in the forecast,” economic adviser Jeff Carr told a panel of high-ranking lawmakers Thursday, Jan. 18.

“Thank you for saying that so bluntly,” House Ways and Means Chair Emilie Kornheiser, D-Brattleboro, replied.

In the initial weeks of every legislative session, Carr and legislative economist Tom Kavet present their updated state revenue forecast to the state’s Emergency Board, a panel comprised of the Legislature’s key money committee chairs, as well as the governor. The highly anticipated presentation largely kicks off the budget-writing process for state lawmakers each year.

Until Thursday, lawmakers had been bracing for sour news. In recent years, “epic, unprecedented, off-the-charts” influxes of federal cash — in the words

of Carr last year — bolstered state revenues. Lawmakers performing well, according to the report, with both



By Glenn Russell/VTDigger

Economist Thomas Kavet speaks during a meeting of the Emergency Board at the Statehouse in Montpelier on Thursday, Jan. 18. Looking on is fellow economist Jeffrey Carr, right.

knew those reserves were due to dry up, and they fretted that the state’s come-down would be harsh.

But according to Carr and Kavet’s report, Vermont’s economy over the past year has “exhibited surprising economic resilience.” Unemployment rates remain low, inflation persists but has slowed, and the stock market is performing well, the economists wrote.

Two of the state’s three major pots of revenue are

the General Fund and Education Fund’s revenues exceeding expectations. Bolstering the General Fund were strong personal income tax receipts, they said, and for the Education Fund, “robust” consumer spending and higher-than-expected cannabis sales have lined the coffers.

The exception in all of this optimism was the state’s Transportation Fund, which performed roughly

Economic forecast → 11



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← Act 127: from page 1

effect on their pupil weights.

If a district's per-pupil spending increases by 10% or more, a district must submit its budget to the state for a tax rate review led by the Agency of Education. The review would decide whether the increase in spending is "beyond the school district's control or for other good cause."

If the budget is deemed to contain "excessive increases in per pupil education spending that are within the school district's control and are not supported by good cause," the district's property taxes would not be capped.

With the cap in mind, lawmakers and the Scott administration think school districts may be packing extra spending into their budgets during a rare time when those increases won't necessarily be directly felt by all of their taxpayers. The concern, then, is that districts may increase spending in the next five years to utilize the cap. One idea thrown around is that because Vermont's schools have hundreds of millions of dollars in deferred maintenance, towns might include extra money toward construction.

Chairs' letter to the general assembly

In the open letter to the General Assembly House Ways and Means Committee Chair Rep. Emilie Kornheiser, D-Brattleboro, and Senate Finance Committee Chair Ann Cummings, D-Washington, said they are "increasingly and seriously concerned about the use of the 5% threshold set forth in Act 127."

The letter stated: "We are increasingly and seriously concerned about the use of the 5% threshold set forth in Act 127. The threshold was designed to help the few districts who would experience the most extreme reduction in weighted pupils, so they could build a gradual glide path through a few years of difficult budget seasons. The threshold was not designed to stack deferred spending and delayed maintenance costs into a few short years. It was not designed to fix all of our state education challenges or the overall pressures of operating in an inflationary environment. It was not intended as free money — in fact nothing in the education fund is free.

"The education fund is a promise among neighbors that we will take care of each other's needs and costs. If districts act solely in their own rational self-interest, those costs will be picked up by property taxes in neighboring towns. Most of us, regardless of the town we live in, can't afford what it seems is happening in the education fund this year, and something will have to give.

"Act 127 was intended to create greater equity between districts — to narrow the range between the haves and have-nots. At this point, given what we hear about how the 5% threshold is being used, it seems to be widening that gulf rather than narrowing it. We have a great respect for the work of school boards, school staff, and school administrators and understand the significant cost pressures you're facing. But Act 127 was not intended to address those cost pressures in a single year. It's intended to achieve greater equity in the system overall.

"While we understand that the timing is incredibly challenging, the Legislature will be looking for policy levers to address unintended consequences this year, and into the future. We have a responsibility to act in the interest of all taxpayers across Vermont. We intend to have all districts that utilize the 5% threshold present their budgets to a reimagined tax rate review committee, and hope that more extreme measures are not needed this year.

"You each have a part to play in this work. In the interest of moving beyond rumor and towards well-informed policy, we anticipate a more current and robust data collection

of your drafted budgets in the coming days with hopes for cooperation by your Associations (VBSA, VSA, and VAS-BO)...We appreciate the partnership of your associations in finding our way through the acute challenges today and the challenges we will face tomorrow. Our kids and communities are worth it," the letter concluded.

Testimony

On Thursday, Jan. 25 lawmakers took rapid-fire five minute testimony from about two dozen school and state education officials in a joint hearing with the House Committee on Education, the Senate Committee on Education, and the Senate Committee on Finance.

Ryan Heraty, superintendent of Lamoille South Supervisory Union, did not hide his disdain for the latest changes resulting from Act 127, which sought to change the education spending formula to direct more resources to schools with higher-need students, calling the law "one of the most detrimental and dangerous pieces of legislation in recent history."

Passing school budgets

Even in districts that stood to gain the most from Act 127's new pupil weights, the pressures on school budgets — health care costs, salaries, the end of federal dollars — have negated any benefit from the new weights, leaders said.

"We approached this budgeting season with some ... trepidation but also hope," Elaine Collins, superintendent of North Country Supervisory Union in the Northeast Kingdom, told lawmakers. "If any district in Vermont should benefit from weights, it's a poor rural district like North Country."

At first, the district expected to be able to lower tax rates for its communities, she said, by passing a budget that didn't add new programming. But once the common level of appraisal adjustment was made for each town, any tax savings disappeared.

"It is a miracle if we're going to pass school budgets this year," Collins said. "It's a mess. And it's a mess, I think, not of the schools' making."

Education — especially with the increasing responsibilities placed on schools — is expensive, and schools are increasingly forced to address the severe behavioral needs of students, according to educators.

Before serving as superintendent, Collins worked as principal of Newport City Elementary School. In her first year, she said the school registered 890 uses of restraints, escorts and seclusions — when a school staff member physically directs, immobilizes or isolates a student.

"Nobody was learning," Collins said.

Six years later, Collins said, that number was below 50.

"The cost of remediating that system was adding lots of extra supports, doing lots of professional development and tweaking systems and refining systems. And it was expensive," she said. "It's not sustainable for us to do this in education unless we find other revenue sources or other ways of funding our schools. Our local taxpayers can't afford it."

In Winooski, a district with the most to gain from Act 127 because of its economically disadvantaged and English language learning students, its leaders said the law may be creating further inequity — the opposite of lawmakers' stated goal.

The 5% cap in particular "turns Act 127 on its head," said Robert Millar, Winooski School District board chair.

Winooski, with the highest proportion of English language learners in the state, saw an increase in pupil weights. With the increased tax capacity, its school district didn't expect to hit the 5% cap, according to Millar.

"We analyzed several districts' public statements and charts from public board meetings and came to the concerning conclusion that many are increasing [their] budgets beyond the normal expected inflation increases in order to take advantage of Act 127's 5% tax rate cap," Millar said. The result, he suggested, would be increased taxes on Winooski residents, despite lower per pupil spending.

Norwich's school district stood to take the hardest hit from Act 127's readjustment of pupil weights. Given the leeway of the law's 5% cap, the district decided to include funds to improve ailing infrastructure in its budget — new boilers, an upgraded heating system. But once the district received lawmakers' letter concerned about the use of the cap, board members nixed most of the additional funds for capital projects, Garrett Palm, the Norwich school board chair, said.

Because Norwich only makes up about a third of a cross-border district with Hanover, New Hampshire, it has to make larger budget cuts to reap the same tax effects, its leaders explained.

"I consider myself an optimist," Palm said, but with Act 127 and education cost pressure, he's concerned Norwich might not have a school in the next decade. "I'm having a hard time staying positive."

How lawmakers could respond to feedback from the field remains to be seen. So too does the exact extent of tax hikes, which rely on warned school budget data not yet collected by the Vermont Agency of Education. Next week, the agency expects updated figures, which will add more clarity to the currently chaotic outlook.

"The data gathering process is like the most essential piece of us figuring out any of this," Kornheiser said.

'Interesting incentives'

Craig Bolio, the state's tax commissioner, said that Act 127's 5% cap created "interesting incentives" for school districts, but he stressed that increased education spending is not the same as unnecessary education spending.

"I don't want to insinuate that every district in Vermont is out there gaming the system," he said.

But Bolio highlighted two primary incentives of concern. The first, he said, is that if a district does not hit the 5% cap, it loses the ability to use the cap in the next four budget cycles.

For some, that creates an "incentive to be over that cap now and stay over it," he said.

The second involves the 10% review process. Bolio suggested that a school district planning to increase per pupil spending by 6% might push that to just under the 10% review threshold, knowing that homestead property tax increases would remain capped at 5% regardless.

Where could the money come from?

The 5% cap begs the question: If homestead tax payers have a cap on their taxes, who makes up the rest of the education spending?

Vermont's Education Fund is self-balancing. The amount of money needed to fund school budgets will always be raised.

How money gets into the fund, though, is a policy choice. Lawmakers have not yet signaled how they could pull the levers at their disposal to fund it. But they have a few options.

One would be adding to non-property tax revenue. Currently, those streams include sales and use tax, a portion of the meals and rooms tax and lottery money, among other sources. Lawmakers could choose to create new revenue sources, or increase the sources that already exist.

Another option is the non-homestead property tax rate, a uniform rate set annually by the Legislature. (Non-homestead properties, put simply, include everything except primary residences — things like commercial properties, rental units, second homes and camps.)

Because Act 127's 5% cap applies only to homestead tax payers, the Legislature has more flexibility to raise revenue this year through the non-homestead property tax.

2024 Rebates for Your Home



If you're planning on **improving the efficiency of your home or apartment** this year, take a look at Efficiency Vermont's residential offers, including:



Air Sealing and Insulation

- 75% off weatherization project costs, up to \$9,500 (completed by an Efficiency Excellence Network contractor)
- DIY weatherization: \$100 back on select do-it-yourself projects



Heating, Cooling, and Water Heating

- Air-source heat pumps: discounts starting at \$350 + income bonus
- Ground source heat pump: up to \$2,100/ton + \$500 income bonus
- Smart thermostats: \$100 rebate for select ENERGY STAR models
- Water heaters: \$300-\$600 for select heat pump water heaters + \$200 income bonus
- Window air conditioners: \$100 rebate for select ENERGY STAR models
- Wood pellet furnaces & boilers: \$6,000 rebate
- Wood and pellet stoves: \$400 discount at select retailers



Electric Vehicles

- Up to \$6,500 in local incentives and up to a \$7,500 federal tax credit



ENERGY STAR® Appliances

- \$25-\$40 for dehumidifiers
- \$200-\$400 rebate on heat pump clothes dryers
- \$400 for heat pump dryer/washer combination units



Lighting

- \$100 rebate for qualifying LED fixtures for indoor growing.



Income-based Assistance

- Free lighting, appliances, energy consultations, and more — visit [efficiencyvermont.com/free-products](https://www.efficiencyvermont.com/free-products) to see if you are eligible.

Additional rebates may also be available from your electric or gas utility.



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All rebates are subject to availability and eligibility.
Visit www.efficiencyvermont.com/rebates for the most up-to-date information.

**Efficiency
Vermont**

Budget address:
from page 8

view myself as very much a guardian of the budget and the decisions and the integrity of the budget, and the sustainability,” she told reporters. “Those are the kinds of comments that I think, if I’m the general public, could really create a source of concern.”

Kicking off negotiations for this coming year’s budget, Scott on Tuesday implored lawmakers to keep a lid on new spending — though he did not call for substantial cuts to state government operations. The governor ultimately proposed an \$8.6 billion budget, divvied up over the state’s three major pots of money: \$2.4 billion for education, \$2.3 billion in the general fund and \$353 million for the state’s transportation fund, which did not enjoy the same sunny revenue projections from state economists as the other two funds last week (see related story, page 8). The remaining approximately \$3 billion of the proposed spending is backed by federal funds, for the state’s Medicaid program and other social services.

Scott proposed to keep increases to general fund spending under 3.6% — a number that falls below the nation’s current rate of inflation. That number, the governor insisted, is “not arbitrary. I didn’t just pick it out of a hat.”

“It’s what we can do within available revenue, without new or higher taxes and fees,” Scott said in his speech. “I’m sure it’s no surprise to you, given the growing burden they already face, I don’t support asking Vermonters to pay more.”

Adam Greshin, Vermont’s commissioner of finance and management, told reporters shortly before the budget address that the budget proposal represents “slimmed-down growth” compared to the past several years, which were bolstered by historic influxes of federal cash — “But it is growth.”

Asked after the speech what she made of limiting General Fund increases to under 3.6%, House Appropriations Committee Chair Rep. Diane Lanpher, D-Vergennes, told reporters, “The devil’s in the details... What does it result in for services for Vermonters?” she pondered. “What are they going to do without because of that?”

Legislative leaders also took jabs at Scott for a speech that, in their view, offered much criticism of the Legislature’s spending and policies, but was short on solutions.

Most notably missing from the address, according to Senator pro tem Baruth, were solutions to what he called the “elephant in the room:” an anticipated double-digit percentage increase in property taxes first flagged in the administration’s Dec. 1 letter, attributable to statewide education spending. That figure has since been updated by the administration to a 17.3% increase.

“The truth is, that’s the No. 1 concern for all of us in the building right now. I know it’s one of the governor’s No. 1 concerns,” Baruth told reporters after Scott’s speech. “He always uses phrases like, ‘Take things head on,’ ‘Do the hard work.’ If you’re going to do the hard work, if you’re going to take it head on, you would talk about that tax increase and say, ‘I can do this [as governor] from my end.’”

Scott did note the projected tax increase in his speech, saying that it was something that “none of us should be OK with.” But he also questioned the Legislature’s willingness to work collaboratively with the administration on the issue.

“I’m not naive,” Scott said. “Without a willing partner, I’m sure any proposal I put on the table will be used to drive divisive attacks and headline clicks, and we won’t get anything done.”

Asked what solutions they would propose on Tuesday, both House and Senate leadership said they needed more time and committee hearings to come up with their strategies.

Ultimately, it’s legislators who write the final budget, or the so-called “big bill,” which is historically the last bill passed at the conclusion of the legislative session in May.

Economic forecast:
from page 8

6% below expectations. Largely to blame for the underperformance, Carr and Kavet said, was a major slow-down in vehicle purchases over the past year — and the tax dollars that those purchases generate. They theorized that the slowdown was attributable to sky-high sticker prices for both new and used vehicles, combined with expensive financing options and still-limited inventories, pushing would-be purchasers away from the dealerships.

Even with the state’s revenues performing relatively well, however, the

lawmakers and economists noted Vermonters may not necessarily hold a favorable

Bolstering the General Fund were strong personal income tax receipts, they said, and for the Education Fund, “robust” consumer spending and higher-than-expected cannabis sales have lined the coffers.

view of the economy. Even at a slowed pace, nationwide inflation remains persistent, and many everyday costs — namely housing, food and fuel — have increased between 25%

and 55% since before the pandemic, according to the economists’ presentation.

“That I think is what people feel also at a visceral level every day because those are the things you’re shopping for frequently and are necessities,” Kavet said.



By Glenn Russell/VTDigger
Gov. Phil Scott, right, shakes hands with Rep. Jim Harrison of Chittenden, as Scott prepares to deliver his budget address to a joint session of the Legislature at the State House on Jan. 23.

Having a little fun

When the online news outlet VTDigger featured a photo of me welcoming the governor entering the House Chamber for his annual budget address (seen above), I couldn’t help using it to my advantage in a “fun” way. With some technical help, we printed out a copy, which I autographed and presented it to the governor at his weekly coffee hour. I’m not sure what he made of it and expected it to disappear after I left. However, I learned from an unnamed source that the photo was still there 24 hours later prominently displayed next to his desk in his State House office. Who knows, maybe it will even be there when I return this week?



By Rep. Jim Harrison

Speaking of the budget address, as he did in his State of the State, the governor asked lawmakers to work with him to address the core challenges of affordability, public safety, and housing. He urged the Legislature to recognize the budget pressures in a year after record spending and with pandemic aid drying up.

Reminding the legislators about past vetoes they overrode, such as the annual budget last June, and he remarked that they don’t have to listen to his objections or consider his priorities, seemed to hit a nerve with leaders.

Speaker Krowinski said to reporters after

his speech, “To hear jabs throughout this speech at policies that we’ve worked on and had tripartisan support on isn’t helpful... And it’s not a good way to start off how we’re going to collaborate on the budget.”

While reiterating his call for not raising taxes, Scott went on to say, “Every penny we spend comes out of the pockets of the people who live, work and invest in Vermont.”

In his administration’s plan for the upcoming year, base spending is increased a modest 3.57%. This contrasts with the overall increase of 13%, (some of which were one-time expenditures), approved last year.

On the education front, the governor stressed the importance of literacy and career and technical education and mitigating the estimated statewide average 17.3% increase in property taxes. He cautioned against raising other taxes for education, likening it to just taking it out of another pocket.

On public safety he now says he has second thoughts on some bills he signed in the past to raise the age of criminal accountability and change the bail laws. And he wants stronger penalties for drug dealers.

Other issues of interest:

- The House approved the annual budget adjustment bill on Friday, Jan. 26, for the current year, increasing spending by \$30 million beyond what the governor recommended. Some of it was for extending the hotel program and providing municipal flood relief. In a press release Friday afternoon, House leaders praised the Harrison → 15

GUEST EDITORIAL

Why Act 127 does not provide 'equitable outcomes'

By Ryan Heraty

Editor's note: This commentary is by Ryan Heraty, superintendent of Lamoille South Supervisory Union.

In 2004, the town of Killington overwhelmingly voted to pursue secession to New Hampshire. It was a time of great turmoil as Vermonters navigated the impact of Act 60. Although extreme, it was a reflection of the anger and frustration felt by residents pushed to the breaking point. Within two years, Act 60 was revised and new revenues were identified to ease the unsustainable tax burden felt by families.

It appears that 20 years later, we may be at a similar political crossroads.

Vermonters will soon face unprecedented economic pressure, and it is clear that the root cause is Act 127, the latest version of Act 60 and one of the most detrimental and dangerous pieces of legislation in recent history.

This bill, signed in the spring of 2022, was intended to increase transparency and produce more "equitable" outcomes for students across the state. Although the intent is the right one, the reality is that this law decreases transparency and raises property taxes for Vermont residents to levels that will require many to make very difficult financial decisions.

As the superintendent of Lamoille South Supervisory Union, I hold a unique perspective regarding the impact of education finance policy. Our supervisory union is composed of three unique towns: Elmore, Morristown and Stowe. These three towns have been operating in a fiscally responsible way for many years, and we have always strived to maintain a spending increase below the state average. We present our academic data on a regular basis and provide our taxpayers with a good return on their investment.

What is our reward for this transparency and steadfast financial management? Based on current projections, Elmore residents can anticipate an average property tax increase of 29% for FY25. In Stowe, the average resident can plan for an increase of 24%, and in Morrisville, residents can anticipate an 18% increase to their annual bill. Let there be no mistake that these increases are completely driven by Act 127, which has resulted in unprecedented statewide spending and a lower property yield.

With a monumental upswing in state-negotiated health care costs and new state policy that removes even more local control, we have been put in a situation where property tax increases are untenable. This is not the Vermont way.

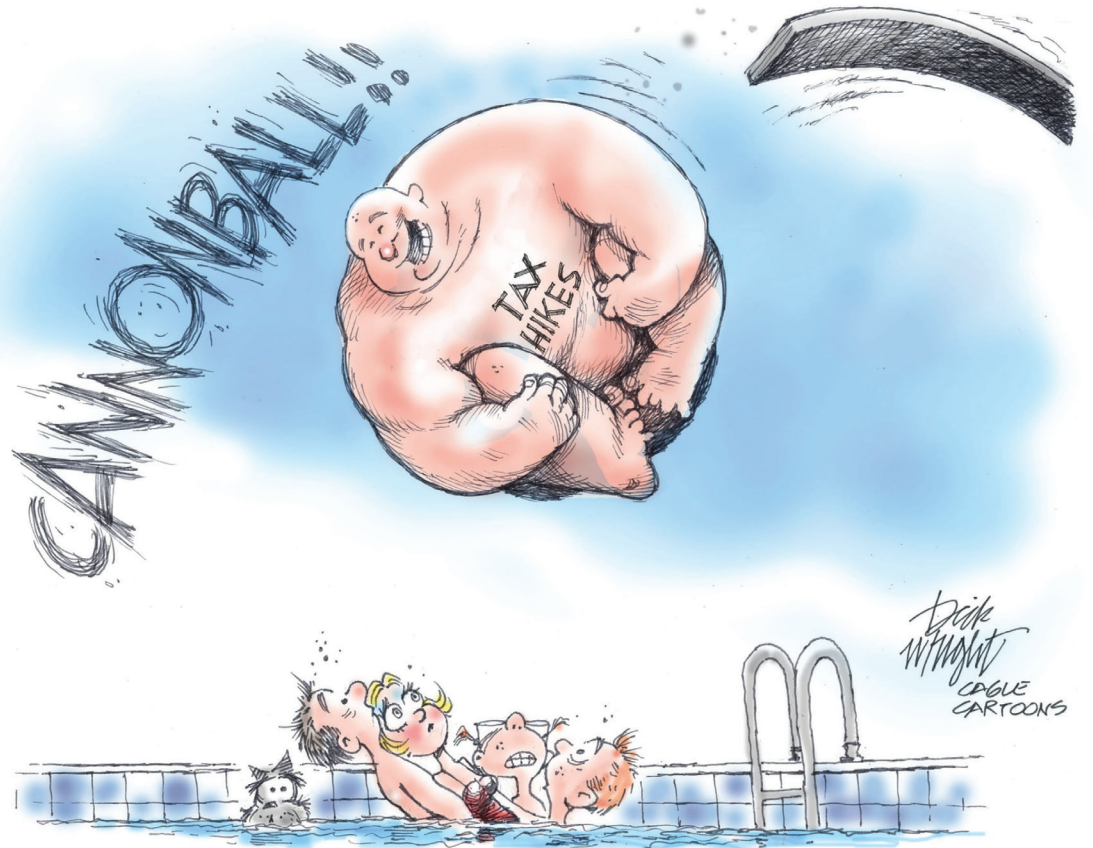
Although we could offer many perspectives on how we got here, what is more prudent is a path forward. After countless conversations with colleagues, school boards, and legislators, I present these three strategies for reversing course:

1. Developing policies that prioritize Vermonters

The most pressing challenge we face is our lack of state revenue, decreasing enrollments and rising costs. Short-term rentals and second homes owned by out-of-state residents need a separate tax rate. Why is the current

Fixed tax → 36

Pupil weights, common level of appraisal, property yields, etc. all work to distance voters from their actual spending increase.



Budget Tax Hikes by Dick Wright, PoliticalCartoons

LETTERS

Killing a town; the end of a community

Dear Editor,

"Spoiler Alert; It doesn't matter what Killington wants" was the title of the recent Jan. 24, 2024 Editorial by Polly Mikula in the Mountain Times. In the context of criticizing the Killington Select Board's motion "to add an article [Article 5] to the Town Meeting Day ballot asking voters if they want to study the option of leaving the MVSU district and either pursuing school choice or designating Rutland middle school/high school," it was stated, "who wouldn't be for lower taxes." That should read "who doesn't want their taxes doubled or even tripled," especially since Vermont per pupil spending is at or near the top in the country already and Woodstock is in the top 10 in Vermont. No one I have spoken to recently is comfortable with the crazy increases in the education taxes. There's an 18% increase coming from the state and then 16% for the proposed new school. Never mind that with reassessment looming, virtually every property in Killington will exceed the \$400,000 Homestead

Exemption threshold above which qualifying properties will be taxed at the full rate. Even if you can afford those kinds of increases, they are appalling.

The state put a moratorium on funding school construction in part due to declining enrollment. State enrollment data shows a nearly 18% decline in total K-12 enrollment from 2008-2021. This trend certainly does not support creating more capacity.

For all the talk about increasing pupil counts I don't see a whole lot of families with school age children moving to Killington given the sky high cost of real estate and the burgeoning taxes.

I'm all for education but a better solution needs to be found especially in light of the level of achievement by Woodstock students, Woodstock middle school/high school ranking No. 3 out of all Vermont high schools, according to the 2023-24 U.S. News and World Report rankings. Additionally, the report notes that the AP participation rate at Woodstock

Killing a town → 14

Seven years toward a new school

Dear Editor,

Editor's note: this letter was written Monday, Jan. 29, and originally posted on the Barnard listserv. It is published here with permissions.

I've been reluctant to post anything because of my role on the School Board, but after seeing a number of posts on our, and other area listservs, I've gotten quite concerned with both the "Us versus Them" language that I am reading and the amount of misinformation in many posts.

The school board consists of 18 members from all of our member towns. Some of us have students in school, some do not, some coach in the District, some own businesses, some own houses, some do not, but we are all members of this community.

Furthermore, the study of how to address our failing school began in the fall of 2016, before any of our sitting board members were on the board. Between then and now, numerous community members have

joined and left the Board, all volunteering their time to make this District the best it can be.

For seven years, members from different towns and different walks of life have weighed in, poked holes in the plan, suggested edits, called in specialists, and gotten second and third opinions, almost entirely at the expense of some


Our school ranked consistently in the top 5 (of 64) high schools in the state, even though our building condition is ranked 63 (of 64).

generous local donors who are the only reason we have all of the information we have today. Through every iteration of the Board, when members come and go in March, there have been concerns about the project. But every iteration of the board has ultimately agreed to move forward with the plan for a new school.

The plan, over the years, has become less square

New school → 15

CAPITOL QUOTES



The Super Bowl LVIII contenders are now set: NFC champion the San Francisco 49ers face the AFC champion and defending Super Bowl winners the Kansas City Chiefs. It'll be the Chiefs fourth Super Bowl appearance in five years. The game will be held Feb. 11, in Las Vegas, Nevada. The 49ers faced the Chiefs in the Super Bowl in 2020 season but lost 20-31. As of Tuesday, the 49ers were favored by 2.5 points.

“We were only down 17 when we came out for the third quarter, there were times when it could've looked worse... by the end of the 3rd it was a tied game — like starting over, but it was the 4th quarter... we just had to get it going... the momentum shifted after the turnover,”

said 49er coach **Kyle Shanahan** after Sunday's win over the Lions propelling them to the Super Bowl.

“Here's a team that went through some adversity and they stepped up and were able to present themselves like they did. We were able to learn from it and move on... we needed a little kick in the tail,”

said Chief's Coach **Andy Reid** after Sunday's win over the Ravens propelling them to the Super Bowl.

“I always say it, but when the lights get brighter, he plays better. That's the true mark of a champion, and that's what he is.”

Said Chief's quarterback **Patrick Mahomes** about teammate, tight end Travis Kelce, whose postgame kiss on the field with girlfriend Taylor Swift generated buzz on social media.

“The 49ers will wear their road white jerseys in the Super Bowl. Yes, they did lose in those last time, but the 49ers' most dominant Super Bowl victory — 55-10 over the Broncos — came in these white jerseys.”

Tweeted **David Lombardi** @LombardiHimself on X (formerly Twitter) Jan. 30.

COMMENTARY

Plain talk from Governor Scott

By Julia Purdy, North Clarendon

No doubt about it, Governor Scott has his finger on the pulse of everyday Vermonters. He is one of us.

Governor Scott's budget address to the Vermont Legislature Jan. 25 continued where his State of the State speech left off, continuing the theme of “affordability, public safety, and at the center of it all, housing.”

His opening salvo specifically acknowledged that the Legislature's supermajority didn't “have to listen, or even consider, my priorities or objections,” but he stressed that “To meet this moment, we are going to have to prioritize, set aside good things that are less urgent, and rise above the toxic polarization of America's political parties to focus our work directly on these fundamental issues.”

Apart from presenting get, his speech also had a twofold message: to Vermonters of all walks that he has their back, and a charge to the Legislature to overcome partisan politics and be prepared to embrace the acclaimed Vermont habit of frugality and

living within one's means.

Governor Scott knows his state and he knows Vermonters — those who have stayed through thick and thin, and kept the state going, at times despite daunting odds. Scott wanted to make it known that he has their back in these tough times.

On his proposed fiscal year 2025 budget, Scott boiled the issues down.

“I bet many of you do hear, and maybe even share, some of my concerns. More importantly, I'm pretty sure the majority of our constituents certainly do. So let's put them first by doing the hard work to fix — not just fund — the problems they face, put party labels aside, and listen to each other so we help our communities, just like the Vermonters I highlighted in the State of the State helped theirs.

“This work, especially when it comes to affordability, starts with the budget I'm presenting, which totals \$8.6 billion across

Plain talk → 35

LETTERS

Why Killington needs a new school building

Dear Editor,

On March 5, Killington voters will face a crucial decision: whether to approve a \$99 million bond for a new school building that will replace the aging and deteriorating middle school/high school. This is not a decision to take lightly, as it will have significant implications for the town's future, both in terms of education and economy.

Some residents may be reluctant to vote “Yes,” fearing that the new school will increase their tax burden and make living in Killington unaffordable. However, this fear is based on misinformation. In reality, the new school will benefit all Killington residents, regardless of their income level or family situation. Here are some reasons why:

- The new school will improve the quality of education for Killington students, who deserve a safe, healthy, and modern learning environment. The new school will feature state-of-the-art facilities with improved accessibility, security, and energy efficiency. The

new school's design will enhance our children's academic performance, social development, health, and well-being.

- Renters, landlords, and second home-

HS/MS will result in fewer people moving in and an exodus of existing families, further increasing the tax burden on locals.

- The new school will save money in the long

Unless you plan to die or move out of town in less than 10 years, you will pay lower taxes in the long run if we replace the school now.

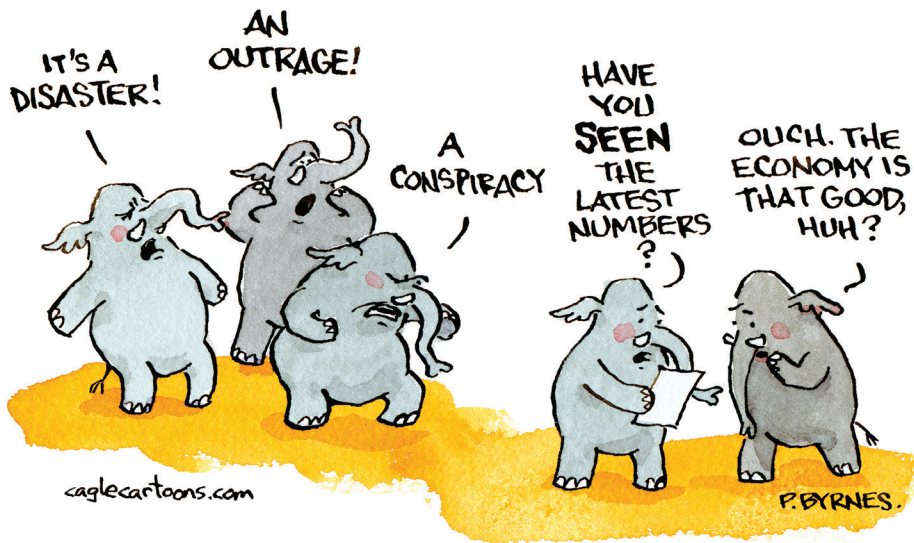
owners will not see any direct increase in their tax rates for the new school. Depending on their income bracket, homeowners declaring homestead may see a minimal or no tax increase from this project.

- The new school will boost the local economy and attract more families and businesses to Killington. The school district is one of the top reasons families choose to live in Killington: it offers a high-quality education and a strong sense of community. Failure to replace the

run, as the existing middle school/high school is in danger of being condemned even with costly repairs. It is impossible to fix many core issues with the HS/MS with repairs or renovations, such as asbestos, lead and PCBs, poor ventilation, inadequate insulation, outdated wiring, and structural damage.

- The design of the new school was substantially reduced to achieve costs lower per square foot than recent school builds in Vermont and the School benefits → 15

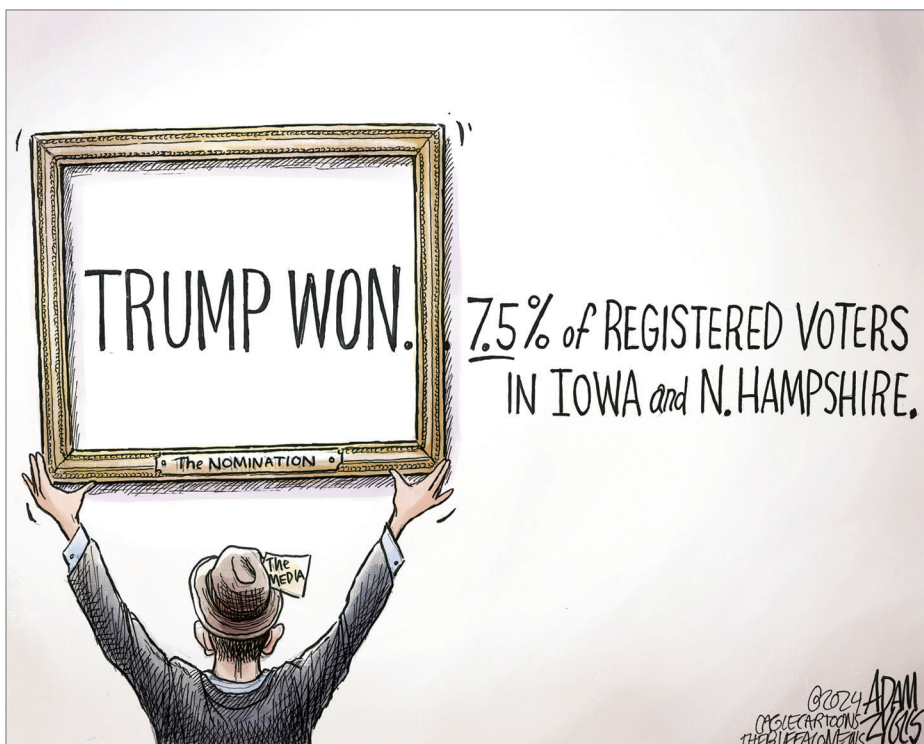
CARTOONS



Economic Disaster by Pat Byrnes, PoliticalCartoons



Fill your boots by Guy Parsons, PoliticalCartoons



Primary Wins by Adam Zyglis, The Buffalo News, NY

← Merger study: from page 1

The report will include the follow two analyses:

1. A review of the finances, administrative functions, departmental operations (non-administrative functions, staffing levels/compensation, equipment/capital materials, and real estate assets of the Town and Village.
2. A merger cost/benefits analysis that addresses labor and staffing levels between both municipalities, revenues and expenses for Town and Village and resultant impacts to tax rates and services. Through this planning effort, the Town intends to lay the groundwork for a future capital planning project that will assist the community to implement recommendations and act on recent planning efforts.

The intended long-term outcomes are to educate and inform residents of the roles of the municipalities; to ensure the local government has streamlined processes and is operating at its highest efficiency; and to prepare for capital planning and/or planned growth.

Poultney successfully competed against 56 municipalities and was one of 31 funded. The town will have two years to complete this project.

"As our state works hard to ensure a future with vibrant and resilient communities, we need to continue to provide our municipalities with the tools they need to adapt and evolve. Municipal planning grants are one way that the state can empower communities to lay the groundwork for a stronger future," said DHCD Commissioner Alex Farrell.

Awarded annually and administered by DHCD, the municipal planning grant program supports local community revitalization and planning initiatives. Since 1998, the program has provided \$15 million to 240 cities and towns across Vermont, bringing people together to adopt useful and relevant municipal plans and implementing those plans through downtown revitalization, updated regulations, improved capital budgeting and innovative projects that prepare for the challenges they face.

For more information, visit: accd.vermont.gov/community-development/funding-incentives/municipal-planning-grant.

← Killing a town: from page 12

Union Middle/High School is 73%. It's also the No.1 school in the state for college curriculum breadth and No. 2 for college readiness," Mikula states. You would think the chamber of horrors that the school is described as would at least hinder students' capability to focus and achieve such high standards.

Killington Selectman Jim Haff queried the Woodstock board whether they had a Plan B if the bond didn't pass and got a negative response. He then stated if the bond doesn't pass and there is no Plan B, we should consider the safety of our students if we have to send them to a school where foul mold-encrusted cinder blocks are falling through the ceiling, septic waste is oozing out of toilets and students have to wear jackets at near 66 degree classrooms (oh my). To this end he moved to put an article for the upcoming Town Meeting warning for a vote to consider withdrawal from the district and choose to either join another or school choice.

Whether or not this is political grandstanding it reflects the general tenor

of Killington residents' thought, who are weary of the continually rising education taxes and the radical changes they are going to

long-term rental housing, the local Vermont economy does not support the kind of income needed to buy a home in Killington's current

Whether or not this is political grandstanding it reflects the general tenor of Killington residents' thought, who are weary of the continually rising education taxes and the radical changes they are going to have to make in their lives to manage them.

have to make in their lives to manage them.

At a recent gathering I spoke to a number of people regarding this situation and the feedback was most people are going to leave town rather than throwing money into a ravenously insatiable black hole. Pretty soon there will be no community in Killington, just second homes and short-term rental properties (about a quarter of homes are already STRs). But I have feeling certain parties are counting on this happening as those properties' non-resident owners don't have a vote.

market. There already has been a significant exodus of locals in recent years between cashing out in the hot real estate market and exploding taxes. Now it looks like more people are going to be forced out with more ridiculously high taxes. Those properties will be gobbled up by second-home owners and STR operators and as a result will wipe out the current local community. Polly Mikula is right, it doesn't matter what Killington wants. We are going to be forced to do what other communities want.

Vito Rasenas, Killington

Already there is very little



By Corey Gambardella, Okemo

White winter atop Okemo Mountain

A family poses together at the top of the Sunburst Six chair at Okemo Mountain Resort.

← New school: from page 12

footage, more modest conceptually, but still very focused on educational outcomes and supporting our amazing faculty who, miraculously, keeps our school ranked consistently in the top 5 (of 64) high schools in the state, even though our building condition is ranked 63 (of 64). All of these changes, all of the research and planning, have all happened because Board members are concerned community members, just like you. There is no “Us versus Them.” We are all one community and in this together.

My second concern is misinformation, stating that there needs to be more transparency from the school board. I’ve even been asked if the information on the website needs to be corrected because some issues being questioned on the listserv are answered in the FAQs on the site (mtnviews.org/breaking-new-ground). I worry that “lack of transparency” is being used to state that someone disagrees with the proposal. We’ve welcomed everyone’s opinions, which is why we’re still working on this seven years later. To be fair to those asking questions about bond rates and material costs, we don’t have those answers because no bank negotiates a rate until you have approval to borrow, and contractors

don’t give locked-in quotes until they know you can pay them.

It’s simply the order of operations that all construction and school bond processes follow. We are unable to move forward any other way. What’s amazing to me is that through those local donations and the support of the taxpayers, we have not only been able to have a construction firm give us a detailed costing but have also paid a 3rd party firm to inspect and weigh in on these numbers. So, at this point, an architectural firm, the engineers, a construction management company, and 3rd third-party firm are all in line with the proposal (but have added \$10 million in contingency included in the bond amount, just in case).

We can not say it’s 100%

speaking about renovations or closing it and moving our students somewhere else. I’m comfortable talking about it because we’ve been talking about it for seven years and we know the answers to what that might mean.

Let’s ensure we’re talking about building a new high school and leave the “Us versus Them” out of it. Instead of questioning transparency, if you have questions, ask them at one of the forums published on the site or email a board member (like me!). As one of your Barnard board representatives, I’m more than happy to answer anything I can or find the answers for you if I don’t know them.

If you want to help me get information out to your friends and family in the community about the

For seven years, members from different towns and different walks of life have weighed in, poked holes in the plan, suggested edits ... but every iteration of the board has ultimately agreed to move forward with the plan for a new school.

accurate, because we cannot ask companies to commit until the taxpayers approve the project.

Not everyone is going to agree with this approach to maintaining our community’s high school, and that’s ok; I’m more than happy to

project so they can make an informed decision on town meeting day, please reach out!

Thanks all, if you made it this far.

Bryce Sammel, Barnard School Board representative, parent, and coach

← School benefits: from page 13

rest of New England. Unless you plan to die or move out of town in less than 10 years, you will pay lower taxes in the long run if we replace the school now.

Moreover, there are several options available to the town to reduce the tax burden of the new school, such as:

- Solicit donations from Airbnb and other short-term rental organizations for their impact on the housing market and, thus, our taxes with the possibility of banning short-term rentals outright.
- Engage with Powder, the owners of Killington Ski Resort, for contributions to the new school, given their position as a vital town partner and primary beneficiary from the lack of a local 1% sales option tax, which we could add back to fund the school.
- Approve the retail cannabis ballot measure and allocate the 1%

local option tax to reducing education taxes.

- Add an impact fee on all new construction in Killington to reduce the tax burden on existing residents.

These options are not mutually exclusive and can be combined to create

the new school is not a luxury but a necessity. It is an investment in our town’s future, not a burden on our present. It is a choice between progress and decline, between opportunity and stagnation.

We urge all Killington voters to vote “Yes” on the

The bottom line is that the new school is not a luxury but a necessity. It is an investment in our town’s future, not a burden on our present. It is a choice between progress and decline.

a comprehensive and sustainable solution for financial challenges faced by residents.

Supporting research for the statements in this article are publicly available on the school district website at: mtnviews.org/breaking-new-ground. You can also contact ben.ford@mtnviews.org and your school board members for additional information.

The bottom line is that

new school bond on March 5. It is the right thing to do for our children, our community, and ourselves.

Sincerely,
Joe Laws, Killington
Editor’s note: Joe Laws lives in Killington with his wife and four children, who attend Killington Elementary School. He is the CEO of Trase Systems, a veteran, and a former U.S. Army Ranger who served in Afghanistan.

← Harrison: from page 11

bill’s investments that address critical issues facing Vermonters.

- A House committee advanced S.18, which bans flavored tobacco and vape products effective January 2025. After concerns were raised that menthol flavored products were disproportionately used by persons of color and members of the LGBTQ+ community, the committee delayed the menthol ban until July 2025 to give the Health Equity panel an opportunity to report back with a recommendation.
- The chair of the House Ways & Means Committee, Rep Kornheiser, D-Brattleboro, unveiled a list of possible new taxes last week: including a 3% surcharge on household incomes over \$500,000; adding the sales tax to online software; a personal income tax on unrealized capital gains; and a change in how corporate taxes are calculated. It is anticipated that these taxes will be used to mitigate some of the expected increase in property taxes and/or the state budget.
- The Senate Transportation Committee is considering legislation that would make it easier for law enforce-

ment to use automatic license plate readers (cameras) in work zones to help reduce speeding.

- The Vermont Senate failed to override the governor’s veto of the bottle bill expansion on a 17-13 vote (20 votes needed). Scott vetoed the measure saying he believed it would increase costs of recycling and raise prices of beverages. Advocates of the expansion to wine, juice and other drinks believed it would increase return rates.
- Attorney General Charity Clark announced a settlement reached with hotels owned by Anil Sachdev, who participated in the motel program for homeless individuals, to the amount of \$300,000. At issue was the return to participants of the \$3,300 security deposits paid by the state on their behalf.

And for a bit more in the “fun” but romantic category, read the story in VT Digger called “Final Reading: Operation Engagement,” which can be found here: tinyurl.com/245s3c6y.

Jim Harrison is the state representative for Chittenden, Killington, Mendon and Pittsfield. He can be reached at JHarrison@leg.state.vt.us or harrisonforvermont.com.

← **Fixed tax:**
from page 12

(non-homestead) rate in the same category as local businesses? Why would local residents pay a higher tax increase than a second home owner? Legislators must create a new category for out-of-state property owners and collect more revenue from those extracting money from our state. Short-term rentals have changed the game and we need to change with it. If these tax increases result in owners selling their properties, so be it. It can only help our housing crisis. Imagine homes filled with teachers, firefighters and Little League coaches. These year-round residents not only contribute to their local communities, but they also increase school enrollments.

2. Implement spending safeguards and increase transparency

Contrary to its claim, the new weighting model does not offer a transparent look at annual spending increases by town. Pupil weights, common level of appraisal, property yields, etc. all work to distance voters from their actual spending increase. A lack of timely statewide academic data also leads to an erosion of trust. How many of your neighbors (or legislators for that matter) can explain how their tax increase was calculated or how investments are connected to learning outcomes?

Instead of complicated formulas that seek to confuse voters, state officials should be establishing safeguards for annual spending and providing clear annual reports on school

performance. Massachusetts requires a voter override when property tax exceeds 2.5%. They also publish school report cards each fall that display current academic and social/emotional data in an easy-to-read format. These safeguards encourage efficiency and allow individual towns to have a strong say in what they are willing to pay in tax increases. The state also provides technical support, not just financial resources, to school systems that are underperforming.

3. Focus on health care

Everyone can agree on health care reform. The 16.4% increase in state-negotiated health care costs has imposed a significant hardship on local budgets. Instead of passing legislation that increases our tax rates, we must encourage our legislators to help us control costs. Health care is the perfect place to start.

Vermont is a state with a long history of providing students with an excellent education. It is arguably our greatest asset and needs to be prioritized in the current legislative session. We need to stop claiming we are pursuing equity while simultaneously pushing our residents into poverty and losing our focus on student learning.

The above are three realistic steps that can be taken this year. Do we really want to revisit a time in history when towns were asking to secede to New Hampshire?

Please consider contacting your local legislators and advocating for our students and families.

← **Chaffee:**
from page 5

prompted the creation of a permanent art center. The Chaffee Art Center is now a venue for events and art classes for all ages.

The Division for Historic Preservation administers the Historic Preservation Grants awarded these one-to-one matching grants up to \$20,000 for the rehabilita-

tion of civic and community resources that are a vital part of Vermont's historic downtowns, villages, and rural communities. To qualify, the resource must be at least 50 years of age and listed in or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. Since the creation of the historic preservation

grants in 1986, more than 650 projects on historic buildings, structures, and sites owned by municipalities and non-profits have received \$6.7 million.

A full list of award winners can be found on the VDHP website, accd.vermont.gov/historic-preservation.

← **Play Forever:**
from page 5

towards operating the Paramount Theatre in downtown Rutland for the second year in a row, and a major supporter of CEDRR and the Killington Pico Area Association.

On opening day this year, Nov. 4, 2023, Killington opted to forgo its typical annual swag giveaway and instead donated \$10 for each passholder in attendance to the charity of their choice. Selected beneficiaries included Snow Angel Foundation, Burton Chill and YES Kids out of Boston. At Pico Mountain, the season kicked off with a food drive, which raised over \$1,000 in in-kind donations for the BROCC Community Cupboard, supporting local families in need during the holiday season.

Killington and Pico Resorts contributions to the community go beyond just monetary with unique programs, such as the Pico School program, which offers local

Killington and Pico Resorts are always on the lookout for deserving causes to support in the future.

students the opportunity to learn to ski or ride. The resorts are also major boosters of programs at KMS and the Pico Ski Education Foundation each

year. And members of the Killington team regularly participate in local events, such as Teddy's Toy Drive, hand-building wagons for local families.

Killington and Pico Resorts are always on the lookout for deserving causes to support in the future, the news release stated. Requests and nominations can be made at killington.requestitem.com.



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Items on sale Feb. 1-29, 2024



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 G M G K T T N E M E S A B R B D D N E B
 Z R G A D M H E Z I N A G R O H A C G H
 H K Y I E Y G I A D P O A M Y T K T A L L
 G G K T K F P B N B I A E U I T M C B L L
 E Y S F R T L D E G U S T O R A G E R I
 Y Y A P D E L A E K S L N T Y R K S A D E
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 I A A Y K H F O Z U I T R L P K N T B R
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SUDOKU

Solutions → 29

How to Play

Each block is divided by its own matrix of nine cells. The rule for solving Sudoku puzzles are very simple. Each row, column and block, must contain one of the numbers from "1" to "9". No number may appear more than once in any row, column, or block. When you've filled the entire grid the puzzle is solved.

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Solutions → 29

CLUES ACROSS

- Become less intense
- Variety of pear
- Religion native to China
- Type of tooth
- Fitted out
- Make every effort
- Autonomic nervous system
- Complete
- Alternate name
- River in France and Belgium
- Miami's mascot is one
- Turfs
- Most cognizant of reality
- Broad volcanic crater
- Canadian surname
- Satisfaction
- Traitorous Greek mythological prince
- Collide
- Immune response
- Feline
- High opinion of one's own appearance
- Thin strip to align parts
- Containers
- Convicted American spy
- Breathe noisily
- Taxi
- Pancakes made

- from buckwheat flour
- Swiss river
 - I.M., architect
 - Have surgery
 - Formal withdrawal
 - Dutch and German surname
 - Square measures 2,000 lbs.
 - Degrade someone

CLUES DOWN

- Siberian river
- Blessing
- Substitutes (abbr.)
- Principle underlying the universe
- Work unit
- Yellow edible fruits
- Gemstone
- A place ships dock (abbr.)
- Evergreen tropical tree
- Reality TV star Richards
- Nonflowering aquatic plant
- Stakes
- Antidiuretic hormone
- Make warm again
- Light beams
- Lethal dose
- Terrorist group
- Kids love him
- Naturally occur-

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

- ring solid
- German surname meaning "man from Saxony"
- Popular cuisine
- Partner to cheese
- Type of horse
- Diego
- Defensive nuclear weapon
- Most shrewd
- It may be for shopping
- Midway between south and southeast
- A stock of foods
- The bindings of books
- Swiss river
- Megabyte
- Sammy __, songwriter
- Dutch colonist
- Clare Booth __, American writer
- Sun or solar disk
- Popular type of bread
- Transfers of money (abbr.)
- Association of engineering professionals
- Young women's association
- City
- Niger-Congo branch of languages
- Pointed end of a pen

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

Level: Intermediate

Guess Who?

I am a singer born on January 29, 1982, in Indiana. I performed in theater groups, and moved to Los Angeles to pursue a musical career. I appeared on "American Idol" and went on to release an album that reached the top ten. I now tour with the rock band "Queen."

Answer: Adam Lambert

THURSDAY

2/1

PLEASE NOTE:
Events are subject to expiration, cancellation, or date changes. Kindly visit or contact the event host to ensure the event's current status.

WEDNESDAY

1/31

Public Skating

Wednesdays, Jan.-Feb. Union Arena, 80 Amsden Way, Woodstock. Ages 13+ \$6; ages 4-12 \$5; ages 3 and under, free. 2-3 p.m. Seniors, parents with toddlers. 3-4:10 p.m. All ages. Rental skates available, \$6/pair. unionarena.org/public-skate-sessions/

Silent Reading Group

4 p.m. Wednesdays. Norman Williams Public Library, 10 The Green, Woodstock. Free. Join us for an hour of silent reading in front of the fireplace. Tea, coffee, and cookies provided. Foster your reading habit in a structured environment. Optional post-reading discussion. Everyone is welcome. normanwilliams.org, 802-457-2295

Cribbage for Adults

3-5 p.m. Wednesdays. Hartland Public Library, 153 Route 5, Hartland. Free. Join a gathering of adult cribbage players at the library's meeting room. hartlandlibraryvt.org/calendar/ or 802-436-2473

Bone Builders

3:30-4:30 p.m. Wednesdays. Chaffee Art Center, 16 So. Main St., Rutland. Free. Improve balance and enhance energy and wellbeing. chaffeeartcenter.org or 802-775-0356

Adult Open Gym: Coed Pickleball

7-9 p.m. Wednesdays, Jan. 8-Mar. 17. Killington Elementary School, 686 School House Road, Killington. Buy a 10-visit punch card for \$20 or pay \$5 for every time you come. Partially punched cards from last year are still valid. Enjoy coed team sports in a low-key environment for ages 16 & up. This is a drop-in program, no preregistration and no leagues. For questions please contact Griffin Van Niel at recadmin@killingtontown.com

Killington Bone Builders

10 a.m. Thursdays. Sherburne Memorial Library, 2998 River Road, Killington. Free. Weights are provided. sherburnelibrary.org or 802-422-4323.

Artery at Chaffee Art Center

10:30am-noon. Thursdays. Chaffee Art Center, 16 So. Main St., Rutland. \$10-\$20. Adult group for connection and inspiration. Painting in all mediums welcome. No set topic or instructor, participants will work on their own. chaffeeartcenter.square.site or 802-775-0356

Ukulele Group

Noon-1 p.m. Thursdays. Chaffee Art Center, 16 So. Main St., Rutland. Free. Musician Steven Wilson leads the group through specific sheet music. All levels welcome. Must pre-register. chaffeeartcenter.square.site or 802-775-0356

Art Classes

Chaffee Art Center, 16 So. Main St., Rutland. 12-1pm — Lunch 'N' Learn: What is it about art, anyway? 1-2pm — Art Lab: What is it about art, anyway? chaffeeartcenter.square.site or 802-775-0356

Michelob Ultra Race World

1-3 p.m. Thursdays, to March 14. Pico Mountain: Lower Pike or Exhibition. \$50 per individual. Weekly race series at Pico featuring 8 races, where participants can race as individuals or form a team of up to 5 racers. Each race is followed by a party at the Last Run Lounge from 4-6 p.m. Register for the race series: tfaforms.com/5031843. picomountain.com

Play Bridge!

2 p.m. Thursdays. Norman Williams Public Library, 10 The Green, Woodstock. Free. Beginners are welcome to observe. normanwilliams.org, 802-457-2295

Rutland Regional Medical Center hosts screening of documentary 'Kili Big'

5:30 p.m. CVPS/Leahy Community Health Education Center, 160 Allen St, Rutland. Free. Screening of "Kili Big" followed by a panel discussion. Inspiring documentary about plus-sized women conquering Mount Kilimanjaro in Africa. Themes of fitness, representation, self-acceptance, and courage. Seating limited to 75 attendees, registration required. Bagged popcorn and refreshments provided. Register: kilibig.com or call 802747-3775.

Zoom Presentation: 'Life in Israel After October 7'

6:30-8:30 p.m. Sponsored by the Rutland Jewish Center, 96 Grove St., Rutland. Yishai and Shayna Paquin will share the experience in Tzfat since Oct. 7, 2023, contending with rockets from Hezbollah and the turmoil in Israel following the deadliest attack against Jews since the Holocaust. Yishai Paquin is a U.S. Navy veteran, a U.S. Army Chaplaincy candidate, and a rabbinical student at the Academy for Jewish Religion. Shayna Paquin is a community leader, organizer, and activist. Join the Zoom meeting with the meeting ID and passcode provided. Contact the office, 802-773-3455

Adult Open Gym: Basketball

7-9 p.m. Thursdays, Jan. 8-Mar. 17. Killington Elementary School, 686 School House Road, Killington. Buy a 10-visit punch card for \$20 or pay \$5 each time. Partially punched cards from last year are still valid. Enjoy coed team sports in a low-key environment for ages 16 & up. This is a drop-in program, no preregistration and no leagues. For questions please contact Griffin Van Niel at recadmin@killingtontown.com

Story Time at the Library

10:30-11:30 a.m. Fridays. Sherburne Memorial Library, 2998 River Road, Killington. Free. sherburnelibrary.org, 802-422-9765 or 802-422-4251.

Bone Builders

11 a.m.-Noon. Chaffee Art Center, 16 So. Main St., Rutland. Free. Improve balance and enhance energy and wellbeing. 802-775-0356

Relaxing with the Arts

1-3 p.m. Fridays through Feb. 16. Chaffee Art Center, 16 So. Main St., Rutland. Heather Wilson. \$120 4-week workshops or \$35 per class. Explore different art forms in a relaxed and mindful environment. Painting, pen & ink, marker, and music-guided art. chaffeeartcenter.square.site or 802-775-0356

Blue Cat Music Series: Mitch Terriciano

6-9 p.m. Fridays through March 22. Blue Cat Bistro, 575 Main St., Castleton. No cover. Come, relax, enjoy the engaging stage presence, soulful sound and energy-fueled performance of Mitch Terriciano, a staple of the après-ski scene in the Mad River Valley. 802-468-2791

Wobbly Barn: Turning the Tide

Door open at 6 p.m. Wobbly Barn Steakhouse and Nightclub, 2229 Killington Road, Killington. Cover charge may be required. An exciting young band with a veteran presence, Turning the Tide will perform both Friday and Saturday night. killington.com.

SATURDAY

2/3

Subaru WinterFest: Uphill Travel Meetup

6:30 a.m. Ramshead Express Quad for an uphill travel meetup with Mammut and Kate's Real Food (must have gone through uphill ticketing process online at killington.com/plan-your-trip/tickets-passes/uphill-travel. See the full schedule at killington.com/things-to-do/events/events-calendar/subaru-winterfest-killington

Park Affair at Killington Resort

8 a.m. Ramshead Base Lodge. \$220. Park Affair is a women's organization that aims to inspire and empower women in the terrain park. The event includes registration, breakout groups, lunch, a park jam, and awards. Register at: parkaffair.com/products/killington

Introduction to Ice Fishing, Fishing Derby

8 a.m.-noon. Dewey's Mills Pond Road, Hartford. Fishing clinic sponsored by the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Dept. Learn the basics of ice safety and ice fishing in a family friendly environment. All equipment will be provided. This clinic takes place during Hartford Parks and Recreation's annual youth fishing derby and is a perfect opportunity for families to learn while also participating in a derby. Register at vtfishandwildlife.com/event/introduction-ice-fishing-0

Billings Backyard Workshop: The Basics of Home Butchering.

10-11:30 a.m. Billings Farm & Museum, 69 Old River Road, Woodstock. \$15/person, \$10/member. The Village Butcher's Josh Coyle will share insights into the art of home butchering and sausage making. Hands-on demonstrations, carving fundamentals, techniques, and more. billingsfarm.org/billings-backyard

Make & Take Saturday Kids' Class

10:30-11:30 a.m. (Saturdays) Chaffee Art Center, 16 So. Main St., Rutland. Ages: 6-12. Weekly fun activity featuring arts and crafts. \$15. Min 5 students. Must pre-register. chaffeeartcenter.square.site or 802-775-0356

The Vermont Winter Farmers' Market

10 a.m.-2 p.m. Howe Center, Suite 92, 1 Scale Ave. (off Strongs Avenue), Rutland. Free. The Vermont Farmers' Market is one of the largest farmers' markets in the state and the first to operate year round. Find seasonal harvest, winter veggies, handcrafted gifts and more. vtfarmersmarket.org

Take Your Child to the Library Day

11 a.m.-1 p.m. Rutland Free Library, 10 Court St., Rutland. Free. Celebrate Take Your Child to the Library Day with storytime, singing, and activities in the Fox Room. Upgrade your library card and decorate it in the Children's Room. rutlandfree.org

Rutland Railway Museum & Model Club

11 a.m.-3 p.m. Weekly. 79 Depot Lane, Center Rutland. Free. Maintained by the Rutland Railway Association, Inc., the historic depot is now a museum that houses an operating HO scale model railroad setup and displays hundreds of rare or antique model trains, photographs, signs and memorabilia saved from an earlier time, including the former Rutland Railroad Caboose #45. rutlandrailway.org

Drop N' Paint

Noon-2 p.m. Chaffee Art Center, 16 So. Main St., Rutland. \$25. All Ages. All materials will be set up and ready for you with a choice of 3 images you can paint. Includes use of: Canvas, paint, brushes, easel, smock. Youth must be accompanied by an adult. Must pre-register. chaffeeartcenter.square.site or 802-775-0356

WOBBLY BARN:
TURNING THE TIDE

SATURDAY



FRIDAY

2/2

Subaru WinterFest at Killington

All day, Feb. 2-4. K-1 Base Lodge, 4763 Killington Road, Killington. Free. Subaru WinterFest is a mountain lifestyle tour featuring live musical performances, giveaways, demos, activities and much more. See the full schedule at killington.com/things-to-do/events/events-calendar/subaru-winterfest-killington

Introduction to Stained Glass

12-2 p.m. The MINT, 112 Quality Lane, Rutland. \$35 for members, \$55 for non-members. Learn the art of stained glass and safety measures. Closed-toe shoes required. This class is required for those wishing to work independently. rutlandmint.org/calendar

Après Afternoons at the Clock Tower: Derek Rando Duo

2-5 p.m. The Bull and Base68 Patio at Clock Tower Base Area, Okemo Ski Resort. Join us for live music, games, food, drinks and more. okemo.com/explore-the-resort

Woodstock Film Series: 'Joonam'

3-5 p.m. Billings Farm & Museum, 69 Old River Road, Woodstock. \$15 person; \$12 member. 16+. Vermont-raised filmmaker explores her Iranian roots through her mother and grandmother. English and Farsi with subtitles. Q&A with filmmaker follows the screening. billingsfarm.org/events

Catholic Mass at Our Lady of the Mountains

4:30 p.m. Saturdays. The "little white church," 4173 US-4, Killington. Free. 802-457-2322 or info@vermontcatholic.org

Let's Go Skating

5:15pm-7:15pm. Giorgetti Arena, 2 Oak St. Ext., Rutland. Suggested donation: \$5 per family. Ice skating for unhoused families receiving coordinated services. There are bathrooms and a warming area available. Plastic crates are provided for new skaters to use.

Wobbly Barn: Turning the Tide.

Door open at 6 p.m. Wobbly Barn Steakhouse and Nightclub, 2229 Killington Road, Killington. Cover charge may be required. An exciting young band with a veteran presence, Turning the Tide, will be performing both Friday and Saturday night at the Wobbly Barn. killington.com.

Tiki Torch Trek

6 p.m. Hartland Rec. Three Corners, Route 12, Hartland. Free for kids 12 and under; \$5 over 12; \$15 for family (parents & kids) An outing on the Hartland Trails with tiki torches and lanterns, bonfire and music, home baked goods and refreshments. All proceeds benefit the hartlandwintertrails.org

WinterFest at Outer Limits Brewing

7 p.m. Outer Limits Brewing, 60 Village Green, Proctorsville. \$25 - \$35. Auction and festival. okemomountainschool.org/events-calendar/2023/12/7/winterfest-outer-limits-brewing

Argentinian-style Social Tango with Live Music by Trio Tango Norte

7-10 p.m. ArtisTree, 2095 Pomfret Road, South Pomfret. \$20. Cash bar, empanadas available separately. Optional: Tango lesson with Eva Zimet, \$15; lesson plus dance, \$30. Details and tix at artistreevt.org/special-events

SUNDAY

2/4

Adult Open Gym: Pickleball

7-9 p.m. Runs Jan. 8-Mar. 17. Killington Elementary School, 686 School House Road, Killington. Buy a 10-visit punch card for \$20 or pay \$5 for every time you come. Punch cards from last year with holes not yet punched, are still valid. Enjoy coed team sports in a low-key environment for ages 16 & up. This is a drop-in program, no preregistration or leagues. For questions please contact Griffin Van Niel at recadmin@killingtontown.com

Subaru WinterFest

8 a.m. K-1 Base Lodge, 4763 Killington Rd, Killington. Free. Subaru WinterFest is a mountain lifestyle tour featuring live musical performances, giveaways, demos and more. See the full schedule at killington.com/things-to-do/events/events-calendar/subaru-winterfest-killington

Learn Basic Knife Skills in the Kitchen

1 p.m. Marble Valley Kitchen & Catering, 22 Killington Ave., Rutland. \$20 for adults, \$15 for kids aged 8-15. Learn proper knife technique and food handling skills from Chef Lisa Fennimore and Chef Nate Wright. Topics covered include dicing, mincing, julienning, and more. Questions encouraged. marblevalleykitchen.com

Perspective Drawing Workshop with Chris Mix

2 p.m. Gallery at The Vault, 68 Main St. Springfield. \$25. Learn how to add perspective to your drawings in this 2-hour Zoom class taught by Christine Mix. galleryvault.org.

Woodstock Film Series: 'Joonam'

3-5 p.m. Billings Farm & Museum, 69 Old River Road, Woodstock. \$15 person; \$12 member. 16+. Vermont-raised filmmaker explores her Iranian roots through her mother and grandmother. English and Farsi with subtitles. Q&A with filmmaker follows the screening. billingsfarm.org/events

Science Pub: 'Decoding Insect Smell'

4 p.m. Tap Room at Lake Bomoseen, 2551 Route 30 N, Bomoseen. Free, except for any drinks or food you order. Gregory Pask, professor of biology at Middlebury College, explores how insects use their sense of smell to locate food, find mates, and communicate. Sponsored by Friends of the Castleton Free Library. castletonfreelibrary.org/friends-of-castleton-free-library/

MONDAY

2/5

Killington Bone Builders

10 a.m. Weekly. Sherburne Memorial Library, 2998 River Road, Killington. Free. Weights are provided. sherburnelibrary.org or 802-422-4323

Okemo Innkeepers Race Series

10 a.m. Mondays, Jan. 8 - Mar. 11 Okemo Ski Resort. A Ludlow tradition. Teams and individual skiers and snowboarders compete in 8 age categories. There is an après race gathering hosted by a local bar from 5-7 p.m. okemoracing@gmail.com.

Monday Movie

1 p.m. The Sherburne Memorial Library, 2998 River Road, Killington. Free. Please call the library for the title of the film. sherburnelibrary.org, 802 422-9765

Poetry Group

4-5:30 p.m. 1st and 3rd Mondays. Norman Williams Public Library, 10 The Green, Woodstock. Free. Join the poetry group at NWPL for sharing and critique in a workshop format, focusing on different elements of poetry such as theme, language, sound and rhythm, structure, and context. This group is open to all interested in poetry and offers feedback on poems. RSVP. normanwilliams.org, 802-457-2295

Adult Open Gym: Indoor Soccer

7-9 p.m. Runs Jan. 8-Mar. 17. Killington Elementary School, 686 School House Road, Killington. Buy a 10-visit punch card for \$20 or pay \$5 for every time you come. Punch cards from last year with holes not yet punched, are still valid. Enjoy coed team sports in a low-key environment for ages 16 & up. This is a drop-in program, no preregistration or leagues. For questions please contact Griffin Van Niel at recadmin@killingtontown.com

TUESDAY

2/6

Play Chess & Backgammon

5 p.m. Tuesdays. Norman Williams Public Library, 10 The Green, Woodstock. Free. Join us for chess and/or backgammon on Tuesday evenings. All skill levels are welcome, and coaching is available. Bring your own set or use one of ours. normanwilliams.org, 802-457-2295

Essentrics, Aging Backwards:

Stretch and Strengthen

5:30 p.m. Stone Valley Arts at Fox Hill, 145 East Main St., Poultney. \$12. A unique age reversing workout designed to restore and maintain joint mobility, release tension, and unlock tight muscles. stonevalleyarts.org

Paint and Sip in Killington

6-8:30 p.m. Tuesdays. North Star Lodge & Resort, 78 Weatherlane Drive, Killington. \$40 if you register and pay in advance on Eventbrite. Join us for a paint and sip party at the cozy Star Lounge in North Star Inn. We will be painting Van Gogh's "Starry Night" while enjoying food and drink for sale. Cash bar available. Register: tinyurl.com/ms7d84s6. Visit Arty Party Vermont on Facebook.

Adult Open Gym: Indoor Soccer

7-9 p.m. Runs Jan. 8-Mar. 17. Killington Elementary School, 686 School House Road, Killington. Buy a 10-visit punch card for \$20 or pay \$5 for every time you come. Punch cards from last year with holes not yet punched, are still valid. Enjoy coed team sports in a low-key environment for ages 16 & up. This is a drop-in program, no preregistration or leagues. For questions please contact Griffin Van Niel at recadmin@killingtontown.com

'One-off' Book Discussion: 'Covenant of Water' by Abraham Verghese

6-7 p.m. Norman Williams Public Library, 10 The Green, Woodstock. Free. A one-off book discussion of Abraham Verghese's "The Covenant of Water." This novel follows a family in southern India across generations, where at least one person dies by drowning. The book explores progress in medicine, human understanding, and the hardships endured by past generations. Open to all genres and topics, this discussion group welcomes suggestions for future meetings. normanwilliams.org, 802-457-2295



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WED

1/31

KILLINGTON

2 p.m. K1 Base Lodge – Daniel Brown

6 p.m. Rivershed – James Joel

8 p.m. Jax Food & Games – Nick Bredice

LUDLOW

6 p.m. Off the Rails – Learn to Line Dance

QUECHEE

6 p.m. Public House Pub – Kim Wilcox

THURS

2/1

BARNARD

5:30 Fable Farm – Colin McCaffrey and Doug Perkins
BRANDON
5:30 p.m. Red Clover Ale Company – Open Mic hosted by Emily Nelson

BRIDGEWATER

CORNERS

5 p.m. Long Trail Brewery – Sammy B

KILLINGTON

2 p.m. K1 Base Lodge – Daniel Brown

6 p.m. Liquid Art – Open Mic hosted by Grateful Gary

6 p.m. Moguls Sports Pub – Duane Carleton

6 p.m. The Freerider – Nick Bredice

6 p.m. Rivershed – Chris Pallutto

6 p.m. The Foundry – Liz Reedy

7 p.m. Pickle Barrel Nightclub – Moe.stly

8 p.m. Jax Food & Games – Jenny & Friends

LONDONDERRY

7 p.m. New American Grill – Open Mic Night hosted by DJ Jazzy Joel & Catnip John

LUDLOW

6:30 p.m. The Killarney – Irish Sessions with Gypsy Reel

QUECHEE

6:30 p.m. Public House Pub – Name That Tune Bingo with DJ Dave

RUTLAND

8 p.m. Angler Pub – A Sound Space Open Mic hosted by Josh Cote

8 p.m. Center Street Alley – Karaoke 101 hosted by Tenacious T

SOUTH POMFRET

7 p.m. Artistree – Open Mic Night

FRI

2/2

CASTLETON

6 p.m. Blue Cat Bistro – Mitch Terricciano

KILLINGTON

1 p.m. Bear Mountain Base Lodge – Duane Carleton

2 p.m. Pico's Last Run Lounge – Nick Bredice & Rhys Chalmers

3 p.m. K1 Base Lodge (Outside) – Subaru Winterfest with music by Grain Thief

4 p.m. The Foundry – Jamie's Junk Show

6 p.m. Rivershed – Brother Other

6:30 p.m. Still on the Mountain – Nick Bredice

7:30 p.m. McGrath's Irish Pub – Mance

8 p.m. Pickle Barrel Nightclub – Royals

9 p.m. Jax Food & Games – Jamie's Junk Show

9 p.m. Moguls Sports Pub – Last Chair Band

9:30 p.m. Wobbly Barn – Turning the Tide

LONDONDERRY

6 p.m. New American Grill – Sammy B

QUECHEE

5:30 p.m. Public House Pub – Kind Bud

SAT

2/3

BOMOSEEN

5:30 p.m. Bomseen Lodge & Taproom – James Joel

BRIDGEWATER

8 p.m. Woolen Mill Comedy Club – Comedy Night with Co-Headliners Ben Kirschenbaum & Maximilian Spinelli

KILLINGTON

11 a.m. Subaru Winterfest Sambar Stage at Needles Eye – Nick Bredice

2 p.m. K1 Base Lodge – Aaron Audet Band

2 p.m. K1 Base Lodge (Outside) – Subaru Winterfest with music by Tuff Luv feat. the Heavily Brothers

2 p.m. Pico's Last Run Lounge – Kenny Mehler

3:30 p.m. K1 Base Lodge (Outside) – Subaru Winterfest with music by Yonder Mountain String Band

5 p.m. Pickle Barrel Nightclub – Jamie's Junk Show

6 p.m. Moguls Sports Pub – Duane Carleton

6 p.m. O'Dwyers Pub – County Down

6 p.m. Rivershed – Brother Other

6 p.m. Wobbly Barn - KGB

6:30 p.m. Still on the Mountain – Liz Reedy

7 p.m. Casey's Caboose – Ruby Street

7 p.m. The Foundry – Jenny Porter

7:30 p.m. McGrath's Irish Pub – Mance

8 p.m. Pickle Barrel Nightclub – Royals

9 p.m. Jax Food & Games – Aaron Audet Band

9:30 p.m. Wobbly Barn – Turning the Tide

10 p.m. Pickle Barrel Crows Nest – Jamie's Junk Show

LUDLOW

9 a.m. Okemo's Sunburst Six Bubble – Lift Party with DJ Dave

2 p.m. Apres Afternoon at Jackson Gore – Dustin Marshall

QUECHEE

5:30 p.m. Public House Pub – Sammy B

RUTLAND

9 p.m. Center Street Alley – Karaoke 101 hosted by Tenacious T

STOCKBRIDGE

7:30 p.m. Wild Fern – Rick Redington & Tuff Luv

SUN

2/4

KILLINGTON

11 a.m. Subaru Winterfest Sambar Stage at Needles Eye – Sammy B

12 p.m. Rivershed – Brunch with Brother Other

1 p.m. K1 Base Lodge (Outside) – Subaru Winterfest with music by Jeremiah Tall

1 p.m. Pico's Last Run Lounge – Duane Carleton

2 p.m. K1 Base Lodge – Chris Pallutto

5 p.m. The Foundry – Jazz Night with the Summit Pond Quartet

6 p.m. Liquid Art – Tee Boneicus Jones

6 p.m. Rivershed – Trivia

6 p.m. Still on the Mountain – Comedy Night with Headliner Ben Kirschenbaum

7 p.m. Pickle Barrel – Grateful Dub with special guests Roots of Creation

9 p.m. Jax Food & Games – Jenny Porter

MON

2/5

KILLINGTON

2 p.m. K1 Base Lodge – Duane Carleton

5:30 p.m. Mary Lou's – BAK'n

6 p.m. Rivershed – Mandatory Mondays with Name That Tune Bingo by DJ Dave

LUDLOW

8:30 p.m. The Killarney – Open Mic Night with Indigenous Entertainment

TUES

2/6

KILLINGTON

2 p.m. K1 Base Lodge – Rhys Chalmers

5:30 p.m. Mary Lou's – Bow Thayer & Krishna Guthrie

8 p.m. Jax Food & Games – Taco Tuesday with Rick Webb

LONDONDERRY

6:30 p.m. New American Grill – Trivia hosted by Zach Yakaitis

LUDLOW

6 p.m. The Killarney – Trivia with Rick Davis

PITTSFIELD

6:30 p.m. Town Hall – Acoustic Jam

QUECHEE

5 p.m. The Public House – Jim Yeager

RUTLAND

8:30 p.m. Center Street Alley – Acoustic Open Mic hosted by Josh LaFave




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Subaru Winterfest returns to Killington Resort offering an array of family activities

Friday-Sunday, Feb. 2-4—KILLINGTON—The Subaru WinterFest is a free, three-day, one-of-a-kind music and mountain lifestyle event outside the K-1 Base Lodge at Killington Resort that invites friends, family, skiers, snowboarders, music fans, and dog-lovers alike to bask in their love of adventure and all things winter.

The annual mountain destination event features live musical performances headlined by Yonder Mountain String Band. Grab a free morning coffee with Hydroflask, fuel up with Kate's Real Food and indulge in s'mores from Solo Stove. Enter to win daily giveaways and test the latest gear from Thule, Cardiff Snowcraf, Nordica, Mammut, Luno Life, and Dynamic Wax. Subaru owners will enjoy VIP treatment and special gifts while supplies last.

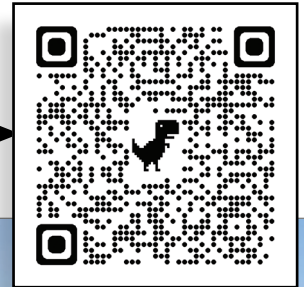
Back again this year is a guided uphill travel tour on Saturday morning. Meet at the bottom of

the Ramshead Express Quad at 6:30 a.m. on Saturday.

New for this year is the official Subaru WinterFest kickoff party, taking place at the Wobbly Barn from 6-9 p.m. on Friday, Feb. 2. There will be live, local live music & great food options during this happy hour gathering.

For more information, visit: killington.com.

For the full event schedule, scan the QR code



Courtesy Killington.com

Subaru WinterFest is a unique, three-day music and mountain lifestyle event located outside the K-1 Base Lodge at Killington Resort. This free event welcomes friends, family, skiers, snowboarders, music enthusiasts, and dog lovers to celebrate their shared passion for adventure and the winter season.



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Choices Restaurant & Rotisserie

Choices Restaurant and Rotisserie was named 2012 "Ski" magazines' favorite restaurant. Choices may be the name of the restaurant but it is also what you get. Soup of the day, shrimp cocktail, steak, hamburgers, a variety of salads and pastas, scallops, monkfish, lamb and more await you. An extensive wine list and in house made desserts are also available. choicesrestaurantkillington.com (802) 422-4030.



Lookout Tavern

A place for fun, friends and good times here in Killington! Everything from soup to nuts for lunch and dinner; juicy burgers, fresh salads, delicious sandwiches and K-Town's best wings. Your first stop after a full day on the Mountain for a cold beer or specialty drink and a great meal! lookoutvt.com, 802-422-5665.



Back Country Café

The Back Country Café is a hot spot for delicious breakfast foods. Choose from farm fresh eggs, multiple kinds of pancakes and waffles, omelets or daily specials to make your breakfast one of a kind. Just the right heat Bloody Marys, Mimosas, Bellini, VT Craft Brews, Coffee and hot chocolate drinks. Maple Syrup and VT products for sale. Check Facebook for daily specials. 802-422-4411.



Moguls

Voted the best ribs and burger in Killington, Moguls is a great place for the whole family. Soups, onion rings, mozzarella sticks, chicken fingers, buckets of chicken wings, salads, subs and pasta are just some of the food that's on the menu. Free shuttle and take away and delivery options are available. mogulssportspub.com 802-422-4777.



Soup Dog

With a focus on soups and hotdogs, this restaurant offers a delicious and comforting menu for visitors and locals alike. Opening in the winter of 2023, Soup Dog invites guests to stop by and enjoy their tasty offerings. The menu features a wide variety of soups, paired with delicious bread, as well as specialty hotdog toppings. Guests also have the option to create their own hotdog combinations. (802) 353-9277. Visit us on Facebook.



Killington Market

Take breakfast, lunch or dinner on the go at Killington Market, Killington's on-mountain grocery store for the last 30 years. Choose from breakfast sandwiches, hand carved dinners, pizza, daily fresh hot panini, roast chicken, salad and specialty sandwiches. Vermont products, maple syrup, fresh meat and produce along with wine and beer are also for sale. killingtonmarket.com 802-422-7736 or 802-422-7594.



Mountain Top Inn

Whether staying overnight or visiting for the day, Mountain Top's Dining Room & Tavern serve delicious cuisine amidst one of Vermont's best views. A mix of locally inspired and International cuisine – including salads, seafood, poultry and a new steakhouse menu - your taste buds are sure to be satisfied. Choose from 12 Vermont craft brews on tap. Warm up by the terrace fire pit after dinner! A short drive from Killington. mountaintopinn.com, 802-483-2311.



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Stop on by to Sugar and Spice for a home style breakfast or lunch served up right. Try six different kinds of pancakes and/or waffles or order up some eggs and home fries. For lunch they offer a Filmore salad, grilled roast beef, burgers and sandwiches. Take away available. www.vtsugarandspice.com 802-773-7832.

Woodstock Vermont Film Series

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Rockin the region, moe.stly with moe.

There's a cool show this Thursday at 7 p.m. at the Pickle Barrel, and that's moe. stly, which is Rob Derhak (bass/vocals) and Al Schnier (guitar/vocals) from the band moe. This will be an acoustic show, a rarity from moe.

moe.stly started out of Covid. Al started doing a live show out of his house. Rob said, "It was a subscription thing, almost like a Zoom meeting. It was a house party, as we called it. He showed me how to do it, and then I started doing it. We did a couple of songs together, going back and forth since we were all isolated. Covid messed a lot of things up; everybody had to readjust and figure stuff out. When that was over, we wanted to try and actually do this together. We did a couple shows and really enjoyed them. It's like in-between a storyteller thing and a live show."

Rob will play an acoustic bass or something similar, and Al will play an acoustic guitar. Rob said, "We'll play moe. songs, some new covers, and some stuff we don't play with moe. We'll play a couple songs, joke around and talk with people. Next thing we know we're off in a full on moe. jam on a song you wouldn't think would be acoustic. It's fun because it's intimate. We're on stools; it's a nice intimate vibe, and people seem to like it. For Al and

I, we're just doing our thing and having a little fun."

Al is an obsessive skier, and Rob does it when he can. When they played snoe.down in Killington back in 2013, they basically skied right to the stage. Rob performed part of Set 1 in his ski boots. They did a breakfast show at the Wobbly Barn on Sunday, which Rob said was "awesome." When I spoke with Rob, they were out in Bend, Oregon, as part of moe's West Coast tour, and Al was skiing before the show. They started in San Diego and went right up the coast, playing cities along the way, and they'll end in Seattle.

They don't do snoe.down any more but this winter they're doing a mini tour of ski resorts in the Rockies. Rob said, "It's 3 weeks of playing ski mountains and ski bars."

They hail from Utica, New York, where Al currently resides, but Rob has been living in Maine since 1997. Rob

grew up in Utica, having gone to high school there. moe. started at the University of Buffalo. Rob met Chuck Garvey (guitar/vocals), who was on his floor. He said, "We started playing together. I didn't really play much at the time, but he let me borrow his guitar and learn how to play some stuff on his electric, and then I switched to bass. I was friends with Al's girlfriend. He didn't go to school there, but after he graduated from Oneonta, he moved in with her. We had already started playing

together before, but Al ended up joining up, and it made the lineup what it is now." moe. is going on 34 years now. They wanted to call themselves "5 Guys Named Moe" but found out there were already some bands named that, so they just shortened it to moe. The period is just a design thing.

Growing up, Rob had older brothers (he was the youngest), and he'd listen to their record collection. Rob said, "They were always playing Little Feat, Steely Dan, Frank Zappa, and stuff like that. To this day, it's kind of ingrained in my head. I ended up playing bass because I heard the Red Hot Chili Peppers and '80s and '90s funk music. That's what got me into the bass."

This is a short tour. After the Pickle Barrel, they play Stowe Cider, and then up to Portland, Maine to the Portland House of Music, near where Rob lives. You can find them on their website at moe.org and on all the social media platforms.

Rob has such a strong friendship with the guys. Thirty-four years together is impressive. Rob ended with saying, "I get to do this with my friends. I'm 55, and the older you get as a grown man or woman, how many friends do you keep? I've been friends with a lot of these dudes since college. I get to go around and play with them play with my friends, like I'm a kid. That's pretty cool."

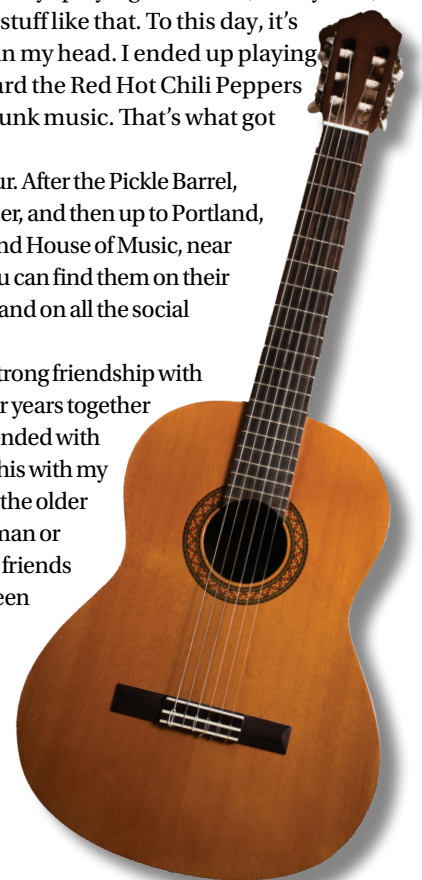


Rockin' the Region
By Dave Hoffenberg



By Paul Citone

moe. a band that includes members Rob Derhak and Al Schnier, will perform "moe.stly," an acoustic show at the Pickle Barrel on Thursday. The inception of moe.stly traces back to the COVID era, with Al initiating live shows from his residence.



Rockin the Region with Roots of Creation and Grateful Dub

This Sunday at 7 p.m. at the Pickle Barrel is going to be my favorite show of the year, and you get two great bands for the price of one. New Hampshire's own Roots of Creation will be opening up for themselves, so to speak. Their other band, Grateful Dub, is the headliner of the evening.



Rockin' the Region
By Dave Hoffenberg

It's called the "Grateful Roots Tour." I've seen both bands, and this is a night not to be missed. Roots of Creation has been going on for 25 years, and Grateful Dub is relatively new, starting in 2018.

Last year, they separated the two projects. Dub member Bret Wilson said, "In 2018, we put out the album "Grateful Dub," and it's turned into its own thing. The original fans wanted more originals, and the Dead fans wanted more Dead. Before the pandemic, we had the idea of the Grateful Roots tour, and it was doing really well. We would do one set as Roots of Creation and then change into our musical costume and alter-ego, Grateful Dub. The tour was amazing; we were super-stoked, and then the pandemic hit. Dammit."

Last year, they did some touring as ROC and some as GD, and this year they decided to combine them. Wilson said, "We open up for ourselves. We do 75 minutes of ROC originals. We've been putting out a lot of new music, so we mix it up with the new stuff and some B-sides and top it off with GD."

The band's home base is New Hampshire. That's where they were formed, record, practice, and where Wilson and another guy live, but they have players from Texas, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and Brooklyn. The lineup for the Pickle show is Wilson Wilson (lead guitar and vocals), Christopher "Tal" Pearson (keyboards), Andrew "Dubking" Riordan (saxophone/vocals), Matthew "Dickey" James (bass), Brendan "Bdilla" Dillion (drums), and Kyle "Bobby" Bell (guitar/vocals). Christopher started the band with Wilson, and they've been jamming for 20 years. Andrew has been with them for 11 years, and the rest are relatively new. Wilson said, "They're all super young and hungry. They have amazing youthful energy. They've been with us for the past year to three years. It's a cool combination of three people who've been focused and dedicated and three people who are bringing a new kind of fire and getting us excited for things."

They've been doing a lot of studio stuff for ROC and Grateful Dub. Wilson said,

"I'm proud of how much new stuff we've released (nine singles in the past year). We've been trying to put out as much music as possible." Lifetime, they have five studio albums, four live albums, and one live EP. You can find these on their website, rootsofcreation.com, and on all the social platforms. Wilson added, "My philosophy is to get as many people to listen to it as possible. If they really want to support us, they can buy a ticket to a show, and if they want to go above and beyond, they can buy it on vinyl and CD, where it sounds a little bit better. I got into this because I love music, so the more people that listen, the happier I am. I like when it affects people in a positive way. We've had people tell us our music got them to quit drugs, helped them through a divorce, and got them out of suicidal thoughts. That's my favorite part about releasing music; other than that, it makes me feel satisfied to create something. Plus, when people come to shows, it feels good that you're doing something that people feed off of. The more people who listen on the internet, the more people you get to entertain and have fun with."

They just released a deluxe version of their 2018 GD album, which has instrumental versions of every song. Wilson said, "They're fun to listen to because you get to hear everything that's going on, the vocals aren't clouding that up, and you can sing along if you want." It also has an acoustic version of "Standing on the Moon" and a dub version of "Friend of the Devil." They also have live singles of "China Cat Sunflower," "Fire on the Mountain," and "They Love Each Other."

A bucket list item of mine is to go to the Sugar Shack Ses-

sions in Florida. I've seen a few favorite bands of mine play there. Look it up on YouTube; it's incredible. Wilson and the guys recently played there and released their whole session. Wilson said, "We did 'Reggae Rise Up' in Florida, and they loved our set and wanted us to do a Grateful Dub set at Sugar Shack. They said it would be really bad ass. We were really excited to go to Florida and do that."

Grateful Dub came to be because when Wilson was learning guitar, someone told him if he wanted to be cool, he'd have to listen to four bands: The Dead, Phish, Moon Boot Lover, and Fishbone. I've seen all 4, so I agree. Wilson was playing metal and punk music but was told to learn those if he wanted to go to the parties. Wilson said, "I started delving into the Dead, trading

bootlegs and trying to figure out what Jerry was doing on the guitar—the improvisation. It was the art of the jam band. I was trying to figure out the art of the solo and the solos you can sing from beginning to end. That's where my love for the Dead started. When I got to high school, the older kids adopted me because of the bootlegs. The Dead was a big part of being accepted by the older crowd, as was my love of music and improvisation. Then I started ROC and kind of fused the Cali reggae, ska, fusion of all different music, like Sublime did of the jam band aesthetic."

Wilson is excited to play the Pickle Barrel again and said, "It's a legendary spot." He loved this life and said, "It's an honor to have this be my job. Everything I do for a living is music. I'm honored that people work all week, hire a babysitter, and spend their hard-earned money and time to drive and see us perform. To have this be my job is amazing. Making love, music, and family are the most important things, and skateboarding or snowboarding if I can get it in."

Courtesy
rootsofcreation.com
Roots of Creation



By Kevin Bires

Grateful Dub, is the headliner of the "Grateful Roots Tour, this Sunday at 7 p.m. at the Pickle Barrel, with Roots of Creation performing as the opening act.





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Hartland Winter Trails will offer a tiki torch trek and snacks on Saturday

Saturday, Feb. 3 at 6 p.m.—HARTLAND—Share an evening with your friends and family on the Hartland Winter Trails, 50 Route 12 (across from the fire station), Hartland, 3 Corners Village. Enjoy home baked goods from the volunteer Hartland bakers together with water, coffee, tea, hot chocolate and cider.

Ski, snowshoe, or walk on 1.5 km of trail lighted by tiki torches and lanterns and enjoy a bonfire and music. Headlamps are recommended; this is an all-weather event.

Free for kids 12 and under, \$5 per person or \$15 per family. All proceeds benefit the Hartland Winter Trails.

Vermont Filmmaker explores her identity through three generations of Iranian women

Saturday-Sunday, Feb. 3-4 at 3 p.m.—WOODSTOCK—Join young Vermont filmmaker Sierra Urich as she explores her identity by uncovering the lived experiences of her Iranian-born mother and grandmother in the film "Joonam."

The 2023 documentary is screening at Billings Farm & Museum, now in its 41st season, on Saturday, Feb. 3-Sunday Feb. 4 at 3 p.m. as part of the Woodstock Vermont Film Series. Following Saturday's screening, there will be a Q&A with the filmmaker.

Urich was recently honored in Doc NYC's 2023 40 Under 40 list and is currently nominated for an Independent Spirit Award.

"Joonam," Urich's first feature film, premiered at the 2023 Sundance Film Festival. At the core of this film is warmth and good humor, echoing the family dynamics that form the backdrop of the story. The title itself, a Farsi term of endearment, sets the tone for the film and invites the audience to share in Urich's personal quest to make sense of her fractured Iranian identity.

Growing up in rural Vermont, far removed from Iran, she navigates barriers of language, culture, and geopolitical conflict to construct a moving portrait of the women in her family. In the film, Urich reflects on her own childhood experiences and explores the challenges of being separated from her roots.

Urich's mother left Iran for college in the United States, just before the Islamic revolution. Urich's grandmother experienced tumult and loss in the aftermath of the Iranian Revolution, with her family scattered and her children emigrating to the United States. It was 16 years before she reunited with them. Without the opportunity to visit Iran herself, Urich pieces together a picture of Iran using grainy home videos, archival flashes of historical protests, FaceTime tours of central Tehran, and TikTok videos from a younger generation of Iranians.

"Joonam," attempts to bridge the understanding between first and second-generation immigrants, exploring both nostalgia and trauma from her family's story.

PBS has commented that "This film at its heart is really about loss of home and how that experience is different for each generation." "Joonam" has been described by Indiewire as "A touching look at intergenerational immigrant identity," and "A blazingly original form of personal expression." By The Moveable Feast.

Following Saturday's screening, there will be a discussion with director Sierra Urich, facilitated by Film Series curator, Jay Craven. Film tickets are \$15 for all screenings, and \$12 for Billings Farm & Museum members. For tickets and more information, visit billingsfarm.org/filmseries/ or call 802-457-5303 Monday-Friday, 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.



Stone Valley Arts offers ballroom dance and Essentrics classes

Stone Valley Arts new lineup of ballroom dance and Essentrics classes will be held this winter at the Green Mountain Community School campus in the Waldron Gym, 1 Brennan Circle, Poultney. Essentrics Stretch and Strengthen, taught by Diane Sullivan, a certified Level 4 Essentrics instructor, is a unique age reversing workout designed to restore and maintain joint mobility, release tension, and systematically unlock tight muscles.

The class will be held on Tuesdays at 5:30 p.m.

The no-weight, low-impact workout will tone and strengthen muscles, free up tight joints and rebalance your body. Postural imbalances, caused by everyday life and repetitive movements, can leave you with decreased mobility and lack of flexibility as well as growing aches and pains. Folks often assume all of this is just part of aging, but it doesn't have to be.

Essentrics creator Miranda Esmonde-White, a former ballerina with the National Ballet of Canada, from the PBS show Classical Stretch, spent years developing this highly beneficial technique.

The program combines the lengthening and strengthening aspects of ballet, the flowing movement of Tai Chi, and the healing qualities of physiotherapy.

For a full schedule and further information, visit: stonevalleyarts.org/calendar

Ballroom dance classes

Thursdays - Feb. 1, 8, 15, 22

- 5-5:50 p.m. - Kids - Tango & Cha-Cha
- 6-6:50 p.m. - Adults - Foxtrot
- 7-7:50 p.m. - Adults - Salsa

For a full schedule and further information, visit: stonevalleyarts.org/calendar

Local Woodstock Ski Runners prepare for The Hard Mile: Saskadena Six's Uphill Race

Saturday, Feb. 3 at 7 a.m.—WOODSTOCK—The Hard Mile Uphill Race starts at the bottom of Easy Mile (near the Woodstock Ski Runners Clubhouse). The finish line will be at the top of Easy Mile, adjacent to the ski patrol hut. Upon finishing at the top, participants can leisurely swap out their skins and free ski or ride to the bottom.

New this year is the Hard Mile + Joe's Extra Mile. Add an extra lap in memory of Joe Duane. The two-lap Extra Mile division will begin first and ski down a designated route to the start line before changing back over for the second uphill lap to finish at the patrol hut.

This race is competitive, yet participants have the flexibility to engage at their preferred pace, whether individually or accompanied by friends (please refrain from bringing four-legged companions unless they can fit inside your backpack).

After the free ski down the hill, meet on the back deck of the S6 Main Lodge for coffee, pastries, and awards for Extra Mile, Men's, and Women's 1st, 2nd, and 3rd, as well as Best Dressed.

The cost for the event is \$25 per person. All contestants must be prepared with skis equipped with skinning or touring gear and/or split boards (no snowshoes or skis without metal edges). Saskadena Six does not have uphill equipment rentals.

- Registration is open through Feb. 2 at noon. (There will be no same-day registration.)
- Day-of-time(s): Bib Pick-Up: 7-7:45 a.m.
- Joe's Extra Mile start time: 8 a.m.
- Men's and Women's Hard Mile Start time: 8:05 a.m.

For more information, visit: saskadenasix.com/do/events/the-hard-mile-uphill-race-0.

**Saturday
Feb. 3**



Courtesy saskadenasix.com

The Hard Mile: Saskadena Six's Uphill Race is set for Saturday, February 3 at 7 a.m. in Woodstock. This year, the event includes Joe Duane's Extra Mile, adding an extra lap. The race is competitive and allows participants to engage at their preferred pace. Participants can swap out their skins and free ski or ride to the bottom.

15th anniversary of the Vermont Adaptive Ski and Sports hosts winter festival for blind, visually impaired

Saturday, Feb. 3 & Sunday, Feb. 4—KILLINGTON—This weekend at Pico Mountain, Vermont Adaptive Ski and Sports will host a special event for more than 20 athletes from around the country. The athletes, who are visually impaired, will learn to ski or learn to race with Vermont Adaptive Ski and Sports.

For 15 years, Vermont Adaptive has hosted this event where the athletes with visual impairments can participate in Alpine skiing, snowboarding, and snowshoeing. The event continues to be one of the largest annual

gatherings of skiers in the U.S. who are blind or visually impaired.

Participants will ski at Pico Mountain on Saturday and Sunday, with the option to practice snowshoeing on Sunday at Base Camp in Killington. During the weekend, participants can practice with Vermont Adaptive's auditory rifle system, the same system used for competition in Nordic Combined in the Paralympics.

Vermont Adaptive's team of highly trained instructors will work with attendees to learn to ski and snowboard

or improve skills. Many participants are returning and will have the same volunteer instructors as in past years.

This year, more than 20 participants, including military veterans, will attend. In some cases, participants will be attending this ski camp for their first time skiing without sight. More than 100 people will be in attendance for the weekend, including volunteer instructors, participants, family members, and friends.

In addition to skiing and winter activities, the festival includes a Friday night welcome party, group lunches each day, and a Saturday night banquet.

For more information, visit: pr@vermontadaptive.org or contact Kim Jackson at 802-345-9730.

More than 100 people will be in attendance for the weekend, including volunteer instructors, participants, family members, and friends.



Courtesy vermontadaptive.org

Vermont Adaptive Ski and Sports is hosting an event for visually impaired athletes at Pico Mountain, offering Alpine skiing, snowboarding, snowshoeing, riflery and more.

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vermontfarmersfoodcenter.org/onlinemarket




Submitted

Visiting Nurse and Hospice for Vermont and New Hampshire, a member of Dartmouth Health, collected more than 100 books for young readers as part of its annual gift collection. Pictured back row, l-r: VNH nurses Krysta Zabriskie, Stephanie Mozzer, Kimberly Rowntree, Missy Carpenter and Saryn Lauzon. Front row, l-r: Kayla Cauvey and Karen Pero.

Visiting Nurse and Hospice employees donate and distribute books for youth throughout the community

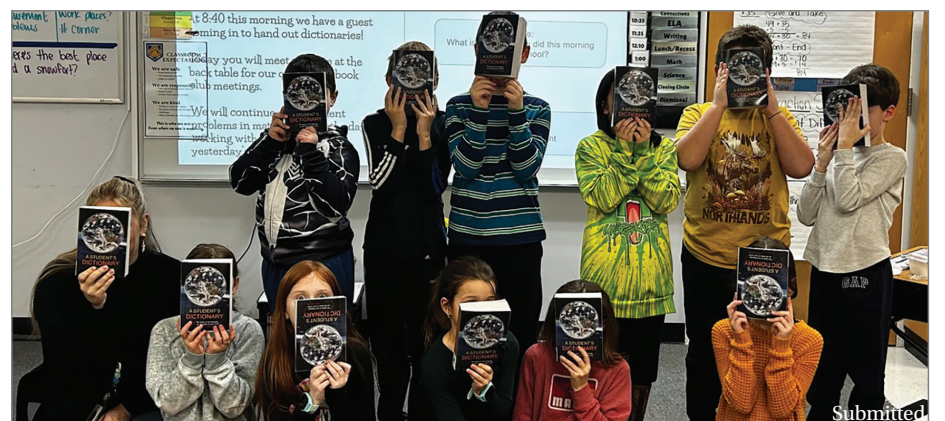
WHITE RIVER JUNCTION— Visiting Nurse and Hospice for Vermont and New Hampshire (VNH), a member of Dartmouth Health, collected more than 110 books for young readers, from infants to teens, as well as \$200 in gift cards for book purchases as part of Visiting Nurse and Hospice (VNH)'s annual gift collection.

"As a 116-year institution, VNH is proud to be an integrated part of the communities it serves," said VNH President and CEO Johanna L. Beliveau, DNP, MBA, RN. "This year, our team chose a book drive as the annual holiday gift collection. We see literacy and youth education as a critical component to community health. Even one book in the hands of a child can make a world of difference."

Each year, VNH's Maternal and Child Health team sponsors a holiday gift drive asking employees to donate gifts that are then distributed to families in the program. This year, they collected books and gift cards for children of all ages.

The books were collected in the month of November at multiple VNH drop sites, and they were distributed during December and January to over 100 families in the Maternal and Child Health program.

This is the second year VNH has organized a gift collection as a way to assist families during the winter season.



Submitted

Rotary's Project Dictionary delivers

Third Graders at Barstow Memorial School were among 16 third grade classes from eight schools — 242 students — to receive brand new dictionaries donated by Rutland South Rotary Club's Project Dictionary program. Supporting childhood literacy is at the core of Rutland South Rotary's mission, and Project Dictionary has been one of their signature philanthropies for the past 25 years. Rotarians volunteer to go into the third grade classrooms to distribute them and engage the students in word play activities with their dictionaries. Participating schools included: Barstow Memorial School, Clarendon Elementary School, Christ the King School, Proctor Elementary School, Rutland Area Christian School, Rutland Intermediate School, Rutland Town School, and West Rutland School.

Vermont Fish & Wildlife Dept.'s Green Mountain Conservation Camp registration is open

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 & Wildlife Dept.'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 & Wildlife Education Specialist Hannah Phelps. "An important takeaway message and common theme during

the week is that conserving and managing habitat will help ensure Vermont will have fish and wildlife in the future."

"We would love to have all of the advanced sessions filled for campers who have already attended a basic session," added Phelps. "Advanced sessions are for campers who have completed a basic session in the 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 on June 16 and continue until Aug. 16. Tuition is \$250 for the week, including food, lodging, and equipment, and financial assistance is available.

To register, visit: vtfishandwildlife.com/learn-more/conservation-education/green-mountain-conservation-camp/gmcc-registration-information

For more information, visit: vtfishandwildlife.com, or FWGMCC@vermont.gov, or call 802-522-2925.

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Solutions From page 17

Crossword

A	B	A	T	E		B	O	S	C		D	A	B	A
M	O	L	A	R		A	P	P	A	R	E	L	E	D
G	O	T	O	G	R	E	A	T	L	E	N	G	T	H
A	N	S			A	L	L		A	L	I	A	S	
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Sudoku

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

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Linda (2 years) and Sugar (8 months) are mother and daughter and two of the sweetest kitties. This bonded pair adores people and are cat friendly. We know they will complete a home and make some very lucky people very happy.

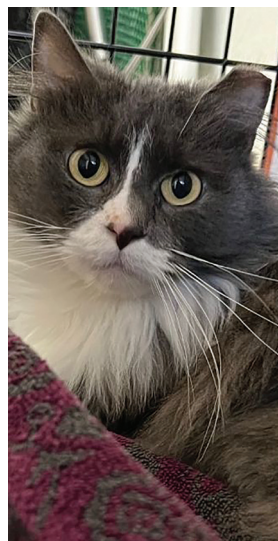
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6-month-old spayed female Hound mix. I came to Lucy Mackenzie after things at my last home didn't quite work out for me. I guess you could consider me as a high energy, but I'm also really super cute and adorable, as well....and I'm a puppy! I think I'd do best in a home with a human who's had experience with hounds before, as I do like my routines and consistency! I can't live with cats, but I may be good with other dogs, as well as children, if I'm introduced to them first, and all goes well.

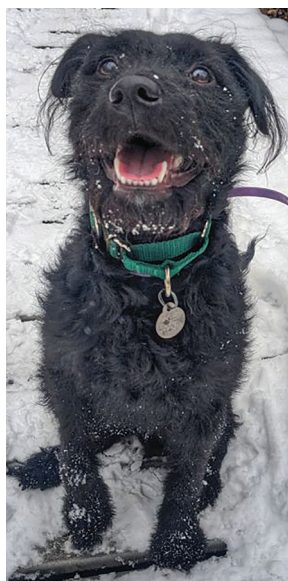
This pet is available for adoption at
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Whiskers—1-year-old.
 Spayed female. Domestic longhair.



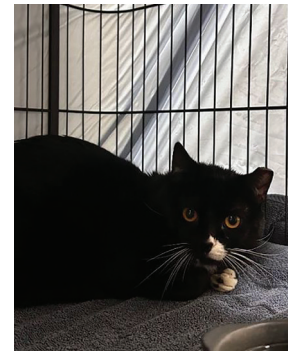
Boone—1-year-old.
 Neutered male. Hound mix.



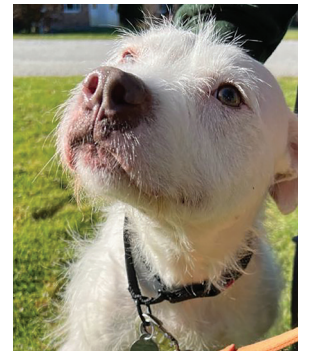
Gizmo—1-year-old. Spayed female. Wirehaired Terrier.



King—10-year-old.
 Neutered male. Domestic shorthair.



Pita—3-year-old. Neutered male. Domestic shorthair.



Blu—3 1/2-year-old. Spayed female. Terrier mix.



TOBIAS

Tobias—1 year-6 month-old. Neutered male. Pitt-mix.

All of these pets are available for adoption at
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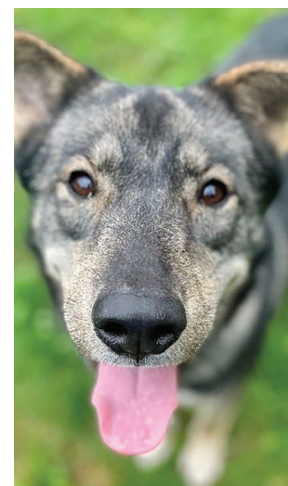
Max—1-year-old. Neutered male. Domestic shorthair.



Genesis—7-year-old.
 Neutered male. mixed Breed.



Johnny Cash—2-year-old. Neutered male. Cata-houla mix.



Raven—1-year-old.
 Spayed female. mixed Breed.



Blueberry—10-Month-Old. Spayed female. mixed Breed.

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Leo
July 21 - August 20

Sometimes the best thing you can do is to keep your head down and get back to work. On the one hand, you want validation and recognition for your efforts, while on the other, this isn't the reason you should be doing what you're doing. If things feel fraught or uncomfortable for you right now, then ask yourself whether you're being authentic or not. You're still going to shine whether others bask in your light or not!

Sagittarius
November 21 - December 20

If you're feeling frustrated or restless with things financially or work-wise, then you know what the definition of insanity is! It may be high time you tried something different, more authentic or more satisfying. If nothing else, it's imperative for you to lead a life that is filled with meaning and purpose beyond just paying the bills. It's your mission now to find what that looks like for you or at the very least, at least start trying to find out!

Taurus
April 21 - May 20

You may finally be ready to make those changes you know you have to make. Now that the planet of change and disruption Uranus is back on track in your sign, you've got several months of forward momentum towards making the authentic adjustments to your life that you know you need. If you've been actively resisting this, may I kindly suggest that you stop. Even the smallest adjustments can gently nudge you forward.

Virgo
August 21 - September 20

You could complain about the seemingly lack of fun and frivolity in your life or you could do something about it! That being said though, it may take some time to realize what fun actually is after having potent Pluto involved for so long. Now things have lightened up, it's time for you to experiment and try new things. The world is your oyster if you're willing to explore the possibilities of what it has to offer you.

Capricorn
December 21 - January 20

The weight that has now lifted from your shoulders feels incredibly liberating. With so many choices, options and possibilities, it may feel like you want to have it all! And, why can't you? When it comes to your personal desires, passion projects or simply living life with a sense of greater fulfillment and joy, all you have to do is decide. Seize the day, as they say! Life changes when you decide to do something different.

Gemini
May 21 - June 20

It's the corners of your life that may be speaking the loudest to you right now. These messages may be in the form of dreams or intuitions. They may be a part of your fears or phobias coming to light in order for you to tackle them, head on. Don't ignore these signs and symbols. Much of what is happening right now are messages from the spirit world informing you of the new directions heading your way.

Libra
September 21 - October 20

Your home and family life is starting to look so different now that Pluto has left. Things may feel lighter or freer than they've done in many many years. Now, you can get back to the job of having your domestic life just the way you like it. If there are changes you're considering, the bigger the risk you take now, the greater the reward will be down the track.

Aquarius
January 21 - February 20

Everything's changed and it's not going back to how it was. As confronting as that may be, the path ahead is also littered with amazing possibilities and opportunities. A big part of this is simply up to you to grasp them. The catch is that you have to be willing to change your mind, see new perspectives and not subject those around you to what you think is right or true. This isn't the time to be recalcitrant.

Cancer
June 21 - July 20

Your social life and relationships of all kinds are highly active right now. This could be of increased energy and activity. It could also be of increased volatility. The recent Full Moon just occurred in your personal value zone. If you feel pushed or pulled by external forces around you, put your hand on your heart and go back to your deepest desires. It's allowed to be about you, you know!

Scorpio
October 21 - November 20

When people think about their big picture plans, they are often trying to build something on a foundation that is less than ideal. At some point this week, take a look and see if you have things in order. Anything you choose to build, literally or metaphorically, can only be as good as the slab it's built upon. It might be time to get your ducks lined up first before you make any choices you can't back out of.

Pisces
February 21 - March 20

You are overdue for an authentic conversation with a friend or sibling. If boundaries have been breached or you're simply feeling different toward someone than you once did, then you need to be honest about it. If you don't, misunderstandings or dynamics that have been hidden under the surface could continue to fester. If you need to, reflect or meditate on it a while before you make any decisions. That said, honesty is always key.

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Cassandra has studied astrology for about 20 years. She is an international teacher of astrology who has been published all over the globe.

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A bit of an adjustment on perspective

January ended very similarly to how it began. Challenges or obstructions to relationships or relating, or even defining your desires and goals for the New Year may have weighed heavy. In order to have one thing, it often means having to say “No” to something else.

To take one side of an issue can appear you’re not sympathetic to another side. It doesn’t have to be this way. All it takes is a little bit of an adjustment or compromise.

Rather than a situation being either/or, this week offers the chance to figure out a

way it can be both/and. It’s not always as easy as it sounds though.

It will require not only thinking outside your current paradigm, but backing up those ideas with action. Choices and decisions you were staunchly against you may find yourself beginning to entertain. Instead of looking at an option and shutting it down, explore it. What would life look like if you took the road less travelled? What might life look like if instead of remaining inside your comfort zone, you took a risk that felt right for you. If you never go, you’ll never know!



Cosmic Catalogue
By Cassandra Tyndall

The beauty of ice

Ice shimmers like glass,
Reflecting the beautiful night sky,
The moon and stars on the ice,
Sparkling in the light,
Almost like a mirror,
So very pretty,
Brightly glistening,
As if had been polished,
Polished so well it has a faint glow,
So amazing the things earth can create,
Little decorations that make our planet incredible,
Let’s try and keep it that way.



Poetry Is Power
By Bree Sarandrea

Trickster’s message: Lighten up

I haven’t been in touch with Bear Spirit for a while. I thought I’d let him hibernate in peace and quiet. But then I recalled I hadn’t shared all my interaction with the coyote who appeared in person and in spirit right before the snow fell.

I entered my Radiant Heavenly Heat Sauna and began my meditation. At first I visualized my feet in water which my spiritual teacher says is important. I stood in the trickling water in our creek that leads from the marsh to Roaring Brook. The leaves were soft with muck below, a slippery cloak on jutting out rocks. I climbed the loose bank and crawled into the heap of branches covered in leaves and grass. Underneath lay a still calm world with a bed of leaves dancing in dappled light. I invited a coyote to speak with me. Soon one crept in, sniffing the air.

“Mr. Coyote, thank you for coming. I believe you may have a message for me. I saw you cross our property and I’m curious about what you’ll say.”

“Thank you for inviting me,” Mr. Coyote politely replied. “It’s not often humans wish to hear me. You mentioned ‘your property’...really? You know better than that. It belongs to all living creatures on Earth. I am happy you’re willing to ‘share’ it, but it isn’t yours in the larger

scheme. Earth was created for us of all to live on happily side by side.”

“What of our ground hog, chipmunks and squirrels who have disappeared since your appearance?” I asked.

“We are interconnected through the web of life, which continues long after we each disappear— we belong to species who depend on one another. Sometimes we take, sometimes we sacrifice. It is the law of nature and survival. We understand and accept this, too. Do you?” he asked.

I confessed, “Maybe not, really. I can’t stand to see anyone suffering.”

Mountain Meditation → 35

Discovering Orion

You know Orion always comes up sideways. Throwing a leg up over our fence of mountains, And rising on his hands, he looks in on me...

So wrote Robert Frost in his poem “The Star-splitter.” The aesthetic wonder of this easy-to-find constellation and its twinkling starlight have captured the imagination of countless stargazers. But the science behind Orion’s stars is also compelling.

“Orion has a lot of really good science going on in it,” said John Gianforte, director of the University of New Hampshire Observatory. “It’s a great place to start learning about the night sky.”

Orion is one of the most easily distinguished constellations, in part because of the three bright stars that form its belt. The hunter figure of Orion also wields a club raised above his head, a shield held before him, and a sword hanging from his belt.

Orion is best observed in the Northern Hemisphere from December through March as it makes its way from east to west in the nighttime sky. In the early evening, during the first full week of February, look southward, about halfway up the sky for the three stars in a row that represent his belt. Hold your arm straight out and try to block these stars with your hand. The area of the sky blocked by your hand will be about the size of Orion. The two bright stars near the top of your fingers are Orion’s shoulders. The two bright stars at the bottom of your palm are his feet.

Betelgeuse is the bright, red-colored shoulder star on the left. Rigel is the bright, blue-white foot star on the right. Most of the other stars look yellow or white.

“The color of these stars depends on their surface temperature,” said Gianforte.

Think of the colors of stars as iron in a blacksmith’s shop. When the iron is heated in the hearth, it turns red in color. Heat the iron a little more and it turns yellow. When it gets even hotter, the iron glows white. Since stars are made up mostly of hydrogen and helium, the color changes happen at much higher temperatures than seen with hot iron, but the principle is the same.

Of the stars we can see with our eyes, red stars are the coolest. The surface temperature of Betelgeuse is about 6,000 degrees. While that may seem hot to us on Earth, it’s rather chilly compared to blue-colored stars; Rigel’s surface temperature is a whopping 22,000 degrees! The yellow-white stars, including our own sun, have surface temperatures around 10,000 degrees.

After you’ve found Orion and distinguished its brightest stars, find the Orion Nebula. It is one of the bright spots making up his sword, which appears

to hang from his belt. This nebula is a giant cloud of interstellar dust and the gases helium and hydrogen, some of which is coalescing to form new stars. The radiation from these stars energizes the gases, causing the nebula to glow, similar to how fluorescent lights work. Light from nearby stars also reflects off the surrounding dust, revealing this nebula as one of the most awesome sights in the night sky.

Most of the stars in Orion have no relationship to each other. They only form an image from our viewpoint here on Earth. In fact, if you were able to view the same stars from another part of the galaxy, you wouldn’t see the image of Orion at all. All these stars would appear to be in different places. That’s because stars in Orion lie at different distances from us, measured in light years.

If you could travel the speed of light, you could make almost 35 round trips from Boston to San Francisco and back every second. Travel that fast in a straight line for a whole year and you’ll be one light-year away from the Earth, or about 6 trillion miles. That is a 6 followed by 12 zeros.

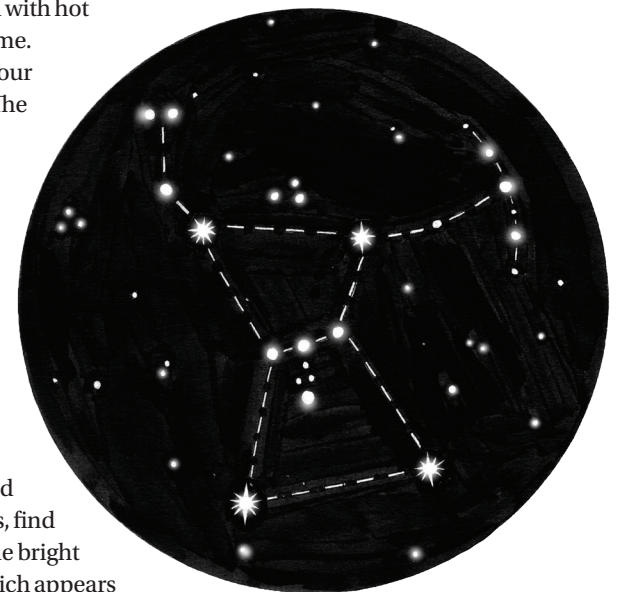
Rigel, the brightest star in Orion, is 870 light-years away from us. Betelgeuse lies 642 light-years away, and the Orion Nebula lies 1,500 light-years away! But from our vantage point on Earth, the stars form the singular image of the mighty hunter, Orion.

So, when you are out in the early evening this time of the year, and Orion looks in on you after he has risen above the fence of mountains (or trees or neighborhood houses), look back on him and marvel at the wonders of the night sky.

Tim Loffus is an environmental chemist and writer based in central Massachusetts. Illustration by Adelaide Murphy Tyrol. The Outside Story is assigned and edited by Northern Woodlands magazine and sponsored by the Wellborn Ecology Fund of the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation: nhcf.org.



The Outside Story
By Timothy Loffus



The gift that keeps on giving

For the first 10 years of my marriage, my mother-in-law gave me pajama pants for Christmas. She was a self-avowed horrible gift-giver and upon gracing me with the sleepwear, would announce, “Yeah, it’s another pair of pajamas. Just switch them out and keep quiet.”

The pajama pants were generally good quality, usually flannel, with some sort of plaid or seasonal pattern on them. It’s not that I hated the way they looked or felt, they were simply something I was never inclined to wear.

Historically, I have avoided pajama pants, especially in bed as I tend to sleep hot. Instead, I always gravitated toward name-brand sweatpants from Nike or Adidas (which are roughly the same thing – albeit a bit more stylish).

I wasn’t alone in my disapproval of the pajamas; she gifted the same item to her other son-in-law, who had the same reaction as me.

Finally, prior to one Christmas, I pulled her aside and gently explained that, as much as I appreciated her thoughtfulness, I felt her money would be better spent if she gifted me a book. And if a book seemed like too much trouble, a gift card to Amazon.com would be just as good.

The idea of switching didn’t sit well with her because she’s a woman who likes consistency, but she finally relented and agreed that going forward she would only purchase books.

I was thrilled for two reasons: because I no longer had to feel bad about bringing brand-new pajama pants to Goodwill

and because I love to read. It was a win-win situation. When my brother-in-law got word that the sleepwear gifting was over, he showered me with praise for initiating the change.

Unfortunately, this started a decade-long struggle of pretending that I was thrilled with the book she chose for me. She never opted for an Amazon gift card and instead would visit a big box bookstore like Barnes & Noble and then raid the discount rack. This meant that I would either receive a fiction title that never caught on or a dated biography of a historical figure that I had little interest in.

Out of respect, I would always start reading whatever book she gave me, but more often than not, I’d bail within the first 50 pages out of disinterest. The book then would sit on our coffee table until I was confident that she had forgotten about giving it to me.

This year prior to Christmas, I pulled my wife aside and begged her to lean on her

mother to buy me the new Elon Musk biography by Walter Isaacson. I’ve been listening to podcasts and speeches from Elon for years and was wildly intrigued by what he was

involved with. I thought for sure that she would appease me.

When Christmas morning arrived, my mother-in-law handed me a wrapped package resembling a book. I tore it open with excitement and discovered a health manual on how to live until 100. I feigned interest and flipped through the pages, then subtly turned toward my wife who gave me an apathetic smile.

My wife then got up and walked over to the Christmas tree, grabbed another similar-sized gift, and brought it to me. I opened it to find Elon’s biography, then looked up at her and laughed.

I just finished reading the book, which was both intriguing and mesmerizing. Elon Musk is a wildly interesting human whose life story reads like something out of a 10-part docudrama. He’s a polarizing figure who doesn’t suffer fools (or laziness), but he’s also making strides in multiple disciplines that cannot be ignored or understated.

I walked away from reading Elon’s bio with a sincere admiration for the man and

his ambitions and a deep respect for his commitment to seeing mankind survive as a multi-planetary species. But I also learned that with an ego as large as his, immense drama will always follow.

Ego was the main talking point on Jan. 28, 1985, when musical recording artists from across the U.S. came together to record “We Are

the World,” the chart-topping charity single created to help combat African famine.

This week’s feature is, “The Greatest Night in Pop,” a documentary about the genesis of one of the greatest selling singles in the history of music. With footage of the actual event and interviews with many of the main players, “The Greatest Night in Pop” delivers a behind-the-scenes glimpse at a rare moment in time.

Check this one out if you remember “We Are the World” and the impact it had on pop culture in 1985.

Those who weren’t around or don’t remember may not be as entertained, but anyone who remembers the event will be transfixed with the nostalgia.

A melancholic “B-” for “The Greatest Night in Pop,” now available to stream on Netflix.

Got a question or comment for Dom? You can email him at moviediary@att.net.



The Movie Diary
By Dom Cioffi



Bodies in flow

I love a good party. And by good party, I mean one where everyone is on the dance floor, free of their inhibitions and simply loving life. The ones where your vision starts to blur and all that surrounds you is the sound of music and the feel of the dance floor beneath your feet. Nothing else matters except trying to stay upright and not have your knee pop out (I didn’t used to think of the latter, but now that I’m a wee bit older it’s a vital focus of the dancing if I want to ski for the rest of the season).

Maybe it is because I grew up listening to Madonna, but I always felt the dance floor was a place where you could get away. My first cassette tape was from the coolest aunt ever. When I was about 6 she gave me a stereo with an 8-track, two cassette players and a record player. I had to be the coolest kid ever and that first tape: Madonna’s Madonna. I’ve been a Madonna fan since the very beginning: you don’t learn to hold back on the dance floor, you learn to Vogue.

Maybe it’s because my dad showed me that the dance floor was a place where you could simply be yourself. He had the most unique way of dancing, because he didn’t care what anyone else thought about him. He loved swing dancing, but made his own way. It was as if stepping on the dance floor released you from the judgments of others, that nothing mattered but simply feeling the music and letting it take you away.

Maybe it’s because I grew up in a weird

community that got drunk and threw a theme party every Saturday night all summer long. I learned how to line dance and square dance. I know the choreography to

Paradise on the Dashboard Light and the Time Warp. I know how to Vogue and do the Beer Barrel Polka.

Maybe it’s because Killington is full of houses that just love a good party. And when I mean a good party, I mean the ones where everyone is running out of the house carrying a random drum, music stand or sound equipment as we evacuate and wait for the fire trucks to come.

The ones where the band is set up in the basement party room and everyone is jumping around for hours. The ones with a little fire pit outside where you can go to let your ears rest for a minute before diving back into the fray.

Because the fray is awesome. There is an unwritten understanding that what happens of the dance floor at a house party doesn’t matter in the least. Because no one actually sees anyone. Sure, you might smile at each other, make eye contact or sing along together at an essential part of a song but you are still having an independent moment all together. You’re a superstar. Let your body go with the flow.

I went to the best house party of the year this past weekend. It was classic. A ski house, crazy outfits, local grunge band The Idiots rocking in the basement, and me, showing up in the middle of the craziest

Livin’ the Dream → 39



Living the Dream
By Merisa Sherman



By Merisa Sherman

The Idiots (Rick Webb and Aaron Normand) provided tunes for an epic dance party.

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Mountain Meditation:
from page 32

Mr. Coyote asked me directly, “Do you wish that my pups go hungry?”
 “I see your point, but I still don’t like it,” I said.
 “Then, perhaps you should be a vegetarian. What about plants? Do you believe they feel, too?”
 “Yes, and I see what you mean. It’s true. I want nothing to suffer because of me,” I said.
 “Good luck with that. Unfortunately, as it is part of living,” he said.
 I was cornered and quickly changed the subject. “Do you have another message for me?”
 “Yes,” Mr. Coyote said, “and you already know what it is. It’s in the column you just submitted. ‘Lighten up’ is what I

have to say.”
 “You’re right again. I take life too seriously. Laughter adds pleasure and years to our living.”
 “You notice discrepancies and contrasts — often they’re funny. So laugh it up!”
 “Thank you for your insights and sharing. I’m happy we met. Let’s meet again.”
 “I am at your disposal.”
 He could have ended with “ha, ha” which would be appropriate for what followed. When I went for a walk that afternoon, I found his calling card outside our ski house. Like a scolded dog, Trickster Coyote left his scat in the middle of our drive.

That might have ended our interaction, but soon our groundhog reappeared. I felt rather guilty for blaming the coyote, assuming he’d eaten the poor fellow for lunch. A few days later, I had eye surgery at UVM then returned home. That night, about 3 a.m., I was awakened to quite a commotion—a cacophony of howls, yips and yelps that I’d never heard before. Coincidence, synchronicity or a welcome home from surgery from Mr. Coyote and his family. Whichever it was, I still feel lucky that a coyote entered my life.
Marguerite Jill Dye is an artist and writer who divides her time between Vermont and Florida.

Plain talk:
from page 13

all funds ... It is what we can do within available revenue, without new or higher taxes and fees. ... To me, it does matter how much money we have. Because every penny we spend comes out of the pockets of the people who live, work and invest in Vermont.”

“And we hear from them all the time, with stories of desperation and fear. The very people I know many of you are trying to help, who want to do their part, but they’re being crushed by the burden of property taxes, or the higher rents that come with it. As well as by increased fees, just to renew a license and register a vehicle. Or the looming payroll tax and the unknown of higher fuel and electricity costs — not to mention inflation. I truly believe most of us want to help people — it’s who we are. But burdening them with more taxes, fees and other costs, is not the way to do it. Especially when they have less expensive options.”

Governor Scott proceeded to itemize the heavy demands on the public purse: the 13% increase in the 2024 budget over his veto; an unexpected FEMA match; and the first payment due to settle the EB-5 scandal of 2015 — \$9.5 million.

“Nearly all the additional revenue is needed just to sustain our core services and programs,” he continued, including \$24.7 million for the existing hotel/motel program, employee salaries and benefits (“\$10 million more than last year”) plus increased payment for pensions; deficits in E911 and fire safety; and another bridge payment to subsidize Vermont State University.

“So now,” he explained, “the added money doesn’t necessarily bring better outcomes or more services, it just keeps us afloat. ... When we spend beyond our means, it catches up to us, and ultimately with taxpayers. And when we fail to address the fundamentals of decades-old problems, they get worse, making it harder to find money to catch up.

“Before the pandemic we saw that disciplined budgeting, without higher taxes, resulted in organic revenue increases, which is the real and lasting economic growth we need to support more public investments.

“At a minimum, we need to address the factors that fuel these increases year after year, even if it won’t reduce costs this year. I truly believe if we’d acted on any of the proposals I put forward in 2017, or 2018, or 2019, we’d be better off today.”

Scott then moved on to the issue of public safety, the drug/overdose epidemic specifically.

“I wish I had better anticipated the challenge of implementing laws to raise the age of criminal accountability,” he said. “Because we weren’t ready. ... We put the policy idea ahead of the fundamentals, the real work of actually helping our youth. ... Like many other areas, we moved too far and too fast into a policy experiment. And we didn’t plan for, or build, the system needed to address extreme cases, or have the workforce to sup-

port it. We focused so much on our well-intentioned goals that we didn’t think through all the possible consequences. Like what adding older, more violent youth to DCF caseloads would do. Or how traffickers would exploit young adults to run their deadliest drugs and expand their markets in Vermont.”

After ticking off a specific examples of repeat offenders taking advantage of lenient release conditions, he continued: “It includes repealing 2018 bail changes and increasing accountability for those who violate conditions of release. I’ll ask you to adjust the ‘Raise the Age’ thresholds to make sure we have the systems and tools in place before we take the next step. I’ll also ask you to add to the list of violent crimes which allow prosecution of a juvenile to start in criminal court, and move to a system of universal sealing, rather than expunging, records, so we give people a second chance, but also hold repeat offenders accountable. And we need to continue talking about a secure facility for those who are mentally ill and a danger to the community, and a process to restore competency when possible — building on our previous collaboration.”

Then he turned to the housing crisis, changing tax policy and zoning ordinances, including Act 250, to incentivize the conversion of “abandoned or rundown properties back into good homes for low- and middle-income working families” and “brighten up neighborhoods.”

“You see, our communities and all those looking for, or struggling to afford, a decent home — they don’t have the lobbyists, the money, or the time to push back on the campaigns we’ve already started to see, to keep you from taking action.

“So those everyday Vermonters need us to represent them, over the special interests. They need us to withstand the pressure, make the right choices and have the courage to act, so they too can afford a home, and a life, here in our beautiful state.

“I don’t think there will be a lot of disagreement about what’s in this budget. The disagreement will lie in what’s not in it. But pretending we can fund everything isn’t realistic.

“We have to be honest, just pushing more and more money at problems and needs, hasn’t always equaled progress. Not in education, pensions, state colleges, housing, homelessness, and other areas where we’ve funded, but have not fixed, the problem.”

Scott ended on the note of collaboration. “A middle majority of this Legislature can help Vermont find the sweet spot, where we do the hard policy work and invest in the things that help people, without pushing them further behind, or making it too expensive for young workers to get started here, and without forcing our anchor employers out of state, or ‘Main Street’ mom and pops out of business.

“I’m not even asking you to cross the aisle, which I’ve done for over 20 years. I’m just asking you to meet me in the middle.”



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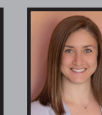
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← **Livin' the Dream:**
 from page 33

hour as I got out of work. It was awesome. And pure fun. It's kind of like skiing, except that you match your rhythms to the music rather than the mountain. Right? If skiing is a dance, then it makes sense why dancing is a huge part of ski culture. We cannot help but be caught up in the movement.

Because the mountain is our dance floor. Think about what you do while you're ripping down the mountain, making your moves and swinging your hips. Ski dancing is even actually a thing, as is ski ballet. Skiing and dancing were intermingled way before Frankie Avalon and Annette Funicello went on a "Ski Party" in 1965. You don't think Stein Erickson was the sexiest skier in history, as he danced down the mountain?

I always dreamed of living a life where dancing was an integral part. Maybe all those years dancing by myself in my room, with my family and with my friends are

what help me feel the movements on the slopes. We always talk about the technical

Dancing is ... kind of like skiing, except that you match your rhythms to the music rather than the mountain.

and power components of skiing, but what about the gracefulness, the elegance and the smoothness required for increased efficiency? Perhaps we need to spend more time on the dance floor and less time in the gym. You've got to ... let your body move to the music. VOGUE!

Merisa Sherman is a long-time Killington resident, local Realtor, bartender and KMS Coach. She can be reached at Merisa.Sherman@FourSeasonsSIR.com.



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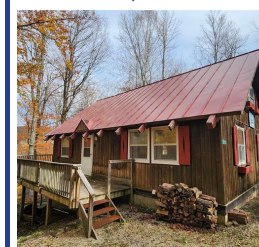
3 BR/1.5 BA, 2-Level condo, 1168 sq. ft.



- Electric heat, 2 decks
- Seller offering some financing
- Furnished & equipped \$519,000

TANGLEWOOD DR - "Snow Haven"

4BR, 2BA, 2,592 sq. ft. home



- 1.5 acres, electric heat
- 1st floor with a BR & BA
- Open living concept
- Level driveway \$579K

TRAIL CREEK - SKI HOME & SHUTTLE OUT

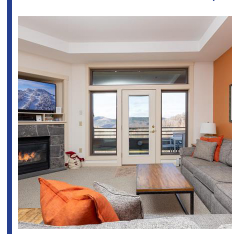
Upper level 2BR+LOFT, 2BA, 1,342 Sq.Ft.



- Great rental history
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- Includes 1BR ensuite that can rent separately
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Lenore Bianchi



Tricia Carter



Pat Linnemayr



Chris Bianchi



Michelle Lord



Meghan Charlebois



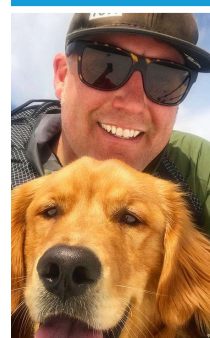
Katie McFadden



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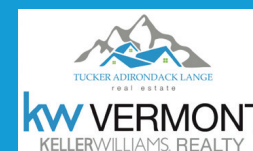


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