



By James Kent

PICO OPENS FRIDAY THE 13TH On Friday, Dec. 13, Pico Mountain will open for another season of family skiing and snowboarding.

Page 3

# **Community rallies to save art programs at MVSU** amid steep budget cuts, board faces tough decisions

District board has proposed 17 staff cuts and program reductions for a \$2.5 million savings By Polly Mikula

Over 100 district residents attend-MVSU serves over 995 students ed the last Mountain Views Supervisory Union (MVSU) board meeting Monday, Dec. 2, to object to the proposed elimination of 17 teaching and staff positions, including both full- and part-time roles, five of which

preK-12 from Barnard, Bridgewater, Killington, Pomfret, Plymouth, Reading and Woodstock. "Our district was required to

make significant budget cuts from FY25 due to the reintroduction of the excess spend threshold," explained Ben Ford, board vice-chair and chair of the finance committee.

The penalty for excess spending

was suspended in 2022, but beginning in July 2025, every dollar a district spends above 118% of the state average of per-pupil spending will be taxed double — meaning that every \$1 over, \$2 must be raised.

To stay below the penalty threshold, the district must trim \$2.5 million of spending from its budget. By restructuring its debt, the district will save \$1.1 million, Superintendent

Sherry Sousa and Ford explained at the last board meeting. The remaining \$1.4 million of proposed cuts are spread between the five elementary schools (\$730,764), the middle/high school (\$332,990) and the central office (\$311.944).

The majority of Monday night's meeting was dedicated to hear $ing \, passion ate \, pleas \, from \, district$ MVSU  $\rightarrow$  5



**SKATE WITH SANTA** AND MRS. CLAUS Come skate with Mr. and Mrs. Claus at the Giorgetti Arena in Rutland this Saturday. Page 17



IT'S WASSAIL WEEKEND IN WOODSTOCK Dec. 13-15, celebrate the holidays in Woodstock for the largest event of the season. Page 20



JINGLE BELL SHOP IS THURSDAY DOWNTOWN Holiday shopping gets extra festive in downtown Rutland on Thursday, Dec. 12.

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Says she felt her best yet on Superstar's GS By Polly Mikula

While the Killington Cup did not go as many expected and all hoped it would, with Mikaela Shiffrin set up to win her 100th World Cup race but instead crashing just seconds before the finish line, the Alpine superstar (still recovering) recently reflected with pride on her runs at Killington.

are in unified arts programs - visual

and performing arts, music and world

languages - which also sees cuts to

resources for those programs.

"My GS skiing was the best it's ever been on that track," she wrote on Facebook, Sunday, Dec. 8. "Superstar has always been particularly challenging for me in GS, and I felt like I broke through some kind of barrier. That was the most excited I have been about my feeling in a GS race for a while. That may seem strange, given the circumstances-but, we've always talked about my goals revolving around the skiing itself, and the feeling. And I felt good on Saturday...until I was impaled, of course."

As a result of the crash on her second run of the Giant Slalom, Saturday, Nov. 30, Shiffrin suffered a puncture wound into the right side of her abdomen and severe muscle trauma. However, she was spared ligament damage and any injury to her bones and internal organs.

"I'm incredibly thankful the crash wasn't worse," Shiffrin continued on her Facebook post. "It was damn close to piercing some organs that would have changed this situation entirely for the worse. I'm grateful for my team, everybody at both Rutland Regional Medical Center and Vail Health who have been taking care of me, and the outpouring of love and kind words from all of you," she said. "There's been a lot of speculation about what Shiffrin  $\rightarrow 3$ 



Courtesy Killington Resort

## Ski bum race registration is open

Killington's Ski Bum League registration party is Wednesday at JAX Food and Games. Registration for the 10-race series must be done online. The weekly race takes place on the Highline ski trail every Wednesday from Jan. 8 to March 12 from 10 a.m.-2 p.m.



Courtesy Dream Maker Baker FB Megan Wagner will soon closer her bakery in Killington.

# **Dream Maker Bakers**

## will close Dec. 22 By Polly Mikula

Megan Wagner, owner of Dream Maker Bakers, announced Saturday Dec. 7, that she will be closing her bakery in Killington.

"With a mix of emotions, I'm announcing that Dream Maker Bakers will be permanently closing on December 22, 2024," she posted on Facebook. "This is something that I have known I wanted since summer came to an end. I had a beautiful summer with my children and upon them returning to school and me to work full force again I realized right then the bakery was no longer where my heart was," she said. "Sometimes though you must get what you think you want to realize what you truly want. Ever since I was a little girl, I was on a mission to prove something, what, and to whom I'm still not sure. I got an idea in my head and that became my focus, 'my destiny'. I loved it and I became really good at it. What I am realizing now though is that baking could have been anything I had chosen at that time. I am a determined and talented woman. I am realizing that my destiny in life, my biggest blessing, is my family and that isn't something that I Dream Maker Bakers  $\rightarrow$  3

## **Rutland Medicaid service** provider charged with Medicaid fraud

The Attorney General's Office announced that Emily St. Peter, 46, of Rutland, Vermont, was arraigned today on one count of felony Medicaid fraud. The charges brought against Ms. St. Peter are the result of an investigation conducted by the Attorney General's Medicaid Fraud and Residential Abuse Unit (MFRAU), which found Ms. St. Peter had falsely billed Medicaid for services that she did not provide as a caregiver for an individual in the Rutland area, defrauding Vermont Medicaid of over \$18,000 in public health care funds.

Ms. St. Peter pleaded not guilty at an arraignment held on Monday, Dec. 9, in Vermont Superior Court, Rutland Division. Judge Cortland Corsones, presiding over the court, ordered her release on her own recognizance.

The Attorney General's Office emphasized that individuals charged with a crime are legally presumed innocent until their guilt is proven beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.

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# MOUNTAIN TIMES

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# Simon Pearce glass company sells stake to San Francisco private equity firm

CEO declined to disclose the financial terms of the deal, nor would he say who holds a majority position

#### By Sarah Mearhoff/VTDigger

The owners of Simon Pearce, Vermont's iconic glass and pottery maker, have sold an unspecified stake in the half-a-century-old business to a San Francisco-based private equity firm.

Simon Pearce has been headquartered in Windsor since its namesake founded it in 1971. In a press release Tuesday, Dec. 3, the company said it had entered into a "strategic partnership" with SBJ Capital, the San Francisco firm, in order to expand its reach.

"In the grand scheme of things, what it means is, it's assured continuity of the brand and the business in Vermont, and the ability to carry on Simon's legacy well past the original 50 years that we've had so far," Simon Pearce CEO Jay Benson said in an interview Wednesday.

A motivating factor in the deal, according to Benson, is Pearce's own age - and his hope for the company

to persevere. "Simon is in his 70s," Benson said.

"There was a very conscious decision made over a decade ago with the family that it would not pass to the next generation of the family," Benson said. "Simon has seen too many businesses and families destroyed by business transition, and really didn't want that to happen to his business."

As for who controls a majority stake in the company now, Benson declined to answer, saying, "We're not disclosing the individual amounts of shareholders." He also declined to specify a dollar amount of the sale.

"You can look at how SBJ typically invests, but all the previous owners are all still involved in the company," he added. According to SBJ Capital's website,

the private equity firm can "make minority or majority investments to finance growth, acquisitions, recapitalizations and buyouts." It says it focuses "on investments in lower middle-market consumer, business services and healthcare services companies."

Pearce himself declined an interview request through the company's external spokesperson, Jessica Olshen. She also declined to provide additional information about the company's ownership or the terms of the deal, calling it "a private business matter."

Olshen said of the company, "They are excited about this partnership; it will be great for the region and keep Simon Pearce growing for many years."

With the sale, Benson said the company has no intentions of relocating its Windsor headquarters, nor its manufacturing facilities in Quechee or Oakland, Maryland.

Asked if it would reduce staffing levels due to the sale, Benson said, "No, I mean, we're hiring."

# Vermont high court reinstates nearly 20-year prison term in fatal Rutland County hit-and-run

By Alan J. Keays/VTDigger

The Vermont Supreme Court has reversed a lower court ruling and reinstated the nearly 20-year prison term handed down in the high-profile hit-and-run that killed a well-known Rutland County dairy farmer in 2016.

Thomas H. Velde Jr., 49, had challenged his sentence from 2018 through a civil process known as post-conviction relief.

Judge Mary Miles Teachout ruled in November 2023 that in one of Velde's prior cases — a 2009 trespassing charge — a guilty plea he entered was defective and could no longer be used to treat him as a habitual offender, a sentencing enhancement that came into play in the hit-and-run case.

Velde had pleaded guilty in 2018 in the hit-and-run that killed 57-year-old Leo Branchaud in the April 2016 crash on Gulf Road in Tinmouth. Initially, Velde's mother tried to take the blame, but police said video cameras from outside the farm revealed that Velde was the driver of the vehicle that fled the scene.

Following Teachout's ruling that the habitual offender enhancement was improper, the matter of the fatal hit-and-run case was set for a resentencing. Rutland County State's Attorney Ian Sulllivan, the prosecutor, then appealed Teachout's ruling to the Vermont Supreme Court.

The Vermont Supreme Court, in a ruling Friday, Dec. 6, overturned Teachout's decision.

"Based on the record here," Justice William Cohen wrote in the unanimous ruling, "we conclude that petitioner waived his right to challenge the convictions underlying habitual-offender status under well-established law when he knowingly and voluntarily pled guilty."

# **Bridgewater schedules** special town meeting

## Bv Brett Yates

In January, Bridgewater residents will have an opportunity to vote on a proposal to ameliorate the town's troubled finances.

According to local officials, anticipated federal reimbursements for flood recovery projects have not arrived on schedule. Amid delays in Washington, D.C., the town has

relied on loans to keep cash in its coffers. Now it wants the public's permission to consolidate the resulting debt.

"The town is in a bind due to the FEMA grants not being timely paid," Selectboard Chair William O. Young summarized.

"The town is in a bind due to the FEMA grants not being timely paid," said Young

Officials hope to roll

several ongoing payments to creditors into a single "threeor five-year note," as Treasurer Melissa Spear put it. In doing so, the town may secure a reduced interest rate.

The plan has the recommendation of the town's auditor. Ron Smith, a certified public accountant from the Mainebased firm RHR Smith & Company, spoke to the Bridgewater Selectboard on Dec. 6.

"We know that you guys have had some extraordinary events happening here that require a lot of capital outlay," Smith said. "We believe that there's a better way to finance these needs of the town, and we're putting the math together for you guys right now."

The board agreed to schedule a special town meeting on Jan. 13. It will likely take place at the Bridgewater Grange Hall.

Before townspeople vote on the proposal, they'll have a chance to hear more about it at an informational meeting on Jan. 7 at the town office. Both meetings will take place at 7 p.m.

# Pico Mountain opens for the season on Friday the 13th

Pico Mountain will kick off its 2024/25 winter season at 9 a.m. on Friday, Dec. 13, welcoming skiers and riders for another season of snowy adventures.

The mountain will operate Thursday through Monday throughout the season, with daily operations during holiday weeks.

"This season is already shaping up to be an exciting one," said Rich McCoy, director of operations at Pico Mountain. "Our new independent ownership and recent investments in snowmaking and infrastructure mean guests can expect more consistent conditions with reduced energy consumption."

#### Upgraded snowmaking and terrain

This summer, Pico nearly doubled its fleet of high-efficiency snow guns, focusing improvements on trails like 49er, Swinger, Ace of Clubs, and Pike. Over the past six years, the resort has invested more than \$6 million to enhance snowmaking, including upgraded pumps, a revitalized snowmaking pond, and new pipelines connecting Pico and Killington.

For beginner skiers and riders, Pico has added a handle tow this season. In partnership with Vermont Adaptive, Pico plans to replace the Bonanza Double Chair with a Magic Carpet lift by the 2025/26 season. The terrain park offerings have also been expanded for this winter.

#### What to expect opening weekend

The Golden Express Quad, Summit Quad, and Bonanza Double will operate during the opening weekend, along with uphill travel. Tickets, rentals, and lessons will be available, and the cafeteria will serve food. The Last Run Lounge will offer full bar service and a limited food menu, with a full menu and new QR code dining service launching on Dec. 20.

#### Supporting the community

Guests are encouraged to bring non-perishable food

## **Shiffrin:** from page 1

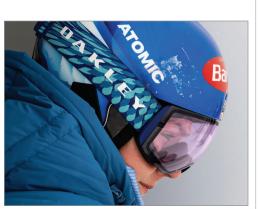
caused the puncture wound ... and a lot of discussion around the 'clean hill initiative.' Some are saying the b-net pin, some are saying the base of the gate, some are speculating about the backpack next to the b-net. Of course, I am fully in support of more safety measures on hill. But, I think in my case, the damage was done before I got close to the net...After reviewing the video several times, we think it was the tip of my ski pole...given the size and shape of the point of entry. Maybe it pierced in, and then I rolled over it which is what dug out the small cavern... hard to say, really. We're just glad it's limited to muscle damage."

Looking ahead, Shiffrin has not yet announced when she'll be able to return to racing. She posted a video this past weekend of her taking a walk at her home in Edward, Colorado, and showed off her "wound vacu-

"The whole vibe in Killington Resort — fans, volunteers, hill prep workers, family — it's truly a special atmosphere," said Shiffrin.

um," which is attached to her body.

While this season is still up in the air, it didn't stop Shiffrin from looking even further ahead to racing again in Killington.



Courtesy Killington Resort, U.S. Ski Team Mikaela Shiffrin looks down at the course before racing the Stifel Killington Cup Nov. 30.

"There's a lot of chatter about whether or not Killington will be back next year...I sincerely hope it will...of course there's some construction planned and that might throw things up in the air— but it's absolutely one

of my favorite World Cup venues and I just want to thank all of the volunteers and the organizing committee for all if the work you do and your

support of our incredible sport, as always... The whole vibe in Killington Resort—fans, volunteers, hill prep workers, family—it's truly a special atmosphere."



By Brooke Geery, courtesy Pico

A skier enjoyed Pico Mountain on opening day last year. Pico opens to the public for the 2024/25 season on Friday, Dec. 13.

donations for BROC Community Action between Dec. 13 and 15. Pico Mountain will match all donations to help fight hunger during the holiday season.

#### Tickets and hours

Lift tickets are available online only at picomountain. com, where skiers and riders can save up to 65% by purchas-

#### Dream Maker Bakers: ... from page 1

could have chosen or worked hard to get, it was something I was gifted with. Life is short and while I hope we have a lifetime together I don't know that, and I don't want anything to keep me from what I truly want in life any longer. It's been a long hard chapter but a beautiful one that will sustain me for lifetime."

Wagner will put the building up for sale soon and expects another restaurant would be interested in the space "but not necessarily a bakery," she told the Mountain Times. "There's a full kitchen here so really it could be anything."

Prior to Wagner buying the building and opening Dream Maker Bakers six years ago on Aug. 22, 2018, Pete Timpone, chef-owner, had the Pasta Pot there for 44 years.

"I was really nervous to tell Pete," Wagner confided, "but he was really happy for me; he's really supportive."

Wagner said she is so appreciative of all the support she's received over the past six years. "From the staff that have stood by my side through every challenge thick and thin to the customers that have come in day after day showing their support. Thank You, from the bottom of my heart. It is because of every single one of you that I get to go out feeling proud with my head held high and I am forever grateful for that."

"Megan has given tirelessly to our com-

ing in advance. Vermont students in grades K-12 can enjoy a season pass for \$134, while Vermont residents can purchase midweek, non-peak tickets for \$54. Lift hours are 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on weekdays and 8:30 a.m.

to 4 p.m. on weekends and peak days.

 $For more \ information, \ visit: PicoMountain.com.$ 

munity, leaving an indelible mark through her talent, kindness, and generosity—not to mention setting the world record for the largest whoopie pie!," the Killington Pico Area Association noted in its newsletter. "While we are sad to hear of Dream Maker Bakers closing its doors on December 22, 2024, we completely understand and applaud Megan's courageous decision to embrace what matters most—her family and the beautiful memories yet to be made."

Wagner said that she doesn't know what the next chapter holds for her, but that "it will be full of love, laughter, smiles and amazing memories."

"I will bake my little heart out for the community I love with the people I love for the next few weeks and on December 22, I am going to hang up my apron, go home to my family and just stay there for a real long while," she wrote concluding her social media post.

"Megan's heartfelt message reminds us all to cherish life's most precious gifts and to follow our hearts, even when it means stepping away from what we've built. Her determination, talent, and passion have inspired us, and we know her next chapter will be just as extraordinary as she is," the KPAA stated on behalf of its members and the greater community.

#### **OBITUARY**



Howard Barbash

# Howard Barbash, age 80

Howard Barbash passed peacefully on Dec. 6 at the Jack Byrne Center for Palliative and Hospice Care at Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center following a long but hard-fought battle with End Stage Renal Disease (ESRD). His wife, Connie, was with him during this time as she had always been during their 41 years of "blissful" marriage.

Howie was born on Dec. 18, 1943, and was educated in Brooklyn and Queens, New York. He proudly served in the Army 101st Airborne Division. After his military duty, he worked for Pan American Airways before moving to AT&T, from which he retired in 1998.

It was during a day of hang-gliding with a group of Howie's friends that he met Connie. They ultimately married on Oct. 30, 1983, which was a great party for the times. They continued the good times with friends for years to come: at their first home in Westchester County, New York, then moving to Morris County, New Jersey, and finally to Killington. They hosted the annual "Bar-Bash" at their homes for 20+ years. Traveling to VT became a road trip that many friends were hesitant to make as they got older, so the parties ended after one final blowout in Vermont. A good time was had by all.

Howie introduced Connie to skiing in the early 1980s. They shared that passion until Covid-19 when they both Obit. Barbash  $\rightarrow$  9

# Parents complaints about gender curriculum in kindergarten spark concerns from local advocacy groups about censorship

By John Flowers/Addison Independent and Mountain Times staff

The leadership of the Rutland Area NAACP raised concern over recent developments in neighboring Addison County related to the actions of two Mary Hogan Elementary School parents/guardians who have challenged gender-related instructional materials to educate kindergarten students at the Middlebury school.

According to sources, the complaints relate to source material that includes the books "They He She Me: Free to Be!" by Maya Christina Gonzales and Matthew Smith Gonzales, "Bodies are Cool" by Tyler Feder, "It Feels Good

"A few parents are trying to ban books and are resorting to personal attacks against an elementary school teacher to do it," wrote MiddPride on Instagram.

to Be Yourself" by Theresa Thorn, "Julián is A Mermaid" by Jessica Love, "Introducing Teddy" by Jessica Walton, "Sparkle Boy" by Leslea Newman, and "Fred Gets Dressed" by Peter Brown.

The Addison Independent was told of a case of a parent requesting their child go to a different room when gender studies education is being taught among their peers.

Emily Blistein, director of communications and engagement for the Addison Central School District, confirmed the parents' challenge of "instructional materials in our classrooms" through a Dec. 9 email exchange with the Independent.

"Challenges to books and other instructional materials come along periodically and are processed carefully," she wrote.

The challenge of Mary Hogan's gender studies material has unleashed Book ban?  $\rightarrow$  14



Three of the picture books about gender expression that Mary Hogan kindergarten teachers read to students, and that some parents would like to see removed from the curriculum.



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## Hit and run: from page 2

The high court in ruling against Velde on the habitual offender enhancement allows Velde to continue to pursue a separate challenge to his sentence, this time on a claim of ineffective assistance of counsel against his attorney in the fatal hitand-run case.

Velde was sentenced in 2018 by Judge Cortland Corsones to 19 years in jail after pleading guilty to

## MVSU: from page 1

residents concerned about the effect such cuts would have on the unified arts programs across the district. About 40 people attended the board meeting in person, and another 86 tuned in via Zoom.

Several speakers noted a lack of cuts to administrative positions and salaries, with raises for administrations budgeted at 5%.

"Any administrator who is looking at a pay raise when they're cutting staff should be ashamed of themselves," Pomfret resident Quincy Saul said.

After over an hour of public comment, the district board voted in favor of a motion to find out how much keeping the current art programs would cost and would consider alternative savings before voting whether to approve the proposed budget cuts at its next meeting, Dec. 16.

Additionally, as of Tuesday, Dec. 10, 148 parents, students, teachers and community members had signed a letter directed to Superintendent Sherry Sousa and School Board Members dated Dec. 5, that encourages more creative alternatives to budget savings.

The School Board's vote to re-examine the numbers related to unified arts is a step in the right direction. It demonstrates an eye towards responsible management, shows the Board is willing to integrate feedback from representatives in the community and experts in the field, and begins to center on student needs," the letter said. "We need to continue to see these indicators of success from both the Board and the Superintendent if we are to create a passable budget: one that is pragmatic, responsible, and student-centered. It is not too late to rebuild trust and move into collaborative partnership."

The letter went on to request the cost analysis proposals be re-calculated for the least significant negative impact on whole-child education, and re-calculated to demonstrate the potential cost-savings and offset by cuts at the leadership level. "The first cuts to be considered in public service are reductions in salary and travel at the senior level, alongside the freezing of raises of administrative positions," the letter requested. "We thank the Board for your willingness to listen and respond to concerns raised regarding non-viable budget cut scenarios. We look forward to a whole-child, student centered, solutions-based analysis reflected in a budget cut scenario that is viable for vote passage," it concluded.

Keri Bristow, chair of the MVSU district board, responded to the community letter on Tuesday, Dec. 10, with a document addressing top concerns with the budget and the boards decision-making process.

"Everything was on the table and the principals were charged with looking at all options and prioritizing what they believed needed to be kept, including coordinators, coaches, interventionists, directors, and other support personnel," the document stated.

## **Cuts outlined**

- Barnard Academy: 1/2 classroom teacher
- Barnard Academy: 1 para educator

charges of leaving the scene with death resulting and gross negligent operation with death resulting in the April 2016 fatal crash.

Both charges carried habitual offender enhancements because of Velde's lengthy criminal record, meaning each could have been punishable by up to life imprisonment. As part of the plea deal reached

after his trial had already started,

prosecutors were permitted to ask for a sentence of up to life in prison for Velde, while his attorney was able to argue for any lesser sentence.

Former Rutland County State's Attorney Rose Kennedy, the prosecutor at the time, asked the judge to impose a sentence of 25 years to life in prison. Velde's attorney asked for a sentence of 4-20 years.

Sullivan, the current prosecutor,

said Monday he was pleased that the sentence against Velde has been reinstated. "When Judge Corsones sentenced Mr. Velde to 19 years to life to serve, Mr. Velde was justly sentenced as a habitual offender for killing Leo Branchaud and fleeing the scene of the crash," the prosecutor stated in an email.

"I was confident that the trial court made a mistake in the post-conviction relief proceeding; I am grateful that the Vermont Supreme Court corrected that error," Sullivan added.

Community members around Rutland County have filled the courtroom in Rutland whenever hearings have been held in the case.

Velde is currently serving his prison sentence in the Southern State Correctional Facility in Springfield.

## Killington Elementary School: 1 classroom teacher

- Woodstock Elementary School: 1/2 interventionist
- Woodstock Elementary School: 1 para educator
- Woodstock Union Middle/High: 1/2 science teacher
- Woodstock Union Middle/High: 1/2 math teacher Woodstock Union Middle/High: .17 library assistant

#### Central office:

- 1 accounts payable clerk
- 1/2 grants manager

Elementary unified arts

- .2 Music Teacher
- .4 Art Teacher
- 1 full time STEM teacher
- 1.6 Spanish teacher (.6 position currently open)

Woodstock Union Middle/High School: unified arts

- .5 French teacher
- 1 Latin teacher and program

#### Other cuts/savings

In addition to the positions outlined above resources such as field trip transportation, literacy and music supplies, textbooks and other equipment faced reductions.

The board also offered a buyout option to teachers and staff who had been with the district for at least five years. Those who opted to leave the district would receive a onetime payment of 50% of their base annual earnings for the current school year.

A total of 11 district employees accepted the offer, Fenn said. Six were licensed educators, whose resignations/retirements the board accepted at the Dec. 2 meeting. Those educators were:

- 1. Nancy Stockwell-WES teacher
- 2. Ann Bahlenhorst-WES teacher
- 3. Marcia Gauvin-RES, TPVS, WES teacher
- 4. Betsy Frates-WES teacher
- 5. Marie Anderson-WUHSMS teacher
- 6 Lisa Laird-KES teacher

The district also offered a one-time payment to faculty and staff willing to relinquish their health insurance benefits.

Currently the district offers \$2,000 per employee that does not participate in MVSU health insurance, but beginning July 1, 2025, it will increase that offer to \$6,000 per employee, Director of Finance and Operations James Fenn explained.

Currently, 21 employees currently opt out of health benefits, Fenn said that the district won't know until the 2026 open enrollment period how many more employees will decide to opt out. "We need three more people to take advantage of this offer to break even and then each additional employee saves us money," he said.

The building and grounds budget was also reduced by \$100,000. "This was possible because we were able to get caught up on some major projects during Covid using ES-SER funds," the explained the MVSU board in its response Tuesday. "It does mean that continued progress on building renovations and updates will be at a slower pace due to the reduction in funding."

## Administrative costs defended

In response to community letter asking the board to seek cuts that don't directly affect student education, such as administrative costs, the board responded: "Administrators, like teachers, have signed multi-year contracts. These are legal documents, similar to the Teacher CBA, and must be honored. The administrative personnel work in the MVSU central office and also includes all principals across the district. Administrative salary raises are the same percentages as the teachers have negotiated, without the step increase that teachers also receive. They work through the school year and summer. The total cost of the raises is \$89,000 for 16 positions, barely the cost of one employee." Administrative positions include:

Eight principals and assistant principals

- . The superintendent
- . The director of curriculum
- The director of facilities
- The director of finance
- The director of food services
- The director of human resources .
- . The director of student support services
- The director of technology

"In FY25 [current year] teachers eligible for steps received an increase of 11% while teachers at the top of the scale received an increase of 8-15% depending on which track they were on. Administrators received an 8% raise," the document continued. "For FY26 teachers eligible for a step will receive an increase of 7.9% while teachers at the top of the grid will receive a 4.5% increase. Administrator raises are budgeted at 5% for next year. In many cases, as Sherry [Sousa] explained at the board meeting, at teacher at the top of their grid will make more on a daily basis than an administrator does. For instance a teacher with a masters degree plus 30 credits and 20 years experience will make \$511.75 per day worked. (Teachers work a 185 day contract) while our highest paid elementary principal with similar education and experience is paid \$492.96 per day. Administration personnel work full year, thus while some administrator have a higher salary, they work more days, lowering their per diem pay."

#### Next steps

The MVSU district board will meet on Dec. 16 to either vote on the proposed budget or to ask for revisions before voting. In addition to the board's request to know the cost of saving the united arts positions and programs, the board will also have to consider finding even more cuts as the specific numbers for Average Daily Membership (ADM) and Penalty Phase threshold calculations were distributed by the state on Friday, Dec. 6. "Both updated numbers are deleterious to the current proposed budget and will likely lead to additional large cuts which have not yet been configured," the document stated.

Once a budget is passed by the district board it will have to be passed by the majority of the voters in the seven district towns. That vote will be held at Town Meeting Day, March 4. For more information visit: mtnviews.org.

Killington Elementary School: 1 para educator

# Study group hesitant about psychedelic therapy in Vt

#### By Peter D'Auria/VTDigger

A Vermont advisory group is not recommending a state psychedelic therapy program after group members could not agree on its potential risks and benefits.

In a final report issued mid-Noveber, the Psychedelic Therapy Advisory Working Group declined to support the creation of some kind of a state-backed program involving therapeutic use of psychedelic drugs, specifically psilocybin mushrooms. Instead, the working group recommended that it continue to study the substances.

"Concerns expressed included the practicalities of creating and enforcing standards of care in an environment of federal prohibition or without broad national consensus," the report's authors wrote.

Those conclusions — or lack thereof — are the result of four months of meetings this year by the group, which includes representatives of the Vermont Dept. of Health and Dept. of Mental Health, the Vermont Psychological Association, the Vermont Medical Society and other institutions.

Lawmakers earlier this year tasked the group with con-

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sidering the effects of decriminalizing psychedelic drugs and creating a program that would allow for Vermonters to undergo psychedelic-assisted therapy.

A small but growing body of research has shown promise

Nationwide, advocates have pushed for greater accep-

tance of psychedelics. A handful of cities have decrimi-

or soon will allow limited therapeutic use of the drugs,

But psilocybin is illegal at the federal level, and the

federal Food and Drug Administration has not approved a

nalized psilocybin, and Oregon, Colorado and Utah allow

in using psychedelic drugs, particularly psilocybin, to treat a range of mental health disorders, including major depressive disorder, PTSD and obsessive-compulsive disorder.

according to the report.

therapeutic version of the drugs.

Research has shown promise in using psychedelic drugs, particularly psilocybin, to treat a range of mental health disorders.

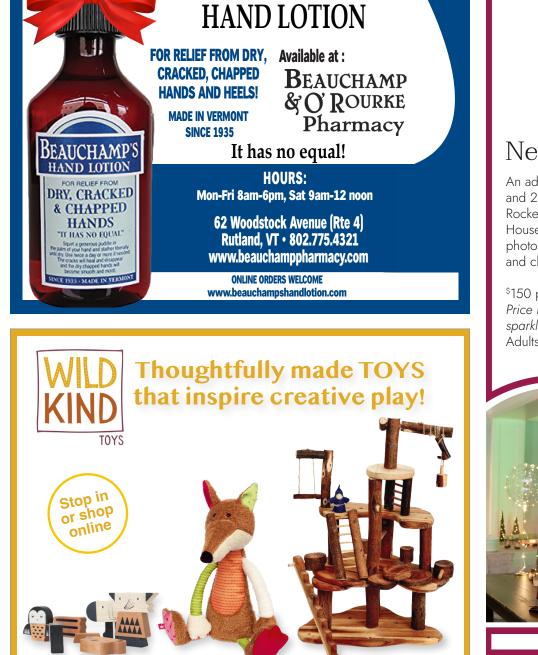
That fact divided the working group, according to the report. Some members felt it best to wait until that federal approval, while others said that Vermont could act sooner "given the mental health crisis, current good evidence for

psilocybin in particular, and to facilitate safe access to this approach."

Ultimately, the working group made two recommendations.

The first was to expand the working group and continue its work to monitor developments in psychedelic therapy, and the second was to fund psychedelic education and harm reduction training for practitioners and patients.

"The Psychedelic Therapy Advisory Group attests to the curiosity and hope for the potential strong application of the research on psychedelics as medicines and therapy, and that a segment of the population may benefit from these applications in the future," the report reads.



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**BEAUCHAMP'S** 

Inn & Resort New Year's Eve in Woodstock

Woodstock

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# New Year's Eve Bash

An adults-only party with glitz, glam, and 2025! Dress up to dance in the Rockefeller Room to live music by A House on Fire, smile for snaps in the photobooth, and celebrate with drinks and chef's splendid party bites!

<sup>s</sup>150 per person (+ tax & gratuity) Price includes a welcome drink and sparkling wine toast at Midnight. Adults (21+) only.



# Family Glow Party

Let's GLOW 2025! This family party in the Ballroom will light up the new year with glow sticks, glow face painting, and fun party favors. Tunes for dancing and exciting ball-drop countdowns (at 9pm & midnight) will get everyone celebrating!

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By Donald Dill





John Neal racing in a Pro Tour few decades ago — long before helmets became a requirement.

John Neal skis at a Master's race at Okemo a few decades ago when skis were long and straight.

# Meet John Neal: Master of a versatile, enjoyable career

#### By Karen D. Lorentz

When someone has worked their entire adult life in as many different ski-industry positions as John Neal, it's not too surprising to hear him say, "The people and the passion for the sport and lifestyle have given me the opportunity to have a career I enjoy."

Neal grew up in Ludlow, graduating from Black River High School in 1972 and from Saint Michael's College (in Colchester) in 1977 with a bachelor of arts in psychology and business administration.

He had learned to ski at age 6, having been taught by his dad, Dr. Ronald Neal, who had served as one of the founders on Okemo's original board of directors. Neal got into Freestyle but turned to racing after meeting his wife Wendy, who hails from the Woodworth racing family. That led to racing on the B Pro Tour during and after college for two seasons. Summers he worked in construction doing home building for Ludlow-based Sunshine Design.

Neal worked for Nordica for nine years as international competition services director in the U.S. and Europe and did boot testing as well. He enjoyed working with U.S. Ski Team skiers who skied in Nordica boots.

Then having children and wanting to stay home, he got his Vermont brokers license and sold condos for a few years at Pico and the Hogge Penny before serving as the general manager and director of sales for the home-owners association at Okemo's Winterplace from 1991-1999.

"My best project and assignment was the resurrection of the Round Top ski area in Plymouth, which became the private Bear Creek Mountain Club," he said of his job as vice president and general manager from 1999 to 2010. That led to serving as general manager and executive director of the Hunt Hollow 450-member private ski resort in the Finger Lakes of Western New York, followed by overseeing resort and hotel operations at Ascutney Mountain from 2013 to 2014.

He also was a founding member of the Okemo Mountain School and served as a member of the National Ski Patrol (2000-2014). Neal also served on the Ludlow School Board and Select Board for many years and on other civic committees like the one that saw to the purchase of the local armory and its redevelopment into a local community center.

## Q&A with John Neal

When did you join Okemo and in what position? John Neal: I came back to Okemo in 2013, working part time as the assistant to Okemo's race director and gave Snow Cat Tours evenings. I took a full-time position in 2014 as director of facilities operations and in 2018 became the director of resort operations. I oversee parking and shuttle ops, base area grounds, sign shop, building maintenance, uniforms, custodial team, night transport, sustainability, and base area administration.

#### What are the challenges in your work?

JN: Part of the job is how quickly you can adapt and change. I find work interesting — it's a fast-paced world especially as you build into winter each year. I always tell my team that we have all learned to work off-balance and to adapt quickly to changes we'll see.

"I always tell my team that we have all learned to work off-balance and to adapt quickly to changes we'll see," said Neal.



What do you like about your job, working at a ski area?

JN: I really like challenges and have learned how to handle hard things better and always take things in stride. I've never had a bad day, just some are better than others.

I really enjoy being part of a larger enterprise and developing young bright leaders who will be the next generation of industry experts. The small tight community of the industry — the people, the teams, the dedication, and passion are all rewarding to see and be part of.

# What are the greatest changes you've seen in the ski industry?

JN: Technology and automation. Technology has helped us build better efficiency into resort operations. It's much more tech-driven than it used to be, and from a staffing standpoint you don't need as many people, just the right people.

The Epic Pass was a brilliant way to open the door to new skiers and riders and to make skiing affordable to a larger and diverse demographic and enable them to become the next passionate generation of skiers and snowboarders.

## Were there any people who were special influences or

mentors to you?

JN: Barry Tucker, Okemo former senior director of mountain operation. I worked with Barry summers when I was in college. Barry was gritty, tough, focused, and driven. But with a quiet gentle demeanor he taught me failure was never an option.

Any insight on why Okemo became so successful?

JN: The location near major skier markets and the easy driving distance to Okemo. As a family mountain, generations of families returned.

How do you spend your time outside of work?

JN: Biking, fishing, carpentry and spending time with my wife, children, and five grandkids.

Do you have a favorite movie or book that you'd like to recommend?

JN: The American President. The message: making hard decisions is sometimes not popular but are the right ones to make.

*What's your take on the mountain or ski town lifestyle?* JN: I love the mountain and ski town atmosphere in Lud-

low. I'm passionate about the challenges, success, and opportunities that Okemo Resort has brought to our community.

MT: Any advice or words of wisdom to share?

JN: Follow your dreams, never look back, have no regrets, and dance like no one is watching.

Iohn Neal

# House leadership prepares to tackle property tax

On Tuesday, Dec. 3, Speaker Jill Krowinski and the Chairs of House Education and Ways and Means outlined the groundwork for the upcoming legislative session to address the rising property taxes and the future of public education in Vermont. Governor Scott issued the administration's "December 1 Letter" which projected a property tax increase next year of 5.9%. The FY24 increase was 13.9%.

"Yesterday, we received the estimated property tax projection," said Speaker Jill Krowinski. "While we are relieved to see a decrease from last year's projection, the continued growth in our property taxes is unsustainable and unaffordable for Vermonters across the state. I look forward to working alongside the governor and hearing his plans. We agree that tough conversations and decisions are ahead, and it will only be possible if we work together." "We will be taking action this session with short- and long-term strategies," said Speaker Krowinski. "There is not one policy change that will fix the problem before us. It will take a variety of changes to make a difference and we must be united

in our mission to make sure that our public schools have the resources

they need to support our kids, at a price that Vermonters can afford."

Chair of House Education, Representative Peter Conlon, who was appointed to the Commission of the Future of Public Education, discussed the work of the Commission, which will include a report in late December with policy recommendations addressing cost containment and strategies for reducing the cost of education.

"The Commission's report will include strong policy proposals, including strategies for class size management and addressing the rising costs of healthcare for schools," said Rep.

"We will be taking action this session with short- and longterm strategies," said Krowinski. Conlon. "We are committed to ensuring that Vermont's children receive the support they need while easing the

burden on property taxpayers."

Chair of House Ways and Means, Representative Emilie Kornheiser, who serves on the Education Finance subcommittee on the Commission, emphasized the need for continued collaboration as the Legislature works towards reform.

"This is not a one-size-fits-all issue, and we're going to need to move forward with a slew of meaningful policy reforms," said Rep. Kornheiser. "We need to continue learning from the lessons of previous reform efforts. It has taken us 30 years to get to this point, and we're going to continue learning from our past and diving deep into what's possible right now, in this moment of crisis, for so many children across our state. It's going to be a significant undertaking ... to make sure that we can have the quality education that all of our kids deserve at a price that Vermonters can afford."

House Democratic leadership said they remain committed to working with the governor, stakeholders, and communities across the state to ensure that public education remains strong and that the cost of education does not continue to burden taxpayers. The focus is on meaningful, sustainable solutions for Vermont.

# Healthcare, housing take center stage with new Vt legislative leaders

Vermont's legislative focus is sharpening on healthcare and housing as Representative Lori Houghton (D-Essex Junction) and Senator Kesha Ram Hinsdale (D-Chittenden County) take on their new roles as House and Senate majority leaders, respectively. Both leaders transitioned from key committee chair roles, marking the first in at least two decades for Vermont's Legislature.

Houghton, a former chair of the House Healthcare Committee, has long championed policies to improve Vermont's healthcare system. Her leadership in the committee focused on supporting overburdened healthcare providers, improving mental health access, and suicide prevention initiatives.

"Our Vermont health care system is at a tipping point with unsustainable increases in the cost of health insurance and a system struggling with patient access," said Houghton. "If we want Vermonters, especially our youth, to stay in Vermont, we need a focused effort by all parties on transforming our system."

Similarly, Ram Hinsdale has emphasized the urgent need to address Vermont's housing crisis. As the former chair of the Senate Economic Development Committee, she tackled the root causes of rising living costs. Ram Hinsdale's background includes teaching environmental and social policy at Vermont Law and Graduate School.

"At the root of most of our affordability concerns are soaring health care costs and declining demographics, which will only be solved through increasing our housing stock," Ram Hinsdale said. "I look forward to working with Leader Houghton on addressing the dual housing and health care crises we face."

Their leadership appointments mark a significant shift, as it is uncommon for committee chairs to transition to majority leader roles because their expertise is tied to specific policy agendas. Ram Hinsdale noted, "Since I began serving in 2009, I have not seen anyone in either body go from chair to leader. But this speaks to the unique challenges we face and the unprecedented moment we're in where Vermonters want to hear how we're going to address interconnected questions of affordability and quality of life."

As the Legislature reconvenes in January, both leaders are calling for concrete proposals from Governor Phil Scott to address health care, housing, and rising property taxes—key issues affecting Vermont's affordability and quality of life.

# Vermont State Historic Sites attendance hits 22-year high, more to open

Seven sites bring in 80,678 visitors and a record \$512,053

2024 was a banner year at Vermont State Historic Sites. New data released Dec. 3 by the Vermont Dept. of Housing and Community Development's Division for Historic Preservation shows 80,678 people spent \$512,053 at seven Vermont State Historic Sites during the 2024 season. Spending is the result of admission fees (charged at six sites) and sales at six gift shops.

"I'm grateful to all Vermonters and visitors who spent time at our State Historic Sites this year," said Governor Phil Scott. "These sites are a good way to explore our beautiful state and I encourage everyone to visit them and learn more about what makes Vermont such a special place."

The seven Vermont State Historic Sites accepting visitors during 2024 were:

- Bennington Battle Monument
   Mount Independence in Orwell
- 3. Chimney Point in Addison
- 4. Senator Justin Morrill in Strafford
- 5. President Calvin Coolidge in Plymouth Notch
- 6. President Chester A. Arthur in Fairfield
- 7. Hubbardton Battlefield Two historic sites have been

closed to the public since Covid: The Old Constitution House in Windsor is scheduled to reopen in



The Calvin Coolidge historical site is one of seven in the state that welcomed visitors last year.

2027 in time to celebrate the 250th anniversary of the Vermont Constitution that was written there and the Eureka Schoolhouse in Springfield could reopen as soon as next year.

"We are thrilled with this year's attendance and sales," said Vermont's Historic Preservation Officer Laura V. Trieschmann. "We have hard-working, dedicated staff who are passionate about sharing Vermont's story with our visitors and that is reflected in the success of the 2024 season."

State historic sites haven't seen more than 80,000 visitors in a year

since the 2002 season. The greatest attendance on record was 93,365 in 1998, but back then there were 12 historic sites open to the public compared to today's nine. The low for attendance was during the Covid pandemic with just 18,214 visitors in 2020.

Most sites have permanent exhibitions featuring their unique history, as well as regularly changing displays that focus on specialized subjects.

Vermont historic sites will begin receiving visitors again in the spring of 2025.

Submitted

## Long-time Killington clerk is retiring

## By Curt Peterson

No one will ever call Lucrecia Wonsor a "nine-to-fiver." The veteran Killington clerk (20 years, 4 months) and treasurer (11 years, 10 months) is known for her dedication to her responsibilities, working long hours and some weekends to successfully manage the official and financial affairs of this resort town of about 1,500 souls.

When she reiterated her plans to retire at Monday's Select Board meeting that she is retiring, one wondered what the mountain town would be like without Lucrecia in the wheelhouse. She is what one might call "an institution;" her absence will leave a noticeable void and a daunting pair of shoes to fill.

Like so many Killington residents, Wonsor came from "away," as native Vermonters call incomers from "down country." Born in Portugal, she spent much of her youth in New Jersey, including studying at Middlesex County College in Edison to achieve her associate's degree in Arts and Sciences, awarded in 1983.



Submitted

Lucrecia Wonsor

In 1999 Dick Horner, planning commissioner, hired Wonsor as recording secretary for the planners, and her work relationship with Killington was born.

From that position she rapidly became assistant town clerk in 2002, then clerk, and subsequently, in 2013, town treasurer. She finds her positions both challenging and rewarding. Horner told the Mountain Times in 2018, "She goes out of her way to help people, and she

follows up on everything." "When you are town clerk," Wonsor said, "they are your residents, your voters."

Wonsor is always busy. In addition to her work responsibilities, she is one of the founders of Killington Community Garden that grew produce for employees. She's sorry it has been lost in the list of priorities, because "it was fun." She has served on the boards and/or been a member of Vermont Municipal Clerks and Treasurers Association (president), and





hung up their skis.

During the warmer months, Howie enjoyed chasing the little white ball around the 18 holes at Green Mountain National Golf Course (GMNGC) in Killington. He played with the same fellows he skied with. Howie loved the walk and, ultimately, the ride around the beautiful fairways, greens, and gardens at GMNGC.

They enjoyed traveling. As part of his last job at AT&T, Howie worked in the International group, traveling to many of the countries that are in the news today: Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, and others. The couple also enjoyed road trips, alternating between cross-country to California and trips to Florida — both locations having friends and family that they enjoyed visiting while they explored the wonders of this beautiful country. Their travels also included ski trips to Canada and the Western ski resorts and trips to Alaska, Hawaii, Australia, Bermuda, and various Caribbean islands, which were mostly visited by windjammer cruises. In 2009, they adopted two kittens from the RCHS in Pittsford. As navigators of the road trips, the kitties were quite well-traveled and loved walking on their leashes when it was time for a pit stop.

In 2018, Howie was diagnosed with Poly-

cystic Kidney Disease (a genetic disease that he shared with his mother, older sister, and younger brother). He started dialysis at the Fresenius Dialysis Center in Lebanon, NH. Dec.2019 saw Howie and Connie bring his dialysis treatments into their home; sessions were every other day until Nov. 2024.

Howie is predeceased by his parents, Yetta and Philip Barbash; his older sister, Sonya; younger brother, Julian; and the 2nd love of his life, "the kitay", Howard's kitty & navigator. He is survived by his wife, Connie, and his youngest sister, Roberta, as well as several nieces and nephews.

Howie and Connie are grateful to the medical staff at DHMC and the Jack Byrne Center for their caring and compassionate support - they will be missed as part of our lives. And to the team at Fresenius: thank you, thank you. You were our constant support, and you will be missed.

Visiting hours will be held at Clifford Funeral Home on Thursday, Dec. 12, from 3:00 to 5:00 p.m., with a Funeral Service at 5:00 p.m.

Arrangements are with Clifford Funeral Home.

In lieu of flowers, please make contributions to the Rutland County Humane Society, rchsvt.org.

# Okemo Mountain School raises \$34,500 through annual ski and snowboard swap

Okemo Mountain School (OMS) celebrated another successful year for its annual ski and snowboard swap, raising \$34,500 to support its mission. Proceeds from the event will help cover operating costs, ensuring tuition remains accessible for students.

The Swap, a community favorite, drew large crowds

this year as customers took advantage of exceptional deals on a wide array of new and used winter gear. Mariel Meringolo, the head of the school, expressed gratitude to the volunteers and Okemo Mountain personnel who played a crucial role in the

event's success. "The Swap could never have achieved this level of success without the dedication of our volunteers and the support of the mountain staff. Their efforts are deeply appreciated by the entire school community," said Meringolo.

For more information about Okemo Mountain School, go to: okemomountainschool.org.



#### Winter Maintenance Activities Reminders

**Snow Plowing:** Residents and private contractors performing snow removal are reminded that it is illegal and dangerous to deposit snow onto Town Highways. Likewise, it is also illegal to dump snow on the edge of the roadway, leaving for the Town plow to wing back. Snow can turn to ice and become a safety hazard for all motorists. When a plow hits ridges of ice or a frozen bank, damage to expensive Town equipment can occur.

**Streetside Parking:** Parking on public highways in Killington is prohibited, per the Town's Parking Ordinance. Streetside parking interferes with plowing or removal of snow in the Town right-of-way. Any law enforcement officer may issue a parking ticket and/or cause the vehicle to be removed at the owner's expense.

Cooperation with these safety concerns is necessary to help keep Town Highways as safe as possible.



Ottauquechee Natural Resources Conservation District 28 Farmvu Drive White River Jct., VT 05001 ONRCD1@gmail.com

LEGAL NOTICE NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY OF PETITIONS FOR ELECTION OF CONSERVATION DISTRICT SUPERVISOR FOR THE OTTAUQUECHEE NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION DISTRICT

To all landowners residing within the boundaries of the Ottauquechee Natural Resources Conservation District (NRCD), notice is hereby given that on November 27, 2024, petitions for the position of Supervisor for the Conservation District will be available. **An election will be held on January 3, 2025, for two Supervisors for the District.** Petitions must be completed and returned to the local Conservation District office (<u>onrcd1@gmail.com</u> or 28 Farmvu Drive, White River Junction, VT 05001) by close of business on **December 20th, 2024.** 

To have your name placed on the **January 3rd election ballot** for the office of District Supervisor, a person must have a minimum of twenty-five (25) signatures on nominating petitions. **Candidates for the position of Supervisor must be residents of the District**. You do not have to own land to serve as a Supervisor. Landowners and persons who hold title-in-fee land and reside within the District are eligible to sign a petition or vote. Supervisors are elected for 5 year terms, and may not be employees of the federal government. If there are no nominations, the District Supervisors may appoint a new Supervisor to fill a vacant seat. District Supervisors meet monthly and are offered a per diem rate of \$50 per meeting; meetings are held monthly and are currently online only.

Conservation Districts are local subdivisions of state government established under the 1939 Soil Conservation Act of Vermont to cooperate with landowners and municipalities in applying conservation practices to the land. Conservation Districts sponsor and coordinate educational, technical, and financial assistance to address soil health, water quality, and the conservation of natural resources.

An eligible candidate may contact Ottauquechee NRCD at <u>onrcd1@gmail.com</u> for a petition and more information.

Dated: November 27, 2024

## **GUEST EDITORIAL**

# Send a message by working together

Dinion

### By Dan Smith

*Editor's note: Dan Smith is the president and CEO of the Vermont Community Foundation.* 

People are tired of politics. Fear, mistrust and polarization have that effect. Trust is the connective tissue of civic structures, and the trend at every level is to trust leaders and each other less and less. As elections increase in intensity, we should reassess what needs to get done (policy) and how we choose to do it (civic design and approach to leadership).

Community and democracy thrive with a sense of shared fate and the potential for progress. Polarization and stalemate offer neither.

In Vermont, the need to focus on demographic imbalance, housing, health care, adapting to dramatic weather events, and creating the conditions for a strong economy require a political system that functions as we were taught it might instead of how it currently does.

The work of building strong communities becomes

Polarization is a chosen political tactic... purposefully accelerated by technology, rhetoric and the professionalization of politics and advocacy.

much harder when politics is polarized.

This erosion of trust is something that the Vermont Community Foundation watches closely, because its work is all about building community by bringing people together.

Polarization is corrosive to people and communities. It carries an emotional weight that is broadly shared. According to the American Psychological Association's "Stress in America" poll, the future of the nation and the election were top drivers of stress and anxiety, along with the economy.

Interestingly, there is abundant research showing that people are much less divided than we think. There are broad areas of agreement. Yet, despite that common ground, we still feel divided. Why?

Polarization is a chosen political tactic taken by professionals. According to Rachel Kleinfeld of the Carnegie Endowment, people wrestle with a high degree of "affective polarization," meaning we are pushed to dislike and distrust people "on the other side." Affective polarization is purposefully accelerated by technology, rhetoric and the professionalization of politics and advocacy.

Polarization is also compounded by the design of elections and governance. In 2017, Michael Porter wrote about the failure of the political system to retain the confidence of its constituents. He noted that parties are insulated from accountability and meaningful pressure to address community conditions. They survive as the lesser of evils.

Our current civic design puts our sense of community at risk and erodes confidence in the representative value of elections. No industry — and politics is an industry should reflexively avoid innovation. Elsewhere, organizations are pushing new ideas like mobile voting and primary reform, ranked choice voting and non-partisan re-districting. Alaska, Maine, California and Washington D.C. have all moved away from partisan primaries and towards ranked choice voting. When Michigan ended partisan gerryman-Together  $\rightarrow 12$ 



## LETTERS

Vt eases access to food program for community college students Dear Editor,

Earning a college degree is challenging, especially for Vermont students who balance school, jobs, and family while working to put food on the table. Fortunately, a new policy change now makes it easier for Vermont's community college students to access 3SquaresVT, the state's name for the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), to help with grocery expenses so they can focus on success in school.

As of Oct. 1, Vermont's Dept. for Children and Families adopted a policy eliminating a prohibitive work activity requirement for community college students seeking to become eligible for 3SquaresVT.

This policy change recognizes that mandating work requirements is ineffective at incentivizing work because 80% of CCV students are already employed while pursuing their degrees.

Food for CCV  $\rightarrow$  11

## End disability discrimination in general assistance hotel shelter

### Dear Editor,

The administration's announcement that the discriminatory prioritization categories throughout the winter months will be used is not only inhumane: it does not follow the law, which created no such prioritization categories and states who is eligible for shelter on a first come, first serve basis. These "priority categories" deprioritize people experiencing homelessness and living with disabilities who are under the age of 50.

In the last eight days, we have seen multiple predictable and preventable deaths. Nearly all that have died from the impacts of living outside in the previous week would be deprioritized under this inhumane policy. It is unacceptable for the administration to continue practices that are causing loss of life in numbers more significant

Homelessness  $\rightarrow$  13

## Care Coordinators save lives and costs Dear Editor,

Is aging at home working for you? Do you have an advocate that checks in, helps find what you need, someone to talk over what going on? I do in Sharon. We have Dena, Health Care Coordinator, because 10 years ago a group us formed the Sharon Health Initiative (SHI), to get this in place. It has paid off many times over and scooped up the isolated, people not in the system.

Our hospitals and medical facilities need this. It takes the pressure off, reduces patient emergencies, unneeded hospital stays and saves A LOT of money.

"Using data from April 2024 on Daily Medicaid Rates at Vermont Nursing Homes, the average cost is \$366.58 daily, with the max at \$550.75 daily cost to the state of Vermont. Based on our clientele, and their insurance, and using the average daily cost of \$366.58 daily, we estimate cost Care  $\rightarrow$  13

## School district budget woes are exacerbated by late changes Dear Editor,

Editor's note: This letter was originally scripted as a message to legislators.

As you get ready to go to work in Jan. I wanted to share the budget situation in our district. Due to the penalty phase being enacted, we calculated that we would need to cut \$2.5 million to stay under the penalty phase. By restructuring our debt, we were able to "find" \$1 million, leaving \$1.5 million more to cut. We have cut numerous positions or parts of positions involving many people. Through an early separation offered to teachers, we have more than 10 staff members who are retiring or leaving our district. We also offered a \$6,000 incentive to not take the school insurance, saving many dollars that way, as well. We have cut classroom teachers by condensing classrooms, cut paraprofessionals, and sadly our Latin program, 1 STEM teacher, 1.5 world

Budget woes  $\rightarrow 11$ 



# CAPITAL QUOTES

Rebel forces in Syria captured the capital, Damascus, and overthrew Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, putting an end to his 24-year rule. Assad and his family have reportedly fled to Moscow, where Russia has granted them asylum. The overthrow marks the conclusion of a brutal civil war that began in 2011, leading to nationwide celebrations among Syrians and prompting varied reactions from the international community.

> "At long last, the Assad regime has fallen...It's also a moment of risk and uncertainty, as we all turn to the question of what comes next,"

said President **Joe Biden** on Dec. 9 during a press briefing in the Roosevelt Room.

"Assad is gone. He has fled his country. His protector, Russia, Russia, Russia, led by Vladimir Putin, was not interested in protecting him any longer,"

said President-elect **Donald Trump** on Truth Social on Dec. 9.

"The Syrian people have suffered under Assad's barbaric regime for too long and we welcome his departure... Our focus is now on ensuring a political solution prevails, and peace and stability is restored,"

said UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer.

"This is a historic day in the history of the Middle East. The Assad regime is a central link in Iran's axis of evil — this regime has fallen,"

said Israeli Prime Minister **Benjamin Netanyahu** during a visit on Dec. 8 to Mount Bental on Israel's border with Syria.

#### Food for CCV: from page 10

The student work requirement does nothing other than create arduous and burdensome paperwork, posing a legitimate barrier to 3SquaresVT for students simply trying to meet their basic needs while learning. This policy aligns Ver-

mont with other states like Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Washington, and Connecticut, which have taken similar steps to support community college students by increasing access to programs like SNAP that help with basic living expenses. By removing the student work requirement, Vermont is supporting the food security of our community college students.

So, what does this mean for CCV students? If enrolled in a two-year associate degree or certificate program (excluding liberal studies students), you must no longer meet the "student work requirement" to qualify for 3SquaresVT. Benefits are provided on an EBT card, which works like a debit card and can be used at grocery stores and farmers' markets in VT, nationwide, and online. A family of three who meets income requirements could receive up to \$768 every month for groceries.

National studies show that students attending two-year colleges are more likely to face challenges when getting enough food for themselves and their



language teachers, a small cut in art and music, and 1 ½ central office positions.

As you can imagine, many parents and community members are angry about the arts and language cuts. However, what is really

concerning is that we received our ADM information and the number to stay under the penalty phase, and with these cuts, we achieved our goal. However, this past Friday, Dec. 6, we received more information showing a smaller ADM count and a lower penalty phase number. We may have to cut another families. Nearly one in four students at community colleges struggle to afford groceries-this is an unacceptable reality.

A 2023 student survey at CCV found that 47% of respondents were concerned about running out of food. This underscores the systemic issue of students at risk of hunger that goes well beyond CCV and Vermont, but solving the problem can start here.

Under President Judy's guidance, CCV has dedicated great attention and resources to the issue of food and basic needs security among students. The institution has created robust Student Resource Centers at every campus, holding in-person classes where students can access staple foods, a hot meal, and support from a trained peer mentor in navigating program applications like 3SquaresVT. We see this as a best practice, one worth investing in.

We commend CCV and President Judy for their commitment to their students' well-being and for supporting this shift in 3SquaresVT policy.

This policy is a win for students, families, and Vermont's economy. By ensuring students have access to the support they need to stay healthy and nourished, they are better positioned to succeed in school and their future careers. No one should ever have to choose between food or books for class. It's a victory for all of us who believe in the power of education to transform lives.

We commend Vermont's Dept. for Children and Families for adopting this common-sense policy. By making it easier for community college students to access 3SquaresVT, they are addressing students' immediate needs and contributing to the long-term success of the state's workforce and economy.

To all CCV students: we encourage you to see if you qualify for 3SquaresVT! You may be leaving behind the grocery money that you rightfully deserve. If you want or need some support through the application process, call 2-1-1 and ask for 3SquaresVT assistance, text VFBSNAP to '85511,' or visit vermontfoodhelp. com to learn more.

Thank you, Vermont Dept. for Children and Families, for this critical step forward. With this change, Vermont is leading the way in supporting community college students, ensuring they have the resources they need to succeed both in the classroom and in life.

Ivy Enoch, Richmond Editor's Note: Ivy Enoch, Richmond, is the SNAP policy & training lead at Hunger Free Vermont

\$400,000 or more. How can this happen? How can num-

bers change like this? We also hear that the penalty phase may be dropped. We have already accepted resignations from beloved teachers who took

beloved teachers who took the early separation. We have told people that their position may not exist next year. Please, I urge you to act swiftly on these kinds of things. We have to vote for a budget by mid-January in order to warn it for March. Please do not flip-flop at the last minute so that we can put forward a budget that is best for everyone. What we have had to do now is ripping us apart.

If you have any hope or advice to offer, I'm willing to sit down with you and listen. I won't even talk about the conditions of the high school/middle school. We don't want to lose more teachers and families as our district grapples with the finances. It was devastating to get the information this past Friday, and I have no idea what we are going to cut and how it will affect our communities and children. Sincerely.

Keri Bristow, Board Chair for MVSD

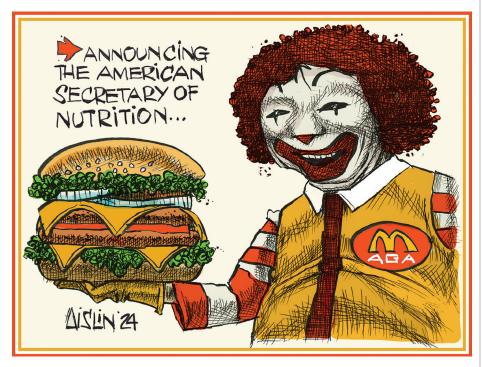
#### CARTOONS



Rising medical costs by Guy Parsons, PoliticalCartoons



Froot Loop Chemicals by Dick Wright, PoliticalCartoons



American Secrecy of Nutrition by Terry Mosher, The Montreal Gazette

# **Together:** from page 10

dering, it stemmed from non-partisan, non-governmental organizations. Only one other state still has a two-year gubernatorial term. Porter observed, "We can fix our political system, but it will require sustained citizens' initiative and significant investment."

Election cycles generate a lot of money politics is a thriving industry. Kleinfeld describes "conflict entrepreneurs." From a philanthropic approach, there are abundant strategies to increase awareness, connection and understanding between people across the spectrum, but the pathways to fundraising and political engagement still run through polarizing structures. Success in the political industry does not depend on the compromise necessary to govern effectively and strengthen communities. Success comes more immediately from feeding polarization and stifling opposition. The industry thrives when the satisfaction of those it is supposed to serve declines.

Vermont may be different but is not immune. Outside of a handful of contests, ballots in Vermont are consistently non-competitive. I've had countless conversations with voters who shared Bill Schubart's experience writing in candidates. Pressure to deliver policy depends on the risk of losing, which requires political competition. Without pressure, problems go unaddressed and compound over time.

Wasted time further erodes faith in civic institutions. Working out of challenges as complex as imbalanced demographics and an economy ill-equipped to support the systems we've asked it to carry will take time and focus. We can't afford to waste either with polarizing tactics. In our organization, recent community engagement and grantee surveys reveal a decline in civility and an appetite for leadership. People are frustrated. We hear Vermonters experiencing an array of shared economic and social crises and they are tired of waiting for fresh thinking.

well into restricted funds."

cia, 62, enjoys the outdoors.

Once a skier, she now does

more snowshoeing and, in

warmer months, hiking and

walking. While she said she

will miss the job she found

so fun and challenging, she

is looking forward to a clas-

sical retirement, spending

time with her family - two

adult children, grandchil-

finishing some personal

will be December 20," she

told the Mountain Times.

projects, and traveling.

dren and her husband Ken,

"My last day in the office

When not at work, Lucre-

# **Wonsor:** from page ?

the International Institute of Municipal Clerks, New England Association of City and Town Clerks, Vermont League of Cities and Towns, and has earned Master certification in two. She also does training for prospective town treasurers.

Wonsor sees her job as treasurer as that of an overseer. In May of this year, Wonsor finished her treasurer's report by commenting to the Select Board about her perception of town finances. She said she was "concerned about the town's cash flow after the education tax is paid to the state, as the town will be There is urgency and high expectations for state leaders to approach this biennium the Vermont way: by working together.

Leadership in this environment means understanding their frustration and responding productively, not competitively. At this point, Vermont's challenges are clear enough to drive an agenda with discipline and focus. But leadership is not just policy. Communities will continue to erode if Vermont leaders, parties and the advocates that surround them fall back on homogenized national rhetoric that drives people further apart.

A hallmark of our communities is the willingness of Vermonters to look out for each other. People look out for those to whom they feel connected. We make a decision with devastating consequences for communities if we take the bait, accept the narrative of polarization and conclude that every neighbor who votes differently represents the worst of the opposing extreme. Affective polarization obscures vast areas of common opinion and shared values.

There are choices leaders can make right now to de-escalate this unproductive dynamic. People need to see leaders working together on the shared frustrations people face. It isn't a stretch to expect them to do so.

Vermont needs a clear demographic strategy and a commitment to reining in the conditions that make Vermont unaffordable. We need a longer-term assessment of civic design. In addition, I'd suggest a new benchmark for our expectations of leaders this session. Working together means compromising. Effective compromise should make vetoes avoidable and the session short. Avoiding any vetoes and adjourning by mid-April will demonstrate the willingness to work together and with shared focus. Success would signal to those Vermonters losing faith that leaders recognize their role in a democracy that brings people together instead of abiding politics that thrive by driving us apart.



The Mountain Times encourages readers to contribute to our community paper by writing letters to the editor. Opinions are not endorsed by the Mountain Times, nor are the facts checked. We ask that opinions remain focused on issues; refrain from name-calling. Please keep them to 300 words or they will be printed only at the editor's discretion if space allows. Email letters to editor@

Email letters to editor@ mountaintimes.info

#### Homelessness: from page 10

than any natural disaster in Vermont. This is a manmade disaster.

It is time for Vermont to have a reckoning. We need to decide if we are committed to protecting the most vulnerable. Our state has to own these deaths, and we need to learn from them.

To re-instate the prioritization policy is to make a decision that the lives of people under 50 and living with disabilities are expendable. Our most vulnerable Vermonters with complex needs under the age of 50 will be left outside at times during the winter. It will also require people living with disabilities to jump extremely high hurdles to access shelter. To put this in context, if someone is under the age of 50, living with a disability, for example, in a wheelchair, on oxygen, with a significant medical condition or complex mental health challenge, like schizophrenia, and is not pregnant or fleeing domestic violence, they will not be

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able to access shelter using the regular process.

In addition to the growing death toll in Vermont as a result of this recent mass un-sheltering, End Homelessness Vermont (EHVT) received several calls from clients who were living outside and had been hospitalized for or were showing signs of hypothermia. We have several clients who are struggling to breathe and at least one who has suffered a violent sexual assault. Of these calls, only two were people over the age of 50, but each lives with a disability.

After a mass un-sheltering of over 1,000 Vermonters this fall due to the administration's insistence that Vermont could not afford to keep our most vulnerable safe, the governor then stood up two family shelters with a price tag of no less than \$3.2 million. To shelter these same 17 families for the same time frame in a General Assistance hotel would cost \$217,600. Meaning that this administration is paying \$2.75 million more than is necessary to shelter 17 families while simultaneously saying that they do not prioritize Vermonters under 50 in wheelchairs, with health conditions, on oxygen, and with other significant and complex needs.

In the last two weeks,

The death toll in Vermont is rising as a result of the most recent failed policy.

EHVT has had a client who, due to the impacts of living outside on oxygen and with diabetes, ended up with a blood infection that has now spread throughout his entire body. This is, unfortunately, not the first situation like this that our organization has seen. Putting people with complex needs and disabilities in a "nonpriority" category is not only inhumane but extremely dangerous.

Winter Weather General Assistance Hotel Housing, available to all eligible households, has been the only reprieve any organization could offer its clients since September. The administration has announced that these eligible households will not have the same access they should receive access under the law. This is changing eligibility categories. People living with disabilities

> under the age of 50 will not be afforded the safety and security that the law allows. We are also

concerned that the administration is creating a capacity issue by preventing the use of available hotel rooms. Some rooms are taken offline for nonhealth-related reasons. While our fellow Vermonters are dying in significant numbers, our state should be using every available tool in its toolbox.

End Homelessness Vermont is calling on the administration to take discriminatory prioritization categories off the table immediately and provide equal access to emergency shelters for all eligible Vermonters as intended in the law.

Our clients and others living with disabilities have a significant need for shelter, as do all Vermonters. Leaving any person eligible under the law to suffer extreme consequences, due to the administration blocking shelter, access is unacceptable. Protecting the most vulnerable does not include leaving people with disabilities or any Vermonter experiencing homelessness outside to fend for themselves. These are genuinely our most vulnerable Vermonters.

The death toll in Vermont is rising as a result of the most recent failed policy. The administration must take seriously the well-being of our most vulnerable Vermonters. We can not understand how the governor can justify implementing a procedure that will increase the death toll of people under 30 experiencing homelessness.

End Homelessness Vermont from page 10

savings for the state over the past month alone for only one of the five Medicaid clients we sesrve, to be \$11,363.98. This one client who is wheelchair bound with a vascular dementia is absolutely dependent on SHI for the ability to remain home. There are countless others like her who we serve," said Dena Wilke.

One problem is that Blueprint for Health needs to embrace the on-theground town care coordinator under its Community Health Care mandate. What's the hold up?

Luckily our regional planning commission is in place to help your town set up a plan to get this Health Care Worker for you.

My ending plea is for more doctors and our health clinics to make use of our town heath care coordinators/nurses. They can lessen the doctor's load and help patients along their prescribed paths.

Carol Langstaff, Sharon

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Income-eligible Vermonters may also qualify for free weatherization services.

\*Subject to availability and eligibility.



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#### Book ban?: from page 4

bitter arguments and insults hurled primarily through social media.

One of those opposing the school's program is resident Kimberly Richards, a parent who, in a Nov. 28 Facebook post, stated, "My daughter started kindergarten this year at Mary Hogan Elementary School. I was nervous, as most parents are, but I had no idea that we would become part of an underground hidden agenda type of curriculum at the kindergarten level. Fast-forward to today where I feel absolutely sick about what I have uncovered going on at this school."

Some of her subsequent posts feature memes, including one depicting a child holding a sign reading, "I'm not old enough to drink, let alone choose my sexuality or gender. How about you let me enjoy being a child and leave me alone?"

Richards' Facebook wall also includes numerous posts of a photo of Mary Hogan kindergarten teacher Franny Gould, with a derogatory message superimposed over it.

On the other side, some members of the Mary Hogan community received a Dec. 6 email from resident Amanda Reinhardt, who encouraged parents to "rally against a small group of parents... spreading misinformation and making hurtful, defamatory statements about the teacher, Franny Gould. They have also misrepresented the school principal, Jen Kravitz."

Reinhardt encouraged parents to write letters to district officials supporting Mary Hogan educators and to "defend this curriculum" by attending one of the ACSD board's meetings (one held on Monday, Dec. 9, and an upcoming meeting on Monday, Dec. 16, at 6:30 p.m.) at the Middlebury Union High School library.

Representatives of the local group Midd Pride confirmed plans to attend the Dec. 9 ACSD meeting.

In an Instagram post, the group stated, "We're navigating a book ban attempt in our local schools... A few parents are trying to ban books and are resorting to personal attacks against an elementary school teacher to do it. The principal supported the teacher and the books (yay!) and now the decision is being appealed to the superintendent. We expect the decision to ultimately go to the Addison Central School District (ACSD) school board. MiddPride is against book bans and entirely in support of educators teaching kids to read. We love books. Let's show each other and the school board how many of us are in support of safe and affirming classrooms."

# Where is the appeal of the gender curriculum materials headed?

Blistein confirmed this to ACSD Superintendent Wendy Baker. It's the third rung on a five-step appeals ladder that challengers can negotiate to try to get material pulled.

"Our approach to selecting materials and considering the removal of materials is guided by evidence-based instructional practices, national and Vermont educational standards, and ACSD Board Policy D23 and its supporting procedure," Blistein said.

According to its policy, the district will entertain "reconsideration of inclusion of instructional resources" based on a process calling for:

An initial meeting between the complainant(s) and the classroom teacher, teaching team, and/or department.

If the issue isn't resolved that way, the school principal will present the complaint with a "request for reconsideration of instructional materials form." If there are concerns about multiple items, a separate form must be completed for each item. The complainant has two weeks to complete and submit the form, or "the matter shall be considered closed."

Upon receiving the completed reconsideration form, the principal must convene a four-person (minimum) committee to consider the complaint. The committee has up to 30 days to discuss the complaint and suggest ways of remedying it.

If the complainant isn't satisfied with the committee outcome, they can appeal to the superintendent, who will undertake a review — including an appeal hearing — and issue a decision.

If the complainant is still dissatisfied, they can appeal to the school board — in public session.

Meanwhile, the "questioned items will remain in classroom instruction during the reconsideration process," reads the policy.

Blistein lamented the manner in which the instructional materials dispute has been playing out in social media.

"We are aware that community members have made derogatory personal attacks toward individual ACSD employees on social media over assumptions made about books read as part of a unit in kindergarten," she said. "We understand and expect differing viewpoints in our community. Even highly emotional disagreements can and should occur respectfully without contributing to an environment that feels personally threatening to our employees."

Blistein confirmed a public records request for information related to the appeals process, which was expected to yield results by Wednesday, Dec 11.

The Mary Hogan gender curriculum matter was not listed on the board's Dec. 9 meeting agenda, though the panel holds public comment periods at the beginning and end of each gathering.

#### What's in the books?

What follows is a brief description of each book that has been part of Mary Hogan's "mini gender" curriculum:

"They He She Me: Free to Be!" is considered to be one of the first children's picture books to use a gender-neutral pronoun.

"Bodies are Cool" is described by Penguin Random House as a "picture book [that's] a pure celebration of all the different human bodies that exist in the world. Highlighting the various skin tones, body shapes, and hair types."

"It Feels Good to Be Yourself" is a picture book "that introduces the concept of gender identity to the youngest reader," according to Macmilliam Publishers.

"Julián is A Mermaid" is a picture book telling the story of a boy who wants to become a mermaid and participate in the Coney Island Mermaid Parade.

"While riding the subway home from the pool with his abuela one day, Julián notices three women spectacularly dressed up. Their hair billows in brilliant hues, their dresses end in fishtails, and

their joy fills the train car. When Julián gets home, daydreaming of the magic he's seen, all he can think about is dressing up in his own fabulous mermaid costume: a butter-yellow curtain for his tail, the

> fronds of a potted fern for his headdress. But what will Abuela think about the mess he makes — and

even more importantly, what will she think about how Julián sees himself?" reads a Penguin Random House description of the book.

"Introducing Teddy," features Errol and his teddy, Thomas.

"One sunny day, Errol finds that

Thomas is sad, even when they are playing in their favorite ways," reads a description of the book. "Errol can't figure out why, until Thomas finally tells Errol what the teddy has been afraid to say: 'In my heart, I've always known that I'm a girl teddy, not a boy teddy. I wish my name was Tilly, not Thomas.' And Errol says, "I don't care if you're a girl teddy or a boy teddy! What matters is that you are my friend.""

"Sparkle Boy," according to a "Social Justice Books" description of the story, "starts with a common sibling in-

"The leadership of the Rutland Area NAACP is troubled to learn of an attempt to ban books in the ACSD school district. The NAACP strongly condemns any attempt to ban books, especially for elementary students, as it undermines students' fundamental right to access diverse ideas and perspectives," stated Mia Schultz, Rutland Area NAACP.

> teraction: Casey wants something his older sister has. In this case, it is a sparkly skirt. It becomes a pattern, with Casey drawing inspiration from his sister Jessie's skirts, nail polish, and jewelry. Each time, Jessie is upset because she believes that these aren't things that boys should wear or like, but she is reminded by her parents and grandmother that although Casey's style may be unconventional, it is in no way unacceptable. Finally, at the end of the book, Jessie and Casey's mother take them to the library, where Casey is mistaken for a girl and made fun of for dressing the way he does. Jessie stands up for him, echoing what her parents told her when she was unsure about Casey's choices."

The book "Fred Gets Dressed" is based on author Peter Brown's childhood memory of going through his mother's makeup one day and smearing some of it across his cheek. Rather than admonish the child, she showed him how to apply it.

"I love that I felt free to explore and experiment. I love that my mom joined me and encouraged my curiosity," the author said. "That might be my favorite childhood memory, and I wanted to tell a version of that story in a picture book."

A patron of the Oakley Public Library in Topeka, Kansas, tried to get "Fred Gets Dressed" banned last year. The library board voted unanimously to keep it.

In a statement released by the Rutland Area NAACP, Mia Schultz, the chapter president, said, "The leadership of the Rutland Area NAACP is troubled to learn of an attempt to ban books in the ACSD school district. The NAACP strongly condemns any attempt to ban books, especially for elementary students, as it undermines students' fundamental right to access diverse ideas and perspectives. Throughout history, book bans have been used to silence marginalized voices, restrict intellectual freedom, and control the narratives surrounding race, identity, and history. These efforts are a direct attack on the educational system's mission to foster critical thinking, creativity, and an appreciation for diversity."

The statement reiterated NAACP's concerns over the damaging history of book banning, from the Jim Crow South to authoritarian regimes, which serve to erase uncomfortable truths, especially regarding identity and equality.

"The Rutland Area NAACP believes that every child deserves an education that embraces diverse voices and encourages the exploration of ideas that empower them to become informed, compassionate, and thoughtful citizens. We strongly urge the Superintendent and the school board to deny this request and make clear their support for a diverse and welcoming learning environment for all students," said Schultz in her statement.

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## SUDOKU

# How to Play

Each block is divided by its own matrix of nine cells. The rule for solv-ing 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.

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Level: Intermediate

# GUESS WHO?

I am an actress born in New York on December 12, 1970. I began my career as a child model with the Ford Modeling Agency. I've starred in many movies, including opposite David Bowie and Tom Cruise. I'm married to one of the stars of the "Avengers" film series.

Answer: Jenniter Connelly

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# 16. Calendar



**S.E.A.T. Exercises** 9-10 a.m. (Wednesdays) Godnick Adult Center, 1 Deer St., Rutland. \$6 per individual class or \$5 per class when paying for the whole month upfront. A brand-new, chair-based full body workout led by Melissa Cox. rutlandrec.com/godnick or 802-773-1853

**Pre-K Story Time** 9:30-11 a.m. Billings Farm & Museum, 69 Old River Road, Woodstock. \$12 per child (includes one adult); \$10 for members. Celebrate winter with a reading of "Wonderful Winter" by Jennifer Marino Walters, followed by hot cocoa, a snack, and visits with sheep and goats. Designed for children ages 3-5 with an adult companion. billingsfarm. or/prefector/time ora/prekstorvtime

Killington Active Seniors Lunch 11:30 a.m. (Wednesdays) The Lookout Tavern, 2910 Killington Road, Killington. \$5 donation towards the meal. 908-783-1050

#### Gentle & Restorative Yoga

11:30 a.m-12:30 p.m. (Wednesdays) Wise Pines, 184 Hartland Road, Woodstock. \$15 or \$30 for three classes. Yoga class for seniors. wisepines.com/events

**Diabetes Support Group** 1-2 p.m. (Monthly, 2nd Wed.) RRMC Diabetes & Endocrinology Center, 160 Allen St., Rutland. Free. For patients managing diabetes, to discuss challenges, ask questions, and provide support. Hosted by Community Health and Rutland Regional Medical Center's Diabetes & Endocrinology Center. Contact Michele Redmond at 802-277-5327. chcrr.org/diabetes-support-group

Public Skating 2-3:40 p.m. (Wednesdays) Union Arena, 80 Amsden Way, Woodstock. Adult \$8, Youth \$6, Seniors \$5, Child under 3 Free, Super Senior (70+) Free. Skate rentals \$7 (figure or ice hockey). unionarena.net

**Cribbage for Adults** 3-5 p.m. (Wednesdays) Hartland Public Library, 135 Route 5, Hartland. Free. hartlandlibraryvt.org/calendar or 802-436-2473

### Bone Builders at the Chaffee

3:30-4:30 p.m. (Wednesdays) Chaffee Art Center, 16 S. Main St., Rutland. Free. Heather Wilson leads a bone-building class focused on weight training and balance exercises. chaffeeartcenter.org

# SKATE WITH SANDA AND MRS. GLAUS



Kids' Mandala Painting (Ornaments) 4-5 p.m. Chaffee Art Center, 16 S. Main St., Rutland. \$20 per person (includes all supplies). Create mandala-dot ornaments in this fun and relaxing class. Open to all skill levels, the activity encourages mindfulness, self-expression, and creativity. Pre-registration required. chaffeeartcenter.org

#### Michelob ULTRA Ski Bum Registration Party

4-7 p.m. JAX Food & Games, 1667 Killington Road, Killington. \$60. Register for the annual Ski Bum Race Series, claim your t-shirt and bib number, and enjoy complimentary appetizers and a free raffle. Participants must be 21 or older. Killington.com.

#### **Diabetes Support Group**

5-6 p.m. (Monthly, 2nd Wednesday) Community Health Castleton, 261 Route 30, Castleton. Free. For patients managing diabetes, to discuss challenges, ask questions, and provide support. Contact Michele Redmond at 802-277-5327. chcrr.org/diabetes-support-group

#### Sandy Hook Vigil

5 p.m. Norwich Green, 15 Church St., Norwich. Join the annual vigil commemorating lives lost to firearm violence, including the 26 victims of the Sandy Hook tragedy in 2012. Bells will ring at the Norwich Congregational Church following the vigil.

Adult Mandala Painting (Ornaments) 5:30-7 p.m. Chaffee Art Center, 16 S. Main St., Rutland. \$25 per person (includes all supplies). Create mandala-dot ornaments in this fun and relaxing class. Open to all skill levels, the activity encourages mindfulness, self-expression, and creativity. Pre-registration required. chaffeeartcenter.org

The Anti-Aging Toolkit: Healthy & Fit Lecture Series 6 p.m. Upper Valley Aquatic Center, 100 Arboretum Lane, White River Junction. Free. Join Dr. Vreeland for a lecture on practical strategies to combat the physical and cognitive effects of aging. RSVP at 802-359-7400 at information and cognitive effects of aging. RSVP at 802-359-7400 or info@befit-pt.com. uvacswim.org



#### **Essentrics Stretch and Strengthen**

9-10 a.m. (Thursdays) Stone Valley Arts, 145 E. Main St., Poultney, \$10. No-weights, low impact workout combines principles from ballet, tai chi, and physiotherapy to restore flexibility and balance. Bring a mat and water. stonevalleyarts.org

#### Intermediate Line Dance

9:30-10:30 a.m. (Thursdays) Godnick Adult Center, 1 Deer St., Rutland. rutlandrec.com/godnick or 802-773-1853

Chaffee: Artery Noon. (Thursdays) Adults. Connect and create with others. \$10-\$20. Painting in all mediums welcome. No set topic or instructor, attendees will work on their individual artwork. Must pre-register. chaffeeartcenter.square.site

Ukelele Group Noon-1 p.m. (Thursdays) Chaffee Art Center, 16 S. Main St., Rutland. Free. Attendees will play a collection of sheet music. All levels welcome, ages 12+. Must pre-register by Wednesday at noon. chaffeeartcenter.square.site

#### Survivors Support Group

10 a.m.-noon. (Thursdays) Godnick Adult Center, 1 Deer St., Rutland. Free. Fliers are available at the Godnick Center or call 802-775-3232. rutlandrec.com/godnick

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

## Play Bridge!

2-4 p.m. (Thursdays) Norman Williams Public Library, 10 The Green, Woodstock. Free. Beginners are welcome to observe. normanwilliams.org or 802-457-2295

## **Gingerbread House**

**Decorating** 3-6 p.m. Roger Clark Memorial Library. 40 Village Green, Pittsfield. Ages 3 and up. Graham cracker gingerbread house decorating event. Houses provided to decorate. pittsfieldlibrary.com

**Jingle Bell Shop** 5-8 p.m. Downtown Rutland, check-in at 28 Center St., Rutland. \$15+. Celebrate the season with shopping, tastings, raffles, and holiday activities across 20+ downtown businesses. Wear festive attire for a chance to win the People's Choice prize. Tickets for attendees 21+ include alcohol tastings and require photo ID at check-in. downtownrutland.com

**Killington Holiday Cookie Party** 5-8 p.m. Grey Bonnet Inn, 831 Route 100, Killington. \$10 donation. Donations accepted via cash, check, or Venmo. Bring six dozen cookies of the same kind to exchange, or simply join for an evening of fun with friends. Proceeds benefit the New Story Center, formerly the Durband Countywards action to the New Story Center, formerly the Rutland County women's shelter. Killington.com

An Enchanted Wassail Evening 6-8 p.m. Norman Williams Public Library, 10 The Green, Woodstock. \$50. Kick off Wassail Weekend with an evening of music by Bob Merrill, festive food and drinks, and a preview of the rare & vintage book sale. Tickets available online or at the library. normanwilliams.org

Sip n Dip Painting Night: Rudolph 6-8 p.m. Dec. 12, Chaffee Art Center, 16 S. Main St., Rutland. \$35 per person (includes supplies). Create an acrylic painting of Rudolph. BYO wine. Pre-registration required. chaffeeartcenter.org

Christmas Lights Ride 6:30 p.m. East Poultney Village Green, Poultney. Free. Join a slow-paced, family-friendly bike parade with holiday-decorated bikes traveling from East Poultney to Poultney. Prizes for best-decorated bikes. Ends at Poultney Pub for post-ride festivities. analogcycles.com

Movie - 'Love Actually' (R) 7:30- 9:45 p.m. Woodstock Town Hall Theater, 31 The Green #2, Woodstock. \$8-\$10. Holiday comedy favorite starring Hugh Grant, Liam Neeson, and Emma Thompson. pentangle-arts.square.site/ movie-tickets



Library Book Sale 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Rutland Free Library, 10 Court St., Rutland. Donations accepted. Browse thousands of gently used books, CDs, DVDs, and puzzles for all ages, including rare and antique selections. Proceeds support library programs and projects. rutlandfree.org

#### Wassail Weekend Rare & Vintage Book Sale

10 a.m.-4 p.m. Norman Williams Public Library, 10 The Green, Woodstock. Free admission. Browse a unique collection of rare and vintage books, from signed classics to illustrated children's titles and pocket-sized poetry collections. Proceeds support library programs, collections, and maintenance. normanwilliams.org

#### Bone Builders

11 a.m.-noon. (Fridays) Chaffee Art Center, 16 S. Main St., Rutland. Free. Heather Wilson leads a bone-building class that focuses on weight training and balance exercises to improve strength, balance, and bone density. chaffeeartcenter.org

## **Connections & Interconnections of Life Weekly**

**Group** Noon-1 p.m. (Fridays) Chaffee Art Center, 16 So. Main St., Rutland. Free. A place to share thoughts, philosophies, spirituality, cultures, and more in a respectful way. All are welcome. Must RSVP:

Analog Cycles Holiday Market 4-8 p.m. Analog Cycles, 188 Main St., Poultney. Free. Browse goods from regional artisans, enjoy refreshments, and spin holiday tunes on the record player. Featuring crafts from local makers. Bring cash or Venmo for purchases. analogcycles.com

Nacho Holiday Party 4:30–6 p.m. Hartland Public Library, 153 US-5, Hartland. Free. Enjoy assorted nachos from the Hartland Community Oven, hot cocoa, and music in the library's Community Room. Create luminaries and holiday crafts, and join the holiday tree lighting at 5 p.m. Hartlandlibraryvt.org

Wassail Weekend Opening Ceremony 5-6 p.m. East End Park, 217 Maxham Meadow Way, Woodstock. Free. Kick off Wassail Weekend with a candlelit walk from East End Park to The Green, accompanied by music and bells. Enjoy pipers by the star and hot cider courtesy of Pentangle Arts Council. pentanglearts.org

West Coast Swing Dance Classes 5:30-6:30 p.m. Gymnasium, 11 Cottage St., Rutland. \$15 per class. Learn West Coast Swing with flexible registration options for individual nights or the full series. Pre-registration required. vtwestiebest@gmail. com

Calendar: Email events@mountaintimes.info from page16

**Rutland Railway Association Holiday Open House** 6-8 p.m. 79 Depot Lane, Center Rutland. Visitors are invited to the historic Center Rutland train station to view the museum collection and two operating model train layouts featuring Christmas trains. facebook. com/p/Rutland-Railway-Association-100066761013097/

#### The JAMmy Awards 2024

6-10 p.m. Junction Arts & Media, Newberry Market, 5 South Main St., White River Junction. Celebrate Junction Arts & Media's second birthday with a festive awards night recognizing members of the creative community for their achievements. Dress code: pajama formal or come as you are. RSVP. uvjam.org

#### **Rutland Youth Theatre Presents: 'Elf The Musical** Jr.'

7 p.m. Paramount Theatre, 30 Center St., Rutland. \$10-\$15. Enjoy this holiday musical as Buddy the Elf embarks on a comedic journey to find his true identity. Featuring songs by Tony Award nominees and a story based on the beloved holiday film. paramountvt.org

Wassail Concert with Gypsy Reel 7–8:30 p.m. Fletcher Memorial Library, 88 Main St., Ludlow. Free. Celebrate the season with Vermont's favorite Celtic band, Gypsy Reel, joined by singer-songwriter Jon Clinch for a festive evening of modern Christmas songs, wassail tunes, carols, and Celtic instrumentals. Fmlnews.org

**'A Christmas Carol' Radio Play** 7 p.m. Stone Valley Arts, 348 Bentley Ave., Poultney. \$10. One Room Theatrics presents a live 1940s radio broadcast adaptation of the Charles Dickens classic, with regional actors portraying dozens of characters. Tickets available at the door or at paramountvt.org

**\*A Classic Christmas' by Frisson** 7:30-9:30 p.m. Woodstock Town Hall Theatre, 31 The Green, Woodstock. \$35-\$45. Kick off Wassail Weekend with Frisson, a group of 11 talented musicians performing holiday classics like "The Nutcracker," "Winter" from Vivaldi's "Four Seasons," "Sleigh Ride," and more. The evening concludes with a festive audience sing-along of traditional correls performance of the setting and th traditional carols. pentanglearts.org



## Hartland Farmers Market Holiday Event

9 a.m.-1 p.m. Hartland Elementary School, 153 US-5, Hartland. Shop local vendors, enjoy breakfast, visit with Santa, and listen to live holiday music at this family-friendly community event. hartlandfarmersmarket.

### Free Demo Day at Winterplace

9 a.m.-2 p.m. Top of A&B Quad, Okemo, in front of Winterplace Condos, Ludlow. Free. Try out this year's demo fleet for men and women with The Boot Pro and their manufacturers. Speak with the Pros, explore ski options, and test demo skis. Last skis go out at 1:30 p.m. Registration and credit card deposit required. Sponsored by The Boot Pro, Vermont Properties & Winterplace.

## thebootpro.net/blogs/shop-talk/free-demo-day-at-winterplace

#### Holiday Craft Fair

**Holiday Craft Fair** 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Castleton American Legion, 378 VT-4A, Castleton. Shop over 27 vendors offering unique, handcrafted items, from maple products to jewelry and home décor. Enjoy lunch provided by the Ladies Auxiliary, with proceeds and raffle donations benefiting local veterans. lisathayercm@yahoo.com

#### Holiday Fiesta

10 a.m.-noon. Cavendish Library, 573 Main St., Proctorsville. Free. Join the Cavendish Historical Society for a festive morning of crafting ornaments from old hymnals, enjoying treats, and a children's pinata. All materials provided, with activities for all ages. facebook.com/ cavendishvt

#### Library Book Sale

10 a.m.-2 p.m. Rutland Free Library, 10 Court St., Rutland. Donations accepted. Browse thousands of gently used books, CDs, DVDs, and puzzles for all ages, including rare and antique selections. Proceeds support library programs and projects. rutlandfree.org

#### Vermont Winter Farmers Market

10 a.m.-2 p.m. Vermont Farmers Food Center, 251 West St., Rutland. Free. Shop local produce, crafts, and goods every Saturday through May 10, 2025. vtfarmersmarket.org

**Christmas at the Village** 10 a.m.-7 p.m. Quechee Gorge Village, 5573 Woodstock Road, Quechee. Free. Visit Santa, Mrs. Claus, and Musette the Holiday Alpaca from 1-2 p.m., enjoy live music by Katie Dobbins from 5-7 p.m., and take advantage of holiday specials at local shops. Includes free raffles and holiday treats.

#### Learn to Crochet Workshop

11 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Green Mountain Yarn & Fiber, 49 Depot St., Chester. \$25. A beginner-friendly crochet class covering basic stitches, terminology, and pattern reading. Materials required: size H crochet hook and worsted weight yarn, available for purchase at the shop. greenmountainyarnandfiber.com

#### Art at the Chaffee: Drop N' Paint

Noon-2 p.m. (Saturdays)Chaffee Art Cent 16 So. Main St., Rutland. \$25 per person, instructor help optional with a fee. All ages. Supplies and images to paint are provided. Must pre register by Friday noon at: chaffeeartcenter.org

#### Holiday Tour of the Marble Mansion

Noon-4 p.m. 12 West Park Place, Fair Haven. Free. Donations appreciated. Annual tour of the Fair Haven landmark with light refreshments provided by the Fair Haven Historical Society. historicalsocietyfairhaven.org

## **Rutland Youth Theatre Presents:**

**'Elf The Musical Jr.'** 2 p.m. & 7 p.m. Paramount Theatre, 30 Center St., Rutland. \$10-\$15. Enjoy this heartwarming holiday musical as Buddy the Elf embarks on a comedic journey to find his true identity. Featuring songs by Tony Award nominees and a story based on the beloved holiday film. paramountvt.org

Wrensong Presents: 'Songs of the Season' 3-4 p.m. Dec. 14, Mezzanine at Town Hall Theatre, 31 The Green, Woodstock. Free. Enjoy a Wassail tradition with Wrensong, an a cappella group performing Renaissance holiday music. Includes familiar tunes, complex arrangements, and sing-alongs, with introductions by choral leader Oliver Goodenough. pentanglearts.org

#### Sip 'n Shop at Smokeshire Design

4-7 p.m. Smokeshire Design, 3630 Route 103N, Chester. Free. Enjoy live music, local vendors, and holiday cheer at this festive shopping event. Enter the raffle for a chance to win Simon Pearce items. smokeshiredesign.com

Sip & Shop in Woodstock Village 5-7 p.m. Various locations, Woodstock. Enjoy special drinks and surprises while shopping at participating stores throughout Woodstock Village, including Yankee Bookshop, Echo Market, Woody's Mercantile, RT Home, and more.

Skate with Santa and Mrs. Claus 5:30-7:30 p.m. Giorgetti Arena, 2 Oak St. Ext., Rutland. Free admission. \$5 skate rentals. Enjoy a festive evening on the ice with Santa and Mrs. Claus, a make-your-own hot cocca bar, and holiday music from Sunset Entertainment. Children 10 and under must be accompanied by an adult a tilandros com adult. rutlandrec.com

Outdoor Nativity 6 p.m. Fair Haven Park, 78 Main St., Fair Haven. Free. In case of inclement weather, it will be held the following evening (Sunday.)

Holiday Cabaret & Dinner 6-10 p.m. Barn Arts. Barnard Town Hall, 115 N. Main St., Barnard. \$150. Celebrate the season with live music by the Speak Easy Prohibition Band and cabaret performances directed by Carol Cronce. Enjoy a four-course farm-to-table dinner buffet and a cash bar by Brownsville Butcher & Pantry. barnarts.org

#### Performance of 'The Nutcracker'

7 p.m. Springfield High School, 303 South St., Springfield. \$15 adults, \$10 children/students. Enjoy Vermont's longest-running production of "The Nutcracker," featuring local dancers and performers from The Dance Factory and area elementary schools. dancefactorvnutcracker24.eventbrite.com

**'A Christmas Carol' Radio Play** 7 p.m. Chaffee Art Center, 16 So. Main St., Rutland. \$10. One Room Theatrics presents a live 1940s radio broadcast adaptation of the Charles Dickens classic, with regional actors portraying dozens of characters. Tickets available at the door or at paramountvt.org

#### Holiday Variety Show

7:30-9:30 p.m. Grange Theatre, 65 Stage Road, Pomfret. \$20-\$25. Celebrate the season with music and togetherness featuring local dancers, musicians, and vocalists performing carols, seasonal classics, and festive new tunes. artistreevt.org

Performance: The Empty Pockets 7:30-9:30 p.m. Woodstock Town Hall Theatre, 31 The Green, Woodstock. \$25-\$35. Celebrate Wassail Weekend with The Empty Pockets, a Chicago-based quartet blending Americana, folk, rock 'n' roll, and roots soul. pentanglearts.org

# SALEWEE

## FRIDAY-SUNDAY



Public Skating 11 a.m.-12:10 p.m. 1(Sundays) Union Arena, 80 Amsden Way, Woodstock. Adult \$8, Youth \$6, Seniors \$5, Child under 3 Free, Super Senior (70+) Free. Skate rentals \$7 (figure or ice hockey). unionarena.

Children's Christmas Party Noon-4 p.m. The Barn at Fox Run Golf Club, 89 Fox Ln., Ludlow. Free. Join the festivities with Santa handing out gifts, a free buffet, and cookie decorating. foxrungolfclubvt.com

Performance of 'The Nutcracker' 2 p.m. Springfield High School, 303 South St., Springfield. \$15 adults, \$10 children/students. Vermont's longest-running production of "The Nutcracker," featuring local performers from The Dance Factory and area elementary schools. dancefactorynutcracker24.eventbrite.com

Revels Kids - Wassail Weekend 2-3 p.m. Woodstock Town Hall Theatre, 31 The Green, Woodstock. \$10. A festive performance by Revels Kids as part of Wassail Weekend celebrations, pentanglearts.org

**'Messiah' and Holiday Concert at Grace Church** 3:30 & 7 p.m. Grace Congregational UCC, 8 Court St., Rutland. Free; donations accepted. Celebrate the season with Handel's "Messiah" (Part 1) and Dale Sakamoto's "Be Still," performed by the Rutland Area Chorus and Grace Festival Orchestra. Featuring distinguished soloists and a freewill offering to support Grace Church programs. gracechurchvt.org

**Poetry, Music, and Dance for World Central Kitchen** 3:30-5:30 p.m. North Chapel, 7 Church St., Woodstock. Suggested donation: \$10+. Enjoy an evening of poetry, music, and dance featuring local artists and high school students. Light Middle Eastern food will be served, with proceeds benefiting World Central Kitchen. northchapelvt. ora

Holiday Sing-Along 4-5 p.m. Little White Church, 4173 Rte. 4, Killington. Enjoy a festive holiday sing-along followed by hot chocolate and cookies.







# **MOUNTAIN TOP** RESORT

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Calendar: Email events@mountaintimes.info.. from page17

'Messiah' Sing: Wassail 2024 4-6 p.m. Dec. 15, Our Lady of the Snows Catholic Church, 7 South St., Woodstock. Free; \$10 suggested donation. Experience the Wassail Weekend tradition as a world-class ensemble and soloists perform the Christmas portions of Handel's "Messiah." pentanglearts.org

**'A Christmas Carol' Radio Play** 7 p.m. The Lilac Inn, 53 Park St., Brandon. \$10. One Room Theatrics presents a live 1940s radio broadcast adaptation of the Charles Dickens classic, with regional actors portraying dozens of characters. Tickets available at the door or at paramountvt.org



#### **Bone Builders**

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

#### Monday Movie

1 p.m. (Mondays) Sherburne Memorial Library, 2998 River Road, Killington. Free. Contact the library for the title. sherburnelibrary.org/ movie-monday or 802-422-9765



#### Virtual Film Screening: 'Food, Inc. 2'

Dec. 17, 12:01 a.m. Online. Free. Donations welcome. Stream "Food, Inc. 2," a film examining corporate consolidation in the food system and exploring solutions for a sustainable future. Use invitation code FI2-SUSW to register. Available to watch anytime from Dec. 17 through Dec. 19 at midnight. Hosted by Sustainable Woodstock and Pentangle Arts with support from Vermont Community Foundation, Mascoma Bank, Ellaway Group, The Unicorn, and Mark Knott DDS. Pentanglearts.org

#### Handcraft Gathering

2-4 p.m. (Monthly, 3rd Tuesday) Abbott Memorial Library, Library St., So. Pomfret. Bring your knitting, crocheting, embroidery, or mending projects. abbottmemoriallibrary.org

Alzheimer's Support Group 4-5 p.m., (Monthly, 2nd Tuesday) Community Health, 71 Allen St., Suite 403, Rutland. Free. A monthly meeting for Alzheimer's caregivers and family members to share experiences and support one another. The group is run by participants with hands-on experience in caregiving. chcrr.org

Holiday Social Gathering 5-7 p.m. Vermont Farmers Food Center, 251 West. St. Rutland. Free. Donations appreciated. All ages. Social Tinkering welcomes people to enjoy the holidays in a social atmosphere for cookies and a Yankee swap. To participate in the swap, please bring a wrapped gift that is homemade, \$5 or less, or a re-gift. socialtinkering.org



Reserve your spot in one of our classes! West African Afro-Latin Heart & Ritual of the Medicine Drum

Other forms of ethnic percussion w/ private instruction available!

Classes held at Building #5, Howe Center, Rutland Contact Gary @ 802-282-2581

#### Line Dance Classes

5:30-7:30 p.m. (Tuesdays) Bradford Methodist Church, 186 N Main St., Bradford. \$10. Easy line dancing at 5:30 p.m., perfect for novices, followed by a 6:30 p.m. beginner-level class. All ages welcome. Bring water and wear comfortable shoes. No need to register in advance. jeanbeanslinedancing@gmail.com

## **Rutland Area Toastmasters**

6-7:30 p.m. (Monthly,) Courcelle Bldg, 16 North St. Ext., Rutland. Develop public speaking, listening, and leadership skills. Guests welcome. 802-775-6929. toastmasters.org



#### A Forest of Lights

Weekends and select weeknights through early January. VINS Nature Center, 149 Natures Way, Quechee. Adults \$13, Youth \$8, Children 3 & under Free. Stroll through magical light displays featuring the Snow Shower Tower, Snow Globe, Whimsical Woodland, and more. Campfire and snacks available for purchase. vinsweb.org

Christmas at Billings Farm Weekends through Jan. 4. Billings Farm & Museum, 69 Old River Road, Woodstock. Experience Victorian Christmas traditions with natural décor, candle dipping, pie crust crafting, and outdoor activities. Warm up by fire pits with hot cocoa and explore the Museum Gift Shop for unique, Vermont-made holiday gifts. billingsfarm.org

#### Disney's 'Beauty and the Beast'

Through Jan. 1, 2025. Northern Stage, 74 Gates St., White River Junction. \$24-\$94. Directed by Carol Dunne. northernstage.org

#### **Festival of Trees Virtual Benefit Auction**

Dec. 10-14. Online. Bid on dining, vacation packages, home goods, sporting event tickets, and more to support The Paramount. Auction catalog preview coming soon. Sponsored by Vermont Quarries, Baird Farm, Foley Services, and Hull Maynard Hersey Insurance. Paramountvt.org

#### Holiday Exhibit

Through January, 2025. Chaffee Art Center, 16 South Main St., Rutland. Free. Annual holiday exhibit. chaffeeartcenter.org

Holiday Art Market Brandon Artists Guild, 7 Center St., Brandon. Free. A festive holiday art market featuring handcrafted ornaments, pottery, stained glass, jewelry, photography, fiber art, and gifts for all ages. Open daily throughout the holiday season. brandonartistsguild.org



Puzzle Palooza 6-8:30 p.m. Prouty's Parlor for Ice Cream, 62 Merchants Row, Rutland. \$15 per player (includes a sundae). Compete to complete a 550-piece puzzle in two hours. Teams of up to four players. RSVP required. proutysparlor@gmail.com

12/21-12/22

Okemo Valley Holiday Express Departing from Chester Depot, 563 Depot St., Chester. \$25-\$30. Ages 2 and under free. Experience a festive train ride through the scenic Okemo Valley with holiday music, seasonal treats, and a special visit from Santa and his elves. yourplaceinvermont.com/okemo-valley-holiday-express

"The Wickhams: Christmas at Pemberley" Through Dec. 22. Shaker Bridge Theatre, Briggs Opera House, 5 S Main St., White River Junction. \$25. A yuletide sequel to "Pride and Prejudice." shakerbridgetheatre.org



## **MUSIC CALENDAR · 19**



WED

MUSIC Scene

KILLINGTON 6 p.m. Rivershed - Matt Koelsch

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

POULTNEY 7 p.m. Poultney Pub – Open Mic hosted by Danny Lang

QUECHEE 6 p.m. The Public House – Kim Wilcox

RUTLAND 5 p.m. Moose Lodge – Nick Bredice & Liz Reedy

8 p.m. Center Street Alley – Full PA/Backline Open Mic hosted by Josh LaFave



BRANDON 5:30 p.m. Red Clover Ale Company – Open Mic hosted by Emily Nelson

BRIDGEWATER CORNERS 5 p.m. Long Trail Brewery – Nick Bredice

KILLINGTON 2 p.m. K1 Base Lodge – Chris Pallutto

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

6 p.m. Rivershed - Rick Webb 6 p.m. The Foundry - Liz Reedy

8 p.m. Pickle Barrel – Jenny & The Boys

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

POULTNEY 6 p.m. Poultney Pub – Vinyl Night with Ken

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

RUTLAND 8 p.m. Angler Pub – A Sound Space Open Mic

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

WOODSTOCK 6 p.m. Ottauquechee Yacht Club – Rhys Chalmers

12/13BOMOSEEN

FR

:30 p.m. Bomoseen Lodge & Taproom – Aaron Audet

CASTLETON 6 p.m. Blue Cat Bistro - Live Music

KILLINGTON 2 p.m. K1 Base Lodge - Nick Bredice

4 p.m. The Foundry – Just Jamie

6 p.m. Rivershed - Stevey Burke 7 p.m. Still on the Mountain – Nick Bredice

7:30 p.m. McGrath's Irish Pub – Donal O'Shaughnessy

7:30 p.m. The Foundry – Chris Pallutto

8 p.m. Pickle Barrel - Dear Zoe 9 p.m. Jax Food & Games – Just Jamie

PAWLET 6 p.m. The Barn – Cry Baby Duo with Carl Anton & Emily Nelson

PITTSFIELD 8 p.m. Clear River Tavern – Bow Thayer & Krishna Guthrie\

POULTNEY 7 p.m. Poultney Pub – Cammy Errington

QUECHEE 5:30 p.m. Public House Pub -Arthur James

RUTLAND 6 p.m. Stonehedge Indoor Golf – Duane Carleton

9 p.m. Center Street Alley - DJ FĠ

WEST RUTLAND 7 p.m. American Legion – Karaoke by Sunset Entertainment



BARNARD 6 p.m. Town Hall – Holiday Cabaret Dinner & Dance

BRIDGEWATER 8 p.m. Woolen Mill Comedy Club – Comedy Show with co-headliners Drew Beekler and Brent Birnbaum

KILLINGTON 1 p.m. Bear Mountain Base Lodge - Chris Pallutto

2 p.m. K1 Base Lodge - Daniel Brown

p.m. Snowshed's Long Trail Pub – Duane Carleton

5 p.m. Pickle Barrel - Jamie's Junk Show

6 p.m. O'Dwyers Public House at the Summit Lodge - Rambletree 6 p.m. Rivershed - Stevey Burke

By DJ Dave Hoffenberg Have a music scene coming up? Email djdavehoff@gmail.com

6 p.m. Wine Bar - Rick Webb 6:30 p.m. Still on the Mountain – Liz Reedy

7 p.m. North Star Lodge Star Lounge – Dan Skoler

7 p.m. The Foundry – George Nostrand 7:30 p.m. McGrath's Irish Pub – Donal O'Shaughnessy

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

9 p.m. Pickle Barrel – Pimp 'n' Ho Ho Ho Party with Dear Zoe

LUDLOW 2 p.m. Okemo's The Bull – Nick Bredice

8 p.m. Off the Rails - Chris Pallutto Band

8 p.m. The Killarnev – Nick Bredice

QUECHEE 5:30 p.m. Public House Pub – Jennings & McComber

RANDOLPH 5 p.m. Chandler Center for the Arts - White River Valley Herald's 150th Anniversary Party with live music from Ali T, Bow Thayer, Krishna Guthrie, and the Randolph Singers, plus historical storytelling from great local actors

RUTLAND 5:30 p.m. Giorgetti Arena – Skate with Santa DJ Party

SOUTH POMFRET 7 p.m. Grange Theatre - A Festive Holiday Variety Show

STOCKBRIDGE 7:30 p.m. Wild Fern – Rick Redington & Tuff Luv WOODSTOCK 6:30 p.m. Ottauquechee Yacht Club - Bobby Sheehan

7:30 p.m. Town Hall Theatre – The Empty Pockets: Wassail 2024



KILLINGTON 12 p.m. Rivershed – Brunch with Stevey Burke

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

2 p.m. K1 Base Lodge –Rhys Chalmers

2 p.m. Snowshed's Long Trail Pub – Chris Pallutto

6 p.m. Liquid Art – Tboneicus Jones 6 p.m. Rivershed - Trivia

6 p.m. Still on the Mountain – Open Mic hosted by Liz Reedy

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

RUTLAND 3:30 p.m./7 p.m. Grace Congregational Church - Messiah

SOUTH POMFRET 7 p.m. Grange Theatre - A Festive Holiday Variety Show STOCKBRIDGE 7:30 p.m. Wild Fern – Rick Redington's Looping Mayhem

WOODSTOCK 2 p.m. Town Hall Theatre – Revels Kids: Wassail 2024

4 p.m. Our Lady of the Snows Roman Catholic Church -

MON

2 p.m. K1 Base Lodge - Duane Carleton

KILLINGTON

6 p.m. Rivershed - Mandatory Mondaves with Name That Tune Bingo by DJ Dave

7 p.m. Moguls Full Circle - Duane Carleton

LUDLOW 5 p.m. Little Mexico – Sammy B

Mic Night with King Arthur Junior

RUTLAND 7 p.m. Angler's Pub – Trivia hosted by Sunset Entertainment

WOODSTOCK 6:30 p.m. Ottauquechee Yacht Club – Bluegrass Etc. Jam with Ben Kogan

# TUES



**KILLINGTON** 2 p.m. K1 Base Lodge – Liz Reedy

6 p.m. Rivershed - Scott Forrest

7:30 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 7 p.m. Town Hall – Acoustic Jam

POULTNEY 7 p.m. Poultney Pub – Bluegrass Jam

QUECHEE 5 p.m. The Public House – Jim Yeader

RUTLAND 6:30 p.m. Vermont Tap House -Trivia Night

8 p.m. Center Street Allev – EDM Night with DJ EG, DJ Sims and Sunset Dreamz



2 p.m. Snowshed's Long Trail Pub – Chris Pallutto

# Woodstock's Wassail Weekend ushers in the holiday season with tradition and celebration

Dec. 13 through 15, from 5 p.m. Friday to 6 p.m. Sunday—Woodstock— Beginning at 5 p.m. on Friday afternoon, Woodstock will transform into a festive wonderland for its annual Wassail Weekend, with events planned through Sunday evening. This cherished tradition blends music, history, and holiday cheer in a packed weekend designed to capture the charm of a quintessential Vermont winter. Here's everything you need to know about this year's celebration:

## Friday, Dec. 13: A festive kickoff

 ${\bf Opening\, ceremony}-5{\text{-}}6$  p.m., East End Park to The Green

Kick off the weekend with a candlelit procession from East End Park to The Green, featuring bells, music, and piping by the star. Warm up with hot cider, courtesy of Pentangle Arts Council.

• **'A Classic Christmas' by Frisson** — 7:30-9:30 p.m., Town Hall Theater Pentangle Arts presents this concert featuring Frisson, an 11-member ensemble of emerging classical music stars. Celebrate with selections from "The Nutcracker," "Winter" from Vivaldi's "Four Seasons," and a Christmas carol sing-along.

#### Saturday, Dec. 14: Music, magic, and merriment Cupcakes with Santa — 11 a.m.-noon, Town Hall Theater

Bring the little ones for a sweet morning with Santa, with cupcakes and Christmas wishes.

- Ham Gillett reads Dylan Thomas Noon-1:30 p.m., Norman Williams Public Library
- Enjoy this traditional reading of Dylan Thomas's lyrical holiday reflections.
- Wassail parade 2 p.m., Downtown Woodstock

Watch as decorated horses and riders parade through the village, celebrating the spirit of the season.

• Wrensong Presents "Songs of the Season" — 3-3:45 p.m., Norman Williams

#### Public Library

Delight in Renaissance-era a cappella choral music from Vermont's own Wrensong ensemble.

#### • Holiday cabaret — 6-10 p.m., BarnArts

Celebrate with live music from the Speak Easy Prohibition Band, a farm-to-table dinner, and dancing at this festive fundraiser.

• The Empty Pockets concert — 7:30-9:30 p.m., Town Hall Theater

Enjoy this Chicago-based quartet blending Americana, folk, and rock for a high-energy performance.

## Sunday, Dec. 15: Family-friendly fun

Revels Kids performance — 2-3 p.m., Town Hall Theater

Revels North presents a joyous children's show featuring music and storytelling. Tickets are \$10 for adults and free for kids.

• Messiah Sing — 4-6 p.m., Our Lady of the Snows Church

Join a world-class ensemble and soloists for a moving rendition of Handel's "Messiah"—a suggested donation of \$10.

#### Billings Farm & Museum events

Throughout the weekend, Billings Farm & Museum visitors can step back into the 1890s with candle dipping, winter story time, and tours of the Farm Manager's House decked in Victorian holiday decor. Join the age-old tradition of wassailing the orchard on Saturday to ensure a fruitful harvest. Sunday features horse-drawn wagon or sleigh rides.

Wassail Weekend promises something for everyone, from live music and historic traditions to Santa sightings and festive shopping.

For more information, go to: pentanglearts.org.





Courtesy Pentangles Arts Council

Woodstock's Wassail Weekend, from Dec. 13-15, offers a festive blend of holiday traditions, music, and community celebrations, including candlelit processions, concerts, parades, family-friendly performances, and historic activities at Billings Farm & Museum.



Courtesy Pentangles Arts Council





Courtesy Billings Farm & Museum



Courtesy Grace Congregational UCC

The Rutland Area Chorus and Grace Festival Orchestra will perform Handel's 'Messiah' and Dale Sakamoto's 'Be Still' on Sunday, Dec. 15 at Grace Congregational UCC in Rutland.

# Handel's 'Messiah' and Dale Sakamoto's 'Be Still' to highlight Grace Church's holiday concert

Sunday, Dec. 15, at 3:30 p.m. and 7 p.m.— RUTLAND—Grace Congregational UCC will host its highly anticipated annual holiday concert featuring an afternoon and evening performance on Sunday. The event, a staple of the local festive season, will present "Messiah" (Part 1) by George Frideric Handel alongside Dale Sakamoto's "Be Still." Admission is free, with seating available on a first-come, first-served basis. A freewill offering will be accepted.

The Rutland Area Chorus, joined by the

Grace Festival Orchestra and distinguished soloists, will bring Handel's depiction of the Christmas story to life. This year's guest soloists include soprano Evangelia Leontis, mezzo-soprano Amy Frostman, tenor Ryan Mangan, and bass David Rugger, all of whom bring impressive credentials and performance experience to the stage.

Leontis, a voice and diction teacher at Keene State College and Vermont State University, has extensive opera and recital experience. Frostman, a native Vermonter and long-time soloist for Grace Church's Messiah performances, brings her expertise as a music teacher and seasoned choral performer.

Mangan, a Rutland native and accomplished vocalist, has appeared with ensembles such as the Barn Opera and Manchester Music Festival. Rugger, a recent transplant to Vermont, is a musicologist and experienced performer of J.S. Bach's works.

Adding to the program is Dale Sakamoto's "Be Still," winner of Grace Church's biannual composition competition. Based on Psalm 46, this piece transitions from "unsettled reverence and instability" to a "jubilant reminder that God is always with us," making it a perfect complement to Handel's "Messiah."

Grace Congregational UCC has a rich tradition of presenting 'Messiah," which includes nearly 100 volunteer singers and 20 instrumentalists. The evening is a celebration of Rutland's musical community and the holiday spirit.

For more information, visit: gracechurchvt.org.

# The Vermont Symphony Orchestra sets the mood for a festive, if shortened, holiday season

#### By James Kent

RUTLAND—On Sunday afternoon, Dec. 8, the Paramount Theatre filled wall-to-wall with people ready to usher in the holidays with the annual tradition of a "Holiday Pops" concert performed by the Vermont Symphony Orchestra. Conductor José Daniel Flores-Caraballo and his 100-plus musicians and chorus singers set the tone in this two-hour performance that mixed recognizable holiday favorites with some pieces reflecting Flores-Caraballo's Latin heritage.

Flores-Caraballo promised the near-capacity crowd on Sunday a party atmosphere, and by all accounts, the VSO delivered. Whether those in attendance knew it or not, when they walked into the theatre that afternoon, they had a role to play in the proceedings. Flores-Caraballo chose several selections where the audience would participate in singing along with the chorus. Flores-Caraballo asked audience members to sing portions of "O Come, All Ye Faithful," "The Many Moods of Christmas (The First Noel)," "Jingle Bells," and "White Christmas." What started as a shy reaction to group singing became a more well-rounded affair when "Jingle Bells" arrived in the program's second half.

Georges Bizet's "Farandole" from "L'Arlésienne" performed during the concert's first half was a highlight. Flores-Caraballo informed the crowd that Bizet's intention with this particular piece was to spark line dancing and that while he recognized such a practice would be impractical on this afternoon, the audience was welcome to imagine such a dance.

Flores-Caraballo proved an entertaining host throughout the afternoon, continually keeping the audience engaged, Orchestra  $\rightarrow 24$ 



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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.



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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

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# Garden inside this winter

#### By Deborah J. Benoit

Cold weather has arrived, and you've put your garden to bed for the season. That doesn't mean you can't garden. Just shift your focus from outdoors to in.

Adding foliage plants to your home satisfies your need to be surrounded by green. Easy-togrow choices that are also tolerant of the low-light conditions common in winter include pothos *(Epipremnum aureum)*, philodendron *(Philodendron hederaceum)*, and Chinese evergreen *(Aglaonema commutatum)*.

Aloe (*Aloe vera*), a succulent, will do well near a window with bright, indirect light. Begonias (*Semperflorens*) are available in various leaf shapes, textures, patterns, and colors, including green, silver, and deep red.

Check the light requirements of any houseplant you select. Please keep it away from heat sources and cold drafts, and be careful not to overwater. Soggy soil can lead to root rot and other problems.

If you're more interested in flowers than greenery, consider African violets (*Saintpaulia*), cape primrose (*Streptocarpus*), or moth orchids (*Orchidaceae*) for long-lasting blooms that will brighten winter days.

Water as needed, and feed with a fertilizer recommended for flowering houseplants according to package directions. Remove faded blossoms.

Flowering plants are likely to require more light than those grown for their foliage. Be sure to check the needs of specific plants. Required light levels and tolerance for direct sunlight will vary. Consider adding a supplemental light source if you don't have a suitable window that provides sufficient sunlight.

Indoor gardening during the winter months isn't limited to houseplants. With some extra work, you can include edibles in your plans.

What could be more visually satisfying than a row of potted herbs basking in the faux sunshine on a grow-lighted shelf?

Herbs such as chives (*Allium schoenoprasum*), basil (*Ocimum basilicum*), and thyme (*Thymus vulgaris*) can be grown in pots on a bright windowsill. Plants may be available at a local greenhouse or can be started from seed. Keep plants away from cold drafts and contact with window glass, which can damage leaves and slow growth.

If a plant needs full sun outdoors, it will require plenty of light indoors. Leggy growth can indicate insufficient light. A window with full sun and a southern exposure will work best for many plants, but a grow light may make your plant happier and more productive.

A home-grown salad in January harvested from a container of lettuce (*Lactuca sativa*), spinach (*Spinacia oleracea*), or other greens can be immensely satisfying. You'll need a good light source, potting mix, water, and, of course, seeds. For more detailed information on growing salad greens, see go.uvm.edu/indoor-greens.

Growing vegetables like tomatoes (*Solanum lycopersicum*) or peppers (*Capsicum*) can provide an extra challenge and personal satisfaction. Varieties such as Tiny Tim and Micro Tom have a compact form and grow well in pots. In general, choose smaller-fruited tomatoes for best results.

Use quality potting soil. Provide plenty of room for good air circulation. Temperatures should be warm (around 70 degrees Fahrenheit). Water consistently and fertilize according to package directions—stake as needed. Once flowers appear, a gentle shake of the stem can aid pollination in the absence of pollinators.

Growing potted vegetables indoors will require supplemental light to produce fruit. For information on selecting and using grow lights, see go.uvm.edu/grow-lights.

If you have pets, check whether plants in your indoor garden are pet-friendly. Keep any that may be toxic out of reach or select alternatives.

No matter what plants or methods you choose, moving your garden indoors can keep your inner gardener content until spring arrives.

Deborah J. Benoit is a UVM Extension Master Gardener from North Adams, Massachusetts, part of the Bennington County Chapter.



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Dec. 15 10 am	Service of Lessons & Carols with Handbells and all the Grace Church choirs
3:30 pm / 7 pm	RAC Performs Handel's <i>Messiah</i> (* <sup>no tickets)</sup>
<b>Dec. 17</b> 7 pm	Longest Night Service: Join us in the Chapel for a time of inspiration and encouragement.
Dec. 22 10 am	Family Christmas Service with Festival Brass & Timpani, Choir and Nativity
Dec. 24 8 pm	Candlelight Christmas Eve Service with Musical Prelude at 7:30 pm
Grace Congregat	tional UCC 🧥





ELEBRATE



# Ugly Christmas Sweater Contest! 15% Off After Hours Shopping Sale!

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13 & 14 - Donal O'Shaughnessy

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# from page 21

enthused, and amused by his enthusiasm and anecdotes. His introduction to the Spanish traditional *"Esta Noche"* included background on Puerto Rican Christmas Eve practices of singing at all hours of the evening. Soprano Evangelia Leontis provided additional flare with her solo singing of *"Esta Noche,"* a

standout moment of the concert. Another highlight

came in the show's second to last performance. Leontis and baritone David Rugger performed a duet to start the first half of "The Twelve Days of Christmas" before the

full chorus kicked in. The number received an enormous applause from the packed auditorium of the Paramount.

The VSO's Holiday Pop concert concluded with an audience favorite, Leroy Anderson's "Sleigh Ride." The entire orchestra and chorus donned Santa hats for this final number, including Flores-Caraballo. The worthy performers received a standing ovation from the gracious audience in attendance. When a late Thanksgiving truncates the holiday season, it can feel more stressful, as if there is so much to do in so little time that taking a moment to experience a holiday pleasantry is a luxury one cannot afford. But for those taking in Sunday's VSO performance, one could not help but experience

Leontis and baritone David Rugger performed a duet to start the first half of "The Twelve Days of Christmas" before the full chorus kicked in. the joy of setting aside a couple of hours to usher in the season in such a proper manner. The sounds of music one hears, perhaps only at this time of year, take the mind back to those earlier times of youth, ones spent hiding under a table at grandma's house while Arthur

Fielder Boston Pops records played on a turntable or the excitement of anticipation waiting for that holiday special logo to appear on the network TV station. All those holiday traditions that once were so distant in our imaginations return instantly when the lights dim and the conductor's wand raises. This day in Rutland was another reminder that old traditions can rekindle new memories, and we should take advantage of them when we can.



There was plenty of good cheer at the VSO's annual 'Holiday Pops' concert at the Paramount Theatre on Sunday, Dec. 8.

# The Dance Factory prepares for its 33rd annual 'Nutcracker' performance

Saturday-Sunday, Dec. 15-16—SPRINGFIELD — The Dance Factory will enchant audiences with its 33rd annual production of "The Nutcracker" at Springfield High School on Saturday at 7 p.m. and Sunday at 2 p.m.

The Mountain Times • Dec. 11-17, 2024

Directed by Ashley Hensel-Browning, the performance features a cast of youth and adult dancers, dazzling custom costumes, and magical elements like a growing tree and a whirling snowstorm. This family-friendly production is Vermont's longest-running rendition of the classic holiday ballet.

The Dance Factory's "Nutcracker" is a unique, inclusive production that highlights the talents of local dancers. This year's cast includes Sabyn Tennis as the Snow Queen, Niavh Gibney as the Sugar Plum Fairy, Gwendelyn Kelley as Clara, and Samantha Cross as the Nutcracker Prince. Tickets are \$15 for adults and \$10 for children and students. They are available at Tina's Hallmark and Woodbury Florist in Springfield, Sage Jewelry and Gifts in Chester, or online at dancefactorynutcracker24.eventbrite. com. Limited tickets will also be available at the door. A portion of proceeds will benefit the Springfield High School Drama Club, continuing a tradition of supporting local arts programs.

"The Nutcracker's" reach extends beyond the stage. SAPA Television will film and broadcast the performance, and selections will be performed at local schools and Springfield Health and Rehab to ensure broader community access to this cherished holiday tradition.

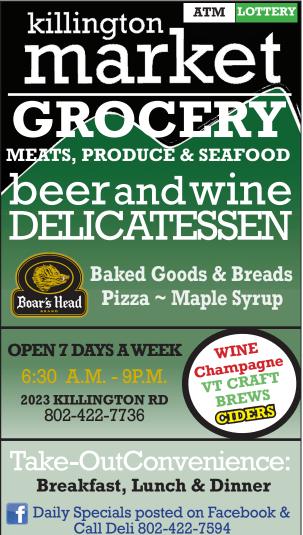
By Denise E. Photography

For more information about the production or The Dance Factory's programs, visit: dancefactoryvt.com.

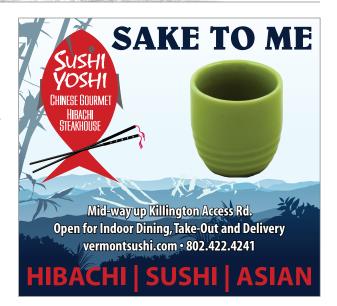


The Dance Factory will perform "The Nutcracker" on Dec. 14 and 15 at Springfield High School.





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9 17

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# reativity shines at Killington's Festival of Trees

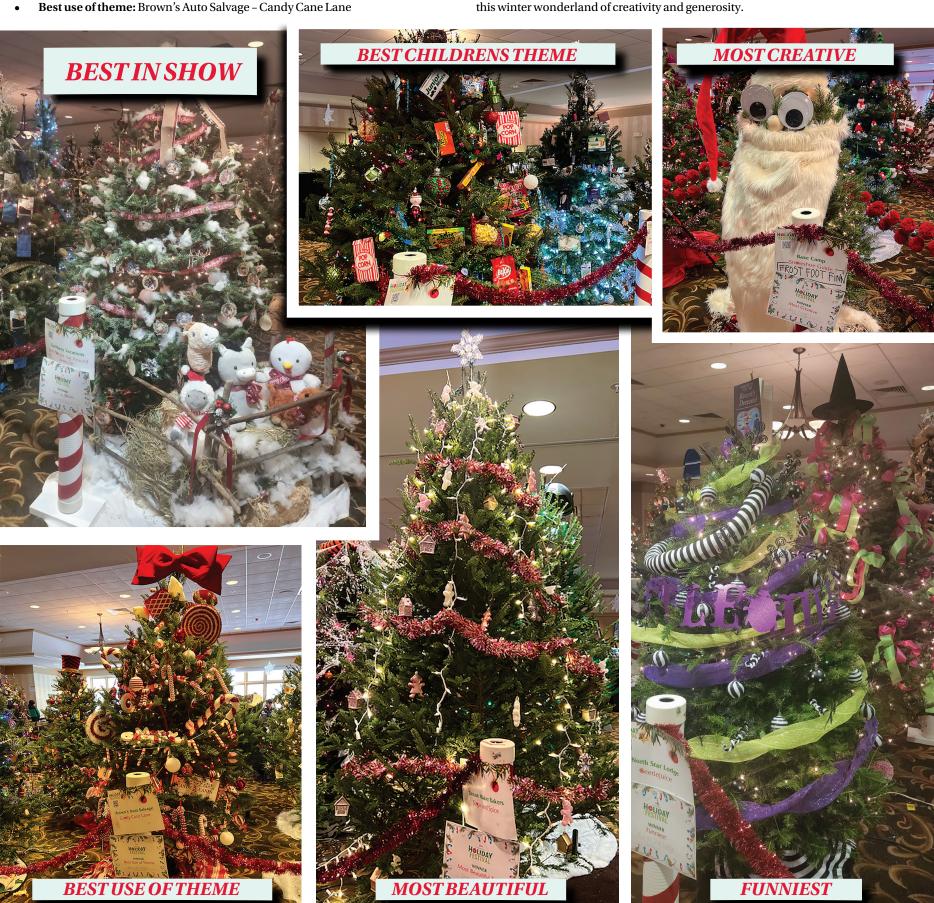
The Festival of Trees, part of the Vermont Holiday Festival held Dec. 5-7 at the Killington Grand Hotel, once again brought holiday cheer and creativity to the spotlight. Local businesses showcased their talent by sponsoring and decorating themed trees, which filled the venue with festive magic and community spirit.

The competition featured standout designs that wowed attendees.

#### This year's winners included

• Best in show: Get Away Vacations – Just Mooo-ing Around Vermont

- Best use of lights: Relay for Life Moove Over Cancer!
- $\bullet \qquad \textbf{Most colorful:} Greenbrier Gift Shop A WICKED Pretty Christmas$
- Funniest: North Star Lodge Beetlejuice
- Most beautiful tree: Dream Maker Bakers Sugar and Spice
- Most creative: Base Camp Snowshoe Guide Frost Foot Finn
- **Best children's theme:** Vista Senior Living Holiday Movie Night Each tree raffled off to benefit local causes, embodied the spirit of community and holiday giving. Guests marveled at the intricate designs and enjoyed strolling through



Courtesy of Kelly Morrisey, Killington Pico Area Association The Festival of Trees, part of the Vermont Holiday Festival at Killington Grand Hotel (Dec. 5-7), showcased festive trees decorated by local businesses. Winners in categories like Best in Show and Most Creative were celebrated, with all trees raffled off to support local causes.



Travel along Pleasant Street in West Rutland, and you'll come across this well-decorated home, which invites visitors to drive along an entranceway through an enchanted scene that loops back around to Pleasant Street.

# ingle Bell Shop bring holiday cheer to downtown Rutland

Thursday, Dec. 12 at 5 p.m. RUTLAND — The highly anticipated Jingle Bell Shop returns to downtown Rutland on

Thursday, Dec. 12, from 5-8 p.m., blending festive shopping with locally sourced food and drink in an event designed to support local businesses and bring seasonal cheer.

For \$25, ticket holders can explore nearly 30 stops throughout the historic downtown area, sampling offerings from Vermont breweries, distilleries, and specialty food vendors. The evening also features live music, a maker's market, and a variety of sales and raffles at participating businesses. Festive attire, including ugly sweaters, is encouraged, with a "People's Choice" prize for the best outfit shared on Downtown Rutland Partnership's social media.

"This event is a wonderful way to embrace the holiday spirit while supporting our incredible local businesses," said Hal Issente, Executive Director of the Downtown Rutland Partnership. "With more stops than ever this year, there's something for everyone-from delicious food and drink to unique shopping experiences and fun activities."

Tickets for the event are available online or in person on the day of at the Downtown Rutland Partnership office at 28 Center Street. A \$15 non-alcohol ticket option is also available. Check-in begins at 4:45 p.m., where attendees will receive a complimentary tote bag, a tasting glass, and a map of participating locations.

Events like the Jingle Bell Shop have a significant economic impact on the local community. "Research shows that 66 cents of every dollar spent locally stays in the community," Issente added. "This event directly supports the downtown's vibrancy, benefiting both businesses and residents."

For more information about the Downtown Rutland Partnership and the Jingle Bell Shop, visit: downtownrutland.com.



Jingle Bell Shop returns to downtown Rutland on Thursday, Dec. 12.

## 28 · ARTS, DINING, ENTERTAINMENT



Shaker Bridge Theatre in White River Junction will run "The Wickhams: Christmas at Pemberley" with performances starting this week and running through Dec. 22.

# Shaker Bridge Theatre presents 'The Wickhams: Christmas at Pemberley'

Thursday-Sunday, Dec. 10-22—WHITE RIVER JUNC-TION—Shaker Bridge Theatre opened "The Wickhams: Christmas at Pemberley" on Thursday, Dec. 5, at the Briggs Opera House. This yuletide sequel to "Pride and Prejudice," written by Lauren M. Gunderson and Margot Melcon, invites audiences to experience Pemberley's bustling servants' quarters during the holiday season.

The story unfolds as Mrs. Reynolds, the efficient housekeeper; Cassie, an enthusiastic maid; and Brian, a lovesick footman, prepare for holiday guests. Mr. Wickham-Lydia's rogue husband and Mr. Darcy's adversary-unexpectedly arrives to disrupt their work. The play weaves class divisions and forgiveness themes into a festive holiday narrative.

The production features a talented cast, including familiar and new faces at Shaker Bridge Theatre. Danielle Cohen (Mrs. Reynolds) returns after her role in "Private Eyes," while Seth Eliser (Brian) and Allie Seibold (Cassie) make their debuts. The ensemble includes Issac Hickox-Young as George Wickham, Dory Psomas as Lydia Wickham, Noor Taher as Mr. Darcy, and Julianne Borger as Elizabeth Darcy.

Artistic director Bill Coons leads the production, continuing his mission to highlight female playwrights.

"This theatre can be a bridge to a wider and deeper understanding of our nature and possibilities," says

Coons

The play is part of Gunderson and Melcon's "Christmas at Pemberley" trilogy. Gunderson, one of the most produced playwrights in America, and Melcon, an experienced arts administrator and writer, bring a unique depth and warmth to this holiday tale.

The creative team includes Clif Rogers (stage management and lighting), Craig Mowery (set design), and Martie Betts (costume design).

Ticket prices range from \$20-\$38 for Thursday evening performances and \$25-\$45 on weekends. There are afternoon performances available on Saturdays and Sundays. For more information, go to: shakerbridgetheatre.org

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# Raffle benefits Habitat for Humanity

KILLINGTON-On Nov. 23, at the annual meeting of the Killington Grand Hotel Owner's Association, Killington Pico Realty and the Owner's Association teamed up to host a successful fundraiser benefiting the Rutland Chapter of Habitat for Humanity. Kyle Kershner, broker/owner at Killington Pico Real Estate, who is also an owner at the Grand Hotel, was invited to set up a table at the annual homeowner's meeting to promote his business and realized it might be an opportunity to have some fun and raise money for a good cause at the same time. The Killington Pico Realty team reached out to local businesses for donations to include in the raffle and was  $astonished \ by the \ overwhelming \ generosity \ of \ the \ local \ community.$ 

"I am eminently grateful to the local businesses who contributed to the raffle and to the staff and owners at the Grand Hotel who helped make this effort a success," said Kershner.

The raffle raised more than \$900 for the Rutland chapter of Habitat for Humanity, where Kershner serves on the Board of Directors.

To learn more about Habitat for Humanity or to make a secure donation, please visit: rutlandhabitat.com.



Kyle Kershner and Killington Pico Realty raised over \$900 for Habitat for Humanity.

Submitted

# 'Emilia Pérez' aims high but doesn't quite reach the top

Jacques Audiard's musical thriller can't achieve its lofty ambitions but still offers more than most films



Acclaimed French film director Jacques Audiard delivered one of the best crime films of the past 20 years in 2009's "A Prophet." Audiard returns to the crime world once more, but this time, he travels from the French prison system to the drug cartels of Mexico in an ambitious adaptation of his opera libretto, which he adapted from Boris Razon's 2018 novel "Écoute."

Screens and Streams By James Kent

While I avoid plot spoilers in my reviews, discussing "Emilia Pérez" without revealing some of its secrets would be difficult. I was vaguely aware of the plot before I sat down and watched the film, which is now on Netflix. Netflix purchased the distribution rights after "Emilia Perez" won a special acting prize for its three female leads, Zoe Saldaña, Karla Sofia Gascón, and Selena Gomez, all of

whom performed terrific. And while Saldaña and Gomez are American actresses, the film is mainly in Spanish with English subtitles.

Saldaña (in a career-best role) plays Rita Mora Castro, a talented but conflicted lawyer in Mexico who recognizes she is a cog in the political machine where the guilty go free, and innocence is a purchasable commodity. Songs that periodically jettison out of the character's lips serve as that fourth wall, theater of the mind, to address the situation occurring in Mexico with the drug cartels and enhance the characters' inner conflicts and struggles.

It doesn't take long for Saldaña's Castro to be reached out by a cartel kingpin who wants to make her an offer she can't refuse. The kingpin, Juan "Manitas" Del Monte, allows Saldaña to refuse, and if she does, no harm. But if she accepts, Del Monte will make her rich beyond her wildest dreams, and she will be of service as long as Del Monte deems necessary.

In these early moments, the premise of "Emilia Pérez" intrigues, and Saldaña's meeting with Del Monte provides an unnerving sense of danger that creates an unease in the stomach. Del Monte is a curious figure who captivates the audience—you want to know more. Where is this film headed?

And now, for those readers not looking for spoilers, you could leave this review, much like Saldaña's character, and go about your business. But if you take the offer to come along for the journey, then beware: I am about to reveal the twist.

Del Monte requests that Saldaña help him become his true self. Saldaña will do whatever it takes to arrange for Del Monte to disappear from his life in the cartel and become what he knows inside he's always been: a woman.

Karla Sofia Gascón, a trans actress, plays Del Monte under makeup effects and then the titular Emilia Pérez, who he becomes through surgeries and hormone therapies. The first hour of the film, which I found the best part of the movie, deals with the process of Del Monte becoming Emilia Pérez. Saldaña dutifully performs her role as a lawyer, ensuring all aspects of Monte/Pérez's wishes come true. Part of these duties includes faking Del Monte's death and relocating his wife (played by Gomez) and children.

Four years later, Saldaña enjoys life in Europe, hobnobbing in higher society circles that her newfound wealth affords her. At a dinner party, she sits beside a woman who introduces herself as Emilia Pérez. By the end of the dinner, Saldaña, who never saw Del Monte's transformation, realizes that her business with the former cartel drug lord is not over and may never be over.

Emilia Pérez wants to return to Mexico and asks Saldaña to join her and help return Pérez's wife and children (who currently reside in Switzerland) to Mexico, too. Saldaña does not want to, but she is smart enough to realize this isn't a request she can deny.

Gomez and her children believe Del Monte is dead and missing. When they are shuffled back to Mexico to live with Del Monte's wealthy cousin Emilia Pérez, they have no idea she was once Del Monte.

And thus begins the second half of "Emilia Pérez," where the perfect life Del Monte dreamed of, this opportunity to leave the cartel world behind and live as the woman he always knew he was, begins to fall apart due to the lies built to conceal his new identity. Emilia Pérez tries to undo crimes of the past through philanthropy in Mexico and trying to locate missing people killed at the hands of the cartel; she can't escape the demons of her former life.

Audiard asks interesting questions. What is the self? Do the masks we wear to conform to society's demands come off entirely if we assume a different one? Del Monte believes that if he can live life as Emilia Pérez, society will accept him, and as Pérez, Del Monte is. There is never a moment in the story where any character is suspicious of Pérez's former identity. However, h one of Pérez's children recognizes some aspects of Del Monte in Pérez, and in one soft song, the child sings about the smell of his father, which he can recognize in Pérez.

Along the way, there is an intriguing new romance for Pérez with a woman whose abusive husband's body is located through Pérez's efforts and a third-act struggle with Gomez, who wants to move on entirely from Pérez's grip. The tragic aspects of the film's final half hour come at the hands of Emilia Pérez's desire to control everything, much the way her former identity did as the head of a cartel.

There is a lot to like about this film. I wanted to love it, but the second half was bogged

down with too many plot deviations. It got tiring, and I asked internal questions, like "What is director Audiard going for?" The songs felt inspired in the movie's first half; in the second half, I wondered why this movie was a musical. Audiard bit off more than he could chew with this effort. Maybe that happens when you're aiming for greatness, and there is more here to scrutinize than the average film because Audiard's movie is of a higher caliber.

It's interesting, on a thematic level, that several of these fall film offerings deal with the subject of internal and external presentations and desires. "The Substance," "A Different Man," and to a lesser extent, "Wicked," "Conclave," and now "Emilia Pérez" all give us stories and characters dealing with a world that sees one exterior and an internal need to either preserve that image, alter that image, reveal a different image, or become someone new to achieve the desires of heart and soul. Those aspects of "Emilia Pérez" are the most thought-provoking. While I cannot give the film as high marks as I would have liked, it is worth watching if you are looking for more challenging entertainment, and with its accessibility on Netflix, chances are you could watch it right away.

James Kent is the publisher's assistant at the Mountain Times. He is also the co-host of the "Stuff We've Seen" podcast at stuffweveseen.com.



"Emilia Pérez," the acclaimed film from director Jacques Audiard, is now streaming on Netflix.

Submitted



Solutions

## Crossword

From page 15

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# Sudoku

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# **Rutland County Humane Society**



CHILI-2-year-old. Neutered Male. Cattle Dog Mix.



KEEN—1-year-old. Neutered Male. Domestic Shorthair.



PUMA—1-year-old. Spayed Female. Domestic Shorthair.



STELLA—2-year-old. Spayed Female. American.



SNOWY-4-year-old. Neutered Male. American.



Spay date set. American Staffordshire Terrier.

**Rutland County Humane Society** 765 Stevens Road, Pittsford, VT • (802) 483-6700 Tues. - Sat. 11 a.m. -4 p.m. Closed Sun. & Mon. · www.rchsvt.org



DOBIE-2-year-old. Neutered Male. Doberman Pinscher.



MAX-3-year-old. Neutered Male. Domestic Shorthair.



PHTHALO-6-monthold. Spayed Female. Domestic Shorthair.



WHEELER-4-year-old. Neuter Appointment Set. German Shepherd.



OREGANO-1.5year-old. Neutered Male. Domestic Shorthair.



PIE-1.5-year-old. Neutered Male. Lionhead.



Lucy Mackenzie Humane Society 4832 VT-44, Windsor, VT · (802) 484-5829 \*By appointment only at this time. lucymac.org



**Springfield Humane Society** 401 Skitchewaug Trail, Springfield, VT · (802) 885-3997 \*Open by appointment only. spfldhumane.org



Aries

f something isn't working as smoothly as you'd prefer in your creative life, with children, or in a romantic situation, ask yourself whether you're trying to push the issue. Right now, you're being taught the virtue of patience. It won't be the most enjoyable process for you. The problems you can approach with maturity now will be gifts you receive later. Think outside the current perspective you're in. Change your thinking, change your life.

## Taurus Anril 21 - May 20

hen you have a problem in one area of life, it's easy to project it onto another. This week may be a case of being careful with whom you share your problems, not everyone who smiles at you as a friend. If something is upsetting you, deal with the person involved. Looking for moral support from others just to feel heard won't improve things but could likely make them worse.



ife could take on a new direction this week. The Full Moon illuminates your sign as Mercury changes direction in your relationship sector. Knowing what you want and need and how to communicate it may become clearer and easier than it's been for you in a while. That said. Neptune in the mix could either make things even more confusing or it could bring the magic you've been looking for. What you've been seeking also seeks you.



Tour cash flow and general financ-Y es may be a little bit problematic. Regardless of your circumstances, nobody likes money being funny. At a deeper level, this could be about your confidence and self-esteem. The more you can double down on what you know you're capable of and what you have to offer, the more abundance of all kinds vou'll attract. Don't let vour mood determine the actions you do or don't take.



n order to get something you've Inever had, you have to do something you've never done. Leopards don't change their spots, so this won't be the easiest of processes for you. That said, though, if you don't change something, well, nothing changes. A sudden turn of events, a friend, or a relationship could be seen in a new light, and then, everything could change. The power of deciding is what you need to embrace.

## Virao inust 21 - S

To many options are available for You now regarding your career or the direction in which you want your life to be going. However, if you don't make a choice, these options will pass, and you'll be left in exactly the same position you are in now. It would be easy for you to do what has always been done, but if you want change, then you do have to think differently. When you do that, you can make the choices you need to make.



our romantic life or a creative out-**Y** let, hobby, or pastime could really be changing your life right now. Perspectives are shifting, too. It's an exciting time for you as you undergo the last weeks of a longer 18-month cycle of getting to know yourself. You've shed old habits and discovered more about vourself in the process. As a result, new people, new situations, and new possibilities are what you are currently being set up for. It's up to you to embrace them with both hands.



f things feel anything but smooth sail-If things teel anyuming out out of things when it comes to your career or your life direction goals, then you really do need to pull back your energy. Some time to reassess your desires and decide what you truly want will help you make better choices. You can opt to be stubborn and push for progress, but it will be an exercise in futility. Press the pause button. The sooner you fall behind, the sooner you'll catch up.



**N**ometimes, the more confusing Sthings get, the more sense they seem to make. The more you try and figure things out, the more confusing that thing becomes. If you're in this position now, then you need to double down on faith. Whatever you're dealing with, working through, or wanting to manifest in life, your clarity has to become greater than your logic. It's an oxymoron for most, but likely not for vou!



etting your financial life where Uyou want it to be is a mathematical situation. Spreadsheets, budgets, and balances. Spend less than you earn, and you'll get where you want to be. This isn't the entire equation. though. In order to have what you want in the bank, you have to believe you're worthy of it. Self-sabotage often gets in the way of self-belief. Right now, you have the chance to rebalance the most important spreadsheet.



ou're the last person who appre-Y ciates being backed into a corner, but that is what someone else is attempting to do to you now. Other people's problems don't have to be yours to take on. You can help, guide, and support those you're closest to, but also keep your distance - that is what you usually do. It may sound a bit cruel, but sometimes that's what vou have to be to be kind. You'll be appreciated for it in the end.



verything will have its own wav Every uning ..... Every uning ..... work or what you want to do with yourself in 2025, plus trying to balance everything within your domestic life, will begin to feel clearer this week. So, with that in mind, keep doing what you're doing and know that everything will work out as it should and in perfect timing. The more you push, the more resistance you'll get, so just relax and go with the flow!

### Grief is the price you pay for love. War is the price you pay for

peace. Discipline is the price you pay for freedom. Nothing in life is free. Few people are willing to pay the price for what they want. Do they even know what they want? People think they know what

they want, yet cannot identify the crosscurrents within them that in-

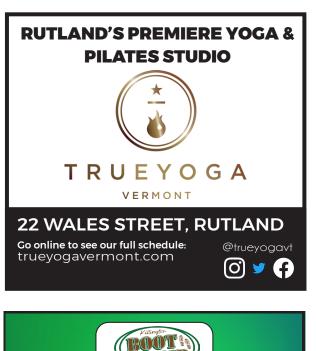
your alone time too much. Maybe you want to save money but can't resist a sale.

Crosscurrents

We all have these kinds of crosscurrents. To identify them, you have to be honest. Are you giving just to get something back? Do you want to receive but are unwilling to give?

This week brings a variety of opportunities to look at things from a multitude of perspectives. If you feel as though you're spinning your wheels in frustration, then let that frustration be the fuel for change.

Like paying the price, few people like change. This week, ask yourself whether you're more afraid of change or of staying in precisely the same place you are. Work done now will reap blessings you cannot imagine.





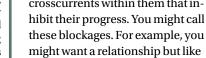
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Cassandra has studied astrology for about 20 years. She is an international teacher of astrology who has been published all over the globe.









# The winter lives of salamanders

In the cold October air, my classmates and I gathered around the square oak board placed on the ground more than a year earlier. Carefully, we lifted it and peered underneath. Against the dark brown soil, two shiny lines caught our attention: salamanders.

Both were Eastern redbacked salamanders (Plethodon cinereus), the most abundant salamander species in the Northeast. One had the classic red stripe running down its back; the other was a less common lead morph, sporting a speckled black back without the stripe. If you look under

logs in a forest for much of the year, you'll likely find red-backed salamanders sheltering between nighttime forays to hunt mites, ants, and other small prey.

Coverboards, like the one we lifted to find these two salamanders, replicate natural habitats and allow researchers to collect data on various species. In the fall of 2019, I was part of a wildlife monitoring class at the University of New Hampshire, working under Professor Jennifer Purrenhage to study the seasonal movements of terrestrial salamanders. Every week, a few of us would check under the coverboards.

Salamanders are most conspicuous in early spring, when several terrestrial species migrate en masse on rainy nights, moving through the forest and, all too often, crossing roads to access breeding pools. Yet terrestrial salamanders have other, less spectacular seasonal movements, including summer and fall



migrations and those that are vertical, up and down in the earth. All salamanders are ectotherms, meaning their body tem-

> perature fluctuates with the local air or soil temperature. As amphibians, they also are at constant risk of desiccation. Heat regulation and access to water are key to their survival.

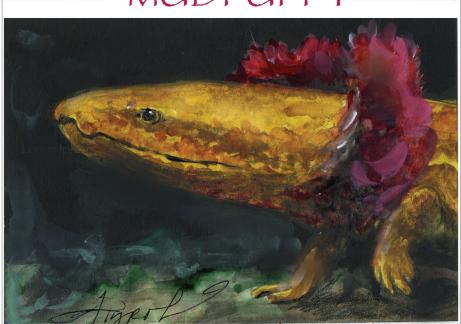
As trees leaf out in summer and the ground dries, many salamanders move downward, where the temperature is cooler, and soil moisture keeps them hydrated. They resurface in autumn as rains replenish soil moisture. By mid-November, however, the spaces beneath the boards were empty.

The salamanders had disappeared. As winter approaches, salamanders

must adapt - to the most challenging season of all. Many terrestrial salamanders head underground for the coldest months. In addition to red-backed salamanders, this group includes four-toed salamanders, so named for only four toes on each hind foot, red efts (the juvenile form of eastern newts), and members of the mole salamander (Ambystoma) genus: the aptly named spotted salamander, Jefferson salamander, and the blue-spotted salamander.

To survive, these species must migrate below the frost line, which, depending on air temperatures and the presence of insulating snow, can be more than 5 feet down. Deep in the earth, they'll settle in, their bodies staying just above the freezing point and soil moisture keeping them from The Outside Story  $\rightarrow$  38

# MUDPUPF



Necturus maculosus



Skiing could get extreme in the early days of Killington.

# Killington in the '60s: The rest of the tale The first extreme skiing

By James

Kachadorian

The ski school constructed an upward-sloping ramp in front of the Snowshed Lodge observation deck. We blew snow on it to maintain the right amount of surface needed to create a perfect ski jump. Two daredevils, Herman Goellner and Tom LeRoy, figured out that they could get enough speed to hit the jump and perform a backward flip by shooting down the Snowshed slope. This was a first, and it amazed onlookers. Soon, it became a regular attraction: every **Slippery Slopes** Saturday and Sunday at 10:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m., our two skiers would put on quite a show to the delight of the assembled

crowd. The following year, they upped the ante by hitting a bump at the end of the ramp, allowing them to do a forward flip. I carefully surveyed the ramps to make sure they could be replicated. To my knowledge this was the first time these acrobatic feats were accomplished. Goellner was later inducted into the US Ski-Board Hall of Fame.

#### The first gondola

In January 1967, I was sworn to secrecy and handed plans for a gondola that would start on Route 4 and end atop Killington. I was told to take the plans home and hide them. It had to be top secret, I was told because more land would need to be purchased to complete this project. Preston Leete Smith was afraid that if the word got out, the land purchase prices would be upped.

One January afternoon, Smith told me we needed to locate the spot where the gondola's "Swamp Terminal" would be built, the midway station where the gondola would have to make an angle turn. He said to get some climbing spurs and a pole with a red flag on it. We'd need to locate the spot and place the flag atop a tree to identify it from the top of Killington 1. Since this was a covert operation, we waited until just before the Snowshed lift closed to

begin our mission, setting off in the

dark. We had downhill skis, a headlamp, and a coast and geodetic map. Smith said we were going to follow the contour to the correct spot. Off we went, making our way through brush and fallen trees until we got to what he thought was the correct spot. Okay, go up the tree. No, how about you going up the tree? Smith prevailed, and I climbed up as far as pos-

sible with downhill ski boots and spurs to set the flag. Now, it was time to head back to Snowshed. Smith led the way.

"Pres, I think we're losing elevation," I said to Smith.

"No, those are the lights of Snowshed," Smith responded.

"I don't think so because they are moving!"

We trudged on. About 7:30 p.m., we arrived on Route 4. This was before cell phones, so the corporation president and his operations engineer hitchhiked back to Killington. When I finally got home, my girlfriend and soon-to-be wife, Lea, asked me where I had been and why I was all scratched up with pine needles on my parka.

"I can't tell you. It's a secret," I answered. The Committee of 5

Paul Bousquet had been general manager for years, giving his all to Killington. Paul left in the fall of 1967. In his place, a "Committee of 5" was appointed to run Slippery Slopes  $\rightarrow$  39

# **Breaking a leg**

Sports were my greatest concern growing up, to the detriment of almost every other activity. I never considered choir or band or scouting or anything else. I was all-in with my sporting interests, which varied in degree between basketball, football, baseball, and track.

My personality was completely defined and characterized by mv involvement in athletics. I hate to admit it, but while I never knowingly treated anyone poorly (to the best of my recollection), I did snub my nose at the other extracurricular activities and those who chose to be involved in them. And none more so than theater.

I'm not sure why I found theater so disillusioning. In reality, sports is as much theater as

theater is sports. Both activities take place on a stage with an audience in attendance. Both have stars, directors, and support. And both, if done well, have dramatic highs and lows that make for intriguing storylines.

But in my mind, sports were cool, and the theater was very uncool.

Yet, an interesting dichotomy is at play because, at one time in my life, I was involved in a theater production that moved me deeply.

The theatrical production I'm speaking about occurred at my church sometime in the mid-1970s, where I played Joseph in a regional adaptation of "The Nativity." Many of

With the holiday season upon us and many of us traveling to visit family, we

must take time to consider gratitude.

feeling it? What can you do to

it affect us and others in our

lives?

find more gratitude? How does

Gratitude is a gift

All of the riches in the world

could never replace the feeling

of goodwill shared when treat-

derstanding that behind what

we see in a person, there is still

that inner voice inside of them:

The one that gets them up in the

start their day, the one that sees

the world from a truly unique and individ-

ual perspective based on what's happen-

ing to them, and the one that decides how

they view and treat themselves and others.

That inner voice in all of us that can build

or destroy, grow or remain stuck, smile or

frown, embrace or refuse, act or stand still,

love or be apathetic. Understanding that the inner voice in all of us deserves a little

kindness from time to time. I do this by

taking time to fully reflect on the kindness

and fortune I've experienced and allowing

morning to make coffee and

ing someone with kindness. Un-

Where does it come from? How is it sus-

tained? How do you show it when you are



The Movie Diary By Dom Cioffi

the details are lost to me, but somehow, I got roped into auditioning for the annual event, eventually finding my way to center stage as the father of Jesus. I guess that because of my involvement in sports, I had little fear of acting out in front of other people, which

apparently made me a viable candidate to portray history's greatest dad.

> Whatever the case, I remember taking my role in the play seriously. While I didn't have an abundance of lines to memorize, I did have enough where I was concerned that, without ample preparation, I could easily make a public spectacle of myself. I think flubbing a line would be tantamount to missing a wide-open layup.

So, I practiced—a lot. In fact, I have more memories of reciting lines in my bedroom than I have of the actual event.

The church I attended in my youth was a typical New England Episcopalian structure with expansive marble flooring, rows upon rows of uncomfortable wooden pews, countless stained glass windows highlighting biblical stories, a glorious alter adorned with all the scriptural accouterments, and an expansive ceiling that looked like it reached into the heavens.

When I was there (which was every Movie Diary  $\rightarrow$  39

I've found that gratitude does require

acceptance. It requires meeting yourself

a positive impact on your life. It requires

ly to your life.

and recognizing that something is making

emotional availability and

awareness to dig deep within

oneself and take stock of the

things contributing positive-

Knowing what has been done

Sometimes, when I am

caught up in a moment of

stress or dissatisfaction, I

recognize that I'm not feel-

ing much gratitude. Know-

ing how quickly negative

a moment to receive the gift.

# When the dream takes a detour

I've been to World Series Games in Yankee Stadium during the 1990s, with Pettitte on the mound and 56,000 cheering, the entire structure shaking violently. But I've never experienced anything quite like the moment when 39,000 people felt our hearts drop into our stomachs as we went from cheering beyond ourselves, ready to burst into victory tears. Instead. we watched our beloved Mikaela Shiffrin crash hard in the 2nd run of the GS on Saturday.

The crash was horrible. A simple boot out turned into a double panel gate crash into the B-net. Shiffrin's body was upside down, with pressure on her neck as she slid from one panel gate to the next. The crowd required no replay to confirm the horror of what we witnessed. The BF and I watch motorcycle racing all

the time. This crash was way scarier than anything we've seen there.

It was ... overwhelming. I honestly couldn't write this for last week's paper. I tried but wasn't ready; I couldn't get through all the emotions. The moment was too much. Nobody spoke. Nobody moved.

# Remembering Christmas from the '50s

Looking

Back

By Mary Ellen

Shaw

Living the

Dream

By Merisa

Sherman

Each generation has its own memories associated with Christmas. When I was growing up back in the 50s, there were certain trends from that period that are unlike those of today.

I think it's safe to say that there were more "real" trees than "fake" trees in people's homes back then. Those looking for a non-traditional tree and not the "real thing" were probably happy when aluminum trees debuted around 1955. Instead of being green, they were either white or silver.

Of course, the plus side to an artificial tree is that you don't have to add water to the tree stand, and there are no dropped needles to clean up. However, that type of tree never made it into our house. We always had a balsam tree which had a scent that will forever remind me of Christmases past! Our trees were always decorated with an abundance of icicles and a

silver garland that wound its way around the branches. The ornaments on the tree were a sign of the times. Many of them were glass, which meant that if you dropped one on the hardwood floor, it broke! There were also some realistic plastic icicles hanging from the tree branches, along with Styrofoam candy canes with red or yellow piping for the stripes.

The lights on the tree were large compared to today and hot to the touch. If you really wanted something unique, you could use bubble lights. They were candle-shaped with an Art Deco base and came in a variety

Nobody breathed. We, all of us, stood quietly and just waited. The BF & I quietly grabbed each other's hands, squeezing them tight with all our fears and hopes. The crash felt like the bottom fell out of the world, and we were paralyzed with our in-

ability to do anything. But wait. So wait,

we did. It felt like time simultaneously stood still and took forever, especially as the crowd began to realize Shiffrin wouldn't be coming down on her own.

> Any skier knows that toboggan is a last resort, especially when you're on a sheet of ice like the bottom of SuperStar for the World Cup. As we saw the sled come down, our fears grew. We couldn't see anything while patrol loaded the sled, and we felt ill at the thought of our hero being strapped in. A sponsorship

banner was in the way, and the cameramen honorably gave Mikaela her privacy. To the horror of the crowd, the race crew continued to set up the awards ceremony. Would they really do the awards with Shiffrin still on the hill? And still, nobody moved. The sled started slowly sliding down the hill,

Living the Dream  $\rightarrow$  38

of colors. The glass tube of the light has an incandescent bulb that heats up and causes

> the liquid in the tube to boil. When it came to paying for gifts, many people relied on Christmas club accounts. Banks and credit unions offered weekly options for putting money into the account. You could draw it out a few weeks before Christmas and be ready to let the shopping begin! Credit

cards were not an option back then.

What presents did children want to find under their Christmas tree in the '50s? Girls hoped to get a Barbie doll, which became available in 1959. The outfits and accessories for Barbie were on a child's Christmas lists for as long as she played with the doll. Needless to say, there were many choices for those!

Young boys often wanted anything related to Davey Crockett, who made his debut in 1955. Toy versions of the flintlock rifle and

coonskin caps were items boys were happy to get.

Both boys and girls wanted Mr. Potato Head. Eyes, ears, nose, mustache, etc., could be attached to a plastic potato "head." It was a nice, quiet Christmas toy!

Silly putty was another toy that didn't produce noise. It went on the market in 1950 and was inside multi-colored plastic containers shaped like eggs. What kid doesn't like something that can float like a liquid, bounce, and stretch? It provided hours of entertainment! Looking Back → 39



Gratitude

By Will O'Donnell

Gratitude is an emotion, so I take a moment and recognize what has been done for me that makes me feel. I think about the emotional impact of something being done for me: how it delights me, how it opens my heart, how it makes me feel more light and free. I take a moment to recognize that something intentional or unintentional is benefiting me.

A simple, peaceful walk can help me



**Dream in Color** 

feelings can grow, I try to uncover some things to be grateful for and see if I can

find stability again.

Dream in Color  $\rightarrow$  39

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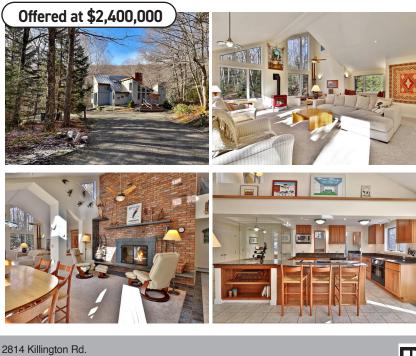
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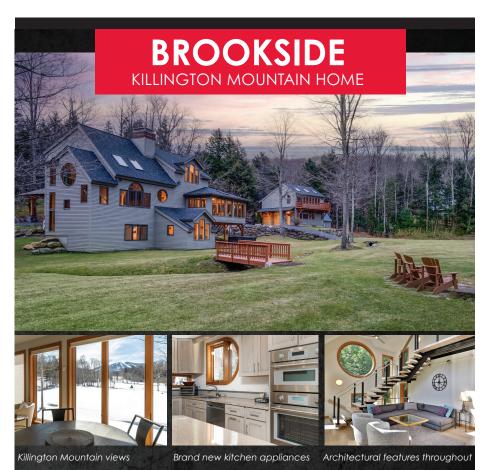


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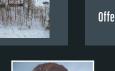
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## The Outside Story: from page 32

drying out.

Not all salamanders take shelter in the ground, however. The adult eastern newt overwinters in bodies of water, which may be as big as Lake Champlain or as

small as a stream. The newts will remain active there, even if ice forms on the water. They often congregate near seepages, "where groundwater comes through the surface," explained Jim Andrews, Vermont Reptile

and Amphibian Atlas coordinator. These upwellings provide additional protection from freezing and greater dissolved oxygen content. Andrews has received reports from cross-country skiers who witnessed "literally hundreds of newts" gathering where groundwater kept ponds from freezing.

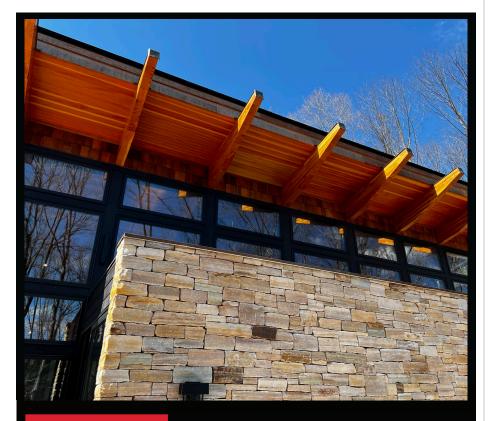
The salamander most active in our region during winter is the little-seen but spectacular mudpuppy (Necturus maculo-sus).

"We get reports here [in Vermont]... from ice fishermen that catch them on ice fishing baits," Andrews said, noting mudpuppies have come up in trawls in the Great Lakes. Mudpuppies, 1 foot or more long, are famous for their external red gills that look like excessive ear hair. These gills reflect mudpuppies' status as fully aquatic amphibians and efficiently harvest oxygen from the water. In highly oxygenated winter habitats – for example, rivers that remain open to the air – mudpuppies

Mudpuppies, a foot or more long, are famous for their external red gills that look like excessive ear hair. are more active in winter than in summer because cold water holds more oxygen, and predaceous fish are less active. There's yet a third group of

salamanders, a happy medium between terrestrial and aquatic salamanders, which depend on the relative warmth of stream water to keep body temperatures just above freezing. The northern two-lined salamander (*Eurycea bislineata*), with dark brown stripes, often hides in saturated soil under rocks and logs on stream edges. The reddish-brown northern dusky salamander (*Desmognathus fuscus*) usually seeks out mucky and mossy seepage areas during winter.

Jenna O'del is a biologist and science writer based in Rhode Island. Illustration by Adelaide Murphy Tyrol. The Outside Story is assigned and edited by Northern Woodlands magazine and sponsored by the Wellborn Ecology Fund of New Hampshire Charitable Foundation: nhcf.org.



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## Living the Dream: ... from page 33

guided by two of our best patrollers. A roar began to rise slowly from the crowd, and the quiet tension dissolved. They say Killington has the loudest fans; we love all the athletes. And so we did what we do best: we cheered. We cheered from our hearts, wanting to let Shiffrin know we loved her. We loved her for her skiing and for simply being her, no matter that 100 didn't happen today. We just wanted her to know that we loved her, win or lose.

It was a beautiful cheer, with the respect given to Derek Jeter at his last game in Yankee Stadium. But this cheer went deeper. We combined our energies and shone them at Mikaela, so powerful together that our love alone could heal her. As a child of the 1980s, the Care Bears taught me that people united by adversity become a healing force. If we couldn't cheer Shiffrin on to victory, we would cheer for her healing instead. We had to try. We had to do everything we could to ensure she was okay. I'd never witnessed it in real life before, but that day, in that moment, the Killington crowd performed the Care Bear stare.

As the toboggan approached the skiers right of the finish line, we saw a small, bright orange-colored mitten rise up in the air. The crowd went just as wild as if she had crossed the finish line in victory. She was awake! Together, the ski racing world breathed a collective sigh of relief as tears dripped down thousands of cold cheeks. Fans gasped, so wrought up in thinking healing thoughts that we had forgotten to breathe. Shoulders that had been raised high with anxiety dropped suddenly. Mittens that had been covering eyes moved down just enough so that one could sneak a peek. The crowd let up an enormous roar of relief, and life could continue again.

She could move her left arm! That was all we knew. Well, we knew the crash was the weekend ending, but was it season-ending? Career ending? All those questions passed behind everyone's eyes in just a few moments. Then the guilt clicked in, and we were again sick to our stomachs. Had we pushed her too hard? Had we loved her so much that now she felt like she had to perform instead of just ski? Had we caused this with our intense enthusiasm for the sport of ski racing and our demand for 100? Why couldn't we have let her ski and then count the races afterward? She will eventually make the 100 Club, and we should have let her do it in her own time.

But a crash is nobody's fault. Sometimes, you slip out. Sometimes, your skis knock together. And sometimes, you slide down the mountain on your hip and feel the abrasion developing underneath your GS suit. That's ski racing. Your skin is already so cold and brittle you just know it's getting ripped apart with a nasty abrasion. The snow is too rough, too cold. The ice is jagged, and all you've got for protection is a thin lycra suit, maybe some paddling on the outer thigh, and a pair of long johns. Any ski racer can tell you that—that slide HURT.

As Camille Roust said in her victory speech immediately following the race, "Mikaela is the strongest of us." There is no doubt that Shiffrin was aggressively fighting for every turn in that run, and she wanted that 100th victory just as much - if not more - than any of us standing in the crowd. And she wanted to win in Killington. We could feel it. She's one the hardest working & committed athletes; she deserves that 100th victory. There is no doubt that she will get that 100th victory. On her schedule— When she is ready.

HOF Pitcher Tom Seaver said, "If you dwell on statistics, you get shortsighted. If you aim for consistency, the numbers will be there at the end." Like those of us in our own 100 Club, just do the work. Every day. Just go skiing—every day. Simply love the sport, and the numbers will come. And when they do, wherever it happens, Mikaela, know that your Killington fans will be 100 percent behind you, filled with love and admiration. Because we are not fickle fans, the ones that love only in victory. Because you did not fail-you are amazing! And we will love you as you heal - and if you need any advice on that, don't hesitate to sit down at a bar in Killington. We absolutely love to talk about ski injuries.

Merisa Sherman is a longtime Killington resident, global real estate advisor, town official, and Coach

PomPom. If you have a Killington moment you'd like to share, reach out at Merisa. Sherman@ SothebysRealty.com.



By Merisa Sherman Mikaela prepared to take the lift up for her second run on Saturday, Nov. 30, right before her crash.

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Killington and report directly to Smith.

The Committee of 5 consisted of Charlie Hanley, in charge of inside operations; Karl Pfeiffer - ski school; Phil Camp - marketing; Marty Wilson; and me. The plan was for each one of us to act as general manager on a rotating basis. Smith and the chairman of the Sherburne Corporation, Joe Sargeant, called a Saturday afternoon meeting. Sargeant was a successful insurance man from Hartford, Conecticut, who was instrumental in lining up early Killington investors. Smith was in constant communication with Sargeant. I don't think Smith made an important decision without first consulting with Sargeant. At the meeting, Smith and Sargean "let the cat out of the bag" that they intended to build a gondola from Route 4 to the top of Killington and wanted to hear from all of us regarding the feasibility of the project.

Wilson stated that it was too risky financially as it would jeopardize Killington's entire net worth. Hanley said he was already spread too thin and would have difficulty getting the help he would need for any new inside facilities. Camp said he didn't think we would scoop up skiers off Route 4 and thought the money would be better spent advertising in the Boston and New York areas. Pfeiffer said it was simple: there's no dependable

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Sunday throughout my entire childhood), I was caught between a sense of religious awe and painful boredom. Week after week, I suffered through the seemingly pointless biblical interpretations, totally unaware that the scriptures and those conveying them to me were having a profound effect on my young psyche.

It would take decades before I realized just how much those early years at church profoundly affected my personality and outlook on life. And while the pageant I'm speaking of was only a one-off event, it still left an indelible mark on me.

Anyone who has ever been involved in a production of a nativity play knows that Mary is the central character. The Angel Gabriel is sort of a big deal, but Mary (with the baby Jesus swaddled in her arms) really is the center of attention. I knew my role of Joseph was supporting at best, but I still wanted my performance to be a slam dunk.

All I remember was being ridiculously nervous prior to the start of the play and up until I spoke my final line. After that, all my acting was simply moving about the stage. At some point, I looked into the gathered crowd, with the candles burning and the Christmas

# from page 33

But Christmas isn't all about presents. That seemed to be more obvious back in the 50s than it is today. Many homes had a nativity set in a prominent place. Our set was the folding type with all parts permanently attached. It was very easy to put in place and store when the season was over.

Handwritten Christmas cards were so numerous that we often had two mail deliveries per day. My mother had a long list of recipients and a checklist to see if the people she sent cards to also sent one snow that low in elevation, plus it would substantially increase the size of the ski school, for which he already had difficulty filling needed positions. I stated that it would double the size of the ski patrol, grooming, and lift and maintenance operations. In sum, we all thought it was a bad idea. Smith and Sargeant listened as each of us made our case and concluded the meeting by saying that Killington would go ahead with the project. So much for the Committee of 5!

#### Time to leave

I had surpassed the time I had allocated for staying at Killington. I found Smith increasingly challenging to work for, and our relationship could only be described as strained. Smith was in charge of the outside operations before I arrived and had difficulty letting it go despite all I had accomplished. I wanted to pursue my chosen civil engineering profession. I left Killington to become the scheduling engineer for the Peach Bottom twin nuclear power plant in Delta, Pennsylvania. It continues to produce the equivalent hydropower of the Grand Coulee Dam – about 21 million megawatt hours of electricity annually.

I was not alone in deciding to leave. One by one, the Committee of 5 headed for the door. Wilson was the only

## **Dream in Color:**... from page 33

take a moment to slow down and draw my focus inward, allowing feelings of gratitude to reverberate through me.

Maybe I notice the way the sun peaks through the trees near my home, the way the cool mountain air stings my lungs with crisp, clean cold, or simply the fact that I am able to breathe.

Maybe you'd find gratitude in having a dog to walk in the morning, a job to go to that helps our community, or a vehicle warming up for us while we clear it from snow and ice.

Whatever it is that allows us a moment, it is a perfect opportunity to recognize that something is undoubtedly benefiting us right now.

Impact of gratitude

Another component of gratitude is recognizing how this beneficial thing has made us feel and acting on it. Taking a moment to find appreciation and thankfulness for this thing and how it brings us joy, how it grows our light, how it contributes positively to our lives, and how it makes us feel to know that this thing is present for us.

Once we have recognized this benefit, we take a moment to really honor it. If we are grateful for a beautiful day, maybe we take a moment to close our eyes and smile at the gorgeous environment that we find ourselves in. If it is a person, perhaps we take time to reach out and thank them for what they have contributed positively to our lives. If it is a wealth of experiences shared, let's take time to reflect on them with joy and share that reflection with those involved.

While gratitude may not be required in personal relationships, its presence or absence does have a lasting impact. Someone who struggles with expressing

one who stayed on and was instrumental in the eventual sale of Killington.

I have no regrets about my time at Killington. It was a great experience and instilled a "can-do attitude." I tapped into that spirit as I pursued other fields of interest. Most importantly, I met my wife of 57 years on that mountain. All because George Wesson hired me on the spot for \$1.50 per hour! I eventually founded a successful prefabricated solar home business – the first in the country – Green Mountain Homes, based in Royalton. We designed and delivered over 300 prefabricated solar homes throughout the Northeast. I was awarded two U.S. patents for the design and have written a "How-To" book about this successful venture. See Kindle books: "The Passive Solar House," by James Kachadorian.

Killington remains "The Beast of the East" and continues to evolve, hosting more than 4 million skiers per year. I don't recognize too many faces when I visit the mountain, nor do they recognize me, but gazing up the slopes brings back vivid memories of those wild years when we moved mountains to literally lay the foundations for the largest ski resort in the East.

This chapter concludes Slippery Slopes, a series written by James Kachadorian about the early days of Killington.

> their own emotions in a healthy way may find difficulty feeling gratitude. From personal experience, this could cause the people in our lives who are pouring their positive energy into us to not feel valued, accepted, or appreciated by us. As such, the presence of gratitude in a relationship is a good indicator of whether it can be seen as fulfilling or long-term.

> On a personal level, the absence of gratitude for one's situation and environment can cause depression, insecurity, and a host of other issues that can build a tangled web of discontent. I find it best to start with the basics, and I quickly discover that things aren't as bad as they seem at that moment. Things as simple as living, being warm, working, having food, having dreams, having goals, and having the ability to positively impact the world today - have all made a big difference for me. Certainly, gratitude doesn't take a problem away, but it positively helps put it into perspective, which can help us solve it or respond to it more effectively and less reactively.

The acknowledgment and positive feedback from expressing gratitude toward a person is one of the most healing joys we can offer someone. It is a truly selfless gift that can be life-changing for the recipient. Showing that appreciation toward someone for positively impacting our lives promotes growth in both individuals. As we work to live a life of kindness toward ourselves and others, let's take a moment this holiday season to come up with each and everything we are grateful for and try to find a way to show it. You never know how that domino effect of kindness could cascade and shape our world into a more loving place.

## hymns beginning to be sung, and had an overwhelming feeling about the holiday that has never left me.

This week's film, "The Best Christmas Pageant Ever," is a story not unlike my own, except in this case, there's a bit more deviance at play. This wonderfully simple yet poignant story of a small-town nativity production has all the markings of a holiday classic, with fun-loving characters, a cheerful storyline, and a memorable lesson about life.

Outside of the obvious plot structure, this film has a decidedly Christian slant. But while some films in this category get preachy with their messaging, this one does not. Instead, it is subtle and endearing, like the movies many of us grew up with that involve religion without pushing it down our throats.

If you grew up going to church during the holidays or happened to be in your own nativity play, definitely give this one a try. It's a family film at heart, but its holiday tone makes it appealing to everyone.

A righteous "B+" for "The Best Christmas Pageant Ever," now playing in theaters everywhere.

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

#### to us.

One thing that hasn't changed very much is the dinner menu. Turkey is probably the most common choice for the main course. A popular side dish tradition is Campbell's green bean casserole. It was created in 1955 by one of their employees, Dorcas Reilly. Its original name was "green bean bake."

Soon, another Christmas will arrive. Have fun making memories that you can look back on with a smile!

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