



HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

Christmas is Wednesday and so is the first day of Hanukkah this year. Trivia: The first known mention of St. Nicholas in America was on Dec. 23, 1773, in the New York Rivington's Gazette. Then called St. A Claus, the name soon became synonymous with Santa Claus. Hanukkah begins Wednesday evening, Dec. 25 and continues through Jan. 2.



KILLINGTON'S TUBING PARK OPENS DEC. 21

The tubing park at Killington Resort opens for the season on Saturday, Dec. 21, and will operate 7 days a week through Christmas.



FREE SKATING AT KILLINGTON REC

The Johnson Recreation ice rink on River Road in Killington is now open. Open skate hours are 9 a.m.-9 p.m., with lights twinkling from 3:30-9:15 p.m.



By James Kent

Holiday spirit shines at Mac Steel

Mac Steel's Tyrannosaurus Rex, T-Rextroyer, donned a festive holiday look as he watched over Route 4 in Rutland on Friday, Dec. 13, accompanied by others.

MVSU board narrowly votes to keep arts, languages in tact

By Polly Mikula

A motion to save all unified arts (UA) programs and positions in Mountain Views School District passed in a tiebreaker vote Monday night, Dec. 16. Ryan Townsend from Bridgewater made the motion, with seven district board representatives voting for and seven voting against. The chair of the board, Keri Bristow of Woodstock, cast the tiebreaking vote in favor of saving all UA from budget

cut considerations.

"I think it's worth the exploration," Bristow said after casting her vote. "We have to make cuts responsibly."

The district serves about 995 students preK-12 from Barnard, Bridgewater, Killington, Pomfret, Plymouth, Reading and Woodstock.

The proposed savings of \$450,000 from UA programs was to come from United Arts → 12

Uncertainty over funding clouds proposed school construction aid

By Ethan Weinstein/VTDigger

A group of lawmakers and a Vermont Agency of Education executive tasked with designing a potential school construction aid program have hashed out the details but stopped short of identifying a funding stream.

The group is hoping Gov. Phil Scott will recommend appropriating state money in his budget proposal to help pay for school construction projects. But that looks unlikely.

"The Agency has not submitted a specific budget request for the creation of a [school construction aid] special fund at this time," Lindsey Hedges, an Agency of Education spokesperson, said in an email Dec. 10. "The proposed

School construction aid → 13

Vermont loosened Act 250 rules for housing, how are developers responding?

Developers use new exemptions in at least a dozen locations to increase housing stock

By Carly Berlin

Editor's note: This story, by Report for America corps member Carly Berlin, was produced through a partnership between VTDigger and Vermont Public.

When 10 apartments at the new Armory House building just outside of downtown Vergennes opened in June, they all had tenants within two weeks. To Peter Kahn, the building's developer, watching the new apartments fill up so quickly — most deemed as "workforce housing," and several as affordable to people with lower incomes — underscored the severity of Vermont's housing deficit.

"Seeing firsthand and experiencing the shortage at a personal level really illuminated how deep this problem is," Kahn said.

Kahn's plans for the Armory Lane lot have been guided by recent changes to Act 250, Vermont's land use review law. At first, he'd planned to build 9 apartments there, to avoid triggering scrutiny under Act 250, which he feared would add time and expense to the project. But after the Legislature made temporary tweaks to the law last year, he



By Glenn Russell/VTDigger

Developer Peter Kahn is using temporary adjustments to Act 250 to build workforce housing in Vergennes. Seen last week on Tuesday, Dec. 10.

realized he could build 24 apartments without Act 250 kicking in. He quickly added a 10th unit to the building-in-progress, and started hashing out plans

for a second, 14-unit building at the same site.

Then, the Legislature passed even bolder Act 250 reforms this year, as part of Act 181. Kahn learned he could add even more homes to the Armory Lane lot without bumping up against the land use law. He has also begun to sketch out plans for a much larger, 74-unit workforce housing apartment complex on a vacant lot near the police station in town. Kahn is shaping that new project around a new, temporary Act 250 exemption for 75 units or fewer in certain areas designated for growth.

"100% we are tailoring the project around that exemption," Kahn said.

The response of developers like Kahn indicates the reforms are beginning to work as intended. Proponents had hoped the temporary carve-outs for housing in Act 181 would clear red tape and encourage compact housing development to ease Vermont's acute housing shortage. Since the law took effect in June, about a dozen housing developments

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Ski Vermont's passport program offers free skiing to fifth graders everywhere

On Dec. 12, Ski Vermont launched its popular Fifth Grade Passport for the 2024-25 season. Regardless of state or country of residence, the program provides any fifth grader access to 90 days of skiing at ski areas across Vermont.

"The passport program gets kids outside to experience skiing and snowboarding. It's a chance to learn and enjoy what can become healthy, lifelong activities," said Ski Vermont President Molly Mahar. "Data shows that the earlier a child starts skiing, the more apt they are to continue throughout their lifetime and benefit from the physical and mental health benefits that go along with that. The



passport program is an opportunity for kids to foster a connection with the outdoors at ski areas across Vermont."

Fifth graders can access more than 90 days of skiing via the passport program. For a \$35 administrative fee,

they can receive three vouchers for each of the 20 participating alpine ski areas and up to three vouchers for the 24 participating cross-country areas. The program is open to any current fifth-grade student, regardless of state or country of residence. Some holiday restrictions apply, and an adult with a valid lift ticket, season pass, or trail pass must accompany students.

"The Passport is a great opportunity for young skiers and snowboarders to explore ski areas they may not have experienced yet and spend more time outside with family and friends," added Mahar.

For more information, visit: skivermont.com/fifth-grade-passport.

Killington Resort builds 30 bikes to support Teddy's toy party

Teddy Arbo's Holiday Toy Party is an annual tradition in the Killington community. What started as a dinner party in 1986 where guests were asked to bring toys instead of a side dish has grown into something much bigger. The 38th annual party was held this year at The Foundry on Dec. 7.

"The purpose of my event is to raise awareness and help people in need for the holidays," said Arbo. "It benefits veterans and people without the means for food and toys, and we want to support anyone who needs it."

In the past 10 years, the event has gone from raising around \$10,000 a year to much, much more, all thanks to individual donors who bring toys, local businesses donating items to be



By Brooke Geery, Killington Resort
 Killington Resort built and donated 30 bikes to four area organizations as part of the toy drive.

leadership and management team at Killington assembled 30 bikes to be donated to four local organizations including Killington Elementary, The Open Door Mission, The New Story Center and the Rutland County Parent Child Center.

"It just means a lot to these kids because they really have nothing. We call you guys and Teddy Arbo our Santa Claus," said Duclos.

auctioned off, and generous cash donations.

This year, nearly \$40,000 was raised for local charities. Killington Resort is one of the largest single donors to the event and each year. This year, members of the

been supporting us for a number of years and without him we wouldn't be able to support this many families. He's very good to us."

The Open Door Mission in Rutland has been around for over 60 years, providing the largest emergency shelter in the state with 51 beds and the first long-term veterans shelter in the state.

"Kids that come from some of these families would not be able to ride a bike and don't get the stuff most kids have," said Executive Director Tammy Duclos. "It just means a lot to these kids because they really have nothing. We call you guys and Teddy Arbo our Santa Claus."

That sentiment was echoed by Avaloy Lanning,

executive director of The New Story Center. "It means so much not only to the people we serve, but to our staff. You know, we deal with hard stuff every day because we serve survivors of domestic violence, sexual violence and human trafficking and their children," said Lanning. "Lives are hard and it's hard to hear their stories. To be able to do something like give a bike to a kid for Christmas brings us joy. Seeing mom's face when we give the bike to mom to be able to give to her kid on Christmas morning is beautiful. It's some sort of normalcy that is returning to the lives of the people we serve and that's a beautiful thing. We are so appreciative."

MOUNTAIN TIMES

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← **Act 250:**
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have used the interim exemptions, most of which stipulate that construction has to have begun by 2027 or 2028.

That's based on a VT Digger/Vermont Public review of development proposals that have received explicit confirmation from an Act 250 district coordinator that the project will not require an Act 250 permit. Still more projects might be moving forward without seeking this official thumbs up, called a "jurisdictional opinion."

'Signs of success'

The housing projects using the new exemptions span geography and scale. They include the conversion of a nursing home into 40 apartments in Hartford, the construction of a new senior housing project in downtown St. Johnsbury, and a hotel-plus-apartments development in the heart of Rutland.

"There are signs of success," said Alex Farrell, commissioner of the Department of Housing and Community Development, about the interim exemptions.

Many developments taking advantage of the exemptions were likely already in the works, but will now have an expedited timeline — a positive outcome, Farrell said. But the bigger impact will come when more developers like Kahn take the exemptions into account early, and expand the number of homes they seek to build.

"I think this coming spring and summer, we're going to see some — probably some really exciting results," Farrell said.

But the exemptions are already encouraging developers to take on projects they may have shied away from otherwise.

In Brandon, Naylor & Breen Builders recently got word that they would not need an Act 250 permit to convert a former arts center into 24 units of housing, using a new exemption for commercial-to-residential conversions.

Tanner Romano, the owner of the company, said Naylor & Breen is working with several other local employers to create workforce housing. The project is not yet a guarantee, he said. But the fact that it will not need to go through Act 250 means the developers won't have to pour thousands of dollars into permitting, design and engineering fees just to put a permit application together.

"So when you put that exemption into play, it's like, 'OK, now we can take a real crack at this' — without having to put all that money up front and run the risk of either not getting permitted

or the project not going, and you've wasted that investment," he said.

Had the project been subject to the typical Act 250 requirements, Romano said, the company probably would have passed on it.

And the exemptions are making a difference for housing developments in some of Vermont's smaller towns, too.

In Fairlee, which has fewer than 1,000 residents as of the last census, the small real estate development firm Village Ventures is planning to rehabilitate an existing 10-unit apartment complex at the corner of Bridge and Main Streets, and is also planning to build two new fourplexes on the same property. That will nearly double the number of homes at the site. The project is taking advantage of a new Act 250 exemption for building up to 50 units of housing in village centers.

The developers plan to allow the current tenants to stay, and they're planning to apply for low income housing tax credits to keep the apartments affordable to people making less than the median income in the area. Rents will range from \$890 for a one-bedroom to \$1,653 for a four-bedroom, according to Austin Meehan, a development manager for Village Ventures. Several units will be set aside for people exiting homelessness and will come with supportive services, he said.

The hope is to create more housing options in a town that's largely a tourist hotspot for Lake Morey, Meehan said.

"Trying to get this village center activated — and kind of start becoming a job center, and also a housing center — will do a lot to help the area continue to grow, and not just remain a summer destination," Meehan said.

In Brandon, Naylor & Breen Builders recently got word that they would not need an Act 250 permit to convert a former arts center into 24 units of housing, using a new exemption for commercial-to-residential conversions.

"What we could end up with right now," Farrell said, "is a sunset of the interim exemptions and then a long gap that creates uncertainty for home builders before the new, longer term exemptions come."

That change is one of several updates to Act 181 that Gov. Phil Scott's administration plans to pursue during the next

legislative session, which kicks off in early January. Other proposals include making the exemptions apply retroactively — assuring projects that were already in the development process before the law went into effect can still benefit from it — and clarifying how they apply to subdividing proper-

ties, Farrell said.

Sen. Kesha Ram Hinsdale, D/P-Chittenden Southeast, one of the chief architects of Act 181, said she "probably hear[s] more of the bad news than the good news" when it comes to the impact of the new exemptions — meaning she gets calls from developers when they hit a snag in the permitting process, rather than when it goes smoothly. She sees more need for permit reform.

"I think there's still more work to do outside of Act 250. People still come to me to talk about the length and obscurity of the [Agency of Natural Resources] permitting process, and, you know, issues that still increase the cost per unit of housing," she said.

Both Farrell and Ram Hinsdale see taking on the appeals process for housing as a priority this coming year. Proposals for reforming how neighbors can challenge new housing — a key issue at both the local and state permitting levels in Vermont — largely did not make it to the finish line last legislative session.

The issue of neighbor opposition hits close to home for Kahn, the Vergennes developer. Plans for a South Burlington development he worked on faced significant community pushback several years ago, as many neighbors voiced their concerns over the loss of open space. The specter of taking that project through the Act 250 process — with the potential for lengthy, costly delays — ultimately led the developers to abandon it, Kahn said.

He hopes lawmakers ultimately make the interim Act 250 exemptions permanent, to keep easing the path for more housing, he said.

The housing projects using the new exemptions... include the conversion of a nursing home into 40 apartments in Hartford ... and a hotel-plus-apartments development in the heart of Rutland.

place as the state undertakes a mapping process over the next several years, which will determine the law's reach for the future. Administration officials hope lawmakers will extend the interim exemptions this year until the new Act 250 framework is finalized, said Farrell, the housing commissioner.

Looking ahead

The temporary exemptions to Act 250 were put in



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OBITUARY

Jason Tylor Thomas, age 52

Jason Tylor Thomas, 52, of Killington, and formerly of Putnam Station, New York, passed away suddenly on Thursday, Dec. 12, 2024.

Born in Middlebury on Jan. 2, 1972, he is the son of Jeanette L. (Cummings) LaPointe and the late Henry A. Thomas.

Jason was a veteran of the U.S. Army.

He graduated from Ticonderoga High School and NCCC with a degree in Computer Science. Most recently, he was ordained a Minister.

Jason loved to cook and was employed as a cook at the Rivershed Restaurant in Killington.

He was an avid Yankees fan and loved cars. His greatest enjoyment was being a Dad and spending time with his kids.

He also enjoyed fishing with his fiancée Heidi and hunting.

Survivors include his mother, Jeanette LaPointe; his fiancée, Heidi DePaul; his two sons, Riley Thomas and Ross Thomas; his daughter, Raegan Thomas; three stepsons, Timothy Rogers, Ryan Rogers, and Damon Rogers; three sisters, Kim Coffin (Matt), Chantel Thomas (Cindy), and Desiree LaPointe; two stepbrothers, Tom LaPointe



Submitted

Jason Tylor Thomas

(Judy) and Chris LaPointe (Charlotte); and many aunts, uncles, nieces, and nephews.

He was pre-deceased by his father, Henry Thomas, and his step-father, John LaPointe.

A viewing and funeral service were held on Tuesday, Dec. 17, at the Wilcox & Regan Funeral Home, 11 Algonkin Street, Ticonderoga.

Interment with Military Honors will take place in the Spring at the family plot of the Meadow Knoll Cemetery of Putnam Station.

To offer online condolences, visit: wilcoxandreganfuneralhome.com.

Casella Waste Systems, Inc. dedicates CDL Training Center to first employee

Casella Waste Systems, Inc., a regional solid waste, recycling, and resource management services company, dedicated its CDL Training Center to Ken Hier, the company's first-ever employee, in a ceremony held at the facility on Dec. 12.

Established in 2020, The Kenneth A. Hier Sr. CDL Training Center ("The Center") has graduated nearly 300 drivers since its inception, providing the necessary training for people to achieve their commercial driver's license for free.

A standing-room-only crowd of friends and family, colleagues, legislative officials, customers, and vocational school partners were on hand to honor Hier, who passed away in January.

Hier, the first employee hired at Casella in 1976, embodied a steadfast commitment to safety and customer service, performing over one million successful service stops throughout his 41-year career. Known by many as "The Man on the Moun-



Courtesy Casella Waste Systems, Inc.

Courtney Hier, daughter of Ken Hier Sr., spoke at the dedication of the Kenneth A. Hier Sr. CDL Training Center on Dec. 12.

tain" from his long-running television commercial that highlighted his commitment to customers through all conditions on Killington Mountain, Hier was named the National Waste and Recycling Association's Driver of the Year in 1996, and in 2017 Casella dubbed him its "Driver of a Lifetime."

"The reality of our business is pretty simple, in that the only way that you succeed is through your people," said Casella Chairman and CEO John W. Casella. "No

one illustrated that more clearly than Ken Hier. His commitment to service and safety was at the forefront of everything he did, and his example will continue to be a cornerstone for every graduate who comes through this training center."

Vermont's Agency of Commerce and Community Development Secretary Lindsay Kurre underscored the need for newly trained drivers, who cited shifting demographic challenges and Casella → 13

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House Republicans mull a plan to repeal the environmental Clean Heat Standard

By James Kent

Armed with new confidence and voted in by residents hoping they'll help make Vermont more affordable, Vermont House Republicans set their sights on controversial Act 18, the Clean Heat Standard, which most have said they seek to repeal in 2025.

Citing a report from the independent Vermont Public Utilities Commission (PUC) that Act 18 was not feasible for all low- and moderate-income households to participate in the program's early years – and those not able to participate could face higher heating costs, Vermont House Republicans were in agreement that repealing the law was high on their agenda.

House Republican Leader, Representative Patty McCoy

said, "Vermonters sent a message loud and clear in the November elections. We need to return affordability to Vermont. Our caucus is fully behind a repeal of this legislation that was enacted by the supermajority Democrats through an override of Governor Scott's veto in 2023."

Act 18, which Republicans say have already cost taxpayers several million dollars to set up a complicated and expensive system of fuel charges and credits, is set to return to the full Legislature in the upcoming session to approve the final regulations.

In a press release issued by McCoy on Dec. 13, she cited a report this past fall by an independent consultant hired

Clean Heat → 14

Select Board closer to Quechee Road action

By Curt Peterson

There are at least three well-known reasons to focus on Quechee Road, a major route from Three Corners to Quechee: first, the condition of parts of the road is so bad it aggravates wear-and-tear on one's vehicle. Second, band-aid patchwork and overall repaving for years have been very expensive with unsatisfactory results. Third, doing what is necessary to upgrade the road to safe and sustainable condition is so expensive the decision about what, and how much, to do is daunting for the Select Board.

A rough estimate to rebuild the road was about \$6.5 million. An engineering report from Pathways Consulting, LLC, of Lebanon, rated sections of the road by how urgently they needed repairs or rebuilding.

Quechee Road's potholes, broken pavement, and sinking edges are annoying and dangerous, and worse when there is snow and/or ice adding to the challenge. Much of the road requires a slower pace than the posted speed limit of 35 mph.

According to Scott Williams of Pathways, "Good sections may deteriorate over time, but are holding up well since their recent overlayment. But what is underneath those sections is unknown, so there's no predicting their longevity."

He said 3,000-3,500 feet of Quechee Road suffer badly from drainage, slope and ditching issues, producing damaging "ponding" during heavy rain.

Repaving over the bad parts will only buy time, he said, and the same problem will reoccur.

"It's better to do major work on the worst sections now, so the investment will be less over the long run," he said.

Ditching and culvert clearing, and adding up to 18-inches of stone are needed to bring the road up to state local highway standards.

On Monday, Dec. 16, the Select Board discussion centered around a \$4 million estimate including major work on 3.2 miles of Quechee Road. To put in perspective, \$4 million would be a \$1,171 investment by every one of 3,500 Hartland residents.

The Select Board has to make multiple choices, including whether to put off the Quechee Road project for a year and just apply hot patch to the very sore parts of the road, or to follow Pathway's advice and reconstruct the 3.2 mile stretch of bad road and patch the rest.

If the \$4 million choice is made, financing will require a bond for that amount. According to Town Manager John Broker-Campbell, \$28,000 per year would be required for

Quechee Road → 14

Vt Cannabis businesses sue over alleged free speech violations

FLÖRA Cannabis, a licensed cannabis retailer in Middlebury, has filed a lawsuit against the Vermont Cannabis Control Board, challenging what it claims are unconstitutional restrictions on free speech rights for the state's 500-plus licensed cannabis businesses.

The suit, *Park Rec LLC v. Vermont Cannabis Control Board et al.* (Case No. 24-CV-05027), was filed in Addison County Superior Court's Civil Division. Represented by attorney A.J. Ruben of Black Bear Legal Services in Pittsfield, FLÖRA's case seeks to overturn regulations they argue stifle lawful marketing and communication with adult consumers.

According to the lawsuit, Vermont's regulations require licensed cannabis businesses to submit all public statements for state pre-approval and prohibit them from posting images or descriptions of products on social media. FLÖRA and other businesses say these rules infringe on their constitutional right to free speech, putting them at a competitive disadvantage.

"Instead of narrowly tailoring advertising regulations to prevent harm, Vermont has implemented the most wide-ranging and onerous restrictions on protected speech in the nation," said Dave Silberman, co-founder of FLÖRA Cannabis. "This effectively muzzles the cannabis industry and prevents us from communicating effectively with adult customers."

The coalition claims these rules are unique among the 24 states that regulate adult-use cannabis sales, harming not only businesses but also Vermont taxpayers. FLÖRA estimates that restrictive advertising policies have contributed to regulated cannabis sales falling nearly 50% below the Cannabis Control Board's projections, with customers turning to unregulated and out-of-state markets.

The lawsuit has the backing of a wide array of Vermont's cannabis cultivators, manufacturers, distributors, and retailers—most of whom operate small, locally owned businesses. Collectively, these businesses pay millions in fees annually while struggling under what they view as unfair and burdensome restrictions.

FLÖRA Cannabis, a prominent name in the industry, opened its doors in downtown Middlebury in 2022 and made Vermont's first legal adult-use cannabis sale. The company continues to advocate for what it describes as reasonable advertising standards akin to those in place for alcohol and sports wagering.

"We reluctantly filed this lawsuit after years of failed attempts to find a workable compromise with legislators and regulators," said Silberman. "We're simply asking to be treated like other regulated industries."

'Tis the season...

Santa with his endless lists, and many others are busy this time of year getting ready for the upcoming holiday season. Likewise, Vermont legislators are also busy prepping for the new session, which begins Jan. 8. Newly elected representatives and senators attended a three-day orientation session last month at the State House and all new and returning members were recently invited to participate in a fiscal briefing. Additionally, many legislators are busy working with State House lawyers to draft various bills for introduction in January.



By Rep. Jim Harrison

What is clear to most political observers is that there will be a

There will be a marked difference in the '25-'26 legislative biennium compared to the past two years.

marked difference in the '25-'26 legislative biennium compared to the past two years. In the past biennium, the legislative majority enacted 12 laws by overriding vetoes by the governor.

That is unlikely to happen again in the new session because of Republican gains in the Vermont House and Senate. For anything to pass in the coming session, there needs to be an agreement between the Democratic majority and Governor Scott, along with his Republican colleagues in the Legislature.

Reaching consensus on major bills is not always easy to achieve, especially given we all look at issues differently. However, there is some agreement on what the major priorities are:

- Education financing – Candidates all heard the message of high property taxes. The perspectives and solutions vary, from raising other taxes to getting serious on reducing the cost of education, or some combination. To add to the challenge, many do not understand the education funding formula and even fewer can explain our current system of how education taxes relate to voter approved budgets.
- Housing – We need more housing, period. Some regulatory changes were approved last year to help development in certain downtowns, but many rural areas face new Act 250 restrictions.
- Public Safety – Increased crime, sometimes the result of other issues, such as addiction or mental health, will require additional focus at the State House.
- Health Care – According to some reports, Vermont's health insurance rates are among the highest. Coupled with ongoing friction between hospitals and the Green Mountain Care Board, health care will be on the front burner.
- Affordability – The governor's message of affordability throughout the summer and fall has certainly resonated with many voters. Every issue before the legislature will likely receive extra scrutiny as to how it impacts the cost of living in Vermont.

Meanwhile, legislative leadership positions are essentially set, except for a closely watched race for House Speaker. Current Speaker Jill Krowinski, D-Burlington, is being challenged by Rep. Laura Sibilia, I-Dover. With the Democrats still holding a strong majority in the Chamber, Krowinski holds the edge. However, Sibilia could attract some Democratic defectors, given her past support of several key climate initiatives along with some in the party

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By Peter D'Auria/VTDigger
Norwich University students and Guidon staffers Lilian Lu, Owen Clapp, Bennett Oakes and Kerry McAuley in the Norwich University Library.

Norwich student newspaper resumes publishing

By Peter D'Auria/VTDigger

The Guidon, Norwich University's student newspaper, has resumed reporting and publishing for the first time since it was suspended by administrators earlier this year.

Prior to last week, student writers and editors had refused to resume publication of the paper, saying they were protesting administrative oversight of the paper and holding out for concessions. But on Monday, Dec. 9, the paper announced that it would start reporting Norwich University news again.

"Despite The Guidon's conditions still being unmet, the staff decided that their obligation to the Norwich community takes precedence for the time being," the paper said in a story written by reporters Bennett Oakes and Kerry McAuley.

Over the summer, administrators at the Northfield military university had barred the paper, which is over a century old, from publishing, citing concerns about students' ability to responsibly report the news.

Faculty and students, however, said that administrators were upset at some of The Guidon's stories in recent semesters, particularly reporting about sexual assault on campus.

After VTDigger published a story in October about the newspaper's suspension, Norwich University President John Broadmeadow, a retired lieutenant general, said the paper could resume publishing, but with "ethics oversight"

Administrators appointed a second faculty advisor for the newspaper in addition to the existing one, and stood up a committee to advise students involved in media on campus.

That advisory committee has been working on drafting a code of ethics for student media organizations, Guidon staffers said.

Writers with The Guidon have refused to participate in meetings of that committee or adhere to any code of ethics drafted by it, they said. Last month, the newspaper posted a statement titled "Why We Won't Work," saying that the paper would not publish until administrators met certain conditions, including ending all oversight and issuing a statement affirming the paper's independence.

Those concessions have not taken place. But after a series of communications with administrators that Guidon writers described

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Rockingham scientist combines research and recognition to aid shorebirds

Stephen Brown, PhD, is leading a charge to reverse the alarming decline of North American shorebirds. As vice president of science at Manomet Conservation Sciences, Brown's groundbreaking research and conservation efforts are reshaping the future for species teetering on the brink of extinction.

For the past 20 years, Brown has worked at Manomet, where he supports the organization's scientific work across its programs, ensuring research is rigorous, applicable, and accessible. His own studies focus on identifying factors that limit shorebird populations and developing methods to track their numbers across the hemisphere. Brown has led annual field expeditions to the Arctic for over two decades, gathering critical data on migration and habitat needs.

Brown's most recent study, published in Ornithological Applications, revealed staggering declines in shorebird populations. Over half of North American shorebird species have experienced drops of 50% or more since 1980, with iconic species like the Hudsonian godwit and ruddy turnstone now at greater risk.

"This is a wake-up call," said Brown. "Coordinated efforts are urgently needed to address habitat loss, climate change, and other threats to shorebird populations."

Under Brown's leadership, Manomet has spearheaded efforts like the Oystercatcher Recovery Working Group, which helped the American oystercatcher rebound by 45%—well beyond its initial goal. "Collaboration is key," said Brown. "When scientists,

Shorebirds → 14



New Year's Eve in Woodstock

Two great parties to ring in 2025 with us!

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!

\$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!

\$25 per person (+ tax & gratuity)
Cash bar and snacks available for purchase.



Reserve Your NYE Party Tickets Online!

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Killington, VT 05751

**TOWN OF
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VERMONT**

Tel: 802-422-3241
Fax: 802-422-3030
killingtontown.com

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.**

RRMC named to U.S. News 2025 Best Hospitals for Maternity Care

U.S. News & World Report, the global authority in hospital rankings and consumer advice, has named Rutland Regional Medical Center (RRMC) as a 2025 High Performing hospital for Maternity Care. This is the highest award a hospital can earn as part of U.S. News' Best Hospitals for Maternity Care annual study. RRMC was the only hospital in Vermont to attain this recognition.

U.S. News began evaluating maternity care hospitals in 2021, rating hospitals that provide labor and delivery

services and submitting detailed data to the publication for analysis. Best Hospitals for Maternity Care assist expectant parents, in consultation with their prenatal care team, in making informed decisions about where to receive maternity services that best meets their family's needs.

The U.S. News Best Hospitals for Maternity Care methodology is based entirely on objective measures of quality, such as C-section rates in lower-risk pregnancies, severe unexpected

RRMC → 13

Be idle free: Turning your key saves money, supports a cleaner environment

As Vermonters prepare for colder weather, the Dept. of Environmental Conservation (DEC) urges drivers to switch off their ignition to limit unnecessary idling of engines.

"Idling isn't good for your car or our air," said DEC Commissioner Batchelder. "It not only causes excess engine wear and wastes fuel and money, but it also pollutes our air which impacts our health, climate, and environment."

In Vermont, motor vehicles are a significant source of air pollutants and greenhouse gases. The exhaust from vehicle idling degrades air quality for all Vermonters and is most detrimental to children, older adults, and people with heart or lung disease.

If every gasoline- and diesel-powered car and truck in Vermont reduced unnecessary idling by one minute per day over one year, Vermonters would save over one million gallons of fuel and more than \$3.8 million in fuel costs as well as contribute to cutting carbon dioxide emissions by more than 10,000 metric tons.

You can help protect Vermont's clean air and avoid unnecessary idling by:

- Turning off your vehicle when you are stopped for 10 seconds or more, except in traffic (30 seconds for heavy-duty vehicles).
- Warming up your engine and vehicle by driving gently. If needed, limit idling to 30 seconds (three to five minutes for heavy-duty vehicles), even in cold weather. Make sure windshield defrosting is adequate before driving.
- Use indoor spaces or waiting rooms instead of sitting in your idling vehicle.

In Vermont, the state law limits all motor vehicle idling to 5 minutes in any 60-minute period with some exceptions. Local jurisdictions may have additional idling limitations in place. The School Bus Idling Rule also states that school buses shall not idle while picking up and dropping off children on school property.

For more information, visit: BeIdleFree.vermont.gov.

State law limits all motor vehicle idling to 5 minutes in any 60-minute period.

Education funding: The three cliffs problem

Low- and moderate-income Vermonters can see big tax jumps even if equal spending

Education spending saw its biggest jump in years in fiscal 2025, and school taxpayers are noticing the change in their bills. The increase this year was due to a lot of factors outside both schools' and taxpayers' control—inflation, healthcare costs, and the loss of pandemic-era federal support chief among them. All of that led to an increase in total homestead taxes of 12.9%, although the rate varied from town to town, according to the Public Assets Institute.

But taxpayers can see their tax bills suddenly balloon even when spending increases are modest. The reason: thresholds built into the system. A majority of Vermont

years, many more Vermonters are falling into these categories—24% of income-based school taxpayers were at or over the \$90,000 mark in 2023, compared with just 3% when it was set in 2008.

INCOMES BELOW \$90,000

			% change
income	\$89,999	\$89,999	0.0%
housesite value	\$400,000	\$450,000	+12.5%
tax bill	\$2,304	\$2,960	+28.5%

Because the thresholds haven't been increased or adjusted for inflation over time, more and more Vermonters have hit these cliffs and seen a jump in their school tax bills.

resident homeowners pay all or some of their school taxes based on their household income, which better reflects their ability to pay. But the Legislature has imposed limits on these income-based taxes, which means some homeowners—and the number has been increasing—pay a combination of the income-based and property-based school taxes.

The property taxes kick in when homeowners' incomes or house values pass certain thresholds. These thresholds create tax "cliffs"—sudden rises in tax owed. Because the thresholds haven't been increased or adjusted for inflation over time, more and more Vermonters have hit these cliffs and seen a jump in their school tax bills.

INCOMES ABOVE \$47,000

			% change
income	\$47,000	\$47,001	+0.002%
tax bill	\$940	\$1,203	+28.0%

Cliff 1: The circuit breaker

This key threshold caps the share of income low-income Vermonters pay in school taxes. It was set even before Act 60 was enacted in 1997 at \$47,000 in household income—and it hasn't changed. At or below that amount, taxpayers' school taxes cannot exceed 2% of their income. But above \$47,000, taxpayers pay the town tax rate on income, which averaged 2.56% in fiscal 2025. So a taxpayer earning \$47,000 would pay \$940, but one earning \$47,001 would pay \$1,203.

INCOMES AT OR ABOVE \$90,000

			% change
income	\$89,999	\$90,000	+0.001%
housesite value	\$350,000	\$350,000	0.0%
tax bill	\$2,304	\$3,943	+71.1%

Cliff 2: Incomes at or above \$90,000

Middle-class Vermonters run into cliffs, too. If they earn \$90,000 or more, they pay a property-based school tax on housesite value in excess of \$225,000 in addition to an income-based school tax. So a taxpayer with income of \$89,999 and a housesite valued at \$350,000 would pay \$2,304 in school taxes at the average rate of 2.56%.

But if that same taxpayer, with the same \$350,000 house, earned one more dollar in a given year, their bill would be \$3,943—the income bill of \$2,304 plus a property tax on \$125,000 in home value, an additional \$1,639 at the fiscal 2025 average property rate of \$1.31.

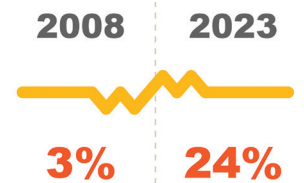
Given the growth in property values over the last few

Cliff 3: The cap on housesite value

Taxpayers with incomes below \$90,000 also hit a cliff—they pay property taxes on housesite value in excess of \$400,000. A taxpayer with \$89,999 in household income and a \$400,000 house would pay an income-based tax—\$2,304 at this year's average income rate. But for a \$450,000 house, the same taxpayer would also owe property taxes on \$50,000—\$656 at the average property rate.

And the housesite value thresholds in all of these cliffs were lowered in 2018, meaning many more Vermonters began paying a school property tax, and those who were already paying that tax owed it on a bigger amount.

Only 3% of income-based filers had incomes of \$90,000 or more, but by 2023 24% exceeded the threshold



Effect of cliffs

These cliffs can have real effects on family budgets, contribute to the confusion and frustration with the funding system, and might discourage voters from supporting the needs of their schools. While the increase in overall spending in fiscal 2025 meant many more taxpayers faced spikes, these thresholds have been causing problems for an increasing share of Vermonters for years.

The examples above are intended to describe how the thresholds affect variously situated taxpayers at the average fiscal 2025 rates. It is not a comprehensive explanation of how Vermont school taxes are calculated. There are certain details that are not addressed here, such as a cap on property tax credits, which can limit the tax reduction in property taxes, or the option to claim a small homestead exemption, which may be an advantage over an income-based tax for some low-income homeowners. These provisions affect relatively few Vermonters who qualify for property tax credits. Taxpayers in this category would also be subject to cliff 3 if their housesite value exceeds \$400,000. A housesite includes the primary residence and up to two acres of land.

For more information, visit: publicassets.org.



Submitted
More Vermonters are falling off financial cliffs, which make even modest increases extraordinary for their families.



By Glenn Russell/VTDigger

Incumbent U.S. Senator Bernie Sanders, I-Vermont, speaks during a debate with Republican challenger Gerald Malloy, left, in a forum sponsored by VTDigger and Vermont Public in Winooski on Wednesday, Oct. 23.

Bernie Sanders tells Politico that next U.S. Senate term will 'probably' be his last

By Kristen Fountain/VTDigger

Vermont's senior U.S. senator shared new insight this week into how long he may be willing to represent the Green Mountain State in the nation's capital.

In an interview published by Politico Tuesday night, Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., said he was likely to call it quits after his fourth six-year term in the chamber.

Asked by the Beltway-based news outlet whether his next term would be his last, Sanders said, "I'm 83 now. I'll be 89 when I get out of here. You can do the figuring. I don't know, but I would assume, probably, yes."

Sanders, who served as Vermont's sole representative in the U.S. House for 16 years prior to his election to the Senate

"I have significant seniority in the United States Senate," Sanders said, which he argued "helps me bring a lot of money into the state for various things."

in 2006, had been unwilling to speculate about the future during his reelection campaign this year.

Asked a similar question by VTDigger in October, Sanders said, "Let's worry about this election." He also emphasized his vigor, telling VTDigger, "I think I have the energy to do the job. If I didn't, I would not have run for reelection."

When Republican opponent Gerald Malloy raised the topic of Sanders' long tenure during an October 23 debate hosted by VTDigger and Vermont Public, Sanders said, "Let's not be an ageist, Mr. Malloy," then added, "I am feeling just fine."

Sanders declined on Wednesday through a spokesperson to elaborate on his comments to Politico and would not agree to an interview.

Sanders is a political independent, self-described democratic socialist and a leader in progressive politics after two runs at the Democratic nomination for the U.S. presidency in 2016 and 2020. His national stature earned him the chairmanship of the Senate Budget Committee in 2020, when Democrats — with whom he caucuses — took the majority.

Bernie → 13

St Mike's to offer full tuition for families whose income falls at or below \$100,000

Saint Michael's College is fortifying its mission to make a deeply engaging, student-centered education more affordable through a new financial aid initiative: the St. Mike's Community Commitment. The new initiative gives families whose income falls at or below \$100,000 a total aid package that covers full tuition after federal grants, according to a news release Friday, Dec. 13.

How are income and assets assessed?

Total income includes a family's adjusted gross income (AGI) for the federal tax year applicable to each academic year (e.g., 2023 for the 2025-2026 Academic Year). This data is provided to us through the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and is required to complete every year enrolled at SMC.

Data on assets, similar to income, will be collect through the FAFSA. When the combination of your reported assets (cash, investments, business/farm assets) are at or below \$150,000 you will be eligible for this scholarship program. The value of qualifying retirement accounts are excluded.

What do total grants and scholarships include?

Total grants and scholarships include both merit-based scholarships and need-based grants from Saint Michael's College. If you are eligible for Federal Pell Grant and Federal SEOG Grant assistance, these funds will be included in the calculation. The St. Mike's Community Commitment will be the last award applied and will cover any remaining unmet tuition costs. Merit-based scholarships at Saint Michael's

include academic, athletic, and/or endowed scholarships.

Is there a application for the Saint Michael's Commitment?

No. To be considered for the St. Mike's Community Commitment, students need only complete the FAFSA by March 1 (i.e. by March 1, 2025 for the Fall 2025 enrollment cycle). Returning students must complete the FAFSA by May 1.

What are other requirement?

Students must also maintain an overall GPA of 3.2.

International students are not eligible for the St. Mike's Community Commitment program nor are graduate students.

In order to receive the full benefit of the St. Mike's Community Commitment program students are required to live on campus.

Students currently enrolled at St. Mike's for the Fall 2025 semester are eligible for the St. Mike's Community Commitment program as long as they maintain an overall GPA of 3.2 or higher.

Does the St. Mike's Community Commitment program cover all tuition costs?

No. Students will still be required to cover any tuition costs if enrolled in winter intersession and summer semester courses. Also, the St. Mike's Community Commitment program eligibility will not be included in any semester a student is not taking classes at SMC (i.e. consortium courses at another institution, semester studying abroad, etc.)

For more information, visit: smcvt.edu.

John Rodgers seeks to be a bridge between parties in his new role as Lt. Gov.

By Ekaterina Raikhovskii

Editor's note: The following story was supplied by Community News Service, a University of Vermont journalism internship, originally produced for an assignment for the Winooski News.

Grandchildren running around his 1840s farmhouse isn't the only thing keeping John Rodgers' hands full these days. There's the masonry business the West Glover 59-year-old has helmed for the last two decades, the hemp farm he's managed for the previous few years, and he even works plowing snow from driveways.

The former Northeast Kingdom legislator has added another commitment to the list: serving as Vermont's next lieutenant governor.

Following a race this fall decided by about 6,000 votes, according to state records, incumbent Lt. Gov. David Zuckerman conceded to Rodgers on Nov. 7. He paved the way for the Dem-



Courtesy John Rodgers

Lt. Gov.-elect John Rodgers, center left, discussed issues on the campaign trail.

ocrat-turned-Republican to re-enter politics after losing his Statehouse seat in 2020.

Rodgers spoke to the Winooski News ahead of his Jan. 8, 2025, start date about his plans for the role and his path toward it.

Rodgers' election as lieutenant governor was a

surprising achievement for someone who was hesitant about getting involved in politics early in his career.

"I had young kids, my own business, and it's just really hard to justify taking the amount of time off my business during construction season to campaign

because it's a money-losing proposition," he said. "But they convinced me there was no time like the present, and I went for it."

As a Democrat, Rodgers first sought a seat in the Orleans-Caledonia 1 House district in 2000 and lost

Rodgers → 39

GUEST EDITORIAL

Prioritizing the magic in education

By John Freitag

Editor's note: This commentary is by John Freitag. He was facilities manager for the Strafford School District for 34 years and in 1994 was named "outstanding support staff" in Vermont. He served three years as PTA president at the Newton School and has closely watched and covered school and school funding issues for over 30 years as Strafford correspondent for the White River Valley Herald.

The upcoming legislative session will be all about affordability. We need to be careful, as the saying goes, "not to throw out the baby with the bathwater." The "baby" in terms of education in Vermont is the magic that takes place between teachers, staff and the children in our schools combined with the active involvement of parents and the support of our communities.

In the short term we have to avoid further detrimental consolidation of our elementary and middle schools as a knee-jerk reaction. Instead, we could provide immediate significant

property tax relief by limiting the education fund to supporting our pre-K-12 schools and not the many unrelated programs which over the years have been added. Currently, the only way voters feel they can register their feeling of being education fund taxed out is to vote against their school budget.

In the long term we need to provide real savings that have minimal impact on the actual learning taking place. We could start by reducing our current 52 supervisory unions serving Vermont students to a much smaller number. However, if we are going to do this, we also need to reduce the workload. This could be done in two ways.

First, have teacher and staff contracts be negotiated on a statewide basis. Contract negotiations take away the time of a great deal of administrative, board, teacher and staff from providing educational services. Negotiating contracts on a statewide level currently takes place for state employees, and recently health care benefits for teachers and staff have been moved to a state-negotiated level as well.

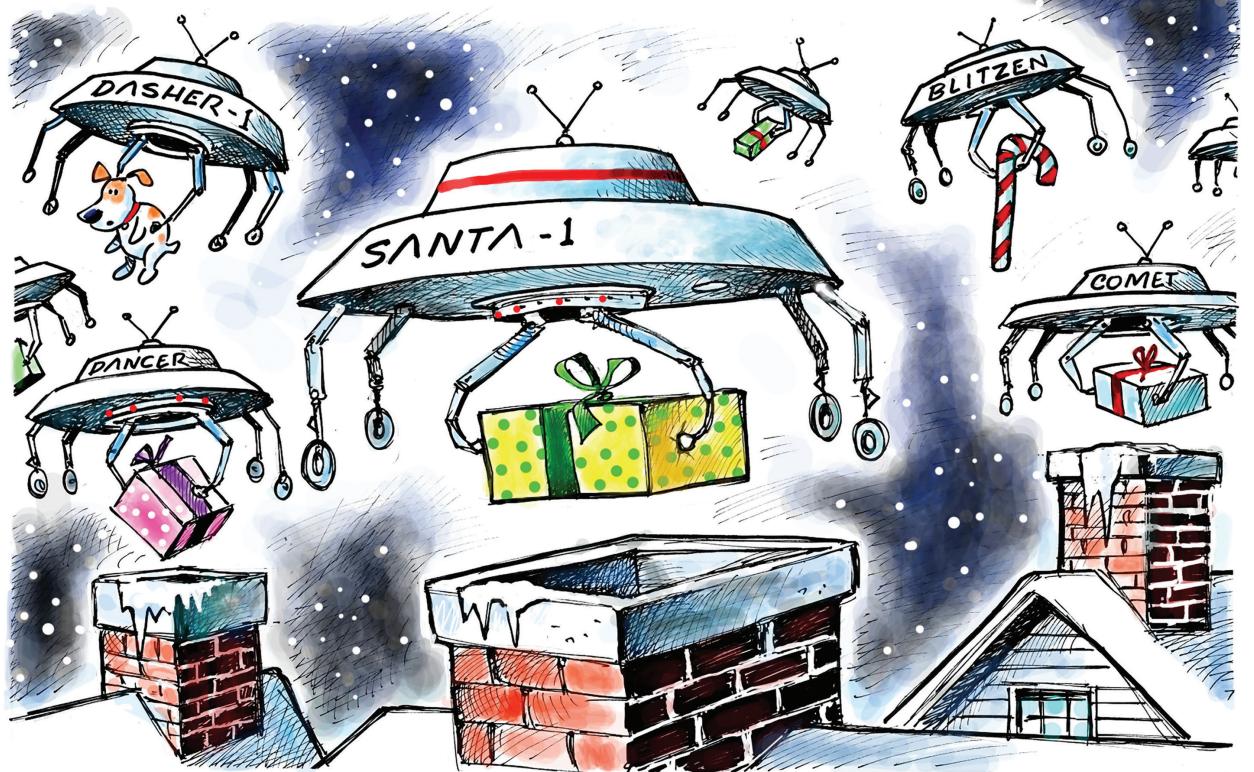
Second, we could see what policies and procedures could be adopted on a statewide rather than a supervisory union or district level. Keeping the focus of superintendents and their offices as much as possible on actual education and supporting their principals who provide their schools administrative leadership should be the main goal.

Both these short- and long-term proposals will face pushback from interests who want to keep things as they are. Proponents, who have programs currently in the education fund, would rather not have to compete for funding with other items in the general fund. The Superintendent's Association is not interested in shrinking their membership and the VTNEA does not want to give up the bargaining advantage they have when negotiating on a district level.

Yet, with a sharp dropoff in federal aid to education on the way, and with many taxpayers feeling strapped, changes will have to be made. Preserving and enhancing the magic of learning that takes place in our schools must be the priority.

In the long term we need to provide real savings that have minimal impact on the actual learning taking place.

ABOUT THE DRONE ACTIVITY IN THE EVENING SKIES...



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POLITICALCARTOONS.COM

Drones in December skies by Dave Granlund, PoliticalCartoons

LETTERS

Vermont Packinghouse animal cruelty investigation

Dear Editor,

According to a Dec. 9 article in VTDigger, a local slaughterhouse, Vermont Packinghouse, is under investigation again for cruelty to animals. Allegedly, workers failed to intervene when a truck driver unloading pigs kicked animals in the head and neck and shoved them off the back of the trailer. The pigs suffered heat stroke after an eight-hour journey from a New York farm.

Vermont Packinghouse claims it is taking corrective action to "uphold its commitment to humane animal handling"

This statement from a slaughterhouse previously shut down for 15 non-compliance violations of federal and state animal welfare laws for improper stunning of pigs and sheep is outrageous. In each instance, employees failed to stun an animal effectively and render it immediately unconscious, as required under the federal Humane Methods of Slaughter Act.

Cruelty → 14

The dictates of conscience in Vermont

Dear Editor,

Does Vermont still believe in the separation of church and state? The newly elected legislature must address this question.

In June 2022, the U.S. Supreme Court's *Carson v. Makin* decision required that states providing tuition reimbursement to independent and charter schools must extend those same programs to religious schools as well as nonreligious schools. The Vermont Agency of Education complied with the decision and told school districts they could not withhold public tuition money from schools simply because of their religious affiliation. However, in Vermont, there is a constitutional provision called the compelled support clause, which prohibits the state from using public tax dollars to support religious worship or instruction "contrary to the dictates of conscience."

Chapter 1, Article 3 of the Vermont Constitution states, in part, "that no person

Conscience → 11

Vote 'yes' for a flat tax rate without programming cuts

Dear Editor,

As a former school district board member for 15 years, I know budgeting always comes with difficult choices — particularly when making cuts.

This year, the Mountain Views Supervisory Union (MVSU) board proposed \$2.5 million in cuts — no small feat, especially because insurance costs and contractual obligations to teachers and staff rose by double digits again.

So, it's not surprising that they may have cut too deep.

Cutting arts and language programs proved widely unpopular, and the board voted on Monday to save all united arts programs from the chopping block. That's good.

The task of district board members is to put a budget in front of the town's people that's best for the students. Cutting programming, including high school Latin, which 50 students have elected to take — nearly 12%

of the high school population (she must be a great teacher!) — is not in the students' best interest.

We must preserve educational opportunities and look to the future, positioning Woodstock to be invested in as one of the "newer and fewer" hub middle/high schools in the state.

If we keep all united arts, Killington will see a flat tax rate. Why would we cut an additional \$450,000 in programming?

We can't do this by focusing on cuts. Instead of being scared of the penalty phase, let's focus on tax rates.

If we keep all united arts, Killington will see a flat tax rate. Why would we cut an additional \$450,000 in programming?

The UA programs back in the administration still have made \$2 million in cuts, which got us to a flat tax rate (the state average is 5.9%). That's impressive.

Flat rate → 11

CAPITAL QUOTES

Not since Orson Welles reported alien spacecraft over the skies of Haddonfield, New Jersey, during his infamous Halloween night broadcast of "War of the Worlds" have sightings of unidentified aircraft caused such a stir. Since mid-November, numerous reports of unidentified drones have emerged across New Jersey and New York, causing public concern and prompting federal investigations. Despite extensive investigations by the FBI and Dept. of Homeland Security, officials have found no evidence of foreign involvement or threats to public safety. Many sightings have been attributed to misidentified manned aircraft or lawful drone operations.

"There's no so-called mothership launching drones towards the United States,"

said **Sabrina Singh**, Pentagon press deputy secretary.

"The ones flying these drones ought to be tracked down and held accountable for common sense and public safety,"

said Senator **Richard Blumenthal**, urging officials to find the people responsible for the drones.

"Did anyone think we'd start selling drones at convenience stores in America and there wouldn't come a day when people were screaming, 'There's too many goddamn drones!'"

said **Seth Meyers** on Late Night with Seth Meyers.

"For some reason, they don't want to comment. And I think they'd be better off saying what it is if our military knows and our president knows. And for some reason, they want to keep people in suspense,"

said President-elect **Donald Trump** to reporters at his Mar-a-Lago resort in Florida on Dec. 16.

← Flat rate:

from page 10

Over the past few years, we've seen 20%-30% increases yearly.

A flat tax rate? Let's celebrate!

I also think the state Legislature will get the tax rate from 5.9% to 0% — which would mean we would all see more significant savings, possibly 6-7% off the current rates.

I've gone to three meetings during this budget process; I asked (as did others) for the dollar amount that put the arts programming back into the budget.

To his credit, Ben Ford, the finance committee chair, did just that. He gave the board five scenarios at the most recent meeting,

Monday, Dec. 16.

In doing this, the finance group listened to the community.

I'll be voting 'yes' on the budget this year for the first time in two years.

Then, on Dec. 16, with this information, the board passed the motion to save all United Arts from budget cuts as it should have.

In this day and age, if the tax rate stays the same or goes down, why wouldn't you vote 'yes'?

No further cuts are needed. We can and should preserve the educational opportunities in our

schools.

Let's get through this year with a flat (possibly a 6% decrease) in our tax rates. I'll be voting 'yes' on the budget this year for the first time in two years.

I've always been in favor of the educational side. And on the building side, let the Legislature figure out school building plans. I really hope that Woodstock can be a hub with a bigger building that can serve our kids even better. Let's set ourselves up to make that case. We need the best educational opportunities available to do that.

Jim Haff, Killington

← Conscience:

from page 10

ought to, or of right can be compelled to attend any religious worship, erect or support any place of worship, or maintain any minister, contrary to the dictates of conscience." Note that this is an individual right understood to mean that Vermont cannot force a taxpayer or citizen to subsidize religious programming or institutions against their will.

Vermont's Constitution reflects a dedication to religion and religious liberty. It also recognizes that freedom of conscience—the freedom to engage in and support religious worship as dictated by one's mind, not by the government—is a necessary aspect of religious freedom. Freedom from compelled support for the religion of others is a central aspect of Vermonters' religious freedom. To those who drafted the Vermont Constitution, freedom from compelled support for the religion of others was not in opposition to the free exercise of religion. It was freedom of religion.

Vermont's tuition program is, therefore, in a difficult position. A district that declines to provide tuition money to a religious school may violate the U.S. Constitution under the Supreme Court's decision. However, sending public dollars to that

school could violate taxpayer's "dictates of conscience" and thereby violate the Vermont Constitution.

Because of the Vermont Agency of Education's directive, Vermont continues to dismantle the wall of separation between church and state that the framers of our constitutions fought to build. We are now sending money to schools to support the teaching and practice of religion. These schools also have admission policies that allow them to deny enrollment based on gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, and religion. Many of these schools have a history of discriminatory practices against our LGBTQ+ community of students and educators.

Vermonters should recognize the importance and, indeed, the privilege of having freedom of conscience. Our state was founded on this freedom. The framers of Vermont's Constitution were willing to fight and die for this freedom, which is worth preserving today. The Vermont Agency of Education should not be allowed to take the freedom of conscience away from our citizens.

The holding in *Carson v. Makin* does not require that the state pay tuition to religious schools. States are

allowed to fund only public schools. However, if states choose to fund private schools, then they cannot exclude religious schools.

The Vermont legislature needs to consider revisions to our state educational tuition reimbursement program to control our property taxes and address the disregard for the compelled support clause of our constitution. When taxpayer dollars support private and religious schools, we are publicly funding everything they do. That is what causes constitutional problems—the segregation and discrimination of students are contrary to the dictates of conscience for many of our citizens.

We must recognize that a good public education is the great equalizer in our democracy. Rich or poor, black or white, gay or straight, those with disabilities and those without, everyone has the right to a free, inclusive, high-quality public education. People have the right to provide their children with a private or religious school education. However, they do not have a right to have public money fund these alternatives. The Vermont legislature needs to correct this.

G. Gregory Hughes, Bethel

← United Arts:
from page 1

cutting \$350,000 of district elementary school UA programs and \$98,000 at the middle/high school (the Latin program, which has about 50 students enrolled or 12% of the high school student body).

Unified arts refers to art, music, world languages, STEM, makerspace and library programs.

There was a large community effort supporting saving the UA programs, which put pressure on the district board. Supporters spoke in the public comment portion of the previous board meeting, Dec. 2, for over an hour making their case, then wrote a letter that garnered almost 200 signatures. Many were at the meeting Dec. 16 planning to make their case again, but the passage of the motion to save UA prior to public comment, made that unnecessary.

Cost of saving UA

The motion put the entire \$450,000 back in the budget without mandating, or even specifying, the administration to look into any specific additional cuts. The \$450,000 would put the district in the penalty phase such that it would have to raise \$850,000 to cover those costs (all spending in the penalty threshold have to raise \$2 for every \$1 spent).

The board waffled on how to move forward after passing the motion to save UA — whether different cuts ought to be presented to the board or if the budget should be presented to the voters as is with the UA \$450,000 added back in.

“I’m confused as to what you’re actually asking us to do,” said Finance Director Jim Fenn. “Are you asking us to cut \$850,000 but none of it comes from UA to get another threshold? Or are you telling us to increase the budget by \$450,000 then it looks good?”

“The only motion voted on is: stay away from UA,” summarized Ben Ford, board vice chair and finance committee chair. “Individual board members have expressed interest in other cuts, but those have been left for discussion ... No one’s prepared to say, I propose that we pass a budget that cuts x, y or z.”

Board member Josh Linton, from Plymouth, abstained from voting on the UA motion saying he was hoping for a more nuanced path. “What if we made it our goal to not make as many cuts to UA. To try to get the the budget to right below penalty base, and then try to restore as much UA as we can... We’ve heard them say that they don’t want UA cut. However, we also have a number that says we go above this number we start paying two for one, \$2 for every \$1, which doesn’t make sense economically.”

Sam DiNatale of Woodstock, voted against the motion explaining: “I think that blanket saying that we’re not cutting anything from UA now has left our administrators to make bigger cuts elsewhere and we don’t know what that looks like. I would have been more comfortable with ... less cuts to the UA, and that’s why I voted nay, was because I wanted it to be more more equitable.”

Townsend who made the motion “not to make cuts to any of the Unified Art programs,” later clarified that he expected the administration to find other cuts to keep the district under the penalty phase. “All I’m doing by this motion is making sure if there are cuts to the UA is the last damn option we go down ... we might still have to make those cuts to avoid the penalty once we get everything down at the bottom line without UA on the books. Like, if you guys come back to me say, ‘Hey, we don’t find any other place to make a cut. This is what it will cost us.’ We can make a motion to accept cuts to UA to keep under the penalty phase,” he said.

Many other board members weighed in expressing concern over passing a budget that puts the district into the penalty phase.

“I wanted to provide some context... how big of a deal is the penalty phase?” Ford asked rhetorically Monday night. “In terms of the other pieces of the puzzle — the yield or the ADM or penalty threshold — it’s not the most significant. In fact, it’s relatively minor, in terms of impact,” he explained

Projected FY26 Tax Rates Calculation - Additional Reductions to Avoid Penalty on New Threshold								
	Barnard	Bridgewater	Killington	Plymouth	Pomfret	Reading	Woodstock	
FY26 Est Equalized Tax Rate	\$1.9420	\$1.9420	\$1.9420	\$1.9420	\$1.9420	\$1.9420	\$1.9420	\$1.9420
CLA	1.3900	1.4900	0.6300	0.6800	1.2700	1.3600	0.7900	
Homestead Property Tax Rate	\$1.3971	\$1.3033	\$3.0825	\$2.8559	\$1.5291	\$1.4279	\$2.4582	
FY25 Homestead Prop Tax Rate	\$1.6010	\$1.4011	\$3.1981	\$2.6895	\$1.6654	\$1.6640	\$2.6303	
Increase(Decrease) from FY25	(\$0.2039)	(\$0.0978)	(\$0.1156)	\$0.1664	(\$0.1362)	(\$0.2361)	(\$0.1721)	
Percentage Change from FY25	-12.74%	-6.98%	-3.61%	6.19%	-8.18%	-14.19%	-6.54%	

Projected FY26 Tax Rates Calculation - Retain all UA Positions/Offerings (~\$450k)								
	Barnard	Bridgewater	Killington	Plymouth	Pomfret	Reading	Woodstock	
FY26 Est Equalized Tax Rate	\$2.0102	\$2.0102	\$2.0102	\$2.0102	\$2.0102	\$2.0102	\$2.0102	\$2.0102
CLA	1.3900	1.4900	0.6300	0.6800	1.2700	1.3600	0.7900	
Homestead Property Tax Rate	\$1.4462	\$1.3491	\$3.1908	\$2.9562	\$1.5828	\$1.4781	\$2.5446	
FY25 Homestead Prop Tax Rate	\$1.6010	\$1.4011	\$3.1981	\$2.6895	\$1.6654	\$1.6640	\$2.6303	
Increase(Decrease) from FY25	(\$0.1548)	(\$0.0520)	(\$0.0073)	\$0.2667	(\$0.0825)	(\$0.1860)	(\$0.0857)	
Percentage Change from FY25	-9.67%	-3.71%	-0.23%	9.92%	-4.96%	-11.17%	-3.26%	

Projected FY26 Tax Rates Calculation - Put Back All Cuts								
	Barnard	Bridgewater	Killington	Plymouth	Pomfret	Reading	Woodstock	
FY26 Est Equalized Tax Rate	\$2.0618	\$2.0618	\$2.0618	\$2.0618	\$2.0618	\$2.0618	\$2.0618	\$2.0618
CLA	1.3900	1.4900	0.6300	0.6800	1.2700	1.3600	0.7900	
Homestead Property Tax Rate	\$1.4833	\$1.3837	\$3.2726	\$3.0320	\$1.6234	\$1.5160	\$2.6098	
FY25 Homestead Prop Tax Rate	\$1.6010	\$1.4011	\$3.1981	\$2.6895	\$1.6654	\$1.6640	\$2.6303	
Increase(Decrease) from FY25	(\$0.1177)	(\$0.0174)	\$0.0746	\$0.3425	(\$0.0419)	(\$0.1480)	(\$0.0205)	
Percentage Change from FY25	-7.35%	-1.24%	2.33%	12.74%	-2.52%	-8.90%	-0.78%	

Courtesy Ben Ford

Three scenarios for the MVSU FY26 budget — lowest to highest — show how tax rates would be affected in each district town.

showing charts with the tax rate fluctuating only a few percentage points in five different scenarios (see charts above).

The state determines the estimate for property yield per long term weighted average daily membership (LTWADM) but that number can fluctuate depending on approved budgets through June, Fenn noted.

The penalty phase — calculated as 118% of average statewide budgets — can also fluctuate as those budgets come in. Lower statewide budgets, lower the average, which then lowers the penalty threshold.

Due to updated calculations in LTWADM and penalty phase, last week, the district budget was over additional \$408,000 into the penalty phase, Ford reported, noting that the Legislative session has not yet begun, and further changes are expected once it convenes. Last year, a projected 19% increase was reduced to 14% by the Legislature. This year, the projection is 5.9% with many new legislatures voted in to address rising costs.

“I guess where I kind of land is our administration and principals have done a lot of quality work. There’s been some great thought, I think we should still make a healthy set of cuts, right? But do it kind of with an eye towards recognizing that penalty phase isn’t necessarily the worst thing,” Ford said.

Public weighs in

About two dozen citizens attended the district meeting in person Monday night, Dec. 16, with another 60 attending via Zoom. Those that spoke were all in support of preserving the educational quality and frequency of programming throughout the district.

Jim Haff, of Killington, a former district board member, kicked off the public comment portion of the meeting after the board had completed its agenda. “Whichever way you voted, you’re here to put a budget in front of the town’s people that’s the best, as Ryan said, for the students. I think the messaging is bad regarding discussions of the penalty phase. The focus should be on a flat tax rate compared to the prior year,” Haff said. “Ben said that the vote last year for the budget passed two to one. The folks like the education that’s in this school district, the more you keep cutting, the more people are going to leave... You’ve made cuts with incentives for staff resigning. That’s a one year cost... of \$150,000. So I really do believe that the way you should be going here is ... no cuts, bring the \$450K back. That’s what I think you should do. And I think you would have the budget passing even in Killington this year”

Dillon Benros, of Woodstock agreed, “I wanted to second

Jim’s comment, to stick with adding the \$450K back in and put it up for the vote... cutting programs is not the right direction to maintain a higher ranking school system.”

Jessica Kirby, of Woodstock, added: “If we want to talk about equity, we need to think about what’s going to happen if we keep making these cuts? People are worried about leaving because of taxes, and I fully understand that’s a real concern, but families are so going to leave if these cuts continue and they’re going to move or put these kids in other schools, and then our cost per pupil is going to go up even more,” she said.

Sarah Reiter from Pomfret, said, “I recommend all considered cuts be considered against the backdrop of weather and to what extent these cuts will have a negative impact on the whole child education. And I would love to see that as part of the analysis as we consider cuts going forward.”

Sarit Werner, of Woodstock, encouraged the board to consider the larger implication for the future of the district schools, particularly its middle and high school.

“I think it’s important to consider what the future of Woodstock, middle school/high school looks like. The building is the second worst in the state, if we cut our programming now so that we’re not offering a better education than other schools, and the state moves forward with its ‘fewer and newer’ proposal, why should or would the state elect to keep Woodstock? Keeping our status as a third best public high school in the state is crucial, and that designation includes UA and all the extra program opportunities.”

Next steps

“So on January 6, are we going to come and we’re going to have one option and we’re going to vote up or down? Or are we going to have like three options, or a la cart... is it possible for the administration to look at any further cuts between now and Jan. 6?” asked Anna Sessa, of Reading.

“I took notes on all the proposals and I’m going to provide those to Ben,” said Superintendent Sherry Sousa. “I think it’s in the hands of the finance committee and the principals to come up with a recommendation for the next board meeting,” she said adding that with only four working days left in the week before holiday vacations, the amount of new budgeting work possible before Jan. 6 is limited.

If a budget is passed by the district board on Jan. 6, it will be sent to the seven district towns to be included on their Town Meeting Day ballots. If the board doesn’t pass a budget on Jan. 6, it could require pushing the district budget vote back requiring a special vote in all district towns.

← **Casella:**
from page 5

applauded Casella's efforts to overcome them and sustain economic resilience. "It's truly inspiring to have a major employer be a part of the solution by opening this facility to get more truck drivers on the road and more mechanics in the garage. Trucking is part of the American fabric. It keeps commerce flowing, businesses thriving, and workers employed," she said.

The Center, which provides training, room, and board valued at \$5,000 per student, is held over 10 days, has a nearly 100 percent pass rate for its graduates, and requires a two-year employment commitment.

"We commit to the students, who in turn commit to our company," Casella said. "We have seen over the last four years that drivers who successfully come through the program have an incredibly high retention rate past that initial commitment."

Hier's family was also on hand to celebrate the dedication, and Ken's daughter, Courtney, encouraged recent graduates and current students in attendance to follow in her father's footsteps and "offer your skills and your performance to build



Courtesy Casella FB

A crowd gathered for a dedication of the CDL Training Center.

on the mission of customer service, teamwork, and integrity."

"Our continued growth and success are predicated on the investments we make in our people," Casella said in closing. "Anyone can buy the same equipment, software, and trucks, but our people and their commitment to our Core Values and culture are the keys to our success."

← **School construction aid:**
from page 1

legislation represents a thoughtful and collaborative effort, and we believe that the question of funding should be approached with the same level of diligence and consideration."

The uncertainty raises questions about state financial support for Vermont's schools as voters clamor for education property tax relief and deteriorating school infrastructure increasingly disrupts classrooms.

Vermont's schools are the second oldest in the nation and will require upwards of \$6 billion in infrastructure

transparent about what will fund it and how," Amanda Wheeler, a spokesperson for the governor, said. "If that funding source is proposed to be a new revenue or fee, the governor would not be in support."

As proposed, the aid program would pay for 20% of a project's eligible cost, with opportunities for additional funding up to another 20% if certain criteria are met. The program's responsibilities would primarily fall to the Agency of Education, with an additional advisory board consulting with the agency on implementation.

The agency would require at least three full time positions to implement the program, according to Jill

Vermont's schools are the second oldest in the nation and will require upwards of \$6 billion in infrastructure investments in the next two decades.

investments in the next two decades, according to the Agency of Education.

The eye-popping price tag is just one cost pressure on the state's public education system. Lawmakers say they plan to address Vermont's school funding system in the coming legislative session, with school construction aid a possible part of the path ahead.

Vermont has lacked a state-funded school construction program for more than 15 years, transferring the financial burden to local school budgets and property taxes.

Now, as the rising cost of education has become one of the state's most pressing political issues, officials have turned renewed attention to the idea of state support for construction. Some argue updating schools would save money currently spent on deferred maintenance and energy inefficiencies. Others have indicated now is not the time to put more money into education.

"Voters were very clear that affordability is a top priority for them, so any proposal with a cost needs to be very

Briggs Campbell, the interim deputy secretary of education and a member of the construction aid working group. The group voted unanimously to endorse a draft piece of legislation last week.

Sen. Martine Gulick, D-Chittenden Central, who co-chaired the group, said she felt good about its work but more needed to be done in legislative committees come January.

"A lot of the current draft, the draft that we ended up with, comes from the previous program that existed prior to 2007," she said. "We're hoping that the education committees will take this bill up and really flesh out some of the details."

Asked about the likelihood that the governor will include an appropriation for school construction in his budget recommendations, Gulick called herself "hopeful."

"We have the second oldest school facilities portfolio in the country. It's at a point where it's unhealthy," she said. "If you want to be someone who's looking at fiscal responsibility then you have to be looking at the future."

Yet as of Dec. 10, there appeared little reason to expect the administration would recommend funding construction aid without cutting from elsewhere in the state budget.

Part of the working group's charge was to "align the proposed construction aid program with fiscal modeling produced by the Joint Fiscal Office." Historically, the state provided school construction aid in the Capital Bill through bonds and by appropriating one-time money.

Sen. David Weeks, R-Rutland, served on the construction aid working group and is a member of the Senate Education Committee. He said Republican senators recently met with Scott to discuss the administration's legislative priorities, and construction aid was not among them.

"I get that we have some other fiscal problems to solve," Weeks said in an interview Tuesday, noting that the administration could have secondary priorities that were not discussed. "I am trying to get a sense myself for whether they have an appetite for restarting school construction aid."

Although he took issue with some of the working group's recommendations, like the bureaucratic layer of creating an advisory group, Weeks praised the group's bipartisan collaboration and indicated his support for some kind of school construction aid.

"Do we need it? Yeah, we really do," he said.

Weeks predicted the legislation "will be changed a thousand times" when it reaches committees this session, and he suggested construction aid will be a key part of conversations about education finance this session.

"I think it's very clear to everybody we do have a cost problem," Weeks said. "There's going to be a lot of levers pulled to make ourselves more efficient in how we spend."

← **Bernie:**
from page 9

In 2023, he became chair of the powerful Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions, where he used his bully pulpit to highlight price gouging by pharmaceutical companies and the corporate profits that make the U.S. system of health care among the world's most expensive. The Republican sweep of Congress and the White House in November will put him in the minority again at the start of his next term in January.

In his October interview with VT Digger, Sanders said age was a factor in politics but not the most important one. "I have significant seniority in the United States Senate," Sanders said, which he argued "helps me bring a lot of money into the state for various things."

Long tenures have been a consistent feature of Vermont's congressional representation in recent years.

Sanders himself took over in 2007 from the late Sen. Jim Jeffords, I-Vt., who represented Vermont in the Senate for three terms after spending 14 years as its sole U.S. representative. Former Sen. Patrick Leahy, D-Vt., represented the state for almost 50 years before retiring in 2023. His successor was Peter Welch, who had been Vermont's U.S. representative since Sanders left the position and is next up for reelection in 2028.

Emma Cotton contributed reporting to this story.

← **RRMC:**
from page 8

newborn complication rates, exclusive breast milk feeding rates, birthing-friendly practices and reporting on racial/ethnic disparities, among other measures.

Based on excellent performance in each of these areas, RRMC earned a High Performing designation in recognition of maternity care.

"We are very honored to be recognized for the high level of care we provide to our patients and their babies," said Sarah Decker, MD, medical director of

"We are very honored to be recognized for the high level of care we provide to our patients and their babies," said Sarah Decker.

Rutland Women's Healthcare at RRMC. "The collaboration within the Women's and Children's Unit and the Birthing Center is exceptional, and we are always working together to optimize outcomes for our patients and their babies."

U.S. News evaluated 817 hospitals from across the U.S. Fewer than half of all hospitals evaluated for U.S. News' 2025 ratings edition have been recognized as Best Hospitals for Maternity Care. Rutland Regional Medical Center is the only hospital in Vermont to receive this high performing designation.

"The hospitals recognized by U.S. News as Best Hospitals for Maternity Care showcase exceptional care for expectant parents," said Jennifer Winston, Ph.D., health data scientist at U.S. News. "These hospitals demonstrate significantly lower C-section rates and severe unexpected newborn complications compared to hospitals not recognized by U.S. News."

Additionally, RRMC was one of only 118 hospitals nationwide to be named a 2025 Maternity Care Access Hospital, which is a hospital that offers essential maternity services to underserved communities. This recognizes hospitals serving communities that would be in danger of becoming a maternity care desert.

← Newspaper:

from page 7

as unproductive, they made the decision to restart the paper anyway. “After months of this happening — whether it be, you know, administration red-taping us, or us waiting for these demands to be met, all this back and forth, ping-pong correspondence — we realize that we need to, you know, take (on) our role as a newspaper,” Oakes, a Guidon reporter, said. “I think we feel like that role supersedes these demands being met.”

Marc Kolb, a spokesperson for Norwich University, said in an email that Norwich welcomed the return of The Guidon.

“We are happy to see the Guidon is publishing again,” Kolb said in an email. “They are an important part of our campus community and provide an important service.”

The Guidon has published two stories so far this week. The first, on Monday, was a report about the paper’s decision to resume reporting.

The second, published Tuesday, reported that a Norwich University student was arrested after an alleged sexual assault on campus Monday. Reporters said they are currently working on follow-up stories.

“At the end of the day, the news is the most important thing here,” McAuley, a Guidon reporter, said in an interview. “So we can’t just keep going in circles. We have to plow forward because the news never stops.”

The Guidon can be read at: norwichguidon.org.

← Cruelty:

from page 10

The “mis-stunned” animals tried to escape and had to be re-captured and stunned multiple times.

Vermont Packinghouse, local meat farms, and butcher shops use the word “humane” liberally to advertise their services and products. But labels do not always tell the truth.

“Food” animals, even locally raised ones, suffer all manner of cruelties from birth to death: Newborn dairy calves shiver alone in outdoor huts; pigs in double-decker trucks endure long-distance transport in extreme temperatures; terrified animals wait hours or days in slaughterhouse holding

pens for their turn to die, etc. “Stunning” requires violence either by captive bolt, blow to the skull, or electrocution, and, as we know from Vermont Packinghouse’s prior offenses, it is easily botched.

Merriam-Webster defines “humane” as “marked by compassion, sympathy, or consideration.” Sympathy requires an ability to put oneself into the shoes of another. Killing animals for food is not a humane endeavor in which animals are treated with compassion. Vermont Packinghouse and local meat purveyors should lose the “humanely-produced” label and just call it meat.

Lucy Goodrum, Reading

← Quechee Road:

from page 6

principle on a 20-year bond, plus \$53,000 for interest. He said the town is still waiting for \$130,000 from FEMA for 2023 flood damage, and there are significant funds in the highway reserve account, both of which could finance just ditching and culvert work done by the town crew.

Selectman Tom Kennedy warned against trying to float a bond this year, as the property tax increase already has Hartlanders reeling.

“If the bond fails, it will be even more difficult to get it through next year,” he said.

Select Board chair Phil Hobbie is in favor of putting off any work that would require taking on debt this year.

“Let’s use existing funding to do the first phase — ditching and drainage work — and use this year to explain the project and warn about next year.”

He suggested dedicating upcoming meetings to education and discussion of the various ways to finance fixing Quechee Road.

← Harrison:

from page 5

disappointed with their losses at the polls. And Sibilis is not from Burlington. The election for Speaker will be done on the first day of the new session by secret ballot. At this writing, it is unclear who House Republicans may prefer for the position.

To win the post you need 76 votes if all 150 members are present. In the Senate, Phil Baruth, D-Chittenden Central, is expected to be re-elected as Senate President pro-tem.

In other news this past week:

The House Republicans plan to introduce legislation to repeal Act 18, the Clean Heat Standard. The legislation, while still needing approval of the regulations to fully implement it, is estimated to dramatically increase the cost of heating fuels in Vermont.

The Vermont Human Rights Commission, an independent body that focuses on enforcing discrimination violations, is seeking to double its staff and budget, which may be difficult in a tight budget environment.

In closing, I want to extend my best wishes for a joyous, healthy and safe holiday season! Regular updates will resume with the new legislative session in January.

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

← Clean Heat:

from page 5

by the Vermont Dept. of Public Service which estimated the cost of heating oil could increase anywhere from \$1.79 to \$4.00 per gallon. McCoy did not specify details on when such increases would take place.

While unnamed in the press release, the Vermont Dept. of Public Service did hire independent Vermont consultant Energy Futures Group, which issued a 94-page report estimating fuel prices would increase by an average of 1 to 2 cents per gallon per year from the date the program took effect until 2030.

House Republicans, who oppose the cost to consumers of the Clean Heat Standard, urge the legislature to repeal the entire law and start over with affordability foremost in mind.

McCoy added, “Not only do we need to start over with Act 18, we need to remain vigilant that it is not replaced with some other new carbon tax scheme.”

In related news, Smithsonian Magazine reported on Dec. 4 that scientists reviewing data on a new study of climate models indicated the Arctic could experience its first “Ice-Free” day by as early as 2027, which could have devastating impacts on the environment. There were no estimates provided on how such an occurrence might impact future energy prices.



By Salvadora Morales

The American oystercatcher, seen along the shores of Delta del Estero Real Natural Reserve in Nicaragua, is one of the bird species helped by the efforts of Stephen Brown a scientist from Rockingham, Vermont.

← Shorebirds:

from page 7

communities, and governments work together, we see real results.”

Brown’s work has not gone unnoticed. In November, the American Ornithological Society (AOS) named him a Fellow, recognizing his transformative contributions to bird conservation. The honor places him among an elite group of only 569 AOS Fellows nationwide.

“Stephen’s work exemplifies the power of science to drive real-world conservation,” said Elizabeth Schueler, president of Manomet Conservation Sciences.

For more than two decades, Brown has conducted fieldwork in the Arctic,



Submitted

Stephen Brown Recognized as Fellow of the American Ornithological Society.

advanced conservation policies, and mentored young scientists, leaving an indelible mark on the field. At home in Rockingham, 8 miles southeast of Chester, he continues to lead by example, living in a carbon-neutral homestead powered by solar energy.

As Brown reflects on his career and the challenges ahead, he remains hopeful. “We’re at a crossroads,” Brown said. “But with sustained effort, we can protect these incredible birds and the ecosystems they depend on for generations to come.”

For more information, visit: americanornithology.org.

WORDPLAY

UNDER THE WEATHER WORD SEARCH

Find the words hidden vertically, horizontally, diagonally and backwards

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

- ARTHRITIS
- BACTERIA
- COMMON COLD
- COVID
- DISEASE
- E-COLI
- FUNGAL
- HEPATITIS
- HOOKWORMS
- ILLNESS
- INFECTIOUS
- INFLUENZA
- MIGRAINE
- PAIN
- PARASITE
- PERTUSSIS
- SALMONELLA
- STOMACH BUG
- STREP THROAT
- THRUSH
- TOXOPLASMOSIS
- TRANSMISSIBLE
- TUBERCULOSIS
- VIRUS

SUDOKU

Solutions → 30

How to Play

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

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

Level: Intermediate

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Solutions → 30

CLUES ACROSS

- 1. Miller beer variety
- 4. Member of people inhabiting Bering Sea islands
- 9. Stomach
- 14. Investment vehicle
- 15. Fictional soccer coach Ted
- 16. Irregular in botanical parlance
- 17. Cease standing
- 18. "American Horror Story" actress
- 20. Grow milk teeth
- 22. Plant parts
- 23. Snow house
- 24. Most contemptuous
- 28. Note to repay
- 29. Old English
- 30. Wings
- 31. Financial institutions
- 33. Parks and Lopez are two
- 37. Mr. T's "The A-Team" character
- 38. Relative biological effectiveness (abbr.)
- 39. Give off
- 41. Semitic alphabet letter
- 42. Farm state
- 43. Actress Sarandon
- 44. Back parts
- 46. Zoroastrian concept of holy fire

- 49. Touchdown
- 50. One point north of due east
- 51. Refurbishes
- 55. Silver and Dogg are two
- 58. Former Tigers catcher Alex
- 59. Type of envelope
- 60. Seriously considered
- 64. Unhappy
- 65. Past (archaic)
- 66. Asian wild dog
- 67. Old English letter
- 68. Young domestic sheep
- 69. Football players need to gain them
- 70. Witness

CLUES DOWN

- 1. Dormant Peruvian volcano
- 2. Norwegian composer
- 3. Indicates location
- 4. Pubs
- 5. Unable to walk easily
- 6. Electronic warfare-support measures
- 7. World leader
- 8. Midsection
- 9. Jewish calendar month
- 10. Urological condition
- 11. A small quantity of anything

1	2	3		4	5	6	7	8		9	10	11	12	13		
14				15						16						
									18							
17										19						
20			21							22						
23								24	25					26	27	
			28					29					30			
31	32							33		34	35	36			37	
38								39	40						41	
42								43					44	45		
46			47	48						49			50			
51								52	53	54				55	56	57
60	61									62	63				64	
65										66					67	
68										69					70	

- 12. Mountain Time
- 13. Affirmative
- 19. Word element meaning ear
- 21. Carried away
- 24. Short-billed rails
- 25. Newborn child
- 26. Sword
- 27. Groups of people
- 31. Prickly, scrambling shrubs
- 32. Become less intense
- 34. Polishes
- 35. Indicates position
- 36. Songs sung to one's beloved
- 40. The 12th letter of the Greek alphabet
- 41. Insects
- 45. Israeli politician
- 47. Pre-digital
- 48. Roaming
- 52. Ambience
- 53. Brew
- 54. Late
- 56. Make ecstatically happy
- 57. Semitic alphabet letter
- 59. Blend
- 60. Dash
- 61. Self
- 62. Exclamation of satisfaction
- 63. Hill or rocky peak

GUESS WHO?

I am a comedic actor born in Canada on December 17, 1946. In high school I used humorous campaign posters to win the student council race. I've worked alongside fellow Canadians and am known for my thick eyebrows and glasses. My most iconic role was as an awkward dad in a movie about teenagers and virginity.

Answer: Eugene Levy

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- Generators
- Smart Home
- Fuel Stops
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WED
12/18

Virtual Film Screening: 'Food, Inc. 2'

Online. All Day. 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 F12-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

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

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

HOLIDAY SWEATER SHOWDOWN & SHOPPING EXCLUSIVE

THURSDAY @ 6 P.M.



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

Book Discussion: 'Build the Life You Want'

5:30-6:30 p.m. Chaffee Art Center, 16 S. Main St., Rutland. Discuss "Build the Life You Want" by Arthur C. Brooks and Oprah Winfrey. RSVP required. Book group members receive 20% off the monthly book at Phoenix Books. chaffeeartcenter.org

Alla Prima Oil Painting Workshop

6-8 p.m. Chaffee Art Center, 16 So. Main St., Rutland. \$35. Learn the historic Alla Prima oil technique with instructor Spencer Pelkey. Create a painting in one sitting by applying wet paint to wet paint. Includes all supplies. Min: 5, Max: 12 participants. Must pre-register. chaffeeartcenter.org

Annual Give Back Mixer

6-8 p.m. Hub Streetside Conference Center, 67 Merchants Row, Rutland. Suggested \$5+ donation or bring an item to donate for the Rutland County Humane Society. Join Rutland Young Professionals for an evening of networking and fundraising, featuring an ugly Christmas sweater contest with prizes. rutlandyoungprofessionals.org

Art of Emotion: Inspiration

6-8 p.m. Kaleidoscope Art Supply, 109 Center St., Rutland. \$20. Explore inspiration for the new year through vision boards, collages, and painting in a creative, expressive session. Materials provided. Sign up in person at Kaleidoscope Art Supply or at movewithmountains.com

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

THURS
12/19

Virtual Film Screening: 'Food, Inc. 2'

Online. Available till 11:59 p.m. 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 F12-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

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

Holiday Sweater Showdown & Shopping Exclusive

6-8 p.m. The Sparkle Barn, 1509 US 7 S, Wallingford. Join the fun with an Ugly Christmas Sweater Contest and after-hours shopping. Enjoy a 15% discount on purchases, holiday treats, drinks, and a festive Polaroid photo backdrop. Prizes include \$75 gift cards for top sweaters in adult and kids' categories. thesparklebarn.com

Pour Painting Workshop

6-8 p.m. Chaffee Art Center, 16 So. Main St., Rutland. \$40. Learn the pour painting technique with instructor Lorrie Amerio Manier. Includes all supplies. Min: 5, Max: 12 participants. Must pre-register. chaffeeartcenter.org

Charades Night at Abbott Memorial Library

6:30-8 p.m. Abbott Memorial Library, 15 Library St., South Pomfret. Free. Join an evening of charades filled with friendly competition. Drinks and snacks will be provided; guests are welcome to bring additional treats to share. abbottmemoriallibrary.org

Film Screening: 'The Polar Express' (G)

7:30-9:40 p.m. Woodstock Town Hall Theater, 31 The Green #2, Woodstock. \$8-\$10. On Christmas Eve, a young boy embarks on an adventure to the North Pole on the Polar Express, while learning about friendship, bravery, and the spirit of Christmas. pentangle-arts.square.site/movie-tickets

FRI
12/20

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

Basic Sewing: Upcycle a Sweater

Noon-2 p.m. Upper Valley Food Co-op, 193 North Main St., White River Junction. \$30 for UVFC members, \$35 for non-members. Learn to use a sewing machine while upcycling a sweater; two project options available. Bring a worn-out sweater if you have one. Open to ages 14 and up. Registration required: email info@uppervalleyfood.coop

Calendar: Email events@mountaintimes.info from page 16

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: chaffeeartcenter.square.site

Wrensong Solstice Concert

5-6 p.m. Quechee Library, 1957 Quechee Main St., Quechee. Free. A musical evening celebrating holiday music, including traditional and contemporary arrangements. Wrensong, a premier small vocal ensemble, presents Renaissance and modern choral music with narration for context. <https://www.quecheeandwilderlibraries.com/home/>

FNM Magic Academy: Learn to Play

5-8 p.m. Draw Go Games, 9 Evelyn St., Rutland. Free. Learn to play "Magic: The Gathering" with a provided welcome deck. New players and those bringing new players will receive a Darksteel Colossus promo (while supplies last). drawgogames.com

West Coast Swing Dance Classes

5:30-6:30 p.m. West Rutland Town Hall (upstairs), 35 Marble St., West 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

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/

DJ Skate Night

6:30-8:30 p.m., Giorgetti Arena, 2 Oak St. Ext., Rutland. \$5 for Rutland City residents, \$8 for non-residents, skate rentals \$5. Enjoy a night of public skating with music provided by Sunset Entertainment. rutlandrec.com/giorgetti

Winter Carols

7-8 p.m. BarnArts, 6211 VT Route 12, Barnard. Free. Celebrate the season with the BarnArts Chorale and Youth Chorale, featuring a program of Winter Solstice-themed music under the direction of Michael Zsoldos. The event includes instrumental performances, audience sing-alongs, and a festive community gathering. Reservations required. barnarts.org

Christmas Honky Tonk

7-9 p.m. Seven Stars Arts Center, 5126 VT Route 14, Sharon. \$20 in advance, \$25 at the door. Enjoy vintage country, bluegrass, rockabilly, and western swing with Jim Rooney, Colin McCaffrey, Danny Coane, Dave Rowell, and Don Schabner. Brocklebank Beer available. Children under 12 free. sevenstarsarts.org

Film Screening: Dr. Seuss' 'How The Grinch Stole Christmas' (2000)

7-9 p.m. The Paramount Theatre, 30 Center St., Rutland. Free. Enjoy this holiday classic with Jim Carrey as the Grinch on a state-of-the-art 4K projector with surround sound. Doors open 30 minutes prior. paramountvt.org

CHRISTMAS HONKY TONK

FRIDAY @ 7 P.M.



'A Christmas Story': Marionette Performance

7:30 p.m. Beaver Meadow Chapel, Chapel Hill Road, West Norwich. Free admission; donations welcome. An updated marionette performance of the Nativity story featuring humor and modern references. Limited seating. Park on Chapel Hill Road or at Beaver Meadow Schoolhouse. Wear warm clothes and bring a flashlight. 802-649-1626

SAT
12/21

Santa Visits Killington Resort

All day. Killington Resort, 4763 Killington Road, Killington. Santa Claus takes a break before the big day to ski around Killington Resort. Spot him on the slopes for a photo opportunity and a candy cane. killington.com

Okemo Valley Holiday Express

9 a.m.-6 p.m. 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

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

Art at the Chaffee: Drop N' Paint

Noon-2 p.m. (Saturdays) Chaffee Art Center, 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

Film Screening: 'The Polar Express' (G)

2-3:45 p.m. The Paramount Theatre, 30 Center St., Rutland. Free. Experience this family favorite on the big screen with stunning 4K visuals and immersive sound. Doors open 30 minutes prior. paramountvt.org

Film Screening: 'The Cowboy & The Queen'

3-5 p.m. Billings Farm & Museum Visitor Center Theater, 69 Old River Road, Woodstock. \$15; \$12 for members. The Woodstock Vermont Film Series presents a documentary exploring the life of Monty Roberts, a horse trainer who revolutionized training with kindness, and his connection to Queen Elizabeth II. Part of a series of place-based films curated by Jay Craven. billingsfarm.org/filmseries

Starry Starry Night

4-7 p.m. Downtown Chester. Free. Experience a magical evening lit by luminaries with special events, refreshments, and shopping at over 20 participating businesses. Map and details available. fischer-arts.com/starry-starry-night-chester

Murder at the Parlor: Poison on the Polar Express

6-9 p.m. Prouty's Parlor for Ice Cream, 62 Merchants Row, Rutland. \$50. Murder mystery dinner party featuring heavy hors d'oeuvres, ice cream sundaes, and hot chocolate. Solve the mystery with or without a role. Ages 12+. Childcare available next door at Wonderfeet Kids Museum for ages 3+, \$35/child. RSVP. proutysparlor@gmail.com

Film Screening: 'A Christmas Story' (1983)

7 p.m. The Paramount Theatre, 30 Center St., Rutland. Free. Relive the holiday nostalgia of this beloved film in breathtaking 4K with surround sound. Doors open 30 minutes prior. paramountvt.org/

Marionette Performance: 'A Christmas Story'

7:30 p.m. Beaver Meadow Chapel, Chapel Hill Road, West Norwich. Free admission; donations welcome. An updated marionette performance of the Nativity story featuring humor and modern references. Limited seating. Park on Chapel Hill Road or at Beaver Meadow Schoolhouse. Wear warm clothes and bring a flashlight. 802-649-1626

Next Stop Comedy

7-9 p.m. Brandon Inn, 20 Park St., Brandon. \$20. Enjoy a fresh line-up of top comedians each month, featuring acts seen on TV and heard on popular podcasts. nextstopcomedy.com

Film Screening: 'Gladiator II' (R)

7:30- 10:00 p.m. Woodstock Town Hall Theater, 31 The Green #2, Woodstock. \$8-\$10. Directed by Ridley Scott, starring Paul Mescal, Pedro Pascal, and Denzel Washington. Sequel to the award-winning 2000 film. pentanglearts.org



SANTA VISITS KILLINGTON RESORT

SATURDAY

SUN
12/22

Okemo Valley Holiday Express

9 a.m.-6 p.m. 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

Festival of 9 Lessons & Carols

Dec. 22, 9:30-10:30 a.m. Brownsville Community Church, 66 Brownsville Hartland Road, Brownsville. Free. A pre-Christmas festival featuring hymns, anthems, carols, solos, and special music. bccvt.org

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.net

Young Family Hanukkah Event

2-4 p.m. Wonderfeet Kids' Museum, 11 Center St., Rutland. Free. Join the Rutland Jewish Center for a family-friendly Hanukkah celebration featuring arts and crafts, storytime, Hanukkah songs, and snacks. Sponsored in part by JCVT. Arrivals before 2 p.m. may be subject to regular museum admission. rutlandjewishcenter.org

Film Screening: 'It's a Wonderful Life' (1946)

2-4:15 p.m. The Paramount Theatre, 30 Center St., Rutland. Free. Experience this timeless holiday film classic shown in 4K resolution and surround sound. Doors open 30 minutes prior. paramountvt.org

Film Screening: 'The Cowboy & The Queen'

3-5 p.m. Billings Farm & Museum Visitor Center Theater, 69 Old River Road, Woodstock. \$15; \$12 for members. The Woodstock Vermont Film Series presents a documentary exploring the life of Monty Roberts, a horse trainer who revolutionized training with kindness, and his connection to Queen Elizabeth II. Part of a series of place-based films curated by Jay Craven. billingsfarm.org/filmseries

Film Screening: 'Gladiator II' (R)


3:00- 5:30 p.m. Woodstock Town Hall Theater, 31 The Green #2, Woodstock. \$8-\$10. Directed by Ridley Scott, starring Paul Mescal, Pedro Pascal, and Denzel Washington. Sequel to the award-winning 2000 film. pentanglearts.org

Marionette Performance: 'A Christmas Story'

4:00 p.m. Beaver Meadow Chapel, Chapel Hill Road, West Norwich. Free admission; donations welcome. An updated marionette performance of the Nativity story featuring humor and modern references. Limited seating. Park on Chapel Hill Road or at Beaver Meadow Schoolhouse. Wear warm clothes and bring a flashlight. 802-649-1626


Woodstock Vermont Film Series

DEC 21 & 22



THE COWBOY AND THE QUEEN

BILLINGS FARM & MUSEUM
SHOWINGS AT 3:00 PM • SAT & SUN
billingsfarm.org/filmseries • 802-457-5303



← **Calendar:** Email events@mountaintimes.info.....
from page 17

MON
12/23

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

Film Screening: 'Gladiator II' (R)
7:30- 10:00 p.m. Woodstock Town Hall Theater, 31 The Green #2, Woodstock. \$8-\$10. Directed by Ridley Scott, starring Paul Mescal, Pedro Pascal, and Denzel Washington. Sequel to the award-winning 2000 film. pentanglearts.org

TUES
12/24

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

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service
7-8 p.m. Brownsville Community Church, 66 Brownsville Hartland Road, Brownsville. Free. A candlelit Christmas Eve service surrounded by poinsettias and the warm glow of candlelight. bccvt.org

Christmas Eve Service of Candles and Carols
6-7 p.m. United Church of Ludlow, 48 Pleasant St., Ludlow. Join the United Church of Ludlow for a Christmas Eve service featuring candles and carols. All are welcome to this celebration of community and faith. unitedchurchofludlow.org

ONGOING

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

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

'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

CELEBRATE
Jesus'
BIRTH



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 *Messiah* (*no tickets)

Dec. 17 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 Congregational UCC
8 Court Street, Rutland, VT
gracechurchvt.org



WED
12/25

Community Christmas Potluck
1 p.m. — Norwich Congregational Church, 15 Church St. Norwich. Norwich Congregational Church invites community members to gather for a potluck meal in the parish hall. All ages welcome. Donations of side dishes, desserts, beverages, or favorite holiday specialties are encouraged but not required. RSVP to Patty at 802-649-1433 or email norwichcongregational@gmail.com

Hanukkah Chinese Christmas Dinner and Movie
5:30 p.m. Rutland Jewish Center, 96 Grove St., Rutland. \$40 adults, \$20 children 7-12, free for children 6 and under. Celebrate the first night of Hanukkah with a Chinese Christmas dinner, including "Chinese Latkes," followed by a classic movie. Coffee and tea provided; BYO beverages. Bring menorahs for the candle lighting. RSVP with payment required by Dec. 19. Contact Harvey at 802-773-7685

OKEMO VALLEY HOLIDAY EXPRESS

SATURDAY & SUNDAY



[MUSIC Scene]

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

WED
12/18

KILLINGTON
2 p.m. K1 Base Lodge- Daniel Brown

6 p.m. Rivershed – Sammy B

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 – Chris Pallutto

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

THURS
12/19

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

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

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

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

6 p.m. Rivershed – Chris Pallutto

6 p.m. The Foundry – Liz Reedy

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

8 p.m. Pickle Barrel – Brownstein Family Band

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

SOUTH POMFRET
7 p.m. Artistree – Open Mic Night

WOODSTOCK
6 p.m. Ottauquechee Yacht Club – Rose Hip Jam

FRI
12/20

BARNARD
7 p.m. First Universalist Church – Winter Carols BOMOSEEN

5:30 p.m. Bomoseen Lodge & Taproom – Ryan Fuller
CASTLETON
6 p.m. Blue Cat Bistro – George Nostrand
KILLINGTON
1 p.m. Bear Mountain base Lodge – Duane Carleton

2 p.m. K1 Base Lodge – Rhys Chalmers

2 p.m. Snowshed's Long Trail Pub – Nick Bredece

4 p.m. The Foundry – Just Jamie

6 p.m. Rivershed – Sammy B

7 p.m. Still on the Mountain – Nick Bredece

8 p.m. Pickle Barrel – All Time Favorite

9 p.m. Jax Food & Games – Just Jamie

POULTNEY
7 p.m. Poultney Pub – Ugly Sweater Party with Maple & Ink

QUECHEE
5:30 p.m. Public House Pub – Ugly Sweater Party with The Conniption Fits

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

9 p.m. Center Street Alley – DJ EG

SAT
12/21

BRIDGEWATER
8 p.m. Woolen Mill Comedy Club – Comedy Show with headliners Brian Muenzer

CASTLETON
6 p.m. Third Place Pizza – Ryan Fuller

KILLINGTON
1 p.m. Bear Mountain Base Lodge – Rhys Chalmers

2 p.m. K1 Base Lodge – Chris Pallutto

1 p.m. Pico's Last Run Lounge – Nick Bredece

2 p.m. Snowshed's Long Trail Pub – Daniel Brown

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 – Liz Reedy

6:30 p.m. Still on the Mountain – Sammy B

7 p.m. North Star Lodge Star Lounge – James Joel

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

9 p.m. Pickle Barrel – All Time Favorite

LUDLOW
9 a.m. Okemo's Sunburst Six Bubble Chair – Lift Line Dance Party with DJ Dave
2 p.m. Okemo's The Bull – Rhys Chalmers

QUECHEE
5:30 p.m. Public House Pub – The Frogz

RANDOLPH
5 p.m. The Underground Listening Room – Make Music Winter in Randolph

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

WOODSTOCK
6:30 p.m. Ottauquechee Yacht Club – Nick Bredece

SUN
12/22

BRIDGEWATER
CORNERS
3 p.m. Long Trail Brewery – Nick Bredece

KILLINGTON
Noon. Rivershed – Brunch with James Joel

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

2 p.m. K1 Base Lodge – Liz Reedy

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

LUDLOW
11 a.m. Okemo's Solitude Lift – Sunday's with Sammy B

RUTLAND
9 p.m. CJ's Suds South – Karaoke with Sunset Entertainment

STOCKBRIDGE
7:30 p.m. Wild Fern – Rick Redington's Looping Mayhem

MON
12/23

KILLINGTON
2 p.m. K1 Base Lodge – Duane Carleton

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

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

7 p.m. Moguls Full Circle – Duane Carleton

LUDLOW
8:30 p.m. The Killarney – Open 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 – Jim Yeager

TUES
12/24

KILLINGTON
6 p.m. Still on the Mountain Zack Yak
8 p.m. Jax Food & Games – Taco Tuesday with Rick Webb

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

WED
12/25

KILLINGTON
6 p.m. Still on the Mountain – James Joel

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UPCOMING SHOWS

Visit paramountvt.org for the complete listing

Free Movies
AT THE PARAMOUNT

12/20 7 PM **DR. SEUSS' HOW THE GRINCH STOLE CHRISTMAS**

12/21 2 PM **THE POLAR EXPRESS**

12/21 7 PM **A CHRISTMAS STORY**

12/22 2 PM **IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE**

No tickets necessary! SPONSORED BY: Rutland Regional Medical Center

UTOHER GROUND PRESENTS

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Rutland Youth Theatre brings Christmas magic to life in 'Elf The Musical Jr.' at Rutland's Paramount Theatre

By Pat Wise



By Melanie Williams

James Shorey (Buddy) and Apple Williams (Jovie) lit up the stage in Rutland Youth Theatre's production of *Elf The Musical Jr.*

The holiday spirit sparked at Rutland's Paramount Theatre during the weekend of Dec. 13-14, with three performances of "Elf The Musical Jr.," a remake adapted from the 2003 comedy film directed by Jon Favreau, starring Will Ferrell as Buddy the Elf.

"Elf The Musical Jr.," presented by Rutland Youth Theatre, brought Buddy, played by James Shorey, the bumbling elf and his colorful cohorts to life in an on-stage musical production filled with engaging performances and riveting songs that set the tone for the holiday season.

The play opens at the North Pole, where we find Buddy alongside Santa, played by Myles Donohue, and his elves going about their usual Christmas-time operations. Much to Buddy's shock and surprise, he learns he is human, not an elf. Upon hearing the truth, Buddy sets out to New York City to find his real dad, Walter Hobbs, played by Jackson Marks. Hobbs, an over-worked curmudgeon whose character reflects the world's loss of belief in the Christmas spirit, is unaware that Buddy is his son.

Shorey brilliantly portrays Buddy in his attempt to connect with his dad and newfound family. He propels the narrative forward through its theme—to save Christmas through belief in Santa and the Christmas spirit—which also provides the magical power to make Santa's sleigh fly. Buddy's infectious optimism reignites the relationship with his reluctant dad. Shorey's performance dazzles with infectious enthusiasm, lively, top-of-lung charisma, and surging vocals during the song numbers.

When Buddy crosses paths with Jovie, the mildly cynical yet hopeful department store employee played by Apple Williams, a roman-

tic love connection emerges, guiding Buddy on a head-over-heels path toward acceptance of his newly-found home in New York City.

Williams' expressive acting and dynamic singing commanded the spotlight, highlighting her infectious stage presence. After a duet between Williams and Shorey, the audience filled the theatre with resounding applause.

Every aspect of the production, from the wardrobe to the sets to the supporting performances, was stellar. Illustrated backgrounds displayed on a jumbo TV screen positioned at the back of the stage changed intermittently in accordance with the theme of each set, providing a touch of innovation to this youth performance that strove for professionalism.

The seamless and joyful interactions between Buddy and the cast created an engaging atmosphere, making it clear they enjoyed themselves on stage. The performances were spirited, with a finely choreographed rhythm indicating a solid, well-rehearsed cast. "Elf is an annual "must-watch" film during the holidays; "Elf Junior," as performed by the Rutland Youth Theatre, proved that on stage, Buddy would make a welcomed return guest every December.



By Melanie Williams

Rutland Youth Theatre director Haley Lassen shared a moment before the show with Apple Williams who played Jovie.



By Melanie Williams

Cast and crew prepared for stage at Paramount Theatre's "Elf the Musical Jr."

Okemo Valley Holiday Express brings festive cheer to Vermont



Dec. 21 through 22 from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.—CHESTER—The Okemo Valley Regional Chamber of Commerce (OVRCC), in collaboration with Vermont Rail System, is launching the Okemo Valley Holiday Express, a new festive holiday train experience for families and visitors. Running on Dec 21 and 22, the excursion train offers a scenic journey through South-Central Vermont's picturesque winter landscapes, bringing holiday magic to passengers of all ages.

The Okemo Valley Holiday Express departs from and returns to the historic Chester Depot, offering five rides per day. Guests can enjoy various holiday-themed activities in the festively decorated train cars, including caroling, live music, and special treats. Each passenger will receive a keepsake ornament to commemorate the

experience, while Santa Claus will appear throughout the journey, spreading cheer and posing for photos. Complimentary hot cocoa and cookies will also be served to add to the festive atmosphere.

"This unique experience will bring holiday magic to life and offer another way to celebrate the season," said OVRCC Executive Director Carol Lighthall. "We are thrilled to introduce the Okemo Valley Holiday Express to our communities and visitors."

The Okemo Valley Holiday Express promises to be a memorable addition to the holiday season. It will create cherished memories for families and friends while showcasing the beauty of Vermont's winter landscape.

For tickets and additional information, visit: yourplaceinvermont.com/okemo-valley-holiday-express.



Courtesy Okemo Valley Regional Chamber of Commerce

The Okemo Valley Holiday Express will offer a festive holiday train experience on the weekend of Dec. 21-22.

Social Tinkering's annual Light Up Rutland County event

It's time to go light-peeping! The Light Up Rutland County winter lights and decorating contest is in full swing, with nine competing households, two non-competing households, and a local business decorator all ready for visitors to come see their lights.

Videos and slideshows for school decorators will be posted on Social Tinkering's website after Dec. 20. On the site, people can access the 2024 lights map, check out Social Tinkering's generous sponsors, and cast votes for their favorite in each category. All voters are automatically entered into a prize drawing to win one of five gift cards donated by Rutland County businesses. Voting runs until Jan. 4th. Social Tinkering will announce the decoration contest winners and voter raffle the second week of January.

Take an evening drive around Rutland County and see some inspiring light displays that are sure to put you in a festive mood.

For more information, visit: socialtinkering.org/lightuprutlandcounty.



By James Kent

The home at 12 Grandview Terrace in Rutland treated light peepers to a dazzling display of holiday lights and music on Dec. 14. It is one of nine competing households in Light Up Rutland County's annual display contest.

'The Cowboy & The Queen': A tale of friendship and innovation in horse training

Dec. 21 and 22 at 3 p.m.—WOODSTOCK—The Woodstock Vermont Film Series will showcase "The Cowboy & The Queen," an inspiring documentary about the transformative friendship between Monty Roberts, a pioneering horse trainer, and Queen Elizabeth II. The film will screen on Dec. 21 and 22 at 3 p.m. at the Billings Farm & Museum Visitor Center Theater.

Directed by Andrea Nevins, the documentary delves into Roberts' revolutionary approach to horse training. Rejecting the traditional practice of "breaking" a horse's spirit, Roberts introduced a method based on kindness, mutual respect, and gentleness. Despite skepticism, his techniques gained credibility when Queen Elizabeth II, a longtime advocate for humane horse training, became a supporter. Their collaboration sparked a global movement that continues to inspire horse trainers worldwide.

"This is a very tender, very sweet, very endearing story," said FilmWeek in its film review.

The screening is part of the Woodstock Vermont Film Series, which highlights compelling, place-based stories to inspire conversation and foster connections. The series, curated by award-winning filmmaker Jay Craven, runs select Saturdays and Sundays through Feb. 23, 2025.

Tickets for "The Cowboy & The Queen" are \$15 per person and \$12 for Billings Farm & Museum members. For more information, visit: billingsfarm.org/filmseries.



Courtesy Greenwich Entertainment

'The Cowboy & The Queen' screens on Dec. 21 and 22 as part of the Woodstock Vermont Film Series

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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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Latin-inspired flavors hit Rutland

By James Kent

There is exciting news in the culinary world. The Rutland area has two new eating destinations with Latin-inspired flavors that will expand palates and stuff tummies with delicious treats from regions such as Peru, Venezuela, and Argentina.

Pao Pao is a Peruvian restaurant that opened on Dec. 6 at 124 Woodstock Ave. off Route 4. Serving a mix of food from Peru and Venezuela, the Mountain Times stopped in for dinner on Dec. 10 and found a lot of exciting items to enjoy. The Venezuelan Tray, which features a sampling of appetizers from mini empanadas, tostones, arepas, and tequenos, provided a perfect opportunity to taste a variety of foods that all grabbed our attention.

In addition to the sampler, we ordered a Venezuelan rice with chicken dish that knocked our socks off, a delicious side order of huancaína potato, which is a boiled potato cut in two, served with a rich and spicy Peruvian cheese sauce, and pabellón, which is a tropical rice dish with shredded stewed beef, stewed black beans, sweet plantains, and white cheese. How good was this food? We brought along a notoriously picky twelve-year-old eater; to our shock, he tasted and loved every dish. He wants to come back, and so do we.

In a conversation with our waitress, she said the owner's inspiration for bringing Peruvian food to the area was partly due to the contingent of Peruvian J-1 students who come



Pao Pao opened on Dec. 6 in Rutland. It is a must-try restaurant for food enthusiasts.

By James Kent

abroad every year to experience ski culture in Vermont. If Pao Pao can provide a little taste of home, it could be a welcoming place for those on the mountain looking for their culture's zesty and savory flavors. And for everyone else in the area, it's an opportunity to enjoy food that feels both familiar and new. Pao Pao isn't a one-time trip. You'll go there once for the experience, and you'll return again and again to try what you couldn't fit on your table the first time

around.

Ana's Empanadas expands

There was even more good news to share in Rutland's Latin-inspired flavor-seeking world. On Monday, Dec. 16, everyone's favorite Vermont Farmer's Market mainstay, Ana's Empanadas, celebrated the grand opening of its first downtown Rutland brick-and-mortar location.

Those who can't get to the farmer's market on the weekends can get their empanada fix at Ana's new location at 24 Wales Street. Ana's still serving the same delicious Argentinian dough-wrapped delights at the same reasonable prices, but now they're far more accessible thanks to this permanent location.

With the editions of Pao Pao and Ana's Empanadas, Rutland area residents have two more reasons to get excited about dining out.

For more information, visit paopaovt.com and facebook.com/Ana.Empanada.



By James Kent

Are you unsure what to order at Pao Pao? The Venezuelan Tray offers a variety of appetizers that will satisfy any tastebud.



By James Kent

On Dec. 10, the tender and savory beef and black beans in Pao Pao's pabellón satisfied hungry diners.



Courtesy Downtown Rutland Partnership FB

Ana's Empanadas held its grand opening on Dec. 16 at its new location on Wales Street in Downtown Rutland.

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2024 holiday album guide: old and new favorites to play this week!

By Alan Sculley

Every fall brings a big-ol' -bag-full of Christmas albums. This year brought a slightly lower number of holiday releases than previous seasons. But happily, we get more than our share of worthy and unique Christmas albums. Here's a look at the albums fans of Christmas music will want to put on their "to-listen-to" list now that the 2024 holiday season is upon us.

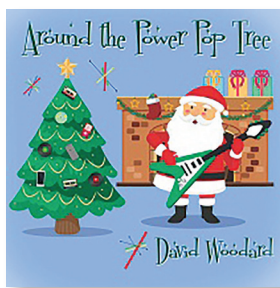


Ben Folds: "Sleigher" – The pianist-singer behind the band Ben Folds Five and an eclectic array of solo albums brings his considerable talents to one of this year's most refreshing and best holiday outings. "Sleigher" features seven original songs

– including the easy-going "Sleepwalking Through Christmas" and the jazzy and nostalgic "Christmas Time Rhyme" – that share the cheery disposition of long-standing favorites like "Frosty The Snowman" or "Jingle Bells." And unearthing the Mills Brothers' "You Don't Have To Be a Santa Claus"—which Folds gives a Jordanaires vocal touch—was a really smart move. "Sleigher" has the makings of a new timeless classic that will be enjoyed year after year by many-a-fan of holiday albums.

David Woodard: "Around The Power Pop Tre e" – Woodard successfully merges timeless Christmas styles with his hooky power pop sound here. "The First Noel" and "O Holy Night" get juiced with faster tempos and catchy guitar riffs.

Several catchy originals ("Waiting For Christmas," "Around The Power Pop Tree," and "Peace & Love, Merry Christmas") highlight this most welcome holiday entry for fans of rocking pop.



Dan + Shay: "It's Officially Christmas: The Double Album" – A two-album set, this duo's holiday effort starts somewhat vanilla, with a first disc of oft-covered holiday standards. There is nothing wrong with that, but these versions offer little that's unique.

Where things get interesting is on the second disc. Made up of 11 original holiday/winter tunes, it further cements the notion that songwriting is this duo's strongest suit. The originals come with perky pop hooks aplenty and often-playful lyrics (note the humor in "Blame It On Santa" and "Save The Snowman"), while a few ballads (such as "Christmas Isn't Christmas" and "The Cozy Song") give the disc welcome balance. This outing is officially a winner.

Judith Owen: "Swings Christmas" – Owen has shown throughout her career that she can sing virtually any style, including jazz, pop, classical, and blues. Now, she shows she has the vocal chops and knowledge to do vintage big band and holiday music by turning her 2023 EP "Winter Wonderland" into this full-length effort. The

jazzy versions of standards like "Have Yourself A Merry Little Christmas," "Silver Bells," "Santa Baby," and "Last Christmas" leave room for the horns to elaborate on the familiar arrangements of these songs while Owen takes a few fun vocal liberties of her own with phrasing, cadences and inflections ("What Are You Doing New Year's Eve" and "Winter Wonderland."), although she goes a bit overboard on "The Christmas Song." And the originals, the sassy "Back Door Santa" and sly "Santa Claus Got Stuck In My Chimney," provide icing on the cake.



Brett Eldredge: "Merry Christmas (Welcome to the Family)" – His third-holiday album contains eight songs co-written by Eldredge. More pop than country, Eldredge goes for the warm and fuzzies here, and that tone works well. The piano-centric title track should ring true to anyone whose

holidays are highlighted by family get-togethers. Other highly melodic songs like the soul-tinged mid-tempo "Sweet December" (a duet with Kelly Clarkson), the slightly jazzy pop of "It Must Be Christmas," and the frisky, horn-forward "The Night St. Nick Got Sick" (a humorous standout) keep things bright and sweet.

Little Big Town: "The Christmas Record" – The popular group leans toward the more contemporary side of holiday material on their first-holiday album. Along with some fresh takes on covers ("Someday At Christmas" and "Santa Claus Is Back In Town"), the album features four originals (the sprightly "Glow" and the Philly soul-ish "Holiday" are highlights). And, of course, the quartet's lovely lush harmonies shine throughout these 11 selections.



Alicia Witt: "I Think I'm Spending Christmas With You" – Taking a break from her busy acting career to return to music, Witt shows she wasn't about to do a rote collection of holiday covers. The highlights include the bouncy rocker "Weird Time of Year," which humorously highlights

oddsities of the holidays, and "Soap Sud Snow," a graceful pop tune with an Irish touch, while a trio of piano (that's Witt's instrument) ballads— "December 26th," "Christmas Will Never End" and "Lonely Holy Christmas" — give the album some emotional weight.

The Philly Specials: "A Philly Special Christmas Party" —The trio of Philadelphia Eagles offensive linemen Lane Johnson, Jordan Mailata, and the now-retired

Jason Kelce return with a third holiday album whose proceeds go to several charities. The footballers once again prove to be credible singers and are joined by Stevie Nicks, who joins Kelce on

"Maybe This Christmas," and Philly icons Boyz II Men, who lend their considerable talents to "It's Christmas Time (In Cleveland Heights)." There are also some creative moments, including a solid version of Sam Cooke's "Having A Party" and a version of Alvin & the Chipmunks' "Christmas Don't Be Late," which cleverly changes some lines from the original to suit the singers on this version. And let's just say any act that thinks to collaborate with Mt. Joy to transform their song "Jesus Drives An Astrovan" into "Santa Drives An Astrovan" is doing something right. This is another enjoyable holiday project for a good cause.

Tower Of Power: "It's Christmas" – The long-running horn-forward group puts enough of their soulful and funky spin on "Silver Bells," "Santa Claus Is Coming To Town," and "O Holy Night," among other songs, to elevate "It's Christmas" above many of this year's other releases.

Jimmy Fallon: "Holiday Seasoning" – Joining the late-night TV host/comedian is an all-star cast of guests (Justin Timberlake, the Jonas Brothers, the Roots, and Dolly Parton, to name a few) to perform a set of good-natured, frequently humorous pop originals. It's a holiday confection if ever there was one.

Tedashii: "Tis The Season" – Tedashii sets aside his usual rap stylings for singing on this eight-song EP. "Tis The Season" is highlighted by four originals, including "Back Home For Christmas," a poppy gem in a Stevie Wonder vein, and the sweet ballad "Christmas Call," where he trades vocals with V. Rose.

Jim "Sonni" Sonefeld: "Light Of Joy" – The Hootie & the Blowfish drummer delivers a consistently enjoyable EP that celebrates the religious and family joys of the season. At five songs, it's fairly short but plenty sweet.

Other new holiday albums to consider

As in typical years, a number of the acts making holiday albums this year played it pretty safe, performing the standards and not straying too far from the signature arrangements of the songs, adding orchestral sweetening as a common ingredient. That doesn't mean these releases are duds. They're fine and good, just similar to Christmas albums that came before them. If you prefer your Christmas albums to be like musical comfort food, you may favor these over the albums listed above. Here are some other solid 2024 holiday releases. Just don't expect many musical surprises.

- Jennifer Hudson: "The Gift Of Love"
- Lea Salonga: "Sounding Joy – The Holiday Album"
- Chapel Hart: "Hartfelt Family Christmas"
- Rick Braun: "It's Christmas"
- Mickey Thomas: "A Classic Christmas"
- Home Free: "Any Kind Of Christmas"
- Ruben Studdard: "My Favorite Holiday" EP
- Clay Aiken: "Christmas Bells Are Ringing"



Three indie movies generating buzz

By Jared Rasic

I went into this past weekend fully intending to see “Red One,” that new movie in which The Rock, Chris Evans, and a polar bear have to rescue a kidnapped (and completely jacked) Santa Claus. But then I realized that, ultimately, that movie is probably as critic-proof as it possibly gets. You don’t need me to tell you whether it’s worth your time because if you’ve seen the trailer, you absolutely already know if it’s for you or not. I’m sure it’s fun and probably at least a little entertaining, but it’s doubtful there’s much to really decode from it.

So, instead, I figure we’ll all gain something more from a look at three of the high-profile independent movies that are in many early discussions about the upcoming Oscars.

This time of year, studios release their award contenders, those must-see don’t-miss movies for people who care about those sorts of things. The movie that seems to have the year’s most Oscar buzz so far is “Anora,” the new film from Sean Baker, the indie auteur behind stone classics like “Tangerine” and “The Florida Project.”

Baker is a hell of a filmmaker whose output so far has almost exclusively unpacked different aspects of sex work from the viewpoint of lower/middle-class societal exiles. “Anora” is easily Baker’s most “mainstream” film so far, which is saying a lot since it’s still a 139-minute romantic dramedy that effortlessly flits between gritty drama, screwball comedy, and crime thriller.

“Anora” won the Palme d’Or at the 2024 Cannes Film Festival, joining the ranks of films like “Parasite,” “Paris, Texas,” “Taxi Driver,” “Pulp Fiction” and “Apocalypse Now” in the prestigious club of cinematic greats. While on the surface, “Anora” is a somewhat more realistic take on “Pretty Woman,” the film looks at the toll that life takes on a young woman who meets a wealthy young Russian who wants to pay her lots of money for her company. What



Courtesy Neon
“Anora” is currently playing in theaters.

seems glamorous and exciting at first begins to curdle in ways we don’t even recognize at first, and while the film is fun and fast-paced, it’s also exhausting on an almost spiritual level while still never succumbing to nihilistic musing on the state of the world.

“Anora” is ridiculously entertaining at its worst and profoundly moving at its best. It features an astonishing performance from Mikey

Madison as Anora. It’s not my favorite film of the year so far, but it definitely belongs in the top 10.

Another movie sitting pretty with awards buzz is “We Live in Time,” a romantic drama featuring two full-blown movie star performances from Florence Pugh and Andrew Garfield as a couple that we follow over a decade. Pugh and Garfield have such easy-going chemistry that feels so lived in and effortless that even though the story is something we’ve seen a million times before, they’re so impossibly charming to watch that we’re swept along anyway. With these two central performances and surprisingly deft and subtle direction from John Crowley, “We Live in Time” film feels like an old-fashioned melodrama in both



Courtesy Mubi
Barry Keoghan stars in Andrea Arnold’s new film, “Bird,” which is currently in theaters.

positive (stirring, moving) and negative (cheesy, manipulative) ways. Aside from the non-chronological storytelling, it’s such a conventional film that it’s hard to believe A24 released it. Still, it feels like the kind of film we don’t get much of anymore, so it’s easy to be romanced by the whole thing.

Also sharing some of the buzz is the new film from English auteur Andrea Arnold, “Bird,” starring Barry Keoghan (he left “Gladiator II” to make this), just as grimy here as he was in “Saltburn,” but with 100 percent less bathtubs.

“Bird” follows 12-year-old Bailey (played by the natural and moving Nykiya Adams), who lives in a falling-to-pieces slum in Kent, surrounded by adults much less mature than her. With her drug-dealing father (played by the phenomenal Keoghan) bringing endless chaos to her life, Bailey exists between a state of gritty immediacy and magical realism that keeps “Bird” feeling like a work of pure originality.

Arnold films most of “Bird” handheld, so the intensity of the filmmaking is belayed by Bailey still accessing her childhood wonder, creating multiple moments that feel spontaneous and perfectly formally executed. It’s bravura filmmaking from the fearless Arnold, who expands the breadth of her filmmaking language here to make me wonder if there’s anything she can’t do. The film itself is so tonally all over the place that it initially felt jarring, but it won me over by the end. “Bird” is strange and singular in a way only Arnold could have achieved.

I’m unsure if any of these three movies will win top prizes at the Oscars (although “Anora” has the best chance). Regardless, these three works deserve your consideration—even without the polar bears.

“Anora” — Grade: A-
“We Live in Time” — Grade: B
“Bird” — Grade: B+



Courtesy A24
Florence Pugh and Andrew Garfield star in “We Live in Time,” which is currently available on demand.



Courtesy Brett Harris’s FB
Brett Harris

KPAA honors Brett Harris with Killington Pico Area Association’s Outstanding Community Member of the Year

On Thursday, Dec. 5, Brett Harris received the honor of Killington Pico Area Association’s (KPAA) Outstanding Community Member of the Year. Whether attending fundraisers, cheering on the Steelers at Jax’s, or spreading smiles at local events, KPAA recognized Harris’ inspiring dedication.

Harris’ passion was even the catalyst for creating the KPAA’s Friends Membership category because

she wanted to join, but her business is not local. Her plaque says it best:

“Thank you for your dedication and service, which have gone above and beyond. You have uplifted our community and the KPAA with heart and action!”

The passion of people like Harris makes the Killington community even brighter.





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Two Christmas movies for fans of holiday films

By Jared Rasic

This is the time of year when I start watching Christmas movies with gleeful and reckless abandon...quality be damned. It doesn't matter if it's good because, ultimately, most of those Hallmark movies (or the new Netflix variant) have the same structure and story arc with only a few mild variations.

The quality is relative to exactly what you want out of the movies because you're not getting a masterpiece no matter what. If you're shooting for something optimistic and filled with a specifically "American" sort of cheer that desperately tries to get the audience to feel a special warmth in some way...then look no further.

Usually, a redheaded (sometimes brunette) professional woman from the evil big city has to go to a small town either for A) something involving money, B) it's her hometown, and she has unfinished business or C) she has been cheated on (usually by a blonde guy) and wants to reinvent herself. She's usually some variation on spoiled, rich, and spoiled or just generally jaded from either heartbreak or money.

When she arrives in the small town (invariably named something like Hope Falls, Chester's Landing, or Sycamore Downs), she's rude to everyone at first since she only plans to remain for a short while to take care of specific and time-sensitive business. Even as she pines for her old life in the skyscrapers of NYC or the valleys of L.A., she opens up to an old innkeeper/bartender/bookstore owner who introduces her to a handsome local handyman/carpenter/woodcutter.

He's dark-haired with multiple flannel shirts and only wears blue jeans, has perfectly manicured stubble, and has either A) never left Sycamore Landing or B) gone to the big city for some schoolin' and then realized everything he ever needed was back home. He's smarter than he looks in a hyper-masculine way and capable of a great depth of emotion.

At first, they annoy the hell out of each other because she's rude and cynical, and he's naive and simple. You know where this goes: they fall in love, she does something hurtful (usually a white lie of some kind), they fight, she feels bad and makes a grand gesture of some sort by A) saving his bookstore, B) saving the whole town or C)

saving Christmas. The film ends with them kissing under the stars, surrounded by lights as the town looks on, smiling and excited that the mean lady is now perfectly assimilated and one of them.

It's a fundamental and repetitive formula, but it is the perfect thing to have on television if you're looking for something to remind you how the holidays make some people feel, even if you're struggling to find that feeling yourself. The films are also the perfect choice if you're with family members and are desperate to avoid discussing politics. Recently, I watched two Hallmark-like romantic dramedies on Netflix that did precisely what I expected, but they also managed to be entertainingly ridiculous and fun.

The first one is "Hot Frosty," which follows a young widow who falls in love with a shredded, hunky snowman come to life. That's the plot. It's campy, goofy, and good-natured, which might be all it was trying to do. It's not sexy because Hallmark and Hallmark-like movies cannot generate that level of sexual tension, but it's cute and got me in the mood to watch more Christmas movies.

I followed that one up with "The Merry Gentlemen," which I watched because it sounded like Hallmark trying to remake "Magic Mike," but Christmas-themed, and I'm there for it. This movie follows a Broadway dancer who comes back to her hometown of, let me check, yep, Sycamore Creek, where she steps up (see what I did there) to help save her parent's struggling music venue, The Rhythm Room. Along with a local handyman and a few other shredded dudes, she starts a sexy, Christmas-themed dance show to titillate the local women and raise some cash for her mom and dad. It's pretty adorable, and with Britt Robertson and Chad Michael Murray starring, it's well-acted and genuinely charming.

I'm not saying Hallmark movies are good, and I'm definitely not saying the Netflix ripoffs of Hallmark movies are any better, but just for a moment, I found myself feeling the Christmas spirit and looking forward to all the cheesiness the season brings. I'm not sure these movies themselves earn the emotions they raise, but maybe as long as you're feeling it, where the cheesy warmth comes from doesn't matter so much.



Courtesy Netflix

Two feel good movies that are sure to make you smile: "Merry Gentleman" (left) and "Hot Frosty" (right) are on Netflix.

'Yule Log 2: Branching Out' and 'Dear Santa': Two lumps of coal for your movie stockings



Screens and Streams
By James Kent

In keeping with the spirit of the holiday season, I found it only fitting to review some current holiday film offerings. The biggest holiday movie offering of the season, at least in terms of cast and Hollywood budget expenditures, is the Rock vehicle "Red One." It's streaming now on Amazon Prime after a less-than-stellar box office run in November. So, that was available, but honestly? A quick peak at "Red One's" trailer filled with an odd-looking assortment of CGI snow bad guys, I couldn't bring myself to watch it. The Movie Diary guy reviewed it a few weeks ago. He took one for the team.

Another reviewer this week saw "Hot Frosty," a Netflix offering that tries as hard as it might to be a Hallmark holiday movie. Yeah, I did see that one, and there is nothing more I could, should, or would add to that one, but for what it was, it wasn't awful. But let's be clear: the sliding

scale is weighted when it comes to these holiday movies.

All that's left for little ole' me is the coal at the bottom of the stocking for all bad little boys and girls who watch movies. And I have a couple of real doozies.

'Adult Swim's Yule Log 2: Branching out'

Yup, that really is the title. This sequel to Adult Swim's horror holiday phantasmagoria of unbridled awesome from 2022 showed up on Friday, Dec. 13 (coincidence? I don't think so) unannounced on MAX, much in the way the original "Yule Log" did. I know what you're thinking: What the Dickens is "Yule Log?" For those familiar with the 2014 Adult Swim cult-favorite short, "Too Many Cooks," that insane creation's director Casper Kelly created this surprise feature that dropped on MAX in 2022 on Dec. 12. That film, which I watched opening night and rewatched a year ago, is indescribably insane. There's a cabin in the woods. There's a homicidal cleaning woman and her deranged son. There are two competing Air BnB groups assigned to the cabin at the same time. There's a notorious history of death and mayhem associated with the cabin. A strange old man lives inside the cabin fireplace in an alternative David Lynchian world where the beverage of choice is Nurse Nutmeg soda. So, there's that. And before the dust settles, a killer Yule log is dead set on wiping out everyone in the cabin.

Okay, you got me. That's my kind of movie, horror or otherwise. It's weird enough to turn away pretty much everyone but the most particular of filmgoers. I am that filmgoer. So, you can imagine my delight when my wife texted me the good news that "Yule Log 2: Branching Out" hit MAX on Friday the Thirteenth. We watched it that night.

And "Yule Log 2" follows the instruction manual for a horror sequel to a tee. First, it should never be anywhere near as good as the original. And brothers and sisters, it ain't. Yes, it's as absurd and silly as the first film, but while the original had the advantage of coming out of nowhere and being so weird and deranged that nothing could compare to it, this new film runs out of gas

Screens & Streams → 28



Courtesy Paramount Pictures

'Dear Santa' is available to rent/purchase on demand or watch via streaming on Paramount+.

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← **Screens & Streams:**
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early. Instead of trying to outdo the first film in the outlandish department, “YL2” opts for a different approach. It didn’t 100% work for me, but I appreciate its inspired genius.

The protagonist, Zoe, played by Andrea Laing, is one of the only survivors from the first “Yule Log.” And, as you may imagine, after surviving an aggressive “Terminator”-like assault from a Yule log that killed your fiancé, whose side hustle was making Yule log videos, Zoe has some left-over trauma issues.

After a breakdown during work sends Zoe packing, she and her bestie, Jakester, played by Chase Steven Anderson, head out of town to get away from it all in Mexico. Fate has different plans, which leave the pair temporarily stranded in the town of Mistletoe. This is the seed that takes root in our story (see what I did there) as “Yule Log 2” quickly morphs into a Hallmark holiday film satire. You name the trope, and “Yule Log 2” throws it in for fun. As a sendup of Hallmark films, “Yule Log 2” does find tremendous heaps of hilarious inspiration. As a sequel to the gonzo original, it’s a tad lackluster.

You may be wondering when the Yule log shows up. In classic “Jaws: the Revenge” style, the log comes after Zoe and will continue until it finishes what it started in the first film.

Look, for those who saw the original, loved the original, and had no idea that a sequel was coming, I’m doing a service. You’re on notice. The sequel is out there and available. But I won’t spoil all the fun by telling you what happens next. You’re going to have to watch for yourself. Still, if I am being honest, “Yule Log 2: Branching Out” left me disappointed. However, if I am still being honest, I’ll be the first one to watch “Yule Log 3” whenever Adult Swim chooses to surprise me with another sequel.

“Dear Santa”

Dear Santa, would you please promise me you’ll never let the Farrelly Brothers make another holiday film if I’m good? Is that a wish you can deliver?

On paper, “Dear Santa” sounds like a winner. A socially awkward boy with dyslexia whose family is trying to overcome a recent tragedy makes a personal wish to Santa Claus via a letter. The catch? He has dyslexia, so the boy accidentally sends the letter to Satan. Sa-

tan comes a calling, but it’s a soul he’s a wanting, and will the boy outwit the devil? And it’s a comedy? And it’s made by the writer/director team of the two guys who gave audiences “Dumb and Dumber” and “Something About Mary”? Okay, I’m willing to watch this.

Jack Black, who probably should stick to cartoon pandas at this point, plays Satan, who shows up to grant three wishes to the boy. Naturally, there is a catch, and we all know what it is. The genius in “Beetlejuice” and its sequel “Beetlejuice Beetlejuice” is in its strategic and economic use of Michael Keaton. Keaton’s over-the-top performance is great because he is only on screen for 17 minutes in the first film and 17 minutes in the sequel. It’s just the right amount. We feel he is on screen throughout the movie and never get sick of him. Oh, if the Farrelly Brothers only knew such restraint. A little Jack Black goes a long way, and there’s far too much Jack Black in this movie. Far, far too much.

In the early goings, there are a few mild chuckles to be had, but the story gets tedious quickly, and by the 54-minute mark, my wife, youngest child, and I all groaned when we paused the movie to discover there was still an hour of this holiday turd to go.

It’s a bad sign when, as a film watcher, you start noticing details, like the bland beige interior design of the protagonist’s house, and wondering aloud, “Who decorates their home like this?” Or when you repeatedly ask questions like, “Does this kid’s parents have jobs, and what do they do for a living that affords them this home with such carefully curated crap in their house that makes them look like they got kicked out of a Hallmark holiday movie and pushed into the lower realm of the Paramount Network. And yeah, that’s where this film is hiding, on Paramount +. So, that’s probably good news for you. I doubt you have Paramount +. Does anyone? I do, which is how this crapfest wound up on my watch list on Sunday night.

Okay, maybe skip all this nonsense and just watch “Christmas Vacation” for the umpteenth time.

James Kent is the publisher’s assistant at The Mountain Times and the co-host of the “Stuff We’ve Seen” podcast at stuffweveeseen.com.



Courtesy Adult Swim

‘Yule Log 2: Branching Out’ is available to stream on MAX.



Submitted

The Paramount Theatre will debut its new projection and sound system with a weekend of free holiday movie screenings, Dec. 20-22. Enjoy classics like "How the Grinch Stole Christmas", "The Polar Express," "A Christmas Story," and "It's a Wonderful Life" in stunning 4K with immersive surround sound. No tickets required!

The Paramount Theatre to debut its new **projection and sound system** with a weekend of free holiday film screenings



Friday through Sunday, Dec. 20-22—RUTLAND—The Paramount Theatre plans to spread holiday joy with a series of free classic film screenings. These screenings will showcase beloved holiday movies in stunning 4K resolution with immersive Surround Sound. Thanks to support from the Rutland Regional Medical Center, these family-friendly screenings are open to all, with no tickets required.

Film lineup

Dec. 20 at 7 p.m.

Dr. Seuss' "How The Grinch Stole Christmas." Come experience Jim Carrey's take on the Grinch in director Ron Howard's 2000 film.

Dec. 21 at 2 p.m.

"The Polar Express." Tom Hanks plays several roles in this children's holiday favorite from

2004, which is celebrating its 20th anniversary.

Dec. 21 at 7 p.m.

"A Christmas Story." The perennial holiday staple from 1983 stars Peter Billingsley as Ralphie, the boy whose sole Christmas request is a Red Ryder range 200-shot BB gun.

Dec. 22 at 2 p.m.

"It's a Wonderful Life." Jimmy Stewart's George Bailey gets to see what life would be like without him in Frank Capra's holiday classic from 1946.

Doors open 30 minutes before each film.

"The Paramount Theatre is thrilled to welcome the community for these special holiday events," said the theater's executive director, Eric Mallette. "We're excited to offer families the chance to experience these cherished films in our beautifully restored venue with state-of-the-art projection and sound."

For more information, visit: paramountvt.org.

'Honky Tonk Christmas' brings classic country sounds to Seven Stars Arts

Friday, Dec. 20—SHARON— Looking for a different experience to celebrate the holiday season? Seven Stars Arts Center in Sharon offers an evening of vintage country, bluegrass, rockabilly, and western swing at "Honky Tonk Christmas," happening on Friday, Dec. 20, from 7-9 p.m. Admission is \$25 at the door.

Presented by "McCaffrey and Rooney Present," the concert features an all-star lineup of Vermont musicians, including Colin McCaffrey (electric lead guitar/fiddle/vocals), Danny Coane (acoustic rhythm guitar/vocals), Dave Rowell (electric bass/vocals), and Grammy-winning producer Jim Rooney (guitar/vocals).

These long-time musical collaborators promise a lively, off-the-cuff performance showcasing classic tunes and timeless stories. Brocklebank Beer will be available for purchase, and children under 12 enjoy free admission.

Colin McCaffrey, a Berklee College of Music graduate and award-winning songwriter, brings years of musical expertise. At the same time, Danny Coane, best known for The Starline Rhythm Boys, adds his signature acoustic rhythm. Dave Rowell, rooted in Vermont's musical traditions, rounds out the rhythm section. Jim Rooney ties the night together with his warm vocals and stories from a lifetime in music.

For more information, visit: sevenstarsarts.org.



Courtesy Seven Stars Arts

Dave Rowell, Danny Coane, Jim Rooney, Colin McCaffrey will bring a Honkey Tonk Christmas to the Seven Stars Arts Center on Dec. 20.

Solutions From page 15

Crossword

M	G	D		A	L	E	U	T		T	U	M	M	Y	
I	R	A		L	A	S	S	O		E	R	O	S	E	
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Sudoku

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

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Cosmic Catalogue

Aries March 21 - April 20

If you've been lackluster in your attitude toward pre-holiday celebrations and socializing, you can turn that around this week. Sure, your energy may not be at its buzzing best, but sometimes you just really need to push yourself. All you need to do is decide to put your best foot forward; before you know it, you're spicing up your life again. The obstacle is often the way.

Leo July 21 - August 20

What makes you tick? What is it that you desire? All this and more are currently undergoing a process of recalibration and change. Cosmic upgrades are taxing, so be gentle with yourself as your energy waxes and wanes. Relationships of all types – personal and professional are a source of support. If you're looking for a different way to view yourself and life, part of these upgrades may also involve the company you're keeping. Adjust accordingly.

Sagittarius November 21 - December 20

It seems so simple, almost cliché, the idea that thoughts become things. When it comes to relationships of all kinds, the way you think about them will determine your experience of them. Taking on a curious and open-minded attitude will serve you well now. Embrace the unique and interesting, and you'll never grow bored. In fact, the more you can explore the magical and mystical, the happier you'll be. Dare to dream!

Taurus April 21 - May 20

The more you give, the more you get. This is the Universal Law. Unfortunately, so many people have forgotten this. As such, they don't willingly share their resources, be it time, energy, attention, or money. Right now, you're being invited to share. It matters not which form it takes, but the wonderful blessings in escrow await you to unlock them. What are you waiting for?

Virgo August 21 - September 20

Sometimes, the best thing you can do to get through is to recalibrate your thinking. Now that your patron planet, Mercury, is direct, recent confusion on the home front will reside. This doesn't mean that everything will be perfect, but if you can come to a greater level of acceptance, then life will feel sweeter. Also, remember to have some fun and try not to sweat the small stuff.

Capricorn December 21 - January 20

You're no stranger to working hard. Lucky for you, the recent dry spell you've been in is about to pay off. That said, this isn't your invitation to take all your efforts for granted and lean on your laurels. On the contrary, this is your time to double down on self-belief as well as self-improvement. The glimmers of hope you now see will turn into brilliant flashes of light in no time.

Gemini May 21 - June 20

In the blink of an eye, your life can change. It sounds dramatic, and, in some cases, it is. However, it can be a change of attitude, beliefs, or ideas that are the catalyst for real change. Once things begin to shift, all you need to do is embrace opportunities that present themselves with both hands. Just say yes and ask questions later. The tide right now is too high to not ride it!

Libra September 21 - October 20

It can often be the smallest and most seemingly insignificant things that can really alter the direction of your life. Shared ideas. A differing point of view. A broader perspective. It's the shared words, thoughts, and ideas that have the capacity to collapse time and space. What is happening for you now is paving the way for a future you've imagined but couldn't quite grasp – but with both hands, you must grasp it.

Aquarius January 21 - February 20

When it comes to fun, happiness, and romance, luck is on your side this week. This is your chance to put any intense feelings, fears, or experiences to one side and choose to see the good. You can choose not to see the good, of course, but good isn't what you'll get. Everything you've ever wanted lies on the other side of what you're afraid of. You could be about to embark on the adventure of your life!

Cancer June 21 - July 20

It can be important to remind yourself this week that everything you've ever wanted truly is available to you. This isn't the time to be practical. Instead, you need to be magical. When you can think outside the realities of existence, you can tap into the mystery and magic of being alive. Everything you've ever wanted also wants you. All you need to do is open your eyes and see it.

Scorpio October 21 - November 20

Life can often be divided into two categories. It's the life you have to live in order to keep the lights on. Then, there is the life that fulfills you with a sense of meaning and purpose. Right now, you're figuring out how you can have the best of both worlds. This won't be an overnight process, but as long as you continue to wrestle rather than accept what is, the sooner you'll reach a solution.

Pisces February 21 - March 20

As some former tension builds again between what you want and what your domestic life requires from you, you may feel a little caught between a rock and a hard place. You might be tempted to avoid conflict by burying your head in the sand or focusing on work. Compromise is possible, but you have to be willing to look at things from a completely fresh angle. Soon, this will become easier than what it is now.

The turning of the Sun

The turning of the Sun marks a significant turning point of light. In the Northern Hemisphere, the light of the Sun will embark upon its ascent of increased light that will peak in June's Summer Solstice. While in the South, the Sun's arrival in Capricorn sees the slow descent into shorter days and longer nights.

Regardless of your vantage point, it's a celebration of light. Whether you're preparing to celebrate the birth of a Jewish man, the festival of light that lasted eight nights instead of one, bonfires and pagan rituals, or all of the above or nothing at all – it's a time to celebrate the light within you.

Sweet and sublime alignments flavor the week as the Full Moon begins to wane. So, what light are you emanating that can make the world a better place? Are you projecting your fears or insecurities, or are you trying to be the tide that raises all boats?

A little bit of faith combined with kindness and trust can go a long way in healing a fractured world. Overwhelming or helplessness can be easily cured by changing your mind and taking action. In every moment, you can think differently and take a different path. The battle of dark and light begins with you!



Cosmic Catalogue
By Cassandra Tyndall

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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 evergreen Christmas fern

Tromping through our woods in December in search of a Christmas tree, I often notice an evergreen fern, one of the few green plants on the forest floor this time of year, other than young conifers. An easy fern to identify, it grows in fountain-like clumps and has glossy, dark green leaflets or pinnae. This is a Christmas fern (*Polystichum acrostichoides*), named for its evergreen habit and the shape of its leaflets. Each leathery, lance-shaped leaflet has a lobe at its base, creating a leaf shape my college botany professor described as looking like Santa's boot. Others have noted the leaflets' resemblance to Christmas stockings.

Christmas fern grows throughout eastern North America. It is related to the uncommon Braun's holly fern, which grows in cool, moist forests in much of New England. Occasionally, the two species hybridize, producing the rare Potter's fern, named after Henry Potter, a Vermont farmer and botanist.

Christmas fern grows in a variety of woodlands and on shady, rocky slopes. It tolerates a range of soil acidity and moisture levels. This fern is most abundant in northern hardwood forests, especially those with rich, calcareous (limey) soils. I once visited a red oak-northern hardwood forest with rich soils and the tallest and healthiest-looking Christmas ferns I've ever seen, some with twisted leaves.

In winter, the fronds of these ferns are often flattened against the ground. Studies have shown that the first hard frosts stimulate the development of a hinge zone at the base of the stem, which causes the fronds to fall over. The prostrate fronds benefit from the warmth and protection of

leaf litter, which helps to prevent the leaves from freezing. Humidity is trapped beneath the ferns' leaves, reducing desiccation. The leaves continue to photosynthesize during winter at a reduced rate. When fiddleheads emerge in spring, covered with silvery scales, the old fronds die.

Spring Christmas ferns include fertile fronds in the center of the clump, which grow taller than the sterile fronds. The uppermost leaflets of the fertile fronds are smaller than the others and bear spores in tiny cases called sporangia. If you check the undersides of fertile leaflets in summer, you can see brown masses of these spore cases. When the sporangia are ripe and dry in late summer or early fall, they split open, and

the wind disperses the spores.

Each fern produces millions of spores, but only a few will land in suitable habitat. In contrast to flowering plants, ferns and their relatives, such as club mosses, undergo two very different developmental stages during their lives (sometimes called alternating generations). There is a gametophyte, or sexual phase, and a sporophyte, the familiar, spore-producing phase. According to the "Peterson Field Guide to Ferns" by Cobb, Farnsworth, and Lowe, if a spore lands in a moist, shady spot, it develops into a gametophyte: a flat, green, heart-shaped body with sex organs that grows underground. When stimulated by water, sperm from one gametophyte swim to the female organ on another gametophyte and fertilize an egg. The egg divides and grows into a tiny fern, a new sporophyte anchored to the gametophyte. Ferns also reproduce vegetatively; horizontal stems, or rhizomes, grow outwards and develop new fronds

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The Outside
Story
By Susan Shea



VPIRG report provides tips for avoiding potentially toxic plastic stuff this holiday season

Nowhere on Earth is free from plastic pollution these days, from the highest mountaintops to the deepest ocean canyons. The problem gets worse each year and seems to peak during the holiday season when household trash rates in the U.S. increase by 25% or more. Much of that trash is plastic waste that will be around for centuries since plastic doesn't break down naturally in the environment.

A new report by the Vermont Public Interest Research and Education Fund (VPIRG's charitable research and education arm) takes direct aim at wasteful and toxic plastic packaging and products.

The report, titled "'Tis the Season for Less Plastic," provides examples of problem plastics, from throwaway cameras to individually wrapped potatoes, and black plastic kitchen utensils contaminated with dangerous flame retardants to track pants made with at least 14 different chemicals and compounds on the Vermont Health Department's list of Chemicals of High Concern to Children.

The report can be found at: vpirg.org/vpirgs-2024-plastic-free-holiday-tips.

"Plastic waste is all around us and it's getting worse by the day," said Paul Burns, executive director of the Vermont Public Interest Research Group. "Not only is the amount of plastic waste increasing, but nearly all of the plastic junk that's ever been created is still with us. It doesn't biodegrade. It just gets smaller and smaller and releases its toxic elements into our air and water."

VPIRG's report identifies food items needlessly wrapped in plastic, including fresh produce like potatoes, garlic, peppers, and more. These same items are sold in many stores without any plastic wrapping at all. VPIRG urges shoppers to skip the plastic and let retailers know you prefer your produce plastic-free.

Other plastic products coming in contact with food include black plastic kitchen utensils, black plastic trays, and take-out containers. A separate peer reviewed study released just last month by Toxic Free Future uncovered high levels of cancer-causing, hormone-disrupting flame retardant chemicals in a variety of household products made with black plastics.

"When plastic electronics that contain highly toxic flame retardants are recycled into products we use in our home kitchens every day, we have a serious problem," said Lauren Hierl, executive director of the Vermont Natural Resources Council. "Your black plastic spatula, the black plastic tray your hamburger sits on at the grocery store, or the black plastic utensils you get with your takeout meal all may be contaminated with worrisome levels of toxic flame retardants," she added.

The report identifies alternatives to the troublesome black plastic items, including silicone or wooden kitchen utensils. VPIRG suggests they could make good stocking stuffers.

VPIRG environmental associate Alexis Drown pointed out excessive plastic packaging on a number of items, including toys, dolls, and items ordered via online shopping. A large yellow box at the news conference was from the online photo framing company, Keepsake Frames. It was twice as big as necessary for the five framed photos it contained, and it was stuffed with a large mound of plastic bubble wrap.

"Everyone wants the products they order online to be delivered safely," said Drown. "But companies must do a better job of cutting down on plastic waste. They need to start taking responsibility for the waste they generate and the environmental harm they cause."

Drown added that the plastic waste associated with shipping can be avoided entirely by shopping locally whenever possible, which is good for the health and vitality of our communities and businesses, too. When packaging material is needed, there are Vermont businesses ready to provide natural alternatives to plastic as well. For example, Sylvacurl is a company based in Hardwick, that makes packing material made of wood shavings. The material is highly effective in keeping products safe and can be reused or safely composted when it's no longer needed.

"'Tis the Season" notes that single-use cameras are making a comeback, which is a loss for the environment. "Most people carry a high-quality camera in their pocket all the time," said Drown. "It's also a computer and is commonly referred to as a phone. The world does not need another throwaway camera."

VPIRG research found that a pair of Addidas track pants popular with teens and pre-teens apparently contain more than a dozen chemicals or compounds that appear on the Vermont Dept. of Health's list of Chemicals of High Concern to Children. Other well-known brands made similar disclosures to the Health Department as they are required to do under Act 188, passed in Vermont a decade ago. While the law requires disclosure of toxins in children's products, the information remains very difficult for the public to access. Still, this is another area where business must do better, according to Burns.

A study published in Marine Pollution Bulletin found that approximately 500,000 microscopic fibers could be released into wastewater each time polyester track pants like those included in the report are washed in a household washing machine. Many of the particles could carry toxic chemicals and would likely pass through sewage treatment and into the environment.

"Whether it's textiles, kitchen utensils, Barbie dolls, or baking potatoes, it's time to dramatically cut back on wasteful and toxic plastics," said Burns.

He noted there's a role for businesses, policymakers, and consumers to play.

‘Here,’ there, and everywhere

Several years ago, while on a work trip to Denmark, I took a stroll into downtown Copenhagen to take in the sights. I enjoy roaming the cities I visit, hoping to catch a glimpse of something new and interesting or find some delicacy I’ve never tasted.

Denmark is notoriously rainy, but the sun was shining on this day, and the temperatures were unseasonably warm. After some time, I found myself close to the water near Langelinie Pier in Copenhagen Harbor, where tourists and locals took advantage of the stellar conditions.

Copenhagen’s origins as a port date back to the 11th Century, when it was a small fishing village. The name Copenhagen derives from the Danish word København, meaning “merchant’s harbor.”

By the 12th Century, the port began to grow into a key trading hub due to its ideal location between the North Sea and the Baltic Sea. During the Middle Ages, Copenhagen became a trade center, connecting Scandinavia with the rest of Europe. By the 20th century, Copenhagen had transitioned into a modern port city. Its deep-water harbor, well-connected rail and road networks, and proximity to European markets ensured its continued prominence in global shipping and trade.

On the day I was perusing the port, I expected a large ship or iconic structure to be the highlight of my walk, but instead, a tiny statue no more than 4 feet tall stopped me in my tracks, unleashing a rush of memories that I never expected.

The statue commemorated the book “The Little Mermaid” and its famed author,

Hans Christian Andersen. This small metallic figure is one of the country’s most popular landmarks and a beloved symbol of the city, having drawn millions of visitors since its unveiling over a hundred years ago.

The statue was unveiled on August 23, 1913, by Edvard Eriksen, a famous Danish sculptor. Eriksen’s wife, Eline, served as the model for the mermaid’s face and upper body, while the body was modeled after a ballet dancer named Ellen Price, who starred in the ballet adaptation.

The statue depicts the mermaid sitting on a rock, gazing longingly toward the sea. It embodies the melancholy and yearning central to Andersen’s tale. The figure, made of bronze and granite, stands roughly 4 feet tall and weighs around 385

pounds.

I was fortunate enough to see the statue when it was fully intact. Unfortunately, it has faced several acts of vandalism and political protest over the years, even though it’s not easily accessible from its water-laden perch. The Little Mermaid has been decapitated, painted, and even blown off her rock, but she has been restored each time, with the incidents only adding to her mystique and resilience.

Hans Christian Andersen has long been celebrated as one of Denmark’s literary treasures. While I cannot claim to have read any of his books personally, I do know that a film based on his life had a profound effect on me as a child.

“Hans Christian Andersen,” starring Danny Kaye, was a Hollywood musical released in 1952, and throughout the early

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The Movie Diary
By Dom Cioffi



Living the Dream
By Merisa Sherman

Hot laps and powder dreams: Living the Killington lifestyle

We were skiing everything the weeks around World Cup. Over 5 feet of snow fell in Killington on top of no real base, and man, did we ski it all—Hot laps in the Canyon on 100% natural snow with no end to the greatness in sight. It was a glorious few weeks that will go down in the echelons of Killington history. Flume on 100% natural, and it was so good that the bottom wasn’t that normal sheet of frozen runoff, scare you to death business. It was fun and playful, and I have never apologized to a pair of skis so often as I did those few weeks.

But you couldn’t say no. The BF coined the phrase that it was like skiing Mad River ... but with sharper rocks. It really was that good. Down-draft was amazing; Double Dipper felt like the old days when you could actually feel the two dips. Cascade was glorious until you got round the turn to the big rocks, and then it was only almost glorious. Escapade: Well, Escapade was closed, now, wasn’t it?

Once you passed the first turn on the Cascade and Downdraft headwalls, you were in heaven. Those two sections of trail are never like that. One night (and it was that dark for last chair), I made the second turn on Cascade headwall and got stuck in a foot of snow between two moguls. I poofed. It was amazing. It will go down as one of my top ten turns, especially since we had literally skied the same turn the run before, so I figured it would be tracked out. Thank you, Vermont wind, for putting it back for me!

What? You don’t have your top 10 turns ingrained in your brain? My best turn ever was for a promo shoot for Killington in the early 2000s, and we had an early lift on Superstar Quad. You never know if it’s just gonna be a wind-blown mess or really something fun to play with off Skye Peak. Well, we nailed it. I was on tele’s at the time, so granted, the powder was a little bit deeper than if I was on Alpine. That bent knee just gets you into it so beautifully.

Anyway, I dropped off the Ovation headwall and sank past my waist and up to my armpits. I literally sank. And to have that turn happen here, in Killington, at the mountain where I was working at the time, turned that turn into complete magic. What an affirmation of all the life choices I had made until then. I had dropped out of graduate school to become a ski instructor and ended up in armpit-deep powder. I’d say that confirms the greatness of my life choice to be a ski bum.

But I’m not really a bum anymore, am I? I own my home, I am a managing broker for Sotheby’s Realty, and I am an elected town official. Can I still be considered a ski bum? But I still coach skiing, introducing young athletes to the love of the sport. Sunday nights at Baja are filled with locals discussing everything

from park structure to village development to the turn of the day. It’s all in there. My clients are either looking to start living their ski dreams or looking for someone to guide them through a tearful farewell.

My whole life revolves around the sport of skiing and my love for it. My entire life relies on time blocking, making sure that every day has 1-2 hours of me time, I mean ski time. I’ve never wanted to be anywhere else, even when it rains 2.42 inches at my house in one devastating storm. But when I looked outside that morning, I managed to find the snowy lining. Literally, there was still snow covering my lawn!

I’ve still been able to find terrain through the woods—that’s why I have touring equipment. If you can’t ski down the woods, usually there is enough to ski up or through them!

The skiing lifestyle is a choice, a commitment made to the snow, sport, and lifestyle. Everyone who lives here has made that choice. Every second, the homeowner has decided to prioritize skiing and riding every weekend. Every investor recognizes the value of the skiing lifestyle. That’s why we’re here, why our world revolves around sliding down a mountain as much as possible.

My second best turn was a private moment in Sore Thumb. It was the first time I had found the trail all by myself and hadn’t been led in by one of the more mature skiers. I was skiing alone, and I found it before anyone else. All that powder was mine! That beautiful chute of several turns with snow up to my hip. Hot damn was that a glorious moment. It’s weird that most of my top turns of all time were at Killington.

Merisa Sherman is a longtime Killington resident, global real estate advisor, town official, and coach PomPom. Share your stories at Merisa.Sherman@SothebysRealty.com.



By Merisa Sherman

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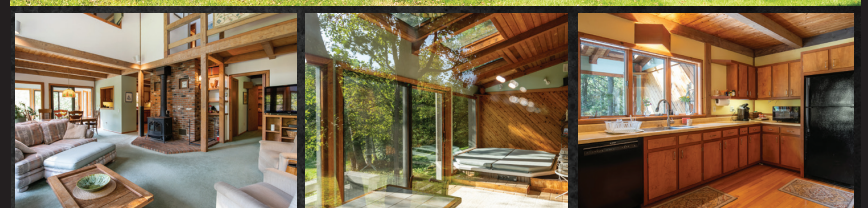
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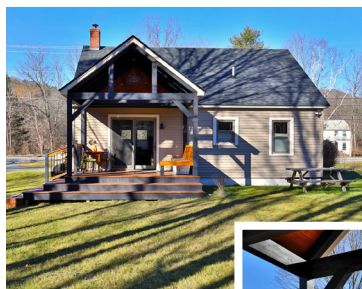
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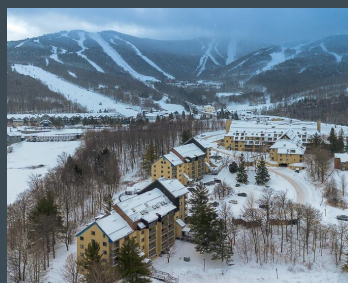
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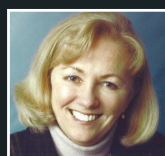
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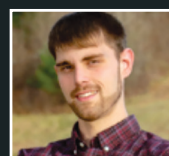
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802-345-2785



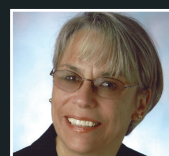
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Heritage Family Credit Union donates \$25,000 to support local nonprofits

RUTLAND—At a Chamber & Economic Development of the Rutland Region (CEDRR) winter mixer held on Dec. 10 at the Ron Hance Operations Center, Heritage Family Credit Union (HFCU) presented five Rutland County nonprofits, each with a \$5,000 donation in recognition of their contributions to the local community.

The CEDRR mixer drew more than 150 attendees, who enjoyed an evening of festive fun and inspiring presentations by the five donation recipients.

“It’s always heartening to hear about all the good work being done by our local nonprofits,” said HFCU President/CEO Chris Gomez. “During this time when we typically take a look back, it is especially meaningful to reflect on how many lives are brightened and made better each year because of their efforts.”

The five nonprofits receiving donations at the mixer were Rutland Community Cupboard, Rutland County Pride, Rutland Free Library, Habitat for Humanity of Rutland County, and the Rutland Area NAACP. Joining Gomez in recognizing the recipients was Kim Griffin, executive director of The Mint, who sits on the Heritage Family Credit Union board and its Heritage Family Cares 4 You Foundation.

“Heritage Family Credit Union is honored to support the continued impact these recipients make every single day in Rutland County,” said HFCU Senior Vice President of Retail Ryan Butler, who leads the Credit Union’s philanthropic efforts. “We are proud to stand alongside them and all our nonprofit partners who share the same unwavering commitment to the local communities we all are so privileged to serve.”



Courtesy Heritage Family Credit Union
Heritage Family Credit Union presented a \$25,000 check to local Rutland County nonprofits at a CEDRR mixer on Dec. 10.

Got an eye for NEWS?
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← The Outside Story:
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and roots. When the connecting rhizomes die, the ferns become separate plants.

Christmas fern is easy to grow and makes a good ornamental for shade gardens. It’s best to purchase nursery-grown plants so as not to deplete wild populations. People have used this fern for a variety of medicinal purposes, including to treat rheumatism, stomachache, pneumonia, and toothache.

Wildlife also eat Christmas fern. Ruffed grouse feed on leaves in fall and winter. Deer may browse the fronds during harsh winters when food is scarce. Wild turkeys eat the young spring leaves. Ground-nest-

ing songbirds such as ovenbirds and veery sometimes nest in clumps of Christmas fern.

When you walk in the winter woods, look for the splashes of green made by the hardy Christmas fern and the stocking shape of its leaflets.

Susan Shea is a naturalist, writer, and conservationist based in Vermont. 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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← **Movie Diary:**
from page 33

years of my life, the film was a holiday staple. The movie portrays Andersen as a cobbler by trade but a storyteller at heart. His famous tales, from “The Little Match Girl” to “Thumbelina,” are highlighted during the film, giving the viewer a glimpse into how his stories evolved. And, of course, the culmination of the movie features a ballet based on his most famous work, “The Little Mermaid.”

The catchiness of the songs, along with Kaye’s masterful interpretation of the main character, made it one of my favorite holiday films. Seeing that statue brought wonderful memories of that film rushing back.

This week’s feature, “Here,” starring Tom Hanks and Robin Wright (based on the acclaimed graphic novel by Richard McGuire), is another example of creative storytelling, except in this case, the plot is unveiled in a uniquely cinematic fashion.

The entire story of “Here” is shot from the same viewpoint. This means the viewer watches the unfolding history of this one particular spot on earth without ever moving. It sounds confusing, but after the first 15 minutes, you start to understand what’s at play.

Of course, uniqueness doesn’t always mean good, and while “Here” is creative and different from most other films, it still fell short as a coherent piece due to the unruly chronology.

Check this one out if you’re interested in watching something different. If you go in with an open mind, you’ll appreciate the effort, even if the story doesn’t add up.

An inimitable “C+” for “Here.” This film is available to rent on Amazon Prime Video and other streaming platforms.

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

← **Rodgers:**
from page 9

by about 130 votes. But two years later, he edged out one of the incumbents by 16 votes and won a seat in the Vermont House. He’d keep his spot in office until 2010 — when he lost by fewer than five votes — before serving eight years as a senator for the Essex-Orleans district.

The 2020 election threw a wrench into his winning streak. Rodgers missed the deadline to file his paperwork for the Democratic primary, forcing him to run independently after nearly two decades of representing the party. He’d ultimately finish fifth out of five candidates that year.

“I think there’s too many people who vote for a D and R and don’t really know who the candidate is,” Rodgers told the Winooski News. “I really underestimated how badly that hurt me.”

These days, he is hopeful his political ambiguity and past experience will help him navigate his new role. “I’m

a Vermonter first, and you are part of a party, but you shouldn’t let it dictate who you are and who you work with,” he said. “I see my role as lieutenant governor as being nonpartisan. I’m elected to work for all Vermonters.”

While Rodgers grew up in a Democratic family and had consistent electoral success running as a Democrat in the Kingdom, he switched parties ahead of the 2024 election and ran on the Republican ticket.

“The Democratic Party had shifted way too far to the left, and they don’t appear to understand blue-collar Vermonters,” he said.

A self-proclaimed Yankee, Rodgers felt the party had moved away from him and other working-class Vermonters. However, he found that many moderate Republicans still represented the communities he hails from.

The role of lieutenant governor may be inconspicuous to many Vermonters. The official duties of the position entail running the Senate, voting only as a tiebreaker, and sitting on the three-person panel that decides committee assignments in the chamber.

However, the statewide platform of the position has Rodgers excited to jump into the role.

“I want to be a bridge between Vermonters and the building (the State House) because I feel that Vermonters’ voices aren’t being heard enough in the building,” he said. “We want to get out in the communities and have town hall meetings where people can say these are the issues we’re facing, and these are the ideas we have. This is what we would like to see and be able to bring that back to the Legislature.”

Former gubernatorial candidate James Ehlers, an outspoken water activist who Rodgers recently tapped to serve as his special advisor, emphasized the hands-on effort Rodgers took on with Vermonters during his campaign.

“John worked to get every single one of those votes, and when I say work, that means he spent the hours in the car and on the phone. He didn’t have to work at who he is,” said Ehlers, adding that the “dirt under his fingernails is real, and that willingness to get hands dirty is absolutely what is going to be necessary to ensure that the voice of working Vermonters and those downstream are heard.”

Gov. Phil Scott endorsed Rodgers during the campaign. Amanda Wheeler, his press secretary, said in a statement that Scott hopes to have a good working relationship with

“I think there’s too many people who vote for a D and R and don’t really know who the candidate is,” Rodgers said.

his future counterpart, even if the role is mostly ceremonial.

“The governor and lieutenant governor-elect have known each other for many years during their time serving as legislators,” Wheeler said, adding that Scott is “always open and willing to work with others to make Vermont more affordable, protect the most vulnerable and grow the economy.”

Rodgers came into the race feeling the odds this election season were stacked against him.

He was a Republican in a year when Vermonters would reject the party’s presidential candidate by a nearly 2-to-1 margin. It was his first time running as a statewide candidate as well — and against a Progressive/Democratic incumbent in Zuckerman. The last time someone became lieutenant governor by defeating the incumbent in a general election was 1815, according to VTDigger.

“It gives me hope that there are still enough people out there that are willing to think about the person, and that’s what I’ve always tried to get people to do when there’s good people in both parties,” he said.

Rodgers said he is hopeful that once in office, he will be able to show Vermonters that he’s the right man for the job no matter what letter sits beside his name on the ballot.

“That really provides me with a huge amount of excitement to do that, go out and do the work on the ground and meet people, discuss issues, and do everything I can to help Vermont be a place where everybody can afford to live,” he said.

The position has always attracted Rodgers, but he felt he couldn’t jump from senator to lieutenant governor due to financial constraints. He said that’s too large a factor affecting who serves in Montpelier.

“We need a better cross-section of the Vermont population in that building if we want a true representative government,” he said.

Why’d he decide to run this year?

“I just felt like the stakes were different, with what happened over the last two years and the cost of living here,” Rodgers said. “I felt like it was time to step up and give it a shot for the big stage and see if I could help turn things around.”

Looking forward to the Legislature convening early in January, Rodgers spoke about how he plans to manage his new role alongside his existing responsibilities.

“You grow up on a farm, and there’s just always something to do,” he said, “so you just put one foot in front of the other and just keep getting things done.”



Submitted

John Rodgers



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