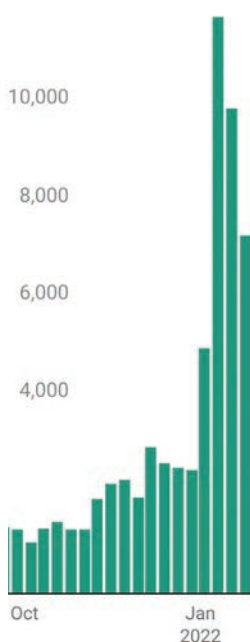




SIX MORE WEEKS OF WINTER? ASK PHIL
Groundhog Day is Feb. 2. If the furry forecasters sees his shadow, skiers/riders will rejoice celebrating six more weeks of winter.



Courtesy VDH

SURGE DECLINING
Vermont reported 8,135 new Covid-19 cases this week, 2,878 fewer cases than last week, but still the third highest ever.

Page 16



LOCAL NEEDS KIDNEY
Mei Mei Brown, 66, a prolific volunteer in Brandon, is in need of a kidney.

Page 36



ARTS, DINING & ENTERTAINMENT
Find 92 local events not to miss this week.

Page 18



By Paul Holmes

Snow much fun!

Maddie Holmes, 8, enjoyed sledding in Killington on Saturday, Jan. 22. Face-shots of fluffy snow punctuated the adventure making her second guess her choice of earmuffs, but joy abounds.

Castleton Village School closes abruptly

Broken water line, asbestos displace students until March most likely

By Katy Savage

Castleton Village School abruptly closed for two months starting Tuesday, Jan. 18 after a broken water pipe and an asbestos problem damaged half the building. About 100 middle school students and 20 teachers from Castleton Village School moved to Castleton Elementary to resume in-person classes on Tuesday, Jan. 25.

"It's a fairly significant problem," said Slate Valley Unified School District Superintendent Brooke Olsen-Farrell.

About two inches of water was discovered on the floor around 4 a.m. Jan. 18 by a maintenance worker after a pipe burst over the long Martin Luther King weekend. All of the sheetrock will need to be replaced.

Students spent the past week learning remotely as

Castleton > 13

Rutland farmer's market moves to new location due to contamination

By Katy Savage

The Vermont Farmers Food Center on West Street in Rutland has been ordered to shut down after failing to submit a work plan to the state to remediate a contamination problem.

Kimberly Caldwell, an environmental analyst at the Department of Environmental Conservation, said the owners of the property missed a Jan. 17 to submit documentation detailing the next steps of the remediation process. Caldwell sent the owners a letter on Jan. 20, requiring them to vacate the Farmers Hall building on the property within 24 hours and inform all tenants of the property that they could not enter the building.

"That's the next step after we don't receive a requested deliverable," said Caldwell, who said she consulted with the state's legal team.

"We determined that we did have the authority to order them to stop use of the building under our emergency correc-

VFFC > 14



Submitted

Inside the Vermont Farm Food Center vendors sell their wares.

Schools run out of rapid tests

Gone just days after new protocols for students and staff took effect

By Peter D'Auria/VTDigger

On Wednesday, Jan. 19, school districts across the state kicked off new Covid-19 testing protocols.

Following the recommendation of the state Agency of Education, school officials rolled out a new system called "test at home." The new method was aimed to lighten the workload on school employees and help them keep up with the rapid spread of the Omicron variant.

Rapid tests are the linchpin of new protocols for Vermont schools.

But the new system did not even last until the end of the week.

Almost immediately school districts across the state ran into a major obstacle: There aren't enough rapid tests.

Short on tests > 8

WCSD reacts to Covid testing protocol changes, lack of supplies

By Curt Peterson

Windsor Central Unified Union School District (WCSD) Superintendent Sherry Sousa told the Mountain Times she understands the rationale behind the Agency of Education's abandonment of the in-school "Test to Stay" program this week.

"Surveillance testing didn't address the Omicron proliferation," she said. "A few weeks ago 500 tests netted only four positive cases.

but then require negative test results in days four and five in order to attend class.

But the state guidance states: "Schools should not monitor compliance of kit pick up or use of kits."

State officials say if their district runs out of tests necessary to follow the new guidance, parents should take responsibility for obtaining tests elsewhere.

Store-bought tests are not free (but can be reimbursed

Sousa said the state underestimated how many tests the new protocol would require.

It just wasn't working."

The new protocol, in effect since Jan. 19, is to distribute antigen rapid tests to the school districts for students' families to use at home.

If a student tests positive, all students in his or her class are designated "presumptive contacts." For the next five days families of unvaccinated students must test their student first thing in the morning and achieve a "negative" result before attending school that day.

Vaccinated presumptive contacts can return to school without testing for three days,

by insurance) but also are hard to find in stock.

Sousa said the state underestimated how many tests the new protocol would require — WCSD received half of what they ordered and thought the second half would arrive this week, in time to replenish the supply. But the second shipment didn't arrive.

"We discovered the misunderstanding and re-ordered a larger amount so we can stock up for future use," Sousa said. "We hope the new order will arrive soon."

To make up for the defi-

WCSD > 8

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Pittsfield postpones Town Meeting

By Brett Yates

The Pittsfield Select Board voted last Thursday, Jan. 20, to delay its annual Town Meeting until May 3, 2022.

On Jan. 14, Gov. Scott signed Act 77, which temporarily suspends the state law requiring town meetings to take place on the first Tuesday in March, citing Covid-19's "potential to jeopardize the health, safety, and welfare" of voters. Municipalities that typically conduct in-person meetings may instead use an Australian ballot or switch to a "to a potentially safer date later in the year," as most did last year, owing to a similar measure.

If the rate of infection remains high over the course of the spring, Pittsfield may resort to a paper ballot, but for now the town aims to maintain its traditional meeting, with business conducted from the floor. Selectwoman Joyce Stevens pointed out that, by May, the weather could be warm enough for open windows, which would reduce the risk of airborne transmission of the virus.

The meeting will take place May 3 at 6 p.m. at the Town Hall.

Windsor Central considers rebranding

By Curt Peterson

Keri Bristow, Windsor Central Unified Union School District board member of Woodstock chaired the second official Zoom meeting of the board's recently created district renaming committee on Jan. 24.

Unlike some school district rebranding projects, WCUUSD doesn't have any controversial ethnic or racial issues with either the district name or its athletic mascot. Superintendent Sherry Sousa said changing the name shouldn't raise any eyebrows, as it was chosen for purely geographical reasons, most campuses being in the middle of Windsor County. Killington is an outlier within the district, as it is in Rutland County.

Sousa's meeting notice cited the board's strategic plan mandate to "name and brand the district and campuses to build a shared identity enhancing district pride, and [design] and [disperse] promotional materials highlighting district programs and outcomes," as the rebranding directive.

Rebranding > 4

Supreme Court denies Banyai's appeal, orders Slate Ridge to close

Staff report, VTDigger

PAWLET—A Supreme Court decision has confirmed that Slate Ridge must permanently shut down and pay the town of Pawlet \$46,603.

Neighbors have long expressed concerns and fear about the operations at the controversial paramilitary training facility, owned by Daniel Banyai, which has hosted local militia groups. Slate Ridge has garnered national attention; both The New York Times and This American Life have profiled the yearslong conflict between Banyai and neighbors.

Judge Thomas Durkin, a judge with the Environmental Division of the Vermont Superior Court, ordered Slate Ridge to close in a March 2021 ruling that required Banyai to dismantle all of the buildings on his property that do not have a zoning permit and pay the fine. Banyai appealed last summer.

The Supreme Court affirmed that order in a decision issued Friday, Jan. 14. The ruling appears to lay a court case, which has been ongoing since 2018, to rest — though it sets off enforcement actions that likely will take time.

During the appeal, Banyai's attorney, Cindy Hill, argued that a voided 2018 permit was still valid and asked the higher court to determine that Banyai's paramilitary training activities on the property "are not under subject matter jurisdiction of the town or Environmental Division."

A notice of violation issued to Banyai in 2019 is still valid, the Supreme Court ruled.

"Landowner argues that the trial court abused its discretion in part based on his assertion that no violation occurred and NOV2 (the second notice of violation) is void," the Supreme Court decision, written by Jus-

tice Harold Eaton, said. "As explained above, NOV2 is valid, and landowner is foreclosed from challenging any of the violations therein."

In its March 4, 2021, decision, the Environmental Court also made permanent a temporary injunction from January 2021, which said Banyai "shall not conduct or permit to be conducted any school and/or firearms training activities on the property situated at 541 Briar Hill Road, nor host classes of any type on the property."

Merrill Bent, attorney for the town, said town officials were pleased to hear that the Supreme Court affirmed the decision, and will now begin the process of enforcement. Banyai's fine resulted from his 466 days of noncompliance at \$100 per day. To date, as far

as the town knows, Bent said, Banyai hasn't made efforts to comply, and Banyai did not ask for a stay while the matter was under appeal.

"Fines continue to accrue on a daily basis," Bent said.

The town still needs to ask the court to rule on a contempt order issued last January when Banyai didn't comply with a 30-day deadline to hire a surveyor and begin the process of dismantling buildings on his property, which the Environmental Court order required him to do.

"We also have to update that to reflect the last year or so of fines," Bent said. "The court hasn't said what the daily rate will be for fines to accrue, but the last round was \$100 a day."

It's unlikely the daily fine would

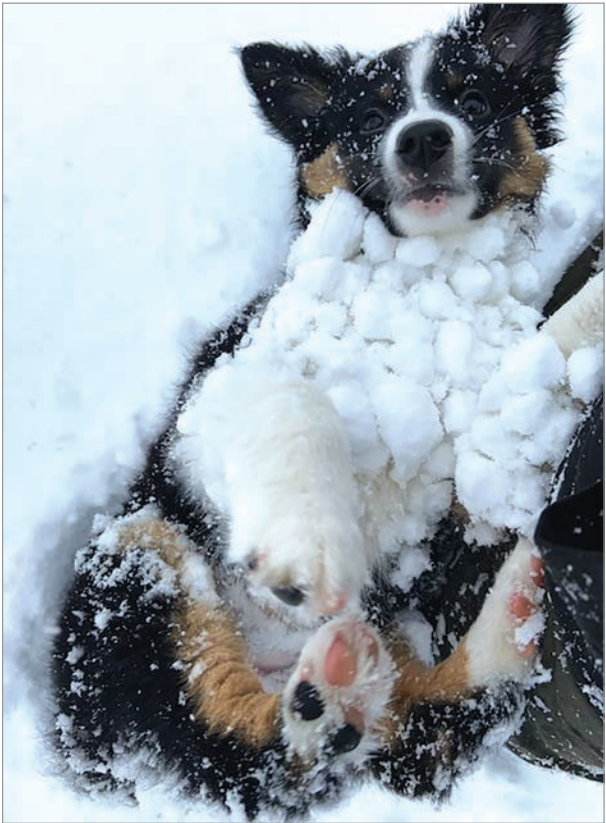
Slate Ridge > 6



Courtesy Twitter
Slate Ridge posted a image on Twitter Sept. 4 showing new building progress.



By Jason Mikula
Students' skis are lined up outside of Killington Elementary School Tuesday, Jan. 25, for the second week of the popular Trailblazers ski program.



By Katy Savage
Ruffian, a 3-month-old mini Australian shepherd, enjoys her first snow storm — but not the snowballs stuck in her fur.



By Victoria Gaither
Enjoying the snow (and digging out)
Pittsfield resident Charlie Howard shovels snow off his roof after last week's foot-deep snowfall.



By Paul Holmes
On Sunday, Jan. 23, Maddie Holmes found more deep snow sledding, but this time she chose to wear a helmet both for safety and warmth. It's hard to see where you're going in a puff of snow!



Courtesy RRPC

Ed Bove to step down from RRPC

The Rutland Regional Planning Commission (RRPC) has been informed that Executive Director Ed Bove will be stepping down from his position in the coming year. Bove has been with the commission for 14 years and has served as executive director for the last eight. Under his steady leadership the RRPC has received membership contributions from all 27 Rutland Region municipalities for the first time in decades, doubled the annual budget to over \$1.5 million, doubled staff size to 12, worked with the Vermont Legislature to receive additional millions for all Regional Planning Commissions across the state, brought in over \$2 million in brownfields assessment funding for the Rutland Region, and led the modernization of administrative functions of the office.

In addition, Bove's leadership led to growth in the RRPC program areas of municipal and regional planning, emergency management, municipal grant administration, transportation, water quality, energy, and mapping. Bove has also been instrumental in expanding the RRPC's programs to include agricultural planning, broadband deployment, healthy community design planning, municipal project management, and municipal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) assistance. He has expanded the commission's economic development initiatives to include administration of the Workforce Investment Board and planning for the Western Vermont Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy.

"The Rutland Region has benefited greatly from Bove's leadership and owes him a debt of gratitude as he plans to return to his roots in community planning and design," according to a news release from RRPC.

'Rutland changed me'

Newcomer adapts to Vermont life

By Victoria Gaither

Rutland, Vermont, is one of those cities that can make you or break you!

Just ask newcomer Stella Shalem, who traded in the beaches of Miami, Florida, for the cold of Rutland.

"I had to learn everything about how to dress for the cold," Shalem said. "Not only cold weather but mountain living. In Miami, my whole outfit was shorts and flip flops."

The move to Rutland last year came as a result of Covid-19.

"My husband decided to move to be closer to the family after Covid — he wanted to be more in touch with family. The last thing I knew, we bought a house here, and I didn't realize where I was going," Shalem said.

She didn't realize how cold and sometimes gray Rutland could be and how it's a different lifestyle than Miami.

"In Miami, when it's under 70 degrees, people start to say, 'it's kind of chilly,' but in Rutland, it's about lifestyle," Shalem said.

She continued, "People here want to play with their grandkids, go on the mountains, be active."

At 49 years of age, Shalem, whose home country is Brazil, finds herself learning a whole new life and way of living.

For example, on a trail at Pine Hill Park, she saw a deer for the first time in her life.

"I was excited, but at the same time, I wasn't sure if I should run or stay, he just stared at me, and it was a magical moment," Shalem said.

Shalem recalled how her mother took her ice skating as a child back in her home country. Now, Shalem, a personal trainer, has signed up for ice skating classes and had her first ski lesson.

"I came full circle, and now I'm learning to ice skate and fall," she laughed.

These magical moments are adding up quickly for her. She talked about finding cool shops and restaurants in downtown Rutland.

"You can find so many things downtown, and if you drive outside of Rutland, there are so many gorgeous places," Shalem said.

She wasted no time as a personal trainer and has new clients while still offering classes to clients in Miami and Chicago through Zoom.

An emotional woman by nature, nothing brings tears



By Victoria Gaither

Rutland newcomer Stella Shalem lives by this motto, 'Don't wish for it, Work for it!'

On a trail at Pine Hill Park, she saw a deer for the first time... "I wasn't sure if I should run or stay, he just stared at me," Shalem said.

to her eyes more than when you ask her about the people of Rutland.

"The people of Rutland are so nice! They speak to me, and they smile. You feel good being here," Shalem said. "Rutland changed me.

I learned things about myself, and I can change and grow. I discovered an inner strength."

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Rebranding: Windsor Central Union Unified School District considers rebranding to avoid confusion from page 2

A quick survey of attending committee members, including three current students, produced a few common goals for a new name, including sensitivity, social justice, inclusivity, supportiveness, and reinforcing district values.

Jen Stainton, district curriculum coordinator, said WCUUSD is often confused with Windsor Southeast Supervisory Union, generally referred to as "the Windsor district." The renaming, she said, should end the mix-ups.

Bristow shared slides from a Dartmouth College Tuck business school project with guidelines for district renaming, based on studies of various similar projects across the country.

There are three parts to the committee's strategy: To identify and recommend a district name change, to consider possibly changing the mascot of the district's athletic teams, and to create appropriate symbols that complement

the new district name. Bristow suggested working on the district name first.

The committee's first meeting, according to Sousa, produced a draft two-page survey to be distributed to students and their families, alumni, staff, and members of those who may not otherwise have a direct current connection to the schools. There will be a link to the final survey on the district website that, Bristow said, could be interactive.

The survey will be emailed to everyone who has a stake in the project and a known email address, she said, and posted on local internet forums and social media sites.

"And I hope there will be a link provided in the local newspapers," she said.

The general public, particularly education-focused groups both within the schools and the community will be asked for ideas, and opinions.

Committee members suggested

possible genres that might be considered, such as local physical features — a mountain, a river, a valley. Sousa mentioned that some districts, such as Slate Valley in Rutland County, are named for local industries.

Stainton will invite Jason Drebber, a 2017 Woodstock Union High School graduate and current University of Vermont student of geomorphology, to provide input at the next meeting regarding local features that might be appropriate.

She said the committee shouldn't assume everyone will be in favor of changing the name, and suggested a direct question to that effect on the survey, which the committee plans to start distributing following the next meeting on Feb. 9.

"We'll keep promoting it for several weeks before we tally the results," Bristow said.

Scott proposes more spending to bring Vermonters back to the workforce and attract workers from other states

By Fred Thys/VTdigger

During his annual budget address on Tuesday, Jan. 18, Gov. Phil Scott proposed taking advantage of federal money pouring into Vermont to encourage more people to move into the state and to train Vermonters to fill thousands of vacant jobs.

“We all see the ‘now hiring’ signs, reduced hours at local businesses and shortages in health care and public safety,” Scott told a joint session of the Legislature.

Among Scott’s proposals were spending \$8.5 million over four years to recruit workers to move to Vermont.

Increasing the number of people in the workforce is the primary concern of Vermont businesses, Betsy Bishop, said president of the Vermont Chamber of Commerce. She said looking outside the state is the solution, because “there’s just not enough people in Vermont to fill the jobs that we have.”

She said the cost of housing is one of the main obstacles to persuading people to move to Vermont. People are willing to move to Vermont “to take jobs or even take their own remote jobs with them, but they cannot find enough houses in Vermont,” she said.

Similarly, Jordan Giaconia, public policy director at Vermont Businesses for Social Responsibility, said he has heard plenty of stories from employers who hired people from out of state, only to have them back out when they found out how expensive housing is in Vermont.

The governor proposed using \$15 million from the federal American Rescue Plan to encourage construction of homes for middle-income Vermonters, \$25 million for grants to landlords to fix rundown and vacant housing, and \$105 million to construct mixed-income housing.

He also proposed increasing tax credits by \$5 million a year to encourage development in downtown areas and villages.

Beyond housing, Scott said he supports adding police officers, nurse practitioners, electricians and other occupations with an acute shortage of workers to the list of jobs that transplants can take when they are reimbursed for moving to Vermont.

Meanwhile, Sen. Michael Sirotkin, D-Chittenden, chair of the Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs, said his committee is considering getting rid of the list altogether, letting demand determine which jobs people fill.

Sirotkin said he supports Scott’s emphasis on the trades. The governor said he wants to spend more on internships and training, adding \$1 million to the state’s internship program and another \$1 million for grants to people who want to train for jobs such as emergency medical technicians and web programmers.

He wants to invest \$2.7 million in a pilot program to connect students from career and technical education centers with employers. The pilot program would start with the technical centers linked to the high schools in Barre, Bennington, Brattleboro, Burlington, Rutland and St. Johnsbury.

“We need to focus on the trades, especially with today’s critical need for housing and broadband,” Sirotkin said in an email.

But Sirotkin expressed concern about a proliferation of training programs.

“We need to pay attention to the fact that we have too many uncoordinated programs when it comes to workforce training,” Sirotkin said. “We have plenty of money and obvious need, but it’s spread out over just about every agency in state government with too many boards and not enough coordination.”

Workforce reductions

From February 2020 to November 2021, the latest month for which there are statistics, nearly 24,600 Vermonters left the workforce, according to the Vermont Department of Labor.

Where did they go, and, as the Vermont Department of La-

bor’s Mat Barewicz put it, “Are these people going to go back?”

“That is the biggest mystery right now,” said Barewicz, the director of economic and labor market information.

Tracking reductions in Vermont’s workforce is an imprecise endeavor.

For one thing, the data doesn’t indicate how many people are over 60, under 18, or whether the number of people leaving the workforce is evenly distributed all ages, Barewicz said. He said early data suggests people from all age groups have pulled back from the workforce.



Gov. Phil Scott delivers his 2022 budget address in the Pavilion State Office Building on Tuesday, Jan. 18, 2022.

Barewicz said some are aging out of the workforce and others are reevaluating their work life. Significant disruptions in child care and education are among the factors contributing to those decisions, he said.

Indeed, Giaconia told the House Committee on Commerce and Economic Development Wednesday that, in a 2020 survey conducted by his organization and the Main Street Alliance of Vermont, 42% of business owners reported a lack of child care was an obstacle to people returning to work.

Also during that hearing, Bishop told the committee that businesses are starting to offer salaries instead of wages in an effort to retain employees, which could lead to fewer workers working more than one job.

Barewicz said many Vermonters hold more than one job because so many work in seasonal businesses.

One thing is for sure: A lot of Vermonters have been quitting their jobs. In October, the last month for which data is available, 15,000 Vermonters were hired and 10,000 people quit their jobs.

Meanwhile, the number of businesses opening in Vermont has apparently accelerated during the pandemic — although Barewicz said that could be a quirk of record-keeping. Between the second quarter of 2019 and the second quarter of 2021, he said, 1,921 businesses opened in Vermont, a growth of 7.8%, compared with 1.8% for the prior two years.

However, he thinks the numbers could reflect workers for out-of-state companies moving to Vermont, with their companies having to register in order to handle taxes for those employees.





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2022 tax filing season opened Jan. 24

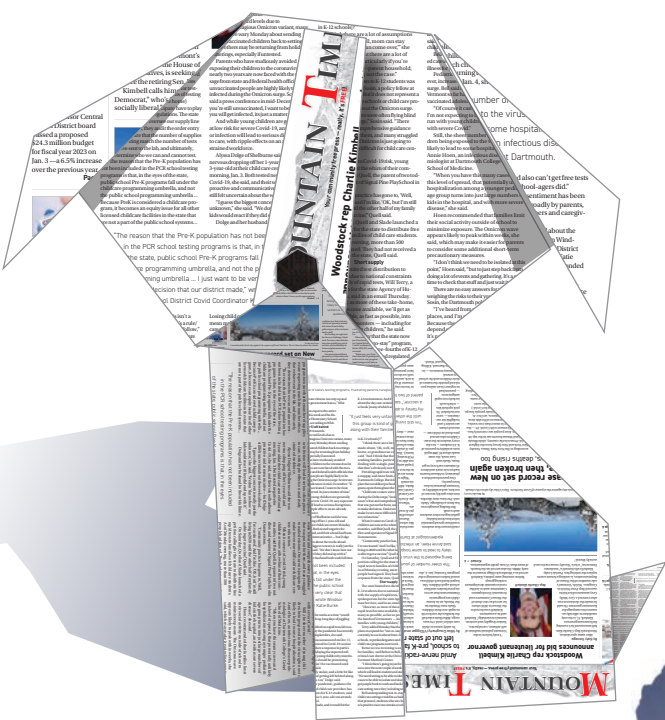
The 2022 tax season officially opened Monday, Jan. 24 at both the federal and state levels. This is the date that the IRS and Vermont begin accepting and processing personal income tax returns for tax year 2021. The Vermont Dept. of Taxes offers the following tips to make filing and getting your refund easier and faster:

- Wait to receive all W-2 forms, 1099 forms or any other necessary tax documents before filing. Filing too early without all your documentation is one of the most common reasons a tax refund is delayed.
- File electronically (e-file) through a commercial software vendor. Filing electronically reduces the risk of typographical errors and significantly speeds up refund processing time. Last year, taxpayers who e-filed their returns on average received their refunds more than four weeks faster than those who mailed paper returns. Free File allows eligible Vermonters to file their taxes at no cost. Information regarding who is eligible and how to access this software is available at: tax.vermont.gov/free-file. Check online at myvtax.vermont.gov for the status of your tax refund, Homestead Declaration, Property Tax Credit and Renter Credit.
- The 2022 filing deadline for personal and corporate income tax returns, Homestead Declarations and Property Tax Credit claims and fiduciary income taxes is April 18.
- New renter credit: Renters filing for a renter credit (formerly renter rebate) this upcoming season will see some changes that took effect for tax year 2021. Importantly, most renters will no longer need to obtain a landlord certificate from their landlord to file. Additional key changes to the program allow a renter to qualify by renting a minimum of 6 months of the year instead of all 12 months, and renters living in shared households no longer need to share their personal financial information with roommates because renters file credit claims individually.
- For landlords, those with one or more (previously two or more) rental units are required to submit landlord certificates to the department by Jan. 31, but they no longer need to send the certificates to their renters. All landlords are strongly encouraged to file landlord certificates electronically at mytax.vermont.gov, and those with five or more renters are required to file electronically.

Last year, taxpayers who e-filed their returns on average received their refunds more than four weeks faster than those who mailed paper returns.

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Legislative Update: Pension for teachers, state employees rectified

When the Pension Benefits, Design, and Funding Task Force was created last year, I was relieved. Our public pension system was in crisis. If we did nothing to fix the problems, Vermont taxpayers were looking at an unfunded pension liability of \$4.5 billion dollars, with that liability growing for the teachers and state employees by over \$600 million dollars per year. These financial pressures (historic underfunding, fund underperformance and rising health care costs) coupled with demographic changes (fewer people paying into the system and people living longer) were stressing the pension system. To guarantee a secure and reliable retirement for people who have served Vermont admirably for decades, and to recruit new teachers and employees, we needed to address this thorny problem.



By Sen. Alison Clarkson

Unlike the many other states facing a similar crisis, Vermont chose to address it head on. It created a well balanced task force with every stakeholder group represented at the table to tackle this daunting job. Everyone had skin in the game and everyone benefited if a solution could be agreed upon. This group of 13 participants managed to accomplish this feat. They worked hard building trust, learning together, listening to each other and compromising. It was a good example of Vermonters coming together to solve hard problems.

After six months of work on this complex issue, the Pension Task Force voted

unanimously to adopt their Final Report on Jan. 10. This agreement protects the public pension system, saves the taxpayers \$2 billion in the upcoming years, and maintains the defined benefit plan. Vermont will be adding hundreds of millions more to lower the unfunded liability and will continue to contribute millions annually to the pension system both through the ADEC (actuarial defined employer contribution) and by pre-funding the OPEB (other post employment benefits/health care).

While there are differences between the teachers and state employee agreements, some changes will include: phasing in a progressive contribution structure, higher employee contributions, delaying their COLA for an additional 12 months and other benefit changes. At the public hearing last week, many teachers and state employees testified that the agreed package to keep the pension system healthy was "fair and reasonable." Those who are currently retired are not affected by these changes.

In addition, the Pew Charitable Trust recently cited Vermont for restructuring its pension governance board, which is an important step in strengthening our pension investment and oversight practices. I encourage you to read this report and the Joint Fiscal Office's overview. Both are on the pension task force's webpage.

Here is a link to that report: bit.ly/vtpensionfinalreport

I appreciate hearing from you. I can be reached by email: aclarkson@leg.state.vt.us or by phone at 457-4627. To watch Legislative committees in action, and to get more information on the Vermont Legislature, the bills which are being debated now, and those which have been proposed and passed, visit the legislative website: legislature.vermont.gov.

Slate Ridge: Ordered to close and pay town of Pawlet fines for noncompliance from page 2

exceed \$100 per day because the matter was under appeal, Bent said.

Next, Banyai will need to hire a surveyor to assess the improvements on his property, including structures and gun ranges, Bent said. Banyai told The Granville Sentinel that he's spent \$1.6 million on infrastructure — the story was used as an exhibit in the case.

Then, the town will need to get an order identifying what needs to be removed and how long it will take, Bent said.

"And then we also have to see what exactly Mr. Banyai is going to do about it, in terms of whether he's going to willingly do so himself or if the town is going to have to ask for permission to go on the property to perform the work," Bent said.

If he doesn't comply, Bent said the town will need to ask the court to hold him in contempt. "Theoretically, civil contempt can include both fines or even jail time," Bent said. "But I really don't want

property. He's set up another gun range, and a new building to accompany it, according to his posts and photos.

Banyai already has a permitted garage and attached apartment on the land that could stay.

"Theoretically, civil contempt can include both fines or even jail time," Bent said.

to get ahead of ourselves here because, hopefully, we never get there. Hopefully we get compliance with the order and move forward, and then, if there are future projects on that property, then we can start with a clean slate."

In the last several months, Banyai has posted on Slate Ridge's Twitter account about continued building on the

Meanwhile, neighbors and town officials say the area has been somewhat quiet in recent months.

"There's certainly a road ahead, I'm sure," said Jessica Van Oort, who chairs the Pawlet Planning Commission. "But I think, as far as many people in the town are concerned, this is probably a good step."

Golden opportunity

Last Tuesday, Jan. 18, Governor Phil Scott began the week with his annual budget address to the Legislature. In that speech, he called on lawmakers to work with his administration to pass a budget that was transformational by strategically using the federal funds from last year's American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA).

The ARPA money coupled with an increase in the state's revenue forecast should allow for fully funding current programs, meeting pension obligations, reducing some of the state debt and making strategic long-term investments for a better, brighter future, according to Scott. In other words, it marks a golden opportunity.

In some respects, it was a continuation of his call for investments in climate measures, connectivity, housing and increasing our workforce. He also called for some tax reductions, including:

- Exempting military pensions from Vermont income taxes
- Return half of the estimated \$90 million surplus in the education fund to property taxpayers
- Increase the income threshold by \$30,000 to exempt more Vermonters from taxes on their social security benefits
- Increase the earned income tax credit to benefit working lower- and moderate-income families
- Expand the child and dependent care tax credit
- New tax credits for nurses and childcare workers

House Speaker Jill Krowinski and Senate leader Becca Balint indicated they were supportive of a lot of the governor's priorities, but have different ideas on tax relief. With inflation pressures impacting all,



By Rep. Jim Harrison

initiatives, \$6 million for childcare staff retention, \$9.7 million for the state college critical occupational scholarships (such as nursing), and \$60 million for healthcare staff retention.

Other items of interest:

The Senate Judiciary Committee has begun taking testimony on S.254, which removes qualified immunity for law enforcement. Under current law and court precedence, all public officials, from school board members to fire fighters and snowplow drivers rely on qualified immunity to protect them from personal liability unless the official violated a clearly established constitutional right. S.254 would remove law enforcement officers from that protection. The legislation is a priority of Senate leader Becca Balint and the ACLU. It is opposed by law enforcement groups and the organization representing municipalities.

A Senate committee advanced S.210, which establishes a statewide rental registry and attempts to address some of the concerns Scott raised on a similar bill, S.79, that he vetoed last June. The new bill exempts properties rented for fewer than 90 days each year, owner-occupied residences with three or fewer units and those in towns with similar registry programs in place.

Prop. 2, a clarification amendment to Vermont's constitution prohibiting slavery and indentured service, has advanced from committee and will be before the full House in the coming week.

Senate leader Becca Balint indicated that she did not see a path forward for a statewide mask mandate at this time, given the opposition from the governor. The Senate Health & Welfare Committee had been scheduled to vote on the measure last Tuesday, which was later cancelled.

Last week marked the first full week for House members to return to the Capitol in-person, albeit in a hybrid fashion.

Scott is proposing breaks across the spectrum. The legislative leaders, instead, have indicated a preference to focus reductions primarily to those families with childcare.

No doubt it will be a conversation that will be front and center over the next few months.

Another key money bill, the annual mid-year budget adjustment, received unanimous approval by the full House this past week. The legislation, H.679, began as an administration proposal to adjust for spending during the current fiscal year and then was modified by the House Appropriations Committee. Overall spending was up approximately \$358 million (4.9%) in state and federal funds. Some of the extra expenses included \$68 million for Medicaid, \$50 million reserved for pensions, \$18 million to the Dept. of Labor to help unemployment claims backlog, \$75 million for housing

A new registration requirement for home contractors, along with written contract requirements for planned work with homeowners, is on its way to final passage following a House vote on Thursday.

Last week marked the first full week for House members to return to the Capitol in-person, albeit in a hybrid fashion with allowances for members to continue remotely. There were some technical issues with floor sessions, as well as a few members having trouble finding their mute buttons at times, but overall, the return went smoothly. An estimated 98% of House members and staff are fully vaccinated and 100% complied with the mandatory weekly testing if they were not. The Senate, meanwhile, extended their schedule to stay fully remote.

Public Hearing, Proposal 5: Proposed Amendment to the Vermont Constitu-

Harrison > 12

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Vermont is no longer collecting school Covid data

Positive Covid case numbers are now impossible to know with shift to at-home antigen testing, self-reporting

By Peter D'Auria/VTDigger and Polly Mikula

State officials in Vermont are no longer gathering or publishing the number of Covid-19 cases detected in schools.

In response to questions, Department of Health spokesperson Ben Truman confirmed Tuesday, Jan. 18, that the state will no longer maintain its list of such cases, which was previously updated weekly.

The data was last updated Monday, Jan. 10.

The change comes as the state Agency of Education is urging schools to shift to a new Covid testing model, called "test at home," in which parents of unvaccinated children will be responsible for testing their children for Covid-19 if a known positive case is confirmed in their classroom.

"With the shift to Test at Home, schools are no longer doing contact tracing," Truman said in an email. "This means we will not have data on which cases were at a K-12 learning community location while infectious."

Vermont will begin publishing a "pediatric cases data brief," Truman said, which would break down Covid cases by age group, but not school or district. Health department officials already report data on pediatric cases, and the brief is "based on our case data," according to another health department spokesperson, Katie Warchut.

The shift in data collection protocols is part of a major shift in how Vermont schools handle Covid cases.

Previously, the state recommended a program called "test to stay," in which school officials administered rapid tests to students before classes and reported positive Covid cases to the state.

Health department officials used that data to publish a list of all schools' reported infectious Covid cases.

"This change marks the turning point in treating Covid-19 as a pandemic. We are now being asked to respond like we do with other endemic viruses (ex: common cold, flu, etc.)," wrote Barstow Memorial School Principal David St. Germain.

But that data often lagged behind the numbers recorded by local school staff.

And, with the rapid spread of the Omicron variant, officials expected the numbers to "lose some of their currency," Education Secretary Dan French said at a press conference last month.

Now, it will fall to parents to test their children for Covid-19 and report positives to the state using an online form (healthvermont.gov/reportresults).

Health Commissioner Dr. Mark Levine explained further in an interview on NPR, Jan. 18. He said that Vermont still leads the nation in testing per capita, but now that Vermont "is transitioning to a more antigen testing approach" as is the county as a whole, it will reduce the known case numbers significantly.

"With the antigen testing we of course don't always know the denominator of how many people chose to get tested, we rarely know who tested negative and uncommonly we know who tested positive," Levine said. "We know people are reporting on our website, but we don't think that's a super high percentage of the total. So just knowing how many cases you're dealing with in any state is a challenge now."

At the press conference Jan. 11, French also acknowledged that the shift to at home antigen testing would have a significant impact on the collection of positive case numbers.

"We'll lose control of that data in exchange for having more

broadly distributed tests in the public," he said.

After being forced back into remote schooling the week prior, Barstow Memorial School Principal David St. Germain wrote a email to all parents, stating that the school would no longer be treating Covid-19 as a pandemic.

"Last week did not end as we had planned," he wrote, Sunday, Jan. 16. "Tomorrow, we will

be following our last in-the-building Test to Stay protocols. Beginning Wednesday, parents will be asked to conduct the tests of their student(s) at home. Students who have been exposed to the Covid virus will be given the Rapid Test kits to take home. This change marks the turning point in treating Covid-19 as a pandemic. We are now being asked to respond like we do with other endemic viruses (ex: common cold, flu, etc.)."



By Glenn Russell/VTDigger

Christine Soyachak, who works at the local high school, performs a rapid antigen covid-19 test on student Silas Gooding, age 10, at the Enosburgh Public Safety Building on Friday, Dec. 17, 2021.

Short on tests: Last week, just days after the new testing process was rolled out for school, tests ran out from page 1

"We are completely out of tests as of today," Montpelier Roxbury Public School District Superintendent Libby Bonesteel said Thursday, Jan. 20. "We're not going to be able to follow through on the guidance."

"We've gotten (tests) in the hundreds, when we need in the thousands," Chris Hennessey, superintendent of the Barre Unified Union School District, said Thursday.

For much of the academic year, most of the state's schools have been using a testing process called "test to stay."

In that process, school staff conduct contact tracing after a positive case turns up in a school. Unvaccinated close contacts participating in the program must test negative with a rapid Covid-19 test performed at school.

But earlier this month, the Vermont Agency of Education unveiled a new strategy: test at home.

Schools were told to halt contact tracing entirely. Instead, all participating students who share a class with a Covid-positive person are all classified as presumptive contacts.

If unvaccinated, those presumptive contacts are instructed to test five consecutive days in a row in order to attend class. Vaccinated students and school staff are given two rapid antigen tests and told to test on the fourth and fifth days after exposure.

Since Omicron spreads much faster

than earlier versions of the coronavirus, "our processes of contact tracing and test to stay had difficulty keeping up," Dan French, Vermont's secretary of education, said at a press conference Jan. 11.

But school districts found that it requires a far greater supply of rapid tests than Test to Stay.

In Montpelier-Roxbury, a single Covid-19 case in an elementary school would create roughly 20 presumptive contacts, if not more, Bonesteel said.

Cases at middle or high schools, where students move from class to class, could create between 70 and 150 close contacts, she said.

Each presumptive contact takes home either two or five rapid tests, depending on their vaccination status — meaning a single case could eat up hundreds of rapid tests.

"The way they've set this up, it would almost be easier if we just sent a box of antigen tests home with every kid every day," Bonesteel said.

In the Rutland Northeast Supervisory Union, school officials have also run out of tests, Superintendent Jeanne Collins said. Schools there, whose student bodies have not exceeded a 50% vaccination rate, have reported between 20 to 35 positive Covid-19 cases a day, Collins said.

"We're at the point where we're going to have to start deciding if kids

can't come to school again," she said.

Ted Fisher, a spokesperson for the Agency of Education, said state officials expect the demand for rapid tests in schools to drop in the coming weeks, as the Omicron wave recedes.

"More tests are being shipped today, tomorrow, and early next week," Fisher said in an email last week. "We are working to expedite delivery to any Supervisory Unions and School Districts that are using tests more quickly than anticipated."

If a school district runs out of tests, state education officials advise against shutting schools. Students who were identified as presumptive close contacts after a positive case at school can still attend class, according to guidance from the state Agency of Education, though anyone with symptoms is still advised to stay home.

Last week, schools across Vermont received shipments of roughly 120,000 rapid tests, but state officials expect to need about 80,000 rapid tests a week — a number roughly equivalent to one for every public school student in the state.

"In the coming weeks, we do not expect challenges filling requests from schools, based on our current usage estimates," Fisher said.

On Thursday, Gov. Phil Scott hinted that more rapid tests could also be diverted to schools.

WCSD: Schools react to Covid policy changes from page 1

ciency, the town of Killington stepped up to provide 125 rapid tests to Killington Elementary School on Monday, Jan. 24. Prior to that Bob and Whit Montgomery (father and son owner of the Killington Group and the chief of police, respectively) donated 50 tests to the Pre-K, which they were subsequently required to use that same week when a positive case was identified and the school ran out of tests. The Select Board hopes to secure hundreds more tests for the school and possibly district in the weeks to come.

Parents are asked to report positive test results to the district. The AoE was collecting test result data and maintained a public access list, but will no longer do so.

Sousa said WCSD's website dashboard shows a daily report of positive tests, a system inspired by the Springfield, Vermont district's similar arrangement. The WCSD scoreboard was developed with a lot of effort by Raphael Adamek, instructional technology director, and Katie Burke, Covid-19 coordinator.

"It's important to be transparent about what's going on regarding Covid in the schools," Sousa said. "It builds trust, enhances our relationship with our parents, and informs families with no direct connection to the district. And it also dispels inaccurate rumors that might otherwise have the opposite effect."

According to the WCSD daily report, as of Jan. 21 there have been 132 positive student cases during the 2021-2022 school year, 67 in the latest 14 days, and 21 in the last seven days. There are approximately 900 students in the district.

Districts are handling the data in various ways.

Dr. David Baker, superintendent of Windsor Southeast Supervisory Union (WSESU) said his district maintains a record of positive tests internally.

"The reporting is all self-reporting now. Our parents are good about doing it," Dr. Baker said.

The most recent unofficial report was 40 new cases, out of about 500 students.

‘There’s just not a light on the horizon:’ Vermont hospital staff swamped by record Covid-19 hospitalizations

By Liora Engel-Smith, Erin Petenko and Ethan Weinstein/VT Digger

RUTLAND — Asked what it’s like to do her job right now amid a staffing crisis and surging Covid-19 hospitalizations, a nurse heading home from Rutland Regional Medical Center on Monday, Jan. 17, was moved to tears.

“It’s a lot. It’s just a lot. It’s really difficult right now,” said the woman, who declined to give her name. Having just finished her shift, she was already late to pick up her daughter, she said.

Vermont has hit new record-setting highs for Covid-19 hospitalization numbers last week, part of a trend of a rising Omicron surge. This week, the Vermont Department of Health reported 101 people were in the state’s hospitals with Covid-19 Tuesday, Jan. 25. There were 111 people hospitalized with Covid on Saturday and 104 on Sunday and 105 on Monday. Tuesday marked the 12th consecutive day with more than 100 Covid patients in Vermont hospitals.

Hospital staff and administrators have said they are under “extreme strain” due to the surge in Covid patients, people seeking care for other conditions and staffing shortage—an increasing number of health care workers are getting sidelined after being exposed or infected themselves, contributing to an ever-worsening shortage.

Late last week, the University of Vermont Medical Center — the state’s largest hospital — instituted emergency staffing procedures after some 400 workers were out, representing a roughly 5% reduction in the hospital’s 8,500-person roster.

Vermont’s small rural hospitals are feeling the same pressure, said Jeff Tieman, president and CEO of the Vermont Association of Hospitals and Health Systems.

“They’ve closed operating rooms and suspended surgery schedules,” Tieman said. “They’ve used CDC [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention] guidance in a couple of cases to bring back workers who are Covid-positive.”

At Gifford Medical Center in rural Randolph, CEO Dan Bennett said he could have 25 beds at the ready if he had a full staff, but these days he can eke out enough coverage for only 20 beds.

Overnight shifts are the most difficult to fill, Bennett said, which means that patients admitted in the wee hours sometimes stay in the emergency room until a shift change the following morning.

The pressure on UVM Medical Center compounds the challenge for Gifford and hospitals like it, especially when it comes to transferring

critically ill patients, Bennett said. Before the pandemic, hospital staff could make a simple phone call to transfer a patient to a larger hospital — typically Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center in Lebanon, New Hampshire, or UVM Medical Center in Burlington. But now, these hospitals are often full, and patients are being sent to medical centers in Boston, Philadelphia and Rhode Island.

As with many hospitals, staffing has been a constant struggle in recent years at Copley Hospital in Morrisville, but absences caused by the Omicron variant have deepened the crisis, according to Chief Medical Officer Donald Dupuis. The 25-bed hospital usually needs four or five nurses per shift, he said.

“When you think about a hospital, everyone thinks about nurses and doctors, right off,” Dupuis said. “You don’t have to think about it very long before you’re thinking about the people who do the radiology, the people who make the lab run and even the people that make the food — I mean, you can’t have a hospital without all those people. And all of those areas just sort of get nibbled away.”

Some of the state’s medium-sized hospitals have adopted policies similar to those at UVM. To keep the emergency department and inpatient services running

“There’s just not a light on the horizon,” Danielovich said. “It’s not one of those magical things where it’s like, ‘oh, it’ll be over soon.’ For it to be over, there needs to be more nurses.”

without interruptions, executives at the 61-bed Brattleboro Memorial Hospital cut elective surgeries and outpatient services by roughly a half, spokesperson Gina Pattison said Monday, Jan. 17.

Officials at UVM Medical Center expect to continue for at least a week at emergency staffing status. It’s an extraordinary step that puts significant pressure on a workforce that’s already stretched to capacity.

The policy means nurses can be reassigned to units with the greatest needs, and nurse managers — some of whom have not been on the floor for years — may have to care for patients, among other measures. If staffing levels remain inadequate, hospitals may have to turn patients away and refuse transfers.

As of Monday, more than 300 UVM Medical Center workers were unable to work, spokesperson Annie Mackin said.

Fraser Danielovich, a nurse at the Burlington hospital’s surgical intensive care unit, said the additional stress that has no end date has been difficult to handle.

“There’s just not a light on the horizon,” Danielovich said. “It’s not one of those magical things where it’s like, ‘oh, it’ll be over soon.’ For it to be over, there needs to be more nurses. You can’t just clap your hands and they appear.”

State officials have noted that reports of hospitalizations and deaths tend to lag behind reported infections. The Vermont Department of Financial Regulation, which keeps the state’s statistics, has forecasted that, even as cases “slow and possibly decline,” deaths may remain elevated through February.

The health department reported seven additional Covid deaths during the weekend, for a total of 41 so far in January. Overall, 521 people have died from Covid in Vermont since the beginning of the pandemic in March 2020.



Courtesy of Ryan Mercer/UVM Medical Center

Staff care for a new arrival to the University of Vermont Medical Center Intensive Care Unit on Dec. 2.

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EDITORIAL

Governor's budget — it's easy to just say 'yes'

By Angelo Lynn

It's not surprising that any governor of Vermont faced with creating a budget with more than \$1 billion in one-time ARPA money (with \$500 million still left to spend), plus another \$2.2 billion coming from the congressional infrastructure package, would choose to spread it around to as many constituencies as possible for maximum political benefit.

So it was with Gov. Phil Scott's \$7.7 billion budget address delivered Tuesday, Jan. 11. Like last year, another year of record federal aid, the governor didn't have to fret about which programs to trim, but rather which programs got extra funding and which taxes got reduced.

Scott, nonetheless, gave lip service to being prudent with these one-time funds, and being sure every dollar counted.

"Let's do our very best to make sure that every negotiation, every decision and every investment withstands the test of time and meets this extraordinary moment," he said during his address. "Because we will not get a second chance."

To that end, he did focus federal aid on several big-ticket items that should stand the test of time:

- \$145 million for housing initiatives;
- \$200 million to expand broadband throughout the state;
- \$51 million for cell towers;
- \$72 million for water, sewer and stormwater infrastructure;
- \$216 million for climate change and community resiliency projects;
- \$50 million to retire certain government debts;
- \$394 million to fully fund the state's current retirement (pension) obligations;
- \$25 million for various higher-education initiatives; and
- \$12 million to the state's child care subsidy program for low-income families.

There were also dozens of smaller initiatives that will help juice the economy and serve various state needs. It is, **Budget > 12**

OP-ED

Rapid tests and N95 masks for every Vermonter

By Senator Bernie Sanders (I-Vermont)

As you read this, the number of Covid cases in Vermont are reaching levels far greater than at any point in the crisis. Today, I am writing to you with some news that should be of help as we fight this terrible pandemic.

The scientific community has been very clear that wearing masks helps prevent the spread of the Covid virus. It protects both the individual who wears the mask and those who are nearby.

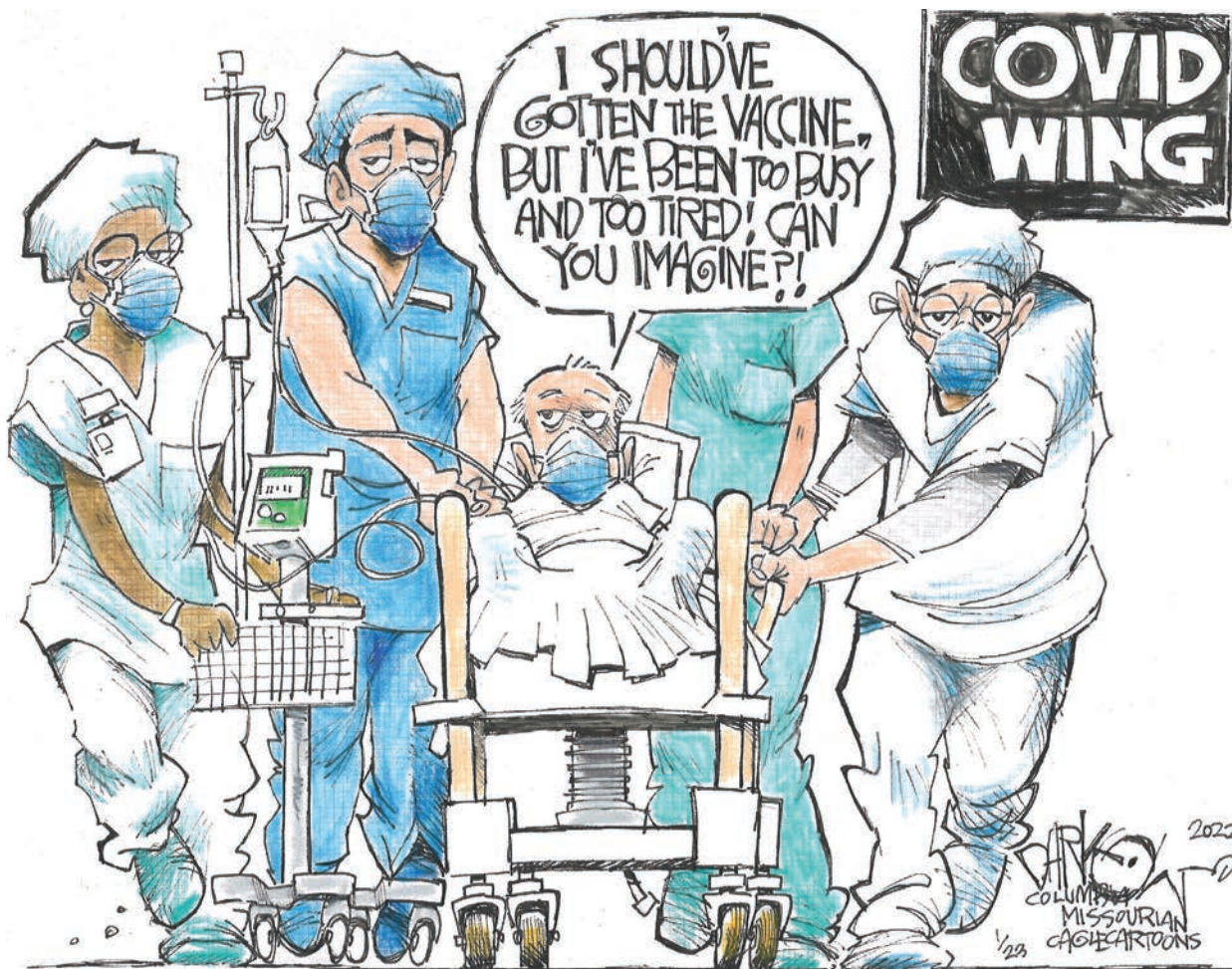
But, what research has also been very clear about is that not all masks are created equal.

The research tells us that N95 masks are far more effective than cloth masks in preventing the spread of Covid. In fact, a non-medical N95 mask provides 2 hours of additional protection, as compared with a cloth or surgical mask, in preventing the spread of the virus.

As a result of that reality, the Biden Administration today announced that it will make 400 million N95 masks available for free around the country, including at community health centers and pharmacies in Vermont.

This is a good first step, but more must be done. That is why last week I introduced legislation to have the Administration utilize the Defense Production Act to produce the large quantity of N95 masks that we need and distribute them to every household in the country through the Postal Service.

If this bill becomes law, every Vermonter would receive a

Fighting Covid > 13

Can you imagine? by John Darkow, Columbia Missourian

LETTERS

Vote 'no' on Prop. 5

Dear Editor,

The Vermont Medical Society states that "no abortion providers in Vermont perform elective abortions in the third trimester." However, their claim seems terribly disingenuous considering that prop 5 sets no time limits, but allows for unrestricted, unregulated abortion for any reason right up to the moment of birth. If they feel so strongly that there is a problem with late-term abortions, why hasn't even one physician from this society ever spoken out against Prop 5, or at least suggested limits?

This raises some troubling questions: what exactly is it about late-term abortions that the physicians in the Vermont Medical Society — and the politicians who agree with them in their support of Prop. 5 — find so disturbing that they are adamant such a thing would never happen in Vermont? Why do they insist that for the first six months, abortion is a private decision between a woman and her healthcare provider, but then somehow arbitrarily decide it is no longer ethical afterward to terminate her pregnancy? Who

decides these timelines and on what basis?

Is it because of the moral difficulty experienced by these physicians, realizing they will have just purposely destroyed and then delivered a dead baby, who is without a doubt recognizable as a nearly full-term human infant? Sometimes the abortion doesn't go as planned, and the baby is born alive. Then what? Did you know that Senators Leahy and Sanders actually voted against legislation which would ensure lifesaving measures be given to infants who survive botched abortions?

Is it because they believe that preborn children in the first and second trimesters are incapable of feeling pain? The Vermont Medical Society believes that a fetus does not have the ability to "interpret and perceive pain until at least 28 weeks."

This information is tragically misleading when the fact is that premature babies as young as 22 weeks—the second trimester—are surviving and thriving now because

Prop 5 > 12

Nurses, teachers must be thanked... Every day

Dear Editor,

Every day....Every day.... Every day each superintendent, principal, administrator and school board member should make a point of

thanking their teachers and school nurses.

Every day!
John Beattie
Salisbury

Students not safe in school

Dear Editor,

I'm terrified to go to school. That's really nothing new — I'm from a generation raised on school shooter drills, told that a strap on a door would protect us and that if all else failed, our books could be shields. Expect the worst-case scenario; any learning environment could be a war zone in a matter of seconds. This has been my public school experience. Covid-19 is a worst-case scenario every day that no amount of drills could have prepared us for.

I'm 17 years old. I have had a chronic illness since I was 14. In those three and a half years, I've had more doctor's appointments than most people twice my age. Illness is nothing new to me.

I have known for years what everyone has discovered over the course of this pandemic: the invisible threat of sickness and the unknown of developing long-term symptoms is terrifying. It makes you feel out of control.


Most of my peers, luckily, have never known illness

I urge the governor, the school board and the superintendent to take steps to keep kids safe, because right now, the adults in the room are failing us.

like this, and it shows. I think about their blissful ignorance every day when I come home from school and start my decontamination routine:

Not safe > 13

CAPITAL QUOTES



On the "great American sickout" ... Nearly 9 million Americans had to stay home from work because they or someone they were caring for had Covid-19 in early January (Dec. 29 to Jan. 10) according to data collected by the Census Bureau. That's about 6% of the workforce — a record. Additionally, another 3.2 million people said they weren't working because they were worried about getting or spreading the coronavirus — up 25% from early December.

"Time and time again, we see that this economic recovery is tied to the pandemic and public health measures,"

said **Luke Pardue**, an economist at payroll services company Gusto.

"It was a hellacious three weeks,"

said Delta Airlines CEO **Ed Bastian** in a conference call with stock analysts and reporters earlier this month. The executive said 8,000 of his employees contracted Covid-19 in the three weeks since the start of the Christmas holiday — about 10% of the carrier's workforce, causing massive flight cancellations.

"As long as there's a positive adult that they can build connections with — whether it's a National Guard member or a state employee or a substitute — and we're keeping our schools open, that's our top priority,"

said **Whitney Holland**, president of the American Federation of Teachers in New Mexico, Jan. 19, after Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham asked the National Guard and state workers to fill in as substitute teachers covering for sick teachers.

"At a time when we're closing in on 850,000 Americans having died in the worst global pandemic in a century, and when infections and hospitalizations are continuing to soar, it is the obligation of our public agencies to require and enforce essential public safety measures to protect the lives and health of all American workers,"

said **Zenei Triunfo-Cortez**, president of the union National Nurses United.

COMMENTARY

The 'why' behind the Woodstock Village mask requirement

By Seton McIlroy, vice-chair of Woodstock Village Board of Trustees

Weatherwise, the toughest time in Vermont is not the freezing days of winter, as some out-of-staters think. It's the Janus-faced month of April. We get a few days, maybe a week, when the snow melts, flowers poke out, and heavy coats stay in the closet. Suddenly, we get freezing temperatures, dark skies and flower-killing frost and snow. The hope for short sleeves and warm breezes is dashed. The coats and sweaters now feel too heavy. You just want winter to be over already.

After two years of Covid winter, we are now in the Vermont April of the pandemic. For a few months, we rode high on vaccines and felt safe venturing out with maskless faces to see the family and friends we had missed. But then, just like that April snowstorm, the Omicron-variant blew in and took us back to record-breaking Covid cases, deaths and hospitalizations.

Returning to masks, social distancing and staying away from Grandma feels like going backwards. We've followed the rules, we've done the right things, only to have the virus pull a trick play. Unfortunately, Covid doesn't care about our feelings. Covid just wants to find the next host to infect so it can continue to spread, and the Omicron evolution has made it drastically more effective in that regard. So, what do we do? Do we look at the overrun hospitals, the exhausted teachers, the frontline workers who are afraid to go to work and say

Mask mandate > 16

Infantilizing women is not OK

By Elaine Haney

Tim Newcomb's cartoon on Jan. 19 compares the three candidates running for the U.S. House of Representatives. It appears to imply that experience is the most important factor for voters to consider. But whatever the primary message of this cartoon is supposed to be, the implicit, negative messages it sends about these women, and women and people of color in general, are glaring.

The candidates are depicted as a car full of bickering girls. The lieutenant governor of Vermont is shown as a toddler in a car seat.

A sitting state senator and former state representative, a woman of color, is drawn as a child with exaggerated facial features in a booster seat—in the back of the car.

The candidates in the back seat are labelled "Molly" and "Kesha" while the candidate in the front and the driver are labelled "Balint" and "Kunin."

Vermont's first and only woman governor is depicted as a harried parent tired of her annoying children.

Yes, it's just a cartoon. But I can't unsee the infantilizing of two of the most successful women in Vermont politics today. I can't unsee the dismissive treatment of women candidates for the U.S. House as whiny little girls. And I really can't unsee placing the one candidate who is a woman of color in the back seat and exaggerating her lips and nose. The things that are apparently supposed to be funny about this cartoon are actually entrenched stereotypes and tropes that reinforce implicit bias against women and people of color.

I also can't help but remember that just last year the Vermont media was called out for its gender bias in an open letter from dozens of prominent women, and news outlets publicly pledged to do better. This cartoon doesn't do better.

A lot of readers are probably thinking, 'Oh come on, it's just a cartoon, stop being so sensitive, it's supposed to be funny.' It's true that

political cartoonists have a long and colorful history of tweaking the noses of politicians, poking holes in arguments, shining a bright but unflattering light on government, and exaggerating behavior and appearance in caricature. And this particular cartoonist has made us laugh and cringe at ourselves and our state for decades.

But I can't help thinking about all the Vermonters opening their papers or going online to get the news and seeing this cartoon. Are they thinking about the importance of satire in political discourse? Probably not. I'm guessing a lot of people saw that cartoon and thought, "Yep. He nailed it." Because this cartoon just confirms all the negative biases that exist about women,

A lot of readers are probably thinking, 'Oh come on, it's just a cartoon, stop being so sensitive, it's supposed to be funny.'

people of color and women who run for office, all in one tidy little scene.

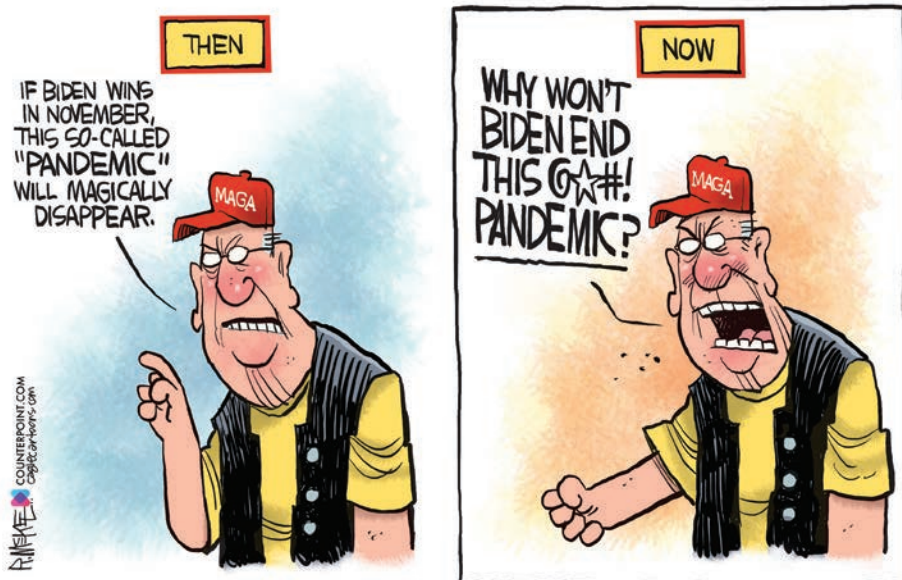
I'm also thinking about all the amazing women currently serving in office right now throughout Vermont, and those who are thinking of running for election on Town Meeting Day and in November. They'll also say, "Yep. He nailed it," but for a different reason: they'll see that cartoon as more of the same dismissive, condescending, stereotypical treatment of women and people of color in politics. And then they'll sigh and carry on doing their good work.

Political cartoons are an important part of our public discourse. They're supposed to get a rise out of us. We shouldn't take them literally—they're supposed to be funny. It's a joke, right?

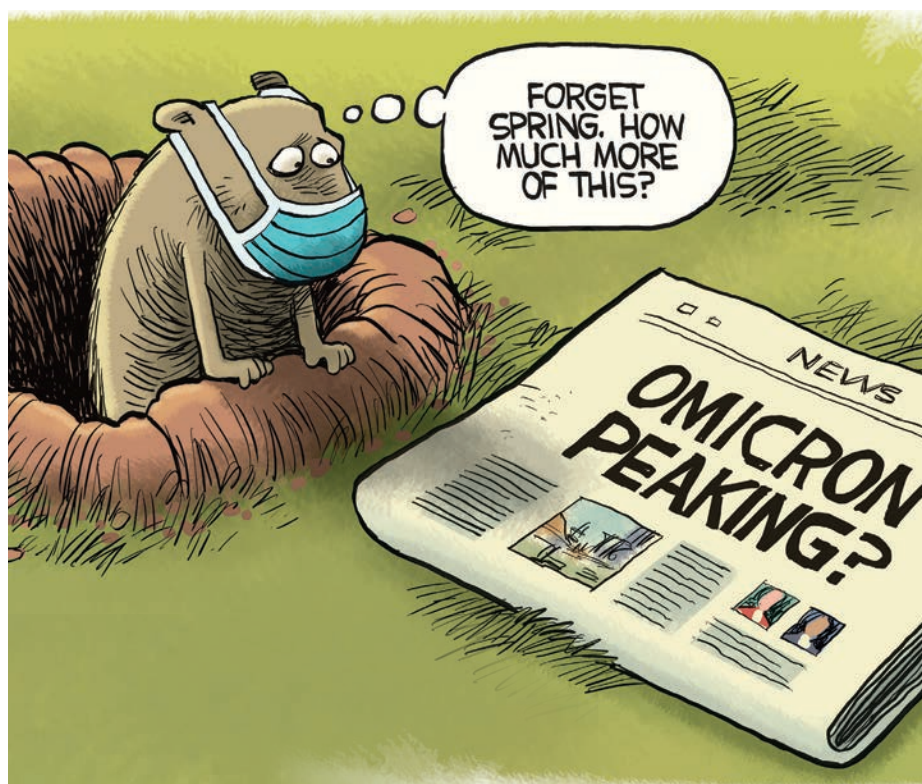
We get it. But the implicit, disrespectful messages about younger women candidates and candidates of color? We get those too, loud and clear.

Elaine Haney is the executive director of Emerge Vermont.

CARTOONS



Covid Magically Disappear by Rick McKee, CagleCartoons.com



Groundhog Covid by Rick McKee, CagleCartoons.com



Health Care Heroes by Jeff Koterba, CagleCartoons.com

Prop. 5: Letter writer says to vote 'no' on controversial issue from page 10

of continuing progress in the science of neonatal technology. Do these physicians really believe that these tiny children do "not have the ability to interpret and perceive pain?"

What ethics will prevent one of these abortion providers from becoming the pioneer in our brave little

state, the first to welcome and do abortions for those who can't obtain third-trimester abortions in their own states?

How ironic that as we celebrate the birthday of the great champion of human and civil rights for all persons, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.—as we

most certainly should—we deny personhood and the right to life for preborn children.

Regardless of the stage of pregnancy, Prop. 5 will only further enshrine this blatant hypocrisy, and this is why we must vote "no."

Martin Green,
Morrisville

Budget: Abundant federal funds part of governor's budget from page 10

as the governor said in his address, a very complex budget that addresses a boatload of state needs.

Among the governor's controversial items, however, were his proposed tax cuts. Scott proposed sending \$45 million — half of the Education Fund's surplus — back to Vermonters with a one-time property tax rebate, a tax that overwhelmingly favors wealthier Vermonters. He also proposed a combined \$50 million tax cut package for military veterans, retirees, low-income workers, people with student loans, nurses and childcare workers.

It's precisely such gratuitous spending that Scott had warned against — \$95 million in tax cuts that would in no way create a lasting impact on the state's economy. Yes, it would satisfy a majority of Vermont taxpayers and it would help some in need, but it would not build critical infrastructure that would help create better jobs and a more robust economy for years to come. (Helping specific workers — nurses and childcare workers — hugely impacted by the pandemic, on the other hand, makes sense.)

Scott proposed sending \$45 million — half of the Education Fund's surplus — back to Vermonters with a one-time property tax rebate, a tax that overwhelmingly favors wealthier Vermonters.

Democratic leaders are apt to make the same mistake. Senate President Pro Tempore Becca Balint, D-Windham, and House Speaker Jill Krowinski, D-Burlington, criticized Scott's tax cut package as being spread broadly but too thinly, diluting the impact on any one group, whereas their plan would direct more tax relief to

working families.

"The legislature is interested in doing something more significant and focused that will help a broad swath of working families," the two leaders wrote in a joint statement that targeted \$60 million in tax cuts to that segment of the population.

Not mentioned by either party in comments about the budget was how to handle the proposed \$200 million in appropriations recommended in a pension

The governor didn't have to fret about which programs to trim, but rather which programs got extra funding and which taxes got reduced.

reform deal struck by legislative leaders and the state's public sector unions last week. That deal suggested the state spend an additional \$200 million this year (on top of the \$394 million noted above) to pay down a \$3 billion unfunded liability in the pension systems for teachers and state workers.

As part of that deal, teachers and state workers for the first time committed to annual increases in pension contributions, as well as modest decreases in cost-of-living adjustments. The proposal still has to be discussed and approved by the full legislature, as well as by the governor, before it is accepted.

Those issues will likely be part of the Legislature's budget battle with the governor this session — mild stuff, all-in-all, compared to previous years when needed programs were on the governor's chopping block and climate change initiatives were largely ignored.

Angelo Lynn is the editor and publisher of the Addison County Independent, a sister publication to the Mountain Times.

Harrison: State will take public comment on controversial Prop. 5 from page 7

tion Regarding the Right to Abortions and Personal Reproductive Freedom

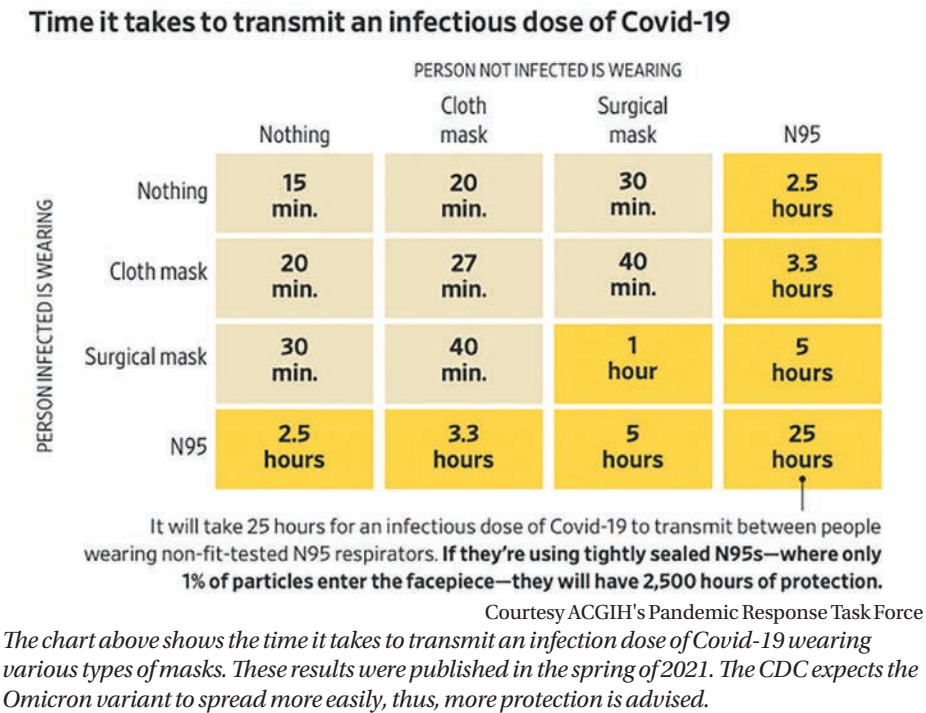
The House Committee on Human Services will hold a public hearing on Proposal 5 on Wednesday, Jan. 26, 2022, from 6-8 p.m. in the House Chamber and on Zoom.

Please register to testify at legislature.vermont.gov/links/proposition-5-public-hearing. You must specify if you intend to

testify in person or by Zoom. You can also submit testimony via email to testimony@leg.state.vt.us.

Please indicate in the subject line Proposal 5 Public Comment.

Jim Harrison is a state representative of Bridgewater, Chittenden, Killington & Mendon. He can be reached at JHarrison@leg.state.vt.us.



Fighting Covid:

from page 10

Get booster shots, get tested frequently, wear quality masks

package of three N95 masks for free.

Secondly, we also know that getting tested frequently is key to ending this pandemic.

Starting this week, Vermonters can order free, at-home, rapid Covid tests online from the federal government which will be delivered directly through the U.S. Postal Service. To make your order, just go to Covidtests.gov.

Finally, without question, vaccination – including booster shots – remains the best way to protect yourself and others against Covid.

The good news is that our state is leading the country when it comes to getting shots

in arms. But if you haven't been vaccinated yet, please schedule your shot today.

If you are vaccinated but know someone who isn't, please make a call and encourage them to make an appointment. It's easy, it can save your life or keep you out of the hospital.

There is no question that Covid has disrupted all our lives. If you are tired and frustrated with it, trust me, you're not alone. But, as we go through this pandemic, let's continue to do everything we can to stay safe and healthy and to protect our families, friends and co-workers.

Together, we will get through these very difficult times.

We also know that getting tested frequently is key to ending this pandemic.

Not safe:

from page 10

Student says schools are a dangerous place for Covid transmission

remove both masks that I've worn for eight consecutive hours; sanitize my phone, my laptop, my binders that sat on communal desks. Shower to scrub off the germs. Clothes in the hamper in the back of my closet. Is this all a bit extreme? Perhaps.

Every authority figure in the district says that masking alone will protect us from the virus — and they'd better hope this is true, since they removed social distancing restrictions, have no idea who's vaccinated, and have now instituted the most relaxed possible contact tracing and testing efforts.

Meanwhile the hallways are filled with students with masks on their chins or only over their mouths.

This type of "masking" does nothing to stop the spread of Covid. Teachers do what they can in classrooms (in fact, a huge shout-out to my teachers, they are the people doing the most) but they cannot effectively teach a class while simultaneously asking the same few students to pull their masks up every two seconds. To my knowledge there are no consequences for incorrect mask wearing (and if there are, they don't work). The truth is that if all the students who do not mask properly were, for example, suspended for repeatedly violating the masking mandate, only about two-thirds of the student body would remain. So while I do understand the predicament, I have to ask why the safety of the students is not being prioritized.

I do not feel safe at school, and I can't be the only one.

I have seen a way of thinking grip the minds of my community and communities across the country: That if you school or the district. But as cases surge, and I feel even more invisible and unsafe at school, I don't want to be quiet any longer.

As omicron becomes a bigger threat by the day, leaders at the state and district push forward with their message that school is a safe and low-risk environment for Covid transmission, or the new line that everyone's going to get it, there's nothing we can do, so we will in fact choose to do nothing, I want to speak openly about my reality as someone with a chronic illness.

Good faith messaging from district leaders that I'm sure is meant to discourage panic, ends up downplaying and burying the reality: that school can be and is a place of Covid transmission and that bigger steps need to be taken to keep vulnerable community members safe.

I don't have all the solutions; I'm only 17, this is not my job. It just seems like common sense that if you ignore a problem, pushing forward with a back-to-normal agenda, then it is only going to get worse. I urge the governor, the school board and the superintendent to take steps to keep kids safe, because right now, the adults in the room are failing us.

Carly Browdy, Middlebury

Bigger steps need to be taken to keep vulnerable community members safe.

are young, Covid is mild, it's never deadly, and generally is worth the risk. However, not all young people will be fine. I am a testament to this. Even if Covid is "just like a cold," as I keep hearing, the last time I got a cold, in 2019, it triggered a three-month relapse of my illness where I could barely get off the couch.

As students continue to take safety guidelines as only a suggestion, I am left wondering who, if anyone, is making policies with my well-being in mind.

To be honest, I started writing this letter two months ago, when the first real outbreak at my high school occurred. At the time, I decided not to submit it, not wanting backlash from the

Castleton:

from page 1

Middle school students move to the Castleton Elementary School until March due to a water problem, asbestos, deferred maintenance

Olsen-Farrell initially expected repairs to be done in February, but on Friday, Jan. 21, maintenance workers found that glue in the baseboards contained asbestos. Castleton Village likely won't open again until March.

"Now we have to remediate all the asbestos before we can do anything," Olsen-Farrell said.

All students and staff can no longer enter the building until air quality testing is done, Olsen-Farrell said.

"We had no idea that portion of the building had asbestos because it was built in the 1990s," Olsen-Farrell said. "It came as a complete surprise."

While teachers were unable to access books and belongings from Castleton Village, they spent Monday, Jan. 24 locating desks, chairs, books, materials, folding tables and anything they could find out from neighboring schools and storage to move to Castleton Elementary School — where they'll stay until repairs are done at Castleton Village School.

"It's going to be a tight fit," Olsen-Farrell said. "It certainly isn't going to be ideal."

Olsen-Farrell said the students will share the gym and cafeteria. The building's support staff, intervention programs and special education rooms were combined to make space.

"We're just trying to pull things together—pull things out of storage," Olsen-Farrell said. "It's going to be cobbled together."

Olsen-Farrell hoped there would be enough desks. "We're moving staff around and having them share space before moving classrooms," she said. "In some ways, Covid prepared us for some of this — in terms of being a little bit flexible."

It's unclear how much repairs will cost. The district has a \$2,500 insurance deductible.

"It doesn't look terrible but the sheetrock walls acted as a sponge and soaked everything up," she said.

She said part of the problem is that the sheetrock is double layered for sound. "It would not dry despite all of our best efforts," Olsen-Farrell said.

Olsen-Farrell was hopeful testing at Castleton Village would be done within a week. But the water leak at Castleton Village isn't the only problem in the district. Olsen-Farrell said she got a call over the weekend about another broken pipe at Fair Haven High School. Staff spent Sunday, Jan. 23, cleaning water at the high school. Olsen-Farrell said there was no significant damage but one room—the student support center — will be temporarily closed.

"I think this is a classic example of deferred maintenance," she said. "We have aging infrastructure and that needs to be addressed. We don't have enough in our budget."

Despite the challenges, Olsen-Farrell said she was committed to keeping the schools open after a year of remote learning due to the pandemic.

"It's critical that our kids have in-person learning," she said.

Olsen-Farrell said the teachers have been "taking it in stride. I think everyone's a bit numb after having years of living in a crisis state."

The water damage adds to an already challenging year.

Sixty staff members were out in the district on Friday, Jan. 21 — most with Covid or Covid-like symptoms, Olsen-Farrell said.

"It's impossible to staff," said Olsen-Farrell "It's been stressful because students and staff absences have been really, really high and there are no substitutes — no one is willing to sub."

Administrators, principals and administrative assistants have been filling in with teachers out. Some classes have been combined.

"It's all hands on deck," Olsen-Farrell said. "We're doing everything we can to not have to close school and keep kids in school."

While the lockers have been removed from Castleton Village School and testing is ongoing, there is a plan to permanently close Castleton Village at the end of this school year. Fair Haven High School is entering the final phase of a \$4 million renovation and all middle school students in the district will move to the high school at the start of next school year.

It's unclear what will happen to Castleton Village School in the future. Both Castleton and Hubbardton have a question on their Town Meeting ballots to acquire the building for \$1. If the vote fails, the district will retain ownership, but it wouldn't be a school, Olsen-Farrell said.

Olsen-Farrell said teachers were optimistic despite the challenges. "It's definitely one more thing, but what can you do?" Olsen-Farrell said. "We have a really good team at Slate Valley and we'll figure it out and we'll get kids back in the classroom. We're a pretty resilient team."

Chris Ettori named regional director of Vermont Adult Learning's Rutland Office

Chris Ettori has been named regional director of Vermont Adult Learning's Rutland office. He previously worked as assistant director at CCV for over twelve years as well as a faculty member teaching classes in foundational math, computer applications, customer service, and effective workplace communications. Ettori is very active in the Rutland community, having served on numerous boards and committees. He spent six years as a Rutland City Alderman and was a founding board member of Wonderfeet Kids' Museum and Rutland's Promise, the first shelter for homeless families in our community.



Chris Ettori

Submitted

"It's a perfect opportunity for me to support our region's workforce and economic development needs," Ettori said.

"I'm excited to take on this new leadership role with Vermont Adult Learning here in Rutland," Ettori said. "It's a perfect opportunity for me to support our region's workforce and

economic development needs by extending educational resources to folks who have faced numerous challenges and barriers over the years. I look forward to continuing my work supporting community members on their journey to pursue their personal and professional goals."

Vermont Adult Learning's Mission is to create an innovative, inclusive and equitable learning environment that provides personalized opportunities for education and career development for Vermont residents by building relationships, strengthening communities and fostering life-long learning. Learn more at vtadulthoodlearning.org.

GMP requests base rate increase

If approved, 2.34% increase becomes effective Sept. 30, 2023

Green Mountain Power (GMP) filed is seeking a 2.34% increase in base rates starting Oct. 1, 2022. If approved by the Vermont Public Utility Commission (PUC), the new rates would be in effect until Sept. 30, 2023.

"This allows us to invest in our people and equipment to be sure we continue to deliver on our promises to our neighbors and customers," President and CEO Mari McClure. "Vermonters need a resilient, renewable power grid and predictable, affordable rates and that's what this filing continues to provide. By leveraging technologies like battery storage, we're also helping to control costs for all customers while transforming the grid to fight climate change."

If approved, the requested base rate would go into effect in the first year of GMP's new multi-year regulation plan – a framework for capping spending, forecasting costs, continuing innovative programs, and setting rates. The MYRP was filed in October 2021 and is also being reviewed by the PUC.

Rob Conboy, the CEO of Glavel, says he appreciates GMP's focus on price stability and understands increases can be challenging for everyone. Glavel converts recycled glass into highly versatile, low-embodied carbon building material at its facility in Essex, and GMP's clean electricity is a key ingredient in Glavel's manufacturing process.

"We've electrified our operation from the get-go to live up to our low-carbon commitment to our customers and the environment. GMP's Business Innovation Team has been a great partner in helping us to reduce carbon and costs in our operations. Having this stability and predictability is so critical to the success of our business here in Vermont," Conboy said.

Pressure from rising energy costs makes up most of the requested increase, and GMP's mix of long-term local and regional power purchase contracts, aligned with Vermont's long-standing policy supporting stable electric supply, are helping to keep this request low in the current market. Another cost driver is vegetation management, as keeping lines clear in the more than 11,000 miles of right-of-way has been made even more challenging in the face of climate change. Other components of the rate request are driven by increased costs for operations and outside services, including inflation seen economy wide that has affected the price for the goods and equipment we rely on to serve customers coming out of the pandemic.

This filing starts a public regulatory review process that includes months of testimony, robust review by regulators, a public hearing, and other opportunities for customers to share their views with the PUC. GMP's 2022 rate request filing will be posted in the regulatory section of GMP's website.

State adopts rules for new Americans' licensure in professional fields

Sec. of State Jim Condos announced Jan. 19 that the Office of Professional Regulation's (OPR) has adopted foreign credentialing rules, which create a pathway for foreign-trained individuals to become licensed in their field in Vermont. The new rules became effective Nov. 19 and come in response to an identified barrier to licensure faced by many new Americans and refugees.

"The foreign credentialing process is a more efficient way of getting qualified professionals with foreign experience into the Vermont workforce, while maintaining public protection" said Condos. "This new process aligns with our office's broader goal of reducing unnecessary barriers to occupational licensing. Expediting the verification of licensure

requirements is important in supporting Vermont's workforce, and in these unprecedented times it is essential in helping to resolve the significant shortages that we are currently seeing in nursing and other healthcare professions."

Through the new process, individuals who obtained their professional license or experience outside the U.S. will get a determination of equivalency from an external credential evaluation service. If the evaluation determines the person's foreign work experience, education, training, and exams are equivalent to what is required for a Vermont license, a report goes directly to OPR who notifies the applicant to apply for endorsement.

Licensure by endorsement is a streamlined path to licensure in lieu of

the traditional licensing path, which can be more time-consuming and costly and often includes formal education, training, and examinations which the foreign trained applicant may already have.

"We recognize the location of one's past professional experience alone should not be a barrier to licensure in our state," said OPR Director Lauren Hibbert. "Although OPR is not resourced to evaluate foreign educational and training programs for each of the 50 professions regulated by our Office, we are confident this process of utilizing third-party evaluators will make it easier and more efficient for New Americans, refugees, and other individuals with experience outside of the U.S. to work in their chosen field in Vermont."

VFFC: Market moves to Cortina Inn in Rutland while the Vermont Farmers Food Center deals with a contamination in the soil, air, awaits remediation for safety from page 1

tive actions rule," said Caldwell.

The Vermont Farmers Market, the largest tenant of the property, canceled its weekly market on Saturday, Jan. 22. The market will move to the Cortina Inn on Holiday Drive in Rutland starting Jan. 29 with normal hours, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

"It's been pretty tough," said Paul Horton, the owner of Foggy Meadow Produce and the president of the Vermont Farmers Market.

About 60 vendors rely on the market for income and about 500-600 customers attend the market every week.

Horton said vendors spoke to customers face to face on Jan. 22 and informed them the market was closed.

Horton declined to comment about the contamination. "We're unhappy but we're continuing to thrive," Horton said.

Horton said some vendors pulled out of the market because they didn't want to relocate.

"There are some serious financial implications for individual vendors and for the farmers market itself," he said.

One problem is that the Cortina Inn doesn't have a commercial kitchen — a requirement for some vendors.

"We've taken a beating here, there's no doubt about that, but the farmers market will thrive," Horton said.

The contamination was discovered during an environmental study as the Vermont Farmers Food Center sought an expansion.

A Phase II environmental site assessment, prepared by Weston & Sampson Engineers, Inc. on Dec. 29, found high levels of tetrachloroethylene (TCE) in the soil beneath the Farmers Hall building and both TCE and chloroform in indoor air samples collected from the Farmer's Hall building.

TCE, a carcinogen, is a common ingredient in stain remover, carpet cleaner and other degreasing products. The indoor TCE levels ranged from 1.7 to 21 micrograms per cubic meter, with the highest levels found in the commercial kitchen. The state requires relocation after TCE reaches 2 micrograms per cubic meter.

"That's our primary concern — the indoor air exposure," Caldwell said.

Heidi Lynch, the director of the Vermont Farmers Food Center, said she was "caught off guard" by the contamination levels.

"We are feeling for our tenants and our renters," Lynch said. "We're doing our best to come through stronger as a whole."

It's unclear why the work plan wasn't submitted by the state's deadline.

Lynch said consultants have "been doing their best."

"We're all doing our best. This was unexpected for all of us

to happen," Lynch said.

The Rutland Regional Planning Commission is paying for the costs of the remediation through its brownfields program.

Ed Bove, the executive director of the planning commission, said about \$55,000 has been paid to complete Phase I and Phase II studies of the Vermont Farmers

Food Center. Bove said he didn't know if Weston & Sampson knew about the Jan. 17 deadline.

"We don't coordinate with the consultant," Bove said. "Everyone is moving as fast as they can on this."

Attempts to reach Weston & Sampson weren't successful.

Both the Vermont Department of Health and the Department of Environmental Conservation urged the owners to find a new location for the market in a letter on Dec. 30. The owners initially wanted to keep using the building for the farmers market with ventilation but Caldwell said no testing or sampling was done to confirm how effective the ventilation was in reducing the contamination.

The owners of the property now have until Feb. 21 to submit a work plan saying they'll do more site work, mitigate the exposure or clean up the contamination. If they don't, the state could take legal action.

"We've taken a beating here...but the farmers market will thrive," said Paul Horton.



By Jon Lampert

Kim Lampert, of the Ludlow Rotary Club stands with Kaytlin Edwards, of the Grayson County, Kentucky Rotary Club in front of a trailer loaded with supplies for those in need.



By Jon Lampert

Vermont volunteers load a trailer with supplies to bring to tornado victims in Kentucky. District rotary clubs rallied for the cause and donations came from many.

Ludlow rotary delivers emergency aid to Kentucky tornado victims

On a recent weekend with threatening storms and frigid temperatures, Ludlow Rotarian Kim Benson Lampert and her husband, Jon headed south to Elizabethtown, Kentucky to deliver a truck and trailer loaded with goods for storm-ravaged Kentuckians who had lost everything.

Lampert said, "I am overwhelmed by the support of our club and community members as well as our Rotary district."

Donations of \$1,000 were received from Henniker, New Hampshire and Poultney Rotary Clubs. The Concord, New Hampshire Rotary Club donated \$5,000. The Brattleboro Sunrise Rotary Club donated the proceeds of \$210 from its trivia night for this cause. Several other district rotarians made personal donations to this cause as well.

Troy Caruso donated sports-related toys from his Assisting Children Today charity arm to assist with a Christmas in January celebration for children who had no Christmas this

year. Numerous individuals and groups brought boxes and bags of clothing, toiletries, household supplies and other needed items to Benson's Chevrolet and Cota and Cota.

From there rotarians and volunteers moved everything to the Lamperts where a snowmobile

trailer was loaded to overflowing. At that point, George Benson, Jr. donated use of his larger trailer to the cause. The smaller trailer was unloaded into the larger trailer before goods that continued to pour in were added to it. Ultimately, the larger trailer was packed to the ceiling by a group of volunteers, including Jon Lampert, Ludlow Rotarians Brigid Sullivan and Barb LeMire with her husband, Doug LeMire; generous Mount Holly friends, Nancy McKeegan, Fern and Dennis Melvin who spent more than two hours readying the trailer for the 15-hour road trip.

The Lamperts left on Friday after work, arriving at a

storage unit rented by the Elizabethtown club on mid-day Saturday. There, Kaytlin Edwards of the Grayson County, Kentucky rotary club, met them to unload the almost 1,000 cubic feet of goods that ultimately filled the storage unit.

Edwards will organize work bees among her fellow KY Rotarians to sort items and deliver them to so many needy people who lost everything in the Dec. 10, 2021 storms. She was shocked at the amount of goods sent by the Ludlow Club. "We actually had a nice variety of items," said Kim Lampert.

The Ludlow Club is continuing to collect cash for the victims. Checks should be made payable to LARCF with KY Tornado written in the "for" line. They can be mailed to Ludlow Rotary, Box 216, Ludlow, VT 05149.

Anyone interested in learning more about joining Rotary is invited to contact Kevin Barnes, membership chairman at (802) 228-8877, to receive an invitation to a meeting.

Nominate a tree hero

Do you know an individual or community group that has demonstrated a strong commitment to conserving, restoring or celebrating Vermont's forests and trees? If so, consider nominating them for a 2022 Vermont Tree Steward Award.

The awards are presented annually by the Vermont Urban and Community Forestry Program (VTUCF) to promote the importance of forests and acknowledge those who work hard to care for and protect them. Winners will be announced in April and will be recognized at the 2022 Vermont Arbor Day conference and through VTUCF's website and social media platforms.

Nominations will be accepted until March 31 Go to go.uvm.edu/tsa for details and the nomination form or to view a list of past award winners. Contact Gwen Kozlowski at gwen.kozlowski@uvm.edu or 802-651-8343, ext. 506, with any questions.

Categories include: Hamilton: This award, created in 2017, honors the late Dr. Larry Hamilton, a long-serving tree warden in Charlotte. It is given to a deserving tree warden who has significantly advanced the goals of urban and community forestry through effective conservation planning, successful forestry practices, increased citizen engagement and public education. Leader: Nominees may be any individual who demonstrates strong leadership and dedication to organizing and carrying out an urban or community forestry project through service to a community or organization. Unsung Hero: The award honors an individual and/or group for sustained efforts that go above and beyond to make a difference in a community's urban and community forest. Volunteer group—Community: Any organization, team, ad/hoc group or community that has demonstrated a strong commitment to introducing or sustaining an urban and community forestry project in their community is eligible to be nominated for this award.

VTUCF is a partnership of University of Vermont Extension and the Vermont Dept. of Forests, Parks and Recreation. To learn more, visit vtcommunityforestry.org.

Waterfowl blinds must be removed

Waterfowl hunters who did not remove their hunting blinds from the waters of the state earlier must do so before Feb. 15 on Lake Champlain or May 15 on inland waters according to a reminder from the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Dept.

State law requires removal of the blinds before these deadlines to protect natural areas and to prevent boating accidents after the ice melts.

"Removal of the blinds and any posts that may be below the surface of the ice is important because of the danger they present when boaters are on the water in the spring," said State Game Warden Col. Jason Batchelder.

Batchelder says wardens annually record names and addresses of blind owners and will follow up with inspections.



By Carl Wedin / VT F&W

State Game Warden Dustin Snyder inspects a duck blind on Lake Champlain prior to the Feb. 15 removal deadline.

Covid cases begin to decline, hospitalizations remain high

Staff report

Covid-19 cases remain elevated in Vermont, with the daily number of new infections averaging 1,121 cases over the last 7 days. The state reported 8,135 new cases this week, 2,878 fewer cases compared to last week, a decrease of 27%, but it was still the third highest week for case counts ever.

During this time, week-over-week PCR testing also fell, with the 7-day average decreasing 17%.

This week Vermont hit another grim milestone: there have now been over 100,000 confirmed infections (100,092 as of Tuesday, Jan. 25).

According to the department of financial regulation (DFR) modeling report, Jan. 25: “The CDC Ensemble model predicts Vermont can expect lower Covid counts in the coming weeks; decreases in hospitalizations and deaths will lag falling cases.”

Currently, however, hospitals statewide report high numbers of Covid patients and reduced staffing. Unvaccinated Vermonters occupy a majority of hospital beds, despite being in the minority (98.8% of Vermonters, ages 12 plus, are partially or fully vaccinated and 58% of Vermont children aged 5-11 have received at least one dose as of Jan. 25). Hospitalizations, which are always a lagging indicator, are expected to start declining over the next week as cases fall.

Recent Vermont data points to Omicron’s lower severity, with those hospitalized for the virus now requiring fewer days in the hospital than with previous variants, according to DFR. Vermont per capita Covid hospitalizations are also tracking substantially below other states in the region, with the third-lowest rate in the U.S.

Mask mandate: Why Woodstock needs it from page 11

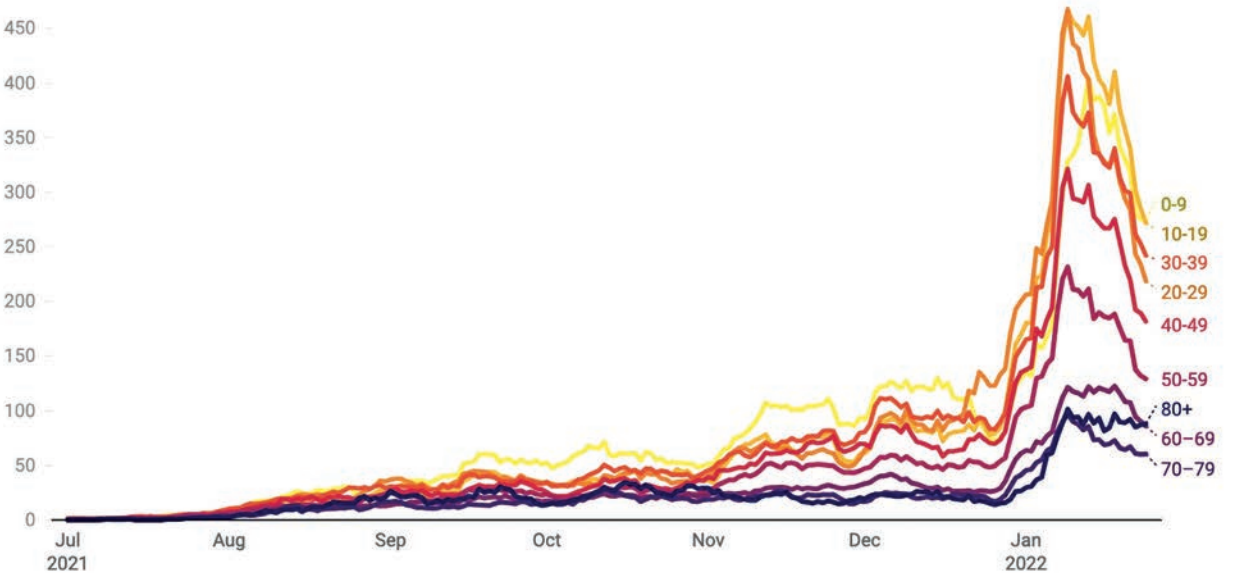
we’re the ones who are tired and that anything we do is just a drop in the bucket? Or do we do our part? On Jan. 11, the Woodstock Village Trustees faced up to the pandemic fatigue and reimposed an indoor mask requirement for public spaces in the village. In accordance with state restrictions, the requirement will expire and be reassessed on Feb. 8. The data shows more Vermonters than at any other point in the pandemic have been infected, hospitalized and died from this new, unrelenting version of the virus. Despite Vermont being the most vaccinated state in the country at 86% age-5-and-older residents with at least one dose, our positive case rate has exploded.

As of this writing, the most recent new one day positive case number was 2,217. Last January, the new case number was 130. At the time, it was rare for that number to go over 200. As fall turned into winter and Omicron became the dominant variant in the Green Mountain State, the new case rate skyrocketed. Our hospitalization rates are also higher than ever. A mask requirement was the responsible reaction.

As I went store-to-store in the Village handing out “Woodstock Wears Masks” signs and letting people know about the new requirement, I was heartened by positive responses. “This is a sign I’m happy to post,” said one cashier. “I’ve been wanting a mask mandate for a long time,” said another. A small business owner thanked me and said it would “give us cover to enforce our own mask requirement.”

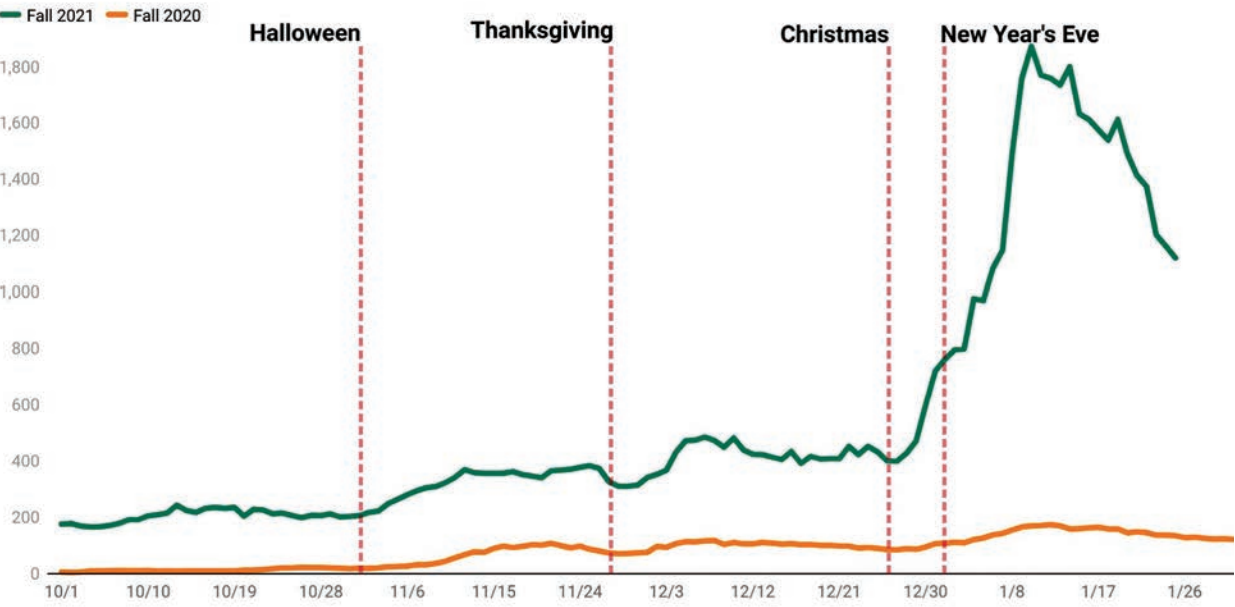
Vermonters are pragmatic. To not put our Covid coats back on for awhile would be to ignore reality and, worse, to put extra burden on our neighbors who are overwhelmed with the response to this health care crisis. Spring will come at some point, but stubbornly freezing in the meantime is not a logical option.

VT COVID-19 Infections per 100K by Age Group



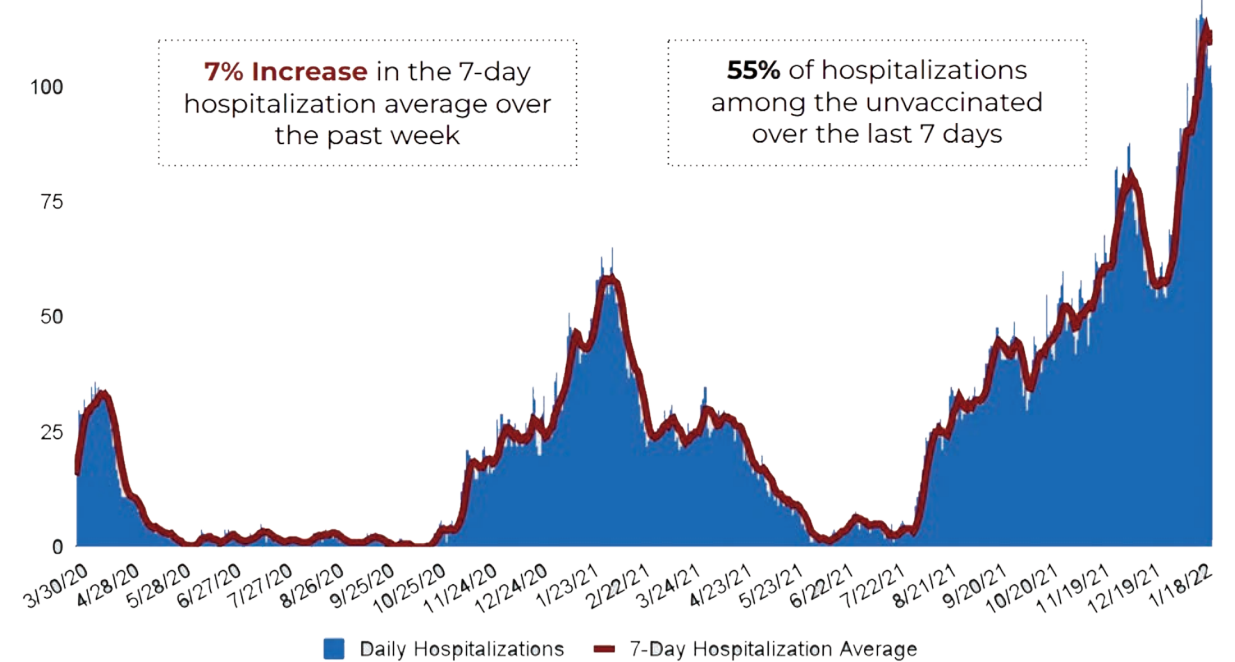
Courtesy Vermont Dept. of Health
Chart shows Covid infections by age group per 100,000 Vermonters. Children continue to have the highest rates.

Vermont COVID-19 Cases Fall/Winter '20-'21 vs. Fall/Winter '21-'22



Courtesy Vermont Dept. of Health
Chart shows Covid cases as they relate to the holidays this year vs. last year. The Omicron spike is evident.

Statewide Covid-19 Hospitalizations



Courtesy Vermont Dept. of Health
Chart shows that Covid hospitalizations as of Jan. 25 are still rising to record-breaking heights. A decline is expected.

WORDPLAY

'Slow cooking' Word Search: Find the words hidden vertically, horizontally, diagonally and backwards.

SUDOKU

Solutions > 32

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.

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

Level: Advanced

Guess Who?

I am a singer born in New York on January 25, 1981. I studied at the Professional Performing Arts School. I am the first singer to receive five Grammy Awards at once after releasing my debut album. I also sang on a Jay Z New York-themed song.

Answer: Alicia Keys

Eat, Drink, Shop Locally

MOUNTAIN TIMES

KILLINGTON FOOD SHELF



We are stocked with nonperishable food, paper goods & cleaning supplies. Any person in need, please call to arrange a pickup. Donations accepted. Please call Nan Salamon, 422-9244 or Ron Willis, 422-3843.

Sherburne UCC "Little White Church," Killington, VT

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Solutions > 32

CLUES ACROSS

- 1. Brew
- 4. NY ballplayer
- 7. Rigid external covering in some animals
- 12. Promotional materials
- 15. More high-pitched
- 16. Widely cultivated cereal
- 18. Dormitory employee
- 19. Bad act
- 20. One's mother
- 21. Scored perfectly
- 24. Space station
- 27. Exchange for money
- 30. Edible seaweed
- 31. Iranian city
- 33. Lakers' crosstown rivals
- 34. Nothing
- 35. Spiritual leader of a Jewish congregation
- 37. ___ student, learns healing
- 39. Military official (abbr.)
- 41. Matchstick games
- 42. Gasteyer and De Armas are two
- 44. Distant planet
- 47. A type of residue
- 48. Punk art icon
- 49. Millihenry

CLUES DOWN

- 50. Canadian media firm
- 52. Type of withdrawal
- 53. Spicy
- 56. Dish of minced meat or fish
- 61. Noted previously
- 63. Happily
- 64. "Partridge" actress Susan
- 65. Not present
- 1. In a way, brought to an end
- 2. Scandalized
- actress Loughlin
- 3. This (Spanish)
- 4. Essay
- 5. Continuing indefinitely
- 6. Tool for lifting food
- 7. Partner to Adam
- 8. Dry white wine drink
- 9. Spanish be
- 10. Smaller quantity
- 11. Last or greatest in an indefinitely large series
- 12. (Scottish) island
- 13. Church officer
- 14. Large wrestler
- 17. Polite address for women
- 22. Famed Susan Lucci character "___ Kane"

		1	2	3			4	5	6			
		7				8	9	10			11	
12	13										14	
15							16				17	
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49				50		51					52	
53		54	55					56	57	58	59	60
	61					62						
		63										
			64					65				

- 23. Mason ___ Line
- 24. Disfigure
- 25. Asian nation
- 26. Rage (Span.)
- 28. Khoikhoi peoples
- 29. Opera solo
- 32. Database management system
- 36. Similar
- 38. Move up and down

- playfully
- 40. Alfalfa
- 43. Satisfied
- 44. Baseball official
- 45. Large, flightless bird of S. America
- 46. Money given in support
- 51. Flower cluster
- 54. Beginning military rank
- 55. Russian weight measure-

- ment
- 56. Explosive
- 57. An individual unit
- 58. Midskirt
- 59. Weapon featuring balls
- 60. Used of a number or amount not specified
- 62. Unit of measurement



CULTURING CELLS FOR HEALTHIER SOILS ONLINE

THURSDAY, JAN. 27 AT 7 P.M.

Submitted

WEDNESDAY, JAN. 26

Baptiste Flow yoga

9 a.m. True Yoga Vermont, 22 Wales St., Rutland. \$49 for a month of unlimited classes. Join True Yoga Vermont for an hour long morning Baptiste Flow session. For more info visit trueyogavermont.com.

Fit and Fun exercise class

9:30 a.m. Godnick Center, 1 Deer Street, Rutland. \$15/month. Low impact, aerobic, and stretching routines; move to lively, sing-a-long music led by Marilyn Sheldon. Feel better, increase strength, balance and flexibility. Preregistration required. Limited space. Call 802-773-1853 to reserve your spot.

Fiber Floosies

10 a.m. Godnick Center, 1 Deer Street, Rutland. Free. This fun group will be meeting in the Goodnick Center Craft Room starting in December. Attendees bring their projects in rug hooking, knitting, cross-stitch, or any fiber arts. Attendees must complete a membership form for the Godnick Center. No cost to participate. For more info call 802-773-1853.

Movers and Shakers

11 a.m. Godnick Center, 1 Deer Street, Rutland. Free. This free program of low-impact exercise is designed for people with Parkinson's, or anyone else who wishes to maintain or improve flexibility, strength, and balance in a supportive and relaxing environment. Start your week off right and work out with us. Call 802-773-1853 to reserve your spot.

Phoenix Books virtual poetry open mic

7 p.m. Virtual. Free. Virtually join Phoenix Books to read and/or to listen to poetry. Those interested in reading can sign up at the beginning of the meeting, via the Zoom Chat Box feature. This event is hosted by Bianca Amira Zanella is a cis queer Vermont-based performance poet, artist, and advocate living on traditionally Abenaki land. She is the Poet-in-Residence at Phoenix Books Rutland, hosting an international monthly open mic. Her poems have most recently appeared in The Artful Mind, The Rutland Herald, The Mountain Troubadour, and The Reverie. Their poem films, sculptural poems, and poem paintings have also been on exhibit with PoemCity Montpelier, Merwin Gallery, Stone Valley Arts, SPACE: a Pop Up Art Gallery, and Surdam Gallery. For more info and to register visit phoenixbooks.biz.

Virtual Visiting Artist Talk: Jean Shin

7 p.m. Virtual. Free. Vermont Studio Center hosts Virtual Visiting Artist with Jean Shin. Recognized for her monumental installations, artist she transforms large accumulations of everyday objects into expressions of identity and community engagement. This event is free and open to the public. To register, visit <https://form.jotform.com/213004509727148>. A private Zoom link will be provided after completion. For more information, visit: vermontstudiocenter.org

Al-Anon and Alateen

7 p.m. A Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, 6 Church Hill Road in Rutland. Free. Al-Anon and Alateen are organizations that aim to help relatives, friends, coworkers, and others affected by the drinking of people they know. Al-Anon meetings are open to everyone, while Alateen meetings are for teenagers (and occasionally preteens). Collectively, the meetings are known as Al-Anon Family Groups (AFG). For more info visit good-shepherd.org/events/al-anon.

THURSDAY, JAN. 27

Baptiste Flow yoga

6 a.m. True Yoga Vermont, 22 Wales St., Rutland. \$49 for a month of unlimited classes. Join True Yoga Vermont for an hour long early morning Baptiste Flow session. For more info visit trueyogavermont.com.

Free Thursday Meditation

6 a.m. and 6 p.m. Eagles Nest Studio, 2363 US-RT4, Killington. Free. Reoccurring Free Thursday Meditation offered in the former Mountain Meadows building, below Base Camp Outfitters. Limited to 8 people. Please RSVP at 802-356-2946 or email VTeaglesnest@gmail.com.

Audubon West Rutland Marsh Monitoring Walk

8 a.m. Marsh Boardwalk, Marble St in West Rutland. Free. Join the Rutland County Audubon for the full 3.7 mile loop in this National Audubon IBA (Important Bird Area), or go halfway. Kids, new birders and non-members always welcome. Grow your birding skills with friendly and accomplished birders. For more info contact birding@rutlandcountyaudubon.org.

Line Dance: Groovey Grannies

9:30 a.m. Godnick Center, 1 Deer Street, Rutland. \$5/class. Intermediate line dance, mostly country with a little variety. No partner is needed. Marilyn Sheldon leads the dancing on Thursday mornings at 9:30 a.m. For more info call 802-773-1853.

Circle of Parents

10 a.m. Virtual. Free. Virtual. Circle of Parents is a professionally facilitated, peer led self-help support group for parents and other caregivers. Participants meet weekly for 60-90 minutes online in virtual meetings. To find a group appropriate for you, call 1-800-CHILDREN (1-800-244-5373) or 1-802-229-5724 or email pcavt@pcavt.org.

Story time

10 a.m. Rutland Free Library, Rutland. Free. Join Miss Amanda weekly in the Fox Room for a story & craft! Recommended for ages 2+.

Killington Bone Builders

10 a.m. Sherburne Memorial Library, 2998 River Road, Killington. Free. In the meeting room at Sherburne Memorial Library. Weights provided. For more info call Pat 802-422-3368.

Toddler Storytime

10:30 a.m. Norman Williams Library in Woodstock. Free. Join Norman Williams Library to read a few books on a theme of the week. Enjoy stories, socializing, and often a project tied into the theme. This storytime is meant for children aged 20 months to 3.5 years. It will last 30-60 minutes. For more info visit normanwilliams.org.

Meditation for Your Life

11 a.m. Godnick Center, 1 Deer Street, Rutland. Free. Meditation for Your Life is easy to learn and easy to practice. Meditation creates the ability to improve all of our daily challenges. We believe that meditation will be beneficial to seniors and we will gear our classes to accomplishing a healthy attitude and spirit for all. Sessions are lead by Brian Salmanson. All participants will be sitting on a chair. To reserve your spot call 802-773-1853.

Drive-up pick-up meals

12 p.m. Godnick Center, 1 Deer Street, Rutland. \$3.50 Donation ages 65+, \$6 fee under age 65. Reservations required. Godnick Center, in partnership with Southwestern Vermont Council on Aging and Meals on Wheels, is providing drive-up pick-up meals on Mondays and Thursdays at noon at the Godnick Center. For more info or to make a reservation call 802-773-1853.

Circle of Parents in Recovery

3 p.m. Virtual. Free. Support group meets weekly online on Thursdays from 3-4:30 p.m. For more info and to join a group contact Amber at amenard@pcavt.org or 802-498-0603.

NAMI Connection peer support group

3 p.m. Virtual. Free. Struggling with managing your mental health? NAMI Connection Peer Support Group can help. This is a free, 90-minute recovery support group for people living with a mental health condition. For more info. visit namivt.org/support/peer-support-groups.

Circle of Parents for Grandparents

4 p.m. Virtual. Free. Meets weekly online. Run by Prevent Child Abuse VT. For info and to join a group contact Amber at amenard@pcavt.org or 802-498-0603.

Kids Yoga

5 p.m. Chaffee Art Center, Rutland. \$10/class. Learning the basics of yoga and mindfulness to increase focus and concentration. A fun way to stay playful and healthy inside and out. Students must pre-register by the day before class. For more info and to register visit chaffeeartcenter.org.

Paint and Sip

6-8 p.m. Ten Ping Lounge at Rutland Bowlerama in Rutland. \$45/person. Come paint a 3D farm truck door hanger with interchangeable season inserts. No experience needed. The Price includes one 18 Inch round plaque, six 6-inch interchangeable pieces for the back of the truck, one hello cutout, rope to hang it with, use of paint, brushes and other supplies to create sign. Food and drink will be available for purchase. Pre-registration and pre-payment are required. Hosted by Inspired Creations. To register visit bit.ly/BowleramaPaintandSip.

Rusty Dewees comedy performance

7 p.m. Calcutta's Restaurant at the Fox Run Golf Club, 89 Fox Ln Ext in Ludlow. \$75/person. Vermont's own renowned comedian Rusty Dewees "The Logger" will host his Vermont-flavored stand up at Calcutta's Restaurant located at the Fox Run Golf Club. Tickets are \$75 and include a light dinner, proceeds will benefit ESB. A cash bar will also be available courtesy of Calcutta's. This event will be hosted by the Expeditionary School at Black River. For more info and to purchase tickets visit esblackriver.org.

An Evening with Jennifer Hillier in conversation with S.A. Crosby

7 p.m. Virtual. Free. Sign up to participate in the next event in Macmillan's Book + Author series: a virtual book club event with Jennifer Hillier for "Little Secrets", recently out in paperback. Overwhelmed by tragedy, a woman desperately tries to save her marriage in award-winning author Hillier's a riveting novel of psychological suspense. All it takes to unravel a life is one little secret. Registration is free, but book purchases are welcomed. For more info and to register visit phoenixbooks.biz.

Culturing Cells for Healthier Soils

7 p.m. Virtual. Free. In this 4H café, you will learn more about the science behind healthy soils, helpful microbes, and vigorous plant growth to feed our growing planet within an ever-changing climate. You will also get hands-on examining plant materials and different microbial symbionts to determine their influence on above-ground plant phenotypes. Open to all youth entering grades 7-12. For more info and to register visit uvm.edu/extension/youth/announcements.

Kabbalat Shabbat: Introduction to the Shabbat Evening prayers

7:30-8:30 p.m. Virtual. We will study the structure, choreography, and meaning of various prayers recited/sung during Kabbalat Shabbat (Friday evening service). Learn how those prayers fit into the arc of the service, as well as when and why we stand, sit, and bow. Each class will focus on different prayers. Jill Minkoff, who has explored the meaning of Jewish prayer and worship through illustration, will be joining us for several of the sessions. She is an active member of the Jewish community interested in spirituality and meaningful prayer. Knowledge of Hebrew is NOT required. This is a virtual only class. Please contact the RJC Office at 802-773-3455 for more information.

FRIDAY, JAN. 28

Inferno Hot Pilates

6 a.m. True Yoga Vermont, 22 Wales St., Rutland. \$49 for a month of unlimited classes. Join True Yoga Vermont for an hour long early morning Inferno Hot Pilates session. For more info visit trueyogavermont.com.

Noon time hockey

12-1 p.m. Wendell A. Barwood Arena in Hartford. \$5/play. Season passes available. Noon Time Hockey is for the hockey enthusiast, ages 15+. This program is open play. Participants are required to have some hockey experience and must have complete hockey gear to play. For more info and to purchase tickets and season passes visit bit.ly/Noontimehockey.

Hartford general public skating

1:15-2:30 p.m. Wendell A. Barwood Arena in Hartford. Prices vary. Season passes available. Enjoy public skating at the Wendell A. Barwood Arena (WABA). Skate rentals and sharpening are available on site. Rentals are \$5 per pair and skate sharpening are \$5 per pair. Public Skating Memberships are available online, at the Rec office, or at the WABA. For more info and to purchase season passes visit bit.ly/HartfordSkate.

Guided Uphill Etiquette Tour

4 p.m. Pico Mountain. Winter uphill travel by means of skinning and snowshoeing is becoming increasingly popular. Join us for a guided uphill etiquette tour of Pico to learn about key uphill travel safety information. Meet at the Pico Uphill Sign at the bottom of Lower Pike.

'Matilda The Musical Jr.'

7 p.m. Paramount Theatre in Rutland. \$12 + tax/adult; \$10 + tax/children under 12 and adults over 65. RYT presents Roald Dahl's musical "Matilda Jr." Rebellion is high in Matilda Jr, a gleefully witty ode to the anarchy of childhood and the power of imagination. The story of a girl who dreams of a better life and the children she inspires, will have you rooting for them from your seats. With a cast of talented local young actors this show is packed with high-energy dance numbers and catchy songs. Children and adults alike will be thrilled and delighted by the story of the special little girl with an extraordinary imagination. The Paramount requires proof of full vaccination or a negative Covid-19 test from all ticket holders age 12+ before entering the theatre. Please note they do not accept at-home tests. For more info and to purchase tickets visit bit.ly/RYTMatilda.

← **Calendar:** Email events@mountaintimes.info
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'Encanto'

7:30 p.m. Woodstock Town Hall Theatre, 31 The Green in Woodstock. \$9/adult; \$8/child and senior; \$7/Pentangle Member. The Madrigals are an extraordinary family who live hidden in the mountains of Colombia in a charmed place called the Encanto. The magic of the Encanto has blessed every child in the family with a unique gift. Every child except Mirabel. However, she soon may be the Madrigals last hope when she discovers that the magic surrounding the Encanto is now in danger. All patrons, staff, and volunteers must show proof of full vaccination, 14 days past their final vaccination shot, or proof of a negative Covid-19 test within three days of the event. Masks required inside the theatre, regardless of vaccination status, except while enjoying concessions. For more info and to purchase tickets visit pentanglearts.org.

SATURDAY, JAN. 29**Winter Farmers' Market**

10 a.m. The Cortina Inn ballroom and foyer, Rutland. With a seasonal variety of produce, local grass-fed meat, eggs, artisan cheeses, freshly baked breads, jellies & jams, maple products, honey, CBD products, delicious hot foods, wine & spirits, artisan crafts, and live music rounding out the mix, the winter market is a great place to shop, eat, and visit. **NOTE:** Beginning Saturday, January 29th the winter market will be held at 476 Holiday Dr in Rutland, The Cortina Inn (formerly the Holiday Inn). The market will be held on the regular hours, 10am-2pm in the ballroom and foyer areas of the conference center.

Story Time with Dan Yaccarino

11 a.m. Virtual. Free. Please join Phoenix Books and the Vermont Italian Cultural Association (VICA) for a special Saturday story time event with award-winning illustrator and author, Dan Yaccarino. Dan will be sharing two of his recent picture books with us, All the Way to America: The Story of a Big Italian Family and a Little Shovel and The Longest Storm. VICA is especially excited to highlight Dan's strong connection to his Italian-American background found in All the Way to America which introduces a version of the immigration story not unlike what many have grown up hearing around the dinner table. For more info and to purchase tickets visit pentanglearts.org.

Drop in succulent planting workshop

11 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. Honey Field Farm, 55 Butternut Road in Norwich. Free, plants and supplies available to purchase. Join Honey Field Farm for a drop-in succulent planting workshop during our next greenhouse pop up market. Learn how to build your own terrarium or succulent arrangement, and leave with a beautiful creation. Email valerie@honeyfieldfarmvt.org to reserve your spot. Visit honeyfieldfarmvt.com for more info.

'Matilda The Musical Jr.'

2 p.m. and 7 p.m. Paramount Theatre in Rutland. \$12 + tax/adult; \$10 + tax/children under 12 and adults over 65. Rutland Youth Theatre presents Roald Dahl's musical Matilda Jr at Rutland's Paramount Theatre. Rebellion is nigh in Matilda Jr, a gleefully witty ode to the anarchy of childhood and the power of imagination. The story of a girl who dreams of a better life and the children she inspires, will have you rooting for them from your seats. With a cast of talented local young actors this show is packed with high-energy dance numbers and catchy songs. Children and adults alike will be thrilled and delighted by the story of the special little girl with an extraordinary imagination. The Paramount requires proof of full vaccination or a negative Covid-19 test from all ticket holders age 12+ before entering the theatre. Please note they do not accept at-home tests. For more info and to purchase tickets visit bit.ly/RYTMatilda.

**GUIDED UPHILL
ETIQUETTE TOUR
AT PICO MOUNTAIN****FRIDAY, JAN. 28 AT 4 P.M.****'We Are Nature'**

3 p.m. Ludlow Town Hall Heald Auditorium in Ludlow. The students of the Expeditionary School at Black River will present "We Are Nature". This performance is made possible by a Vermont Arts Council Grant allowing the Expeditionary School to contract local Broadway artist Susan Haefner for a second year in a row. For more info visit esblackriver.org.

Rutland Jewish Center Bonfire

7 p.m. Free. Weather and ground cover permitting, please join us for a Winter Bonfire. Enjoy the warmth and light of an outdoor event on a cold winter night. Contact Judy Stern, judy.e.stern@dartmouth.edu, for more information about the event.

'Encanto'

7:30 p.m. Woodstock Town Hall Theatre, 31 The Green in Woodstock. \$9/adult; \$8/child and senior; \$7/Pentangle Member. The Madrigals are an extraordinary family who live hidden in the mountains of Colombia in a charmed place called the Encanto. The magic of the Encanto has blessed every child in the family with a unique gift. Every child except Mirabel. However, she soon may be the Madrigals last hope when she discovers that the magic surrounding the Encanto is now in danger. All patrons, staff, and volunteers must show proof of full vaccination, 14 days past their final vaccination shot, or proof of a negative Covid-19 test within three days of the event. Masks required inside the theatre, regardless of vaccination status, except while enjoying concessions. For more info and to purchase tickets visit pentanglearts.org.

SUNDAY, JAN. 30**Castleton Fire Association's pancake breakfast**

8-11 a.m. Castleton American Legion, Route 4A in Castleton. \$6/adult and \$3/children 10 and under. Join the Castleton Fire Association for their pancake breakfast. The menu includes plain, blueberry, and chocolate chip pancakes, scrambled eggs, sausage, juice, and coffee.

Original Hot Yoga

8 a.m. True Yoga Vermont, 22 Wales St., Rutland. \$49 for a month of unlimited classes. Join True Yoga Vermont for an hour long morning Original Hot Yoga session. For more info visit trueyogavermont.com.

Adult Hebrew Reading Class

9-10 a.m. Virtual. If you know the Hebrew alphabet and now want to put those letters together with words, join us virtually for a Hebrew Reading Class on Sunday mornings. Classes will be: Jan. 30 and February 6. Please call the RJC Office at 802-773-3455 for more information and to register and receive the zoom link. There is a small fee for non-members to participate.

Metropolitan Opera - Rigoletto (Verdi)

12:55-4 p.m. Paramount Theatre in Rutland. \$23 + tax/person. Tony Award-winning director Bartlett Sher creates a bold new take on Verdi's timeless tragedy, resetting the opera's action in 1920s Europe, with Art Deco sets by Michael Yeargan and elegant costumes by Catherine Zuber. Baritone Quinn Kelsey, a commanding artist at the height of his powers, brings his searing portrayal of the title role to the Met for the first time, starring alongside soprano Rosa Feola as Gilda and tenor Piotr Beczala as the Duke of Mantua, with leading maestro Daniele Rustioni on the podium. For more info and to purchase tickets visit bit.ly/RigoletteVerdi.

Ceramic Moon Make and Take with Jess from**Inspiration Station**

2-5 p.m. Head Over Heels 129 Forest St, Rutland. \$40. Join us at Head Over Heels for a Ceramic Moon Make and Take with Jess from the Inspiration Station. Fully instructed class, supplies and for the ceramic firing. We will provide snacks and BYOB. You must pay upfront by January 16th (No refunds) There is only 10 spaces available for this class and very limited availability per style. They will be first come first serve. Call 802-773-1404 for more information.

'Uplifting Guitar Hymns' CD release concert and fundraiser

2 p.m. Grace Congregation Church, 8 Court St. in Rutland. Free, donations appreciated. Ron Pulcer and guest musicians will perform selections from Ron's new album, "Uplifting Guitar Hymns", which was recorded at Grace Church. The album includes 18 hymns, spirituals and religious songs, and features instrumental finger-style guitar arrangements by Ron. A free-will offering at the concert will be given to the mission and service committee at Grace Church, which in turn supports local non-profits. A portion of CD sales after the concert will be shared with mission and service. For more info visit upliftingguitarhymns.com.

'Encanto'

3 p.m. Woodstock Town Hall Theatre, 31 The Green in Woodstock. \$9/adult; \$8/child and senior; \$7/Pentangle Member. The Madrigals are an extraordinary family who live hidden in the mountains of Colombia in a charmed place called the Encanto. All patrons, staff, and volunteers must show proof of full vaccination, 14 days past their final vaccination shot, or proof of a negative Covid-19 test within three days of the event. Masks required inside the theatre, regardless of vaccination status, except while enjoying concessions. For more info and to purchase tickets visit pentanglearts.org.

**PANCAKE BREAKFAST AT
CASTLETON AMERICAN LEGION
SUNDAY, JAN. 30 AT 8 A.M.**

Submitted

MONDAY, JAN. 31**Inferno Hot Pilates**

6 a.m. True Yoga Vermont, 22 Wales St., Rutland. \$49 for a month of unlimited classes. Join True Yoga Vermont for an hour long early morning Inferno Hot Pilates session. For more info visit trueyogavermont.com.

Mental Health Advocacy Day

10 a.m. - 2 p.m. Virtual. Free. Every year, advocates join together to raise their voice in support of Mental Health Advocacy Day at the Statehouse. This year is no exception. This virtual event will call on Vermont leaders and legislators to advocate for mental health. The day will include a welcome address from state leaders and a keynote presentation from Senate President Pro Tem Becca Balint. The afternoon will be an opportunity for the community to share their mental health experiences and stories to influence legislators about the importance of mental health care. Advocacy trainings will be scheduled prior to the event to help you develop and build your advocacy skills to speak with legislators and to learn more about Vermont's legislative process. Additionally, testimony will be scheduled at the discretion of committee chairs during the week of Feb. 1-4. For more info and to register visit namivt.org/advocacy/advocacy-day.

Babies and Toddlers Rock

10-10:30 a.m. Fox Room, Rutland Free Library in Rutland. Free. A music and pre-literacy program for children 0-24 months with Linda McFarlane. Free and open to all. For more info visit rutlandfree.org/calendar-events.

A Community of Parents

10 a.m. Wonderfeet Kids' Museum, Rutland. Free. The community meets from 10-11:30 a.m. at Wonderfeet Kids' Museum. Snacks provided, siblings welcome. Find connection, education, and a community to share with. They're here to support you during the transition of adding a new baby or child to your family - or whenever you need a community of parents to listen! All parents including expecting parents and caregivers welcome. For more info visit wonderfeetkidsmuseum.org.

Killington Bone Builders

10 a.m. Sherburne Memorial Library, 2998 River Road, Killington. Free. In the meeting room at Sherburne Memorial Library. Weights provided. For more info call Pat at 802-422-3368.

Drive-up pick-up meals

12 p.m. Godnick Center, 1 Deer Street, Rutland. \$3.50 Donation ages 65+, \$6 fee under age 65. Reservations required. Godnick Center, in partnership with Southwestern Vermont Council on Aging and Meals on Wheels, is providing drive-up pick-up meals on Mondays and Thursdays at noon at the Godnick Center. Call (802)773-1853 for information or to make a reservation for pick-up. For more info or to make a reservation call 802-773-1853.

Bone Builders

1 p.m. Godnick Center, 1 Deer Street, Rutland. Free. An Osteo Exercise Program. All you need to bring with you is a bottle of water. The weights are provided. For more info and to RSVP call 802-775-8220.



OPEN EVERYDAY AT 11:30
Daily Happy Hour Food & Drink Specials

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BURRITOS	NACHOS
CRAFT BEER	KIDS MENU
HOMEMADE SPECIALS	GAME ROOM
BEST WINGS	Family-Friendly

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Call Deli 802-422-7594
Any special requests are always welcome.
www.killingtonmarket.com

← **Calendar:** Email events@mountaintimes.info
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Open Discussion and Support Group for Frontline Workers

3:30 p.m. Virtual. Free. Join this facilitated discussion to share and learn from your peers in front-line positions about how best to manage during this time. COVID Support VT staff will provide a structured environment for discussion and tips for coping and wellness. For more info visit bit.ly/frontlineworkerssupport.

NAMI Connection peer support group

7 p.m. Virtual. Free. Struggling with managing your mental health? NAMI Connection Peer Support Group can help. This is a free, 90-minute recovery support group for people living with a mental health condition. For more info., visit namivt.org/support/peer-support-groups or contact Nick Martin at nickmartin@namivt.org.

TUESDAY, FEB. 1

Inferno Hot Pilates

9 a.m. True Yoga Vermont, 22 Wales St., Rutland. \$49 for a month of unlimited classes. Join True Yoga Vermont for an hour long early morning Inferno Hot Pilates session. For more info visit trueyogavermont.com.

Line Dance: Country

9:30 a.m. Godnick Center, 1 Deer Street, Rutland. \$5/class. Join the Godnick Center on Tuesday mornings at 9:30 a.m. with Marilyn Sheldon. Come for a fun cardiovascular workout with both new and old-line dances. No experience necessary. No partner needed. For more info call 802-773-1853.

Tai Chi Level 3

10:45 a.m. Godnick Center, 1 Deer Street, Rutland. Free. Often described as "meditation in motion," Tai Chi is a mind-body practice, originating in China as a martial art. This six week class is a fun, relaxing, and enjoyable way to move with mindfulness and enjoy the camaraderie of others while practicing. For more information call 802-773-1853 or email aprilc@rutlandrec.com.

Knitting Group

12:30 p.m. Godnick Center, 1 Deer Street, Rutland. Free. Gather your knitting (or crochet) project and let's come together! We are trying a new way of gathering with our creative interests. To RSVP call 802-773-1853 or email aprilc@rutlandrec.com

Getting the Best from Yourself and Your Employees

1 p.m. Virtual. \$35/person. Held by the UVM Extension New Farmer Project, this course focuses on strategies for farmers to be better communicators and better managers of employees, customers and family members. By using the DiSC Workplace Profile, they will identify communication and management preferences and how these impact recruitment, hiring and retention of employees. Note that this session is 90 minutes and requires preregistration by January 26 to allow time to complete a self-assessment prior to the workshop. For more info and to register visit go.uvm.edu/farmlabor-wrkshp.

Chess Club

4 p.m. Godnick Center, 1 Deer Street, Rutland. Free. Are you new to the game or have you been playing for years? This is an opportunity for players of all levels and ages to play chess. Bring your own chess set if you are able, some sets will be available. For more info contact club organizer Gregory Weller at gawchess802@gmail.com.

Circle of Fathers

4 p.m. Virtual. Free. Fathers Support Group. Run by Prevent Child Abuse VT. For more info contact Amber Menard, Family Support Programs Coordinator, at 802-552-4274 or amenard@pcavt.org.

Circle of Parents in Recovery

5:30 p.m. Virtual. Free. Virtual support group. Run by Prevent Child Abuse VT. For more info contact Cindy Atkins, Family Support Programs Coordinator, at 802-498-0608 or catkins@pcavt.org

Grief support

6 p.m. VNA & Hospice of the Southwest Region's Rutland office at 7 Albert Cree Drive, Rutland and virtually. Free. The VNA & Hospice of the Southwest Region, (VNAHSR) will provide grief support services both in-person and virtually every Tuesday from 6-7 p.m. at the VNA & Hospice of the Southwest Region's Rutland office on 7 Albert Cree Drive. Led by Spiritual and Bereavement Coordinator, Collin Terenzini. Space is limited. To register call 802-855-4533.

African American Film Forum: Crime on the Bayou

6:30 p.m. Virtual screening. A Crime on the Bayou is the story of Gary Duncan, a Black teenager from Plaquemines Parish, a swampy strip of land south of New Orleans. Please register at crandalllibrary.org to receive a link to the film and a link for the discussion following.

Blind Visionaries

7 p.m. Casella Theatre at Castleton University in Castleton. \$10/ general public; \$5/staff and faculty; free for Castleton students. Blind Visionaries is a multimedia performance featuring photography created by the blind and the visually impaired with original music by the Daniel Kelly Trio. Composer Daniel Kelly, with the Seeing with Photography Collective, invites audiences to see and hear the world in a new way through the lens of blind photographers and live music inspired by their three thought-provoking images. This multimedia performance explores the nature of sight and blindness, light and dark, and what it truly means to see. For more info visit bit.ly/BlindVisionaries.



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Choices Restaurant & Rotisserie

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



Dream Maker Bakers

Dream Maker Bakers is an all-butter, from-scratch bakery making breads, bagels, croissants, cakes and more daily. It serves soups, salads and sandwiches and offers seating with free Wifi. At 5501 US Route 4, Killington, VT. No time to wait? Call ahead. Curb-side pick up available. dreammakerbakers.com, 802-422-5950.



Inn at Long Trail

Looking for something a little different? Hit up McGrath's Irish Pub for a perfectly poured pint of Guinness, live music on the weekends and delicious food. Guinness not your favorite? They also have Vermont's largest Irish Whiskey selection. Visit innatlongtrail.com, 802-775-7181.



Jones' Donuts

Offering donuts and a bakery, with a community reputation as being the best! Closed Monday and Tuesday. 23 West Street, Rutland. See what's on special at [Facebook.com/JonesDonuts/](https://www.facebook.com/JonesDonuts/). Call 802-773-7810.



Killington Market

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



Liquid Art

Relax in the warm atmosphere at Liquid Art. Look for artfully served lattes from their La Marzocco espresso machine, or if you want something stronger, try their signature cocktails. Serving breakfast, lunch and dinner, they focus on healthy fare and provide you with a delicious meal different than anything else on the mountain. liquidartvt.com, (802) 422-2787.



Lookout Tavern

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



Moguls

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



Mountain Merchant

Killington's new deli, grocery and beer cave. Serving breakfast and a full deli menu daily. Mountain Merchant also offers the area's largest beer cave with over 500+ choices, a variety of everyday grocery items and the only gas on the Access Road. (802) 422-CAVE



Mountain Top Inn

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



Roots the Restaurant

Delicious food from fresh, local ingredients. Weekly entree & cocktail specials. Eat in or Order online. 55 Washington St., Center St. Marketplace, Rutland. RootsRutland.com 802-747-7414.



Rosemary's Restaurant

Rosemary's Restaurant at the Inn at Long Trail is serving dinner Thursday through Saturday, with casual fine dining specializing in comfort foods. Our chef blends the flavors of Ireland and New England, featuring locally sourced products. Enjoy the scenery of our indoor boulder and illuminated boulder garden view. Reservations appreciated. 802-775-7181



Rutland CO-OP

The Rutland Area Food Co-op is a community-owned grocery and wellness market situated in downtown Rutland. As a food cooperative, we are owned by a membership base of around 2,000 members. We aim to provide affordable access to high-quality, local, organic and sustainable foods and goods. At the same time, as a mission-driven, community-oriented business, we proudly strengthen our region by carrying products of more than 180 local businesses. 77 Wale St. Rutland. rutlandcoop.com 802-773-0737



Sugar and Spice

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



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[MUSIC Scene]

By DJ Dave Hoffenberg

Listings for Jan. 26 – Feb. 1 (Some places require reservations, some proof of vaccination or a negative covid test within 72 hours, so please call ahead before making a drive.)

WED. 1/26

KILLINGTON

2 p.m. K1 Base Lodge – Sammy B

5 p.m. Wobbly Barn – King Arthur Junior

9 p.m. Moguls Sports Pub – DJ Dirty D

LUDLOW

6 p.m. Du Jour VT – Jim Yeager and Melissa Dee Phipps

POULTNEY

7 p.m. Taps Tavern – Open Mic hosted by Danny Lang

QUECHEE

6 p.m. The Public House – Matt Seiple

RANDOLPH

7 p.m. One Main Tap & Grill – Open Mic hosted by Silas McPrior

RUTLAND

6 p.m. Strange Fellows Pub – Ryan Fuller

9:30 p.m. Center Street Alley – Open Mic hosted by Rick Urbani

THURS. 1/27

BRANDON

6 p.m. Ripton Mountain Distillery – Open Jam

KILLINGTON

5 p.m. Moguls Sports Pub – Duane Carleton

6 p.m. Liquid Art – Open Mic

6 p.m. Rivershed – King Arthur

6 p.m. The Foundry – James Joel

6 p.m. Wobbly Barn – Primo & Prior

8 p.m. Pickle Barrel Nightclub – Higher Education

8:30 p.m. Jax Food & Games – Jenny Porter and Liz Reedy

LUDLOW

6 p.m. Du Jour VT – BYO(Damn) Mic: Open Mic hosted by George Nostrand

POULTNEY

7 p.m. Taps Tavern – Aaron Audet

PROCTORSVILLE

5 p.m. Neal's Restaurant & Bar – Sammy B

QUECHEE

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

RUTLAND

6:30 p.m. Angler Pub – Open Mic hosted by John Lafave & Chuck Booth

9 p.m. Center Street Saloon – International Night

FRI. 1/28

KILLINGTON

4 p.m. The Foundry – Jamie

4 p.m. Wobbly Barn – Kim Wilcox

6 p.m. Summit Lodge – Duane Carleton

6:30 p.m. Wobbly Barn – Kenny Mehler

7 p.m. The Foundry – Jenny Porter

7:30 p.m. McGrath's Irish Pub – McMurphy

8 p.m. Pickle Barrel Nightclub – Crash The Party

9 p.m. Moguls Sports Pub – Fiddle Witch

9:30 p.m. Jax Food & Games – Jamie

9:30 p.m. Wobbly Barn – The Benderz

LUDLOW

5:30 p.m. Calcuttas – Brooks Hubbard

6 p.m. Du Jour VT – Silas McPrior

9:30 p.m. Off The Rails – Rustie Bus

PROCTORSVILLE

7:30 p.m. Neal's Restaurant & Bar – Sing-O! Music Bingo

QUECHEE

6 p.m. The Public House – Sammy B

RUTLAND

6 p.m. Moose Lodge – Ryan Fuller

SAT. 1/29

BOMOSEEN

5:30 p.m. Bomoseen Lodge & Taproom – George Nostrand

CHESTER

6:30 p.m. Pizza Stone VT – Tree Rat

KILLINGTON

2 p.m. K1 Base Lodge – Fiddle Witch

4 p.m. Pickle Barrel Nightclub – Jamie's Junk Show with guest opener Jenny Porter

4 p.m. The Foundry – Happy Hour with Jacob Butler

4 p.m. Wobbly Barn – Chris White Duo

4:30 p.m. North Star Lodge – Tom Irish

6 p.m. Preston's at the Grand Hotel – Rick Webb

6 p.m. Summit Lodge – Fiddle Witch

6:30 p.m. Wobbly Barn – Krishna Guthrie Band

7 p.m. The Foundry – Jenny Porter

7:30 p.m. McGrath's Irish Pub – McMurphy

8 p.m. Moguls Sports Pub – Duane Carleton

8 p.m. Pickle Barrel Nightclub – Crash The Party

9:30 p.m. Jax Food & Games – King Margo

9:30 p.m. Wobbly Barn – The Benderz

LUDLOW

5:30 p.m. Calcuttas – Dustin Marshall

6 p.m. Du Jour VT – Eric King

RUTLAND

9 p.m. Center Street Alley – DJ Mega

PROCTORSVILLE

4 p.m. Outer Limits Brewery – Sammy B

8:30 p.m. Neal's Restaurant & Bar – The What Knots

SUN. 1/30

KILLINGTON

2 p.m. Snowshed's Long Trail Pub – Primo & Prior

5 p.m. The Foundry – The Foundry Jazz Trio

6 p.m. Liquid Art – Tee Boneicus Jones

8 p.m. Pickle Barrel Nightclub – Mihali

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

PITTSFIELD

6 p.m. Clear River Tavern – Duane Carleton

RUTLAND

8 p.m. Medusa Lounge – Latin Sunday

STOCKBRIDGE

1 p.m. The Wild Fern – The People's Jam with Rick Redington

MON. 1/31

KILLINGTON

5 p.m. Mary Lou's – Aaron, Bobby and Krishna

6 p.m. The Foundry – Blues Night with the Chris Pallutto Trio

LUDLOW

8 p.m. The Killarney – Open Mic with host Silas McPrior

PROCTORSVILLE

5 p.m. Neal's Restaurant & Bar – Sammy B

TUES. 2/1

KILLINGTON

2 p.m. K1 Base Lodge – Sammy B

4 p.m. Wobbly Barn – Rick Redington

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

LUDLOW

7 p.m. Du Jour VT – Taco Tuesday with Brooks Hubbard

POULTNEY

7 p.m. Taps Tavern – Open Bluegrass Jam

QUECHEE

5 p.m. The Public House – Jim Yeager

Virtual Events

WED. 1/26

8 p.m. The Woolen Mill Comedy Club presents The Drunk & Under Quarantine Show
facebook.com/woolenmillcomedy

THURS. 1/27

6 p.m. The Underground Recording Studio presents Dylan Patrick Ward: theundergroundvt.
bandcamp.com/merch/dylan-patrick-ward-live



Did we miss something? Email djdavehoff@gmail.com and we'll be sure to include your next event on this page!

Looking for a new cookbook?

Give this delectable piece of Rutland Jewish Center (RJC) History to all your friends this New Year.

"Kosher Yankee Centennial: 100 Years of Kosher Cooking in Vermont" is a special edition cookbook containing hundreds of recipes from members and friends. Renowned Vermont watercolor artist Peter Huntton was the creator of the cover art. No home should be without a copy. Copies are on sale this month for \$18 each (plus applicable shipping) from the RJC office by calling 802-773-3455 or emailing: office@rutlandjewishcenter.org. Reserve your copies now.

Comforting chicken soup



Sylvie's Stars and Moon Soup

Serves 2 to 4

- 2 cans (10.5 oz or 14.5 oz) chicken broth (or homemade if desired)
- 2 medium carrots, peeled and cut into coins
- ¼ cup orecchiette
- ½ cup elbow macaroni
- ½ cup mini pasta stars (pastina)
- 1 cup frozen shelled edamame
- 8 green beans, cut into ½-inch pieces
- 1 cup shredded, cooked chicken
- Freshly ground black pepper

Pour the broth into a medium saucepan over medium-high heat. Add the carrots and bring to a boil. Add the orecchiette and cook for 2 minutes. Add the macaroni and cook for 3 minutes more. Add the stars, edamame, and green beans and cook for 4 minutes more. Add the chicken, cook until it is heated through, then sprinkle with pepper and serve.

Chef's note: Dana Corwin, from Food & Wine, makes this soup almost every Saturday in the winter with her daughter Sylvie. Feel free to take liberties with the recipe. Change the vegetables, add more broth or adjust the seasonings. The dish is very forgiving and versatile.

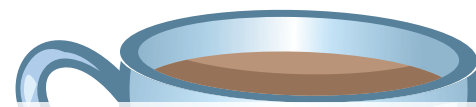
As weather chills, that dip in temperature is often accompanied by cold and flu season. Many people are anxious to avoid feeling under the weather this time of year, and to help ward off many illnesses, one may only need to look to the kitchen stove.

Chicken soups and other soup recipes long have been touted as homeopathic remedies for colds. Not only are they hydrating, hot soups can break up congestion in the nose and chest. Plus their vegetable-rich content offers the vitamins and minerals needed to boost one's immune system. Any soup will do, but "Sylvie's Stars and Moon Soup" is whimsical enough to excite even the pickiest and youngest members of your household.

Enjoy this recipe, courtesy of "Soup's On: Soul-Satisfying Recipes from Your Favorite Cookbook Authors and Chefs" (Chronicle Books) by Leslie Jonath and Frankie Frankeny.



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Submitted

Middlebury College's Film and Media Culture Department screened the film "Petit Rat" by Vera Wagman on demand Jan. 20-27 and on Thursday, Jan. 27, will be hosting a live Q&A.

Holocaust Remembrance Day marked with screening, Q&A with filmmaker of 'Petit Rat'

Watch on demand from Jan. 20-27, Q&A with the filmmaker held on Thursday, Jan. 27 at 7:45 p.m. via Zoom

"Petit Rat" is a portrait of three women facing their lost dreams," explained director Wagman. Catch the film (screening on demand from Jan. 20-27) by visiting go.middlebury.edu/petitrat.

On Thursday, Jan. 27, Middlebury College's Film and Media Culture Department, the Feminist Resource Center at Chellis House, and the Scott Center for Spiritual and Religious Life present the film "Petit Rat" by Vera Wagman to commemorate International Holocaust Remembrance Day. This event is co-sponsored by the Hirschfeld International Film Series and is supported by the Holocaust Remembrance Film Fund.

In 1940, a French Jewish girl's dream of becoming a ballerina is cut short by World War II. She vows that if she has daughters, they will become dancers. Nearly 80 years later, she and her two daughters confront the impact of that pledge. "Petit Rat" is a portrait of three women, bonded by the intergenerational trauma of war and uplifted by the resilience of familial love.

A live Q&A with filmmaker Wagman and her sister Deborah Wagman will be held on Thursday, Jan. 27, at 7:45 p.m. via Zoom.

The plot

Inside the Baryshnikov Arts Center in New York City, Fernande, an 81-year-old woman and her two daughters, Deborah and Vera, rehearse a dance piece together. They have never danced together before. There is history

between the three of them, but the story begins with Fernande.

In 1940, eight year old Fernande Horenstein, lives in Paris, France with her parents, Vera and Henri. Vera wants her daughter to become a ballerina and brings her to study with the Russian ballet mistress, Madame Olga Preobrajenska, who sees that Fernande has raw talent. She begins her training with an eye toward becoming a "petit rat" — an apprentice with the Paris Opera Ballet.

The Nazis invade Paris, forcing the Horensteins to flee to Yenne in the south of France, where they are hidden by a French-Christian family, Marie and Placide Chagnon. Fernande and her parents survive the war and return to Paris. Plagued by survivor's guilt and the shame of being Jewish, Fernande returns to study ballet with Madam Preobrajenska who tells her that she is too old to become a dancer. She vows to herself that if she has daughters someday, they will become dancers.

Fernande's pledge becomes a reality. She has two daughters, Deborah and Vera, who become dancers. Through confessions and revelations made during the rehearsal of the dance piece, a family legacy is uncovered. Petit Rat is a love story between a mother and her daughters, bonded by the intergenerational trauma of

war and uplifted by the resilience of familial love.

"Petit Rat" is a portrait of three women facing their lost dreams," explained director Wagman. "Fernande, my mother, dreamed of Deborah, my sister and I becoming dancers. After the war, it was a way to preserve her own desire to live. Deborah and I were the vehicles which carried her life's meaning through this art form. Each of us had to throw off our mother's identity in order to gain our own. And even though we managed to escape the effects

Each of us had to throw off our mother's identity in order to gain our own.

of our competitive and troubled youth, we still returned to dance. But this return is not the same place from which we started. Now, it is dancing with our own purpose and meaning. 'Petit Rat' demonstrates

how modern people face the same problem as their parent's generation, the generation of "survivors." Survival is the name-of-the-game for our children's generation. The survivors of Nazi Europe had to overcome a political machine that threatened national/ethnic/gender groups. The children of today must overcome a political machine that threatens all of Life itself."

"Petit Rat" runs 45 minutes and is in English and French with English subtitles. To register, go to go.middlebury.edu/petitrat. For more information about the film including biographies, visit petitrat.com.



Courtesy BF&M

Winter and summer camps at Billings Farm now open for registration

WOODSTOCK — Step into the shoes of a farmer, listen to farm stories, meet Billings' Farm animals and enjoy the thrill of the farm in winter. Billings Farm & Museum has four camp offerings which all provide engaging hands-on activities and explorations of the farm and the local landscape.

Winter Wonders Camp, Ages 6-8

Feb. 14-18, 9 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

Winter Wonders Camp offers fun-tastic winter activities, including outdoor explorations, sledding and winter crafts. Learn about animals in winter and go on a scavenger hunt with national park rangers. Meet the Billings Farm animals and find out what they do in wintertime. Warm up while cooking popcorn and hot cocoa over an open fire. Bake sugar cookies and learn to make marshmallows, wassail punch and cinnamon sugar snowflakes in the Billings Learning Kitchen. Craft a paper snowflake, decorate a fleece scarf, experiment with Dr. Seuss's oobleck and make a bird feeder. And of course, enjoy lots of outdoor playtime. Space is limited. Visit billingsfarm.org/winter-wonders-camp to reserve a spot.

Billings Bookworms Camp, Ages 6-8

June 27-July 1, 9 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

Listen to fun stories about farming, nature and animals then meet our calves, sheep goats and learn the basics of caring for each animal through hands-on activities. Visit billingsfarm.org/billings-bookworms to reserve a spot.

Junior Farm Camp, Ages 7-10

**Offered in four sessions on June 20-24; July 11-15;
July 25-29 and; Aug. 15-19, 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.**

Have you ever wondered what it takes to be a farmer? Get up close and personal with the farm's cows, horses, chickens, and sheep while learning the work that goes into the food we eat. In addition to daily farm chores and activities, we will explore different farming topics like dairy, gardening, tractors, and draft animals. To reserve a spot, visit billingsfarm.org/junior-farmer-camp.

Farm Discovery Camp, Ages 11-14

Offered in two sessions on July 18-22 and Aug. 1-5, 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.

What does it mean to be part of a farming community? Farm Discovery Camp is a hands-on program for young people who want a deeper understanding of farming and all that it encompasses. To reserve a spot, visit billingsfarm.org/farm-discovery-camp.

Aftercare is available for full-day camps (Junior Farmer Camp and Farm Discovery Camp).

Our camps follow the CDC and state government guidelines to ensure the safety of our campers and counselors. The group sizes for each session will be small, and campers will be split into smaller groups following CDC guidelines for social distancing.

Our response to Covid-19 will continue to be updated as more information and state government guidelines becomes available. Campers and parents will receive prior notice of all other safety precautions and processes implemented at the Farm & Museum. The majority of our camp activities will be held outside where campers can maintain social distance.

For more information, visit billingsfarm.org.

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Come Alive Outside asks vermonters to send love letters to their towns

It's Year 2 of the pandemic and everyone could use a little love. That's why Come Alive Outside is asking Vermonters to help boost the morale of their community, themselves and their neighbors by telling the world what they love about where they live.

Come Alive Outside's programming is hyper-local and designed to entice residents to experience the benefits of nature where they live, work and play. Love letters are a terrific way to let others know about their particular hometown's charms. These love letters will be a delightful experience for both reader and writer. Expressing gratitude is a great way to increase joy and decrease stress. Writers can share their gratitude and express their love for the little part of Vermont they call home, whereas readers get a chance to reflect on all the ways their town is special to others, which may positively influence how they see their own neck of the woods.

"Both getting outside and gratitude prac-

tices have positive impacts on mental and physical health," said Come Alive Outside Executive Director Arwen Turner. "We hope this contest creates the intention and motivation for folks to get outside and explore their towns as well as inspires others to check out the hidden gems they read about in the letters."

Share the love by writing a love letter to your town. Submit your love letter via email to arwen@comealiveoutside.com by Feb. 10 or snail mail to Come Alive Outside, P.O. Box 267, Rutland, VT 05702. Mail needs to be postmarked by Feb. 7 for consideration. Come Alive Outside will announce three winners: two state-wide winners (one adult, one youth) and an additional winner from Rutland County (Come Alive Outside's HQ). Winners will get a gift basket including a variety of outdoor gifts. Winners will be announced on Feb. 14 and a mystery guest will read the winning love letters. Submissions will be published on comealiveoutside.com on Feb. 14.

Sustainable Woodstock Climate Change and Sustainability film series presents 'The Pollinators'

Jan. 25-30 — VIRTUAL — Sustainable Woodstock and Pentangle Arts presents "The Pollinators," a cinematic journey around the United States following migratory beekeepers and their truckloads of honey bees as they pollinate the flowers that become the fruits, nuts and vegetables we all eat. The film focuses on the challenges the beekeepers and their bees face en route and reveals flaws in our simplified chemically dependent agriculture system. The film interviews farmers, scientists, chefs and academics along the way to give a broad perspective about the threats to honey bees, what it means to our food security and how we can improve it.

Send a note after you view the film. Sustainable Woodstock and Pentangle Arts would love to hear your thoughts and reactions. If you appreciate this free film series please consider donating to Pentangle Arts and supporting our local arts community at pentanglearts.org/get-involved/donations.

For more details about Sustainable Woodstock and to get tickets, visit sustainablewoodstock.org.



Thank you for being a friend to animals

Have you heard of the #BettyWhiteChallenge? It is a new act of giving that has gone viral online.

This year, after the passing of the late actor and comedian, Betty White, humane societies and animal shelters throughout the world called out to their followers for help. As some may know, Betty White had a passion for animals' welfare. For what would have been Betty White's 100th birthday,

January 17, had become a day of giving.

Some local humane societies have been overwhelmed with the charity they have received in the last week in not only monetary donations, but also supplies and gifts. They have been showing their enthusiasm and appreciation via Facebook, posting that Rutland County Humane Society received over \$7,800 and Springfield Humane Society received over \$6,000 so far.

Watershed grants are due

The 2022 Vermont Watershed Grants Program is now accepting applications for projects that protect, restore and enhance the state's lakes, streams, rivers and ponds, including Vermonters' ability to understand and enjoy these treasures. Applications are due no later than Friday, Feb. 11.

Program grants are available to municipalities, local and regional government agencies, sporting clubs, nonprofit organizations and water-related citizen groups. Projects that seek to directly protect or restore fish and aquatic wildlife habitat are strongly encouraged. Examples of past funded projects include invasive species education, shoreline vegetation restoration and the removal of old dams and replacement of culverts to improve fish passage. Visit dec.vermont.gov/water-investment/cwi/grants/co-opportunities for details.

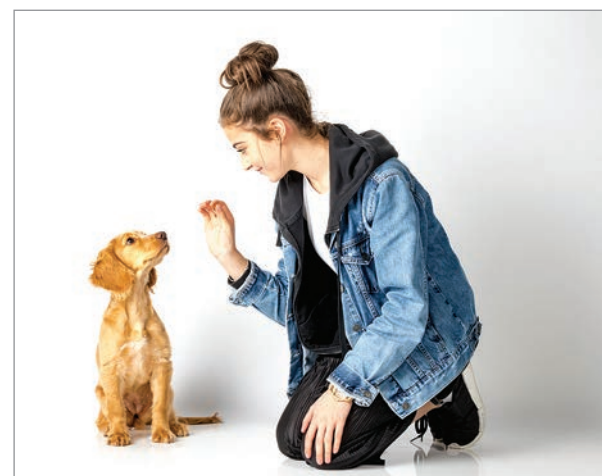
VT F&W offers conservation camps

If you are 12 to 14 years old and want to learn about Vermont's wildlife and gain outdoor skills, consider attending one of the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Dept.'s Green Mountain Conservation camps this summer. The one-week camp programs open June 19 and continue until Aug. 19 at Lake Bomoseen in Castleton and Buck Lake in Woodbury. Tuition is \$250 for the week, includes food, lodging and equipment. Visit vtfishandwildlife.com for details.

Covid-19 remains an unknown factor in planning for the 2022 Conservation Camp program. Keeping staff and campers safe and healthy could mean last minute changes such as reducing the number of sessions held, reducing the number of students in each session, or canceling the program for 2022. For more info, email FWGMCC@vermont.gov or call 802-522-2925.

Vermont 4-H hosts contest

Vermont 4-H invites students in grades 3-12 to explore their creativity, ingenuity and engineering skills through two contests, the Rube Goldberg Challenge and Create Your Own Invention. The deadline for both contests is Feb. 19. Details and links for registration (required to access the Flipgrid contest site) can be found at uvm.edu/extension/youth/announcements online. One winner in each age group (grades 3-5, 6-8 and 9-12) will be selected for each contest and will receive a \$50 gift certificate.



Selecting an easier-to-train dog breed

Training is one of the most effective ways to keep companion animals safe and secure. When prospective pet owners begin looking for a new dog, one of the first thoughts that may come to mind is trainability and whether certain breeds are more readily trainable than others.

The pet food manufacturers at Honest Kitchen indicate that many factors can make a difference in how easily a dog will train, and breed is just one of them. Certain traits can suggest trainability, but how the animal was bred, raised and socialized can affect how well a dog takes to training as well.

The American Kennel Club reports that certain dogs are more willing to comply with owner requests, while others are bred to work independently and may be less likely to immediately respond to commands from their owners.

Certain traits can make some dogs a little easier to train than others. For example, dogs that are food-motivated and enjoy being around people may be more easily trained than those without such traits. Though there's no guarantee any dog will take to training, the following are some breeds that are generally considered training-friendly.

- **Border collies:** Collies are bright and energetic dogs that like to herd with their agility and intelligence.
- **Australian shepherd:** Another herding dog, Aussies have a natural focus on their owners and are bred to work with those owners in challenging environments.
- **Doberman pinchers:** Dobermans are smart and attentive to their owners. They have traditionally been employed as guard dogs and require careful training and

Dogs > 38

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Offering 7% store-wide discounts
(excluding beer & wine)



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MONDAYS - SATURDAYS : 9AM-7PM
SUNDAYS : 10AM - 4PM
77 Wales Street, Rutland
802-773-0737

Free course teaches students how to create chatbots

Feb. 3 - Mar. 10 — VIRTUAL — Grade 5-12 students will have a chance to create their own custom chatbot through a free online course, offered on consecutive Thursdays, Feb. 3 - Mar. 10.

University of Vermont (UVM) Extension 4-H and Ohio 4-H have teamed up to offer the 4-H World Changers Learn to Code course, designed to introduce middle and high school students to coding. The classes will be held from 7-8 p.m.

The course is inspired by Girls Who Code, a national non-profit organi-

zation that engages girls in learning about technology and engineering. It is open to any student with an interest in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics), coding or developing important workforce skills. Enrollment in 4-H is not required.

Participants will learn how to use the Trinket coding platform to write and run their own chatbot in a web browser using the Python programming language. A chatbot, a simple form of artificial intelligence, is a computer program that simulates conver-

sations with a real person.

Registration will close on Feb. 1. To register, go to go.uvm.edu/4hcoding. The Zoom link will be provided on the morning of the first session. All classes will be live captioned.

If requiring a disability-related accommodation to participate, please contact Lauren Traister, UVM Extension 4-H Teen and Leadership Program coordinator, at 802-888-4972, ext. 402.



Drop-in succulent planting workshop

Saturday, Jan. 29 at 11 a.m. — NORWICH — Join Honey Field Farm for a drop-in succulent planting workshop during its next greenhouse pop-up market. Learn how to build your own terrarium or succulent arrangement, and leave with a beautiful creation.

At Honey Field Farm's last market, they gave private tours of the succulents, shared growing tips and played with combinations. They're excited to open the greenhouse for you to make your own creations.

Come anytime between 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. to explore the succulents, ranging from large plants to tiny babies perfect for filling in mixed planters and terrariums.

It's also your last chance for the super succulent sale. Large succulents are available for \$7 or 3 for \$15 through the end of the month.

The greenhouse will be open for any to shop during the drop-in workshop on Jan. 29. Workshop details:

- Learn about the basic steps and materials needed to make a succulent/cacti arrangement.
- Get inspired by the collection of terrariums made from found and reused objects.
- Bring your own pot or pick from the unique containers and glassware.
- Get creative with the selection of stones, figurines and other found or natural objects to dress up your planter.
- Get assistance in picking out your succulents/cacti and planting the container or terrarium.

The workshop is free, with plants and supplies available to purchase.

Space is limited to 10 in the workshop at a time. Masks required.

Email valerie@honeyfieldfarmvt.com to reserve a spot in the workshop or drop by between 11 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. on Jan. 29.



By Shawn Good / VTF&W

Vermont offers free ice fishing for all ages on Saturday, Jan. 29 at any body of water in the state.

Vermont's free ice fishing day is Saturday, Jan. 29

Vermont's Free Ice Fishing Day this year is Saturday, Jan. 29, according to the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Dept.

"Ice fishing can be a great way to introduce people to how much fun fishing can be," said Fish & Wildlife Commissioner Christopher Herrick. "Showing youngsters or adult new anglers how to jig for perch or how to use tip-ups is rewarding, and it can provide an excellent

meal of fresh fish. Perhaps best of all – the experience almost always creates fond memories to last a lifetime."

Free Ice Fishing Day is held annually on the last Saturday in January. Residents and nonresident anglers may ice fish without a license on any Vermont waterbody that is open to ice fishing.

For ice fishing tips and to learn how to safely go ice fishing, go to Vermont

Fish & Wildlife's website, vtfishandwildlife.com.

Be sure to visit the virtual ice fishing festival for a video presentation on fish identification, safety and cooking your catch.

To learn about fishing regulations, you can pick up a free copy of the 2022 Fishing Guide & Regulations booklet from any Vermont license agent or Interstate highway rest area, or it can be downloaded from the website.

'Uplifting Guitar Hymns' CD release concert and fundraiser

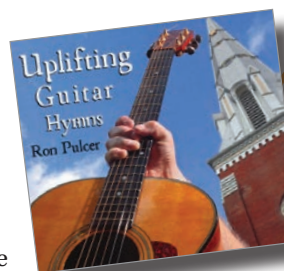
Sunday, Jan. 30 at 2 p.m. — RUTLAND — A CD release concert and fundraiser for Grace Congregational Church's mission and service programs will be held on Sunday, Jan. 30 at 2 p.m. in the sanctuary.

Ron Pulcer and guest musicians will perform selections from Ron's new album, "Uplift-

ing Guitar Hymns," which was recorded at Grace Church. The album includes 18 hymns, spirituals and religious songs, and features instrumental fingerstyle guitar arrangements by Pulcer. Guest musicians include Marina Smakhtina (cello, guitar), Linda MacFarlane (dulcimer, guitar) and Phil Henry

(djembe, guitar).

A free will offering at the concert will be given to the mission and service committee at Grace Church, which in turn supports local non-profits. Additionally, a portion of CD sales after the concert will be shared with the mission and



Jan.
30

service committee. A member of the committee will speak to concert audience about the committee's programs and plans.

For more information, visit gracechurchvt.org or call 802-775-4301. Keep up to date and follow Grace on Facebook: @GraceChurchVT.



BAXTER

Baxter is a 2-year-old mixed breed that came from Arkansas. He's a bit shy, we think people were not always kind to him, but this has not stopped him from loving people and wanting to be your new best friend! Baxter has been pretty clean in his kennel, so he maybe housebroken. He seems to like most female dogs, but more leery around male dogs. He will be a wonderful addition to a home where people give him time to get used to his new surroundings. Baxter is heartworm positive and has to remain in the state of Vermont. We will pay for his treatments, but his home would have to transport him to the vet in Rutland for his treatments.

This pet is available for adoption at

Springfield Humane Society

401 Skitchewaugh Trail, Springfield, VT • (802) 885-3997

*Open by appointment only. spfldhumane.org



LUCKY

I'm a 14-year-old neutered male. I came to Lucy Mackenzie after my last home didn't quite work out for me. I am such a loveable and affectionate little guy who just loves attention and loves to be petted!

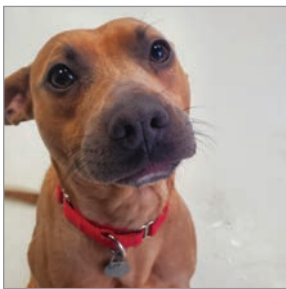
This pet is available for adoption at

Lucy Mackenzie Humane Society

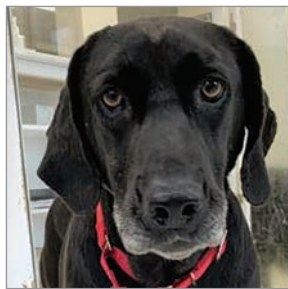
4832 VT-44, Windsor, VT • (802) 484-5829

*(By appointment only at this time.) Tues. - Sat. 12-4 p.m. & Thurs. 12-7 p.m. • lucymac.org

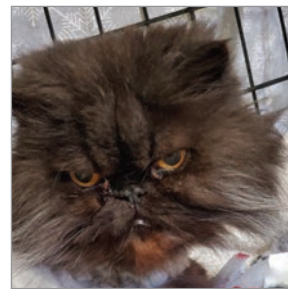
Rutland County Humane Society



KIKO—2-year-old. Neutered male. Terrier mix. Brown. I am such a sweet boy who loves everyone.



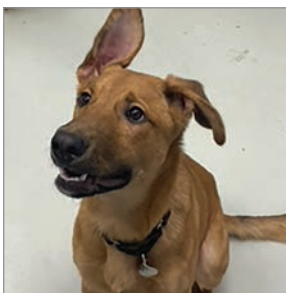
HUNTER—3-year-old. Neutered male. Labrador mix. Black. With my sad looking face, who wouldn't want to take me home and love me forever?



GIZMO—7-year-old. (FELV +). Neutered male. Persian. Black. I am a very sweet and friendly boy, who can't wait to find my forever home.



RUFUS— Guinea pig. Adult. Male. Hi everyone, I am a happy little guy that enjoys scurrying around my little home, hiding in the hut and munching on hay.



SAM—10-month-old. Neutered male. German shepherd mix. Brown. I'm a silly boy! I love people and get very excited for my walks.



GOOSE

6-year-old. Neutered male. Rottweiler mix. Black/brown. I am a lovely and funny guy, but no cats for me please!

All of these pets are available for adoption at

Rutland County Humane Society

765 Stevens Road, Pittsford, VT • (802) 483-6700

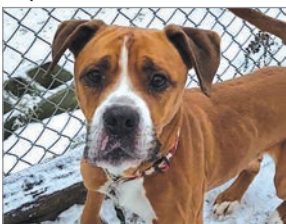
Tues. - Sat. 11-5p.m. for adoptions

*(By appointment only at this time.)

Closed Sun. & Mon. • www.rchsvt.org



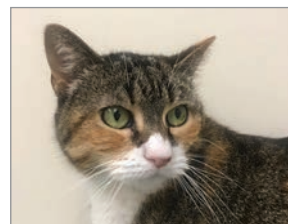
SPIKE—1-year-old. Neutered male. Pit mix. Brindle. I am such a happy boy who loves people. I love to go for walks, chase tennis balls, and then take long naps.



OZZIE—2-year-old. Neutered male. Boxer mix. Tan and white. My name is Ozzie, and I am a fun and goofy boy, ready to join your family!



LUNA—5-year-old. Spayed female. Domestic Shorthair. Brown tiger. Hi there! I'm Luna and I am a very sweet girl! I enjoy getting ear scratches and lots of attention.



CARRIE—10-year-old. Spayed female. Domestic Shorthair. Torbie. If you are looking for a laid-back companion, then I am your girl! I love kicking my paws up and relaxing whenever I have the chance.



RALPH— Guinea pig. Adult. Male. I am so much fun to watch and talk to and with daily handling I know I would just love to be carried around.



SNOW— Adult. Neutered male. American rabbit. White. I am a lovely rabbit who likes to sit and watch the world go by in between eating and playing.

RGHS to be open by appointment only

For the safety and wellbeing of our staff, volunteers, and adopters, the Rutland County Humane Society (RGHS) adoption center will now be open by appointment only. For any questions, or if you are interested in visiting with or adopting an animal, please call us at 802-483-6700 or e-mail adoptions@rchsvt.org to set up an appointment! You can check out all of the adoptable animals online at rchsvt.org.

Catamount Pet Supply Company, inc.

296 U.S. Route 4 East
Rutland Town, VT 05701 | 802-773-7642



OPEN

MON. - FRI. 10am - 6:30pm & SAT. 10am - 5pm

Grooming by appointment | 802-773-7636

Cosmic Catalogue

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Aries

March 21 - April 20

After a period of rest and reflection, you're now ready to strike out in a new direction professionally or make choices concerning your major life plans. If you've been dealing with any relationship difficulties, confusion or power dynamics, you've got the chance to step up and take charge of the situation this week. Rather than go in all guns blazing, it may be important to remember that high tides raise all boats.



Leo

July 21 - August 20

It's time to get back to work! Or at the least, get clear on what you need to do to achieve your outcomes. Just once in every two years Mars moves into your busy 6th House. Here, the red planet sets a punishing pace. That said, this week, get your affairs in order and iron out any little tasks you've been avoiding. Eliminate as many distractions as you can in order to carve out some time for your rest and wellness rituals – you may need them!



Sagittarius

November 21 - December 20

Perhaps you've been a little frustrated recently regarding a money situation and the realization that you need to make some changes. It's possible the ongoing or repetitive habits or attitudes you have around money or even your sense of self-worth actually aren't working for you. No doubt you know this. Thankfully, Mars will boost you with the confidence you need to make some decisive money choices that will not only help your bank account, but your self-esteem too!

Time to try something new

By Cassandra Tyndall

The week is the final week of the first month of the new year. It's amazing how fast that time flew by. It's quite possible that just a month ago you were feeling focused about your goals and the possibility that 2022 promises.

ter Capricorn for the first time in two years, marking the anniversary of when the pandemic began in the Western world. Many of your goals and priorities may have changed since then, so the next six weeks can support you in con-

A toll has been taken, even if you didn't think you needed to pay it.

It seems that for many of us Jupiter in Pisces has had other ideas! Fatigue, vagueness and a focus on soul nourishment has proven to be the rest we may not have wanted, but we desperately needed. The last two years have been tough on many levels. A toll has been taken, even if you didn't think you needed to pay it.

This week sees Mars en-

necting with what matters to you and doing the work that needs to be done in order to achieve it.

Venus winds up her retrograde phase, which began in December 2021. As new desires emerge, different directions may need to be taken. You may discover you have more support than you think, especially if you're willing to try something new.



Taurus

April 21 - May 20

It's a very memorable time in history, isn't it? How polarized we've become and the extent it's affected our relationships in a way we would have never thought possible. The good news is that this week, it may be a little easier to get on the same page with someone else. If you can find common ground philosophically, then together there won't be too much you can't accomplish. Be mindful of your changing values and don't allow yourself to be railroaded under the guise of help.



Virgo

August 21 - September 20

Life may have gotten a little busy for you so far this year. Or at the least, a lot of time was spent chasing your tail. This week, a couple of astrological opportunities will remind you that you need to get out and have some fun! In 2022, you've got some pretty amazing stars for love and relationships. So, it doesn't matter if you're spoken for or single, remind yourself that to enjoy life, you do need to have some fun along the way!



Capricorn

December 21 - January 20

It's not like you to face a new year head-on. In fact, you probably needed more rest than you're used to taking, especially in January. The good news is that Mars bursts into your sign this week. With a newfound energy and readiness to tackle any goal that's put in front of you, there may be little you can't achieve over the next six weeks. The question is, have you decided what it is you want yet?



Gemini

May 21 - June 20

How intimate are you with your money? Especially your couple finances or any debts you may have? If this has been on your mind lately, chances are, you're ready for a new approach to your long-term financial security. The only way you can get clear about what you earn and owe is to face it head on and make some practical choices. Regardless of your circumstances, taking charge and making decisions is better than doing nothing at all.



Libra

September 21 - October 20

It could be possible that when it comes to a family or domestic situation, you've reached the end of the line. You spend a lot of your energy and effort accommodating and compromising, but eventually, even the most affable Libran will reach their limit. That limit could arrive this week. So, if you're faced with a choice to make, it may be up to you to make it. Taking charge isn't your style, but it will be worth your while now.



Aquarius

January 21 - February 20

You've been getting to know yourself a little better, thanks to Mercury retrograde in your sign. This week, the quicksilver planet will dip into your most private zone. This might mean you need to think a little more deeply about a personal issue. And by think, I actually mean feel. This week, tap into your intuition, meditate or listen to your instincts a little more. Logic can be helpful but your feelings need to guide the way.



Cancer

June 21 - July 20

You've been undergoing a relationship reevaluation – whether you're single or partnered. As time goes by and we evolve, so do our desires. This is the area you've been giving much thought to recently. The time has come to initiate action or start a conversation, even if that means addressing something you thought was dealt with. The good news is, even if something or someone from your past reappears, you'll have the confidence and clarity to face it.



Scorpio

October 21 - November 20

A change of pace for you this week as your guiding star, Mars, changes signs. This may be a key reminder for you to return to some of those routines and rituals that are easy to lose sight of when life gets in the way. Whatever you feel has been lacking – the gym, reading, more "me time" or whatever it is, commit to doing more of it. When you can reconnect to what nourishes you, it becomes easier to make better choices.



Pisces

February 21 - March 20

There is a lot of energy coming through your sector of friends, social circles and benefactors this week. It may pay off to double check the details when it comes to invitations, scheduled get-togethers and general plans to avoid confusion or delays. While you're keen to catch up with everyone you've not seen in a while, there is only so much you can do in a short space of time so remember to pace yourself!

Empowering you to lead a divinely inspired life.

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

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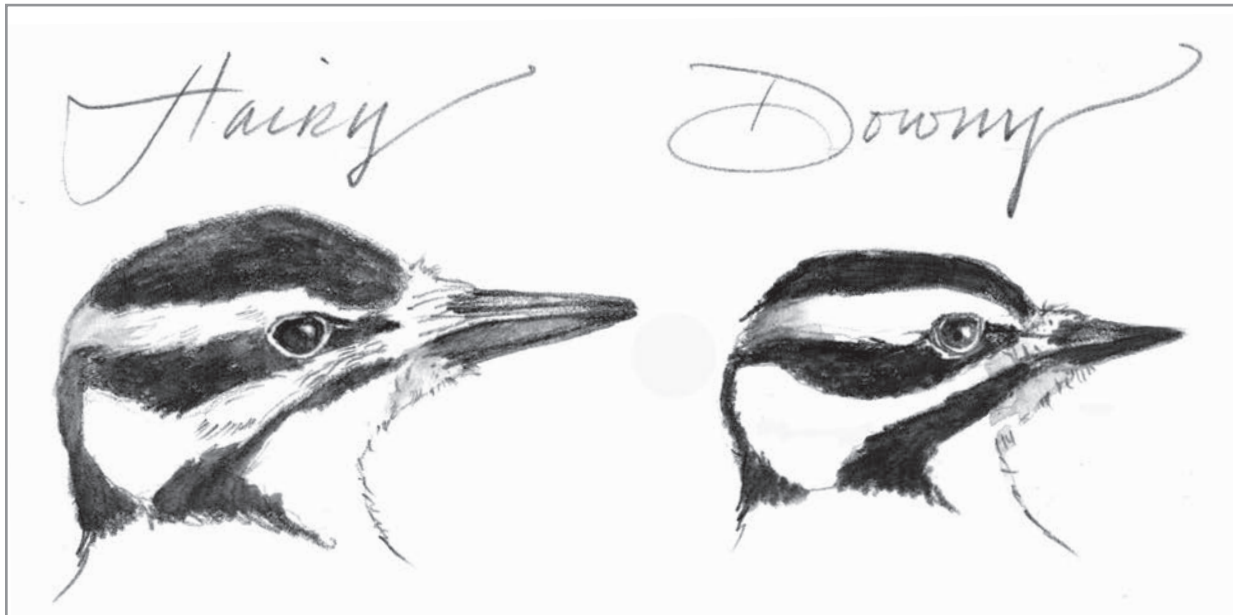
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Downy woodpeckers are well adapted to winter

On winter mornings, I often venture outside to photograph the assembly of birds that visit the feeders in my front yard. One of the regular visitors is the diminutive downy woodpecker, which clings to my peanut feeder, takes a nibble of suet, or forages in the nearby maple trees. Fairly comfortable with a human presence, these birds feature heavily in my photos.

Measuring only 6 inches in length and weighing less than an ounce, downy woodpeckers are the smallest of North America's 22 native woodpecker species. They are often confused with the similar-looking hairy woodpecker. Downies are smaller than hairy woodpeckers, however, and rather than the hairy's spike-like bill, downies sport a smaller, less conspicuous bill. Males possess a red spot on the back of the head, and both sexes have a general black and white appearance.

I'm hardly alone in seeing these woodpeckers, especially during the coldest months of the year. Found in every state except Hawaii, and throughout much of Canada, downy woodpeckers are abundant across North America. Associated with riparian habitats and deciduous forests, downies are also present in suburban parks, developed neighborhoods, orchards, and mixed woods. In the Northeast, the species is a regular visitor to backyards with bird feeders and tree cover.

Although they are not long-distance migrants, downy woodpeckers in the northern part of the range and in mountainous areas do move in winter. In the "Peterson Reference Guide to Woodpeckers of North America," Stephen A. Shunk writes, "These birds tend to move southward or downslope as the frost level lowers in elevation, often overwintering in urban woodlots and frequently visiting well-stocked feeding stations."

Downy woodpeckers also adapt to winter weather by changing their foraging habits. As Bernd Heinrich relates in his book "Winter World," downy woodpeckers may join a flock of chickadees which might also include brown creepers, red-breasted nuthatches, and golden-crowned kinglets. These mixed species flocks enable member birds to avoid predators and take advantage of available food resources.

During winter, male and female downy woodpeckers also feed in different places. Females are relegated to the lower portion of trees, while males forage higher up. However, both males and females continue to find insects by drilling into tree bark. Once they've made a hole, downies use their long, barbed tongues to extract hidden insect prey. Depending on the time of year, preferred foods include gall wasps, caterpillars, and wood-boring beetles. At winter feeders, sunflower seeds, peanuts, and

suet are all readily eaten. In the spring and summer, downy woodpeckers have also been spotted sipping from hummingbird feeders.

To stay warm on frigid nights, downies roost in cavities they've excavated in dead or dying trees. Constructed in late fall, these spaces offer shelter from sub-freezing temperatures and protection from predators. Downy woodpeckers will also use artificial nest boxes. After the sun rises each day, a woodpecker will vacate the roosting site and begin searching for food.

Downy woodpeckers rely on a variety of woodland types to meet their food, water, and cover needs. They thrive in regenerating open forests as well as towns and cities with adequate tree cover. However, like other woodpeckers, downies rely on snags for nesting during the breeding season. Removal of these dead trees may negatively impact local

woodpecker populations. Development that fails to leave pockets of trees will also reduce suitable habitat.

In my yard in southern Maine, downy woodpeckers join the chickadees, titmice, nuthatches, and hairy woodpeckers that wait for a turn at the feeders. Small yet easily spotted, these woodpeckers are well-suited to life in a Northeastern winter. I appreciate their ingenuity and their ability to stay warm and fed during the most challenging time of the year. And on a personal level, I appreciate the inspiration they afford me day in and day out.

Lee Emmons is a nature writer. He lives in Newcastle, Maine. The illustration for this column is by Adelaide Murphy Tyrol. The Outside Story is assigned and edited by Northern Woodlands magazine and sponsored by the Wellborn Ecology Fund of the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation: www.nhcf.org.



The Outside Story
By Lee Emmons

To stay warm on frigid nights, downies roost in cavities they've excavated in dead or dying trees.

Market predictions for 2022

By any measure, 2021 was a strong year for investors. But what's in store for 2022? From my perspective, I expect that many of the same forces that influenced markets last year will play a role again in the year ahead.



Money Matters
By Kevin Theissen

COVID-19 remains tragic and unpredictable. The pandemic was one of the primary drivers of financial market activity in 2021. I hope that the worst is behind us, but I would not be surprised to see COVID-related events influence markets in the New Year.

The Federal Reserve will continue to get its share of headlines. From Fed chair Powell's nomi-

Investors who watch the market often will experience more stress than people who don't.

nation hearings to potential changes in interest rates, expect investors' attention to shift to the Fed from time to time in 2022.

Tax law changes are always possible, but many of the anticipated federal tax law changes in 2021 were linked to President Biden's Build Back Better plan, which ended the year in debate with congress. So, stay tuned here.

January has led off with a downturn that many have been anticipating. What is in store for the next 11 ½ months? Here are my predictions.

Nobody can predict what the economy and markets will do
Money matters > 33

Good bag and a clear night

You know that there is a big difference between waiting for spring and embracing winter. One involves a warm fire, a good book/Netflix, hot chocolate, and windows to

the world both inside and out — a certain degree of passivity if you will. However, with miles of trails, or not, and thousands of acres of forest, Killington is well placed to do a little embracing.

Any deer hunter will tell you that a little snow on the ground increases visibility in the woods tremendously. Both the trees themselves and entire forested hill-sides suddenly become completely visible to those willing to get out.

And although wildlife numbers may be less, their movements will certainly stand out be it a flitting chickadee or a deer feeding on a sunny hillside. Even tree parts take on a "new life" in the winter. For example add a little snow to remnant tulip tree flowers and you get winter snow cones.

This might be a good time also to examine your ash trees for the presence of emerald ash borer (EAB). This insect keeps expanding throughout Vermont killing trees as it goes and while Shrewsbury now looks like the hole in the donut on the EAB maps it will eventually get here and force the town and landowners to either inoculate, let die or cut down their ash trees. Early stages of infestation are very hard to detect but as the tree is invaded by more and more borers two signs become visible in the wintertime. Ash tree crowns have died back and dense clumps of new branches have appeared on the lower crown. A flattening of the ridges on the bark, called "blonding," also occurs, created by woodpeckers looking for borers beneath the bark. Evidence

Tree talk > 33



Tree Talk
By Gary Salmon

For the love of the game

When I was in middle school in the early 1980s, I played in a flag football league sponsored by our city's recreation department. The league brought together kids from all the local schools and organized them onto eight teams.



**The Movie
Diary**
By Dom Cioffi

I was a skinny, unassuming kid, but I was fast and coordinated, which gave me legitimacy. I played to my strengths in both the half-back and wide receiver positions and ended both seasons as one of the leading scorers in the league.

The speed and coordination certainly helped with my success, but it was a tip from my coach that was the real reason I shone. He told me to spin whenever the defense reached

for my flag, which made tackling much harder.

I have memories of running down the field with the ball and then, as a player reached for my flag, spinning into the air while still in full stride. I'm not confident that this move looked visually impressive from the sidelines, but a touchdown is a touchdown, and scoring those was all I cared about.

I have several faded newspaper clippings from those games attesting to my superior play. It likely wouldn't happen today, but back then, the local paper sent a sports reporter to cover middle school flag football games. The clippings meant the world to me; just seeing my name in conjunction with athletic prowess gave me immense pride and satisfaction.

And then came freshman football, complete with helmets and pads.

Everything changed when I hit 9th grade football. Unlike most of my classmates, I was late to puberty, so while my friends were all starting to look like men, I was still a skinny little kid. Not surprisingly, my lack of size and strength did not bode well in a sport where aggression and physical force

determined success.

I did well when it came to running fast and catching difficult passes, but as soon as I was forced to go one-on-one with the bigger kids, I was toast. Being a running back was out of the question. And while, with time, I could have possibly matured into a respectable wide receiver, my small stature did not make me the most desirable target on the field.

Unfortunately (or fortunately), a late-season drill where the receivers would try to catch passes thrown at them at full force from close range, broke two of my fingers and ended my season.

Basketball was always my favorite sport and the reality that a football injury could affect my basketball season suddenly had me second guessing my interest in the gridiron.

Deciding not to continue with football was a tough decision since my father and brothers all played. But I was determined to be a good basketball player and to me, football was an impediment in that regard.

And so, I bowed out of JV and varsity football and focused on basketball, which turned out to be a good call since my team went to the state finals during our senior year. However, my love of the sport never waned.

I ended up growing quite a bit later in high school and managed to put on some more weight through training. I often wondered if I would have found success if I stuck with football.

Once I graduated from high school, my parents made the intelligent decision to send me to a post-graduate year before unleashing me into the world of college. I was OK with



this plan because I thought an extra year of basketball would increase my chances of playing in college.

When I arrived on campus, I was told I would have to play a fall sport. Given that there were limited offerings, I decided to give football one more shot.

Suddenly I was not the smallest or skinniest kid. And with testosterone flowing through my body at a much higher level, I was more than happy to run full speed into another player.

I would like to tell you that I became an all-star wide receiver while at prep school, breaking school records and attracting college interest, but that didn't happen. Unfortunately, a knee injury sidelined me for much of the season, rendering me fairly ineffective (but not before I had the opportunity to score a touchdown!).

This week's film, "American Underdog," is a much better story about someone who used football to reach the pinnacle of success. Kurt

Warner was a small-college quarterback with zero interest from the pros, but he had a dream, and sometimes dreams can push people to amazing places.

"American Underdog" tells Warner's incredible true-life story (arguably one of football's greatest stories) and his unlikely accession to the heights of pro sports. The film is a bit cliché-ridden, but barring that, it was emotionally gripping throughout.

Check this one out if you love sports or simply love to see someone defy all odds.

A heroic "B-" for "American Underdog," now playing in theaters.

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

Enjoying togetherness on the ride up

We shuffle though the lift line, our necks pulled up over our noses in the crowd. I look over one shoulder, then the other, to see if we have moved up any relative to the strangers on either side of us. I work my skis forward, just a bit, unable to break the decades-long habit of "working the lift line." Those formative childhood years of ducking underneath adults when they were looking the other way to get ahead in the alternating lift line years.

But I've come a long way from those days, and I sigh as I wait patiently. I lean forward on my too-tall, ski racer's poles and acknowledge that I'll get to the front of the line eventually. There's no more rush, just acceptance as I chat with the friends beside me in line. It doesn't matter when we get to the front anymore, because we need the extra time to finish our conversation.

I slide my ski sideways, covering it with snow. I can't sit still for long, so I use this time to work on my rudiments. You'll see me standing on one foot, transferring my weight from edge to edge as I work on increasing my muscle memory. I love being trapped where I can play with my balance, practice variable edge angles or explore simple rotary movements.

Finally, we come to the front of the cor-

ral and look to see if we have beaten the rest of our group. We start to come alive, like racers in the starting gate prepping for action. As the liftie points to our row, we shuffle quickly toward the scanners not wanting to leave an open chair on a busy day. Taking a quick look at our lineup, I take a quick step back and to the left one slot, making sure that I am positioned on the BF's right. He, I notice, has shuffled to the far left of the chair as we prepare for the inevitable confrontation with the scanning machines.

They should set up a camera here, for a comedy segment in the classic Warren Miller style complete with a heckling voiceover. Even three years later, I still struggle to get that thing to beep on the first try. Lift a leg, wiggle your belly, shake your arm, take a gate to the gut. It's like playing an anxiety causing version of the hokey pokey while people back up behind you. Maybe I'm too old-school and miss the laminated ski passes with the floating heads too much.

We come through the scanners and check our lineup. The BF is still on my left so I'm happy. If it's a cold day, I might yell out "girls in the middle!" to keep me warm and toasty and protected from the wind. I miss being so snugly warm, squished in

Livin' the dream > 33



**Livin' the
Dream**
By Merisa
Sherman

Starting to seek out seeds

Just in case you aren't an enthusiast of snow covered ground, let's look ahead this week to spending time in the garden. When the second half of January arrives my thoughts turn to playing in the dirt. Granted it will be about four months before I can even consider spending

time in the garden but it's a perfect time to think about what to plant. Thoughts of picking fresh veggies to accompany dinners and cutting flowers for bouquets are great mood boosters on a cold winter day.

This is also the time of year to watch for seed sales at local garden centers. I love to pick a cold day to go seed shopping. I make an alphabetical list of the seeds I want. It's easier to find them that way and an added bonus is that you won't forget any thanks to your list.

Seed catalogues begin arriving at our house around Thanksgiving time. Local stores will probably not have every seed that you want to purchase so check out catalogues or websites for the best price and place your order early. That way you won't be disappointed if a pandemic shortage comes your way. As they say, "The early bird catches the worm" or in this case gets the seeds!

Over the years I have learned to buy an extra packet of seeds if there are small quantities inside. It's possible that all the seeds you plant won't germinate or the plants can get eaten as they begin to grow. I have had to do a second planting for both those reasons and was glad I could go to my seed packet box and pull out another packet.

If you are handy, or can find someone who is, make a seed packet box to keep them organized. My handy husband, Peter, built a box "made to measure" for the packets I buy every year. It has slots with a divider for every packet and just like with my shopping list I put the seeds in the box alphabetically. That way I don't have to hunt for the one I need.

When planning your veggie garden you might want to choose veggies that freeze well. You get to enjoy them all winter that way. Among my favorites that meet that requirement are zucchini, kale, beets and carrots. I puree the zucchini and freeze that in amounts needed to make bread. After cooking the kale, beets and carrots I dry them between paper towels and freeze them in portions that will accompany our meals.

When it comes to flower seeds I like to buy what is not available in plant form at garden centers. Some can be sown directly into the ground in late May and they will come into bloom when most of the perennials have gone by. "Cut-and-come-again" zinnias are one of my favorites. As the name implies you can cut off flowers for a bouquet and

Looking back > 33



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< PUZZLES page 17

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

← Money matters: Market success for 2022 is largely to be determined, but it's best to have a plan from page 30

but they will do something that will surprise us, and we will all look back and think it was obvious.

Investors who watch the market often will experience more stress than people who don't – and those who focus on the things they can control will have a better experience than those who focus on things that they can't.

Investors that dump their plan to follow a sure thing

The pandemic was one of the primary drivers of financial market activity in 2021.

will have lower long-term returns than those who stay with their plan.

The best investment results are achieved by those who first set a plan, have the discipline to ignore distractions, and keep focus on the long-term. Here's to a prosperous new year!

Kevin Theissen is the owner and principal of HWC Financial in Ludlow.

← Tree talk: A little snow in the wood is perfect for observing trees up close from page 30

of either of these activities is probably worth contacting Vtinvasives.com. If there is a history buff in you, this is the time of year when the "road crews" cut down dead roadside trees including, sadly, the remnant large sugar maples still gracing our road sides. Road salt has been the major contributor to the loss of these historical trees, many of them in the 4-foot diameter range. It's what is left, however, that is still valuable – the stump. If the trunk was solid and your eyes are good, counting the growth rings will take you back to an era of dirt roads, stone walls next to them, horse and wagon travel and little sugar maples starting their growth journey toward becoming today's legacy trees.

So if you have "seen it all" you can always change your viewpoint

for added embracing. Get up in the air and look at the crowns close up. VINS has its famous "canopy walk" and it is open in the winter complete

If the trunk was solid and your eyes were good, counting the growth rings will take you back to an era of dirt roads, stone walls next to them, horse and wagon travel and little sugar maples starting their growth journey toward becoming today's legacy trees.

with loaner snowshoes to get you there. Available phone apps will help you identify everything from tree species to last summer's bird nests still in the canopy. Another viewpoint involves a good sleeping bag and a clear night. Forests on a

dark or moonlit night take on a whole other perspective. You can't "see the forest for the trees" but you can hear them. The sound of the wind,

perhaps the call of a barred owl, and stars through the canopy all make for a great evening adventure provided you stay warm. The fallback position, once the bag you are in is no longer warm, is a mug of hot chocolate by a warm fire.

← Livin' the dream: Riding together from page 31

between the BF and my dad on the Glades Triple — I was never cold riding in-between them.

As I wait for the chair, poles ready to tuck under my legs, I notice that our friends are in the same spots as the last lift ride as well. She's on the outside because of her snowboard, so I'm still squished and warm between two guys. I love it. For some reason, even though we have never ridden together before, we managed to work out our assigned seats for the chairlift without saying a word.

We ride the lift in the same order, every run, every day. No

Lift a leg, wiggle your belly, shake your arm, take a gate to the gut. It's like playing an anxiety causing version of the hokey pokey...

exceptions. Some of us even ride the lifts in the same order, finding comfort in the pattern and the consistency. While it is almost impossible to ski the same trail without taking a different line, we need that assigned seat on the chairlift. I need that second from the left seat on the way up. And, what's super neat is that my friends figure that out. It only takes one run for us all to be aware of each other's preferences, to respect the seating arrangement that makes everyone comfortable.

I don't know why this works, but how could you not see the magic of the ski community in this moment? We notice each other, we notice friends and even strangers. Without saying a word, we make sure that the other feels comfortable. Ever gotten on a gondola and have people shuffle around because that one friend gets queasy looking down the mountain? That is this moment.

There is no judgment here. We make sure that the other feels safe while we are flying together through the sky. Skiing and snowboarding might be individual sports, but we all ride the lift together. Plus, it is the best place to take a selfie while on the mountain. And that, my friends, is a beautiful thing.



← Looking forward: Seeking out seeds from page 31

another zinnia will grow from that spot. Calendulas are another favorite to sow directly in the soil.

If you want to start flowers from seed indoors two good options are statice and strawflowers. They grow rather slowly so getting a head start inside is a plus. Both flowers can be dried at the end of the season and enjoyed inside in the winter. Apricot and blue statice are especially attractive. Strawflowers come in both a tall and dwarf size with a nice variety of color choices. I start the seeds indoors in mid-April and that works well for me. They should gradually be exposed to sun and wind for an in-ground planting in late May after all frost dangers have passed.

So if you want to get your "veggie and flower fix" head to the seed department of a local garden center and the 2022 garden season will have officially begun! While you are there you might as well get all the supplies you will need to grow your seeds indoors. Leaving the store with all my "goodies" always puts a smile on my face even if snowflakes hit me on the way to my car!



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STATE OF VERMONT

Proposed use of Incremental Property Tax Revenue for Tax Increment Financing District, Town of Killington

PUBLIC COMMENT INVITED

On January 27, 2022, the Vermont Economic Progress Council (VEPC) will meet virtually to begin consideration of an application submitted by the Town of Killington to utilize future incremental municipal and education property tax revenues to finance debt, if approved by the voters and incurred, for infrastructure to serve expected real property developments within the Tax Increment Financing District that was established by the Town of Killington on January 4, 2022.

VEPC invites the public to comment on the consideration of this application.

This meeting will be held virtually. An in-person attendance option is not available. To comment on this application during the January 27 VEPC meeting:

1. Register to provide public comment by emailing Cherie.Yaeger@vermont.gov or calling (802) 793-0721 by January 26, 2022.
2. On January 27, 2022, at 1:00 p.m. sign onto the meeting using the link on the VEPC website (accd.vermont.gov/economic-development/programs/vepc/VEPCMeetingScheduleAgendasMinutes). An alternative call-in option will also be noted on the website.
3. VEPC staff will call on registered attendees. Comments are limited to 7 minutes per person.
4. Please also email copy of your comments to abbie.sherman@vermont.gov.

Public comment may also be made in writing. Comments must be submitted by February 22, 2022, and be emailed to abbie.sherman@vermont.gov.



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Classifieds > 35

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Classifieds:

from page 34

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The City of Rutland is actively selling the following four properties through its City-Owned Properties Program:

- 24 Division Street
- 120 Maple Street
- 157 State Street
- 33 Summer Street

The City is looking for applicants who will invest in the properties by elevating the quality of the structure and returning the building to a state where it will be a positive contributor to their respected neighborhood.

The City anticipates the application process to be very competitive. Therefore, only complete and thorough applications will be considered. Applications that fail to provide details, where appropriate, about the proposed development plan will likely be rejected, and may not be afforded the opportunity to be supplemented. Please note that the City-Owned Properties Program is not a "highest-bid-auction" and all offers will be given full consideration.

Additional information and application materials relating to the properties can be found on the City's and the Rutland Redevelopment Authority's respective websites:

- www.rutlandcity.org
- www.rutlandvtbusiness.com

Open houses for 120 Maple Street and 24 Division Street will be performed on Monday, February 7, 2022 and Monday February 14, 2022. Open houses for 157 State Street and 33 Summer Street will be performed on Tuesday, February 8, 2022 and Tuesday, February 15, 2022.

Applications shall be submitted in person at, or mailed to, the addresses below no later than 5:00 PM on Friday, February 25, 2022:

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For questions relating to the application process, please contact Andrew Strniste at andrews@rutlandcity.org or (802) 774-7833.



By Andrea Knepper

In addition to beautiful photography, seed catalogs provide a wealth of information about plants to help gardeners choose the best varieties to order for their garden.

Sifting through seed catalogs

By Andrea Knepper

Nothing brightens a dreary winter afternoon like a crisp, colorful seed catalog arriving in the mailbox. The anticipation of sunshine to come and daydreams of a bountiful harvest are welcome during these seasonally short days.

I have been caught up in the excitement and found myself with enough seed packets in my online shopping cart for a small farm, and later found my selections to not be ideal for my garden space or needs. Avoid this by taking some time to get organized and refining your shopping list.

After each gardening season, and before the temptation of seed catalogs calls, it is wise to reflect on your previous year's successes and struggles. Have an idea of what you would like to replicate, what you would like to adjust and any new plants or techniques you'd like to try. If you didn't do this after cleaning out last year's garden, the new year is a perfect time to ponder this and start formulating a plan for the coming year.

If you haven't received any seed catalogs yet this year, check your favorite seed supplier's website. Most have a link where you can request a catalog by mail, download or browse their offerings online. Look for a local or regional supplier as seeds grown in a similar climate will be more predictable performers in your garden.

For first time gardeners, a great place to start learning about seed companies is your local garden center as they will stock seeds from numerous suppliers. If you find seeds from a particular company appeal to you, visit their website to view, or request, their complete catalog.

In addition to beautiful photography, stories from growers and recipes, a good seed catalog will include a thorough description of each plant for which seed is available.

Here in Vermont, with our short growing season, it is important to note the days to maturity. For plants that are direct-seeded, meaning the seed goes directly into the ground when temperatures are warm enough, the days to maturity indicates the number of days the seed will take to produce harvestable fruit. For plants that are started indoors and transplanted at the appropriate time, this is the length of time it will take from transplanting to harvest.

To find your frost dates, and determine the length of your growing season, you can search the National Gardening Association's website, garden.org/apps/frost-dates.

The plant description will tell you if a variety is open-pollinated or a hybrid. Choose open-pollinated if you plan to save your own seed. Hybrid varieties may offer resistance to disease or pests. Sometimes hybrid resistance is noted as a code. You may need to flip through the catalog to find out what the code means.

Finally, carefully read the listing to see if there are any peculiarities of the variety. Some may be more tolerant to variations in soil conditions while others may need fertilization to maximize yield. Know what each plant will require before making your final choices.

I also recommend holding onto your seed catalog for the gardening season. Sometimes there are details provided there that are not printed on the seed packet. Having access to your catalog can save you time if the seed packet goes astray.

Andrea Knepper is an extension master gardener at the University of Vermont.

NatureRx, the nature prescription

A community health wellness program

Let's talk about the beautiful parks and trails and the abundance of nature-related activities in Rutland and surrounding counties. Then, let's talk about how outdoor activity can be a prescription for your health. Put them together and you get a movement called NatureRx. Community Health has partnered with Come Alive Outside (CAO) for two 12-week NatureRx programs designed to help people develop healthy lifestyles by being active and spending more time outside.

"Individuals or families will have access to a health coach once a week," said Andrea Wicher, Community Health's director of population health and quality. "NatureRx participants will keep a journal of their activity and their provider will document basic health data like blood pressure and weight and maintain a progress report."

The Community Health program is designed to work with cohorts of 50 patients twice a year, aiming to reach 100 patients with this preventive wellness program.

Here's how it works. Doctors and health care providers initiate conversations with patients about the health benefits of spending time in nature. The NatureRx referral suggests activities such as working in a garden twice a week, or taking a short walk three times a week. These activities increase the amount of time a patient spends outside and increases their level of physical activity. The CAO NatureRx coordinator will support participants after they get an outdoor referral from their health care provider. During the 12-week program, each participant receives one-on-one weekly health coaching, as well as tools for setting and tracking their goals. Participants will check in with their Community Health provider to look at how the program is impacting their health and wellness.

"We are thrilled that Community Health is sponsoring and having such a hands-on partnership with the NatureRx program," said Come Alive Outside Program Director Myra Pepper. "Having Community Health's providers capture pre- and post-health data on program participants will show the health benefits of this program in a way we never have been able to measure before. We hope this program becomes a model across Vermont."

Several ParkRx/NatureRx programs exist around the U.S., Pepper said. Working with UVM, Come Alive Outside recently rolled out an updated NatureRx model incorporating other best practice programs from across the country. For more information on ParkRx/NatureRx programs visit parkrx.org/



Courtesy Facebook

Pictured (l-r): Mary DeGeoso, Bruce Brown and Mei Mei Brown share a laugh together during a summer outing.

Prolific Brandon volunteer is in need of a kidney donor

By Angelo Lynn

Mei Mei Brown, one of Brandon's best known and prolific volunteers needs a kidney, but the message she wants to convey is to broaden the awareness of the process around organ transplants and the vital importance it has to those in need.

"It's very touching and humbling" to be in the position of needing a donor organ, she said in an interview last week, explaining that she has lived a full and active life, even after she was diagnosed at 59 with polycystic kidney disease. It's an inherited disease with parents having a 50% chance of passing it on to their children.

Now 66, Brown said she either needs a kidney transplant in the near future, probably by the end of winter, or she will go on a kidney dialysis machine — a process that takes several hours per day to perform at home (after extensive training) or up to half a day each day at an area hospital. Brown has been on the waiting list for a kidney for the past 36 months. And that's not unusual. The average wait time for a kidney, she said, is 31 months.

A bubbly, energized and engaging woman, Mei Mei, as everyone calls her, seemingly has unlimited energy when you meet her, and talks in rapid fire, succinct comments that go right to the point.

"It's hard to advocate for yourself," she admitted. "I don't like to put myself front and center; causes are what I want to put front and center, not me."

And that is what she's done most of her life.

In her early years, she and her husband, Bruce, 74, lived at the Branbury State Park where Bruce was state park ranger for a number of years. Following that stint she worked as a dispatcher for the state police from 1979-93, then was the coordinator for the District 1 Environmental Board that oversees Act 250 for 14 years from 1993-2005.

While Bruce had served many years on the Brandon Planning Commission and Select Board, Mei Mei's service has been widespread throughout Rutland and Addison Counties. She founded

and has spearheaded the Brandon Federal Cat Assistance Program since 2005; she volunteers for Homeward Bound, Addison County's Humane Society; she is president of the board of directors for the Rutland County Humane Society.

"I'm the crazy cat lady, I tell everyone," she said with a hearty laugh, explaining that she's worked to spay or neuter more than 600 cats in the Brandon area, reducing the feral cat population in the town to what used to be a runaway population to just one or two annually now. "Everyone knows about the program, and I receive a call or two a year as soon as a foreign cat comes into the neighborhood. It's been a very successful program. I wish every town would adopt it."

While cats and books are her passions, — "I love books, and I read and read and read," she said — she's helps in other areas of the community, including volunteering for the Brandon Public Library and she's currently president of Safer Society Foundation, a program to prevent sexual and social violence.

About the organ donor process, she said, she's learned that only about 10% of prospective donors make the cut, either because of their own health reasons, age differences that are too great, or other reasons — and that's for those people who match up with the recipient's blood type and body antigens and antibodies. Brown has type A blood, which means she can accept donors with Type A or Type O blood, the most common. For potential donors, all costs associated with screening, testing and the transplant surgery are covered.

People are born with two kidneys, but only one is needed.

"We were born with a spare, and don't need them both," Brown said with a big smile, but added that she understands how big a commitment it was to be a donor. Donors usually need to be within 15 years in age of the recipient and not over the age of 72, with some exceptions, Brown said. That means most of her prospective donors will be between the ages of 72 and 51.

"It's a huge commitment because

even though each person has two, you never know when you might need the other one, or perhaps need to be a donor to a close family member," she said.

Friends and acquaintances were among the first 16 donors who were each rejected for one reason or another. "I am just so grateful and humbled for each person who has done this for me, and I'm glad the guidelines (in terms of it being a healthy and safe procedure for both people) are so strict for their sake."

If a known voluntary donor doesn't come through, Brown explained, those needing donors are on lists for organ transplants from a cadaver, but that can be a lengthy and trying process with thousands of people on the waiting list and a 48-hour grace period to find a match and get into surgery. Brown said she had been third in line on one occasion and had gone through a rigorous preparation (along with two others ahead of her) only to learn that the organ never arrived at the hospital.

Nonetheless, Brown carries a pager with her wherever she goes 24-7. She's now on the kidney transplant list at Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center in Lebanon, N.H. Anyone wanting to be screened for a kidney donation should contact Cathy Pratt, the coordinator for living donation and kidney exchange, at 603-653-3931.

While she's waiting for a donor or potential call, Mei Mei remains active, upbeat and thoughtful.

"It sounds cliché, but you realize that life is really fragile and you need to seize each day and live life to the fullest," she said, "just live like there's no tomorrow."

As far her day-to-day health, she's feeling fine as of now.

"My doctors are really impressed with me being as healthy as I am, so far, considering the poor function of my liver," she said. "I get tired, but otherwise, I can't complain. I try to be one of those people who believes the glass is half full. I want to be as optimistic as I can be; no sense dwelling on the negative."

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Dogs:

How to choose from page 26

socialization to be tolerant of strangers.

- **German shepherds:** These workhorses serve many different roles because of their affinity for learning tasks. Like Dobermans, look for a well-socialized German shepherd to avoid anxiety and wariness with people.
- **Poodles:** They are popular because they don't shed much, but also because they are an intelligent, obedient and versatile breed.
- **Golden retrievers:** They are not the No. 1 family dog for nothing. They are very intelligent and amiable and often will do anything to please their owners. Labrador retrievers also take to training well and are very affectionate.
- **Papillon:** Smaller dogs are often dubbed "stubborn." But papillons are incredibly smart and trainable and are naturally focused.

The pet advisement site K9 of Mine warns that some of the smartest, most easily trained dogs may not necessarily be the easiest to live with. They can get bored easily and destroy things around the house if they can't keep their minds occupied. This is a factor to consider when selecting a breed too.

Try positive reinforcement when addressing pets' behavioral issues

What can pet owners do when their pets exhibit unwanted behaviors? The first instinct may be to yell or punish the pet by being cross with him or her. However, many animal behaviorists believe that positive reinforcement training is the most effective way to address behavioral issues.

Positive reinforcement training, according to The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), utilizes rewards for desired behaviors. The reward, whether it is a treat, praise, toys, or anything the pet finds rewarding, will eventually get the pet to repeat the behavior that earned that reward. Rather than punishing a bad behavior, pet owners who utilize positive reinforcement reward good behaviors.

Timing is the key to positive reinforcement training. The reward must occur immediately after the desired behavior or the pet may not associate it with the proper action. So if the dog sits, then the reward has to come as soon as it gets on the floor. If the reward comes when he has stood back up, then the pooch may think the reward is for standing.

When practicing positive reinforcement, keep commands short and training sessions brief so that dogs can understand before they get restless. Dogs don't understand sentences, says HSUS, and they will lose interest if sessions are too long. Consistency also is essential. Each person interacting with the pet should use the same commands and cues to achieve the desired result, which is a well-behaved pet.

It may take time, but with patience it can be effective.

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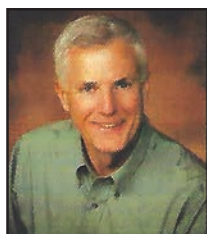
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The poster features a vibrant illustration of a blue Subaru SUV parked on a snowy mountain slope. The car's roof is heavily loaded with winter sports equipment, including a large orange and yellow striped inflatable ring, a blue snowboard, a pair of orange and black skis, and a black ski bag with a 'WINTERFEST' sticker and a paw print. A black and white dog with orange patches sits in the snow in front of the car, holding a blue frisbee in its mouth. The background shows a scenic view of a ski resort with a gondola lift, skiers on the slopes, and snow-capped mountains under a clear sky. The Subaru logo is visible on the car's side.

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