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# THE MESSAGE

## OF THE WEEK

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### Claremont City Council reviews renovations to town buildings —

BY ANNE DEMPSEY  
*The Message*

CLAREMONT, N.H. – The Claremont City Council meeting of Dec. 10 opened with the presenting of plaques for two council members. Jonathan Hayden received a plaque for his two years of service, as did Brian Zutter for his two years of service. Mayor Dale Girard then announced that the Claremont Sugar River Rotary and the Claremont Parks and Recreation Department will be hosting a First Night celebration on Dec. 31, from 6-10 p.m.

City manager Nancy Bates stated that tax bills went out in the mail on Dec. 10. The deadline for paying taxes is Jan. 22, 2026. The tax rate is \$30.54 per \$1,000 of assessed value. The municipal portion was reduced from \$10.87 in 2024, to \$10.64 in 2025.

A forthcoming engineering study of the visitors center requires an assessment and creation of construction documents, for which a company from Massachusetts entered a bid of \$37,000. An option for construction management would bring the total cost up to \$52,000. Bates explained that there is not enough in the city's reserves to cover this cost, but transferring this expense out of the fund balance is possible. She will bring this proposal back for approval in January.

The city received one bid of \$42,850 for the Sullivan Street sidewalk. Bates recommended that this work be paid for with tax increment financing funds.

The council then addressed needed renovations to the Claremont Opera House. The clock

tower needs significant attention, and the 12 arched window openings and the three square window openings, along with the wooden stairs and railings, are also in need of repairs. Temporary weatherproofing of the upper level is needed. The total cost is estimated at \$13,300. Bates stated that if these repairs and upgrades do not happen, the condition of the clock tower will continue to deteriorate, and cost the city more in the long run. Additional work includes applying protective coating on the 12 arched windows, and installing new storm panels. The total cost of the clock tower work comes to \$27,910. Capital reserve for city facilities could cover that cost. Councilor Andrew O'Hearne commented that he would like to make sure that the lights in the clock tower and the clock itself will be in good working order.

Bates reported that the city received three professional bids on the water/sewer rate study for the city's five-year water and sewer rate. She stated, "We'll be holding a meeting before the end of the year to review bids and to determine the best fit for these bids for the city. This will be a posted meeting, open to the public, during normal business hours."

Bates shared the news that a Northern Border Regional Commission grant was awarded to Claremont, in the amount of \$130,000, for the Sugar River Revitalization Project. This grant funding was due in large part to Sen. Jeanne Shaheen's support. Bates stated, "We anticipate \$800,000 through Maggie Goodlander's office for congress-

sional spending. The Sugar River Walk Project should become a reality in the foreseeable future with these funds."

Bates has plans in the works for a Celebrate Claremont Day on May 30, the weekend after Memorial Day. She's reaching out to the library, the police and fire departments, pop-up vendors, and talking to members of the Abenaki Tribe about holding a powwow on the green behind the visitors center. The powwow would involve, among other activities, teepees overnight, and a campfire. The council members requested that the Abenaki visit be placed on the agenda for a January discussion, with a representative of the tribe present.

Council member Nicholas Koloski requested that more information be given to the council about trips taken out of the city on buses. He expressed some concern about liability. He also asked, "Are we seeing a return on that use of tax dollars? What are the number of attendees? Did we break even? Did we lose \$200? I'd like to know if we're making a little money on these or covering our expenses." Koloski also would like to

know if there is a set policy for displacing community center members when high school sports events are taking place. Members cannot use certain parts of the facility which are included in their membership during these high school sports events. He said he would also like clarification of what the indoor sports fees are.

Koloski also wanted to know the locations, days, and times that warming centers are open in Claremont. Bates responded that the warming center is located in the community center, and is available to the public during the hours the community center is open.

The council approved the appointments of Lawrence Johnson to Seat 4 on the Francis J. Tolles Home Board, with a term expiring on July 31, 2026; Molly Tremblay to Alternate Seat 1, for Ward 1, on the parks and recreation board, with a term expiring on May 31, 2026; and Carla Schaffer to seat Alternate Seat 2 on the Claremont Arts, History, and Cultural Resource Commission, with a term expiring on May 31, 2026.

Under new business, Chief Wilmott of the Claremont Police Department request-



City of Claremont.

PHOTO PROVIDED

ed that the council accept the donation of \$5,000 from Baerbell Merrill. For the last several years, Merrill has made generous donations to the City of Claremont. She wishes that it be used by the police department to help families or children in need. Merrill and her husband emigrated from Germany in about 1960. They settled in Claremont and had two children. During this time, her husband went away to Lake Champlain on a fishing trip. He never came back, and was never seen or heard from again. She had called the police about her husband's disappearance. An officer visited her

home and realized that her children needed more food in the house. He left the house, and returned with bags of groceries. When the family moved to another neighborhood, members of the police staff helped her move. Making this annual donation to the city is her way of thanking the police for helping her in her time of need. It is also her way of paying it forward. The city has a special fund for her donations.

The Claremont City Council meets on the second and fourth Wednesdays of every month, at 6:30 p.m., in the Claremont City Hall Council Chambers.

### Puzzle page winner

Congratulations to Brian Wing, of Chester, for winning our holiday puzzle page contest drawing! Brian has selected the \$75 gift certificate to Tina's Hallmark. Look out for our next puzzle page contest for your next chance to win.

Answers to the Dec. 3 puzzles:

## Weekly SUDOKU

Answer

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

## King Crossword

Answers

Solution time: 22 mins.

OR	SO	OM	G	M	C	C	C
L	T	E	U	N	E	A	A
A	P	E	T	T	R	I	C
F	A	R	R	A	H	T	R
		A	X	E	L	Y	U
T	R	I	N	I	D	A	D
E	O	N	S	O	U	R	S
L	O	S	T	R	I	P	T
U	A	L	A	V	E	O	
S	E	R	M	O	N	E	D
T	R	I	B	U	T	E	S
U	L	N	A	S	T	A	
B	E	G	S	B	E	T	

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# Garden Club Holiday Market a success



Springfield Garden Club members at their holiday market.

PHOTO PROVIDED

SPRINGFIELD, Vt. – The Springfield Garden Club Holiday Market on Friday, Dec. 5, was a big success. The club would like to thank the people who came and purchased handmade wreaths and arrangements for their support. This is the garden club's only major fundraiser, and the proceeds go toward its mission to "provide a social framework for education and community service

in the areas of gardening, beautification, and conservation, and to coordinate the activities of the club with those of the Federated Garden Clubs of Vermont, in order to advance our mutual aims." Activities include civic beautification in the form of planting annuals in planters and window boxes along Main Street, and maintaining six gardens around town. The club

also sponsors public talks and scholarships, engages in garden therapy with Meals on Wheels and the Adult Day Service, and collaborates with Springfield on the Move, the Town of Springfield, and the Springfield Chamber of Commerce on the revitalization of downtown Springfield.

The club also would like to thank the following businesses and individuals for their generous donations: Peter Andrews Senior Insurance Services; Beardsley Inc.; John and Corinne Bond; Claremont Savings Bank; Deanna and Buddy Dexter; Jerry Farnum, State Farm Insurance; Christopher Fauver, DDS; Heather Frahm and Bill Cronin; Mary Helen Hawthorne; Steve Greene; HB Energy Solutions; Linda Husband; Robert and Fredda Kischko; Linda and Kurt Merriman; Priscilla Mil-lay; Parker & Ankuda, PC; Joy Regan; The Richards Group; Springfield Housing Authority; Tina's Hallmark; Vermont Timber Works; and James and Diane Young.

# Solstice Puzzlepalooza at Rockingham Library

BELLOWS FALLS, Vt. – On Saturday, Dec. 20, from 11 a.m. – 1 p.m., please join the Rockingham Free Public Library for a cheerful Solstice Puzzlepalooza event.

On the (almost) shortest day of the year, gather at the Rockingham Free Public Library for a fun puzzlepalooza, as we do puzzles about winter and light, surrounded by sparkles and community. Enjoy cozy refreshments and puzzle

positivity as we greet the winter together. Bring your own puzzle, or borrow one of ours. A bright, joyful way to celebrate the winter solstice.

The Solstice Puzzlepalooza event is part of Rockingham Library's Rockingham Gathers program, made possible by a 2025 AARP Vermont Winter Placemaking Grant. Rockingham Gathers is a series of programs and activities the Rockingham Library is organizing during winter 2025 to support "creative,

inclusive programming that fosters community connection, and combats social isolation among older adults during the coldest months of the year." RFPL is one of eight organizations from across Vermont to receive this grant. This event is free and open to the public.

For more information about this and other programs, call 802-463-4270, visit [www.rockinghamlibrary.org](http://www.rockinghamlibrary.org), or stop by the library at 65 Westminster Street, Bellows Falls, Vt.

# SAPCC launches annual appeal

N. SPRINGFIELD, Vt. – The Springfield Area Parent Child Center (SAPCC) is calling on the community to support families in need across southern Windsor and northern Windham counties. Through its annual appeal, SAPCC seeks donations to help children, parents, and caregivers navigate everyday challenges.

From providing essen-

tial supplies like diapers and food, to offering grief support for perinatal loss and early childhood programs that promote learning and development, SAPCC impacts the lives of hundreds of local families. "Every moment we witness – a child signing 'more,' a parent finding reassurance, a family receiving support – builds the strong, caring community we all want to live in," said Danna Bare,

executive director.

Federal and state funding does not cover the full cost of SAPCC's programs. Community donations enable SAPCC to respond immediately when families face crises, ensuring that no family has to navigate hardship alone.

Gifts of any size, from \$25 to \$2,500, have a direct and immediate impact. To donate or learn more, visit [www.sapcc-vt.org](http://www.sapcc-vt.org).

# "Free Speech and Extremism"

SPRINGFIELD, Vt. – Join Meg Mott at the Springfield Town Library, on Tuesday, Jan. 6, at 5:30 p.m., for her presentation "Free Speech and Extremism."

The right to protest is one of the people's most fundamental freedoms,

but what about speech that veers towards lawlessness or social disorder? During most of the 20th century, governments put speakers in jail for producing a "clear and present danger." Under that rule, Eugene Debs went to prison for denouncing World War I, and Charlotte Whitney went to jail for belonging to the Communist Party. As far as the government was concerned, their ideas were too dangerous to be heard in public.

In 1969, the Supreme Court changed the rule. Only words that caused "imminent lawless action" could be suppressed. The

case behind this decision, Brandenburg v. Ohio, involved the speech of a Klansman at a Klan rally during their campaign of terror. Thanks to the successful advocacy of Black and Jewish ACLU lawyers, extremists could no longer be imprisoned for their speech.

This presentation considers the arguments and paradoxes of the Brandenburg decision. How many Americans are still willing to defend Clarence Brandenburg's right to speak?

To sign up for a reminder, visit our [www.springfieldtownlibrary.org/calendar](http://www.springfieldtownlibrary.org/calendar).



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# Families of Faith Outdoors night sky viewing

**BROWNSVILLE, Vt.** – Please join the Brownsville Community Church, 66 Brownsville-Hartland Road, Brownsville, Vt., for the Families of Faith Outdoors event on Sunday, Dec. 21. We will meet at the church, at 6 p.m., and walk together over to the Albert Bridge School field. Lead by Gary Barnett, we will be experiencing the grandeur of creation closer than many of us have seen before. Using his telescope, Barnett will be introducing us to galaxies, planets, and other stunning features of the night sky. An avid astrophotographer, Barnett loves to capture in stunning detail the glory of the night sky. Matthew Roberts will be leading us in a few thoughts about how the intricate detail of the creation reflects God’s creativity, and points to the existence of a creator.

# Pam Bernard’s memoir workshop adds Zoom class

**WALPOLE, N.H.** – New sessions of Pam Bernard’s popular eight-week memoir-writing workshop are beginning the first weeks of January. Start days and times vary from class to class. This session, a Zoom workshop is being added to the two existing workshops, both of which have limited openings. Reach out as soon as possible if you are curious about the process of these well-known and respected writing workshops. Queries of any kind are welcome. The governing philosophy that makes Bernard’s teaching of memoir so effective is that the struggle must be to nurture a healthy relationship with the past, in order to get beyond the authorized version of oneself. The central paradox of this kind of writing is that a memoirist must rely on memory, though, at best, memory is mutable and utterly fallible. Memoirists learn to honor artful leaps of dramatic presentation in order to create a narrative nimble enough to fully and convincingly reveal a life. Retired Judge Patti Whalen, of Putney, Vt., explains how the workshop has helped her process and eventually find a way into difficult material. She says, “Pam’s workshop is the highlight of my week. Pam leads each session with skill and warmth, bringing the process of memoir writing alive with support and creativity. As I began to write and to identify the deeper themes, I realized with great relief that I had a way to shape hard truths into a story I could share. I could only have done this with Pam’s caring but rigorous guidance, and within the supportive and generous community of writers she has created. A retired professor of writing, Bernard is an author, editor, writing mentor, and instructor. She works also one-on-one with writers of nonfiction and poetry in a variety of ways. Bernard is the author of four books, the latest a novel in verse titled “Esther.” She received her Master of Fine Arts in creative writing from Warren Wilson College, and her bachelor’s degree from Harvard University. Her awards include fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Massachusetts Cultural Council. Her collection “Across the Dark” was a finalist for the National Poetry Series. Workshops are hybrid, using the Owl meeting device, to accommodate those who must attend remotely. The Owl makes the experience for the participant much more realistic. For more information, including days and times, please visit Bernard’s website at [www.pambernard.com](http://www.pambernard.com), email [www.pambernardwriter@gmail.com](mailto:www.pambernardwriter@gmail.com), or call 603-439-1809.

# SEVCA seeks volunteers for tax assistance program

**REGION** – Southeastern Vermont Community Action (SEVCA) is actively recruiting volunteers to join its Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program, offering free tax preparation services, as well as assistance with homestead declarations, property tax credit claims, and renter credit claims, to residents across Windsor and Windham counties. With appointments available at multiple locations, SEVCA is looking to expand its volunteer base to meet the growing demand for this vital service. Volunteers will help individuals and families with low to moderate incomes, persons with disabilities, and limited English-speaking taxpayers file their taxes accurately and efficiently. The VITA program aims to help people understand their tax returns and maximize their refunds, a critical boost for many households. “Volunteering with VITA is a chance to make a real difference in our community,” says Emily Strasser, VITA program coordinator. “Not only do you assist people with filing their taxes, but you also play a vital role in helping them gain a better understanding of their finances, and make informed decisions for their future.” VITA volunteers are essential to the success of this program. They come from diverse backgrounds, and receive comprehensive training to ensure they are well-equipped to assist with tax preparation. Volunteer tax preparers must pass an annual IRS certification exam to demonstrate proficiency in tax law and electronic filing, but there are other roles where this is not required. Foreign language or American Sign Language skills are also in great demand. Joshua Davis, SEVCA’s executive director, adds, “This program is centered on making tax assistance accessible to everyone, and our volunteers are essential to its success. By recruiting more volunteers, we can reach more people and amplify our positive impact on the community.” Volunteering with VITA is a rewarding way to give back and gain valuable skills. Training is provided, and volunteers can choose to assist with tax preparation, intake, or provide general support. No prior experience is necessary, and flexible scheduling is available to fit volunteers’ availability. For more information about becoming a VITA volunteer, visit [www.sevca.org/volunteer](http://www.sevca.org/volunteer), call or text the VITA program directly at 802-428-3032, or email [estrasser@sevca.org](mailto:estrasser@sevca.org).

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# obituaries

## HEALTH

### Chair yoga at Springfield Library

SPRINGFIELD, Vt. – Join us online or in person at the Springfield Town Library, every third Friday through September 2026, for a 60-minute chair yoga practice. You'll learn movements that you can do right from your seat, leaving you feeling mobile, grounded, and focused. In addition to boosting our brains and soothing our nervous systems, at the December class we'll acknowledge the turning of the year with fun,

accessible rotations, and we'll soothe ourselves with nourishing self-massage and acupressure points, useful after snow shoveling.

Walk into the library and join us live in person for free; there is no need to preregister. For online access, which includes all recordings, follow the link to choose from among a variety of registration options. Enjoy other chair yoga class recordings as soon as you sign up at [studio.jobregnard.com/product/88980](http://studio.jobregnard.com/product/88980).

### Eugene G. Adams, 1938-2025

PERKINSVILLE, Vt. – Eugene G. Adams, 87, died Tuesday morning, Dec. 9, at his home. He was born Aug. 16, 1938, in Randolph, Vt., the son of Theron and Lucy (Flint) Adams. He graduated from Springfield High School, Class of 1958, and the co-op program, and went to work in the machine tool industry, on the night shift. Gene left the machine tool shop and opened his own business at Downers Four Corners; he moved from the Four Corners business to just up the road, where he owned and operated his automotive business until he sold it in 1987. Gene and Alice purchased the property on Stoughton Pond Road in 1987, where he built a new garage and opened another automotive business, which

has been the hub of the community for almost 40 years. Gene and his team ran the safety crew at the Canaan Raceway and the Claremont Speedway every Saturday night for many years.

He served on the West Weathersfield Volunteer Fire Department, and ran a wrecker service as well for many years.

Gene had a love of cars and racing, and could talk cars all day long. On any given day you could find him with the boys in the shop. The shop became the gathering place for the community to stop by and chat and shoot the breeze.

In his later years, he developed an interest in model electric trains. He had trains and train tracks that took up half the basement of his home.

Gene was always tinkering; he was a fixer. If something was broken, he would figure out a way to fix it. If he didn't like the way it worked, he would modify it to work

better.

He loved family, and the highlight of his week was having supper and playing cards on Saturday nights. He missed it when we had to skip a week.

He will be greatly missed by his family and the community.

He is survived by his children from his first marriage to Lucinda Adams (deceased), his son Richard Adams, of Springfield, and his daughter Joy Fletcher (Shannon), of Red Boiling Springs, Tenn.; his sister Maralyn Jillson, of Brattleboro; stepdaughters Barbara Slaton (Robert), of Springfield, Beverly Lauren, of Chester, and Bette Matulonis (Jeff), of Springfield; as well as grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

He was predeceased by his wife of 38 years Alice Gilman Adams in 2016.

Memorial contributions may be made to the Gene Adams Memorial Scholarship Fund, 703 Maple Street,



Eugene Adams, 1938-2025. PHOTO PROVIDED

Perkinsville, VT 05151. The scholarship is being set up in Gene's memory to assist a student seeking training in automotive repair.

Visiting hours will be held on Friday evening, Dec. 19, from 5-7 p.m., at the Davis Memorial Chapel in Springfield, Vt.

A memorial service will be celebrated on Saturday, Dec. 20, at 3 p.m., at the North Springfield Baptist Church. The Rev. Joanne Thomas will officiate.

Burial will be at a later date at the Mountain View Cemetery in Braintree, Vt.

### Gilbert E. Stuart Jr., 1962-2025

HANCOCK, Vt. – Gilbert "Skip" Stuart passed away on Nov. 26, after a three-year battle with brain cancer. He is survived by his sons Elijah and Marley; his siblings Jeffrey, Marc, and Kimberlee; and many beloved friends. Skip grew up in West Hartford, Conn., and in southern Vermont, where he became a formidable skier. He went on to ski for MSU's ski team in

Bozeman, Mont., while earning his mechanical engineering degree. Skip's values informed his work; as a LEED-certified PE, he held positions at Bread Loaf Corporation, van Zelm, Saint-Gobain, and others, where he helped implement sustainable systems for buildings like Killington Resort's new K-1 lodge and Harvard's award-winning science and engineering



Gilbert Stuart, 1962-2025. PHOTO PROVIDED

complex. He settled in Hancock, Vt., coaching youth skiers at Middlebury's Snowbowl, and mountain biking with friends.

After his glioblastoma diagnosis, Skip fought cancer with the resolve of a lifelong athlete. He was the first patient at Dartmouth Cancer Center to receive Gamma-Tile implants, and in 2023 contributed to a clinical trial with an Optune TT-Field device, which he wore while skiing deep powder in Utah and riding his bike in the Green Mountains.

Skip was brilliant, scrupulous, eccentric, and, above all, kind. He understood that kindness, like energy, abides the laws of thermodynamics; it cannot be created or destroyed, work must be done to move it around, and if you fail to do that work it will be lost. If you knew Skip, you knew his way. He left the world a kinder and more interesting place. Now it's up to us.

Donations in Skip's memory may be made to The Prouty, Dartmouth Cancer Center's outdoor sports-based fundraiser for life-saving research and support services. For more information, or to share stories and photos of Skip with the family, email [skipstuart1@gmail.com](mailto:skipstuart1@gmail.com).



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**8 FREE Omaha Steaks Burgers (4 oz.)**

78237XDS separately \$999.99 **\$129.99**

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Ask for your FREE burgers with offer 78237XDS

Savings shown over aggregated single item base price. 8 free 4 oz. burgers will be sent to each shipping address that includes 78237. Limit 2. Standard S&H added per address. While supplies last. Items may be substituted due to inventory limitations. Some products may not be available for sale in your area. Sales are subject to OmahaSteaks.com/terms-of-use. Expires 12/31/25. 24M7165 | Omaha Steaks, LLC



**GET 8 FREE BURGERS**  
A \$22 value!

Scan Now To Order





Pamela Barnes, 2025

**READING, Vt.** – Pamela Barnes, 59, of Warwick, R.I., and Reading, Vt., passed away peacefully on Nov. 28, 2025, after a courageous battle with pancreatic cancer, surrounded by her loving family.

Born in Providence, R.I., Pam grew up in Barrington, R.I., and graduated from Branford High School in Branford, Conn. She later earned an associate's degree in accounting and computer science from Ethan Allen College and the Community College of Vermont.

Pam's early career in hospitality was spent in Vermont, where she worked at the Kedron Valley Inn, Echo Lake Inn, and then as event coordinator at Okemo Mountain Resort, before becoming resort manager at Hawk Mountain Resort. In 2020, she founded New England Hearing, proudly serving communities across Rhode Island, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and

Vermont with hearing aid sales and care.

In 1986, she married the love of her life Kevin P. Barnes. Together they settled in Reading, Vt., and filled their home with love and countless family memories. Pamela cherished every moment with her family, especially the many adventures they had on their trips together. Yes, she was a tropical destination and Disney girl. Pam also loved maintaining her many flower gardens, as well as relaxing on beaches near and far. She also enjoyed boating, scuba diving, kayaking, biking, hiking, and sipping frozen margaritas by the pool.

She is survived by her devoted husband Kevin P. Barnes; her sons Kyle Barnes, of Warwick, R.I., and Matthew Barnes (Amy Gagnon) of Berkley, Mass.; her brother Edwin Alan Turner (Coreena), of Warwick, R.I.; her brothers-in-law Richard Barnes, Tim Barnes (Mary),



Pamela Barnes, 2025. PHOTO PROVIDED

and Lewis Barnes; her sisters-in-law Julie Hoy (Tom) and Kathy Gardner (Bryan); and nieces and nephews Ian, Jack, Hannah, Ethan, Corey, Ryan, Andrew, Aleasha, Danielle, Amity, and Michael. Pam is preceded in death by her parents Edwin J. and Patricia E. Turner, and her niece Rachel.

Pamela's generous spirit, infectious laughter, and boundless love for family and friends will be deeply missed and forever remembered by all who were fortunate to know her.

Bette J. Holt, 1934-2025

**ROCKINGHAM, Vt.** – Bette Jane Holt, of Bellows Falls, passed away peacefully on Nov. 19, 2025, at home, with family around her. She was born in Bethlehem, N.H., on July 5, 1934, to Inez Quimby Norman and William Norman.

Born and raised on a large farm, Bette developed an appreciation for self-sufficiency. During childhood, she enjoyed picking berries and spending time outdoors. As a student at Bethlehem High School, Bette excelled in academics, and enjoyed playing basketball and softball.

Shortly after graduation in 1952, Bette married the love of her life, Lloyd Holt. The couple eventually settled in Rockingham, where they built a home, developed the land, and raised their children. Bette always had an abundant vegetable garden, sharing the bounty with family and friends. Bette and Lloyd shared a passion for ballroom dancing. Together they learned the art, and often spent weekends dancing at nearby venues.

Following her husband's sudden and tragic death in a work accident, Bette sought employment initially as an Avon representative, and later for a local dentist, where she worked for many years.

Bette was a devoted sports fan, cheering for the Boston Red Sox and the New England Patriots through thick and thin. Though she loved New England, she had a notable dislike for winter, the only exception being the joy she found in feeding the birds and cooking. She enjoyed many trips throughout the Caribbean with friends. Bette also spent several weeks every summer camping at York Beach, Maine. Locally, Bette was a longtime member of the TOPS chapter. Bette had a keen eye for a bargain, and enjoyed searching for treasures at local yard sales.

Bette's warmth, generosity, and strong spirit will be deeply missed by all who knew her. She leaves behind a legacy of love, hard work, and a life well-lived. Bette is survived by her children



Bette Holt, 1934-2025. PHOTO PROVIDED

Victor Holt, Bradley Holt, Steven Holt (Tanya), and Valerie Barry (Stephen); eight grandchildren; nine great-grandchildren; her sister Laura Jean Cornell (Bob); and many cousins, nieces, and nephews. Bette was predeceased by her husband Lloyd, her grandson Daniel, and an infant daughter Debra Lee.

A Celebration of Bette Holt's Life will be announced and held in the spring.

Memorial donations may be made to the Springfield Humane Society, or to the Bellows Falls Area Senior Center.

**Brownsville Community Church, 66 Brownsville-Hartland Rd., Brownsville, Vt.**  
The Brownsville Community Church will hold a Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols on Sunday, Dec. 21, at 9:30 a.m. A Christmas Eve candlelight service will be held on Wednesday, Dec. 24, at 7 p.m. Both services can be attended in person and via Facebook livestream at [www.facebook.com/brownsvillecommunitychurch](https://www.facebook.com/brownsvillecommunitychurch).

**Tyson Community Church, Corner of Route 100 and Dublin Rd., Ludlow, Vt.**  
There will be a Christmas candlelight service on Sunday, Dec. 21, at 6 p.m. Readings from the Bible of Jesus' birth and favorite hymns played by our musician, Erik Johansson, followed by cookies and hot

chocolate.

**Ludlow Baptist Church, on the Green, 99 Main St., Ludlow, Vt.**  
There will be a Christmas Eve candlelight service on Wednesday, Dec. 24, at 6:30 p.m.

**First Congregational Church of Westminster, 3470 U.S. Route 5, Westminster, Vt.**  
The First Congregational Church of Westminster will hold its Christmas Eve service on Wednesday, Dec. 24, at 5:30 p.m. All are welcome to join us. There is additional parking at the Westminster Institute. The Rev. Rich O'Donnell serves as pastor, and welcomes you.

**Union-St. Luke's Episcopal Church, 133 Old Church Rd., Claremont, N.H.**

Christmas Eve service will be held Dec. 24, at 7 p.m. A beautiful traditional service that was historically the first gathering by candlelight in the area. The community service is held in the historical church, which is decorated with boughs of evergreen and lit by the warm glow of dozens of real candles. The service includes the readings of the Christmas story and carols. The service will also be available on YouTube, live or on demand, at [www.youtube.com/@unionchurchnh](https://www.youtube.com/@unionchurchnh).

obituaries

Mary Bigelow, 1937-2025

**LANDGROVE, Vt.** – Mary Elizabeth Nutting Bigelow passed away Dec. 8, 2025, in Landgrove, Vt. May was a beloved figure in the Mountain Towns of southern Vermont, known for her gregarious, fun-loving, and nurturing personality.

She was born in Lebanon, Pa., on Feb. 20, 1937, to Marion Heminway and Harry Otis Nutting II. Her early childhood in Lebanon was marked by the absence of her father while he fought in the Philippines during World War II. Between helping in the family victory garden, and collecting aluminum for the war effort, she developed habits of thrift she retained for life.

She was a scholarship student at Northampton School for Girls, and met her husband David S. Bigelow III while working as a counselor at Mamie Ogden's Landgrove camp during Smith College's

summer break. May joined Dave on a peripatetic career that led them to England, Canada, Brazil, and France; she became fluent in French, and adored France for its art, architecture, and her friends there. In her early 50s, she returned with Dave to Landgrove, where she lived until her death.

May contributed to every community she was a part of, and her activities included fundraising for the Friends of Old French Houses, leadership roles in the historical societies of Landgrove and Weston, and serving as a commissioner of the Landgrove Cemetery. She loved classical music and other arts, tennis, skiing, gardening, reading, and travel.

She is predeceased by her husband, and son David. Survivors include her sister Nancy and her brother Harry; children Seth (Mel-



Mary Bigelow, 1937-2025. PHOTO PROVIDED

va), Hope (John), and Jonathan (Tove); grandchildren David, Andrew, Kira, Leo, George, Ira, Holt, James, Sam, Anna, Mary Sofie, Magnus, and Helena; and great-grandson Cameron.

A memorial service will be held on Dec. 27, at 2 p.m., at Burr and Burton's Mountain Campus in Peru. In lieu of flowers, please consider a donation to Neighborhood Connections or the Londonderry Volunteer Rescue Squad.

Douglas Neet, 2025



**WEATHERSFIELD, Vt.** – Doug Neet, of Weathersfield, Vt., passed away on Dec. 1, 2025, at the age of 72. Born to Charlie and Marjorie Neet, he was raised in Babylon, N.Y. He was a graduate of East Stroudsburg State College (now University) in Pennsylvania. A lifelong athlete, Doug played football and baseball in high school, and football and lacrosse in college. He continued his athleticism as a soccer and lacrosse referee into his 60s. An avid gamer, Doug was also a founding member of New England's Carnegie gaming group, assisting with organizing and planning their annual convention for more than 25 years. He was also a proud second lieutenant in the United States Marine Corps; Semper Fi!

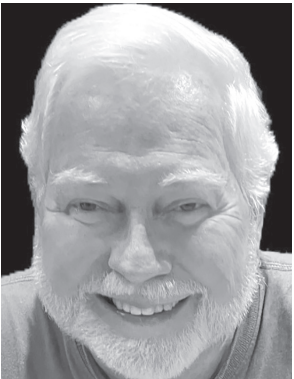
Doug had two professional careers: business management and teaching. He worked for Roadway Trucking Company in several Northeast locations, and then for Coca-Cola in New Jersey. He later entered the teaching profession, working as a physical education teacher in Mount Holly, Windsor, and Springfield, Vt. He thoroughly enjoyed both professions, and built lifelong friendships with coworkers and associates in both fields.

Doug is survived by his wife of 25 years Julie; children Allison, Maura, Liam, and Meiya (Meg); son-in-

law Shawn; grandchildren Maeve and Lochlann; brother Chip and sister-in-law June; mother-in-law Theresa; several sisters-in-law and brothers-in-law; nieces; nephews; cousins; and countless friends across the country.

Memorial contributions can be made in Doug's memory to the Lustgarten Foundation, which conducts research into pancreatic cancer, and the Hand to Heart Project, which provides massages to cancer patients and their partners. Loved ones are encouraged to participate in or donate to The Prouty, an annual summer fundraiser for the Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center (DHMC) Cancer Center.

Doug's family is grateful to the staff at the DHMC Cancer Center and Palliative Care Clinic, and Visiting Nurses & Hospice of New Hampshire/Vermont, who provided such good



Douglas Neet, 2025. PHOTO PROVIDED

care to him during his final year. A Celebration of Life will be held on Saturday, April 25, at 11 a.m. at the Unitarian Universalist Meetinghouse in Springfield, Vt.

Doug loved life and had an indomitable will to live. Doug's immortal legacy is the community of family and friendships he built and sustained across his more than 70 years. Please honor his memory by cherishing time with friends and family, sharing food, music, love, and laughter.

PROJECT LISTING

SPRINGFIELD, VT SCHOOL DISTRICT

Project: VCT Flooring Replacement – Springfield High School

Location: Springfield High School, 303 South St., Springfield, VT.

Description: Install VCT Flooring & Cove Base

\*Specifications available from Martha Tarbell, 802-885-5120\*

Proposal Due Date/Time: Monday, January 5, 2026, at 2:00 p.m., submitted to owner (below) in a sealed envelope marked "SHS Tile Project" on the outside of the envelope.

Mandatory site inspection and walk through must be scheduled through Tim Bixby, 802.282.3434 no later than Wednesday, December 31, 2025.

Documents Required: Proof of Insurance, Details per Specifications

Owner/Contact: Springfield School District  
Richard Pembroke  
301 South Street Springfield, VT. 05156  
Telephone: (802) 885-5120  
[rpembroke@ssdvt.org](mailto:rpembroke@ssdvt.org)

Request for Bids (RFB)

The Town of Andover, VT is seeking bids from qualified General Contractors for energy improvements to the Andover Town Office, Town Hall & Town Garage. The project also includes ADA improvements to the Town Office & the Town Hall. A detailed RFB for this project can be found on the Andover Town website <https://www.andovervt.org> Deadline for submission of sealed bids is Monday, January 26, 2026 at 3:00 PM at the Town Office (953 Weston-Andover Road).



calendar

LEGAL NOTICES

**DEC. 18 –** PERKINSVILLE, Vt. – Join us on Dec. 18, from 6:30-7:30 p.m., at the Perkinsville Community Church, 35 Church Street, for a festive evening of classical Christmas music with pianist Jacob McLaughlin. The concert will conclude with a singalong of “Silent Night.” This is a free event, but donations will be accepted to go towards a local charity.

CLAREMONT, N.H. – The Women to Women group will meet on Thursday, Dec. 18, from 1-3 p.m., in the Mozden Room at the Claremont Senior Center, 5 Acer Heights. This is an opportunity for women to get together and talk and share life stories. For more information, call 603-543-5998.

**DEC. 19 –** CLAREMONT, N.H. – The next Quilting Bee at the Claremont Senior Center, 5 Acer Heights, will be held Friday, Dec. 19, at 10 a.m. Come tell your story with the quilting skills you want to share with other quilters. You don’t have to be a quilter to attend. Bring your own project. For more information, call 603-543-5998.

**DEC. 20 –** CLAREMONT, N.H. – On

Saturday, Dec. 20, a turkey dinner will be served at the Claremont Senior Center, 5 Acer Heights. The menu will be turkey, stuffing, mashed potatoes, gravy, squash, cranberry sauce, dinner rolls, and cherry pie. Please call 603-678-0433 to order a meal any time until 3:30 p.m. the day of the dinner, and specify whether dine-in or takeout. Dining in will begin at 4:30 p.m., and takeout meals will be available at 5 p.m. For more information, call 603-543-5998.

**SUNDAYS –** BELLOWS FALLS, Vt. – Bellows Falls Loyal Order of Moose will be hosting a community breakfast on the first and third Sunday of every month, downstairs at the Bellows Falls Moose Lodge, 59 Westminster Street in Bellows Falls, from 8-10 a.m. All you can eat for a minimal cost.

**MONDAYS –** WESTON, Vt. – Bingo is Monday nights at 7 p.m. at the Weston Rod & Gun Club, 982 Route 100, 1.5 miles north of Weston Village. All are welcome.

**TUESDAYS –** SPRINGFIELD, Vt. – Head to the Unitarian Universalist Meetinghouse in Springfield, Vt., 21 Fairground Road, on Tuesdays, at 10 a.m., from Nov. 11, 2025 – March 24, 2026, to learn from and practice with Tai Chi Vermont-certified teacher Jo Bregnard. Classes are 60 minutes, and will also be livestreamed via Zoom, as well as recorded for those who can’t make it to the meetinghouse. To learn more or register, visit [studio.jobregnard.com/product/90038](http://studio.jobregnard.com/product/90038).

**WEDNESDAYS –** CHESTER, Vt. – Knitting with Friends at Six Loose Ladies on the Chester Common, Wednesdays, from 10 a.m. to noon.

**THURSDAYS –** CLAREMONT, N.H. – The Claremont Senior Center, 5 Acer Heights, holds computer clinics on the third Thursday of every month, from 1-3 p.m. Bring your computer or laptop in if you need help with it. This is for seniors only. Emily and Luke will help you troubleshoot any problems you are having, or help you to better understand your computer. You are responsible if any parts need to be purchased, but that is not usually the case. They can also help you with your cell phone, especially if it is an Android. For more information, call 603-543-5998.

**Town of Plymouth, Vermont**  
**Part-Time Treasurer**

Job Description

Directs and performs duties involving the daily operations of the Treasurer office; develops office procedures and documents, reviews, prepares and administers departmental budget and works with Town Clerk.

Maintains effective working relationships with Town officials, staff, and members of the community. Meets and speaks with taxpayers, the public, municipal or other business associates to provide answers, address complaints and requests, deal with errors or other job-related issues.

Manages the bills and collects all monies for the Town including real estate property, fees, charges, bills, and revenues committed to the Treasurer.

Works with the Delinquent Tax Collector to prepare municipal lien certificates, delinquency notifications and all other documents as required in the collection of taxes.

Works with Delinquent Tax Collector and Town Attorney to assist with Tax Sales.

Works with the Town Clerk to oversee the collection, deposit and reconciles bank statements for all Town accounts; prepare reports for Town’s annual audit; and balance cash, receivables, and debt monthly.

Manages debt including the borrowing of funds for the Town, compliance with all reporting requirements, timely payment of debt obligations, preparation of all financial documents including continuing disclosure.

Back-up to the Town Clerk to manage payroll, ensures that employees are properly enrolled in the system; maintains earnings records for all employees. Prepares and files W-2 information and all other third-party required reports.

Perform other duties as required by the Select Board or as the situation dictates.

Additional Duties

Financial liaison: Communicate financial information clearly to board members.

Risk management: Identify and work to minimize financial risks.

Cost reduction: Find strategies to reduce organizational costs and improve efficiency.

Recommended Qualifications

Degree in business administration, finance, accounting, or related field preferred; at least two years of experience in business or financial management preferably in a municipal Treasurer and/ or Collectors office; or an equivalent combination of education and experience.

The compensation range for this role is \$25.00 –\$30.00 per hour, dependent on experience, education level, and specific skill sets.

Please mail your resume and/or a completed application to the Plymouth Town Clerk’s Office at 68 Town Office Road, Plymouth, Vermont 05056 or email [clerk@plymouthvt.org](mailto:clerk@plymouthvt.org).

The Town of Plymouth is an equal opportunity employer.

**Town of Plymouth**  
**Public Notice of the Planning Commission and Zoning Board of Adjustment Conditional Use Hearing, Continued**

A public hearing will be held Tuesday, January 6, 2026 at 6:00 PM. at the Town Municipal Building, 68 Town Office Rd., Plymouth, Vermont, to continue a Conditional Use Hearing for the following applicant:

Join Zoom Meeting  
<https://zoom.us/j/9788686006?pwd=RVYz9U64hLsWIG8ggUHFc9asaobTF1&omn=96136223282>  
Meeting ID: 978 868 6006  
Passcode: 565333

One tap mobile  
+13092053325,,9788686006#,,,,\*565333# US  
+13126266799,,9788686006#,,,,\*565333# US (Chicago)

Dial by your location  
• +1 309 205 3325 US  
• +1 312 626 6799 US (Chicago)

Applicant: Jennifer Milano  
Property Owner: Christian Sundahl, Two Cees Realty  
Property Address: 32 Route 100, Plymouth, Vermont, 05056  
Project: Rural Small Enterprise and Non-Formula Restaurant in Village Zone

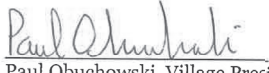
**WARNING**  
**SPECIAL VILLAGE MEETING**  
**VILLAGE OF BELLOWS FALLS**  
**January 12, 2026 & January 13, 2026**

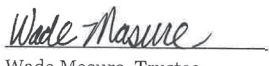
The legal voters of the Village of Bellows Falls are hereby notified and warned to meet at the Town Hall Lower Theater in said Village on Monday, January 12, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. for an informational meeting, and then to adjourn to the Bellows Falls Fire Department (170 Rockingham Street) in said Village from the hours of 9:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. on Tuesday, January 13, 2026, to vote by Australian Ballot on Article 1 and Article 2 as set forth below.


ARTICLE 1: Shall general obligation bonds or notes of the Village of Bellows Falls in an amount not to exceed Eight Hundred Twelve Thousand Five Hundred Dollars and Zero Cents (\$812,500.00) be issued under Chapter 53 of Title 24, Vermont Statutes Annotated, payable from the Village’s water fund, derived from the revenue from the provision of water over a period not to exceed thirty years, and subject to reduction by available grants-in-aid or other funding sources, be issued to finance the Village’s cost of Kissel Hill and Colony Road Water Line Improvements (the Project)?


ARTICLE 2: Shall general obligation bonds or notes of the Village of Bellows Falls in an amount not to exceed Three Hundred Thousand Dollars and Zero Cents (\$300,000.00) be issued under Chapter 53 of Title 24, Vermont Statutes Annotated, payable from the Village’s sewer fund, derived from the revenue from billing for sewer service over a period not to exceed thirty years, and subject to reduction by available grants-in-aid or other funding sources, be issued to finance the Village’s cost of Laurel Avenue Sewer Improvements (the Project)?


Adopted and approved at a meeting of the Trustees of the Village of Bellows Falls, duly called , noticed, and held on December 2, 2025.

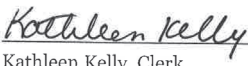
  
Paul Obuchowski, Village President

  
Wade Masure, Trustee

  
Susan MacNeil, Trustee

  
Samantha Snow, Trustee

  
Taylor Pichette, Trustee

  
Kathleen Kelly, Clerk  
RECEIVED FOR THE RECORD  
ROCKINGHAM TOWN CLERK'S OFFICE  
December 2, 2026  
Recorded in Book 34B Page 210

ATTEST:  
Kathleen Kelly, Town Clerk

**STATE OF VERMONT**

**SUPERIOR COURT**  
**Windham**

**Unit**

**PROBATE DIVISION**  
**Docket No.: 25-PR-06931**

**In re ESTATE of :** Robert J. Collins, Jr.

**NOTICE TO CREDITORS**

**To the Creditors of: Robert J. Collins, Jr.**

*Decedent*

**late of Londonderry**


*Decedent's Town of Residence*

I have been appointed to administer this estate. All creditors having claims against the decedent or the estate must present their claims in writing within four (4) months of the first publication of this notice. **The claim must be presented to me at the address listed below with a copy sent to the Court. The claim may be barred forever if it is not presented within the four (4) month period.**

*Dated:*

Dec 9, 2025

*Signature of Fiduciary*

  
Linda Collins (Dec 9, 2025 16:00:34 EST)

<i>Executor/Administrator</i> Linda S. Collins, Administrator		<i>Mailing Address</i> c/o Law Offices of Amanda L. S. George, PO Box 578
<i>Phone Number</i> 802-875-7777	<i>Email</i> <a href="mailto:chaffee@amandageorge.law.com">chaffee@amandageorge.law.com</a>	<i>City, State, Zip</i> Chester, VT 05143

**Name of Publication:**

**Publication Date:**

The Vermont Journal

December 17, 2025

**Name of Probate Court:**

**Address of Probate Court:**

Vermont Superior Court - Windham Probate

30 Putney Road

Brattleboro, VT 05301



LEGAL NOTICES

BUYING/SELLING

BUYING-SELLING Coins, Paper \$\$, Vintage Sports Postcards, Comics. See our displays at antique centers in Chester and Quechee. Open 7 Days. 802-379-2353. House calls available.

CLEAN OUTS + MORE

EZ-Dump Enterprises has a 15-yard dump trailer available.

We're also here for heating equipment, appliance removal, home/storage unit clean outs, stump grinding, and refinishing/repairing gravel driveways. Serving Springfield, Vt. area. Call/text 802-376-1168 or email ezdump.bl@gmail.com.

FOR SALE

GRAFTON, Vt. – 2005 GMC Serria, SLE 2500HD DSL, 4dr/4wd, Inspected, good condition, \$8500. Call 802-732-8494.

GRAFTON, Vt. – 2020 GMC Sierra SLT 2500HD DSL. Loaded.

4dr/4wd, Fisher V-plow, 5th wheel set up, side tool boxes, \$38,000. Call 802-732-8494.

GRAFTON, Vt. – 2020 GMC Sierra SLT 2500HD DSL, Loaded. 4dr /4wd, 2025 Fisher V-plow w/2025 Fisher Sander, 5th wheel set up, \$48,000. Call 802-732-8494.

HELP WANTED

LUDLOW, Vt. – Okemo Valley TV / WLUD is searching for its next Executive Director to lead the organization into its next chapter. We are a small but vibrant community-based multi-media

organization, headquartered in Ludlow. With the recent addition of community radio we are evolving to serve and engage with the community in different ways. To learn more about the position and how to apply, please visit the station's website at okemovalley.tv.

SNOW PLOWING

LUDLOW, Vt. – Snowplowing and sanding, Ludlow area, residential only. Reasonable rates. Contact SK Logging at 802-384-0313.

CLASSIFIEDS

Start at \$20 per week for 4 lines of text. Buy 3 get 1 Free! Email ads@vermontjournal.com with your listing today

Town of Springfield - Selectboard Notice of Public Hearing January 12, 2026

The Town of Springfield will hold a Public Hearing at 6:00 PM on Monday, January 12, 2026 for the purpose of receiving public input concerning the July 1, 2026- June 30, 2027 Springfield Town Operating Budget. This will be a hybrid meeting. The Public Hearing will be held at 96 Main Street, Springfield, Vermont. It will also be possible to attend via Zoom.

Join Zoom Meeting https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81054139257 Meeting ID: 810 5413 9257

One tap mobile +13126266799,,81054139257# US (Chicago) +16465588656,,81054139257# US (New York)

Kristi C. Morris, Chair Springfield Selectboard

TOWN OF CHARLESTOWN NH We're Hiring! Join Our Team Today!

Looking for a career with great Pay & Benefits? Look no further!

Come work for the Town of Charlestown!

We're seeking motivated, passionate individuals to join our team. With competitive pay, excellent health and dental benefits, retirement plans, and more, this is more than just a job—it's your future!

Positions Available: Highway Dept. Driver/Equipment Operator/Laborer - FT Water/Waste Water Licensed Superintendent - FT FT Police Officers Building Inspector – PT/On Call

Don't miss out! Start your career with us today. Apply now and take the first step toward a brighter tomorrow!

For more information Visit Charlestown-nh.gov, click on Volunteer & Employment.

Application available on the website or come in to the Town Office at 233 Main St. Charlestown NH

Town of Londonderry, Vermont PLANNING COMMISSION NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING Regarding: Unified Development By-Laws

Monday, January 12, 2025 - 6 P.M. Londonderry Town Office 100 Old School Street South Londonderry, VT 05155

The Planning Commission solicits public comment on the proposed update, as well as comments from the Planning Commissions of abutting municipalities and from the Regional Planning Commission regarding the compatibility of their respective regulations with the proposed Londonderry Unified Development Regulations. These changes aim to make bylaw adoption more efficient and to keep bylaws current, relevant, and in compliance with municipal plans. The regulations apply to the entire Town of Londonderry.

The Table of Contents includes:

- General Standards
- Exemptions and Limitations
- Prior Applications, Approvals, and Uses
- Nonconformities
- Zoning Districts
- Base Zoning Districts
- Overlay Zoning Districts
- General Zoning Rules
- Site Design and Performance Standards
- Specific Use Standards
- Subdivision Standards
- Planned Unit Development (PUD) Standards
- Conservation PUD
- Neighborhood PUD
- Multi-building, Multi-use PUD
- Administration and Enforcement
- Fees and Filing Requirements
- Zoning Permits
- Commercial and Multifamily Home Development
- Appeals
- Notice, Hearings and Decisions
- Violations and Penalties
- Definitions

A full copy of the proposed Londonderry Unified Development Regulations is available for public review. It is available at the Londonderry Town Office, Londonderry, Vermont, and on the town's website at https://www.londonderryvt.gov/.

AGENDA

1. PUBLIC HEARING Unified Development By-Laws: Call to Order a. Opening Statement
- b. Comments and Concerns from the Public
- c. Adjourn

Art Crafts Gifts

CREATE TOGETHER AT FLETCHER FARM

Community Art Center offering Workshops, Equipped Studios, Camps, and More

611 Rt.103S, Ludlow, VT 802-228-8770

www.CreateTogetherVT.org (12/9/26 - 52)

GALLERY AT THE VAULT

Art, Crafts, Gifts, Exhibits & Workshops Holiday Shopping at its best!

Give handmade scarves, mittens, mugs, ornaments, woodenware, glass, craft kits, bags, cards & prints

OPEN Wed. to Sat. 11-5 & Fri. till 7!

68 Main St., Springfield VT 802-885-7111 galleryvault.org/workshops

Joyful Moments – Open Wall Show (01/14/26 - TFN - 13 )

Builders/Contractors

PETER JORDAN CONSTRUCTION

Over 25 years of experience in all phases of construction. Framing, finish carpentry, custom showers and tile work, hardwood flooring, decks, and siding. Fully insured and registered with the State of Vermont. Lead Paint Certified. Located in Proctorsville. 802-558-5267. (02/11/26 - 13)

ROSE'S HOME IMPROVEMENT

Booking for winter 2025 and spring 2026 projects. Offer carpentry, remodeling, interior & exterior painting, window & door replacements, vinyl siding washing, pressure washing, drywall repairs, and odd jobs. Call 802-591-0019 or email billr2808@gmail.com. Caven-dish, Vt. (05/06/26 - 26)

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# Nonprofit acquires and protects 341 acres of forest

ATHENS, Vt. – The southern Vermont community-based nonprofit Bull Creek Common Lands (BCCL) has placed 341 acres of remote land in Athens and Townshend under the permanent protection of a conservation easement with the Vermont Land Trust (VLT), the two organizations announced today. The conserved land is the headwaters of Bull Creek, a special place that many in the local community know and appreciate.

The newly conserved land contains many wetlands and different forest types that are home to beavers, moose, deer, bears, foxes, ducks, and songbirds, as well as rare and endangered plant species. There are also several cellar holes and evidence of past farming.

Public access for non-motorized recreation is currently available from Sam Farr Road in Athens, with a pull-off parking area. The primary existing trail on the property is a section of the Legal Town Trail along Bull Creek. BCCL is planning a new trail that will connect Sam Farr Road to the other side of the property in Townshend.

Those interested in visiting the land from the Townshend side should visit the BCCL website for information. Visitors are also welcome to hike off-trail on the property.

“BCCL protected this land so everyone, your children and grandchildren, can enjoy it and appreciate the benefits of healthy forests, clean water, and plentiful wildlife,” said Andrew Toepfer, board

member of Bull Creek Common Lands. “We do this work because we love our neck of the woods in the same ways other Vermonters do. We want to uphold the rural Vermont tradition of keeping land open for the community to roam on, balance recreation and wildlands, and restore ecosystem health to benefit all.”

The land includes a section of Bull Creek along with the creek’s headwater tributaries, numerous wetlands, five vernal pools, beaver ponds, large swamps, and peatlands. It lies less than a half mile west of the Raymond Bemis Community Forest, which BCCL established in 2023.

“The protection of the headwaters meets values that many in the community share,” said VLT’s Jen-

nifer Garrett, who worked with BCCL on the project. “We’re gratified to support BCCL in the conservation of critical habitat and watershed features in southeastern Vermont, in a way that brings together care for the landscape with people’s needs and wishes.”

Community members in the area already use the headwaters land for hiking and hunting. BCCL plans to manage it for both public access, as well as the health of the land and water. The nonprofit has already done some work to stabilize soils on old logging roads, and thus reduce erosion caused by rain and snowmelt. They have also begun managing non-native plant species in some areas, to reduce pressure on existing flora and protect biodiversity.

BCCL worked over sev-

eral years to protect the land, which was previously split across three contiguous parcels of 188 acres and 42 acres in Athens, and 110 acres in Townshend.

BCCL thanked the many supporters and partners who contributed to the success of this project.

The effort was funded by the Vermont Housing & Conservation Board (VHCB), Open Space Institute (OSI), Davis Conservation Foundation, Fields Pond Foundation, Windham Foundation, and numerous generous donors.

“Communities know their landscapes best, and Bull Creek Common Lands proved that here,” said Gus Seelig, executive director of the Vermont Housing & Conservation Board. “They saw what needed protecting in their corner

of Vermont, and made it happen. VHCB was glad to support work that protects clean water, keeps habitat intact, and ensures public access forever. This is Vermont conservation at its finest.”

“OSI was honored to support Bull Creek Common Lands’ initial acquisition of 110 acres – an ecologically rich landscape of forests, wetlands, and streams,” said Sarah Wells, Open Space Institute’s New England program manager. “It’s inspiring to see how that first step set the stage for protecting the entire headwaters, helping safeguard water quality, reduce flooding, and provide vital habitat for wildlife. This achievement reflects the vision and persistence of BCCL, Vermont Land Trust, and every partner who made it possible.”

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Dear Editor,

Each December, America lights up – not with reverence, but with neon sales, frantic shopping, and countdowns to the next shipment from Amazon. For Generation Z especially, Christmas has increasingly drifted into a glittering spectacle of trends, wish lists, and content creation. The nativity story, the breathtaking moment when eternity stepped into time through the birth of Jesus Christ, is being drowned out by noise, convenience, and commercialization. This world-shaking miracle has been pushed to the margins of relevance within the cultural bubble that much of secular America, and even many believers, now inhabit.

Though no single generation caused this shift, the effects of our lost focus are now surfacing most dramatically in America’s under-30 population. A December 2022 Ipsos poll

of 1,023 adults, drawn from their probability-based KnowledgePanel, found that three-quarters of Americans believe the true meaning of Christmas has been forgotten.

Secular culture has been slowly sanding down the sacred edges of Christmas for decades. We need to acknowledge the urgency of the moment. Gen Z is coming of age in a culture that has nearly severed Christmas from Christ himself. Many young people today know Christmas as a vibe, an aesthetic, or an event, but not a holy day. Not a divine interruption. Not the miracle of the savior of the world arriving in the humblest, most unthinkable way.

As real, devout, Bible-believing, and Spirit-led Christians, we cannot be passive observers of this cultural drift. We are called to be stewards of truth in a generation starving for

meaning, even if they don’t yet realize it. If we do not intentionally teach the true story of Christmas, the world will gladly substitute something cheaper, louder, and spiritually empty.

Christmas began in a manger, not a mall. It began with a virgin girl saying “yes” to God, with shepherds trembling before angels, with Joseph choosing obedience over reputation, and with a child whose first crib was a feeding trough. The holiness of that night is not fragile, but our collec-

tive memory of it is. It must be protected, taught, and proclaimed.

This season, I urge every believer to speak boldly and consistently about the miracle of Christ’s birth. Re-iterate it to yourself. Tell it to your children and grandchildren. Teach it in your churches, your workplaces, your living rooms, and your everyday conversations. Let the next generation hear not only what happened in Bethlehem, but why it matters – that the God of

the universe took on flesh as Jesus Christ to save us wretched sinners from our otherwise endless pit of darkness and death.

If we reclaim Christmas, not as nostalgia, nor as just tradition, but as worship,

we are fulfilling our calling to continuously reignite the flame of truth in a culture desperately in need of light.

Sincerely,  
Maya Wright  
Cavendish, Vt.



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# holiday & events

## Antje Duvekot, Seth Glier

PUTNEY, Vt. – Next Stage Arts and Twilight Music present contemporary folk singer-songwriters Antje Duvekot and Seth Glier on Saturday, Dec. 20, at 7:30 p.m., at Next Stage.

Duvekot is a German-born, American-raised singer-songwriter whose work is celebrated for its hard-won wisdom, dark-eyed realism, and street-smart romanticism. Her bicultural upbringing and relative newness to English shape her strikingly original poetic voice, fueling the powerful empathy at the center of her writing. She has received top songwriting honors, including the grand prize in the John Lennon Songwriting Competition, the Kerrville Folk Festival’s New Folk Award, and the Boston Music Award for Outstanding Folk Act.

Her debut studio album, “Big Dream Boulevard,” was voted the No. 1 folk release of 2006 by the Boston Globe, and named a top 10 release of the year by NPR’s Folk Alley. Since then, Duvekot has toured extensively across the U.S. and Europe, performing at major festivals including Newport, Mountain Stage, Philadelphia, Falcon Ridge, Great Waters, and Ker-ville.

Glier, a five-time Independent Music Award winner, Grammy-nominated singer-songwriter, multi-instrumentalist, and producer, brings a visionary voice to modern folk. Driven by curiosity and a deep desire for human connection, he uses his musical craft as a vehicle for both. Glier has served as a cultural diplomat for the U.S. State Department, collabor-

ating with musicians in Ukraine, Mongolia, China, and Mexico. He has shared stages with Ronnie Spector, James Taylor, Ani DiFranco, and Glen Campbell, and recorded with Richard Shindell, Dar Williams, and Cyndi Lauper. Committed to songwriting as a force for positive change, he has worked with students in Parkland, Fla., on the Parkland Project, cowritten with soldiers at Walter Reed, and is a passionate advocate for autism awareness, citing his autistic brother Jamie as a profound influence.

Next Stage is located at 15 Kimball Hill, Putney, Vt. Tickets are discounted in advance at [www.nextstagearts.org](http://www.nextstagearts.org). A beer, wine, and cocktail cash bar will be available. For more information, call 802-387-0102.

## Community Art Garden Vacation Art Camp

CHESTER, Vt. – Community Art Garden in Chester, Vt., is offering its first vacation art camp over the holiday break, Monday, Dec. 29 – Wednesday, Dec. 31, from 9:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m. each day. This fun, process-art centered program includes lantern making,

origami, snow and ice art, and shadow puppet play. Camp is designed for children ages 5-13, and is geared towards play and child-centered creativity. Campers will have the chance to learn how to take everyday materials like sticks, tissue paper, and glue, and create their own lanterns that re-

ally glow. With lots of outside time sprinkled into the fun, it is a breath of fresh air mid-holiday break. Register online at [www.communityartgarden.com/camps](http://www.communityartgarden.com/camps), or email [emily@communityartgarden.com](mailto:emily@communityartgarden.com) for more information. Space is limited, so early registration is recommended.

## Free screening of “Shrek”

SPRINGFIELD, Vt. – The Springfield Project ACTION Crime & Safety Committee is excited to host a special community event featuring a free screening of the classic movie “Shrek” at Springfield Cinemas 3, on Tuesday, Dec. 29. Arrival time is 10 a.m., with the movie beginning promptly at

10:30 a.m. Admission is free for all students enrolled in the Springfield School District or the River Valley Technical Center, and includes complimentary popcorn and beverages. Attendees will also have the chance to win free gas cards through our raffle.

The Springfield Project ACTION Crime & Safety Committee remains committed to addressing community concerns through proactive and creative initiatives. We strive to foster pride in Springfield, and encourage students to take an active role in their community. This program is designed to strengthen community connections, offer a safe and fun activity during the school break, and give Springfield residents the

opportunity to learn more about the fantastic things Project ACTION and its initiatives are inspiring.

Please come enjoy this great local cinema, watch a classic movie, and learn more about Project ACTION. Advanced registration is appreciated, to ensure we do not exceed capacity. Register at [forms.gle/qBoQFQQerdZjqwcq8](https://forms.gle/qBoQFQQerdZjqwcq8). The event can also be found on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/share/1TqunTm57J](https://www.facebook.com/share/1TqunTm57J).

## “Painting the Winter Landscape in Watercolor” at VAULT—

SPRINGFIELD, Vt. – Explore painting the beautiful New England winter landscape in watercolor with popular artist Rob O’Brien on Saturday, Jan. 10, 2026, from 9:30 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Glazing techniques and layering of the subtle tints of snow will be introduced. Value, composition, and painting light and shadow will be emphasized. You will work from a photo reference that you bring, and learn to create a finished painting with hands-on guidance provided by O’Brien. A critique will be held at the end of the session. Open to all levels, with some watercolor experience suggested.

The cost of the class is discounted for gallery members. Register by Saturday, Jan. 3. The workshop will be held at the Great Hall in Springfield. Directions will be provided along with a materials list at registration.

Gallery at the VAULT is located at 68 Main Street in Springfield. For more information, call 802-885-7111, email [gallervault@vermontel.net](mailto:gallervault@vermontel.net), or visit [www.gallervault.org](http://www.gallervault.org) or Facebook and Instagram. The gallery is ADA accessible.



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# holiday happenings

## Starry, Starry Night

CHESTER, Vt. – Chester will come alive with light, festive decor, and community spirit during Starry, Starry Night, on Friday, Dec. 20, from 4-7 p.m. Luminaries will line the streets as local shops, galleries, artists, and restaurants welcome residents and visitors for an evening of holiday shopping, seasonal treats, and extended hours.

Browse, shop, and enjoy special events from artists and makers. Sample baked goods, maple treats, hot cider, wine, and more.

Participating businesses include Collected LTD, 92 Vermont Route 11; DaValia Art and Interiors, 39 North Street; DyakCraft/Linda Diak Quilts, 339 Main Street; Fischer Arts, 102 The Common; The Inn Between & Which Way Tavern, 1834 Simonsville Road, Andover; Kit Kats Embroidery, Gifts, Souvenirs & More, 78 The Common; Matilda and Three Bears, 26 The Common; Rose Arbour Tea Room, Gifts & Art Studio, 55 School Street; Sage Jewelry and Gifts, 78 The Common; Sharon's on the Common and Chester Candy Com-

pany, 80 The Common; Smitty's Chester Market, 526 Depot Street; Songbird Wellness, 12 The Common; Stone Hearth Inn & Eatery, 698 Vermont Route 11; Sugar Bob's Finest Kind, 92 Vermont Route 11; and Wisdom River Designs, 220 South Main Street.

This year's celebration will also coincide with the Okemo Valley Holiday Express Train, departing from the Chester Depot, and featuring a festive ride complete with Santa and his helpers.

## Yuletide caroling at Meeting House

ROCKINGHAM, Vt. – The Rockingham Historic Preservation Commission invites members of the twin-state community to gather for yuletide caroling at the historic Rockingham Meeting House, on Sunday, Dec. 21, at 1 p.m.

This beautiful and historic building provides a perfect setting to celebrate the season and bring



Holiday cookies and doughnuts. PHOTO PROVIDED

the community together in song. Participants are encouraged to dress warmly, as the meeting house is unheated – aside from the warmth of shared voices, good cheer, and perhaps a wool sweater or blanket.

Song lyric sheets will be provided, and celebratory cider and donuts will be served following the caroling.

For more information, please contact 802-463-3964, Ext. 1112. All are welcome.

## Next Stage Winter Solstice Celebration

PUTNEY, Vt. – Next Stage Arts invites the community to celebrate the winter solstice with an afternoon of festive activities, creative fun, and joyful singing on Sunday, Dec. 21, from 2-4:30 p.m., at Next Stage Arts, 15 Kimball Hill in Putney, Vt. The event is free and open to all, and attendees are encouraged to RSVP at [www.nextstagearts.org](http://www.nextstagearts.org).

This family-friendly celebration offers something for everyone.

Festive cookie swap – Community members are invited to bring a batch of their favorite cookies to share. Drop off two or four dozen cookies and a recipe card between 2-3 p.m., then return to pick up a beautifully mixed box of treats

between 4-4:30 p.m. Bakers may sign up in advance at [www.nextstagearts.org](http://www.nextstagearts.org).

Luminaria-bag decorating – From 2-3 p.m., participants of all ages can decorate luminaria bags that will line the outdoor walkway, adding warmth, artistry, and light to the solstice season.

Holiday community singalong – Join musician Rich Grumbine on guitar from 3-4:30 p.m., for a lively and heartwarming community sing. Attendees can sing from a 60-song holiday songbook featuring traditional classics, secular tunes, and songs for kids. Lyrics will be projected on the main theater screen, making it easy for everyone to raise their voices together.

“Winter Solstice is a perfect moment to gather, share traditions, and brighten the darkest day of the year,” says the Next Stage team. “We’re excited to welcome neighbors of all ages for cookies, music, and community connection.”

Warm refreshments, holiday cheer, and plenty of singing will fill the space as Next Stage marks the turning of the season.

For more details or to RSVP, visit [www.nextstagearts.org](http://www.nextstagearts.org).

## SAPA TV eighth annual Public Domain Christmas

SPRINGFIELD, Vt. – SAPA TV, the Springfield area's public access TV station, will once again run 24 hours of Christmas movies and short subjects from 7 p.m. Christmas Eve to 7 p.m. Christmas Day.

Viewers in Springfield, Weathersfield, Chester, Reading, and in Charlestown, N.H., are welcomed to spend the day with 1964's “Santa Claus Conquers the Martians,” the 1959 Mexican production “Santa Claus,” and a host of classic car-

toons, all of which have entered the public domain.

The marathon will run on SAPA's public channel (Comcast 1077, VTel 160), while local Christmas programming will air at the same time on SAPA's government/educational channel (Comcast 1087, VTel 161). Thursday religious programs will air at their usual times, but on the government/education channel.

Viewers without cable, or who live outside SAPA's service area, can watch SAPA's livestream online at [www.sapatv.org](http://www.sapatv.org).

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