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THE MESSAGE OF THE WEEK

APRIL 15, 2026 | WWW.VERMONTJOURNAL.COM

PUBLISHED BY THE VERMONT JOURNAL

VOLUME 01, ISSUE 41

20th annual Steppin' Up to End Violence 5K Walk and Fun Run

CLAREMONT, N.H. – The Center for Safer Communities will host the 20th annual Steppin' Up to End Violence 5K Walk and Fun Run on Saturday, May 2, at Claremont Middle School. With a goal of raising \$200,000 and an anticipated 900 participants, this milestone event continues a powerful community tradition of supporting survivors of domestic and sexual violence, and helping to fund violence prevention education work throughout Sullivan County. This yearly event brings the community together in a meaningful, impactful way, raising awareness about crucial issues in our communities and showing an overwhelming amount of

support to survivors. Registration begins at 8:30 a.m., followed by a rally at 9:45 a.m., and the official start at 10 a.m. Community members can register, join a team, or donate at secure. qgiv.com/event/steppinuptoendviolence2026. Those unable to attend in person are still encouraged to participate by forming a team, fundraising, and "stepping up" from anywhere. Every dollar raised stays local and helps to end violence in our communities. This 20th anniversary year will feature a special commemorative display highlighting photos and memorabilia from the event's history, as well as the organization's beginnings in 1977. Attendees

can also enjoy a 20th anniversary photo booth, food, raffles, a kids activity area, and more. The event is family-friendly, and crowd-friendly dogs on leashes are welcome. "For 20 years, Steppin' Up to End Violence has brought our community together to support survivors and prevent violence in our communities," said Pascale Graham, executive director of The Center for Safer Communities. "As we celebrate this milestone, we're honoring the progress we've made while continuing to raise critical funds and aware-



Join the annual Steppin' Up to End Violence 5K Walk and Fun Run.

PHOTO PROVIDED

ness for the work that still lies ahead. Every step, every team, and every donation makes a meaningful difference." The Center for Safer Communities, formerly known as Turning Points Network, has been serving Sullivan County for nearly 50 years. As a member of

the New Hampshire Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence, the organization works to enhance the safety and wellbeing of victims and survivors through empowerment, advocacy, and peer support. Through violence prevention education and outreach, the organization

also empowers those in our communities to establish a safer culture across Sullivan County, N.H., and, through bystander awareness and prevention efforts, end violence and abuse in our communities.

Claremont City Council receives portrait of Guy Santagate

BY ANNE DEMPSEY
The Message

CLAREMONT, N.H. – The Claremont City Council meeting on Wednesday, April 8, opened with a speech by Mayor Dale Girard honoring Fiske Free Library Director Michael Grace for his 21 years of service, the longest of any city librarian in Claremont's history. Grace will be retiring on April 17.

A number of upcoming events were then announced. The Well Collaborative is hosting a May Day breakfast from 8-11 a.m., at the First Congregational Church on Pleasant Street. The parks and recreation department is working on a scholarship golf tournament, which will take place on Wednesday, May 20. The Center for Safer Communities is having their 20th annual Steppin' Up to End Violence 5K Walk and Run Fun Run on Saturday, May 2. Registration begins that day, at 8:30 a.m., with walking starting at 10 a.m. Registration for youth soccer is open currently, and runs through May 14, at the Claremont Parks and Recreation Center.

There were several reappointments up for council approval for various committees. The list is as follows: Erin Groff Greenhouse, for Alternate Seat 6 on the conservation committee; Gary Dickerman, for Seat 5 on the conservation committee; Bruce Kalen, for Seat 5 on the planning committee; Maxine J. Gell DeFrance, for Seat 3 on the planning committee; Jill Chastity, for Seat 3 on the historic district committee; Wayne Hemingway, for Seat 4 on the zoning board of adjustment; and Michael Lemieux, for Seat 5 on the zoning board of adjustment. The reappointments were approved by the council.

Council member Nicholas Koloski mentioned some of the committees can't hold meetings because there are not enough committee members to meet their quorum. If anyone is interested in volunteering for a committee, Koloski recommended people check for information on the city's website, www.claremontnh.com.

During citizens forum, artist Ernest Montenegro displayed his painting of former City Manager Guy Santagate, who served in the role from 2001-2016. Montenegro would like to gift his artwork to the City of Claremont in honor of Santagate's many accomplishments, which include the Common Man complex of buildings, the industrial park on River Road, the Claremont Makerspace, and the city's parking garage. The artist hopes that the painting of Santagate will be hung in the council chambers.

Charlene Lovett from the Claremont Sugar River Rotary Club spoke about city-wide litter pickup, which is happening from April 18-26, with the goal of cleaning up the roads and sidewalks of Claremont. People can register at the community center, and the Rotary will organize the bag retrieval. Trash bags and gloves will be available at the community center.

Director of Parks and Recreation Justin Martin offered the proposed rates for swim lane reservations for the lap pool and the teaching pool at the community center. They are \$15 per lane per hour for swim lessons, and \$10 per lane per hour for swimming. He also stated that the Upper Valley Aquatic Center is eager to start piloting swim lessons at the community center. The council approved these fee rates.

Director of Public Works Alex Gleeson has been working on standardizing the meter hydrant fee, which currently does not exist. He recommended a \$150 daily connection fee to cover the setup, monitoring, and administration costs associated with it. After much discussion, the council approved a fee of \$100, instead of the proposed \$150.

Police Chief Brent Wilmot recommended changes to restitution fees, copying fees to the public, and false alarm fees. The council approved these fee changes.

City Manager Nancy Bates said there are some proposed changes to the costs of the North and Main Street project. She introduced Brian Colburn, who was contracted by the city to oversee this project. Colburn explained that the volatility in the costs of fuel and pavement, along with the need to relocate the water main line, have increased the cost of this project. Bates explained that the state will pay for the bulk of this cost. However, the city needs to come up with \$59,400 for their share of this cost increase.

The resolution presented to the council for approval proposed that the money needed come out of the unassigned general fund budget. The council voted "no" to this proposal. Members expressed an interest in finding the money from another source. One source suggested using funds not spent on salaries in the planning department due to vacancies.

Gleeson asked for approval to join the Greenwater Infrastructure Design Project with the Upper Valley Sunapee Planning Commission, to solve the problem of sheets of water running down Park Avenue. This design project will be using grant funds



Updates from the City of Claremont.

PHOTO PROVIDED

already obtained from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. The grant is to specifically provide for engineering consultancy and planning. The council approved this plan.

Fire Chief Jim Chamberlain sought approval for funding the purchase of a new fire engine at the cost of \$9,480,364. City Treasurer Cathy Parks presented three payment options. Girard stated that he was opposed to holding future council members to a lease in which they will have no say. He added, "I think we need to come in with an overall plan, which is why the Capital Improvement Plan is there, so that everything is brought to council at once so that we can come up with the money that we're going to be spending...I can't support any of these options this evening. I'm for the fire truck, but not this way." The Chief requested that the council approve the purchase of a fire truck, with no financial plan needed for this initial approval. The council agreed to this.

Bates explained that, while the roof work was being done at 56 Opera House Square, the work crew found asbestos in the second-floor ceiling. She requested that the council approve the application and expenditure of money

through a Capital Regional Development Council grant to remove the asbestos so that roof work can be complete. The council approved.

Bates expressed interest in working with a website developer to design a new city website with timely, professional tech help when needed. She feels input from the public, the council, and the staff is important. The council applauded this.

Bates also told the council that a prior planning and development director had applied for and received funds for a two-phased small-business development project, and that she had recently discovered that some of the stipulations in the grant have not been followed. Councilor Wayne Hemingway noted that this "would probably affect our chances of getting another grant." Assistant Mayor Debora Matteau asked that Bates come back with a new proposal for spending the remaining funds in the Phase 1 portion of the grant on small-business development in the downtown. She suggested that then Phase 2 compliance could be addressed.

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

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The deadline for all content is Thursday at 4 p.m. for the following week's publication.

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Springfield Hospital retires the Apple Blossom Cotillion

BY SHAWNTAE WEBB

The Vermont Journal

SPRINGFIELD, Vt. – In 2025, Springfield Hospital hosted the 67th annual Apple Blossom Cotillion, which happened to be their last year for the annual fundraising event. The long-standing community tradition, which has been held since 1957, raised funds for Springfield Hospital to support the Dr. E. Sherburne Lovell Health Career Award, along with other services for the hospital.

The proceeds were used

annually to fund the scholarship for a graduating senior to pursue higher education in the health care field, and, in 2025, to renovate and purchase new equipment for the hospital's emergency department.

Students from all over the hospital's service area, including Springfield, Chester, Woodstock, Bellows Falls, and Claremont, were invited year after year to participate in the annual competition of poise and grace, and one talented lady was named queen. The tradition began under the leadership of Har-

riet Lindley, past president of the hospital auxiliary and the chairman of the Ways & Means Committee.

"In the first year, seven high school senior girls, all dressed in white gowns, competed for the title of Apple Blossom Queen," states the hospital's website. "Introduced by local businessmen, the young women had attended a formal tea and participated in interviews with the judges, who were volunteers from the local chamber of commerce. Final judging took place at the Cotillion dance on May

9, 1957.

"Joan Ryan of Springfield was selected as Queen and the other six contestants made up her court. It was an exciting evening for those in attendance as they danced to the music of the New Glenn Miller Band under the direction of Ray McKinley. The evening was a financial and a social success."

Over the decades, the event grew to not only showcase the ladies, but featured fun dances from the gentlemen, and also highlighted cheerful dances



First Apple Blossom Queen, Joan Ryan, and her court, 1957. PHOTO PROVIDED

from "future cotillion" elementary student couples. Springfield Hospital has a new fundraising event in the planning stages for 2027 and beyond.

Risks threatening Gen Z's retirement, how to tackle them

REGION – While older generations worry about having enough money for retirement, many Generation Z workers aren't even starting to save. Research in 2025 by Edward Jones and Morning Consult shows that nearly half haven't begun setting money aside for their golden years, and only 22% are contributing to a workplace retirement plan.

The culprit is a perfect storm of financial pressures that can make saving for the future feel impossible. One of the biggest challenges this generation faces is debt. High-interest credit card balances and persistent student loan payments leave many feeling they're just trying to stay afloat, rather than planning decades ahead.

The cost of living doesn't

help either. Nearly 60% of Gen Z renters are considered "rentburdened," spending more than 30% of their pretax income on rent, according to a StreetEasy analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data. Rising prices driven by inflation and tariffs squeeze budgets further, moving retirement savings down the priority list.

The nature of work has also changed. Gen Z is more likely than previous generations to hold gig jobs, contract positions, or other flexible work arrangements that often don't include employer retirement plans, according to Pew Research. Even when plans are available, only 22% participate. Feeling overwhelmed by jargon, confused by investment choices, or focusing

only on today's experiences and technology can all delay participation. These early gaps may lead to catch-up needs later in life.

Unfortunately, Gen Z has little faith in the retirement safety net. Only about a third of Gen Z-ers say they believe Social Security will still exist when they retire, according to the latest information from the Cato Institute.

Fortunately, there are steps Gen Z can take now to get their retirement savings off to a good start.

Start small: Even a few dollars per paycheck builds a savings habit and

gets compounding interest working in your favor. Early momentum matters more than starting big.

Let compounding do its work: Small, consistent contributions can grow dramatically over time, especially when they have decades to accumulate.

Use a workplace retirement account: For anyone with access to a plan, enroll and contribute at least enough to receive any employer match. It's one of the few forms of "free money" available.

Open an IRA: If no plan is available through work, take charge by opening an individual retirement ac-

count (IRA).

Simplify investing: If the choices feel confusing, consider options such as a target date fund, which reduces complexity and helps keep you properly invested without needing expert advice.

Use found money: Direct tax refunds, bonuses, or gig income into retirement savings to boost progress without straining the monthly budget.

Automate contributions: Automatic transfers make saving effortless. Review this annually and increase contributions as income grows.

Build confidence: If in-

vesting feels overwhelming, look for quick financial education resources from an employer, plan provider, or reputable nonprofit organization. Even a little knowledge can make decisions easier.

The path to retirement doesn't require perfection – just progress. Building consistency early helps create choices, security, and financial breathing room later in life.

This article was written by Edward Jones for use by your local Edward Jones financial adviser. Edward Jones, member SIPC.

Claremont Senior Center yard sale

CLAREMONT, N.H. – The Claremont Senior Center will hold its annual indoor/outdoor yard sale on Friday, June 5, and Saturday, June 6, from 8:30 a.m. – 3 p.m. both days. Please donate your unwanted items to our yard sale to help defray the cost of our fuel. Dona-

tions will be accepted at the Claremont Senior Center. The items must be quickly looked over by a board member or receptionist before being accepted.

The senior center is accepting clean, usable household and kitchen wares, small furniture and appli-

ances, indoor/outdoor holiday decorations, arts and crafts, quilting and sewing supplies, toys, games, puzzles, clean linens, sports and camping equipment, pet supplies and tools, etc.

The senior center cannot accept large appliances or furniture; mattresses;

luggage; carpets or rugs; clothing; shoes; electronics including typewriters, computers, and TVs; books; VCRs; CDs; DVDs; stuffed animals; car seats or exercise equipment; helmets; or skis.

For more information, contact the senior center at 603-543-5998.

Exploring LGBTQ+ representation from TV's past with Bellows Falls Pride

BELLOWS FALLS, Vt. – Bellows Falls Pride will be presenting a short collection of episodes of sitcoms from the '70s and '80s, following with an open discussion on LGBTQ+ representation on TV from the past to present day at the Rockingham Public Library, on April 25,

from 11 a.m. – 2 p.m.

While the LGBTQ+ community has always existed, it wasn't until the '70s that there was much representation of the community in widespread public media. Following the Stonewall riots, we began to see a trickle of episodes of television

shows that attempted, to varying degrees of success, to offer glimpses into the lives of the LGBTQ+ community.

Sitcoms have long been a way to normalize and offer the public heavier topics in a light and digestible way, and the '70s and '80s were a

golden era for creative and topical comedies.

Join Bellows Falls Pride in viewing a selection of sitcom episodes, and join the open discussion on the historical significance of the episodes and how they helped lead to representation today.

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arts & entertainment

Springfield Community Players open season with “Dinner with Friends”

SPRINGFIELD, Vt. – On Saturday, April 25, the Springfield Community Players (SCP) open their 106th season with Donald Margulies’ acclaimed dramatic comedy “Dinner with Friends,” at the SCP Studio in Springfield. The production is sponsored by The Copper Fox and will feature a stylized intermission experience reflecting the show’s themes of friendship, connection, and food.

The Pulitzer Prize-winning play examines middle-adult friendships and the ways in which dynamics change when partnerships dissolve: As Beth and Tom reckon with their impending divorce, longtime friends Karen and Gabe navigate the fallout and how it affects their own marriage. The story unfolds through flashbacks, with a dialogue-laden script filled

with humor and poignancy. To create an immersive experience, SCP is offering a limited number of “Food with Friends” intermission add-ons, which include an organic charcuterie board for two from Roo’s Farm and two show-themed mocktails, served at a private table. There will also be a small art gallery in the theater’s lobby.

“Dinner with Friends” is directed by Springfield-based filmmaker and acting coach Matt Munroe. Jonathan Barron, a 30-year veteran of the entertainment industry and cofounder of the award-winning ComedySportz Boston, will make his SCP acting debut as Gabe, and is joined by returning SCP members Ashlee White as Karen, Jet Gage as Beth, and Sean Dabney as Tom.

In lieu of SCP’s tradition-

al 50-50 raffle, guests can enter to win a \$50 gift certificate to The Copper Fox. Raffle tickets can be purchased online and at the door, with all proceeds benefiting SCP’s roof and repairs fundraiser.

“Dinner with Friends” runs two Saturdays, April 25 and May 2, at 7 p.m.; and two Sundays, April 26 and May 3, at 2 p.m. Tickets are available through the SCP website, with a discounted package rate for groups of four. Tickets will be available at the door pending availability.

Springfield Community Players is Vermont’s oldest continuously operating community theater group. For tickets and information, please visit www.springfield-players.org/tickets.

Watercolor techniques for realistic animals

SPRINGFIELD, Vt. – Gallery at the Vault is pleased to offer “Watercolor Painting Techniques for Realistic Animal Features” with Joanna Alix, on Saturday, April 25, from 11 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Explore watercolor painting techniques to render lifelike animal textures, such as fur, feathers, and realistic eyes. There will be a discussion about the best materials to use for attaining these effects. No prior advanced watercolor experience is required, but you will move beyond the basics to give you practical skills you can apply to



A realistic watercolor fox by Joanna Alix. PHOTO PROVIDED

Wednesday, April 22. A materials list will be provided via email directly from Alix after registration.

Gallery at the Vault is located at 68 Main Street in Springfield, and is open Wednesday – Saturday, from 11 a.m. – 5 p.m. For more information, call 802-885-7111, email gallervault@vermontel.net,

your paintings.

The cost of the workshop is discounted for gallery members. Register by

or visit www.gallervault.org, Facebook, or Instagram. Gallery at the Vault is accessible.

Veronica Robles Latin American music and dance

PUTNEY, Vt. – Next Stage Arts is proud to present the Veronica Robles Quartet on Sunday, April 19. The show begins at 2 p.m., with doors opening at 1:15 p.m. Tickets are available discounted in advance at www.nextstagearts.org.

Veronica Robles, a celebrated female mariachi singer, musician, and Latin American folkloric dancer and choreographer, has become a cultural icon for Boston’s Latino community. Known for her dynamic performances that blend music,



Veronica Robles. PHOTO PROVIDED

dance, and storytelling, Robles celebrates the richness of Latin American culture while fostering con-

nection and joy among audiences of all backgrounds.

This unique afternoon concert will feature a quartet performing traditional mariachi pieces alongside Latin American folkloric music, with Robles leading an engaging performance that showcases her signature energy, skill, and passion for cultural traditions. Attendees can expect an immersive experience that honors heritage, artistry, and community through music and dance.

Ablaye Cissoko and Cyrille Brotto at Next Stage

PUTNEY, Vt. – Next Stage Arts presents an extraordinary evening of global music on Friday, April 24, at 7:30 p.m., featuring internationally acclaimed kora master Ablaye Cissoko and celebrated French diatonic accordionist Cyrille Brotto. Doors open at 6:45 p.m., at Next Stage Arts, 15 Kimball Hill in Putney.

In their luminous new project, “Djiyo” – meaning “water” – Cissoko and Brotto create a seamless musical current that flows across cultures, blending West African Manding traditions with the folk music of southern France. The result is a sound that is meditative, lyrical, and deeply human.

Following nearly three years of touring and more than 100 concerts worldwide, the duo reunites with a renewed artistic connection. Their performance unfolds as an intimate and expressive dialogue between kora, voice, and accordion – at times contemplative, at times quietly ecstatic – imbued with warmth, melancholy, and profound musicality. Hailed as “a gem from start to finish” by Songlines UK, “Djiyo” invites listeners into a spiritual journey that both soothes and awakens.

Cissoko is widely regarded as one of the world’s foremost kora players, known for his fluid virtuosity, soulful voice, and boundary-crossing collab-

orations spanning world music, jazz, and classical traditions. Brotto, a leading figure in the European folk scene, brings remarkable sensitivity and inventiveness to the diatonic accordion, crafting richly textured music rooted in tradition yet alive with innovation.

More than a collaboration, this performance is a meeting of kindred spirits – a musical conversation shaped by friendship, mutual respect, and a shared devotion to the transformative power of sound.

Advance tickets are available discounted at www.nextstagearts.org. For more information, call 802-387-0102.

Los Lorcas and Pat Byrne at Stage 33

BELLOWS FALLS, Vt. – Los Lorcas and Pat Byrne share the bill at Stage 33 Live in Bellows Falls, Vt., on April 26, in a 3 p.m. matinee. Tickets can be purchased in advance through www.stage33live.com, or at the door as available. Advance tickets guarantee entry. Only 40 tickets will be sold. Advance sales will close at midnight the day before the show, or when 40 tickets are sold.

Los Lorcas celebrates the release of their new album, “Wild Island,” with a concert blurring the boundaries between spoken word and song, weaving poetry with Andalusian ballads, blues, rock, folk, reggae, hip-hop, Americana, and jazz in pursuit of the cante jondo, “deep song.” Their timely and soulful compositions weave themes of love, loss, homelessness, empathy, activism, and gratitude through a filter of the American dream.

In the spirit of Federico Garcia Lorca, gifted musician, legendary poet and playwright, and ebullient performer, poets Partridge Boswell and Peter Money, along with guitarist Nat Williams, fuse poetry and music in a passionate and surprising mashup.

Troubadouring widely in the U.S., Ireland, Canada, and Slovenia, Los Lorcas have performed everywhere from farmhouse kitchens to

pubs, coffeehouses, schools, theaters, and festivals.

Pat Byrne shares the bill. He migrated from County Carlow, Ireland, to Austin, Texas, to take the U.S. by storm, with breakout performances at the 30A Festival, SXSW, Kerrville Folk Festival, and the Americana Festival. Immersed and highly respected in the Texas music scene, he melds two musical cultures known for introspective lyricism and raw, from-the-heart emotion, with a voice that ranges from seductive whisper to full-bodied rock ‘n’ roll growl.

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health

Health care and tech

LUDLOW, Vt. – Join in on Friday, April 24, from 1-2 p.m., at Fletcher Memorial Library, to learn about how artificial intelligence (AI) and telemedicine are shaping the way we manage our health.

Curious how recent technological advances have changed health care? In this lecture, we'll explore how doctors are using cutting-edge tech, like AI and smart devices, to diagnose, monitor, and treat medical conditions. We'll also discuss how patients can use

technology to manage and improve their health. We'll cover how to prepare for, and what to expect from, telehealth appointments, common health care wearables, and best practices for using AI for medical information.

Senior Planet, a program of Older Adults Technology Services from AARP, empowers older adults to use technology so they can learn, work, create, and thrive in the digital age. Its mission is built on the philosophy of "aging with at-

titude."

This is brought to you by Black River Good Neighbor Services and Fletcher Memorial Library, with support from the Godnick Adult Center and the Vermont Community Foundation. This program is free and accessible. For additional information about this and other Senior Planet workshops, call the library at 802-228-8921, or Black River Good Neighbor Services at 802-228-3663.

Celebrate tai chi and qigong

SPRINGFIELD, Vt. – Join Springfield-area Tai Chi Vermont-certified instructors to mark World Tai Chi and Qigong Day at this fun, free event.

Players from across the globe in more than 80 nations come together on the last Saturday of April each year, at 10 a.m., to educate the world about the profound benefits of tai chi and qigong. You can think of World Tai Chi and Qigong Day like the New Year's Eve ball drop – except instead of midnight celebrations,

it's waves of flowing qi moving across the time zones as the planet turns, from New Zealand to Hawaii. From Springfield, Vt., Sue Rubel and Jo Bregnard will lead you in qigong movements and different tai chi forms. Come practice, follow along, and connect with other tai chi players.

We'll meet in person at Studio Momentum, or online. Those who register for the online option will get access to the recording. Those attending in person should bring a change of footwear

for practice; outdoor shoes are prohibited in the studio space.

Remember to clear your practice space, wear comfortable clothing and closed-toe and -heel shoes for practice, have a full water bottle with you, and let us know if you have any additional questions by emailing jo@jobregnard.com. We look forward to practicing with you. All are welcome.

Thank you to Edgar May for providing a location for this event.

HCRS welcomes Becky Gilbert

SPRINGFIELD, Vt. – Health Care and Rehabilitation Services (HCRS) is proud to announce the appointment of Becky Gilbert as director of children, youth & families (CYF), and urgent care. A familiar and trusted leader within the organization, Gilbert brings more than 18 years of experience serving Vermont's children, youth, and families through nearly every level of care HCRS provides.

In this role, Gilbert is responsible for the leadership, strategic direction, quality, and overall operations of HCRS' CYF division and urgent care program. As a member of the senior leadership team, she oversees management staff, collaborates with community partners and state officials, and ensures that clinical and community needs are met with care that is creative, collaborative, and compassionate.

Gilbert's journey at HCRS is a true "ground-up" story. Over nearly two decades, she has served in roles ranging from administrative generalist and case manager, to clinical services provider, school-based area manager, and urgent care leader. That breadth of experience shapes a leadership style rooted in first-hand understanding. She has worked directly with children and families navigating complex challenges, managed residential and crisis cases, and supported clinicians delivering care in the most critical moments.

At the center of her work is one steady focus: the needs of the client. Every process, policy, and partnership is viewed as a pathway to better life outcomes for the people HCRS serves. Gilbert is also deeply committed to supporting clinical staff, creating an environment where they feel empowered, consulted, and equipped to provide high-quality care. With a clinical

background in cognitive behavioral therapy, she champions evidence-based practices and is a strong advocate for the Zero Suicide framework, helping move systems of care toward proactive safety and lifesaving intervention.

"Becky's leadership reflects the very best of HCRS," said George Karabakakis, CEO at the time of Gilbert's hiring.

"I believe deeply in what HCRS stands for," Gilbert shared. "In this role, I'm committed to leading with collaboration, clarity, and purpose – strengthening our programs, supporting our staff, and ensuring that children and families receive the care they deserve. The future of CYF and urgent care is about proactive, connected support, and I'm excited to help move that vision forward."

For more information about HCRS, visit www.hcrs.org.

Black River Good Neighbor Services grief support group

LUDLOW, Vt. – Black River Good Neighbor Services offers a grief support group for anyone who has experienced a loss. The group provides a safe space for participants to share their feelings and experiences with grief, while acknowledging that everyone grieves differently. The peer-to-peer support group aims to foster connection, understanding, and resiliency during one of life's most

difficult experiences.

Some goals for participants are to reduce the isolation that often comes with grief, to learn coping strategies from the group, and to encourage healing and adjustment while honoring the person or loss the participant has experienced. Hearing others' experiences helps participants to recognize that their reactions are normal, and that grief does not follow a linear path.

The group provides

trained facilitators presenting specific topics, coping strategies, and available resources, while participants' connections with each other provide the greatest support.

The grief support group meets at the Fletcher Memorial Library in Ludlow, on the second Monday of each month, at 1 p.m. For additional information, please contact Black River Good Neighbor Services at 802-228-3663.

HCRS welcomes Anne Bilodeau as CEO

SPRINGFIELD, Vt. – Health Care and Rehabilitation Services (HCRS), southeastern Vermont's nonprofit community mental health agency, officially welcomed Anne Bilodeau to her new role as chief executive officer on April 1.

A familiar leader within the organization, Bilodeau steps into the role following years of hands-on leadership across HCRS' operations, most recently serving as chief operating officer. Her first day as CEO marks both a continuation of the organization's strong foundation and a forward-looking moment for its future.

"Anne leads with intention, clarity, and a genuine commitment to the people behind this work," said Phil Blackburn, chair of the HCRS board of directors. "She understands what it takes to support both staff and communities, and we're excited to see her step into this role."

Since joining HCRS in 2019 as chief human resources officer, Bilodeau

has helped guide the organization through a period of significant growth and change. In her role as COO, she played a key role in advancing major initiatives, including HCRS' work towards certification as a state-certified Community-Based Integrated Health Clinic (CCBHC) and the expansion of enhanced mobile crisis services across Vermont, in partnership with the state's designated agencies.

Known for her collaborative approach and steady leadership style, Bilodeau has focused on strengthening internal systems, supporting staff, and building partnerships that expand access to care throughout the region.

"As I step into this role, I'm feeling both grateful and energized," said Bilodeau. "This work is deeply personal to so many of us, and I'm incredibly proud to be part of a team that shows up every day with compassion, skill, and commitment. I'm excited for what we'll continue to build together – expanding



Anne Bilodeau.

PHOTO PROVIDED

access, strengthening our services, and making sure people feel seen, supported, and connected in their communities."

Bilodeau succeeds longtime CEO George Karabakakis, who will retire at the end of June following more than three decades of leadership at HCRS. He will remain with the organization during the transition to support continuity and a smooth leadership handoff.

As HCRS looks ahead, Bilodeau's leadership reflects a balance of experience, vision, and a deep connection to the organization's mission. HCRS continues to move the work forward while staying grounded in the communities it serves.

HCRS welcomes new staff in February

SPRINGFIELD, Vt. – Health Care and Rehabilitation Services (HCRS) is pleased to welcome four new professionals who joined the agency during the month of February. These new hires will strengthen HCRS' services across Windham and Windsor counties as the organization continues to evolve and respond to growing community needs.

With more than 550 staff working across more than

20 locations, HCRS brings on new team members each month to ensure continued access to high-quality care across the region. The latest additions reflect the agency's broad reach across southeastern Vermont, and its commitment to providing essential mental health, substance use, and developmental services to more than 4,000 people each year.

HCRS welcomes the fol-

lowing new employees: Jonathan Tuthill, children's case manager, Brattleboro; Jennifer Cobb, children's case manager, Springfield; Nicole Rice, residential specialist, Brattleboro; and Mark Nichols, community integration specialist, Bellows Falls.

These professionals bring unique talents and energy to their roles, and HCRS is proud to have them join the team.



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obituaries

Julie Abraham, 1958-2026

LUDLOW, Vt. – On the evening of March 29, the light was taken from Julie, after a brief but very brave battle with cancer.

A celebration of life will be held at Water's Edge Resort in Westbrook, Conn., on Sunday, April 19, from 12-3 p.m., open to all. A celebration of life in Vermont will occur later in the summer, with details to follow.

In lieu of flowers, please consider making a donation in Julie's honor to the Okemo Mountain School via the Julie Abraham Scholarship Fund, at www.okemomountainsschool.org/donate. Alternatively, the Black River Good Neighbor Services (BRGNS) organization is a local charity serving the Okemo Valley. Checks



Julie Abraham, 1958-2026.
PHOTO PROVIDED

can be made out to BRGNS, with the memo indicating "In honor of Julie Abraham," and mailed to Black River Good Neighbor Services, 37B Main Street, Ludlow, VT 05149. For more information, please visit www.brgn.org.

James E. Dunn, 1943-2026

SPRINGFIELD, Vt. – James "Jim" Erwin Dunn, 82, passed away peacefully on April 7, 2026, at Tidewell Hospice in Port Charlotte, Fla., surrounded by his loving family. He was born on May 7, 1943, and lived a full and meaningful life devoted to family, service, work, and community.

Jim was the son of the late Edmund "Pat" Dunn and Viola Nelson Dunn, and was raised in Springfield, Vt. He was a proud graduate of Springfield High School, Class of 1961. Following graduation, Jim honorably served his country in the United States Navy from 1962-1966 during the Vietnam War.

After completing his military service, Jim returned to Springfield, where he built a long and successful professional career. He worked for several local companies, including Lovejoy Tools and Vermont Research, where he was employed for 24 years. He later joined Stryker Biotech, where he spent many years before retiring as director of global expansion.

In addition to his corporate career, Jim was an entrepreneur. Alongside his late wife, Elizabeth "Betty" Davis Dunn, he cofounded and operated Bittersweet Antiques, a business they owned and ran together for more than 20 years.

Jim was deeply involved in his community. He was a longtime member of Crown Point Country Club, where he proudly served as president. He also volunteered his time with the Springfield Planning Commission before relocating to Lake Suzy, Fla., with Sylvia Scofield Dunn, his beloved wife of 15 years, whom he had known since they were high school classmates. In



James Dunn, 1943-2026.
PHOTO PROVIDED

his leisure time, Jim enjoyed golfing, hunting, fishing, reading, and faithfully cheering on his beloved New England Patriots.

In addition to his parents and his late wife, Betty, Jim was preceded in death by his brother, Crawford Dunn, and his sister, Gail Dunn Stickney.

Jim is survived by his wife, Sylvia; his son, Patrick (Carol) Dunn; and his stepchildren Kimberly (Joe) Romo, Dawn (Jerry) Sundeen Hinson, Deborah (Scott) Cope, Kathleen (Bob Holshue) Fleck, Michael (Maribeth) Makela, Eric (Sondra) Ogden, Dawn (Bruce) Wallace, Jaime Ogden, and Mark (Nakita) Ogden; and his first wife, Judy Heald Brown. He also leaves behind 24 grandchildren, six great-grandchildren, and numerous nieces and nephews.

Jim will be fondly remembered and deeply missed as a devoted husband, loving father and grandfather, and a good friend to many. His quiet leadership, strong work ethic, and generous spirit left a lasting impression on all who knew him.

A celebration of Jim's life will be held in late June, in Springfield, Vt. Additional details will be provided to family and friends at a later date.

Judith Benway Mills celebration of life

CHESTER, Vt. – There will be a burial service and celebration of life for Judith Benway Mills on May 2, at 11 a.m., at the Pleasant View Cemetery in Chester. There will be a reception at the American Legion in Chester following the service.

Diane L. Albonizio, 1944-2026

LONDONDERRY, Vt. – Diane Louise Albonizio, of Londonderry, Vt., passed away at Springfield Hospital on April 9, 2026, after a long illness with lung disease.

Diane was born Nov. 9, 1944, in Fort Riley, Kan., to Lloyd B. and Louise D. Copeland, and was raised in Upper Saddle River, N.J. She attended local schools and received her Bachelor of Arts in biology from Franklin Pierce College, Rindge, N.H.

Diane met her husband, Nicholas, on a blind date at college. They were married on Nov. 3, 1968, prior to Nick's tour of duty in Vietnam. During that time, she was employed at Lederle Labs, Pearl River, N.Y., as a tissue culture biologist.

Diane enjoyed golfing and attending to the flower gardens at the Bellows Falls Country Club. She was an accomplished rug hooker, spent many hours solving mystery puzzles and reading spy/mystery novels, and enjoyed spending time with her family.

She is survived by her husband, Nicholas; two sons, Matthew, of Littleton, N.H., and Mark (Noa), of Roch-



Diane Albonizio, 1944-2026.
PHOTO PROVIDED

ester, Wash.; sisters, Joanne Barthman (Peter) and Carol Dietrich; stepsister, Kathy Sgroi (Tony); sisters-in-law, Carleen Farrell (Dan) and Marietta Stone Anastas; and many nieces and nephews. She is predeceased by her parents and brother William Copeland.

Visitation will be at the Davis Memorial Chapel in Springfield, Vt., on Saturday, April 18, from 10 a.m. – 12 p.m. A celebration of life will follow at the American Legion Post 67, Chester, Vt., at 1 p.m.

In lieu of flowers, Diane requested donations be made to Neighborhood Connections in Londonderry, Vt.

Karen K. Neely, 1940-2026

CHESTER, Vt. – Karen K. Neely, 85, passed away peacefully at Pine Heights in Brattleboro, Vt., on March 27, 2026.

Karen was born in Springfield, Vt., on Sept. 2, 1940, to William and Beverly (Hunt-oon) Keith. She was raised in Londonderry and attended Chester High School. As a young adult, she asked Jesus into her life, and her faith remained important and sustained her throughout.

On Oct. 6, 1956, Karen married Eugene "Sam" Hill, and together they began their married life in Chester, which would span 26 years. Karen and Sam became parents to four boys in seven years. They enjoyed snowmobiling and camping trips, and as a couple took a trip to Germany and France. It was a memorable family life full of raucous boy stories that live on decades later.

Following the untimely death of Sam in 1983, Karen met Matthew Neely. They were married for 27 years. Together they enjoyed motorcycling through New England, building two new homes over the years, the beach, and entertaining family and friends at their home.

Always very connected to her church family, Karen started a women's bible study group in her home, which grew and still meets today at the Renewed Life in Jesus Church.

Karen's work life included jobs at Readex, The Chester Drug Store, and The Vermont Country Store, where she also assisted founder Vest Orton for a time. Karen also worked at The Old Tavern at Grafton, and as a private caregiver.



Karen Neely, 1940-2026.
PHOTO PROVIDED

Karen is survived by her four sons, Andrew Hill (Mary), Keith Hill (Joyce), Timothy Hill (Stacey), and Jason Hill (Shayne); 11 grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren; her stepchildren, Sandy Boegly, Phyllis Saltmer, Scott Neely, and Polly Neely; five step-grandchildren; and sister Jeanie Petraska (Tom); as well as sisters-in-law, nieces, and nephews.

Karen was predeceased by her parents; husband Eugene Hill; husband Matthew Neely in 2011; her siblings William Keith II, Sally Pajala, and James Keith; niece Kolleen Keith; and nephew William J. Keith.

A celebration of Karen's life will be held at on Saturday, May 16, at 11 a.m., at the Andover Community Church, 928 Weston-Andover Road, Andover, Vt.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to Women of Revelation, c/o Renewed Life in Jesus Church, P.O. Box 352, Chester, VT 05143; or Valley Village Senior Living, 461 Grafton Road, Townshend, VT 05353.

Davis Memorial Chapel in Springfield, Vt., is assisting with the arrangements.

Gale S. Alger, 1945-2026

SPRINGFIELD, Vt. – Gale S. Alger, 81, passed away unexpectedly on April 4, 2026, at the Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center in Lebanon, N.H. She was born Jan. 11, 1945, in Barton, Vt., to Ralph and Charlotte (Morse) Bishop.

Her family later moved to Springfield, where she attended Springfield schools and graduated from Springfield High School in 1963.

On July 9, 1966, Gale married Robert P. Alger in Springfield, Vt., where they continued to live and raise their son, Bobby. They would have celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary this July.

Gale was employed as a real estate broker in the area for many years. She began her career in 1973. Gale built a reputation not just on closing deals, but genuinely listening to people's wants, needs, and concerns, and found so many people their homes. Long after contracts were signed and years had passed, people would come back to Gale for their next move.

She and Bob owned one of the most memorable restaurants in Springfield's prime, The Gaslight. Many people have stories about their days or nights in the bar. Aside from selling real estate and owning the restaurant, Gale was a fixture at Crown Point Country Club. She was the one and only female president on their board of trustees and, as of today, she is the longest-serving restaurant



Gale Alger, 1945-2026.
PHOTO PROVIDED

manager. She wore many different hats at Crown Point. She gained many friends and extended family through these roles in her life. She was a mentor to many, and her infectious smile and spirit lit up the room.

She is survived by her husband, Robert; son, Robert P. Alger Jr. (Lindsay); brother, Donald Bishop (Jean), and sister, Diana Brown; four grandchildren; niece, Adrienne Bishop Phillips (Brent); and nephew, M. Boyd Brown. She also had many nieces and nephews all over the country whom she adored.

She was predeceased by her parents Ralph and Charlotte Bishop; in-laws, Jack and Tanya Alger; sister-in-law, Jill Osbourne (Alger); brother-in-law, Jack Alger Jr.; and dear friend Richard Tracy, aka "Scummy."

A celebration of life will be held at a later date, at Crown Point Country Club.

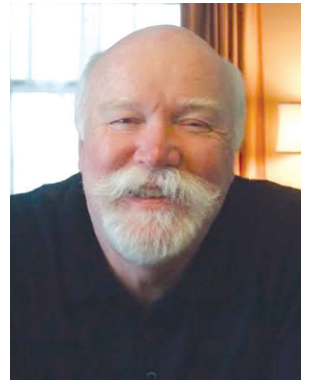
Davis Memorial Chapel in Springfield, Vt., is assisting with the arrangements.

Edward P. Smith, 1950-2026

SPRINGFIELD, Vt. – It is with great sadness that we share the passing of Dr. Edward Patrick Smith Jr., on April 5, 2026. Ed was born in Philadelphia, Pa., on May 28, 1950, to Edward P. Smith and Mary Agnes Nelson Smith Martin. He delighted in all things Philadelphia, from hoagies and scrapple, to his beloved Eagles, Super Bowl champs!

Ed attended St. Barnabas and West Catholic High School, crediting the nuns and brothers for giving him an excellent education along with hilarious stories to tell. He received his undergraduate degree at Long Island University Brooklyn, before heading back to Philadelphia to receive his doctorate from Temple University School of Podiatric Medicine. It was in Brooklyn where he met Claudia Hall, from Nebraska. They have been together ever since, marrying in 1974.

In 1980, Ed, Claudia, and their first child, Meghan, moved to Springfield, Vt., due to a shared love of the mountains, and to begin his podiatry practice. Siobhan, Eamonn, and Brendan soon joined their family. In 1980, Ed proudly gained surgical privileges at Springfield Hospital, the first podiatrist in Vermont to do so. He served as president of the Vermont Podiatric Medical Board for several terms, as well as holding other executive positions within the organization over the years. Ed was a member of Office and Professional Employees International Union (OPEIU), Local 45. He made many great friends during his tenure with the union and association with the AFL-CIO. He, working along with VPMA and OPEIU, was instrumental in getting the scope of medical practice expanded for podiatrists in Vermont. In 2019, after an illustrious career with many accomplishments along the way, Ed retired from his podiatry practice. He and Claudia loved to travel, and were fortunate to have visited the Caribbean and Europe, Eastern Canada, and the many locations where his children have



Edward Smith, 1950-2026.
PHOTO PROVIDED

lived. One of his passions was music, and he enjoyed collecting vintage guitars. He wondered often if selling his guitars way back when to pay for college textbooks was a wise decision. Prior to his passing, Ed spent his final days surrounded by his children and wife, enjoying a true Irish wake with lots of laughter, happy memories and stories, and even a martini.

Ed was predeceased by his parents; his stepfather, Gilbert "Reds" Martin; his older sister Maryanne Moore and her husband, James A. Moore; and his stepbrother, Donald Martin. Surviving him is his wife of 51.5 years, Claudia; his sister Regina 'Jean' Trout (Eddie) and stepsister, Gail Rabb (Bob); and his four children, his pride and joy, Meghan M. Smith, of Chicago, Siobhan K. Smith, of Costa Rica, Eamonn P. (Lindsay) Smith, of Cross River, N.Y.; and Brendan C. (Madeline) Smith, of Whispering Pines, N.C. Also surviving are his grandchildren, the absolute delights of his life, Rory and Calin Smith, and Greyson and Ellison Smith; and many nieces, nephews, and dear friends.

Per Ed's request, there will be no service or wake, but a family gathering will be held at a later date. Memorial donations in Ed's honor can be made to Windsor County Youth Services, 756 Main Street, P.O. Box 357, Proctorsville, VT 05249; or Springfield Humane Society, 401 Skitchewaugh Trail, Springfield, VT 05156.

Davis Memorial Chapel in Springfield, Vt., is assisting with the arrangements.

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LEGAL NOTICES

UPCOMING EVENTS

APRIL 17-18 –
ACWORTH, N.H. – The Female Charitable Society of Acworth will hold their biannual rummage sale on Friday, April 17, from 2 p.m. – 5 p.m.; and Saturday, April 18, from 9 a.m. – 2 p.m., at 16 Town Hall Road in Acworth, N.H. Come see what you may find! The mission of the society includes helping to fill the needs both locally and globally.

APRIL 18 –
CHESTER, Vt. – The Chester Rod & Gun Club, 4352 Vermont Route 11, will hold a beginner fly-fishing workshop for youth and adults on Saturday, April 18, from 9 a.m. – 12 p.m. The workshop is free for youth under 16 and current club members. Space is limited to 30 participants, with priority given to those 16 and younger. Register by emailing flybnt@vermontel.net. The course will include basic fly-fishing principles, an overview of equipment and knots, and a basic casting lesson. Hamburgers and hot dogs will be served from 12:15-1:30 p.m.

APRIL 19 –
CLAREMONT, N.H. – Learn how to decoupage using greeting cards for free on a 5-by-7-inch art canvas using Mod Podge on Sunday, April 19, from 11:15 a.m. – 1 p.m., at the First Congregational Church of Claremont, 72 Pleasant Street. Materials and snacks will be provided or bring your own. Finished art can

be donated to the May breakfast mini art sale or taken home. No experience needed, ages 8 and older.

BRIDGEWATER CORNERS, Vt. – The Bridgewater Grange's third annual chili taste-off will be held on Sunday, April 19, from 1-3 p.m., at the Bridgewater Grange, 129 Route 100A. There is a nominal entry fee for tasters and judges. Taste up to 12 pots of chili. Proceeds will benefit the Bridgewater Grange. If you would like to enter a chili, or would like more information, call Robin at 802-672-5179.

APRIL 20 –
LUDLOW, Vt. – The Black River Valley Senior Center, 10 High Street, will host a pizza party lunch on Monday, April 20, at 12 p.m. There will be a surprise dessert. Please make reservations by calling 802-228-7421. All ages are welcome.

APRIL 28 –
CLAREMONT, N.H. – There will be a scam-awareness class at the Claremont Senior Center, 5 Acer Heights, on Tuesday, April 28, at 1 p.m., open to all seniors. Come hear ways to protect yourself from scams.

MAY 2 –
CLAREMONT, N.H. – Join us on Saturday, May 2, from 8-11 a.m., for the annual May breakfast at First Congregational Church, 72 Pleasant Street in Claremont, N.H. The event is hosted by The Well Collaborative NH. Admission is free for kids 4 and younger. There will be locally-sourced

eggs, meat from North Country Smokehouse, locally produced maple syrup, baked goods made by volunteers, and more. This year, the breakfast will include a spring mini art show featuring art created by people from around the area, with the theme of spring. All pieces will be sold by donation. This year, the art can be any medium (such as painting, decoupage, clay, crochet, cross-stitch, embroidery, etc.) as long as it is no bigger than 5 by 7 inches. If you would like to participate, reach out to Neil at neilpierceallen@gmail.com.

MAY 3 –
PERKINSVILLE, Vt. – Matt Meserve will be playing a live concert on Sunday, May 3, from 4-5 p.m., at the Perkinsville Community Church, 35 Church Street. If you would like to be on the email list for these events, contact churchperkinsville@gmail.com.

MAY 9 –
SPRINGFIELD, Vt. – Join Springfield on the Move for a delightful Mother's Day market on Saturday, May 9, from 10 a.m. – 4 p.m., at 100 River Street. This is the perfect way to honor the incredible moms in our lives. Discover a beautifully curated market featuring local artists showcasing their unique creations, amazing vendors offering handmade goods and gifts, and workshops where you can learn to create stunning floral arrangements. Whether you're looking for the perfect gift or a fun day out with mom, this event has something for everyone. Don't miss out on the joy and creativity waiting for you at the Great Hall.

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.

PLYMOUTH, Vt. – The Plymouth Historical Society, at the former Plymouth Elementary School, 35 School Drive, will be open the first and third Sunday of each month, from 2-4 p.m., from November 2025 – April 2026. Watch for the "open" flag.

MONDAYS –
BELLOWS FALLS, Vt. – Free Tobacco Quit class led by Sarah Doyle, Mondays, from 6-7 p.m., at Parks Place, 44 School Street Extension, Bellows Falls. Dinner included. Call or text Sarah at 802-289-0045 or email sdoyle@springfieldmed.org.

BELLOWS FALLS, Vt. – Overeaters Anonymous 12-Step Recovery Program is Mondays, from 6-7 p.m., at Parks Place, 44 School Street Extension in Bellows Falls. The program is free. For more information go to www.oa.org.

WALPOLE, N.H. – Meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous on Mondays at 6:30 p.m. in St. John's Parish Hall, Walpole.

LUDLOW, Vt. – The Fletcher Memorial Library, 88 Main Street, hosts a writers group on the first and third Monday of every month, from 5-6:30 p.m. Are you interested in sharing your work and receiving feedback from other writers? Join us. Bring three pages to share. Hosted by Catherine Martin. For more information, call 802-228-8921.

TUESDAYS –
BELLOWS FALLS, Vt. – Come check out TOPS – Take Off Pounds Sensibly. We are a nonjudgmental, affordable, and supportive weight loss group. The first visit is free. All are welcome; youth must be at least 9 to attend and have parental permission. Meetings are every Tuesday at 25 Cherry Hill in Bellows Falls. Weigh-ins start at 5 p.m.

W. TOWNSHEND, Vt. – Burger night is held every Tuesday, from 5-7 p.m., at the West Townshend Country Store, 6573 Vermont Route 30, West Townshend, Vt. There will be live music provided by a different local artist each week. For more information, visit www.westtownshend.org, call 802-874-4800, email info@westtownshend.org, or message the store on Facebook.

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

SPRINGFIELD, Vt. – Every Wednesday morning, from 8-11 a.m., at the Springfield VFW Post 771, 191 River Street, we get together with fellow veterans for coffee and donuts, and socialize for a few hours. All veterans of all ages are welcome. You do not have to be a VFW or American Legion member to come. Call 802-885-6008 for more information.

THURSDAYS –
LUDLOW, Vt. – Certified instructor Helena Wu will teach tai chi classes every Thursday, from 9-10 a.m., at the Black River Valley Senior Center, 10 High Street in Ludlow. Classes are free, and are limited to 10 participants. Registration is required. For more information, contact the Senior Center at 802-228-7421, or Helena Wu at 802-289-7369.

CLAREMONT, N.H. – A fly-tying class will be held at the Claremont Senior Center, 5 Acer Heights, on Thursday evenings, from 6-8 p.m. Tools and instruction are available for free, with a small charge to cover materials. The class is limited to five students. If interested, contact Lloyd Mann at lrmann126@gmail.com.

FRIDAYS –
CHESTER, Vt. – Alcoholics Anonymous meetings held every Friday at 6:30 p.m. at St. Joseph's Church, located at 96 South Main Street in Chester. If you have a problem with alcohol, this is an understanding place to come to.

SPRINGFIELD, Vt. – Join us online or in person at the Springfield Town Library, 43 Main Street, at 10 a.m. every third Friday through September 2026, for a 60-minute chair yoga practice. You'll learn accessible movements that you can do right from your seat, leaving you feeling mobile, grounded, and focused. Walk into the library and join live in person for free; there is no need to preregister. For online access, which includes all recordings, visit studio.jobregnard.com/product/88980 to choose from among a variety of registration options.

PERKINSVILLE, Vt. – Shoot trap every Friday, at 5:30 p.m., at Precision Valley Fish and Game Outdoor Range, located at 2879 Route 106 in Perkinsville.

SPRINGFIELD, Vt. – First Friday events have been expanded to include fourth Fridays for the remainder of 2026. Join us on Main Street, from 5-8 p.m., every fourth Friday in May, June, July, August, September, and October. The events feature a vibrant downtown experience filled with local vendors, live music in the park, and plenty of activities for everyone to enjoy. Presented by Springfield on the Move, Copper Fox, and Gallery at the Vault.

SATURDAYS –
SPRINGFIELD, Vt. – The Springfield VFW Post 771, 191 River Street, will host burger nights on the first and third Saturdays of every month, from 5-7 p.m., downstairs in the canteen. These events are open to the public.

DAILY –
REGION – If you want to drink that's your business, but if you want to stop, that's ours. Contact Alcoholics Anonymous at www.aavt.org or call your local hotline at 802-802-2288 and join a meeting. You are not alone.

Contractors, Electricians, and General Laborers:

Check out our Business Directory on Page 8!



Add a listing for your Business!
802-228-3600

Warning of the Annual meeting of Cavendish Fire District 2 to be held Wednesday May 13th, 2026 at 6:00 pm at 2154 Main Street, Cavendish, Vermont 05142

The legal voters of Cavendish Fire District 2 are hereby notified and warned to meet at the Cavendish Volunteer Fire Department fire station on Wednesday May 13 th, 2026 at 6:00 pm to act on the following articles.

- Article 1: To hear and act on the Auditor's report.
- Article 2: To approve the minutes from 2025
- Article 3: Election of officers
 - Moderator for 1 Year (currently Abraham Gross)
 - Prudential Committee Member for 3 Years (currently Scott Ranney)
 - Tax collector for 1 Year (currently Town Manager)
 - Auditor for 1 Year (currently Scott Boyer)
 - Treasurer for 1 year (currently Maureen Savage)
 - Secretary for 1 year (currently Matt Seaton)

Article 4 To see if the legal voters of Cavendish Fire District 2 will allow Cavendish Fire District 2 to borrow funds to cover both expected and unforeseen expenses in the year July 1, 2026 to June 30, 2027.

Article 5 To see if the legal voters of Cavendish Fire District 2 will raise money and in what amount for the purpose of defraying Fire Department expenses for the year July 1, 2026 to June 30, 2027

Article 6 To conduct any other business to come before the meeting. Including, but not limited to: 1) Update on progression of MERP project 2) Update on District merger effort pursuant to 2025 resolution.

Scott Ranney

Matt Seaton

Stuart Lindberg

Dated at Cavendish, Vermont, the _____ day of April 2026

RECURRING EVENTS

Sign up for our email newsletter!

If you enjoy reading our news, you can sign up for our weekly email newsletter.



Scan here!



Green Mountain Union High School is seeking a part-time school year cook to join its Food and Nutritional Services team (15 hours per week). This fast-paced, high-energy role involves preparing and serving breakfast, lunch, and snacks using fresh, local ingredients, along with maintaining food safety standards and basic kitchen records. No nights, weekends, or holidays required. Pay ranges from \$16.70 to \$20.70 per hour. Interested applicants should contact Andrew.Levesque@trsu.org or 802-875-2146.



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UPDATED SUBSTITUTE PAY STRUCTURE!!

HELP WANTED TOWN OF READING, VT – HIGHWAY DEPT

The Town of Reading VT is seeking an Equipment Operator/Truck Driver/Laborer for the Town Highway Department. The position is for an energetic individual that is seeking fulltime secure long-term employment. The position is, 40 hours per week. (4) 10-hour days, May to October and (5) 8-hour days November to April. However, a flexible schedule during the November to April period is a must and may include nights, weekends and holidays, as well as overtime. The applicant must be able to pass a random pre-employment drug test, and understand that the position also includes random drug and alcohol testing by the State of Vermont. Applicant must possess a current valid CDL license, have a clean driving record, and be dependable and willing to be on call during winter hours. Experience with the operation of heavy equipment such as a bucket loader and road grader as well as equipment such as chain saws, and welders etc. a plus. Manual labor and some heavy lifting is required. The knowledge and ability to do some mechanical repairs is also a plus. This job includes an excellent starting salary depending on experience, and a benefit package including vacation, insurance and retirement contribution.

A complete job application is available from the Town Clerk or the Town of Readings web site at https://readingvt.govoffice.com

Questions should be referred to Bob Allen, Chair of Selectboard at (802) 296-1124 or rkallen@myfairpoint.net

Send application, resume and references to: Town of Reading, PO Box 72, Reading, VT 05062 Attn: Selectboard, OR e-mail to Selectboard@comcast.net

LEGAL NOTICES

classifieds

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.

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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.

CLEANING

CHESTER/SPRINGFIELD, Vt. - Are you interested in getting your house cleaned? I have excellent references, trustworthy, and dependable. I've been doing this

for 30+ years. Please give me a call 802-591-0769.

FOR SALE

GRAFTON, Vt. - 2005 GMC Sierra, SLE 2500HD DSL, 4dr/4wd, \$8500. 2020 GMC Sierra SLT 2500HD DSL, 4dr/4wd, Fisher V-plow, 5th wheel set up, side tool boxes, \$36,000. 2020 GMC Sierra SLT 2500HD DSL, 4dr/4wd, w/2025 Fisher V-plow and 2025 Fisher Sander, 5th wheel set up, \$46,000. Call 802-732-8494.

OTHER

CENTRAL VERMONT - A & J's Tree Service - No job too big or too small. Free Estimates & Fully Insured. "Dangerous Trees are our Specialty." 802-376-7000.

TAG SALE

S. LONDONDERRY, Vt. - Saturday, May 2, from 10 a.m. - 4 p.m., at 3650 VT Route 100, South Londonderry. Tag sale, plant sale, and bake sale to benefit the West River Montessori School.

Like us on Facebook! @VermontJournal



BELLOWS FALLS, VERMONT

The Town of Rockingham is seeking bids for plaster repair at the Rockingham Town Hall, built in 1926 and listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Town Hall houses municipal offices, two storefronts, the Bellows Falls Opera House and the lower theater.

The focus of this work will be to address the significant areas of failure and delamination, bringing plaster back to its original condition while keeping the building open to the public and municipal staff. Qualification Statement: Required with Bid Proposal.

There will be a mandatory pre-bid site visit on **Thursday, April 16 at 10 a.m.** at 7 The Square, Bellows Falls, Vermont in the 3rd Floor Conference Room. All questions shall be submitted in writing by 4:00pm on April 23, 2026.

Bids Due: Wednesday, May 13, 2026, at 4:00 p.m. developmentassist@rockbf.org Or by Mail/Dropped at: Town of Rockingham, 7 The Square, Bellows Falls, VT 05101 Attn.: Betsy Thurston, Development Assistant. (Envelopes / Subject line "Town Hall Plaster Repair") Visit https://www.rockinghamvt.org/public-notice for photographs and full RFP.

15th annual May Festival calls for vendors

SPRINGFIELD, Vt. - Looking for a great spot to sell your crafts, antiques, or flea market finds? Join us for our 15th annual May Festival on Saturday, May 16, from 9 a.m. - 2 p.m., at the Unitarian Universalist Meetinghouse, 21 Fairground Road, Springfield Vt., rain or shine.

This is a prime location to set up your table, with a steady flow of community members throughout the day. We'll also have a plant sale, food, live music, and tai-chi demonstrations throughout the day.

The vendor fee covers a 10-by-10-foot space, with tables available for an additional fee. Vendors must bring their own canopies. To participate, please request a vendor application by emailing uusingfieldvt@gmail.com.

For your protection, please only communicate through this email address and do not send payment until your application has been approved.

Fletcher Memorial Library 125th anniversary calendar photo submissions

LUDLOW, Vt. - As part of the library's 125th anniversary, the Friends of Fletcher Memorial Library are developing a 2027 calendar which will feature photos of Ludlow and be sold in the fall of 2026. All proceeds will be used to support the library. We are looking for photos that showcase

some aspects of Ludlow: our beautiful mountains, lakes, flowers, wildlife, and quaint village. More details and the entry form may be picked up at the library. The deadline for submissions is July 13.

TOWN OF PERU WARNING OF SPECIAL TOWN MEETING

VOTE TO ASSESS LOCAL OPTION TAX May 2, 2026

The legal voters of the Town of Peru are hereby warned and notified to meet in the Peru Town Center on Saturday, May 2, 2026, at 10:00 AM, to transact the following business from the floor:

Article 1: Shall the town assess a one percent (1%) tax on sales pursuant to 24 V.S.A. § 138(b)?

Article 2: Shall the town assess a one percent (1%) tax on meals and alcoholic beverages pursuant to 24 V.S.A. § 138(b)?

Dated at Peru, Vermont, March 31, 2026

Selectboard: Laurie Gayda, Ben Foltz, Andy Dahlstrom

NOTICE TO VOTERS
Peru residents not on the voter checklist may register to vote at the Peru Town Center, 402 Main Street, Peru, VT.

TOWN OF LONDONDERRY

The Town is now accepting proposals for Road Salt and Winter Sand for the FY 2027 season. To see the bid documents, please visit our Request for Proposal page at www.londonderryvt.gov/rfps.

WARNING FOR THE LONDONDERRY TOWN MEETING

The legal voters of the Town of Londonderry, Vermont, are hereby notified and warned to meet at the Town Hall, 139 Middletown Road, South Londonderry in Londonderry, on Monday, May 11, 2026, to act on the following Articles, namely:

BUSINESS TO BE TRANSACTED FROM THE FLOOR: Beginning at 6:00 p.m., the following business will be transacted from the floor:

ARTICLE 1 Shall the Town raise and appropriate a sum not to exceed \$81,000 for the purpose of funding, in part, the salary and benefits of the General Office Manager, a portion of which salary and benefits will be shared by all Departments within the town?

ARTICLE 2 To transact any other business that may legally come before the Meeting.

- (NON-BINDING) Shall the Town of Londonderry authorize the Selectboard to investigate purchasing one or more parcels of land for future use to be determined by a future Town Meeting?

Dated at Londonderry this 6th day of April 2026.

Selectboard of the Town of Londonderry

Thomas Cavanagh, Chair
James Ameden, Jr., Vice Chair
Taylor Prouty
James Fleming
Leanne Alexander

Received for the record this 6th day of April 2026

Allison Marino, Town Clerk

PUBLIC NOTICE TOWN OF LONDONDERRY

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Selectboard of the Town of LONDONDERRY proposes, pursuant to Title 19 Vermont Statutes Annotated, Chapter 7, and pursuant to vote by the Selectboard on its own motion, to take the following action with regard to the town highway set forth below:

- To discontinue Monet Lane (Town Highway # 30) in its entirety; the property to return back to the abutting landowners; and

THEREFORE, pursuant to Title 19 V.S.A. Chapter 7, you are hereby notified that a site visit will be held by the Selectboard for the Town of LONDONDERRY on May 18, 2026 commencing at 4:30 p.m. at the Monet Lane road site.

The Selectboard shall reconvene in the Meeting Room at the Windham Town Offices, Windham, Vermont, after the site visit for a hearing on the matter. The hearing shall begin at 5:00 p.m. or as soon thereafter as the Selectboard and interested persons return from the site visit. The purpose of the hearing shall be to hear all persons interested in said public highway discontinuance.

This hearing and site visit will be a joint hearing and site visit with the Town of Windham Selectboard as the highway, Monet Lane, exists in both towns, and each town desires to discontinue the roadway.

Dated at Londonderry, Vermont this 6th day of April, 2026.

SELECTBOARD, TOWN OF LONDONDERRY

James Ameden, Jr.
Taylor Prouty
James Fleming
Leanne Alexander

Town of Plymouth Public Notice of Planning Commission and Zoning Board of Adjustment Conditional Use Hearing

A public hearing will be held on Tuesday, May 5, 2026 at 6:00 PM at the Town Municipal Building, 68 Town Office Road, Plymouth, Vermont. The following applicants seek a Conditional Use Permit.

Join Zoom Meeting
https://zoom.us/j/9788686006?pwd=RVZ9U64lhLsWIG8gg uHfc9asaobTF.1&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: Considerably Green, LLC
Property Owners: Maribel Araujo & Andrew Field
Property Address: 1394 Messer Hill Road, Plymouth, VT
Project: Rural Small Enterprise for a 10'x15' Sauna, 8'x8' shelter/Lean-To, and business sign

Applicant: Rafal Wrotniak & Marta Wojcik
Property Owner: Rafal Wrotniak & Marta Wojcik
Property Address: 1275 Route 100, Plymouth, VT
Project: Change of Use: Garage with second story apartment with 2 bedrooms within the Shoreland Overlay.

STATE OF VERMONT

SUPERIOR COURT Windsor Unit

PROBATE DIVISION Docket No.: 26-PR-012221

In re ESTATE of: Mary Williams

NOTICE TO CREDITORS

To the Creditors of: Mary Williams Decedent

late of Andover 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: 4-7-26 Signature of Fiduciary

Executor/Administrator	Mailing Address
Barry M. Williams	c/o Parker & Ankuda, PC, PO Box 519
Phone Number	City, State, Zip
802-885-2582	Springfield, VT 05156
Email	
parkerankuda@vermontel.net	

Name of Publication: The Vermont Journal

Publication Date: April 15, 2026

Name of Probate Court: Vermont Superior Court, Windsor Unit
Address of Probate Court: 12 The Green Woodstock, VT 05091

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STATE OF VERMONT SUPERIOR COURT Windsor Unit PROBATE DIVISION Docket No.: 26-PR-012221 In re ESTATE of: Mary Williams NOTICE TO CREDITORS To the Creditors of: Mary Williams Decedent late of Andover 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: 4-7-26 Signature of Fiduciary Executor/Administrator Barry M. Williams Mailing Address c/o Parker & Ankuda, PC, PO Box 519 Phone Number 802-885-2582 Email parkerankuda@vermontel.net City, State, Zip Springfield, VT 05156 Name of Publication: The Vermont Journal Publication Date: April 15, 2026 Name of Probate Court: Vermont Superior Court, Windsor Unit Address of Probate Court: 12 The Green Woodstock, VT 05091

WARNING FOR THE LONDONDERRY TOWN MEETING The legal voters of the Town of Londonderry, Vermont, are hereby notified and warned to meet at the Town Hall, 139 Middletown Road, South Londonderry in Londonderry, on Monday, May 11, 2026, to act on the following Articles, namely: BUSINESS TO BE TRANSACTED FROM THE FLOOR: Beginning at 6:00 p.m., the following business will be transacted from the floor: ARTICLE 1 Shall the Town raise and appropriate a sum not to exceed \$81,000 for the purpose of funding, in part, the salary and benefits of the General Office Manager, a portion of which salary and benefits will be shared by all Departments within the town? ARTICLE 2 To transact any other business that may legally come before the Meeting. (NON-BINDING) Shall the Town of Londonderry authorize the Selectboard to investigate purchasing one or more parcels of land for future use to be determined by a future Town Meeting? Dated at Londonderry this 6th day of April 2026. Selectboard of the Town of Londonderry Thomas Cavanagh, Chair James Ameden, Jr., Vice Chair Taylor Prouty James Fleming Leanne Alexander Received for the record this 6th day of April 2026 Allison Marino, Town Clerk

PUBLIC NOTICE TOWN OF LONDONDERRY NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Selectboard of the Town of LONDONDERRY proposes, pursuant to Title 19 Vermont Statutes Annotated, Chapter 7, and pursuant to vote by the Selectboard on its own motion, to take the following action with regard to the town highway set forth below: 1) To discontinue Monet Lane (Town Highway # 30) in its entirety; the property to return back to the abutting landowners; and THEREFORE, pursuant to Title 19 V.S.A. Chapter 7, you are hereby notified that a site visit will be held by the Selectboard for the Town of LONDONDERRY on May 18, 2026 commencing at 4:30 p.m. at the Monet Lane road site. The Selectboard shall reconvene in the Meeting Room at the Windham Town Offices, Windham, Vermont, after the site visit for a hearing on the matter. The hearing shall begin at 5:00 p.m. or as soon thereafter as the Selectboard and interested persons return from the site visit. The purpose of the hearing shall be to hear all persons interested in said public highway discontinuance. This hearing and site visit will be a joint hearing and site visit with the Town of Windham Selectboard as the highway, Monet Lane, exists in both towns, and each town desires to discontinue the roadway. Dated at Londonderry, Vermont this 6th day of April, 2026. SELECTBOARD, TOWN OF LONDONDERRY James Ameden, Jr. Taylor Prouty James Fleming Leanne Alexander

save the dates

Divided Sky's Big Weekend

LUDLOW, Vt. – The Phoenix and Divided Sky Foundation announce Divided Sky's Big Weekend, a three-day, family-friendly destination mountain experience uniting live music, movement, recovery, and community in the heart of Vermont, taking place May 15-17.

The weekend is anchored by The Phoenix's annual Music on the Mountain (MOTM) festival, and the Divided Sky Fun(d) Run, with additional special events throughout the weekend, including alumni gatherings curated by Divided Sky Foundation.

Tickets for the full weekend are available at www.bigweekend.org or www.musiconthemtn.com. Ludlow, Vt., residents will receive a discount.

The weekend offers a full slate of live music, a 5K run/walk, wellness activities, kids zone fun, recovery meetings, local arts vendors, food trucks, and community moments set against the backdrop of one of New England's most iconic Green Mountain resorts.

The festivities all take place at Okemo Mountain Resort's Jackson Gore Vil-

lage in Ludlow, Vt., just 1 mile from Divided Sky's 46-bed residential recovery program, where individuals struggling with addiction receive compassionate care through a unique, affordable, and multifaceted approach including the 12 steps, mindfulness, embodied activities, and more.

Music on the Mountain
The third annual Music on the Mountain festival will take place on Saturday, May 16, from 12-8 p.m., with the genre-blending four-piece rock band Egg, and groove-driven, organ-forward trio LaMP, featuring Scott Metzger (JRAD) joining returning artists Ray Paczkowski and Russ Lawton (Trey Anastasio Band, Soule Monde).

Electric bassist and songwriter Karina Rykman returns with her vibrant stage presence and infectious sound. MOTM veteran Anders Osborne joins Jackie Greene for a special duo set, and Daniel Donato and Natalie Cressman are back as artists-at-large, joined by Jennifer Hartswick, appearing for the first time.

New this year is 2LØT, blending electronic production, jazz fusion, and

high-energy improvisation, plus a special appearance by The Trombone Shorty Foundation Band, which brings a dynamic ensemble of emerging New Orleans musicians, showcasing bold brass, funk, and soul while representing the next generation of the city's rich musical tradition. Saturday's music will be emceed by Dave Manheim of the Dopey Podcast.

The celebration continues with the Big Weekend All-Stars After Party, bringing together a rotating cast of weekend artists for an evening of improvisation-driven collaboration. Participating musicians include Karina Rykman, Brian Murray, Jimmy Law, Daniel Donato, Scott Metzger, Ray Paczkowski, Dezron Douglas, Joe Dyson, Jennifer Hartswick, and Natalie Cressman.

Divided Sky Fun(d) Run
2021 marked the first Divided Sky Fun(d) Run, making it the weekend's longest-standing event. Launched before the Divided Sky Residential Recovery Program opened its doors, the race is produced in partnership with Antelope Running Club as a means to

raise funds for the Divided Sky Foundation while encouraging individuals in early sobriety to incorporate physical activity into their recovery. Virtual registration is also available.

A full-mountain experience

The Big Weekend kicks off on Friday evening with Divided Sky Foundation hosting "Minstrels and Mocktails," an intimate dinner concert gathering of friends and supporters, featuring special alumni musical guests Sean Leahy and Kate Gaffney. Tickets for this event are very limited.

Immediately following the dinner, The Phoenix will welcome guests with the "Campfire Jam," an acoustic, in-the-round concert, where Anders Osborne and Daniel Donato will be joined by Jackie Greene.

On Sunday, the weekend concludes with a relaxed acoustic brunch, featuring Murray's Law (Brian Murray and Jimmy Law) and Vermont guitarist Evan Jennison, offering a reflective and communal close to three days of music and

mountain connection.

Beyond the stage, the Big Weekend offers immersive, all-ages programming throughout the resort. The Phoenix will host daily hikes; yoga sessions; gratitude meetups; a screening of "Sober," The Phoenix documentary; and a large-scale volunteer convening that helps power the weekend. Set breaks will feature presentations from Divided Sky Foundation staff and alumni, and interactive community moments, including the largest gathering of Yellow Balloon groups.

Families are welcome throughout the weekend, with a dedicated family area, scenic chairlift rides to the summit, the Okemo Mountain coaster, and mini golf, transforming the festival into a true mountain adventure. All events are family-friendly, and guests are encouraged to bring chairs, picnic blankets, and refillable water bottles.

"The Big Weekend reflects what Divided Sky is all about: creating spaces where recovery is celebrated, connection is real, and

people can experience the joy of music and community without barriers," said Seth Dolinsky, executive director of Divided Sky Foundation.

Substance-free fun

Creating environments where artists and fans can gather without alcohol or drugs fosters deeper connection, sustainability, and access, particularly for those in recovery, those choosing sobriety, and families often excluded from traditional music settings. The Big Weekend demonstrates that vibrant live music culture, movement, and substance-free experiences not only coexist, but strengthen one another.

"We're building something that truly stands out – stand-out music, stand-out people, and the kind of weekend that has you thinking about next year the moment you get home," said Jacki Hillios, cofounder of The Phoenix. "When you put the music first and create an environment where everyone belongs, something powerful happens. That's the Phoenix way."

Best of Vermont Summer Festival returns in August

LUDLOW, Vt. – The Okemo Valley Regional Chamber of Commerce, the official organizer of the Best of Vermont Summer Festival, is proud to announce the return of this beloved two-day celebration on Saturday, Aug. 22, and Sunday, Aug. 23, at Okemo Field, at the intersection of Route 103 and Bixby Road. Now in its sixth year, the festival continues to bring together the people, flavors, sounds, and traditions that make Vermont shine in the summertime.

This year's festival is proudly presented by Mary W. Davis Realtor & Associates, whose longstanding commitment to community and regional vitality helps make this signature event possible.

With a spirit rooted in connection and discovery,

the Best of Vermont Summer Festival offers "a touch of everything you love about summer in Vermont." Attendees can look forward to live music throughout the weekend; line dancing and other lively community activities; craft beverage producers, including breweries, wineries, and distilleries; cheese and maple makers showcasing Vermont's iconic flavors; specialty foods and small-batch culinary artisans; local artists, makers, and fine crafts; family-friendly activities and a lively kids zone; and community organizations and regional businesses sharing their work.

Reflecting on the festival's growth, Executive Director Carol A. Lighthall shared, "It's hard to believe we're already celebrating our sixth year. What began

as a simple community gathering has grown into a signature event that truly highlights the best of Okemo Valley – our makers, our music, our flavors, and the welcoming spirit that defines this region."

The festival welcomes locals, new residents, second-home owners, and visitors for a weekend that celebrates the best of Vermont's creativity, culture, and community spirit.

Event details, vendor announcements, and the full music lineup will be shared throughout the spring and summer on the Best of Vermont Summer Festival Facebook page and the Okemo Valley Regional Chamber of Commerce website.

Weston Theater Company announces 90th season

WESTON, Vt. – Weston Theater Company proudly announces its 90th season, a milestone summer featuring iconic music, Pulitzer-winning drama, Broadway stars, and new works. Weston has grown from a small-town tradition into one of New England's most respected professional theaters.

Season 90 opens in June with the revival of a Weston favorite, "Ring of Fire." Forged from the passions and poetry of his rebellious spirit, this electrifying musical journeys through the life, love, and legacy of Johnny Cash. "Ring of Fire" will be playing from June 10 – July 5.

In July, Weston marks the 30th anniversary of Jonathan Larson's groundbreaking rock musical "Rent." Urgent, ardent, and alive with possibility, this powerful portrait of

a group of friends navigating love, loss, and chosen family in New York City features beloved anthems including "Seasons of Love," "La Vie Bohème," and "Take Me or Leave Me," playing July 22 – Aug. 16

In August, Weston presents the 2024 Pulitzer Prize-winning play "Primary Trust" by Eboni Booth. At once intimate and expansive, affecting and funny, this luminous story of friendship and quiet transformation reminds us of the courage it takes to step into the unknown, and the grace found in human connection. Playing Aug. 26 – Sept. 6.

Multigenerational fun takes center stage with Weston's Free Young Company touring production of "Schoolhouse Rock Live!" The show bursts with humor and invites audiences to laugh and rediscover just how great learning can be.

Playing June 19 – June 28 in Weston and on tour across southern Vermont

In addition, Weston is thrilled to announce the launch of a groundbreaking New Work Development Initiative, expanding its investment in playwrights and musical theater writers. The multiphase, multiyear program will include a fall residency at Walker Farm in the fall of 2027.

Finally, Season 90 is dedicated to Wayne Granquist in celebration of his 90th birthday and his extraordinary commitment to the theater and the entire southern Vermont community. A longtime leader and advocate, Granquist's service has helped shape Weston's growth and resilience across decades.

For more information, visit www.westontheater.org, or call the Weston box office at 802-824-5288

\$175 for 13 Weeks • \$275 for 26 Weeks • \$425 for 52 Weeks
Prices are based on a 20 word listing. An additional 50 cents for each word thereafter.

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(12/9/26 - 5/2)

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real estate

What is a conventional loan?

REGION – A conventional loan, also called a conventional mortgage, is a type of loan offered through a private lender, like a bank, credit union, or mortgage company. Unlike government-backed loans like FHA, VA, or USDA loans, which are available to specific buyers based on certain criteria, conventional loans aren't limited to borrowers based on factors like income, location, or military status. If you meet the lender's qualification requirements, you will be eligible for a conventional mortgage.

How a conventional loan works

You'll need a 20% down payment to avoid private mortgage insurance (PMI). However, most first-time buyers can qualify with as little as 3% with PMI. You can apply for a conventional loan directly with any qualified mortgage lender. Conventional loan requirements may vary by lender. You can purchase almost any type of property, including a primary residence, vacation home, or investment property, as long as the home is within the conforming loan limits for the area. Conventional loans offer both fixed and adjustable rates, and flexible repayment periods, such as

15- and 30-year terms.

Conventional loan requirements

Conventional loans typically require larger down payments and stronger credit scores than nonconforming or government loans. Lenders generally have their own loan eligibility requirements. Since qualifications vary, be sure to shop around for a lender that meets your needs.

Some general conventional loan requirements for most lenders include a minimum credit score of 620, a debt-to-income ratio of 36% to 50%, and a down payment of 3% to 20% of the price of the home.

What do you need for a conventional mortgage?

The process of obtaining a conventional mortgage may begin with an optional pre-approval. During this process, your lender will conditionally confirm you qualify for a loan based on reviewing a number of important documents. Typically, these documents include proof of income, employment verification, assets, proof of identity, and a credit report.

Pros and cons of conventional loans

For borrowers with established credit and high credit scores, conventional loans

have many upsides, including down payments as low as 3% (with PMI); flexibility, with fixed and variable rate options and multiple loan terms, up to 30 years; the ability to be used for second homes or investment properties; and ease of removing mortgage insurance down the road – you can typically cancel your PMI once your principal loan balance reaches 80% of the original home value.

The biggest downside to conventional loans is the lower flexibility in qualification criteria. Lenders will closely review your financial profile and deny any applicant with low credit scores or high debt-to-income ratios. Also, if you put less than 20% down, you'll be saddled with paying monthly PMI, at least in the near term.

How to get a conventional loan

To start the process of getting a conventional loan, you have two options. If you're just testing the waters and aren't sure you're ready to buy, a prequalification is a good first step, as it gives you a feel for the types of loans for which you might qualify, and it doesn't require a hard credit pull.

Alternatively, you can go the preapproval route,

where you provide all of your financial documents and allow the lender to perform a hard credit check. This step gives you a conditional approval to borrow a certain sum of money – an important first step if you're serious about buying in the near future.

Once you're under contract on the home you want to buy, you'll complete the loan application with your preferred lender. Then, your interest rate may be locked in, your loan will go through the underwriting process, and, assuming everything goes through, you'll close on the loan. Then it will be your responsibility to repay the loan according to its terms.

Conventional mortgage interest rates

The interest rate you'll qualify for on a conventional mortgage will vary based both on the attributes of the loan itself and your financial profile. The amount you borrow, length of repayment, and whether it's a fixed or variable-rate loan all factor into your interest rate. Similarly, your credit score, income, and debts play a role. More qualified buyers will enjoy lower interest rates, generally speaking.

If the interest rate you

qualify for is too high for your liking, you may consider using mortgage points to buy down your interest rate. One point costs 1% of the loan amount and reduces your interest rate by 0.25%. Points are paid in cash at closing.

Conventional loan closing costs

When you take out a conventional loan, you'll be required to pay closing costs that range between 2% and 5% of the purchase price. As part of your negotiation with the seller, you can request they pay for some or all of your closing costs. The amount and types of fees and charges they're allowed to cover depend on the loan program and size of your

down payment.

If your down payment is less than 10%, the seller can pay closing costs up to a total of 3% of the loan amount. For down payments of 10% to 24%, the seller can cover up to 6% of the loan. If you have a down payment of 25% or more, your seller is allowed to pay for closing costs up to 9% of the total purchase price.

Deciding which loan type is the right fit can be complicated. A lender can help summarize your monthly payments, determine the overall interest you'll pay, and compare other pros and cons of each loan type.

Written by Alycia Lucio, Zillow Group.




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spring home & garden

Can old seeds still grow?

REGION – It's that time of year: Seed packet displays are appearing everywhere, from grocery stores, to farm and garden supply centers. Garden catalogs arrive in our mailboxes daily, featuring common and exotic vegetable and flower seeds. There's so much temptation.

If you're a gardener, or want to be one, you likely already have a collection of seed packets from previous years. Before you purchase new seeds, take the time to go through your collection and determine which are likely still usable, and which you'll want to replace.

Seeds contain everything needed to produce a new plant. As they age, their viability – how likely a seed is to germinate – lessens. How old is too old depends on the type of seed and the conditions under which they've been stored.

Check your seed packets for a "packed for" date. That's the year the seeds were intended to be planted. Seeds purchased this year will be dated for 2026, but that doesn't mean any left-

over seeds at the end of the season should be discarded. Most seeds are viable for an additional year or two, some more, depending on the type of seed. For example, tomato and kale seeds are usually viable for four years, while corn and peppers are typically viable for only two, though that can vary. The older a seed is, the lower the germination rate, i.e., the percentage that will successfully sprout.

Just as important, perhaps moreso, is how seeds are stored. The best way to store seeds is in a cool, dark, and dry location. A sealed glass jar or metal storage container will keep out moisture and help keep seeds safe from mice and other hungry rodents. Temperatures around 40 degrees Fahrenheit are optimal for storage. If you choose to store seeds in the refrigerator, be sure to keep them in an airtight container to avoid humidity.

Testing the viability of seeds is easy to do. You'll need around 10 seeds, a half sheet of paper towel, and a

sealable plastic bag. Wet the paper towel thoroughly, then ring out excess moisture. Lay it on a flat surface. Place the seeds in a line about an inch away from the long edge of the paper towel. Fold the paper towel over the seeds, and fold it over again to enclose the seeds. Place the folded paper towel in the plastic bag and seal it. Make a note on the bag of the date the test began, the type of seed, and the expected date for germination. The anticipated number of days to germination can be found on the seed packet. Add that number to the start date to get the expected germination date.

Place the plastic bag in a warm place, such as the top



Testing seed viability on a damp paper towel.

PHOTO PROVIDED



A variety of seed packets.

PHOTO PROVIDED

of the refrigerator. Check the bag every few days to be sure the paper towel hasn't dried out. On or after the expected germination date, carefully open the folded paper towel to check how many seeds have germinated. If less than half, consider

purchasing new seeds.

If you're ready to plant, seeds that have germinated can be transferred to a seed-starting tray. There's no need to remove the paper if the sprouted seed is attached to it. Just carefully cut around the seed and gently plant

the paper with the sprouted seed. See go.uvm.edu/seed-startingbasics for more information on starting seeds.

Written by Deborah J. Benoit, extension master gardener, University of Vermont.

Culvert Crawlers workshop in Cavendish on April 22

CAVENDISH, Vt. – Culverts are designed to convey stormwater runoff, but can easily become clogged with fallen leaves, vegetation, and debris, which can lead to flooding. For Green Up Day this year, May 2, as people are picking up trash, we are encouraging people to take the time to check culverts, ditches, and drains (aka culverts and closed drainage systems, or CCDs) in and around where they live, to make sure they are

clear.

To help the community learn more about CCDs and how to care for them, a free workshop, open to the public, is being held on April 22, at the Cavendish Library, 573 Main Street in Proctorsville, from 5:30-6:30 p.m. As part of the workshop, participants will download and use an open-source phone app to monitor culvert conditions and report to road crews. One of the advan-

tages of the app is that you can continually monitor the CCDs where you live, comparing changes seasonally and yearly. The workshop also includes how to clear out culverts safely, ridding them of vegetation and debris that could block their flow. Please note, there is no crawling in culverts involved.

Culvert Crawlers is a citizen-science, grassroots effort to prevent flooding that is a collaboration with

Black River Action Team, Cavendish Connects, and the Rural Rivers Project at Dartmouth.

As part of Green Up Day this year, there will be special Culvert Crawlers teams in Cavendish and Springfield. For more information on the workshop, or to register with one of the Culvert Crawlers teams on Green Up Day, call 802-226-7807, or email culvert.crawlers@gmail.com or cavendish-connects@gmail.com.

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spring home & garden

Whether you're moving or improving, spring is the time to act

REGION – For a lot of people, spring is when home plans start coming back to the surface. I hear it in conversations every week. Buyers who paused their search over the winter are ready to start touring again. Homeowners start noticing projects they've been putting off. The change in season tends to bring a fresh look at what's next.



Spring could be the right time to make home improvements. PHOTO PROVIDED

Whether you're thinking about buying or just want to make your current home work better for you, it's a natural time to take a step forward. Here's how you can approach it from both sides.

Buying and moving

Competition tends to pick up as more buyers enter the market, and the homes that are priced well usually don't last long. That's why preparation matters.

One tip I always share is to tour homes in different conditions, not just when the sun is out. Rainy days can tell you a lot. This gives you a chance to catch drainage issues, window leaks, and gutter problems that never would've shown up on a clear day. It may not be the most comfortable way to house hunt, but it can be one of the most informative.

Being ready to make an offer also makes a difference. If you walk into the right home, you don't want financing questions slowing you down. Having a clear understanding of your price range and loan options ahead of time puts you in a much stronger position when it's time to move.

And if inventory feels limited, it can help to widen the search a bit. Condos and townhomes are often overlooked, but they can be a great path into homeownership, especially for buyers looking for something more affordable or lower

maintenance. I also work with buyers who consider homes that need updates. With renovation financing, a property that needs work can turn into something that fits both your budget and your vision.

Home improvements

Buying isn't the only thing that picks up this time of year. I also hear from homeowners who start noticing the little things around the house once winter wraps up.

Some of the most important updates are the simplest ones. Testing smoke and carbon monoxide detectors, replacing batteries, and checking fire extinguishers are quick safety steps that are easy to overlook. Swapping air filters, cleaning dryer vents, and replacing water filters can also make a noticeable difference in air quality and system performance.

There are comfort updates too. Flipping mattresses, rotating couch cushions, and replacing dim light bulbs doesn't take much time, but it can make your space feel refreshed.

And then there are the projects that come into focus once you start looking around: flooring that's

worn down, an aging roof, cosmetic updates you've been putting off. Not every improvement has to come out of pocket all at once. Some homeowners explore renovation loans or equity options to fund larger updates, especially if the goal is to improve day-to-day living or maintain property value over time.

One season, different home goals

This time of year tends to bring home plans back into focus. For some, that means starting a search. For others, it means improving what they already have.

If you find yourself somewhere in that space, it can be helpful to understand what your financing options look like before making any big decisions. Sometimes a quick review of numbers, equity, or loan paths is all it takes to turn an idea into a plan.

Submitted by Victoria Blodgett, Prime Lending, Ludlow, Vt.

New England Outdoor Furnaces now offering indoor furnaces

NEWPORT, N.H. – New England Outdoor Furnaces, a small, family-owned outdoor wood boiler business, has recently expanded into selling wood stoves, building on its reputation for reliable, wood-based heating solutions.

While the company has been helping customers to heat their homes primarily with outdoor systems for a long time, the new owners recognized a growing interest in indoor alternatives that offer both efficiency and a cozy atmosphere. By adding several lines of high-quality wood stoves, the business can now serve a wider range of needs – from whole-property heating to supplemental warmth inside the home. These stoves appeal to customers not only for their warm, traditional feel, but also for their practical benefits, such as lower heating costs and reduced reliance on electricity or traditional fossil fuels.

According to Matthew Pikus, one of the owners of New England Outdoor Furnaces, "When energy prices skyrocket and temps drop, there is one constant source for heat that remains unshakable: wood. We understand that it's the most attractive option for both our environmentally and economically conscious homeowners."

New England Outdoor Furnaces' new expansion

allows them to leverage their existing expertise in wood fuel, system efficiency, and customer service, while giving homeowners more flexible, cost-effective options for staying warm through the colder months. You can now visit them in their newly opened showroom, located in Newport, N.H.



Matthew Pikus in the new showroom. PHOTO PROVIDED

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outdoor

Gardner talks stone walls

SPRINGFIELD, Vt. – On Tuesday, April 7, Kevin Gardner spoke to a crowd of 140 people at the Nolin-Murray Center in Springfield. While simultaneously constructing a miniature stone wall, he covered how and why New England's stone walls were built, how their styles emerged and changed over time, and their significance to the famous New England landscape. One interesting fact was that the length of stone walls combined could stretch to the moon and back or circle the globe at least 10 times.

Gardner is from Hopkinton, N.H. Like a lot of independent rural Yankees, he has been a jack of many trades – a builder, logger, writer, teacher, radio voice, and even an actor and director. For more than 40 years, he has been a stone-wall builder in a family business widely known for tradition-



Kevin Gardner and Marita Johnson with stone wall demonstration.
PHOTO PROVIDED

al New England stonework, particularly for historic restoration of antique structures. In 2001, Kevin published "The Granite Kiss: Traditions and Techniques of Building New England Stone Walls." His second book, "Stone Building: How to Make New England Style Walls and Other Structures the Old Way," was published in May of 2017. He has also published poetry, songs, and essays, including "Land of Stone," an examination of several historic sites in the Monadnock Region, in the 2006 anthology "Where the Mountain Stands Alone." Gardner was introduced

by Marita Johnson, Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) facilitator and Springfield Garden Club (SGC) member. OLLI has existed for 22 years, and every year the SGC has cosponsored a program, including this one, relating to gardening, landscaping, the environment, or conservation. Besides volunteering their time beautifying the town with plantings, another main mission of the garden club is to share educational information with the community. There is also an overlap in membership, and many are members of both OLLI and the SGC.

The program was recorded by SAPA TV and will be available at www.sapatv.org. Find more information about the SGC at www.springfieldgardenclub.org, or on their Facebook page, Springfield Garden Club of Vermont. More information on OLLI's programs in Springfield can be found at www.learn.uvm.edu/olli/springfield.

Earth Day celebration

GRAFTON, Vt. – The Nature Museum in Grafton will be celebrating Earth Day on Saturday, April 18, with their annual open house. The festivities run from 10 a.m. – 4 p.m., which include programs and crafts throughout the event.

All-day activities include crafting native seed balls, Grow Art card-making with local artist Stephanie Sullivan, indoor

and outdoor seek-and-find activities, and solar telescope viewing with the Southern Vermont Astronomy Group, weather permitting.

Special programs include the "Wildlife and Working Landscapes" live-animal presentation from the Vermont Museum of Natural History, from 11 a.m. – 12 p.m. At 2 p.m., members of The Nature Museum's staff and board will discuss the big changes that have been

happening to the museum's pollinator gardens, and share how native plantings and garden design can help restore important habitats in home and community gardens throughout the region.

The museum's Magic Forest Playscape, trails, and exhibits will also be open during the gathering. There is a small suggested donation, with a special rate for families. All proceeds will support local nature education.

Reinbow Riding Center applications for participants

BELMONT, Vt. – Reinbow Riding Center, a therapeutic horsemanship program based in Belmont, is now accepting applications for 2026 program participants. The mission of Reinbow Riding Center is to improve the wellbeing of individuals with unique physical, emotional, and/or cognitive challenges through a customized therapeutic equine experience.



A center horse and rider.
PHOTO PROVIDED

Reinbow Riding Center also announces their upcoming 2026 season schedule. This year, they will be offering three seven-week sessions, with one-week breaks between each session. The spring session will run from May 18 – July 3, the summer session will run from July 13 – Aug. 28, and the fall session will run from

Sept. 7 – Oct. 23. There will be four one-hour lessons, both individual and group, per day, from Monday-Friday, at 9:30 a.m., 11:30 a.m., 1:30 p.m., and 3:30 p.m.

Applications to participate in the spring 2026 session, as well as financial assistance forms, can be found at www.reinbowridingcenter.org/therapeutic

horsemanship. The application deadline for the spring session is Monday, April 20. The application deadline for the summer session is Monday, June 15, and for the fall session, the deadline is Monday, Aug. 10. Participants are reminded to wear pants and closed-toed shoes. They are also responsible for their own transportation to and from the riding facility.

For more information about Reinbow Riding Center and all its programs, please visit www.reinbowridingcenter.org. If you are interested in sponsoring or supporting the upcoming 2026 season, please visit www.reinbowridingcenter.org/support-us. You can also show your support by following the riding center's Facebook, Instagram, X/Twitter, and LinkedIn social media channels.

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Thanks to All Our Guests, Community, & Employees for a Fantastic 70 Years. Here's to 70 More!

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