

O'TOOLE & EWALD: CITIZENS OF THE YEAR

Peggy O'Toole and John Ewald have been named Westminster's 2023 Citizens of the Year by the Westminster Selectboard.

For more than 20 years, Peggy and John have volunteered time and energy to the town. They have served as Justices of the Peace for nearly 20 years, and as members of the Board of Civil Authority and Board of Abatement which Peggy has chaired since 2019. They have both been trustees and commissioners of the Campbell Fund.

They have been members of the Friends of Westminster West Town Hall, whose goal is to preserve the town hall

building and make it available for use – Peggy since 2006 and John since 2011. Peggy was also a member of the Friends of the East Parish Town Hall for several years.

John, a town auditor for three years, was recently elected a town lister.

Retiring selectboard member Craig Allen presented the award at Town Meeting, noting their many years of service to Westminster.

In photo, Peggy O'Toole and John Ewald, Westminster's 2023 Citizens of the Year.



“THANK YOU” TO ALL THE EMERGENCY WORKERS!

In the aftermath of our recent devastating snow storm, which took out power in parts of our region for up to several days, on behalf of the Citizens of Westminster, the *Gazette* would like to say thank you to all of the emergency workers in our town - the Fire Department, Rescue, the Town Road Crew, and anyone else who lent a hand.

We would also like to thank the Green Mountain Power workers and all of the other power companies that came in to help us from around Vermont as well as other states and Canada. Thanks also goes out to the tree companies, phone companies, and any of the others involved for their tireless work cleaning up the storm damage.

Thank you all so much!

LORI MILLER & THE PARKS PLACE GARDENS

by Frankie Knibb and The Parks Place Gardeners

A bundle of boundless energy, Lori Miller shared her considerable talents as a volunteer gardener at Parks Place Community Resource Center in Bellows Falls for 17 years.

A Certified Master Gardener since 2006, she soon became a volunteer at Parks Place, developing a garden where visitors and staff could find a calming patch of land that offers respite, a space for reflection and, of course, beauty.

She spent many of those years as project leader coordinating the efforts of community and master gardeners in this labor of love.

As project leader, she fostered gardens that would thrive with minimum maintenance over the years, knowing volunteer labor only stretched so far. Thanks to Lori's constant and devoted attention the gardens have prevailed. Over the years an oasis has emerged where struggling families can seek the calmness that nature can bring.

Lori loved working at Parks Place. Over the past few years, while she struggled with a debilitating illness, she kept coming to Parks Place while she slowly stopped her activities with numerous other organizations.

She and her husband, Dick Miller, were named

Citizens of the Year in 2021 in Westminster for their many decades of work for Meals on Wheels and the Westminster Institute.

Week after week during gardening season, Lori showed up at Parks Place with her bucket of tools and a list of priorities for the day, graciously accepting the frequent appreciative comments of visitors and staff.

She also fostered a strong sense of camaraderie among the gardeners, hosting many potlucks. She will be sorely missed.

Parks Place was founded in 1995 to connect people throughout the Greater Falls region and beyond with the social, health and educational information and resources they need to strengthen their lives. Their website is parkspplacevermont.com.

The goal of the Extension Master Gardeners is to support safe and sustainable home gardening practices



through education and community activities that incorporate Integrated Pest Management practices.

For more information about Master Gardeners go to master.gardener@UVM.edu.

In photo, Dick and the late Lori Miller in 2021, when they were named Citizens of the Year for Westminster.

ANCIENT MIGRATION



Story and Photo by Robert F. Smith

In March we were delighted to again see Canada Geese by the thousands landing in the Westminster cornfields on their annual migration north. It's still so exciting to see, whether it's our first time or the 100th.

Michael McCarthy's book *The Moth Snowstorm* is about our connections with the natural world, connections that grow weaker as more of the world's population moves from rural areas into cities.

McCarthy's concern is that we may be missing nature's great yearly cycle of birth, death and rebirth, the cycle that sustains life. Being able to be more attuned to what he refers to as the "tiny signs of the switches and transformations" as Earth journeys through its cyclic calendar is one of the great gifts of rural living.

"These signals," McCarthy wrote, "above all of the world's reawakening after winter, have produced intense pleasure and excitement and indeed reverence in us since we began to be human, they have produced the most powerful emotions, and not infrequently in my own case, they have produced joy."

Our ancestors have stood in these same spots along the Connecticut River's great meadows and watched the ancestors of these same geese make this same Spring migration for hundreds, and in some cases, thousands of years.

No wonder the migration still produces pleasure, excitement, reverence, and indeed, joy.

CIRCUS SKILLS ABOUND AT KURN HATTIN HOMES

The Kurn Hattin Homes' children, with Big Top Adventures founder Troy Wunderle's guidance and support from physical education instructor, Caleb Steever, really shined showcasing their circus skills.

The Big Top Adventures week-long residency was part of KHH's Positive Behavior interventions and Support March Madness initiative.

Wunderle is a graduate of the Maryland Institute College of Art, and the Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Clown College. He is a former international performer with the Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus.

Wunderle states. "The secret of success for every circus comes from the core of its endeavor: an ability to attract and retain a culture of hard-working, dedicated and passionate individuals. People who choose a life in the performing arts possess a strong creative vision, a zest for life, and the capacity to overcome challenge in pursuit of their dreams. Much can be learnt from the inner workings of a circus and everyone can benefit from experiencing its magic firsthand." This certainly is true for the children who experienced this amazing opportunity. The children work together, over-



come their fears, and learn new and fun activities.

Photo of the KHH's children's circus performance.

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OUR WORKING LANDSCAPE

Westminster has many farms and businesses which work the land to create products, mostly edible, and jobs, while making the landscape that we see today. The *Gazette* will be highlighting this part of our economy with short articles and letters which explain and recognize the importance of our working landscape.

SHEEP IN SHEEP’S CLOTHING



We all know that Vermont Shepherd (Patch Farm) makes great cheese from sheep’s milk. We all probably know that sheep must be sheared.

Vermont Shepherd has about 200 cross-Frisian milking ewes. In order to make cheese, their cycle of breeding, lambing, shearing, and milking must be carefully managed.

Here is a little of the backstory:

Dairy sheep farms are less common in Vermont than those raising fiber and meat, and their cycle is different. The photo shows shearing on Feb. 22 at Patch Farm. But won’t they be cold? It’s still winter!

The milking ewes are pregnant, and due to start lambing in a few weeks. But if not clipped, it would be hard to keep them clean for milking and they could roll over on their lambs and not even notice.

So Vermont Shepherd shears before lambing, and keeps the ewes and lambs inside until there is first grass in April. Anyway, grass is coming earlier and earlier due to climate change!

The February group is the best milkers and best bloodlines. These lambs are kept as replacements for the herd. They are weaned at about 4-6 weeks, and then

the ewes go to the milking parlor and might produce milk all the way up to breeding again in November.

A second group will lamb outside on pasture in May. Most of these lambs are sold to be raised as meat, or to other dairies.

The wool is sold, after sorting on the farm. Green Mountain Spinnery in Putney scours (washes) it, and spins a knitting yarn which is sold at the Vermont Shepherd Farm Store and on-line.

Some fleece also goes for insulation projects or for home spinners. A lot of the fleece is sold to Swans Island Blanket Co. in Maine.

The cycle of sheep, lambs, milk, wool and cheese depends on 250 acres of carefully maintained pastures and hayfields which you can see from Patch Road.

For more information go to vermontshepherd.com.

- by Mary Norton with Rebecca Dixon

In photo, David Major is shearing with Mary Lake (professional shearer and home slaughterer) and Katie Carson.



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Underwriting Support is a donation of at least \$300 annually and does not include advertising. Underwriters are listed in the box on page 6 each month.

We also welcome article submissions that would be of interest to the community. We ask for a maximum size limit of 500 words, and reserve the right to edit for content and length. Thank you!

On-line at: www.westministervt.org

MAPLE SUGARING AT KURN HATTIN HOMES

Maple sugaring is a long-standing tradition at Kurn Hattin Homes for Children.

Getting started early in the morning and on week-ends during the maple season, Farm Manager, Real Bazin, gets the sap boiling. He’s been doing this for 36 years.

The equipment he uses is more than functional, but not as fast as larger farms or commercial businesses’ equipment.

Tubing and buckets are used to collect the sap. It takes a lot of sap to make the syrup. Generally the ratio of sap to syrup is 40 to 1.

Every year, the children help with the sugaring process. They observe Real, or the Assistant Farm Manager, Conor Fitzgerald, do the boiling.

Sampling is always fun. The conditions have been good, and Real has made 50 gallons of syrup so far. He expects he’ll make 90-100 gallons before the season is over.

There’s nothing like 100% maple syrup on pan-cakes, and in other foods and drinks. The entire KHH campus looks forward to the delicious rewards of the maple season.

In photo, Real Bazin boiling sap in the Kurn Hattin Homes’ sugar house.



NEWS FROM THE TOWN GARAGE - ASSESSING STORM DAMAGE

Hello neighbors,

With all that has been sent our direction in the way of weather the last few years I think the saying should be Westminster Strong! It was good to see folks working together to get through it despite of what their differences may be.

The Highway Department was lucky there was not any equipment damage and no bodily injury. Unfortunately the roads suffered extensive damage with an estimated gravel loss of 12,000 cubic yards over 50 miles of dirt roads. This equates to approximately \$154,000 in gravel cost which is over three times our annual stone and gravel budget.

This does not include the equipment time and man hours to replace the material. Furthermore most of the Act 64 stone lined ditches are now contaminated with gravel. At this point the State has not acknowledged this as an issue.

On a good note the weather is getting warmer and we are able to get out and grade the warm spots more consistently. With any luck the mud won’t be as bad this time around which will allow us to focus on getting the roads back into shape and not just passable.

I would like to thank our friends and neighbors at Green Mountain Power for all of their hard work and dedicated service as well as Westminster Fire and Rescue for all of their help with trees and power lines down.

Thank you to all of you for your continued support and patience as we continue to experience new challenges with each passing year.

*Thank you as always,
Chuck and Crew*

In submitted photo, one of the many downed trees during our recent heavy, wet, snowstorm.



NEWS FROM WESTMINSTER CARES

The Westminster Cares Board of Directors met March 1st in person and via WebEx with President Lori Larue presiding. The following attended in person: Pat Goodell, Doug Oftedahl and director Donna Dawson. Those attending via WebEx were Miriam Lanata, Regina Borden, Cindy Moses, Don Dawson and Kathy Elliot. Pete Harrison was unable to attend.

Programs & Services Provided in Feb. 2023

Meals-on-Wheels: Five new clients started Meals in February and one client was re-started. WC volunteers delivered meals five days a week to 29 different people. Those in need of weekend meals received two frozen meals each Friday. By month’s end one client no longer needed meals, bringing the total to 28.

Transportation Program: Two rides were given in February and two were cancelled due to snow.

Healthy Aging Programs: Both of our Strong Living exercise classes, (Karen W. and Ronnie F.; instructors), are happening two times per week on Zoom. Gentle Yoga class is being offered online as well. Our new, beginner Tai Chi class at the Institute started in early March with 10-12 interested participants. The class will continue weekly throughout the spring.

Assistance and Referrals: Volunteers picked up prescriptions at local pharmacies and delivered them two times. Volunteers also delivered pet food to seven residents during the month.

Medical Equipment – In February we loaned out seven pieces of equipment and had six items returned.

Community Nurse Program: In February our Nurse consulted with 12 clients by phone for a total of 17 contacts.

Westminster Cares is extremely grateful for the Annual Appeal donations received to date. Every gift supports our programs and services for older adults and adults with disabilities in our community.

Memorial and Honorary Donations Received February and March:

HONORARY:
In honor of Beth Shrader from the Center for Health & Learning

MEMORIALS:
In memory of Phyllis Anderson from Susie and Jack Peters
In memory of Jay Larry Hammond from Marty Hammond
In memory of Laura Leonard from Nancy Dalzell
In loving memory of Lori Miller; she will be deeply missed by those who knew her:
Kathy Abbott
Barbara Angers
Agnes B. Beall

Judy and Bob Boynton
Kenneth Fay
Ruth Grandy
Betty and Hugh Haggerty
Claudia and Dave Allbee
Joan Ahmadian and Family
Colleen and Jim Grout
Patricia and John Cooper
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Hooded Mergansers and Other Birds

by Alma Beals, Vermont Master Gardener and Naturalist

A few days ago, I ran into former neighbors and our conversation immediately turned to birds and what birds have come back.

A few of the early migrators that I expect about the last week of February arrived a couple weeks early in middle February. Red-winged Blackbirds and Turkey Vultures were here at the same time as the Canada Geese.

I’m writing this shortly after the last heavy, wet snowstorm. The field across from Community Feeds has been covered with hundreds, maybe thousands, of geese. Many of them are standing in snow. How I love the sight and sound of them.

The marsh that has been frozen is now opening up. One Great Blue Heron is back and this morning was standing on the old nest. We can keep our fingers crossed that they will nest again this year. I spotted a pair of American Kestrels, a Belted Kingfisher and a Bald Eagle this morning.

Several male Hooded Mergansers and a few females are back. They are small ducks with a thin beak. The white patch on their heads shows up so white it is almost blinding. The males are so beautiful with their black and white hooded heads, black back above cinnamon and with a white chest but it is the head that will catch your attention.

A fan-shaped collapsible crest makes the head look oversized. It can be raised or lowered changing the shape of the head and the white head patch. The females are gray/brown with a darker gray back and a cinnamon crest.

They dive to catch aquatic insects, crayfish and small fish. In spring, they nest in holes in trees, often near freshwater ponds or rivers. In winter, they move in small flocks to larger bodies of water in lakes or bays.

The Slate-colored Juncos and Tree Sparrows that have spent the winter with us have moved back north. I still have several Northern Cardinals but shortly only one pair will stay to nest. As much as I enjoy the winter birds, I am ready for the spring birds.

Every year, sap icicles form in the maple tree where my feeders are. I enjoy watching the Black-capped Chickadees getting a drink from the icicles. I have heard



From top left, a male, a pair, and a female Hooded Mergansers. Photos by Don Clark

that other birds will also drink from icicles but I have never seen them do it.

In an earlier storm this winter, I had a tree come down on my roof (with no damage). I was amazed to see how many small birds found shelter among the branches that hung over my deck in front of the sliding glass door.

One of my neighbors mentioned that the black oil sunflower seeds we have been buying have more chaff than they used to. Chaff refers to the debris from threshing the seeds. We bought seed at different stores and they all seemed to have more chaff than usual. That led to our discussing whether our local stores were purchasing the seed from the same distributor. I turned to my computer.

I assumed that the seed we are buying in Vermont would be grown in this country. I was amazed to find out that 2/3 of our black oil sunflower seed is imported from eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. They are Turkey, Bulgaria, Netherlands, Russia and Spain. Following are Romania, Germany, Ukraine, France, Hungary, Austria, United States, Italy, Portugal, Czech Republic, Egypt, China, Iraq, Belgium and Iran as the top 20. Seed is grown as an annual crop primarily for cooking oil and wild bird seed.

Then our conversation drifted to what we feed beside black oil sunflower, and I said for the first time this year I am feeding small crack corn. All my birds like it, from Tree Sparrows and Slate-colored Juncos to Northern Cardinals and Mourning Doves. It’s a lot less messy than the



mixed seed that I throw out on the ground. Next we talked about feeding all year, which I normally do. I have decided that I will stop feeding by June 1 and not feed again until late fall. My decision is based on not attracting squirrels, chipmunks and mice. It’s well known that food for the birds draws in critters. I don’t object to 3 or 4 squirrels but the 13 that I have is a little much. I’m ready for spring, bring it on!

A WESTMINSTER SAMPLER: WINTER STORMS

As the historic March storm, which dumped three feet of snow in higher elevations of town, and much less in the valleys, recedes into memory and mud season, it’s worth recalling what storms were like ‘back in the day,’ when nobody had a cell phone with which to call in a power outage, or backup generators, when snow was flattened down with a snow roller drawn by weary horses, and when it was the job of every landowner to clear the road in front of his own property. It was also his duty to keep on shoveling—and shovels were heavy then, before the era of plastic and ergonomic handles—until he met a neighbor shoveling in the other direction.

It’s hard to even imagine how exhausting that must have been, though these were mostly farmers who would have worked all through the winter, so in much better shape than we are (just speaking for myself here.) The isolation was intense, and the community worked together. It had to, or everyone would just sit there on the farm until mud season was over.

In earlier eras, winter was actually a prime time for travel if the roads were rolled. A good hard surface meant good sledding, so it was a time to take farm products to market and to go visiting. One necessary job in the covered bridge era was ‘snowing the bridges.’ Since the bridges were under roofs, snow didn’t collect on the surface, and needed to be brought in and packed so sleighs could easily travel through.

That was a big job on a long bridge like the one between Westminster and Walpole. And what happened when spring came, and all that snow thawed to slush—and then probably turned back to ice, as spring changed her mind and went back? History doesn’t have much to say about that in-between season.

Many of us worried, in the recent storm, about what would happen if we had an accident or fire. Back when, there would have been nobody to call, or no way to call

them. One incident from the Blizzard of 1888 illustrates that. The Reverend Alfred Stevens lived in one of the large mansions out behind the Westminster West church. At this time he was quite elderly and retired.

According to a newspaper report: “About five o’clock of the Tuesday morning of the terrible storm, when it was raging at its height, Rev. Dr. Stevens discovered the chimney of his neighbor, R.C. Goodell, burning out in full blast, the flames leaping forth, and the sparks flying in every direction before the fearful gale.

“Despite the storm, the venerable neighbor sallied forth to the help of his more venerable neighbor. Taking a straight course across the intervening grounds, he soon became buried in a mighty snow-drift, but extricating himself, and veering to the right, he managed to flounder through, and found to his relief, that the chimney had burned out and no harm was done.”

Before the advent of town road crews, landowners were also required to put in a certain number of days doing road work in the spring, as well as breaking out after storms. In the 1870s, Westminster roads were divided into 17 highway districts, each with its own surveyor, and each supported by its own set of taxes.

In this so-called simpler time, a property owner paid taxes to the town, to the school district, to the highway district, and on any dog he owned, as well as a poll tax allowing him to vote. Highway district tax totals ranged from \$24 to \$176.

On top of this, farmers still worked a few days on the road every year.

By the 1930s we were down to two road commissioners, one for each parish, and had entered the modern era, with all work being done by truck and tractor. Easier on the back for everyone, but a big storm still has the capacity to throw us for a loop.

STORM PICS FROM READERS



NEWS FROM WESTMINSTER VOLUNTEER FIRE AND RESCUE

The Westminster Fire and Rescue Department holds its monthly meetings at 7 p.m. on the first Tuesday of every month and a combined drill on the third Tuesday of every month. Rescue training is the second Tuesday of the month. Next association meeting is April 4 at 7 p.m.

The Prudential Committee normally meets once or twice a month. A warning will be posted 48 hours prior to each meeting.

Number of calls in February 48
Number of calls through March 24th: 48
Number of calls calendar year to date: 143
Number of calls fiscal year to date: 411

Association Meeting: The Westminster Fire and Rescue Association met for their regular meeting March 14th with 1st Trustee Nick Streeter presiding. There were 19 members present and 18 members excused. Currently there are 48 members of the volunteer fire department.

Emergency responses: We are having an ex-

tremely busy month so far in March, partly because of the extreme weather conditions. Also, we are on target to reach 500 calls for the fiscal year ending June 30th, which will be a record. Stay tuned! Kudos and hats off to the many volunteers who have responded in all kinds of weather and all times of day and night.

Flooding: Dangers of high water and flooded cellars becomes an issue this time of year. Residents should check the workability of sump pumps and drains. Be sure to keep watch of the cellar for incoming water.

Water in the cellar can be very dangerous, especially if the water comes in contact with anything electrical. The Fire Department does not have the equipment to pump water that is less than 4 inches deep.

Avoid driving through puddles on the road. Their depth can be deceiving. Watch the children around potentially deep water. Don’t forget the pets.

Mud Season: It is always a good idea to limit travel on muddy roads as much as possible, giving them a chance to dry out. If using a muddy road is unavoidable, be sure to drive toward the center when possible. The shoulders are apt to be very soft adding to the chances of getting stuck or tipping over.

FIRE EXTINGUISHERS FOR SALE: Anyone want to buy a fire extinguisher? We have them for sale and there are 4 sizes available. See the Chief or stop by the fire station for more information if interested.

The Westminster Fire & Rescue Association welcomes donations throughout the year from anyone wishing to remember a loved one or a friend.

As always, we would like to thank the members of the community for their continued support of the fire department. Check us out on our website www.westminsterfireandrescue.org

Aged in Vermont

Westminster Cares, Inc.

“...I’M OLD ENOUGH TO DO...”

by Helen Neswald

“...whatever I want...” These words, uttered by my rebellious brother-in-law, eight years older than I, struck me as ironic at the time, since I had always thought of him as someone who had done just that all his life. For me, however, that phrase became a sort of internal mantra. As I approached my eighties, I began to feel a new sense of freedom from constraints, real or imaginary, that was empowering.

Such empowerment had, of course, to take into consideration the existential constraints of aging -- sensory and muscle loss, cognitive, shall we say, bumps in the road, and for some, financial limitations.

For me, newly exalted (megalomania being a propensity of the weakened brain), all these were a piffle, compared with my nifty lodge -- good health, happy relationships, engagement in satisfying volunteerism, and financial means sufficient to afford me my simple and -- I hoped -- resourceful lifestyle.

This new posture affected everything, from what I ate for breakfast, my recreational choices (appropriately tailored to exclude activities of high risk to brittle bones) and indulgences in my favorite creative activities -- home cooking (co-eaters being happily available), painting, poetry writing and scribbling brief and trivial essays about aging in general.

Once I had wanted to write something meatier than poetry and even, at a critical juncture in my life, had spun out a 500 page memoir ("Grandma, you wrote 500 pages?" "Easy " said I, "one page a day for a year and a half..."), which I later trashed because I no longer shared some of its perceptions

Admittedly, I'm lazy in my choices. The memoir I later wrote and published only for the eyes of family and close friends, is modeled on Kipling's, and is a mere 70 pages.

My culinary skills are strictly applicable to family dining, my style of painting is splashy and exuberant, my poetry sporadic and short. But I'm happy being lazy.

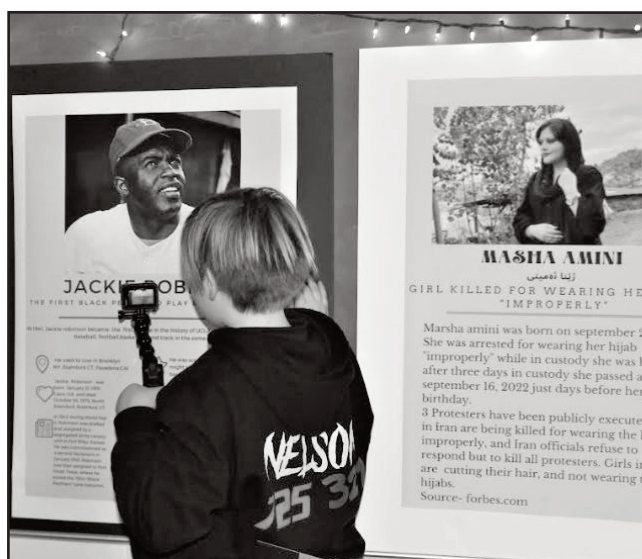
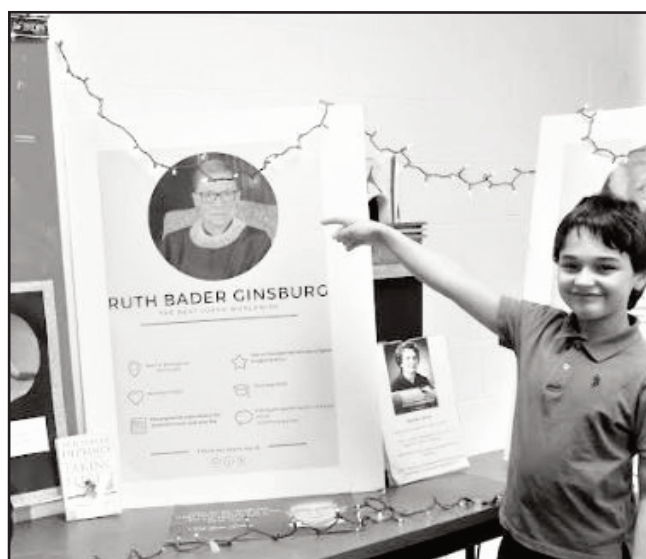
My daily walks are no more ambitious than my shortness of limbs and needs for outdoor breathing and viewing require. I've never skied, tho I swam and still swim, in brief but restorative sessions in my very own swimming pond -- only in summer, of course.

I plow my way through sometimes formidable winters and indulge my love of outdoors all summer long, tending grounds and vegetable gardens, enjoying the company and productions of my flock of chickens, worshipping living things of all ilk, even those I do my best to keep away, reading outdoors under an unproductive apple tree whenever the fancy takes me and bidding a sad farewell to summer when it is indisputably over.

Though I've sometimes (fleetingly) considered becoming a snow bird and moving into a site of eternal summer, I know better. Warm locations have been hard hit by climate change and here in Vermont we have been blessed with milder winters and sufficient rainfall for growing things, albeit with also a loss of valuable flora and fauna. In any case, I am hopelessly spellbound by the all-season beauty that surrounds me in my rural home.

In short, I do whatever I want to and am proud to confess as much!

KURN HATTIN STUDENTS PRESENT THEIR PEACE MUSEUM



Kurn Hattin Homes 6th - 8th grade students presented their Peace Museum project on March 1. The theme was quite relevant as we moved from Black History Month into Women's History Month.

Presented were some of the world's great peace-makers, civil rights pioneers, and others committed to non-violent resistance. These inspiring men and women were featured on the Wall of Peaceful Change Makers.

There were several student projects from social studies, the SmartLab, a community art project, and a few hands-on activities, all while a selection of protest

songs and the civil rights era played in the background.

Social Studies and Civics Teacher Deborah Velto, coordinated the event, and SmartLab Facilitator, Ben Weiner, put the interactive activities together. All members of the KHH community were invited.

The students were excited to show their projects, and part of their grade was based on their social and presentation skills.

"I really enjoyed the Peace Museum. I found it inspiring and uplifting. What a great message to give our students—that change can be achieved through non-violent means," said Counselor, Glenn Koshar.

COMMUNITY ROCK STARS

**Great Falls Regional Chamber of Commerce invites you to
CELEBRATE OUR LOCAL ROCK STARS!**

Join the Great Falls Regional Chamber of Commerce at the Bellows Falls Country Club as we celebrate our Local Rock Stars on Thursday, April 20 at the Bellows Falls Country Club. Cocktails at 5:30 p.m. with appetizers, small plates and desserts to follow, tickets \$25 and all are welcome!

You do not need to be a Chamber member to attend.

Nominees can be from any of the Chamber's serviced communities Bellows Falls, Rockingham, Grafton, Saxtons River, Westminster, Putney, and Alstead, Acworth, Langdon, Charlestown, Walpole and North Walpole, NH.

You can RSVP and/or nominate with the link below. Payment can be sent to GFRCC 17 Depot St, Bellows

Falls VT 05101.

Nominate your Local Rock Star and RSVP by April 14th please!!

Other Chamber Mixers include:

April – Windham & Windsor unveiling of BF Garage Project

May - Open

June - Savings Bank of Walpole

July 17th - Walpole Creamery

August – Open

September – Parks Place

October – 7 Balls Brewery

November – Halladays Florist and Gifts

December - Cota & Cota Holiday Mixer & Auction

SEVCA SEEKING DONATIONS FOR GOOD BUY STORES

Southeastern Vermont Community Action Good Buy Stores are in need of good quality donations to replenish our thrift store merchandise. We can help you to find a new home for your unwanted items, and offer you a tax receipt. Your donations will directly help our neighbors in the community using the Voucher Program which offers furniture, housewares and clothing..

We accept clean clothing and boxes of gently used housewares, books and other items at our two locations in Springfield and Bellows Falls from 10 a.m. – 3 p.m. each day – two boxes or bags per person.

We can pick up furniture and housewares from your home or business weekly. Call the Springfield location (802) 885-7074 to schedule your local pick up.

REMEMBRANCES

HELEN S. ANDERSON, 97
1/26/1926 - 2/18/2023
BELLOWS FALLS, VT & NORTH
WALPOLE, NH

SHIRLEY FARRAR, 87
4/9/1936 – 2/16/2023
CHESTER, VT

LUELLA FRENCH-STEVENSON, 92
11/4/1930 – 2/27/2023
WESTMINSTER, VT

STEPHEN L. JAMES, 80
9/28/1942 - 2/24/2023
BELLOWS FALLS, VT

WAYNE JOHNSON, SR., 67
11/10/1955 – 2/9/2023
SPRINGFIELD & ROCKINGHAM, VT

JAMES PATRICK LAWLOR 67
1955 – 1/28/2023
NEWCASTLE, ME AND FORMERLY
WESTMINSTER, VT

JOHN GERALD LAWLOR III,
2/5/1951 – 2023
BELLOWS FALLS, VT

LORRAINE COTE MILLER, 80
11/20/1942 - 2/24/2023
WESTMINSTER, VT

BEVERLY A. WARING, 92
10/4/1930 – 2/21/2023
BELLOWS FALLS, VT

BOOK DISCUSSION, POETRY, GENEALOGY, QI GONG & MORE AT RFPL

Pick up a copy of *Braiding Sweetgrass* by Robin Wall Kimmerer at Rockingham Library's front desk, then join the discussion on Thursday, April 20 at 6 p.m.

Drawing on her life as an indigenous scientist, and as a woman, Kimmerer shows how other living beings—asters and goldenrod, strawberries and squash, salamanders, algae, and sweetgrass—offer us gifts and lessons, even if we've forgotten how to hear their voices.

The Rockingham Library is hosting a Poetry Open Mic on Friday, April 7 at 6 p.m. Read original poetry or favorite poems by another poet. All ages are welcome to participate.

Join genealogy enthusiast Wayne Blanchard on a quest to discover your family roots on Thursdays from 10:30 a.m. – 12 p.m. at the Rockingham Library. If you own a laptop, please bring it along.

On consecutive Fridays, John Bohannon teaches Tai Chi/Qi Gong at Rockingham Library from 11 a.m. - noon. No special equipment or clothing is required.

The Rockingham Library hosts a chess club each Monday from 3:00 – 5:30 p.m. led by Mike Sola. Drop-ins and all levels of player are welcome.

On consecutive Wednesdays, Frances LeMoine-Barsky leads a Creative Writing Group from 1 - 2:30 p.m. at the library. Poetry, flash/short fiction as well as narrative fiction are emphasized, but not to the exclusion of other genres. Make sure to bring your laptop or notebook.

For more information, call (802) 463-4270, email programming@rockinghamlibrary.org or stop by the Library at 65 Westminster St. in Bellows Falls.

MEET YOUR LEGISLATORS

Drop by the Rockingham Free Public Library in Bellows Falls to chat with your Windham County Senators Nader Hashim and Wendy Harrison and your Windham-3 (Brookline, Rockingham and Westminster) House Representatives Michelle Bos-Lun and Leslie Goldman the third Saturdays of the month from 10:30-11:30 a.m. Upcoming dates are April 15, May 20.

For more information contact Rep. Michelle Bos Lun at mboslun@leg.state.vt.us or 802 289-2495.

BF BIKE PROJ. THANK YOU

The BF Community Bike Project would like to thank the many individuals and businesses who donated to our 2022 Annual Appeal.

Your generous support helps us to continue our mission, providing the Greater Falls community a space for all to access affordable bicycles, learn bike repair and safe riding skills.

Our vision is a flourishing culture of bicycling, as a means of alternative transportation, self-sufficiency and overall wellness.

For details, or to make a donation, visit bfbike.org.

CROCK POT DINNER

There will be a Crock Pot Dinner on Saturday, April 22 from 5 to 7 p.m. at the United Church of Bellows Falls at 8 School Street.

Cost: adults \$12, children \$6 and under age 5 free.

BARB’S BOOK IS BACK



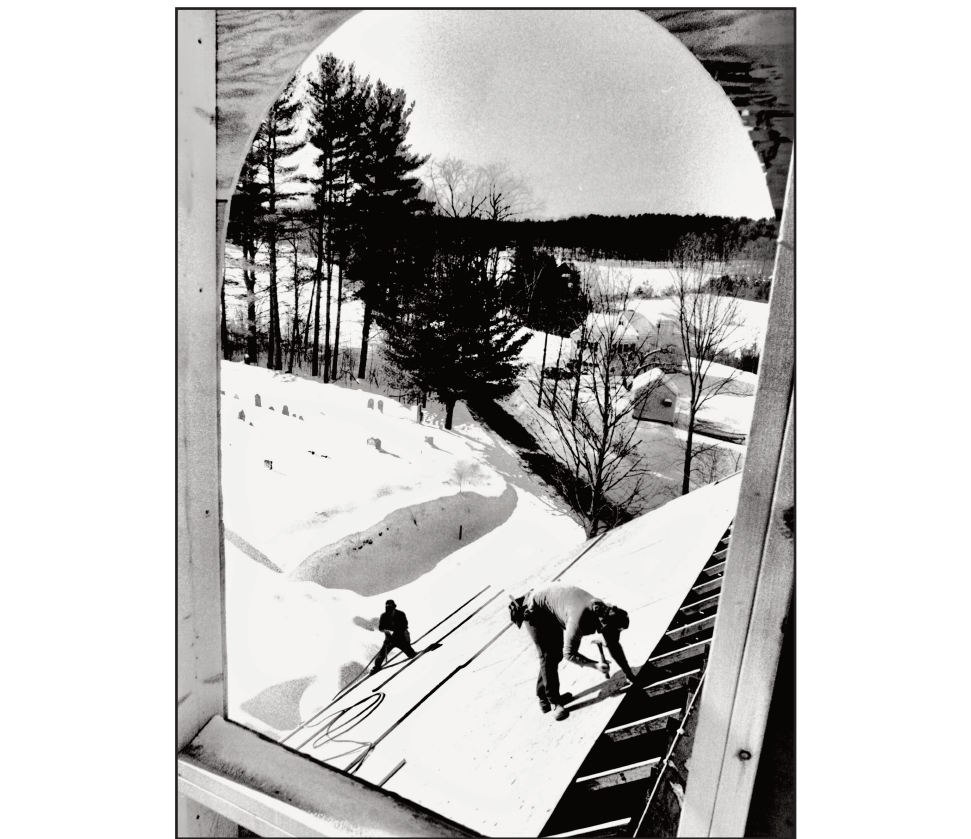
Barb Greenough’s *A Girl in Westminister*, about growing up here in the 1940s and 50s, sold out at once but is now available again. It is on sale for \$5 at the Butterfield Library to benefit the Westminister Historical Society.

Her map of Westminister houses in 1950 is also available for \$2.

Library hours are Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday 1-6 p.m., and Saturday 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Above, from left, Joan Rice, Elaine Lord, Barb Greenough, and Jane Rice ice skating in Westminister.

MYSTERY PHOTO



What building in Westminister is being repaired here following a fire? What year is this? Last month’s Mystery Photo was of students at the Westminister West Elementary School in 1988 in a pageant commemorating town hisotry, including Ethan Allen’s Westminister wedding to Frances Montresor.

WESTMINSTER HAPPENINGS

WE’VE UPDATED ALL THE HAPPENINGS ENTRIES. PLEASE LET US KNOW WHEN THINGS CHANGE OR WHEN SOMETHING SHOULD BE ADDED. THANK YOU!

FAITH COMMUNITY

The First Congregational Church of Westminister
Rte 5, Westminister, offers the following activities and services for April. All are welcome. Handicap accessible. Church services continue to be held in church and on Zoom.

April 2, Palm Sunday, Regular worship 10 a.m.
April 4, Women’s Fellowship meeting at 11 a.m., lunch to follow
April 5, Bible Study 10 a.m., in church & Zoom Souper Wednesday, noon-2 p.m.
April 6, Maundy Thursday, soup with communion at 5:30 p.m., followed by a brief service at 6:30
April 7, Good Friday, service at 5:30 p.m.
April 9, Easter sunrise service at 6:19 a.m., followed by an Easter breakfast
April 9, Easter Worship service at 10 a.m.
April 12, Bible Study at 10 a.m.: Souper Wednesday noon-2 p.m.
April 16, Regular Worship at 10 a.m.
April 17, Standing Committee meeting on Zoom at 5:30 p.m.
April 19, Bible Study at 10 a.m.: Souper Wednesday noon -2 p.m.
April 23, Regular Worship at 10 a.m.
April 26, Bible Study at 10 a.m.: Souper Wednesday noon to 2: p.m.
April 30, Regular Worship at 10 a.m.

The Congregational Church of Westminister West
Worships every Sunday at 10 a.m. We are using Facebook Live to stream our weekly services. Just go on Facebook to the church’s page. If you are with us in person we ask you to wear a mask when conditions warrant it. (Masks are available at the church.) We are an Open and Affirming Church and fully accessible.

On the first Sunday of every month we celebrate Holy Communion. For those watching on Facebook, please provide your own elements for Holy Communion. On the second Sunday, the congregation collects a special offering for the food shelf at Our Place in Bellows Falls. Each dollar donated buys \$10 of food for Our Place from the Vermont Food Bank.

Our Pastor is Rev. Susie Webster-Toleno. She keeps office hours (either in the office itself or by visiting parishioners) on Thursday afternoons and is available by appointment at other times. She keeps Mondays as her Sabbath observation. She can be reached at susiewt@gmail.com or (802)579-8356.

Walpole Bible Church
The Grace Bible Fellowship holds its Sunday

Worship Service at 9:15 a.m. at 38 Elm Street in Walpole, NH. More information at www.walpolebiblechurch.org.

Walpole Unitarian Church
The corner of Union and Main Streets, Walpole, NH. Services begin at 10:a.m. with Rev. Elaine Bomford. www.walpoleunitarian.org. First Sunday of each month is Circle Sunday with visiting presenters.

ACTVITIES

Gentle Yoga with Lisa Nigro
On line; call Westminister Cares 722-3607

Living Strong with Ronnie Friedman, Karen Walter
On line, Mondays & Thursdays 722-3607

Tai Chi new beginners’ class forming March Tuesdays, 11 a.m. - noon; Westminister Institute
Call Westminister Cares 802-722-3607

Souper Wednesdays
Homemade soups at Congregational Church Rt. 5 Noon - 2 p.m. By donation
For deliveries Tina 802-376-7330

Putney Contradance
Last Sunday of month at 3 p.m.
Pierce’s Hall, 121 East Putney Falls Road
Vaccinations, boosters & K95 masks
contradanceputney@gmail.com

Scottish Country Dance
Not meeting at present 802-387-2601

Knitting Together
An Enjoyable Experience! Wednesdays 1- 3 p.m.
Village Square Booksellers, Bellows Falls
Bring your needles, we have yarn and casual instruction - all products donated locally.
Contact: Caroline 802-463-4653

Melody Mornings
Music for Toddlers & Parents
A Joyful Mix of singalong, rhythm & more
Thursdays 10:30-11:30 a.m. Westminister West Library
Free but parent attendance required
Contact: Sarah or Stu 443-756-1274

MEETINGS

Town of Westminister - 802-722-4091

Selectboard 2nd and 4th Wednesdays at 6:30 p.m. in the Town Hall.

Planning Commission 2nd Monday at 6:30 p.m. in the Town Hall.

Conservation Commission meets by ZOOM every 4th Thursday at 7:15 p.m.

Development Review Board 1st Monday of each month at 6:30 p.m. at the Town Hall.

The A.R.P.A. Committee is scheduled to meet on the third Wednesday of each month, provided there is content to discuss. The meetings will start at 6 p.m. at the Westminister Institute. Interested community members are encouraged to attend. Contact pebanik@comcast.net.

Butterfield Library hours are Mon., Tues. and Thur. 1 - 6 p.m. and Sat 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

The Westminister Fire and Rescue Dept. monthly meetings on the 1st Tuesday of every month, at 7 p.m. and a combined drill on the 3rd Tuesday of every month at the Westminister Fire Station. 802-722-3178

911 Committee as needed

Westminister Cares Board 802-722-3607
1st Wed., 4:30 p.m., Westminister Institute on-line & in person

Westminister Historical Society Board
3rd Tuesday, 7 p.m. Town Hall 2nd floor

Westminister Institute Board
2nd Tues. 6:30 p.m., Westminister Institute
jimmatteau@gmail.com

Westminister Gazette westminsternews@gmail.com
3rd Monday, 5 p.m., Westminister Institute

Westminister West Library Board 802-387-4682
2nd Wed. 7 p.m. at the WW Library

Windmill Hill Pinnacle Association
3rd Thurs. 7 p.m., Main St. Arts, Saxtons River
whpatrails@gmail.com

The Living Earth Action Group
most Fridays at 5 p.m.
Westminister West Congregational Church
Contact: Caitlin Adair pcadair@sover.net

Please Note:
The Deadline for
the May 2023 Issue of the
Westminister Gazette is
Wednesday, April 19

Publication Date is
Wednesday, April 26
To Contact the
Westminister Gazette
E-mail:
westminsternews@gmail.com

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westminsternews@gmail.com

HAULIN’ 4 HUNGER SUPPORTS OUR PLACE

Advantage Truck Group is continuing its commitment to help fight hunger in its communities through its Haulin’ 4 Hunger program, with Regency Transportation and SkillsUSA Massachusetts providing some extra help – contributing thousands of nonperishable foods for this quarter’s donations to Our Place Drop-In Center in Bellows Falls and five other organizations.

This month, employees from ATG’s Westminster facility delivered boxes of Ramen noodles and cheese snacks to the Bellows Falls food pantry for its first-quarter donation through Haulin’ 4 Hunger, helping to meet ongoing need in the local community.

The donation comes at a time when people are struggling to get by, and high food prices are putting a strain on both local food pantries and the people they serve. Our Place Drop-In Center relies on donations to help support food assistance to individuals and families, making bulk donations like Haulin’ 4 Hunger’s especially important.

Both Regency Transportation and SkillsUSA Massachusetts share ATG’s commitment to giving back to their communities. In addition to contributing nonperishables for the program’s first-quarter donations, both



organizations helped with Haulin’ 4 Hunger’s fresh meal donations in December, with students from Skill-sUSA Massachusetts’ state officer team helping to sort and pack food and Regency Transportation employees helping to make deliveries.

This quarter, ATG is donating non-perishable food to six pantries across three states through Haulin’ 4 Hunger, including organizations near its dealerships in Raynham and Westfield, Massachusetts; and Lebanon, Manchester and Seabrook, NH.

In photo, employees from Advantage Truck Group in Westminster delivered hundreds of packages of ramen noodle soup and cheese snacks to Our Place Drop-In Center through the company’s Haulin’ 4 Hunger program.

NEWS FROM WESTMINSTER WEST LIBRARY

There is a lot to look forward to in April, the month of the child, at the Westminster West Public Library with five events and three programs on the calendar.

On April 7 from 5-5:30 p.m., Lauren Wolk and her son Moses will perform a hilarious reading from all children’s favorite books by Mo Williams. See *Elephant and Piggie* come alive and come ready to laugh at their unusual antics.

Musical Mornings is a class for toddler-preschool age children, however babies and older kids can join. Professional musicians Stuart Fuchs and Sarah Carlisle invite the young ones to sing and play music together. Classes will be held on April 13, 20, 27 from 10:30-1:30 a.m.

Story Yoga is a program where children can act out the journey of characters in a story while moving and

stretching their bodies. This program will be offered on April 21 at 4 p.m.

Come use your imagination by participating in Dungeons and Dragons. Ben Boyarko leads the group of 10-14 year olds every Wednesday from 9-11 a.m. and 6:30-8:30 p.m. every other Monday. Please call the library at 802-387-4682 if you are interested.

There are two movies being shown the week of spring vacation. Come in and enjoy *Peter Rabbit* on April 11 and *Peter Rabbit 2: The Runaway* on April 12 at 3 p.m.

The Library is here for you and your support attending these free events is appreciated. Also, your input and suggestions enhance how the library serves our community. Please stop by or browse for books on our website.

HAAS ON WRITING



Jessie Haas, Westminster author, spoke on “Different Ways Books Happen” at the Westminster Institute on March 22. Haas has written 41 books, both fiction and nonfiction for children and adults, and is the author of *Westminster Vermont 1735-2000*, a history of Westminster.

The event was organized by the Butterfield Library.

NEW PASTOR WELCOMED

Members and friends of the First Congregational Church of Westminster, after a lengthy search for a minister, have chosen, and have welcomed Pastor Richard O’Donald as our minister.

Pastor Rich lives locally and is committed to being available when needed. He has been present during and after worship services, and has been learning about our hopes and needs for our church. As we have welcomed Pastor Rich, we also welcome you to come and join us in worship.

Beside hiring a new minister, we have plans for an outdoor cleanup at the church on Saturday, May 13 at 10 a.m. Workers are needed to clean and pretty up outside, so if you can, please come and help us spruce up the yard.

On Saturday, May 20 there will be a Plant Sale, Cookout, bake sale, and maybe more, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Just a reminder, Easter is coming up and there will be a Maundy Thursday service, a Good Friday service, an Easter Sunday Sunrise Service, an Easter Breakfast, and a Regular Worship service.

Check times in the Church activities section.

NEWS FROM THE WESTMINSTER SCHOOL BOARD: MARCH 2023

From the Westminster Schoolboard

On March 4th the voters of the town of Westminster approved the school budget for next year, as well as all the Articles relating to the use of surplus funds from early years. And on March 7th, voters returned Margie Kearns Ferry and Charlie Hutchison to further 2 and 3 year terms on the school board.

The budget for next year will be \$4.85M after voters approved the use of \$300,000 of the surplus funds to reduce next year’s budget. The net increase in spending will be about 5% over the previous year.

As explained at the meeting, this year’s increase (11.5% before the \$300,000 reduction) was mostly the result of an increase in the cost of sending our 7th and 8th grade students to Bellows Falls Middle School. Rockingham increased its middle school tuition rate from about \$17,000 in 2022 to about \$21,000 in 2023.

Tuition rates for independent schools also rose, but not as significantly. And next year’s 7/8th grade cohort from Westminster is larger than the current year, so the price increase hit us in two ways.

Other sources of the budget increase include a state mandated 12.7% rise in the cost of health coverage for all WNESU staff; a pay raise negotiated with WNESU teachers and support staff; and a 20% increase in the amount Westminster will have to pay to the Supervisory Union (WNESU) for services such as transportation, nutrition, technology support and overall administration.

Also at the March 4th Town Meeting, Westminster voters approved several exciting and reassuring measures for the use of roughly \$1.6M in surplus funds from 2021 and 2022.

The first was the use of funds to reduce the proposed school budget for both fiscal years 2024 and 2025. Voters approved the creation of a \$200,000 reserve to buffer against future unexpected increases in 7/8th grade enrollment or tuition rates. Another is the approval of \$770,000 to increase security at the entrances to the two Westminster school campuses, to install solar and other energy efficiency measures to reduce the cost of electricity at both campuses, and to pay for other necessary repairs and enhancements in the future.

Voters also approved \$245,000 to improve both indoor and outdoor learning spaces as well as accessibility of playground spaces for children with disabilities.

The board discussed options for a solar installation at the main campus on School Street with representatives of local solar installation companies prior to the town meeting and has received draft plans and estimates for producing 100% of our electricity use for both campuses. Early estimates put the cost at between \$300,000 and \$400,000.

The timing is right for this project since the Inflation Reduction Act, passed by Congress last year, extends substantial rebates to schools and other nonprofit organizations. At this time, it is estimated that panels will produce electricity at high efficiency for 30 – 50

years with relatively low maintenance costs. At current rates the payback period on such an installation will be about 8 years, and the long-term savings for the town will be significantly more than the initial investment. As we explore these options more fully, we will keep voters informed of our progress and plans and invite public comment along the way.

Some voters expressed concern about the recyclability of solar panels at the end of their productive life. The board shares this concern – for solar panels and many other consumer products that we tend to take for granted, such as refrigerators, smart phones and computers, and even non-stain clothing fabrics which contain “forever” chemicals.

Fortunately, we have about 40 years to explore options for eventual disposal of any panels installed at the Westminster Center School (WCS). And the good news is that whatever polluting elements solar panels may contain, the threat they pose to our environment is vanishingly small compared to the pollution prevented by all the fossil fuels that will not need to be mined and refined and burned as a result of our producing pollution-free electricity for the 40+ year life of these panels.

Please join us at our monthly school board meetings, in person at WCS or online at 6 p.m. on the first or third Thursday of each month, for updates and your input on these and other issues before the board.

LIFELONG LEARNING EVENTS

The University of Vermont is providing educational programs in Springfield through OLLI - Osher Lifelong Learning Institute, Tuesdays at 2 p.m. at the Nolin Murray Center on Pleasant Street..

Visit learn.uvm.edu/olli/springfield for details and a full program listing and registration form.

Programs in April and May.

April 4 - Jennie B. Powers: The Woman Who Dares - Jennifer Carroll, Education Director, Cheshire County Historical Society, Keene, NH

April 11 - Supporting Native Plants

Supports Bird Populations - Desiree Narango, Conservation Biologist.

April 25 - “Government of the People, by the People, for the People” - The Making and Meaning of an American Proverb of Democracy - Wolfgang Mieder, University of Vermont

May 9 - 80+ Years of Changes in the Connecticut River Valley - Steve Taylor, Newspaperman, Farmer, Public Servant. Membership Series Fee for this Springfield Spring ‘23 semester is \$35. Non-members are welcome to attend individual programs for an \$8 fee.



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20TH ANNIVERSARY GARDEN TOUR JULY 8 & 9

This summer’s Westminster Garden Tour is scheduled for the weekend of July 8th and 9th.

Plans are underway to make this year’s Garden Tour extra-special in celebration of the 20th Anniversary. The Garden Tour is the largest fundraising event for Westminster Cares.

Interested in supporting the event?

Individuals can support the event by purchasing tour tickets, raffle tickets or by volunteering to work a shift during the weekend. Businesses can support the event by becoming a sponsor, purchasing an ad in the event program booklet, or donating a raffle prize.

For more information contact Donna Dawson in the office at: 722-3607.



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Joe 802.384.0397
Jeff 603.209.4441

**APRIL BUSINESS
OF THE MONTH:
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www.llelectricservices.com

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Small job, large job, odd job, residential, commercial, industrial, give us a call and we will be there.

Thank you from everyone at Lawrence & Lober Electric, Inc.

**APRIL BUSINESS
OF THE MONTH:
WESTMINSTER ANIMAL HOSPITAL**



Westminster Animal Hospital opened in 1985 as a solo small animal hospital and has grown to a full service four doctor practice.

Our patients include dogs, cats, rabbits, ferrets and various small rodents and birds.

Westminster Animal Hospital employs 14 people including the veterinarians, technicians, and animal caregivers. We take pride in providing compassionate care for our neighbors' pets.

Our resident pets are Virgil the miniature donkey, Perry the three-legged cat and Gilligan the diabetic cat!

**CONSERVATION COMMISSION
SPONSORS WINTER
TRACKING WORKSHOP**



In between the moderate March snowstorm and the very heavy March snowstorm, the Westminster Conservation Commission sponsored our second annual winter tracking workshop.

Conditions were not great—week old deep snow with significant surface melting—but we enjoyed a peaceful walk in the woods looking for animal and bird sign. We only spotted the tracks of fox, squirrel and domestic dog!

Thanks to all who attended, and a special thanks to our resident naturalist and knowledgeable guide Martha Mitchell. We will hope for better conditions next year!

If you've seen some interesting nature sightings, we'd love to hear about them at westminstervtconservation@gmail.com.

Spring sightings we've seen this week include emerging chipmunks and daffodil tips, robins, the sound of the male woodcock looking for a mate (a loud PEEENT in a field at dusk), and lots of dripping! (sap and snowmelt). Thankfully, not too much mud!

**THANK YOU FOR
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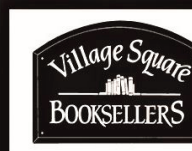
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