

WESTMINSTER CARES: A CONTINUUM OF SERVICE TO THE COMMUNITY

By Susan Harlow

Nearly 40 years after it began, Westminster Cares is planning a transition to a new leader. Donna Dawson, its current – and only the second – director, will retire within the next year or two, and the organization’s board of directors has started looking for her replacement.

“We would like to find someone who looks to the future, cares deeply about the community, especially older adults, and brings new energy and ideas as the organization moves forward,” Donna says.

As the community changes and continues to age, Westminster Cares’ mission becomes even more important, she says. “Especially in this economic climate, where will we be most needed? For instance, older people are working longer and are healthier – how can we support them?”

What will the new director inherit? A long and outstanding history of community engagement, and assistance. Westminster Cares has been helping seniors and disabled adults live independently in the community for thirty-seven years.

It began simply in 1988, as a few local people realized the growing requirements of an aging community. Residents, especially the elderly, needed rides to church and a little help with household chores, like stacking wood. So, Karen Walter, Barbara Greenwood, Jim Matteau, Phyllis Anderson, and others figured out a way to help. Those in need would call Karen at her home; she relayed requests on to other volunteers.

Meanwhile, Judi Petry wrote several grants for a part-time position. With Putney Cares’ permission to use their name, Westminster Cares formed a 501(c)(3) non-profit and served the community for 13 years. In 1999, WC held a quilt show – the first of nine – to raise money for the new director. That has been followed by 22 years of annual garden tours, which continue today as the organization’s biggest fund raiser.

Ronnie Friedman was hired as the first paid part-time director, in 2001, and rented its first office, in the Westminster Motel. Over the years, it has added programs like yoga, a healthy foods workshop, Strong Living exercise classes, weekly senior meals, and Secrets of Healthy Aging, which ran for 16 years. WC volunteers gleaned



local farm fields to deliver fresh produce to Our Place and other community spaces. Seniors got involved in the Green Mountain Senior Games. With a grant from the Council on Aging, the Westminster Gazette was started.

When Ronnie saw the need for a Meals on Wheels program, Kurn Hattin offered to make all the meals, and the organization’s signature service began in 1990. “We put out a request for volunteers and we got 50—many more than we needed,” Karen says. “That’s the strength of the thing – lots of people wanted to help out, right from the beginning.”

Donna also began as a Westminster Cares volunteer. She holds a master’s degree in social work and has always worked in the field, usually with children and families. After she and her husband, Don, moved to Westminster in 2009, Don volunteered to deliver Meals on Wheels, then was elected to the board of directors. That encouraged Donna to volunteer, too. She was hired as assistant director in 2012, when Ronnie began thinking about retiring, and then promoted to Director in January 2014. At the end of 2014, the office moved to the Westminster Institute.

Requests for Meals on Wheels doubled during Covid. But WC maintained services all through it, while keeping its volunteers and people they served safe. “Closing

our doors was never something we had to consider,” Donna says.

She says her social work experience has been critical in her job: skills such as fund raising, and planning and working within a budget. “In a small organization like this, the director has to wear a lot of hats,” Donna says. “I love the variety, anything from picking up equipment to planning a fund raiser to working directly with families. I’d never worked in the same community I’d lived in before, and I like that a lot.”

Pete Harrison has been key to her involvement, filling her in on the who, what, where, and why of the community, and helping out in many ways. Volunteers like Pete mean everything to Westminster Cares, Donna says. Many have been donating their time, skills, and money for decades. “They really do the work of the organization – they are the lifeblood. I feel lucky because I inherited such a robust organization already with a pool of amazing volunteers and a base of

high-quality programs.”

The board of directors has also been very hands-on; they also pitch in. “People come forward to volunteer; we rarely have to ask. They are such good ambassadors; they talk to their friends and find out who may need services.”

Those volunteers will be especially crucial going forward. Local social services are needed more than ever, and communities will have to step up and take care of their own. Westminster is truly lucky in that regard. “It’s amazing how many people just help out, reaching out to neighbors and those who may not have family in the community. The ethic of caring for people in the community is really strong here,” Donna says.

Board President, Lori Larue says that “Working with Donna has been a pleasure and a privilege. She has been a trusted leader and good fit for WC, and as I have said on many occasions she is the face of Westminster Cares. While change can be scary, and we hate to see Donna retire, we are excited to launch the search for a new Director who can carry out the organization’s mission in the coming years.”

In photo, from left, Westminster Cares Directors Karen Walter, Ronnie Friedman, and Donna Dawson.

LEGO ROBOTICS OPEN BUILD FOR GRADES 4-8

Join us for a fun, hands-on LEGO Robotics Open Build event at the Bellows Falls Waypoint Center on Saturday, Sept. 6 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

This event is a great chance for kids and their families to explore FIRST LEGO League and see what our upcoming season is all about. Whether you're new to robotics or already love building and coding, this is the perfect way to jump in!

Explore LEGO SPIKE Prime and Essential robotics kits.

Meet local mentors, including national championship-winning RADs team members!

Learn about the FIRST LEGO League and how to join our team.

Tinker, build, and play—no experience needed! Siblings are welcome, and free-building materials will be available.

Parents and caregivers are encouraged to stay and enjoy the community vibe.

This club is targeted to students in Grades 4–8, but age requirements are flexible based on interest and experience. Our season runs from September to December,



and our meetings will be fun, collaborative, and inclusive—centered around Gracious Professionalism and building skills for the future.

Whether you're curious about joining or just want to see what it's all about, come by, build something cool, and meet our growing team!

Hosted by Aimee Parnell, Executive Director of the, Great Falls Regional Chamber of Commerce & 2023-2024 Co-Facilitator of the Springfield, VT K-5 LEGO Robotics Team.

Learn more about the program at www.firstinspires.org.

WESTMINSTER CARES SEEKS NEW DIRECTOR

Westminster Cares, a non-profit providing services for seniors and adults with disabilities, is seeking a Director.

Responsibilities include volunteer coordination, fundraising, oversight of programs and services, including meals on wheels, rides, healthy aging programs, and community engagement.

The Director helps to ensure operational efficiency and financial sustainability in collaboration with the Board.

This is a part-time position. For more information contact westminstercaresvt@gmail.com.

CELEBRATION OF AGING PLEASE JOIN US!

On Saturday, Sept. 13 from noon to 2:30 p.m. Westminster Cares will host the annual Celebration of Aging which honors our town’s eldest residents, 90 years and older.

Everyone in town is invited to attend and help recognize and celebrate our eldest residents. No r.s.v.p. necessary. It will be held outdoors, on the back lawn of the Westminster Institute.

Refreshments, lunch and dessert will be served. It’s not too late! If you live in Westminster now or if you lived here for many years but moved away, let us know who you are ~ and if you know someone who may be eligible to participate, let us know who they are.

For more information, contact Pete Harrison at 802-289-3776 or Donna Dawson at 802-722-3607. A rain date is set for Sunday, Sept. 14.

Our Monthly Community Newspaper September 2025 Vol. 21 No. 9

Westminster Gazette

Town of Westminster
PO Box 147
Westminster, VT
05158

DELIVER TO ADDRESSEE OR
CURRENT RESIDENT

Pre-Sorted Standard
U.S. Postage
Paid
Westminster, VT
PERMIT NO. 3

“WE ARE HERE TO SELL COWS”

LEVI CHICKERING REMEMBERS WESTMINSTER’S CHICKERING FARM

"We Are Here To Sell Cows" is a memoir by Levi Chickering of his time in the family business, Westminster Commission Auction Sale. The Auction ran from 1942 to 1960, located in the big barns on Rt. 5 now home to the Goodells' dairy business, Westminster Farms. Levi, who now lives in Florida, writes of how it began and about his family and the many workers and customers who were part of Westminster Auction. The Gazette will be publishing extracts from Levi's writing over the next few months. - Mary Scherbatskoy



hay in his pockets, and the scent of barns trailing behind him like a loyal dog. My mother, Irene, had a gentle touch and baked the best Apple Pie in the valley. My Father was always buying and selling Dairy Cows, one at a time or in droves. We didn't need much in those days, just the land beneath our feet and the dream my Father carried deep within his heart. It was a dream that would, by 1948, lead him to join his brother, Albert F. Chickering, in continuing to build the largest Dairy Cow Auction Sale in the eastern half of the United States, located in Westminster, Vermont.

I grew up in Walpole, New Hampshire, attending kindergarten through high school. Once I graduated, I served time in the United

I. The Westminster, Vermont Dairy Cow Auction Sale

The Westminster Auction came into being the day Albert F. Chickering purchased the Fenn Dairy Farm in Westminster, Vermont. The Fenn farm, which had survived the devastating 1936 Connecticut River flood, managed to recover and operate for several more years. Fred Fenn had decided to retire from milking cows and he decided to step away from the milk business altogether.

In 1942, Fred Fenn's decision came soon after the death of his brother, Howard Fenn. With his loss weighing on him, Fred chose to call it quits, sell off the dairy herd, stop the dairy product sales, and part with the farm itself.

Entered New Owner

With Albert F. Chickering’s arrival and the purchase of the Fenn Farm, the Westminster Vermont Dairy Cow Auction was born—a local event that would soon grow into one of the largest dairy cow auctions in the country. The auction continued for the next 18 years, and was held every Thursday, week after week, finalizing in November of 1960. It had become a fixture in the lives of farmers and dairy cow dealers throughout the eastern United States and Canada.

My Father Arthur H. Chickering Jr, was a dairy cowman and dealer through and through—boots by the door,

States Army, before proudly stepping into my Father's footsteps and joining him in his next big venture. It all began on a crisp November night, with the wind rattling the windows and the smell of wood smoke in the air—a pure life, with a purpose already set: "We Are Here to Sell Cows." Dairy cows, that is.

To find longer versions of Levi Chickering's memoirs, visit his site at <https://chickeringranch.com>.

In photo, a drawing from memory of the Chickering Farm around the 1950s, courtesy of Levi Chickering.

MUSIC IN THE MEADOW FIGHT AGAINST CANCER FUNDRAISER

The 21st Music in the Meadow fundraising concert to benefit the Susan G. Komen’s Fight Against Breast Cancer will be held on Saturday, Sept. 6 at the Motel in the Meadow, at 936 Rte. 11 West, Chester from 11 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.

This year's amazing entertainment is performed by local musicians who donate their time and talent.

Here are this year’s performers: Mark Shelton, The Illusion, James Joel, Dirty Looks, Melissa Maravell, Bonnie Waters and Intercept.

Back for 2025 will be the very popular silent auction with donations from many local businesses and residents. Hot food and cold drinks will be available for purchase.

This year we are planning to have a teddy bear pic-

nic for the kids at 11 a.m., cornhole, family games area including bucket golf, ball toss, can jam, and several other games. Raffle tickets will also be on sale for the

Grand Prize Queen Quilt - handmade by Sue Ashe and Sue’s Quilt Studio, with additional items on the day of the concert. The drawing will be at the end of the concert, Sept. 6th at approximately 6:30 p.m.

The past 20 concerts have raised over \$122,000 in support of Komen’s mission to “Save lives by meeting the most critical needs in our communities and investing in breakthrough research to prevent and cure breast cancer.” All proceeds collected go to the Susan G. Komen’s Fight Against Breast Cancer.

For more information contact Motel in the Meadow, 802-875-2626, or find us on Facebook, Music in the Meadow.

Bring a blanket, or your lawn chair or join us under the tents in the meadow for a great day!

Maple Leaf Chimney Sweep

(802) 380-9890

Mapleleafchimney@gmail.com
www.mapleleafchimneysweep.com
Facebook.com/mapleleafchimneysweep

BRENNAN

BUILDING EXCAVATION SEPTIC SYSTEMS

802 869 2866

www.BrennanConstructionVT.com

K. BEEBE, INC

PUMP SERVICE Plumbing and Heating

Established 1946

FULLY INSURED * ESTIMATES GIVEN

CALL 463-3725

51 SAXTONS RIVER ROAD
BELLOWS FALLS

BEST SEPTIC

www.bestsepticvt.net
bestseptic@gmail.com
Fax: (802)-463-1523

All Septic Needs,
Portable Toilets,
Jetting and Camera Service.

Jeff & Lisa Ruggiero
Owners

(802)-463-9444

BIG OR SMALL WE PUMP IT ALL!

WESTMINSTER ENERGY GROUP

A Division of
WESTMINSTER FARMS

Top Soil
Compost
Dried Manure

Made in Vermont
By
Vermont Farmers
And
Vermont Cows

PO Box 24 4187 US Rt 5 Westminster Sta., VT 05159
Phone/Fax: 802 722 4017 Email: westfarms1@myfairpoint.net

ADVERTISE IN THE GAZETTE!

Annual Rates:

Pages 2-3 - approx. 4"x5" \$300 a year - \$30 for one month
Pages 4-7 - approx. 4.7"x6.8" \$525 a year - \$80 for one month
Page 8 - approx. 2.5"x3.25" - \$200 a year

New Sections Introductory Rates:
A&E Events Section \$50 a month
New & Seasonal Businesses Section \$200 for 3 months

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.westminstervt.org

BDCC RECEIVES PRESTIGIOUS STRIVE AWARD NAMES GOLDBERG STRIVE LIASON

The Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation (BDCC) is proud to announce its role as a liaison partner in the newly funded Science and Technology Research Initiative for the Southern Vermont Economy (STRIVE), a transformative program supported by the National Science Foundation’s EPSCoR initiative.

This milestone comes as BDCC welcomes Neil Goldberg to the team to help leverage this opportunity and strengthen investment deal flow across the region.

STRIVE is hosted by Landmark College, which serves as the lead institution for the program. Landmark is proud to be partnering with BDCC, Bennington College, and the Community College of Vermont (CCV) to ensure successful implementation. Together, these institutions form a regional collaborative network designed to build science and technology capacity while fueling economic development across Windham, Bennington, Rutland, and Windsor counties.

STRIVE brings together educational institutions, businesses, advocacy groups, economic developers, and local governments to create a more inclusive and transformative STEM ecosystem. BDCC, as the regional liaison, plays a key role in embedding within this network and unlocking new pathways for innovation and entrepreneurship.

Through STRIVE, BDCC is strategically positioned to identify promising business connections and STEM related ventures at an early stage and connect stakeholders with a continuum of support. This includes technical assistance, mentorship, and direct connections to capital providers.

“This partnership allows us to align our investment strategies with the region’s emerging talent and innovation,” said BDCC Executive Director Adam Grinold. “It’s a unique opportunity to surface high-potential, often overlooked ventures and bring them into our regional economic ecosystem.”

This early identification of STEM-focused businesses enhances regional opportunities to identify opportunities for growth and strategic collaboration and supports BDCC’s broader mission. Through vehicles like the Windham Investment fund, BDCC will continue to deploy capital into enterprises that position



Southern Vermont as a competitive, innovation-driven economy.

To support this expansion, BDCC is excited to introduce Neil Goldberg, who will be deeply involved in executing the STRIVE liaison role. A native of Southern Vermont, Neil brings rich, cross-sector experience in hospitality, real estate, and consumer packaged goods, giving him valuable insight into building and scaling diverse business ventures.

Neil holds both a bachelor’s degree in Economics and Community Development and a Master of Business Administration from the University of Vermont. “It’s a privilege to return to my home region and contribute to such meaningful work,” said Goldberg. “I’m passionate about building systems that uplift both people and places.”

Outside of work, Neil enjoys hiking with his dog, playing soccer, and preparing elaborate meals for friends and family.

With the STRIVE program underway and Neil’s leadership in place, BDCC is positioned to play a pivotal role in shaping the future of Southern Vermont’s innovation economy.

In photo, Neil Goldberg.

ANDY DAVIS AT GUILFORD FAIR



Local songwriter, dance caller and musician Andy Davis will perform at the Guilford Fair on Sunday, August 31 at 1 p.m.

Andy's songs relate to local history and to his many years of living in Windham County. Andy is currently one of the choir directors at the Guilford Community Church. For many years he was a member of Nowell Sing We Clear while teaching music in both Brattleboro and Dover.

He plays the accordion and piano, and often weaves dance tunes in and among the words of his songs. This performance will include "Gold into Straw" in honor of the Rich Earth institute, as well as songs about local dances, teaching music in Windham County and the wonders of the bicycle.

Andy will have copies of his recently published songbook, Gold into Straw. For more information visit andy@dancingmasters.com.

WCS BACK TO SCHOOL

Westminster Center School has had a busy summer hosting the WCS Summer Program.

Students have enjoyed four weeks of both academic and enrichment activities, weekly swimming sessions, and weekly field trips. We cannot thank our staff enough for bringing enthusiasm and creativity every day!

Throughout the summer WCS has had a variety of upgrades including a finalized solar array project courtesy of the Westminster Reserve Fund and a new outdoor basketball court courtesy of the Dascomb Fund.

WCS will be welcoming two new faces to our staff. Mickaelah Simpson will be joining us as a special education case manager. Mickaelah joins our team with experience working with students with a wide range of abilities. She brings a level of enthusiasm and curiosity to our staff that our students will love.

Mallory Newton joins Westminster as a paraprofessional. Mallory has experience working with preschool aged children and will be working primarily in our kindergarten classrooms. She is eager to get to know our students and staff and deepen her knowledge of instructional practices.

Please join WCS in welcoming Mickaelah and Mallory.

Westminster Center School will hold our annual Back to School Open House on Monday, August 25th from 5:30-6:30. This is an opportunity for families to meet their child’s teacher, see their classroom, and visit all areas of the school. Our first day of school is Wednesday, August 27th and we couldn’t be more excited!

Liz Harty, Principal, Westminster Center School

JOIN THE BF BOOK CRAWL ON SEPT. 27

Join the Bellows Falls Downtown for the first BF Book Crawl on Saturday, Sept. 27.

BYOB - Bring your own: 1) book; to the cafes and bars, 2) book bag; to the shops, 3) bookmark; for your new favorite book!

Special cafe and cocktail drinks, Read-in’s, Author readings and book signings, bookmaking class, book readings, displays and more!

Pick up a map at the Rockingham Free Public Library from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. your own hometown Library or the following locations in Bellows Falls.

Arch Bridge Bookshop, the Arch Bridge Annex, Village Square Booksellers, Art Around Books, Little Art

Supply Store, Windham Antique Center, Clutter’s Last Stand, Under the Sun, Rockingham Roasters, Flat Iron Cooperative, Moon Dog Cafe, Kokopelli’s, Holistic Gateway, Seams Sew Together, Donovan’s and Ciao Popolo.

Hours for participating businesses vary between 9 am to 9 pm.

Find up-to-date information on the Book Crawl on Facebook or at www.bellowsfallsvt.org.

NEWS FROM WESTMINSTER CARES

The Westminster Cares Board of Directors does not hold full board meetings in July or August; however, committees continue to meet.

Memorial Donations received through August 13th:

In memory of Adam Harrison from the Westminster Cares Board of Directors.

In memory of my husband, George Shuster, from Kathryn Shuster.

Vermont's Largest Farm Stand

Garden Center & Nursery

Fresh pies and award winning cider donuts made daily!



Allen BROS FARM STAND

WESTMINSTER, VT

Visit us: Exit 5 off I-91

Route 5 South, Westminster, Vermont

802-722-3395 • allenbrothersfarms.com

Open 7 days a week: Mon-Sat 6 a.m.-8 p.m. • Sun 7 a.m.-8 p.m.

Give Your Home a Hug!

With a low cost
Green Mountain Home Repair loan.

Maintaining your home matters, and now there's an affordable way to tackle those home improvement projects.



- Health & safety issues
- Structural problems
- Failing mechanical systems
- Energy efficiency upgrades
- Interior & exterior modifications for elderly or disabled



(802) 254-4604
HomeMattersHere.org

Edward Jones®

> edwardjones.com | Member SIPC



Honoring all workers

Labor Day is your day to relax and celebrate all the hard work you’ve done.



Jessica Fuller, CFP®
Financial Advisor
P O Box 96
57 Main Street
Walpole, NH 03608
603-756-2513

EJB-9811F-A-E-DA AECSPAD 26025207

Nature Notes - Were They Mink?
by Alma Beals, Vermont Master Gardener and Naturalist

On August 2 at 7:30 in the morning, I was sitting at my kitchen table enjoying my cup of coffee when a motion on my lawn caught my eye. Three animals were loping, running in a line nose-to-tail the way baby animals do. My first impression was young mink. But were they?

They looked black but could have been dark brown. I saw them for only about two seconds as they dashed from my front garden to the shrubs. I was looking at their sides from a back view so I have no idea what their head ends looked like.

From their loping (humping along) gait, I think they must have been in the weasel family Mustelidae, which is the largest family of carnivorous mammals, most of which have short legs, long bodies, moderately long tails, and are solitary, nocturnal and active year-round. They are ermine,



Mink photos by Don Clark

long-tailed weasel, American mink, fisher, American marten and American river otter. Having lived by the Saxtons River for several years, I am familiar with seeing mink running along the river-



their mother was leading them and I just didn't see her. Were they mink?

bank, but I am not familiar with the others in the weasel family. I picture mink living along streams, lakes, ponds, and marshes as they are semi-aquatic and good swimmers. But they also can be found in the woods. In the water, they eat fish, frogs, and crayfish whereas in the woods, they eat small mammals like mice and rabbits.

They travel a great distance to find a mate and breed in late February to May. Their den sites are in the nearby woods under roots or logs, cavities in banks or in hollow trees.

I wonder if the three I saw were moving from their den toward water or if

WESTMINSTER SAMPLER - WESTMINSTER BUSINESSES

By Jessie Haas

Westminster is now a farming and bedroom community. If people don't earn a living on the land, by and large they work out of town. But in earlier times, many more people farmed, and there were more small businesses in town.

In 1884, according to *Hamilton Child's Windham County Gazetteer*, 260 heads of household in Westminster were farmers or retired farmers; 4 of these were women. Thirty-one heads of household were laborers: 25 millworkers, 12 carpenters, 7 in the painting, whitewashing or wallpapering business, 7 teamsters, 6 blacksmiths, 5 manufacturers, a couple of lawyers, and 1 artist.

Many Westminster farmers still bred Merino sheep, though the big Vermont sheep bubble had burst a generation ago. There were many sugar orchards, and dairy was becoming more important. Lumber was also a cash crop, with the farmers of Westminster cutting and delivering thousands of sleepers and many cord of firewood to the railroad. Sawmills continued to operate locally; in 1884 Alfred Harlow's sawmill turned out a million feet of sawn lumber a year.

Farm machinery was in a period of innovation, and a few farmers were also equipment dealers. George Campbell's sons, on the main road leading to Westminster West, were agents for St. Albans Horse Power and Threshing Machine and for Kemp Manure Spreaders. Orestes Peck was the agent for Granite State Mower.

Other businesses were based on invention. Benjamin T. Phelps grew up in Westminster in the 1850s, served in the Twelfth Vermont Regiment during the Civil War, and worked as a bookkeeper and collector until his health compelled him to choose an outdoor occupation. He came back to Westminster where he became a tobacco farmer, raised lambs, and started the Crescent Poultry Farm.

He married Annie Holton, daughter of Nodiah, and with her invented and patented a method of custom fitting ladies and children's garments called the Excelsior Square system. The Phelps received a Bronze Medal

Hurry up the Corn

Your chief trouble will be to get the corn to the machine fast enough, if you have an

Abenague Gasoline Engine and Papec Pneumatic Cutter

The blower cutter that requires the least power, and the engine that gives the **most**—an ideal ensilage outfit. The cutter is of most modern type, runs fast and easily, and will elevate ensilage to highest silo. The Abenague is not only good for your ensilage cutter, but is **guaranteed** to have a wider range of work, and to give you less trouble than any other gasoline engine made. Mounted or unmounted; you can set it down **anywhere**, in any position, and it is ready for business. We sell engine and blower separately or as an outfit. Don't fail to send for catalogue.

Abenague Machine Works, WESTMINSTER STATION VT
If you have wood to saw get prices on our sawing outfits.

at the Massachusetts Charitable Design exhibition. They published a 32-page book of instructions, The Excelsior Square, in which they claimed that the rules of drafting patterns were "made so plain and easy that any one can learn to use this system from the Instruction Book alone, without the aid of a teacher."

Possibly; my mind boggled after a brief look at the instructions, which are available on Amazon, amazingly enough, in a Forgotten Books series. Sewing aficionados, please look this up on archive.org and let the Historical Society know what you think.

Woolen and paper mills continued until nearly the 1900s. The Clapp woolen mill at the south end of the village continued under the ownership of Harlan Farr. The paper mill in the Forest in North Westminster begun by Bill Blake was continued by his cousin Charles Marshall Blake under the name Blake and Higgins.

The Gage family made baskets in Gageville, and Walter Gage developed a new kind of clothespin, a spring pin made entirely of wood. The Gages set up a separate clothespin factory next to the basket factory to turn them out.

Also in the late 1800s the Vermont Valley Creamery, located on School Street, was organized by farmers from Westminster, Walpole, and Putney; the creamery

was always primarily Westminster run. It used milk from 200 cows at the beginning, and had 12 patrons. The Creamery grew to have 140 patrons, and made between 4,000 and 4,300 pounds of butter a week.

Westminster butter had an excellent reputation and brought a good price. The contribution to farmers' pocketbooks was significant. In April 1902, for instance, the creamery paid out \$3,875.00. Butter makers generally lived in an apartment on the second floor of the creamery building (the last house before the west corner of School Street).

Other businesses were clustered in Westminster Station, handy to the railroad. A Mr. Butterfield had a pail factory and gristmill there; he would later endow the Westminster library. H.C.

Baxter & Brothers of Brunswick, Maine, built a corn cannery in The Station in 1892, having been granted a tax exemption by the town. They, too, provided farm income, as farmers grew sweet corn for the cannery by contract, and worked at the factory during canning season.

Locals also sold firewood to the cannery to use in its cooking and canning processes. During August and September the air at The Station was filled with a heavy corn smell and flies abounded. But the cannery provided farmers with cash to pay their taxes, and provided local women and young people a chance to earn wages for a few months. As of 1927 it employed 149 people, both men and women. The men received \$4.00/day, the women \$2.50.

Just down the road was the Abenague Machine Works (**ad in photo above**), started in 1893 by the Gilbert family. The gasoline engines made there were shipped around the country, and were also used at the Baxter cannery and E.C. Wellman's carriage shop in Westminster West. Abenague employed between 15 and 40 people over the years, making Westminster Station a hopping manufacturing center in the early 1900s. It's difficult to picture now, but if you visit the archives you can see some of the photos of a very different time in our town.

NEWS FROM WESTMINSTER VOLUNTEER FIRE AND RESCUE

The Westminster Fire & Rescue Department holds their monthly meetings at 7 p.m. on the 1st Tuesday of the month and a combined drill on the 3rd Tuesday of the month. Rescue training is the 2nd Tuesday of the month.

Next association meeting Tuesday, Sept. 2 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.

Unless otherwise called for a special meeting, the Prudential Committee meets on the 3rd Sunday of every month at the Fire House on Grout Ave at 10 a.m.

Next prudential meeting Sept. 21.

Number of calls in July: 51

Number of calls through August 22: 22

Number of calls calendar year to date: 390

Number of calls fiscal year, July 1st to date: 73

Association Meeting: The Westminster Fire and Rescue Association met for their regular meeting Tuesday, Aug. 5 with President J.T. Tabolt presiding. There were 29 members present and 4 excused. Currently there are 47 members of the volunteer fire department

Emergency off-road: The department is looking for names of anyone who has an off-road vehicle that they would be willing to operate in case of an emergency requiring off road or 4-wheelers. Contact any member of the department if this is something you are willing and

able to make available.

Fire wood: Be sure your firewood is well cured and not too green before using it. Green or uncured wood can create creosote and possibly cause a chimney fire. Also when covering your wood pile, cover the top only and leave the sides exposed to the air and sunlight. Wood that is completely covered can rot instead of drying.

Back to School: Now that school has begun there will be a lot of students walking to and from school. There are no sidewalks in many areas forcing students to walk in the roadways. Walkers should remember to always walk on the left side of the road facing traffic and bike riders need to be riding with the flow of traffic on the right side.

As it is getting darker earlier each day, walkers and bikers will need to wear light colored clothing and reflective vests when traveling in the dark or diminished light. And having a flashing light on both front and rear of your bike is a very good idea even during the daylight. Drivers should be extra cautious with more pedestrians and bikes on the roads.

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.

Emergency responses: July turned out to be another very busy month with 51 calls for the month. Here is the

breakdown for the 51 calls: 35 rescue/medical calls; 6 motor vehicle accidents; 3 for tree on wires/power line down; 1 lift assist; 1 smoke investigation; 1 false alarm; 4 mutual aid calls - 2 to Putney, 1 to Bellows Falls, 1 to Chester.

The Fire & Rescue Association welcomes donations throughout the year from anyone wishing to remember or honor a loved one or a friend. Unless otherwise designated, all memorial and honorary donations go into our scholarship fund to be given out at graduation. Open donations are also appreciated: Send donation to:

Westminster Fire & Rescue Association

PO Box 111 Westminster, Vt. 05158

Donations received in August:

Claudia and Dave Allbee in memory of Dave Judd and Bernie Lawrence

John and Cheryl Kmetz in honor of son Joel

Richard & Annette Karabin and Evelyn Bohonowicz in memory of Mary Lou Fogg

Russ and Barb Hodgkins

Pamela Parda Brownell and Michael Parda in memory of Peter Parda

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 web-site www.westminsterfire-andrescue.org.

Aged in Vermont

Westminster Cares, Inc.

10 TIPS TO AVOID INJURY AND SUPPORT AGING IN PLACE DURING FALLS PREVENTION MONTH

September is Falls Prevention Month. Falls Prevention aims to raise awareness about the risks of falls, promote strategies to prevent them, and empower individuals to take proactive measures to improve their safety and protect their health and well-being.

Each year, millions of older people—those 65 and older—fall. In fact, more than one out of four older people fall each year and one out of five falls causes a serious injury such as broken bones or a head injury. Falling just once doubles your chances of falling again.

Home modifications can allow older adult to live safely at home longer. That’s important, because 77 percent of adults 50 and older want to stay in their homes as they age, an AARP survey found. Their homes, however, may not be suited to their wishes. The risk of falling rises with age, and most falls happen at home.

“Not every fall causes a catastrophic injury that changes your life. But when they do happen, they can be devastating,” says Kathryn Daniel, an adult/gerontological nurse practitioner. Falls can lead to broken bones, like a fractured hip, which can make it hard to get around, do everyday activities or live independently, she adds.

Simple changes can be made in and around your home to help prevent falls and eliminate tripping hazards. Here are 10 suggestions.

1. Remove scatter rugs

Remove throw rugs throughout the home that are easy to trip over. If you must have a rug in the bathroom, make sure it has a no-slip bottom.

2. Declutter

When you’ve lived in a place for a number of years you can collect a lot of clutter, and that can become a fall risk. Remove items, such as stacks of books or boxes on the floor, that you may trip over or that can cause harm if you fall.

3. Keep pathways clear

Clear pathways of trip hazards — such as clutter, power cords or extra furniture — so that it’s easier to move around. This includes hallways as well as the route around your bed to the door. Get electrical cords with flat plugs or place rubber strips over cords.

4. Fix uneven surfaces

As people age, vision changes may mean their depth perception isn’t as good as before, and they may not see the details of walking surfaces. Fix uneven walkways and steps inside and outside the home to help prevent falls. Consider adding a contrast color to floors, such as a colorful carpet on a hardwood floor instead of beige, so any surface changes are clear.

5. Shine a light

Good lighting is important to illuminate pathways

and surfaces inside and outside the home. Open curtains or blinds to let in natural light. Add extra lighting, such as night-lights in hallways and toe-kick lights or light strips on steps, where needed. Consider motion-sensor lighting inside or outside for ease of use.

6. Secure the bathroom

Install a higher toilet or a seat extender, which are better for people with arthritis or knee problems. Other fall-prevention changes include using nonslip rugs, adding a shower chair and installing grab bars near the shower, tub and toilet. Now there are grab bars that come in colors and with prettier finishes or decorative elements.”

7. Step up

Add a railing along stairs — or on both sides of steps — to help navigate inside or outside your home. Attach blue packing or painter’s tape to the edge of steps so they stand out. Consider building a ramp — instead of steps — that leads to the front or back door.

8. Take stock of furniture

Decrease the amount of furniture throughout your home so there are fewer obstacles. If you can afford it, replace sharp-edged furniture with □pieces that have soft, rounded edges to reduce the risk of injury should you fall.

9. Check your vision

Since poor eyesight can lead to falls, older adults should get an eye exam once a year. You may need glasses, have an age-related condition like cataracts or need to update your eyeglass prescription. Cataracts can be removed, and Medicare typically covers the procedure.

10. Strengthen muscles

Age-related muscle weakness and deteriorating balance also can contribute to falls. Physical exercise will help to maintain good health and prevent falls. Always consult your physician before starting an exercise program to make sure it aligns with your current state of health. Walking back and forth down your hallway, or from your front door to the back door, is a good way to begin exercising if you can’t leave home. Take brisk walks several times a week to strengthen your leg muscles. Before walking, do some light stretches, such as easy bends and knee flexes while holding onto a chair. Exercises like tai chi and gentle yoga can help improve your balance.

Adapted from AARP.org. Sheryl Jean is a contributing writer who covers aging, business, technology, travel, health and human-interest stories. AARP’s free HomeFit Guide features smart ways to make a home comfortable, safe and a great fit for people of all ages.

REMEMBRANCES

SEPTEMBER 2025:

RAY GOULD, 89
2/13/1936 - 7/24/2025
WESTMORELAND, NH,
FORMERLY BELLOWS FALLS

RAMON HARRINGTON
6/30/37 - 6/8/25

ADAM HARRISON, 32
8/14/1992 - 7/27/2025
BOSTON, MA,
FORMERLY BRATTLEBORO

HOLLIS WYMAN, 82
11/2/1942 - 7/22/2025
GRAFTON, VT,

ROBERT “BOB” GOSSELIN
6/29/1948 - 8/9/2025
CHARLESTOWN, NH,
FORMERLY WESTMINSTER, VT

RUTH E. BARTON, 83
6/7/1942 - 9/8/2025
DUMMERSTON, VT,
FORMERLY WESTMINSTER, VT

**A FALL RABIES CLINIC WILL
BE HELD SEPT. 13, 10AM-1PM
IN THE LOBBY OF THE
SHERIFF'S OFFICE
185 OLD FERRY RD,
BRATTLEBORO
CATS AND DOGS \$25**

CIVIC LIFE SKILLS WORKSHOPS

Get on Board, a program of Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation’s Southern Vermont Economy Project, aims to equip participants with practical skills to become more effective and active in local civic life. Four in-person sessions will take place on Sept. 20, Oct. 4, Oct. 25 and Nov. 8 in towns across Southern Vermont. Classes feature state and regional leaders from a variety of organizations, panelists with deep experience in local government, and scholars of government and community development.

Tuition for the program, which includes breakfast and lunch at each session, is \$200. Scholarships and sponsored seats are available and can be requested as part of the application process. Applications are being accepted on a rolling basis now through Sept. 12.

For details or if you are interested in sponsoring a participant, visit www.sovermontzone.com/get-on-board or contact Meg Staloff at BDCC at mstaloff@brattleborodevelopment.com or (802) 257-7731 ext. 222.

PLANNING COMMISSION LISTENING SESSIONS

The Westminster Planning Commission is excited to announce a series of listening sessions this fall as the commission begins its work on a new Town Plan.

Two events have been scheduled thus far, and at least two more will be added before the Commission begins drafting the updated town plan later this year. The events scheduled thus far are:

- Monday, Sept. 29 from 6 to 8 p.m. at the Westminster Institute/Butterfield Library
- Thursday, Oct. 2, from 6 to 8 pm at Westminster West School/Studio Y

Additionally, the Planning Commission is working to secure an accessible in-person location for at least one listening session in North Westminster and will provide an entirely virtual option via zoom at a date to be determined in late October or early November. Those details will be published in the October edition of the *Gazette*, as well.

At these listening sessions, Westminster residents will hear a brief overview of the Town Plan process, before participating in a facilitated discussion regarding challenges and opportunities facing Westminster’s future.

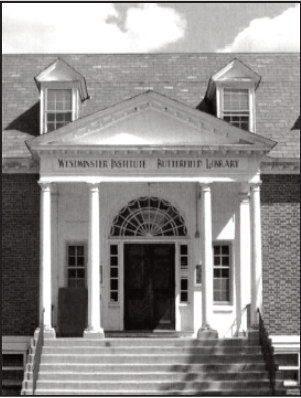
The Town of Westminster has retained Windham Regional Commission to provide professional support throughout the town plan process, including in preparation for and the execution of these listening sessions.

The listening sessions are a vital opportunity for the Planning Commission to hear directly from Westminster residents about what they would like to see reflected in what is their Town Plan. The Planning Commission is also seeking new members who are interested in joining the Commission and helping to shape the Town Plan. This is an excellent time to join the Commission as the Town Plan work is just getting underway.

Anyone interested in learning more about the listening sessions or joining the Planning Commission is encouraged to reach out to Town Hall via Manager@Westminstervt.org.

*Lachlan Francis, Chair
Westminster Planning Commission*

SEPTEMBER AT THE BUTTERFIELD LIBRARY



By Alison Baitz

Hello Westminster!

Can you believe it’s already September? I can’t, even though I often joke that I can really sense the passage of time due to the way we circulate our books, stamping each with its due date, three weeks in the future. I’m constantly reminded that next month, next season is just ahead.

Still, surprise: it’s September!


Autumn is sure to be a busy time here at Butterfield. While I’m still finalizing some upcoming events, I’ll let you know that we’re continuing on with our regular ongoing events: preschool storytime is still happening on Monday mornings at 10 a.m. I encourage our community’s crafters to check out the twice-monthly craft

group (1st Tuesdays 4-8 and 3rd Saturdays 10:30 - 12:30).

All crafts and all experience levels are very welcome. And we are of course continuing with the Bring Your Own Bookclub, always on the third Tuesday of the month at 5 p.m.

This month we have a very special field trip planned: on Friday, Sept. 12 from 1:30 - 3 p.m. we will visit Dartmouth College’s Rauner Special Collections Library. There, Morgan R. Swan, Special Collections Librarian for Teaching and and Scholarly Engagement, will lead us on a tour of some of the library’s holdings. The tour can only accommodate a limited number of guests, so if you’re interested, please sign up by going to bit.ly/476ufyE or call the library.

Please keep an eye on the library’s Facebook page — or stop by! — to learn about more upcoming events! There are lots of good things in the works. And, if you have an idea for an event or anything else, please let me know.



Temple

Chiropractic

Dr. Taronté Venable
DC, DACNB

Dr. Vernon R. Temple
DC, DABCO

633 Route 121
Bellows Falls, VT 05101

802-463-9522

TheOffice@TempleChiropractic.org
www.TempleChiropractic.org

WESTMINSTER WEST COMMUNITY FAIR SEPT. 6TH



The 35th annual Westminister West Community Fair will be on Saturday Sept. 6 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. This year’s Parade theme is “HOME GROWN: CELEBRATING AND PROTECTING LOCAL FARMS, FARMERS AND FARM WORKERS.” The Grand Marshals are longtime local farmers Howard and Elizabeth Prussack. For the truck nerds, they will be driving their old yellow truck, a 1969 Chevy C20, 3/4 ton with 8ft bed. Other local farmers are invited to join in the parade, bring yourself and your favorite tractor. Our wacky parade is again at 10:30 a.m. and offers an opportunity to meet new neighbors, our local politicians, young bike riders, drummers, accordion players and perennial favorites “Ladies Against Women.” And don’t forget our Peace Dove. There’ll be the usual selection of entertainment and activities from races in the morning to the talent show in the afternoon. In between there is the fabulous chicken BBQ, the ever popular and exclusive “Whack a Corn Cob” and don’t forget to view the work of local artists upstairs or the zany vegetable creations in the foyer of the church (let those zucchinis grow!) The Nature Museum of Grafton will have a table and materials for making Fairy Houses. The Westminister West Public Library’s annual book sale is just down the street. The Silent Auction will be both online and at the church. The larger and more expensive items will be online. Most of the business donations will be online, but on Fair day there will be an interesting array of additional auction items not in the online silent auction, upstairs in the church for bidding. In addition, the Golden Elephant Tag Sale will be back again. If you want to be a volunteer to help with the Golden Elephant Tag Sale, call Laura at 802 387-2765 or email her at laladust@gmail.com. (Tag Sale Volunteers get to have first dibs on items in the sale by virtue of seeing them first.) This event is a wonderful opportunity to gather to-

gether as friends and neighbors, to honor the farmers who put food on our table, and have fun and share talents with each other. It also provides a significant financial contribution to the Church’s annual budget for keeping our village church and community gathering center in good repair and available for community use.

ONLINE AUCTION GUIDELINES
If you have an item for the Online Auction, email Cheryl Charles (cherylcharles01@gmail.com) with a photo and description of the item, estimated value, and if there is one, a minimum bid. Online auction Items are posted at www.32auctions.com/WestFair2025AuctionLink and on the church website at westminsterwest.org. Our deadline for receiving photos and a description of the items for the Online Auction is August 25. The bidding kickoff will be at 9am on Saturday, August 30. Sunday September 7th is the last day of bidding. Bidding closes at 5pm. In the next week, we will arrange transport of auction items to the winners.

If you have something for the baked goods table, the golden elephant Sale or in-person Silent Auction at the church, you can bring it by the week before the fair (5 to 8pm on Tue, Wed and Thur.) or make an appointment for drop off with, Tom Griffith 387-5694 or Laura Williams 387-2765. Please remember, no electronics, furniture, broken toys or broken anything, books or clothes and do follow the Golden Rule for the sale: donate only what you yourself might want to buy that doesn’t create more clutter.

In photo, the Peace Dove flying in the 2023 parade. Photo by Ira Wilner.

WWPL BOOK SALE

Come find your next great read at the annual Westminister West Public Library Book Sale on Saturday, Sept. 6, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. during the Westminister West Community Fair. Children's books for all ages! Special categories this year include vegan cook-books, music history, nature, and gardening. Support our little blue library!

SEASONAL, HANDMADE, RAW MILK CHEESE

PRESERVED SUNSHINE, IN A VARIETY OF STYLES



Unique, complex flavors start with healthy cows out on pasture under open skies. Raw milk, creamery-made autochthonous starters, natural rennet, & sea salt from Maine. Our cheese ages slowly, developing distinct flavors and textures that deliver the taste of this place.

VISIT OUR FARMSTORE
873 PATCH ROAD
WWW.PARISHHILLCREAMERY.COM







Listen, Join and Support
Your Community Radio Station

WOOL 91.5 FM

www.blacksheepradio.org


Join The Team
Local Shows and Local DJ's Needed




Kurn Hattin

Home and School for Children

31st Annual Conference



THE BEHAVIOR CODE: PRACTICAL TRAUMA-INFORMED STRATEGIES FOR REDUCING ANXIETY AND CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR




Join colleagues from across the region for a full-day professional conference focused on practical strategies to support students with anxiety and challenging behavior.

Friday, October 24, 2025
8:45 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.
Kurn Hattin Home and School for Children
708 Kurn Hattin Rd, Westminister, VT 05158

CE credits available | Who should attend:

- Educators · School Counselors · School Psychologists
- Social Workers · Substance Abuse Counselors
- Marriage & Family Therapists

Register now: kurnhattin.org/fall-conference



Featured Speaker:
Jessica Minahan,
Ph.D., BCBA, LABA
Licensed and board-certified behavior analyst, author, special educator, and international consultant.

FRED'S ROCK SHOP

Rocks · Minerals · Handmade Jewelry & Gifts

**1993 Pine Banks Rd,
Putney, Vermont 05346**

Open Saturdays 10 AM – 4 PM
Appointments Available Anytime

Call: (802) 376-7313

- Rare Rocks, Mineral Specimens & Crystals
- Jewelry & Gifts Made from Natural Stone
- Lapidary Services – Cutting, Drilling & More!

 **Mention this ad for
10% OFF your purchase!**

Come explore nature's treasures and discover beautiful, one-of-a-kind stone creations at Fred's!

JUDD'S AUTO REPAIRS
6109 US ROUTE 5
WESTMINSTER, VERMONT 05158
802-722-4200
David & Elaine Judd, owners
Steve Godfrey, mechanic
Automotive Repair Vermont State Inspection