



KURN HATTIN CONTINUES LONG TRADITION OF HONORING VETERANS



Kurn Hattin Home and School for Children welcomed local veterans to campus on Nov. 11 for its annual Veterans Day Celebration, a morning filled with gratitude, music, and community pride.

The event featured performances by the Kurn Hattin Band and Chorus, who performed patriotic selections and led the audience in a spirited sing-along. Vermont State Representative Mike Mrowicki served as guest speaker, sharing reflections on service, citizenship, and community.

Children lined the campus roadway with thank-you signs and personally presented handmade cards

to each veteran—a heartfelt show of appreciation. Following the program, veterans joined students and staff for a special lunch in their honor.

“This event is always one of the most meaningful of the year,” said Executive Director Sue Kessler. “It gives our children a chance to express gratitude and connect with the values of respect and service that define our community.”

Kurn Hattin extends its deepest thanks to all who have served and to everyone who helped make this day of remembrance and appreciation so special.

RECOVERY IN JAMAICA



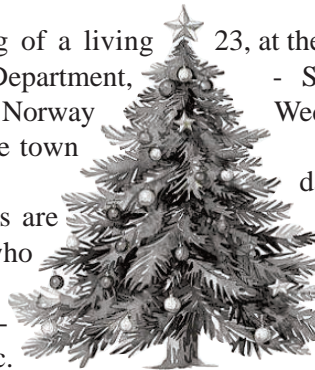
Harlow Farm and its employees whole-heartedly thank everyone who contributed funds to help our Jamaican workers recover from the devastation of Hurricane Melissa. We're fortunate to be part of such a close-knit, generous community!

TOWN HOLIDAY EVENTS

Everyone is invited to the lighting of a living Christmas tree at the Westminster Fire Department, at 6 p.m., on Friday, Dec. 5. The 18-foot Norway spruce tree was recently donated to the town by Tim and Stacey Allen.

The annual Westminster luminaries are scheduled again this year. Anyone who wants to lend a hand may:

- Help fill bags with sand and candles, starting at 5:30 p.m., Tuesday, Dec.



23, at the Fire Department.

- Set out bags along Route 5 in the village on Wednesday morning, Dec. 24.

- Light candles in the bags on Wednesday afternoon.

- Help pick up bags and candles at 7 a.m., Thursday, Dec. 25.

Join your neighbors to help out, do what you can, and enjoy the holiday spirit!

LIGHT UP WESTMINSTER HOLIDAY LIGHTS CONTEST

Let's come together to make this holiday season bright with lights. Don't miss the chance to light up Westminster with your holiday creativity.

Display Requirements: Decorations must be visible from the road and fully lit from dusk to 9 p.m. each evening from Dec. 22-28.

All residents in any part of Westminster can enter, with the entry deadline Dec. 26.

Participants will be judged on three categories: Glitz

and Glitter, Classic Christmas & Judges Choice.

Winners will receive cash prizes or maple syrup to be announced after the New Year.

By entering the contest, participants agree to have their address published in the Westminster Gazette and their displays photographed for promotional purposes.

For more information and a form to register, contact the Town Clerk's office at 802-722-4091 or email, clerk@westminstervt.org.

HOLIDAYS EVENTS & SHOP LOCAL IN BELLOWS FALLS 2025

The Bellows Falls Downtown Development Alliance (BFDDA) invites the community to celebrate the season with Holidays in Bellows Falls 2025, a two-week event designed to bring people downtown to shop, explore, and enjoy the holiday spirit.

From Nov. 28 through Dec. 13, downtown Bellows Falls will be filled with festive activities, shopping promotions, and community cheer.

At the heart of the event is the **Holiday Bingo Game**, encouraging shoppers to visit participating businesses, complete Bingo squares, and enter for a chance to win in the **Holiday Raffle** — one of the event's most popular features. Raffle prizes range from \$25-\$100+, generously donated by local businesses and community supporters.

New this year: **The Festive Fashion Weekend Instagram Contest** on December 6-7 invites pets, people, and groups to dress in their holiday best and ugly

sweaters. Participants can have their photos taken professionally at Hetty Green Park, post them on Instagram, and compete for prizes in the raffle baskets. The contest is open to all, and the public can vote for their favorite entries.

“We hope every business, resident, and visitor will take part — whether it's hosting an event, joining the Holiday Bingo game, or just stopping in to say hello downtown,” said Casey Griffin, Executive Director of the BFDDA. “We know money can be tight and times are hard right now, but even small choices — visiting a local shop, sharing a post, showing up to a community event and having a good time — make a big difference individually and in our community.”

For more information, including a full schedule of events, participating businesses, and raffle details, visit: <https://bellowsfallsvt.org/holidays-in-bellows-falls-2025/>

WESTMINSTER TOWN MEETING 2026

FLOOR VOTE

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 2026
AT BELLOWS FALLS UNION HIGH SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - 10:00 AM

AUSTRALIAN BALLOT

TUESDAY, MARCH 3, 2026
AT THE WESTMINSTER FIRE STATION
GROUT AVENUE, WESTMINSTER
8:00 AM TO 7:00 PM

MONDAY, JANUARY 12, 2026

LAST DAY TO FILE PETITIONS WITH THE TOWN CLERK

SIGNED BY AT LEAST 5% OF THE REGISTERED VOTERS (129) FOR ARTICLES TO BE INCLUDED ON TOWN MEETING WARNING

MONDAY, JANUARY 26, 2026 - 5:00PM

DEADLINE TO FILE WITH THE TOWN CLERK NOMINATING PETITIONS SIGNED BY AT LEAST 1% OF THE REGISTERED VOTERS (26) FOR TOWN OFFICES TO BE VOTED ON BY

AUSTRALIAN BALLOT ON TUESDAY, MARCH 3, 2026.

CONSENT OF CANDIDATE FORM MUST ALSO BE SUBMITTED.

Our Monthly Community Newspaper December 2025 Vol. 21 No.12

Westminster Gazette

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“WE ARE HERE TO SELL COWS” - PART IV - FINAL

LOOKING BACK - A TIME OF CHANGE

LEVI CHICKERING REMEMBERS WESTMINSTER’S CHICKERING FARM

As my father sat there sipping his morning coffee, staring out into the dark early morning, he wasn't just thinking about the cows. He was thinking about the world beyond our auction farm — a world that was changing faster than anyone could keep up. It was the 1950s now, and America was on the move. World War II was over, the soldiers had come home, and across the country, a new hunger was growing.



livestock auctions were held at this historic site. Dairy cows, beef cattle, and calves were sold on a commission basis, drawing consignments and buyers from across the region.

- How It Worked - Dairy cows were consigned by professional livestock dealers and independent farmers. Beef cattle and calves came from both dealers and local farms. A sale commission

Towns were getting bigger, roads were being paved faster, and everywhere you looked, people were dreaming bigger than they ever had before. But out here, in the folds of Vermont's river valleys, life was still measured in seasons and cattle. Dairy farming has been the backbone of New England since the early 1800s when settlers first cleared the thick forests and planted their fields. Dairy Cows were not just animals — they were a way of life. A farm without dairy cows was no farm at all. Milk money paid for new barns, sent children to school, and kept the local stores alive.

By the beginning of the 1940s, Vermont alone had over 11,000 dairy farms—small, family-run spreads where neighbors helped neighbors and where milk was made, fields were worked, and, as I remember, deals were still sealed with a handshake and a good, hard look in the eye. In the 1940s, Vermont had approximately 11,000 dairy farms, a number that has significantly declined since then. In 2025, Vermont was home to 508 dairy farms, a significant decrease from the 11,000 dairy farms in previous years. Despite the decline, dairy remains a key driver of Vermont's agricultural economy.

Dairy cow auctions like ours weren't just about busi-

ness. They were the heartbeat of the rural economy. They were a gathering of hopes, debts, and dreams. When Uncle Albert began building the auction business in 1943 and Father joined him in 1948, it wasn't just about selling cows — it was about keeping the farms alive. Helping dairy farmers find the right cow to keep the milk flowing, to fill their milk cans, and to load onto the old milk trains that still clattered through the countryside every morning. It was a new way of doing business.

Back then, in 1950s, selling hundreds of dairy cows in one day wasn't just a success — it was a statement. It meant our dairy cow auction sale was part of something bigger. Feeding America as it found its way into a brand-new world. And so even though Papa was dog-tired, he smiled that night, knowing in his bones that what we were doing mattered. Not just to us — but to everyone who depended on a glass of fresh milk on their table.

The Facts

- Westminster Commission Auction Sales: Livestock Auctions 1943–1960, Westminster, Vermont
- A hub for northeastern United States livestock trade: From 1943 through November 1960, weekly

was charged based on a percentage of the sale price of the livestock sold at the auction.

- Regional Reach - Cattle and consignors came from: New England states, New York State, and Eastern Canada. The auction became a key link in the northeastern United States livestock trade.

- Chickering Family Operators - The auction was managed by four generations of the Chickering family: Albert F. Chickering (1943–1955), Arthur H. Chickering Jr. (1948–1960), Samuel Chickering (1955–1957), Levi Chickering (1957–1960).

The leadership ensured honest dealings, steady supply, and a respected name in the livestock trade. Step into the legacy of rural agriculture, commerce, and community—a time when neighbors traded livestock with a handshake, auctions echoed across small towns, and the land shaped both livelihood and lifestyle.

Download and read the stories at: chickeringranch.com, "The Chickering Family Legacy in Livestock Dealing." Alma Beals has donated the Gazette's physical copy of Chickering's book to the Butterfield Library for the community to enjoy.

VERMONT WRITERS CASH PRIZE OFFERED BY GMP

Green Mountain Power (GMP) is reminding Vermonters to enter the Vermont Writers' Prize by submitting a poem or work of prose by Jan. 1, 2026. The annual contest celebrates Vermont and offers a way for Vermonters to explore and share their experiences.

Two prizes are awarded – for poetry and prose. Winners will be announced in late spring 2026 and their works will be published in the Summer issue of

Vermont Magazine. Each winner receives \$1,250.

“There is still time to get typing and share your work. The Vermont experience continues to evolve and each year it is exciting to see how the entries reveal the depth of creativity and thought of so many Vermonters and how this state inspires them,” said Kristin Carlson, a Prize judge and GMP vice president.

The contest is open to Vermont residents and en-

tries are accepted for poetry and prose categories. Employees of Vermont Magazine and GMP and their families are not eligible to enter.

Your poem, short story, essay, or play should explore Vermont – its people, places, values, or history. You can learn more details and submit entries for the 2026 Vermont Writers' Prize at www.vtmag.com/post/vermont-writers-prize-2025-winners.



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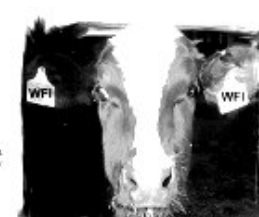
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Pages 2-3 - approx. 4"x5" \$300 a year - \$30 for one month
Pages 4-7 - approx. 4.7"x6.8" \$525 a year - \$80 for one month
Page 8 - approx. 2.5"x3.25" - \$200 a year

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

WESTMINSTER CENTER SCHOOL ANNUAL HARVEST MEAL

By Elizabeth Harty,
Principal

Students, staff, and families will gather on Tuesday, Nov. 25 at 11:00 for the school's annual Harvest Meal, a favorite fall tradition that brings the school community together.

This special meal highlights the importance of supporting local agriculture while teaching students where their food comes from.

Teachers, staff, and volunteers help serve the meal, creating a warm and welcoming atmosphere for all.



From creating decorations and setting up tables to cutting vegetables, peeling squash, chopping potatoes,

and mincing garlic; all students have a hand in planting, harvesting and preparing this meal. Most ingredients are harvested right here in the WCS learning garden. What isn't harvested here is produced within a 20 mile radius. This year, we are prioritizing a "conscious clean up" to reduce our waste stream. We will compost all food scraps, bowls, cups, and silverware, along with reusing any non-compostable items.

The event reminds everyone of the importance of gratitude, kindness, and community as the holiday season approaches. We hope to see all of our families at this event.

If you are interested in volunteering for this event, please reach out to Liz Harty, School Principal, at elizabeth.harty@wnesu.com.

In photo, Westminster Center School 6th graders eating lunch.

2026 WESTMINSTER DOG LICENSES

2026 DOG LICENSES WILL BE AVAILABLE AT THE WESTMINSTER TOWN CLERK'S OFFICE MONDAY DECEMBER 29th

OFFICE HOURS: 8:30 AM TO 4 PM MON-FRI
LICENSE FEES ARE:
\$11.00 FOR SPAYED/NEUTERED
\$13.00 FOR NON-SPAYED/NEUTERED

YOU WILL ALSO NEED CURRENT RABIES INFORMATION. IF YOU WOULD PREFER TO RENEW BY MAIL, PLEASE CALL THE TOWN CLERK'S OFFICE AT 802-722-4091 FOR INFORMATION.
ALL DOGS MUST BE REGISTERED BY APRIL 1, 2026.

BUTTERFIELD LIBRARY - COME GET YOUR LIBRARY CARD

2025 was a big and busy year for Butterfield Library.

Right at the top of the year, we swapped our hours around, adding earlier and later hours in the beginning of the week. We introduced a few regular events and the runaway hit was our monthly book club (bring your own book, any book!)

We're keeping that going and all are welcome — please join us on the third Tuesday of the month at 5 p.m.

The library was also honored to welcome a large variety of guests to present on their topics of expertise, including Jessie Haas, Mary Scherbatskoy and Ruth Grandy, Richard Grumbine, and Alexandra Lacy.

The library even hit the road to visit Dartmouth College and take in some very special collections — a signed book by Helen Keller, even! Sending a huge

thank you to all of our wonderful presenters from this year.

I also want to extend a huge thank you to anyone and everyone who walked through the Butterfield Library doors, whether it was to admire the woodwork (always appreciated!), remark upon the spookiness of the building (popular with some of our younger patrons!) or to get your brand new library card (or use your well-loved and well-used card.) Each and every one of you has contributed to making Butterfield Library the vibrant community space that it is — and you truly make my job so much fun.

If you're reading this and don't already have a library card of your own, please take this as your formal invitation to come get one. It's free, pretty much painless, and quick, and will welcome you into a resource- and community-rich space.

NEWS FROM WESTMINSTER CARES - CLASSES OFFERED

The Westminster Cares Board of Directors met Thursday November 13th at the Westminster Institute with President Lori Larue presiding. The following board members attended: Vice President Pat Goodell, Vice President Pete Harrison, Treasurer Frannie Waldron, Secretary Doug Oftedahl, Don Dawson, Nancy Dalzell, Cindy Moses, Kathy Elliott and Director Donna Dawson.

Donations received as of November 14, 2025:

In memory of Mary Brandt from Anne Dempsey
In memory of Paul and Lillian Chaffee from Debi Chaffee Seamans
In memory of Pat and Walt Jennison from Betty Miller

In memory of our cousin, Joseph Pandolfi, from Susan and Rich Talbot

Programs & Services Provided in October 2025

Meals-on-Wheels:

In October, the Meals on Wheels program had 2 people end meals. We are now delivering to 19 seniors, five days per week. Those in need of weekend meals received two frozen meals each Friday.

If you are a Westminster resident aged 60 or older, and are unable to shop or cook for yourself, you may be eligible for home-delivered meals. Call Westminster Cares for more information: (802) 722-3607.

Transportation Program:

14 rides were given in October. Twelve were for medical appointments and two were for the pharmacy

and bank.

Friendly Visits & Assistance:

In October, volunteers made 8 friendly visits and delivered Pet Food to those enrolled in the Foxy Pet Food Program of Senior Solutions.

Medical Equipment:

In October we loaned out 10 pieces of equipment; had 3 items returned to us and had 4 items donated to us.

Community Nurse Program:

Starting in January, the Community Nurse will be holding monthly Blood Pressure Clinics during SOUPer Wednesday lunches at the First Congregational Church. To make an appt. for a home visit, call the office at 722-3607. (There is no charge for this service.)

Elder Tech Program:

The next Elder Tech session will be held on Saturday, December 6th from 9am-12pm at the Westminster Institute. Call the office to make an appt. for a one-on-one session.

Tai Chi Classes ~

Come out and try it!
Ever hear how wonderful Tai Chi is for your

health and want to try it out?

Westminster Cares and O.H.A.A. certified instructor Leslie Lassetter of O.H.A.A. are offering a free class on Wednesday, December 3rd at 11am. Come out and try it! A new class for beginners will start up in the new year.

Seated Tai Chi: Can't stand for an hour-long class? Seated Tai Chi for older adults meets Tuesdays at 12:15pm. Come and try a class at no charge.

To sign up or ask questions contact Donna Dawson at Westminster Cares: (802) 722-3607 or email wcares@sover.net. Classes are held at the Westminster Institute, 3534 U.S. Rte 5.

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Nature Notes - Watching the Canada Geese

by Alma Beals, Vermont Master Gardener and Naturalist

I watch for the Canada geese in the spring and fall, flocks in vees overhead, or on the water, and in the meadows. Some people don't like them because they are messy, but I like them. Easy for me to say, I don't have to clean up after them.

I find it very calming to watch them slowly floating back and forth on the water, first one way and then the other. I keep watching them, trying to figure out which ones give the signal to lift off and how they know which ones will go, leaving a scattering of white feathers on the water.

One day a lone goose slowly circling by my car, lifted her head as the geese lifted and gave a few honks as they passed over. Then she settled back to circling. Had she become separated from her mate or is she injured? I looked for her the next day, but she was not there.

Geese, unlike ducks, mate for life. They do not break up at the end of the breeding season but stay together through fall and winter. They choose one partner for life. Generally only death will separate them and cause the remaining goose to choose a new mate while ducks form new pairs each fall or winter for the next season.



photos by Don Clark

They usually nest on the ground near water, sometimes on a stump, mound or muskrat nest. Every year a pair nest on top of the beaver house at our local marsh. The nest is made up of sticks, cattails, and grasses and lined with down from the female's breast. The site is selected and built mostly by the female.

She incubates the four to 10 eggs for 28 days while her mate is nearby guarding. Geese have precocial young. They hatch fully feathered, with eyes open, and capable of walking, swimming, and feeding within a few hours of hatching.



The adults protect them from predators and lead them to good feeding areas but don't feed them. At 13 to 16 hours after hatching, young geese imprint on the first parent they see. Hopefully, that will not be a human. They must be strongly attached to have the best chance of survival.

As sad as I am to see the geese leave at the end of the year, my mood is offset by the small feeder birds that spend the winter at my feeder.

WESTMINSTER SAMPLER - A CONE OF STRING

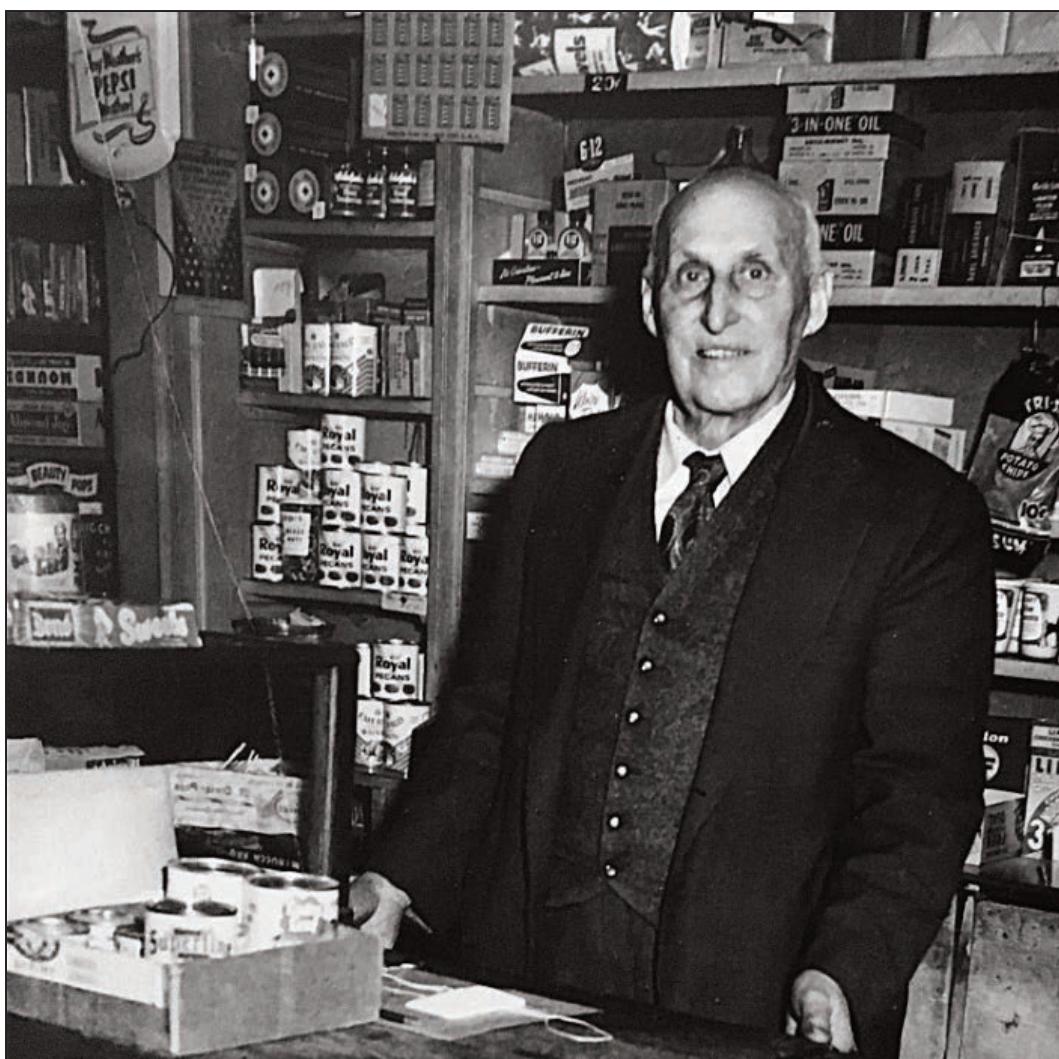
By Jessie Haas

Recently the former store building in the Westminster West village changed hands. Many readers will remember it as Seymour's Store. It closed in the 1970s, having done a slow business for several years before that. There was always a risk to buying candy bars there, as they were apt to contain worms from having sat on the shelf so long.

Before the new owners arrived, a couple of us took the opportunity to visit the old store, a space that had been Westminster West's economic hub for almost 200 years. The store is one long room running front to back of the house, with the east window looking out on the porch and the west window giving a view of the backyard. One continuous counter runs the entire length of the room. Rather crudely made wooden shelves, drawers, and bins still held a few lonely items of stock when we visited. A large cone of string was positioned high above the counter with the end hanging down, handy for the storekeeper to pull some off to tie up a package. A photo of Frank Chapman, who owned the store from 1899 to 1958, shows a length of white string dangling down to the counter—the same kind of string, though probably not the identical cone.

Sharon Boccelli was hired to manage the estate sale. She donated two items from the store to the Historical Society, a long pair of wooden tongs with heavy wire ends for bringing down items stored in rafters, and a small wooden abacus for totting up people's bills.

Items like this connect us to a time when that long,



dark room and the stove in the center wall were the center of village life. Chapman ran the business as it had been run by the owners before him, with modern improvements as they came along. He took beef, lamb, eggs, and syrup as credit items, and sold everything from cheese (off a big wheel aged in the cellar) to coal and gasoline.

He brought in dry goods, including boots and shoes from Dunham Brothers in Brattleboro, and also acted as a cobbler, making shoe repairs.

The store was also the post office, with two daily

deliveries, one from Putney and one from Saxtons River. Chapman was postmaster, and Willis Braley, a disabled man, handled the northern mail route. He delivered children to the village school (up near the church) if they lived over a mile away. Then he picked up the outgoing mail and drove by buggy or sleigh up to Saxtons River. There he waited for the mail delivery from Bellows Falls, dropped it off at Chapman's Store, and drove the children home from school.

Two mail routes, twice daily deliveries, and two outgoing mail deadlines to meet, would have brought villagers into the store/post office frequently, with opportunities for socializing, romance, and political discussions.

Before Chapman the store was owned by W.A. Gorham, who bought it from Alfred P. Ranney, a veteran of Gettysburg. Ranney bought it from Ephraim Wilcox. We have a letter dated January 26, 1862, describing a "Political Fracas" in "the fashionable store of E. Wilcox" in which farmer Fessenden Clark knocked down George W. Daniels, a government official. Sadly the writer seemed to have

no idea what the fracas was about. If that cone of string hanging above the counter had ears to hear and a voice to speak, we'd know a lot more about Westminster history.

There is a Facebook page with quite a few pictures of the store. Go to Old Westminster West Village Store, Westminster VT.

In photo, store owner Frank Chapman behind the counter with the string visible to his right.

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, Dec. 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 December 21st.

Number of calls in October: 36

Number of calls through November 15th: 23

Number of calls calendar year to date: 450

Number of calls fiscal year, July 1st to date: 183

Association Meeting: The Westminster Fire and Rescue Association met for their regular meeting November 4th, 2025, with President J.T. Tabolt presiding. There were 26 members present and 4 excused. Currently there are 48 members of the volunteer fire department. The department welcomed Tim Jeffrey as a new member under the 6-month probation guidelines.

Halloween Open House: The fire department held their annual open house Halloween Friday evening the 31st to hand out candy, cider and popcorn. Several people of all ages appeared in a variety of costumes to share in the fun.

Several members of the fire department put together a "haunted house" that was enjoyed by many. Boo!!

Walking in the dark: Now that standard time has arrived, several people will be out walking after dark. If you are a walker or a biker, be sure to be wearing bright colors including a reflective vest or piece of clothing. Even carrying a flashlight is a good idea.

We see so many people out there wearing dark clothing. And of course, always walk on the left side of the road facing traffic and bike on the right side with the flow of traffic. When crossing the road or street, even in a crosswalk, don't assume the driver of the on-coming vehicle can see you.

You are in charge of your own safety.

Season Reminder: The house fire that took place in Westminster a couple of weeks ago is believed to have started from a box fan. Check your fans for good running condition, clean them and be sure they don't get hot when running. And clean dryer and bathroom vents. Also remove window air conditioners, remove and drain garden hoses and outside faucets.

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 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: October turned out to be another very busy month with 36 calls for the month. Here is the breakdown: 23 rescue/medical call; 2 lift assist; 2 false alarm/ alarm sounding; 1 mental health emergency; 1 structure fire; 1 car fire; 1 bike accident; 1 service call; 2 mutual calls, both to Putney; 2 for tree on wires/power line down

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 October

Bruce Mickle

Donations made in November

Bruce Mickle

Pat Haas

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.

MEALS ON WHEELS IN VERMONT

Meals on Wheels programs across the United States provide essential food services to elderly, disabled, and homebound individuals who are unable to prepare meals for themselves. In Vermont, these services are especially critical due to the state's aging population and rural geography.

We have one of the oldest populations in the nation. According to the Vermont Department of Aging and Independent Living, approximately 28.4% of the state's residents are aged 60 and older. As the number of older Vermonters grows, so does the demand for meal delivery services. Seniors often face a variety of challenges that make it difficult to access or prepare nutritious meals—physical limitations, transportation barriers, financial strain, and isolation are all common factors. For these individuals, Meals on Wheels not only provides nutritious food but also helps combat social isolation by providing regular contact with a friendly volunteer or delivery driver.

Challenges Faced by Meals on Wheels Programs

While Meals on Wheels programs in Vermont have made great strides in meeting the needs of older adults, there are still significant challenges to address:

1. **Funding and Resources:** Many local Meals on Wheels programs are funded through a combination of state and federal grants, donations, and volunteer efforts. However, with an increasing number of older adults requiring meals, funding has not always kept up with the demand.

2. **Transportation and Delivery:** Vermont's rural landscape presents unique challenges when it comes to meal delivery. In some areas, delivery routes can span large distances, and volunteers often need to navigate difficult roads during winter months. Ensuring that meals are delivered in a timely manner, especially in harsh weather conditions, remains a logistical challenge.

3. **Meeting Dietary Needs:** As the senior population becomes more diverse, the need for specialized meal options grows. Many seniors have specific dietary re-



quirements, such as low-sodium, diabetic-friendly, or gluten-free meals. While some programs in Vermont are able to accommodate these needs, it can be difficult to provide a wide range of options with limited funding. Despite these challenges, Meals on Wheels continues to have a significant impact on the lives of Vermont's elderly and homebound residents. Beyond the provision of nutritious meals, the program serves as a vital link to the community. Many participants report feeling less isolated due to the regular visits from volunteers. This social interaction is a key element of the program, as loneliness and isolation are major issues for older adults.

Studies show that access to regular, healthy meals can reduce the risk of malnutrition, chronic illness, and hospital re-admissions. The program also helps reduce the burden on emergency services and long-term care facilities by enabling seniors to remain at home and maintain their independence for longer. Advocacy groups are working to secure more funding, including increasing state support for senior services. The demand for Meals on Wheels is expected to continue growing as the population ages, and it will be crucial for Vermont's communities to support these programs through donations, volunteerism, and state funding.

Federal funding from the Older Americans Act passes through to states where it is used to reimburse kitchens and meals providers for the cost of producing meals. Historically, the reimbursement rate is much less than the true cost to make meals.

As a matter of fact, in 2026 the number of meals funded by the state will be capped for each organization delivering meals. While demand for meals is expected to rise, this will essentially limit the number of people receiving meals unless organizations take on funding that cost themselves.

In photo, Westminster Cares volunteer, Matt Conklin, delivering Meals on Wheels. By Lori Larue.

HARLOW FARM WINTER MARKET OPENS DEC. 4

We're opening Thursday, Dec. 4, for the 2025-2026 season at Harlow Farmstand. This year, the market will be open on Thursday, Friday and Saturday, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., each day until Jan 31. Then it will be open Fridays and Saturdays.

Our hoophouses will be growing vegetables non-stop throughout the winter to bring you organic spinach, arugula, parsley, cilantro, salad mix, kale, and red and green cabbage.

We'll also have our organic root crops: potatoes,

onions, beets, carrots, rutabagas, radishes, and parsnips.

We'll offer Harlow Farm-raised eggs, along with our jams, salsa, and other preserves. Frozen organic vegetables and berries, such as sweet corn, strawberries and blueberries, will be available.

We'll have products from local farms and businesses, including Old Athens Farm and Orchard Hill Breadworks, honey from Bliss Gardens, and maple syrup from Bunker Farm.

See you this winter and thanks for your support!

PARKS PLACE SHARES GRATITUDE AND HOLIDAY CHEER

As the holiday season approaches, Parks Place Community Resource Center is reflecting on the generosity and community spirit that make our work possible year after year.

"We are deeply thankful for all the support we've received this season," said Jennifer Jung Tolaro-Heidbrink, Executive Director of Parks Place. "It's incredible to see how our community comes together to care for one another."

Parks Place extends heartfelt thanks to everyone who contributed to the recent diaper drive — and to the local businesses and organizations that hosted donation bins and made generous contributions to help keep area families supplied with this essential need.

The organization is also grateful to the Thomas Thompson Trust and the Holt Fund for their commitment to an ongoing partnership through a three-year continuous grant, ensuring that Parks Place can continue providing vital services and programs to families in need.

"We're also so appreciative of our Board of Directors, who not only provide steadfast support but also champion our mission throughout the community," Tolaro-Heidbrink added. "Their dedication truly strengthens everything we do."

As Parks Place looks ahead to the holidays, the team is seeking "holiday elves" — individuals, families, or organizations willing to purchase gifts for local children through the annual Holiday Gift Program. Each year, Parks Place works with Chroma Technology to fulfill the wish lists of local children throughout the WNESU school district. The organization is also welcoming monetary donations to help purchase food gift cards for families, so they can share a warm meal this holiday season.

This year, Parks Place has seen a significant in-



crease in community members seeking assistance, including many families who have never reached out for help before. With the rising cost of living, these supports are more important than ever to help ensure local families can meet their basic needs and experience the warmth of the season.

Those interested in getting involved or donating can contact Parks Place at 802-463-9927 ext. 101 or director@parksplacevermont.com.

"This time of year reminds us how powerful it is when neighbors support neighbors," said Tolaro-Heidbrink. "We couldn't do it without our incredible community."

REMEMBRANCES

DECEMBER 2025

TIMOTHY DUNLAP SMITH, 80
2/3/1945 - 9/30/2025
PHILMONT, NY & WESTMINSTER
TAUGHT AT BF MIDDLE SCHOOL

CHARLES "CHARLIE" ARON, 75
10/22/1950 - 10/25/2025
WESTMINSTER, VT

VERONICA BRELSFORD, 89
10/21/1935 - 10/31/2025
WESTMINSTER WEST & PUTNEY

LLOYD TED BROOKS, 95
4/24/1930 - 11/1/2025
WESTMORELAND, NH

EDWARD HINDES, 84
1/26/1941 - 10/26/2025
WESTMINSTER AND
BELLOWS FALLS, VT

ANDREW RAWLING, 27
8/6/1998 - 11/2025
BELLOWS FALLS, VT

WESTMINSTER CARES LAUNCHES 2025-2026 ANNUAL APPEAL

For 37 years and counting, funds raised from the community, the Town of Westminster, and local businesses, in combination with fundraising events and grants, have enabled Westminster Cares to meet our budget requirements and pay for the programs and services we provide to seniors and adults with disabilities in our community.

The Annual Appeal is our primary fundraising source. Appeal cards are mailed out to all Westminster residents at Thanksgiving and our goal is to raise 30-35% of our annual budget from this mailing. Funds generated from the Appeal support programs and services such as Meals-on-Wheels; Equipment Loans; Transportation Program; a part-time Community Nurse; Shopping Assistance; Friendly Check-Ins; Healthy Aging Exercise classes; Workshops and Resource and Referral Assistance.

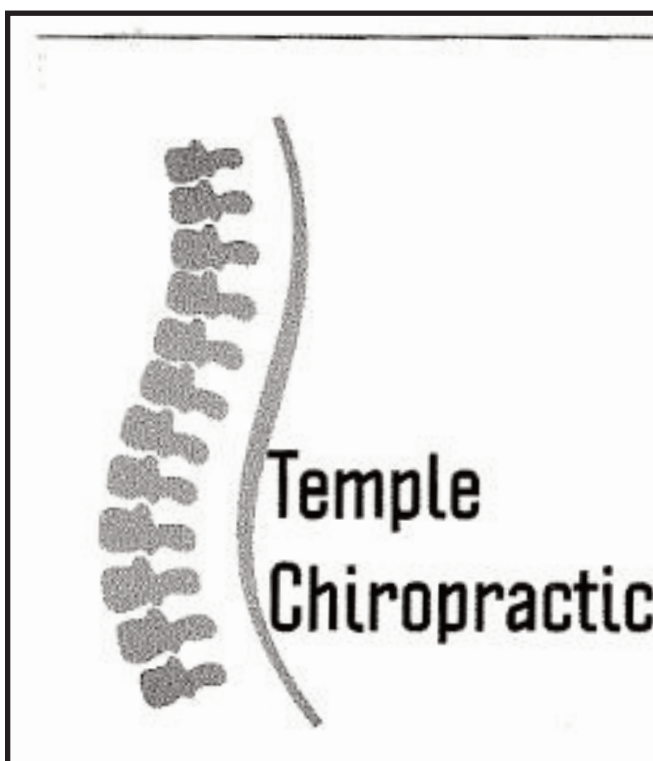
We hope you will consider contributing to this year's Appeal and help us raise funds so that Westminster Cares can continue to support older adults as they strive to maintain independence and adapt to the ongoing challenges of aging in place.

Gifts made in someone's honor or memory will be printed in an upcoming Gazette. Donations to the Annual Appeal can be made throughout the winter by check and mailed to Westminster Cares at: P.O. Box 312 Westminster, VT 05158. Donations can also be made on our website via Credit Card or Pay Pal: www.westminstercares.org.

No gift is too small and every single gift is appreciated!

One of the strengths of our town of Westminster is "Neighbors Helping Neighbors." We thank you for your continued support of our work in the community.

**HAPPY HOLIDAYS
FROM ALL OF US AT
THE WESTMINSTER
GAZETTE.
THANKS FOR
SUPPORTING
YOUR COMMUNITY
PAPER!**



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

HOMESHARE PROGRAM ARRIVES IN SOUTHEASTERN VERMONT

HomeShare Vermont has officially broadened its reach to include communities in Windsor and Windham Counties, uniting Vermonters to address the state's housing crisis with creative homesharing solutions.

With this expansion, HomeShare Vermont now serves 12 of Vermont's 14 counties including all of Windham and Windsor County towns.

For more than 40 years, HomeShare Vermont has worked to create matches based on needs, interests and lifestyles. This often includes help around the house and companionship, and sometimes minimal rent – the average guests pay is \$379 monthly, with 30 percent of guests paying no rent. Guests provide an average of 8.5 hours weekly of help, including housekeeping, yardwork, pet care, errands and general camaraderie. All applicants to the program undergo six background checks and several reference checks.

Through a partnership with the Windham & Windsor Housing Trust, staff are in place and ready to vet and match homeowners or hosts with guests or those seeking



housing.

This unique and inclusive housing model is utilized by people of all ages – ranging from 19 to 100. A recent survey of hosts and guests showed that 80 percent of homesharers reported feeling happier and 79 percent feeling less lonely as a result of living with a matched person.

“By bringing Vermonters together, we are fortunate to have witnessed vibrant, inter-generational, caring and supportive relationships form,” HomeShare Vermont Executive Director Connor Timmons. “Homesharing works because it just makes sense for so many people in our state.”

“This is a great program,” Bruce Whitney, Director of Homeownership with Windham & Windsor Housing Trust shares. “We are very happy to be working with HomeShare and excited to begin working with people in our region to identify hosts and guests and facilitate successful home shares.”

To learn more and apply to be a host or guest, visit homesharevermont.org. Windham & Windsor Housing Trust is a nonprofit organization of southeast Vermont with a mission to strengthen our communities through the development and stewardship of permanently affordable housing and through ongoing support and advocacy for residents. Find more information at www.homemattershere.org.

WESTMINSTER HAPPENINGS

WE'RE ALWAYS UPDATING THE HAPPENINGS ENTRIES. PLEASE LET US KNOW WHEN THINGS CHANGE OR WHEN SOMETHING SHOULD BE ADDED OR REMOVED. THANK YOU!

FAITH COMMUNITY

The First Congregational Church of Westminster

The First Congregational Church of Westminster is located on Rt 5 in Westminster.

Rev. Richard O'Donnell is Pastor. Each Sunday we have a children's message and a well attended fellowship hour after church. We are a growing congregation and we would love to see you.

Nov 23rd. Worship at 10:00 am. Advent wreath making takes place after church for home use

Nov 24th. Ecumenical Thanksgiving Service 6:00 pm at the First Baptist Church in Bellows Falls

Dec. 2nd. Women's Fellowship 10:30 am meeting. Hall and Zoom

Dec 6th. Christmas Bazaar 9:00am -2:00 pm Food, crafts Lunch will be served. Located in Church Hall

Dec 7th 10:00 Service. Advent Season.

Dec 7th 4:00 pm. Christmas Concert with Westmoreland Town Band in the Church

Dec 13th Congregation Christmas Party. 100-4:00 pm. Fun time lots of food and good memories to be made with friends. In the church hall

Dec 14th. 10:00 Service Advent Season with Communion.

Dec 15th. Standing Committee 5:30 pm on Zoom

Dec 21st. 10:00 Service Advent Season with Children Christmas Pageant

Dec.24th. CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE 5:30 pm Candlelight, all the favorite hymns and a great sermon. All are welcome!

Dec 28th. 10:00 am Christmas Season.

We hope to see you at any of our social events, Sunday Church Service or Christmas Eve. Everyone is welcome and we mean it!

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.

United Church of Bellows Falls

Worship service is at 10 a.m. every Sunday at 8 School Street. All are welcome to attend.

Following the service, we host a time of refreshments where you can get to know other members of our community. We offer many other services throughout the week, so there's something for everyone.

To learn more, call us at (802) 463-4323 or visit us. Also find us on Facebook. We're always happy to meet new people and welcome them into our church family.

Putney Friends Meeting - Quakers

17 Bellows Falls Rd (Rt 5) just north of Putney Village. Sunday worship at 8:30 and 10:30, Intergenerational Singing at 10. All are Welcome! Check www.putneyfriendsmeeting.org for more information.

ACTIVITIES

Butterfield Library hours are Mon. 10 a.m. - 3 p.m., Tues. 3-8 p.m. and Thur. 1-6 p.m. Sat. 10:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

Westminster West Library Hours Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday 1- 6 p.m., Saturday 10 - 2 p.m.

Gentle Yoga with Lisa Nigro Monday's 10:30-11:45 a.m. at the Westminster Institute This is an all levels class with a focus on building strength, increasing range of motion and flexibility, and improving balance. All poses can be modified to be either more accessible or more challenging.

Radiance Yoga: A slow Yoga fusion class with focus on immune and nervous systems, balance, ways of breathing, deep relaxation for over all health. At Westminster West Congregational Church, 44 Church St. Thursdays, 9:30-10:45 a.m. \$15 per class or \$54 for 4 classes (paid for month). Instructor is Elizabeth Bunker, shimmerez@gmail.com. Call for further info : 603 835-2900, text 978 793-2256.

Living Strong Classes with Ronnie Friedman, Karen Walter Online - Mondays & Thursdays 722-3607

Tai Chi Seated Class Tues. 12:15-1:15pm Intermediate Classes Tues. 11-12 and 6-7pm New Beginner Class forming soon. At the Westminster Institute

Souper Wednesdays

Homemade soups at Congregational Church Rt. 5 January through April 12-2 p.m. For deliveries Tina 802-376-7330

East Putney Contradance at Pierce's Hall - 121 East Putney Falls Road off Rt. 5 (look for the signs) The November Contra Dance at Pierce's Hall will be on Saturday, Nov. 22

6 pm - Family Hour with Dancing for all ages -- followed by a half-hour break with snacks

7:30 - Contra Dance (starting with instructions for beginners)

9:30 - Last Waltz

Family Dance is free; Contra Dance is by donation Stay in touch at eputneypierceshall@gmail.com

Due to the holidays, there will be no dance in December.

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

Coffee Mornings - Coffee, Community, Conversation Westminster West Library, Saturdays from 10 to 2. All welcome, please drop in!

Zumba Fitness at Westminster Institute: Latin and

world rhythm music, set to easy-to-follow choreography. Hybrid Classes: Tuesdays & Thursdays at 4:30 p.m Pre-registration and status review is required; contact: ZIN Certified Instructor: Pauline Blake O'Brien, 802-376-5397, paulineblakeob@outlook.com.

MEETINGS

Town Clerk - 802-722-4091

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

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

Conservation Commission meets every 4th Thursday at 7 p.m. alternating between Westminster West Library and the Westminster Institute. To attend via Zoom, contact westminstervtconservation@gmail.com.

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

The Westminster Fire and Rescue meet on the 1st Tuesday every month, at 7 p.m. and a combined drill on the 3rd Tuesday at the Fire Station. 802-722-3178

911 Committee as needed

Westminster Cares Board 802-722-3607 Second Thursday, 4:30 p.m., Westminster Institute on-line & in person

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

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

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

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

Windmill Hill Pinnacle Association 3rd Thurs. 7 p.m. In-person or Zoom Contact: coordinator@windmillhillpinnacle.org

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

WVFD Prudential Committee meets on the 3rd Sunday of the month, at 10 a.m. at the Westminster Fire Station.



WESTMINSTER GAZETTE

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Printed by Sentinel Printing, Keene, NH

Pictures and Articles
Provided by the
Community
westminsternews@gmail.com

THE GAZETTE GRATEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGES THE SUPPORT OF ITS UNDERWRITERS:

Abigail Altabef
802 Credit Union
Stacey & Tim Allen
Kurn Hattin Homes
Town of Westminster
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ENJOY THE
BELLOWS FALLS'
PARADE OF LIGHTS
SATURDAY, DEC. 13 AT 5 P.M.

January Deadline

The deadline for the Jan. 2026 Issue of the Westminster Gazette is Wednesday, Dec. 24 Publication Date Is Wed. Dec. 31 To Contact the Westminster Gazette E-mail: westminsternews@gmail.com

BEHIND THE MIC: KURN HATTIN STUDENTS EXPLORE BROADCASTING AT WKNE

Kurn Hattin Home and School for Children launched the third year of its Career Awareness Program (CAP) with an exciting field trip to the Monadnock Media Group offices in Keene, NH.

Students joined local radio personality Steve Hamel in the studio observing the morning broadcast, learning about the technology, and stepping up to the microphones to record the weather, song introductions, and even an impromptu, ad-libbed crime drama.

The CAP visit was designed to help students understand the many roles and responsibilities involved with the daily operation of the Monadnock Media Group and radio stations in general. Steve Hamel, station and operations manager and WKNE program director, shared his journey with the students, explaining how he started as an unpaid intern at 17 and turned his passion for broadcasting into a rewarding career.

"As a kid, I knew I wanted to be on the radio—it was my dream job. Here I am living that dream," Hamel said, encouraging students to follow their passions and work hard to make their own dreams a reality.

Amanda Tyrrell, Kurn Hattin school principal, accompanied the students on the CAP trip. She emphasized the value of this hands-on experience, stating, "It's important that we prepare our students for the future. Introducing them to diverse career opportunities and broadening their horizons is part of that preparation. This experience was not only educational, it was a lot of fun!"

CAP exploration trips, such as this one to WKNE, are great student motivators. They open young minds



to new ideas, spark interest in new possibilities, and encourage students to think about where their futures might lead. If your organization is interested in hosting a CAP visit, please contact Lorie Rogers at 802-721-

6917 or lrogers@kurnhattin.org.

Above, Kurn Hattin students on the air at WKNE-FM radio.

CRAFT TOUR SOUP SALE

The Annual Soup and Dessert sale hosted by the Congregational Church of Westminister West will be open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Friday and Saturday, Nov. 28 and 29 this year.

Come while doing the Annual Craft Tour to warm up, grab coffee and sweets or to enjoy one of many delicious soups and breads.

This year's menu includes everything from Turkey Noodle Soup to West African Peanut Soup, Indonesian Vegetable to Potato Leek.

CHRISTMAS SERVICES IN WESTMINSTER

Westminister will be filled with the Christmas Spirit this year! During the season of Advent the First Congregational Church of Westminister will have lighting of the Advent wreath each Sunday at 10 a.m. There will be a Children's pageant on Dec. 21st at the 10 a.m. Service. Christmas Eve service is at 5:30 p.m.

The Congregational Church of Westminister West will feature candle-lighting with different worship leaders Rev Lise Sparrow, Dave Mulholland and Ray

Huessy on Nov. 30, Dec. 7 and 14. On Dec. 21 at 5 p.m. is the Annual Candlelighting with a Shadowplay and story-telling for children and adults alike, led by Adrienne Major.

The 11 p.m. Christmas Eve Service this year will be led by Rev. Lise Sparrow with Rev. Shawn Bracebridge leading music to include harps and other festive music.

Everyone is welcome to enjoy any and all these services.

STRATEGIC BUSINESS PLANNING WORKSHOPS

The Strategic Planning Working Group offers area businesses time, tools, and trusted peers to focus on long-term planning. Adam Grinold notes the group is built for stable teams ready to expand.

Eligibility: 4+ employees, 3+ years in operation, commitment to grow business and workforce, and a specific project to advance during the program.

Dates: January–February 2025, Location: BDCC, Brattleboro. Apply or info at www.cognitofirms.com/BDCC1/_20252026StrategicPlanningGroupInquiryForm or contact Anthony Toscano at atoscano@brattleborodevelopment.com.

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**DECEMBER BUSINESS OF
 THE MONTH:
 LIVEWATER FARM & DAIRY**



Livewater Farm and Dairy is a sustainable grass based dairy farm in Westminster West producing dairy and farm goods. With an on-site farm stand they purvey farm products grown and raised with GMO-free sustainable and regenerative practices in mind, never using chemicals, hormones or preservatives.

Taylor and Dana Acquaviva live on the farm with their three children along with Taylor's parents, Bill and Miriam whom they purchased the farm from in 2018.

Taylor and Bill conduct the seasonal farm activities from hay making, to maple syrup, to daily chores raising animals, cutting firewood, or performing routine maintenance on equipment.

Come by the farm stand located on the Westminster West Road Thursday - Sunday 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. for raw milk, eggs, fresh and aged cheese, maple syrup, grass fed beef, pasture raised chicken, pork and more!

Located at 1289 Westminster West Road. Call (802) 222-1525 or email livewaterdairy@gmail.com.

**KURN HATTIN RECEIVES NATIONAL
 RECOGNITION FOR COMMUNITY IMPACT**

Kurn Hattin Home and School for Children is pleased to announce that it has been nationally recognized as one of the top 50 small organizations in the country for excellence in team culture, community impact, and growth. The honor—part of theASURE50 Awards presented in Austin, Texas on Sept. 3rd by Kurn Hattin's payroll processor Asure Software—highlights organizations that exemplify strong values, innovation, and meaningful contributions to their communities.

Even more notably, Kurn Hattin received one of only six Gold Medallion Awards, a distinction reserved for organizations whose work demonstrates exceptional dedication and impact.

Executive Director Sue Kessler, who accepted the awards on behalf of the organization, said the recognition is a testament to the passion and commitment of the entire Kurn Hattin community.

"This recognition reflects the inspiring work happening across our campus every day," said Kessler. "From our teachers and houseparents to the many dedicated people who keep our school, cottages, and programs running—whether in the kitchen, finance office, maintenance shop, or beyond—every person at Kurn Hattin plays a vital role in helping children and families build new beginnings and bright futures."

The awards were presented during a national gathering celebrating leadership and innovation among more than 100,000 organizations served by Asure across 24 states and sixteen industries. Kessler also participated in professional sessions focused on human resources and staff engagement.

For more than 130 years, Kurn Hattin has provided a safe, nurturing home and school for children whose families are facing difficult circumstances. This recognition underscores the organization's continued excellence and its enduring impact on young lives.

**FARM MARKET DEVELOPMENT
 GRANT APPLICATION OPENS**

Applications are now being accepted for the 2025 Farm to Institution Market Development (FTIMD) Grant! Farmers, food processors, producer associations, and supply chain facilitators (non-profits, food hubs, etc.) are invited to apply for projects that will:

- Increase sales for at least one local farm; and
- Increase the amount of local food served at Vermont institutions, including schools, early childhood programs, hospitals, colleges, correctional facilities, etc.

Awards will range from \$10,000 to \$30,000, with a 25% match requirement. The application closes on Dec. 31 at 1:59 p.m.

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