



## DONNA DAWSON HONORED AS CITIZEN OF THE YEAR

At this year's Town Meeting, the Town of Westminster proudly honored Donna Dawson, former Director of Westminster Cares as Citizen of the Year, in recognition of her many years of dedicated service to the community.

Donna began her work with Westminster Cares in 2012 as Assistant Director. She then became the organization's Director in 2014. During her years, she has worked with an extraordinary team of volunteers to coordinate a robust Meals-on-Wheels schedule, arrange transportation for residents needing transportation to appointments and errands, manage the lending of medical equipment, and organize workshops promoting healthy living—including yoga, Tai Chi, and wellness programs.

In addition to her work with Westminster Cares, Donna has served on the Board of the Westminster Gazette for the past 10 years, helping support the sustainability of the Gazette at a time when community newspapers face ongoing challenges. She continues this role into retirement.

Donna also chaired the Garden Tour

Committee, an effort that requires nearly six months of planning each year. Her leadership has helped to make the tour a valued community tradition going on 30 years now. She has consistently gone above and beyond by connecting residents with other organizations whenever their needs extended beyond the services Westminster Cares could provide.

Donna retired in March 2026 and is currently assisting with the transition to the organization's new Director, Michelle Aron, who is now managing day-to-day operations.

An open house will be held on April 17th starting at 3 p.m. at the new Westminster Cares office, located in the Westminster Institute on Route 5, where community members are invited to stop in, meet Michelle, and extend their appreciation to Donna for her years of service. Westminster is grateful for Donna Dawson's dedication, compassion, and lasting impact on the community.

*Donna Dawson, Westminster Citizen of the Year for 2026.*



## WCS ROLLS SAFELY INTO SPRING



*By Elizabeth Harty, Principal*

After a robust winter sports season in January and February, including alpine skiing/riding at Okemo, swimming at the Edgar May Center in Springfield, and ice skating both in the yard and at Vermont Academy, Westminster Center School (WCS) wrapped up another awesome year of two consecutive Bike Weeks in March, and we're seeing more happy bike riders than ever!

Every student from Kindergarten to 6th grade gets hands-on cycling lessons, turning our P.E. curriculum into a celebration of bikes with a focus on safety.

Each year WCS applies for a bike trailer from Local Motion in Burlington, where their mission is to "Make it safe, accessible, and fun for everyone to bike, walk, and roll in Vermont."

Younger students and new riders work on building fundamental skills. For the older and more experienced riders, the focus was on important life lessons like road safety, hand signals, and the quick "ABC check" (Air, Brakes, Chain). Local Motion empowers our students and helps them enjoy the beautiful Vermont outdoors.

Wonderful things are happening at WCS! Westminster is fortunate to have such tremendous community partners that help kids to learn at school as well as outside of the school walls.

### THANK YOU VOTERS!

THE WESTMINSTER GAZETTE WOULD LIKE TO THANK THE VOTERS OF WESTMINSTER FOR APPROVING THE INCREASE IN FUNDING. OUR PRINTING AND POSTAGE COSTS CONTINUE TO RISE, WHICH ARE EXPENSES BEYOND OUR CONTROL. WE TRULY APPRECIATE THE SUPPORT OF THE TOWN, UNDERWRITERS, AND ADVERTISERS. DONATIONS ARE ALWAYS GRATEFULLY WELCOME. OUR VOLUNTEERS WORK HARD TO PUT TOGETHER A QUALITY PAPER REPORTING ON THE HAPPENINGS IN THE AREA. YOU WILL NOTICE THAT THE GAZETTE IS NOW IN COLOR, A DECISION MADE BY OUR PRINTER. WE HOPE YOU LIKE WHAT YOU SEE. PLEASE CONTACT THE GAZETTE IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO ADVERTISE OR MAKE A DONATION.

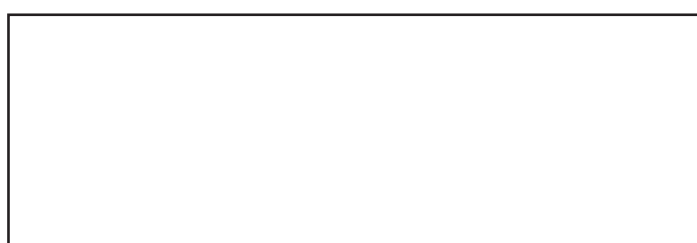
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### Westminster Gazette

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## DO YOU FEEL PAIN IN YOUR FEET, KNEES, HIPS, OR BACK? PERHAPS YOU NEED ORTHOTICS!

By Chris Hastings, for Sojourns Community Health Clinic

Excessive foot pronation occurs when the foot's arches collapse too much during walking or running. This destabilizes the body's foundation and triggers a cascade of alignment issues throughout the entire kinetic chain.

This misalignment often manifests as pain and dysfunction in the ankles, knees, hips, neck, and spine, with conditions like plantar fasciitis, shin splints, and low back pain being common consequences.

Researchers have found that people with pronated feet experience increased movement in the pelvis, knees, and feet during walking, along with changes in foot pressure distribution. These kinematic alterations increase the risk of developing musculoskeletal disorders, highlighting the importance of assessing foot function in patients with lower limb and back pain.

In a study published in 2019, researchers found that people

with overpronation experienced noticeably different muscle engagement during walking, with their back, hip flexors, and stomach muscles working harder and more intensely than people without overpronation.

A tool that we use at Sojourns to assess for foot pronation is the Foot Levelers Posture Check 3D™ scanning technology.

With this tool, both the practitioner and the patient can observe:

The percentage of a patient's misalignment between the left and right sides of the body

Highlighting imbalances and asymmetries between the feet

Reporting the score for all three arches of the foot with the 3D Foot Scanner

The pounds of ground force impact a patient has with each step in the knees, hips, and spine

A forward head posture analysis with a Tech Neck Index score taken by the 3D Neck Scanner, which also uses 130,000 3D Data of the head, neck, and shoulder to build the Nexi cus-

tom pillow

Addressing excessive pronation at the foot level can effectively resolve issues throughout the kinetic chain, demonstrating how proper biomechanical function starts from the ground up.

Forward Head Posture & The Kinetic Chain: The connection between feet and forward head posture lies in the body's kinetic chain, where misalignment in one area creates compensatory changes throughout the entire musculoskeletal system.

Custom orthotics play a crucial role in restoring balance by controlling abnormal foot mechanics, supporting proper structural alignment, and preventing the compensatory postural adaptations that lead to forward head posture.

Understanding the connection between your feet and the support they provide for all other bones in the body is integral to understanding pains that we may feel at different times in our lives.

### NEWS FROM WESTMINSTER CARES

The Westminster Cares Board of Directors met Thursday March 12th at 4:30PM at the Westminster Institute with President Lori Larue presiding. The following board members attended: Treasurer Frannie Waldron, Don Dawson, Cindy Moses, and Director, Michelle Aron.

The board discussed rescheduling the open house for April 17th, and the bake sale and lunch that was held at Town Meeting on February 28th.

**OPEN HOUSE, WELCOME & FAREWELL:** On Friday, April 17th, from 3pm-6pm, there will be an Open House at the Institute. The community is invited to meet Michelle Aron, the new Director; say farewell to Donna Dawson as she retires; and see our new office space. We will be serving appetizers, desserts and refreshments ~ please join us!

**WESTMINSTER CARES GARDEN TOUR:** The 23rd annual Westminster Cares Garden Tour will be held on July 11th and 12th. Over the years this event has become the major fundraiser for Westminster Cares. Look for more information in next month's Westminster Gazette and at [www.westminstercares.org](http://www.westminstercares.org).

**SOUPS & SPEAKERS:** Westminster Cares will host the 4th Wednesday of each month, from 12-2pm at the First Congregational Church's SOUPer Wednesday's January - April. Our volunteers will make soups and desserts and provide a speaker on 4/29. Anyone in the community is welcome to attend.

**COMMUNITY NURSE PROGRAM:** Our Community Nurse, Kathy Shuster, held a Blood Pressure Clinic at the SOUPer Wednesday event on March 25th. To receive a phone call or schedule an initial home visit

with the nurse, please call the office at 722-3607.

**ELDER TECH:** Do you have questions about a device? [laptop, cell phone, smart phone]

Elder Tech sessions are held at the Westminster Institute. If you would like to make an appointment for a session, please call the office @ (802) 722-3607. (Open to Westminster residents, 60 and older.)

**ANNUAL APPEAL UPDATE:** We truly appreciate the support received from individuals, families and businesses in our community. Your contributions allow us to continue to provide programs and services to older adults in our community. Whether from Annual Appeal, memorial gifts, or contributions in honor of our cherished volunteers, every gift counts!

The following list is for donations made in someone's honor or memory.

**Donations Received through March 24th, 2026 HONORARY:**

In honor of Pete Harrison, from George Cheney

In honor of Westminster Cares volunteers, from Bill Smidutz

#### MEMORIALS:

In memory of Steve Belezak, from Heidi Bernier and Claude Blazej

In memory of Carolyn Muzzey, from David and Laurie Noyes

Long River Tai Chi Circle

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## ADVERTISE IN THE GAZETTE!

Annual Rates:  
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Pages 4-7 - approx. 4.7"x6.8" \$600 a year - \$100 for one month  
Page 8 - approx. 2.5"x3.25" - \$230 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](http://www.westminstervt.org)

# SPRING NOTES FROM THE WESTMINSTER CONSERVATION COMMISSION



By Rachael Shaw for the WCC

On a cold and sunny day in mid February, the Westminster Conservation Commission (WCC) had a successful winter tracking event. With the kind permission of Paul Harlow, this event was held at the Greenwood Farm with five guests plus three WCC members. The group saw tracks of opossum, vole, gray squirrel, female mink, coyote, and an actual bald eagle circled overhead looking down at a strip of open water. Perfect weather and the energetic presence of two bright kids enhanced the experience.

**Green Up Day May 2nd!**

As the snow disappears from the ditches, the trash that has accumulated over the past year is becoming visible. It must be almost time for Green Up Day! Since 1970, Green Up Vermont (GUV) has been keeping Vermont clean. Did you know that in its first year, they closed the highway for three hours and bused schoolchildren out to the interstate to do cleanup! Governor Deane Davis flew around the state in a helicopter landing on the interstate to praise the volunteers. Now Green Up Day is in its 56th year and is always scheduled for the first Saturday in May.

Did you know that Green Up Vermont has an app? You can download it from the app store and find information about where and when to pick up bags. You can also use the app to create a green up team and organize and report where you green up. Vermont actually holds a Guinness World Record for green up! According to the GUV website, this record was achieved in 2024, and the official Guinness record title is "The Most Pledges Received for Trash Clean Up in 24 Hours." The number was 6833 pledges, with about 30,000 vol-

unteers. This year Green Up Day is Saturday May 2nd and is coordinated by the WCC. Watch for the sandwich boards which will tell you when you can pick up bags at the Town Hall, the Westminster West Library and the North Westminster Community House. The Town Road Crew will pick up bags on Monday May 4. Thanks in advance for keeping our town beautiful!

**Time to take in your feeders**

The bears are out now, and this is a reminder that bears are opportunistic omnivores and have a penchant for garbage, birdseed and the compost pile. Bears have outstanding senses of smell and memories so they will remember food sources from past years. They have large ranges and live for a long time (average life span is 19 years). In order to avoid bear-human conflict, it is our responsibility to secure garbage and compost and remove bird feeders for the season. With climate change, spring is arriving earlier, and the current recommendation is to bring in feeders in mid-March. Bears are out during days and nights, so it's not enough to just remove them at night.

**Caring for our wildlife**

Here are some other ways you can support the Earth and wildlife 1) Slow down on rainy nights and evenings in spring to avoid crushing our amphibian friends making their way to ponds and wetlands. Slow down in general to prevent road killed animals and birds! If you are interested in joining a Salamander Crossing Brigade, please go to the Bonnyvale Environmental Education Center's website at <https://beec.org/wildlife-conservation/salamander-crossing-brigades/> for more information. 2) Mow less frequently and over less area. Waiting longer into the season to start mowing allows some wildflowers to bloom in the grass which supports

pollinators and everything that depends on pollinators. Mowing walking paths through the lawn or letting some of the lawn go wild promotes biodiversity. 3) Instead of

burning a brush pile, consider throwing some of the organic material into an area to break down naturally, encouraging carbon sequestration and habitat.

**A new home for wood ducks in the Town Forest**

On Saturday March 21, three intrepid members of the WCC hiked two miles into the Westminster Town Forest from East Putney Brook Road, ending up at the large wetland in the Blue Heron Way/Daigel Road area. We used two sleds to haul tools, a ladder, a nesting box lined with pine shavings, and sheet metal to protect the nest from climbing predators. After almost two hours, we arrived at our destination and located a perfect dead tree on a small island for the installation. The ice was just strong enough to support our getting to the island, and the installation went smoothly, thanks to the expert skills of WCC member Jim Calchera. According to Jim, "The box was built by a local director of Delta Waterfowl (an international organization whose focus is on conserving waterfowl through various means including construction and installation of wood duck nesting boxes) and taken in trade by the Vermont Trappers Association, who in turn donated it to the WCC." The recommended height for installation is minimum of 4-6' and our installation is about 5-7'.

You can find interesting videos online of wood ducklings dropping from natural nesting cavities in trees about 10-12' above water. We hope that a pair of wood ducks takes up residence in this nesting box soon!

**Coming up Soon!**

We will be finalizing the date for our Spring Ephemeral Wildflower Walk soon, please email [westministervtconservation@gmail.com](mailto:westministervtconservation@gmail.com) if you would like to be on the contact list for this or any of our other activities. The WCC meets on the fourth Thursday of the month at 7 pm, alternating between the Westminster Institute and the Westminster West Public Library.

The public is always welcome to attend our meetings. Email us at the above email address for more information. We currently have five members but would welcome a couple more!

**GRAVESTONE CLEANING AT THE OLD CEMETERY WANT TO VOLUNTEER TO HELP?**

June 13 is the next gravestone cleaning at the Old Cemetery. You've probably noticed how white the marble stones near the road are.

Did you even know we had marble stones in the Old Cemetery? If we get a good turnout of volunteers we can probably finish up cleaning the Old Cemetery, and start making a plan for Westminster West. Last year's event was a pleasant morning's work in good company, with refreshments! Please join us.

Watch our website, [www.westministervthistory.org](http://www.westministervthistory.org) or our Facebook page, Westminster Vt Historical Society for updates.

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## Nature Notes - Black and Turkey Vultures

by Alma Beals, Vermont Master Gardener and Naturalist

A few days ago, I looked up to see black and turkey vultures circling together overhead.

We all have seen turkey vultures in the sky for years. They leave in the fall and return in the spring. Only, in the very recent years, have black vultures arrived in Vermont.

Blacks are more abundant in the south from South Carolina to Texas but have been expanding their range northward along the east coast since the 1940s or the 1950s. I have only seen a couple in the last three or four years. Some of us may have seen them but mistaken them for the widespread turkeys.

In my research it was stated that blacks and turkeys don't fly together. Yet I saw them circling together. I wondered if this was because I caught a migration or if the turkeys had smelled carrion and the blacks followed them. I'm depending on my readers to let me know if they see them circling together.

Blacks forage for carcasses in open and semi-open areas while turkeys feed in both forested and semi-open spaces. Blacks are more likely found near humans, perched on utility poles, and may roost next to houses and buildings. Turkeys are shy and avoid human settlements.

Tips on how to tell them apart from a distance are



the blacks appear stockier, with shorter tails, and shorter wingspan, and white on the wingtips. Turkeys show white from body to wingtips and fly with a wobbling V.

If you are closer, you can observe red heads on the turkeys except gray heads on the juveniles and gray/black heads on the blacks. Turkeys have red legs that appear whitish and blacks have black/brown legs that appear white. This is because they defecate on their legs to cool down, and it acts as an antiseptic to sterilize



their legs to reduce risk of infection – gross!

Together they clean up the environment, recycle waste, and keep diseases in check. Even the less glamorous creatures have an essential role to play.

*Black vulture, left, and a turkey vulture.*

## WESTMINSTER SAMPLER - THE SPRING FRESHET

By Jessie Haas

Two hundred years ago, in April 1826, Westminster industries were rebuilding after the Flood of '26. Heavy rains and extensive snow melt caused streams and rivers throughout Vermont to overflow. Then as now, economic activity was concentrated in the river valleys, which offered water power for industry, flat ground to build roads on, and of course required bridges in order to be crossed. Villages often clustered in valleys, and we've all seen the consequences of that in our lifetimes!

The 1820s were a time of industrialization along Westminster's streams and rivers. The Saxtons River in North Westminster hosted many mills and factories, including some of the oldest.

Benjamin Burt, a 1760 settler, built a sawmill in present Gageville very early. He sold a right for a sawmill to Charles Church in 1817. This was on the site of the future Gage Basket Company. In 1825 Church leased this sawmill, along with a house and the privilege of building two or three shops, to Sanford Granger. The payment was to be one quarter of the lumber produced. Also in 1825 Church sold property a little farther up the Saxtons River to the papermaker Bill Blake, "with the privilege of flowing said Church's land with a dam as high as he wishes." Benjamin Burt sold Blake another piece of land along the river the same year. Burt was in the process of moving his paper mill and other operations from Bellows Falls to the part of Westminster known as the Forest.

Over the next several months he built a paper mill, sawmill, general store, and several dwellings. Unluckily for everyone, an extraordinary freshet was setting itself up for the spring of 1826 throughout northern New England, upstate New York, and neighboring Canada. A freshet is a high water event caused by snowmelt, typically in late spring.

In March 1826 the Saxtons River rose swiftly and undermined Blake's mill. "(T)he whole building wheeled to the south and immediately was carried off by the impetuosity of the current." Charles Church's sawmill, being run by Sanford Granger, was also destroyed. Granger, who lived only a few hundred yards from the mill, thought the water level was receding and went to bed. He never heard the mill being carried away, taking with it \$60 to \$70 worth of joiner's tools.

Blake immediately started to rebuild, and was making paper again within a month. This was Blake's fourth



mill in 14 years. He got his start with a small mill in Alstead, NH, then known as Paper Mill Village. In 1802 he built a small, primitive mill in Bellows Falls on what would become the site of International Paper. This was Vermont's first paper mill, producing writing and book paper out of clean white rags. That mill burned in 1812. Blake replaced it with a much larger one, then sold it in 1824 to migrate his business to the Forest.

The mill Blake built to replace the one destroyed in 1826 was damaged by another flood in 1828. Blake rebuilt again, and his sons continued to make paper in the Forest until 1861. It seems like extraordinary stubbornness, but water power was the only choice in those days, and the danger of flooding came with the territory, even on smaller brooks. The Holton family ran a sawmill on the east end of Morse Brook for many years, rebuilding after it was destroyed by freshets in 1811 and 1823. After the Holtons went out of the mill business William Gage built his first basket mill on the site. He sold it in 1858, and it remained in business another 10 years as the Chase basket factory.

In the 1820s each Westminster parish had two woolen mills and a clothier's shop, all located along waterways. The Holtons had a fulling mill, dye house, and clothier's shop on Morse Brook, near their sawmill

and gristmill. Caleb Clapp of Boston, who had married Congressman Mark Richards's stepdaughter Nancy Dorr, moved to the south end of the village and set up the Westminster Woolen Factory Company in 1803. He sold a half-interest to his brother-in-law Nathaniel Dorr of Roxbury, Mass., in 1813. That end of the village and the farms and meadows just below the bluff changed their names around this time. Willard Hill became Clapp's Hill. The Clapps and Dorrs remained in the textile business there for many years.

In the West Parish, the East Putney Brook, flowing through the village, powered a tanner's bark mill, fulling mill, and blacksmith's shop, and Otis Haven opened a clothier's store there, which seemed to change hands almost yearly in the 1820s. At Chandler's Mills, at the corner of present Patch Road, Scotto Clark converted an old gristmill building into a woolen factory. It burned in 1823. In 1824 he replaced it with a two-story brick building and installed equipment for making broadcloth and cassimere, a thin lightweight twilled wool used for men's clothing and uniforms.

The mill burned again in 1832, mills being as prone to fire as they were to flood, and this time it was not replaced. Times had changed, and it was more economical to buy fabric from larger mills out of state.

Bridges were also vulnerable to freshets, and unlike mills, they had to be replaced. The one that crossed the Saxtons River between Bellows Falls and Saxtons River Village, was built in 1802 when the road was laid. It washed away in 1819, was replaced two years later at a cost of \$245, and washed out again in 1828. A third bridge was built on the site at a cost of \$645, and served until 1840. That bridge was frequently controversial, as it seemed of greater service to Rockingham than to Westminster, though it clearly lay within Westminster boundaries. Much legal effort was expended to get Rockingham to pay for replacement and repairs.

The freshets of the early 1800s were unprecedented, and were probably made worse by the massive cutting of trees for timber, firewood, and sheep pasture, which left the hills bare and unable to hold their snow pack. Beaver had long since been trapped out of Vermont, so their ponds were unable to absorb the flow. The timber and wool from the sheep fed the mills and created (small) profits, but the process of getting them put the mills in peril and made this industrial era a short one.

*In photo, label from Bill Blake's paper mill.*

## 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 is Tuesday, Apr. 7 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 scheduled Prudential Committee meeting Apr. 21st.

Number of calls in February: 43

Number of calls through March 26th: 16

Number of calls calendar year to date: 93

Number of calls fiscal year, July 1st : 388

Association Meeting: The Westminster Fire and Rescue Association met for their regular meeting March 3rd with Vice President Ryan Struthers presiding. There were 27 present and 5 members excused. Currently there are 43 members of the volunteer fire department.

Braydon Rumrill became a full member having successfully completed his 6 month probation period guidelines and Brian Harlow applied for membership under the 6 month probation guidelines.

### Burn Permit Alert:

Anyone wishing to do an outside burn must get verbal permission from one of the fire wardens before starting a fire. You must speak with one of the wardens. Leaving an answering

machine message will not count as a permit.

When calling for your permit, be sure to ask what materials are acceptable and which ones are unacceptable to burn. If the Fire Department is called to respond and the fire ends up being an illegal burn, the fire will be extinguished and a fine may be imposed. In case there is a complaint from someone about the fire, the fire department is available to investigate and extinguish the fire if necessary.

All burn piles should be at least 100 feet from any building. Some of the items not allowed are trash, building material, anything with paint on it, cardboard. Keep in mind that there may be times when permits are not given out due to sudden changes in the dryness and wind conditions. Always be aware of open dry areas and windy conditions before considering a burn.

If one of the wardens is unable to take your call, leave your name and a good phone number and one of them will call you back. Do not start a fire until you have spoken to one of the wardens and given permission.

The wardens are Warden : Chief Cole Streeter 802-722-3178; Deputy Warden: Duty Chief Mark Lund 802-463-9355

**Flooding:** Dangers of high water and flooded cellars becomes an issue this time of year. Residents should check the workability of sump pumps and drains. Be sure to keep watch of the cellar for incoming water. Water in the cellar can be very dangerous, especially if the water comes in contact with anything electrical.

The Fire Department does not have the equipment to pump water that is less than 4 inches deep. Avoid driving through puddles on the road. Their depth can be deceiving. Watch the chil-

dren around potentially deep water. And don't forget the pets.

**Mud Season is here and driving on muddy roads should be avoided if at all possible.**

**Emergency responses:** February turned out to be another busy month with 43 calls for the month. Here is the breakdown for the 43 calls: 23 rescue/medical calls; 2 Mutual Aid, 1 to Brattleboro, 1 to Bellows Falls; 1 service call; 2 false alarms; 1 lift assist; 11 motor vehicle crashes/ incidents; 2 First Alarms; 1 smoke investigation;

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

The Westminster Fire & Rescue Association welcomes donations throughout the year from anyone wishing to remember or honor a loved one or a friend. All memorial donations go into our scholarship fund to be given out at graduation.

Send donation to: Westminster Fire & Rescue Association, PO Box 111 Westminster, 05158

### Donations in March:

Tom and Diane Coulombe

### Memorial Donations received in March:

In memory of Pat Haas from: Mary Mitchell, H. Valentine Barnes, Anne[Spring] Knowler/ Christopher Bergman, East Dover Volunteer Fire Company, Inc., Jeffrey Winfield and Yeaw Smith.

As always, we would like to thank the members of the community for their continued support of the fire department. Check us out at [www.westminsterfireandrescue.org](http://www.westminsterfireandrescue.org).

# Aged in Vermont

Westminster Cares, Inc.

## SPRING HOME REPAIR SEASON:

### HOW TO AVOID HOME REPAIR SCAMS

Spring has arrived, and with warmer weather comes the start of home repair season. Unfortunately, it's also a time when dishonest contractors target homeowners looking to complete needed projects. Contractor fraud and home improvement scams can cost thousands of dollars—and may leave you with poor workmanship, unfinished jobs, or even damage to your home.

What can you do? Start by educating yourself. Ask friends and family for recommendations, and don't feel pressured to hire the first contractor you meet. Always request references before hiring anyone, especially if you are unfamiliar with the company or individual.

**Never pay the full cost upfront.** Reputable contractors may require a reasonable deposit, but they should not ask for full payment before work begins.

**Be cautious about unsolicited offers.** Avoid responding to unexpected door-to-door solicitations, phone calls, or online messages offering repair services. Instead, take a proactive approach and research contractors on your own terms. Be a fraud fighter! If you can spot a scam, you can stop a scam.

#### Common Home Repair Scams Targeting Older Adults

Home repair scams often involve unsolicited, high-pressure offers for roofing, paving, or specialized services. Scammers may claim they have "leftover materials" or just completed a nearby job to create urgency.

These situations frequently involve requests for upfront cash payments, poor-quality work, or attempts to access valuables inside the home.

#### Watch for these red flags:

- Unsolicited door-to-door visits: Offers of "free

inspections" that uncover unnecessary or exaggerated problems.

- Urgency and pressure: Claims that repairs must begin immediately to prevent further damage.
- Cash-only demands: Requests for payment in cash or wire transfer without a written contract.
- Post-disaster scams: Contractors appearing after storms offering repairs that are never complete or are already covered by insurance.
- Extremely low prices: Deals that sound too good to be true, often tied to "leftover materials."

#### How to Protect Yourself

- Get multiple estimates: Obtain written quotes from at least three licensed and insured contractors.
- Check credentials: Verify licenses and insurance, and review complaints through the Better Business Bureau or your state licensing board.
- Avoid large upfront payments: A common guideline is to pay no more than one-third of the total cost before work begins.
- Require a written contract: Make sure it clearly outlines materials, scope of work, total cost, and start and completion dates.
- Take your time: Never let anyone pressure you into making a quick decision. Consult trusted family members or friends if needed.

#### If You Believe You've Been Scammed

Contact the Vermont state Attorney General's Office immediately ([ago.vermont.gov](http://ago.vermont.gov)) and report the incident. You can also contact the local law enforcement agency for more information.

Acting quickly can help prevent further losses and may protect others in your community.

## WESTMINSTER CELEBRATION IN SONG CONTEST

With prizes for all song entrees and a welcome to all, the Westminster Inclusion committee invites everyone to join in a Celebration of Song at the Butterfield Institute on Friday, May 2 at 4pm. We will gather inside or outside depending on the weather. Bring a picnic and a song or



just come to enjoy the musical offerings and to sing along. Refreshments will be provided.

The Kurn Hattin children's choir will open the show and any musical entertainment is welcome. We especially invite original songs about Westminster.

- celebrate our history, our heroes, businesses, farming, children or the hill and valleys, flora and fauna...
- use familiar or original tunes
- invite others to sing along or just tell a story

We will end with a sing-along of familiar tunes. Come meet your neighbors and welcome in the Spring!

For more information call Lise Sparrow at 802-345-3982 or email [lisesparrow@gmail.com](mailto:lisesparrow@gmail.com).

## WHAT IS THE WESTMINSTER VISIBILITY BRIGADE?

By Rachael Shaw

Greetings Westminster friends and neighbors. I would like to share a short report on the weekly two hour visibility brigades that have been happening at the I-91 overpass near Kurn Hattin since last summer.

First, I would like to thank the local residents and Wellington Hill Road residents for graciously tolerating our presence and the cars that line Wellington Hill Road for those two hours each week. We were politely asked by a resident to just park on one side of Wellington Hill, which we make every effort to do, although an occasional newcomer parks on the other side, apologies for that. Snow clearing that we have done to give ourselves a place to stand has been done as safely as possible, and the snow has been shoveled into the median, not onto the highway.

We do our best to stay out of the roadway, standing very close to the bridge or up on the curb of the bridge. We wear safety vests, and place small orange traffic cones just around where we stand to increase visibility and safety.

On the last Friday of each month, there are 30 different events along I-91 from Central Connecticut to Northern Vermont.

## REMEMBRANCES APRIL 2026

EBEN DODD, 58  
8/2/1967 - 11/15/2025  
PUTNEY, VT

CHARLIE HUTCHISON  
D. 3/2026  
WESTMINSTER WEST, VT

LOUISE LURING, 85  
5/5/1940 - 3/10/2026  
SAXTONS RIVER, VT

PHILLIP "PHIL" RUMRILL SR., 80  
3/9/1945 - 2/11/2026  
CHARLESTOWN, NH FORMERLY  
BELLOWS FALLS & WESTMINSTER

FRANCES MOREEN STEVENS, 73  
11/10/1952 - 2/20/2026  
WESTMINSTER, VT

KATHLEEN HEIDI WATTS, 94  
1933 - 3/15/2026  
PUTNEY, VT

## RENTAL SPACE AT THE WESTMINSTER INSTITUTE

With the relocation of Westminster Cares to a larger space in the Institute, we are looking for a new tenant for their old space (approximately 200 square feet). The Institute currently provides permanent space for Westminster Cares and the Westminster Historical Society.

The Board of Managers is looking for a compatible organization, non profit or otherwise to rent the space. This helps us with operating costs and supports our community programs.

Send inquiries to: [butterfieldlib.05158@gmail.com](mailto:butterfieldlib.05158@gmail.com).

## THANK YOU FROM THE INSTITUTE & LIBRARY

We are very excited to announce that our first ever Annual Appeal for the Westminster Institute and Butterfield Library was a huge success.

To date, we have raised \$8,340 with donations from over 70 donors. This has exceeded all of our expectations and provides an enormous boost to helping us fund programs and operational costs.

Thank you to all who contributed to make this first Annual Appeal so successful.

Jim Grout & Susan Harlow, President and Vice President and the Board of Managers

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[www.TempleChiropractic.org](http://www.TempleChiropractic.org)

## SAVINGS BANK OF WALPOLE RECOGNIZED IN 2025 LENDER AWARDS

Savings Bank of Walpole (SBW) is pleased to announce that SBW and Andrew Richardson, Vice President and Commercial Loan Officer, were each honored at the 2025 NH Lender Awards Celebration, held at the Manchester Historical Museum on March 2.

At this annual event recognizing outstanding contributions to community lending and economic development across New Hampshire, Savings Bank of Walpole received the U.S. Small Business Administration New Hampshire District's Leading Third-Party Lender Award for 2025.

In addition, Granite State Development Corporation presented Andrew Richardson with the 2025 New Hampshire 504 Banker of the Year Award, and Savings Bank of Walpole with the 2025 New Hampshire 504 Bank of the Year Award. These awards highlight both SBW's commitment to supporting local businesses



through responsible lending and Richardson's leadership in fostering strong community and commercial relationships.

"Being acknowledged by the SBA New Hampshire District office, and the Granite State Development Corporation, is a true honor," said Mark Bodin, President of Savings Bank of Wapole. "This recognition reflects

our dedication to helping our local businesses thrive, and our ongoing investment in the economic health of the Monadnock Region."

Granite State Development Corporation's NH Lender Awards celebrate lenders and institutions that demonstrate excellence in fueling small business growth, community development, and access to capital across the state. Savings Bank of Walpole is proud to be counted among organizations and professionals making a measurable impact on New Hampshire's business landscape.

*In photo, the Savings Bank of Walpole's award-winning Commercial Lending team, including Andrew Richardson (2nd from right).*

# 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. We have a special children's message each Sunday and a fellowship hour after the service. Rev. Rich O'Donnell serves as Pastor. We are a growing congregation and have lots to offer so please stop by anytime.

April 1st SOUPer Wednesday 12-2

April 2nd Holy Thursday Soup Meal at 5 Service of the Lord's Supper at 6 p.m.

April 3rd Good Friday. Private Meditation the church is open from 12-3

Service with Veneration of the Cross at 6:00 pm

April 5th EASTER Sunrise service at Kurn Hattin Homes Mayo Building at 6:40 a.m. (rain location the church) Breakfast at the church hall in between services and the Main Service at 10 a.m.

April 7th Women's Fellowship Meeting at 10:30

April 8th SOUPer Wednesday 12-2

April 12th Sunday Service at 10 with Communion

April 15th SOUPer Wednesday 12-2

April 15th Bible Study 6:30 p.m. Hall and Zoom

April 19th Sunday Service 10 a.m.

April 20 Standing Committee 5:30 p.m. Zoom and the Hall

April 22 SOUPer Wednesday 12-2

April 22 Bible Study 6:30 p.m. Hall and Zoom

April 26 Sunday Service 10 a.m.

April 29th SOUPer Wednesday 12-2

The Congregational Church of Westminster West Worships every Sunday at 10 a.m. We are using Facebook Live to stream our weekly services. We are an Open and Affirming Church and fully accessible.

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

As we seek a settled pastor through our search and call process, we will not be able to offer office hours as usual, but the Deacons (Karen Blanchard, Charlotte Gifford, Ray Huessy, Adrienne Major and Sue Venman) are available to support the congregation.

You can leave a message on the church number (802-387-1175) or you can contact a deacon directly.

For all questions of church building use, please contact Tom Griffith (tgriffith@hilltopmontessori.org).

### Walpole Unitarian Church

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

### 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 Vil-

lage. 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 and online for winter.

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. 12:15-1:15 p.m.

New Beginner Class Tues. 10:30-11:30 a.m.

Intermediate Class Tues. 10:30-12 p.m.

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

The East Putney Contradance at Pierce's Hall - Saturday, March 28 at 121 E. Putney Falls Road (look for the "Dance" signs)

Circle and Contra Dances with David Millstone calling.

6 pm - Family Hour with Dancing for all ages

7:00 - Snacks

7:30-Contra Dance

9:30--Last waltz

All dances are taught. No partner required. By free will donation. Stay in touch at: eputneypierceshall@gmail.com

East Putney Contradance at Pierce's Hall - 121 East Putney Falls Road off Rt. 5 (look for the signs) Saturday, April 25

Circle and Contra Dances. Great live music!

6 pm - Family Hour with Dancing for all ages

7:00 - Snacks

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

9:30--Last waltz

All dances are taught. No partner required. By free will donation.

Stay in touch at: eputneypierceshall@gmail.com

### Knitting Together

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THE GAZETTE GRATEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGES THE SUPPORT OF ITS UNDERWRITERS:

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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- Meets 2nd Tues. at 6 p.m., Westminster Institute. Contact is Jim Grout at jgrout@high5adventure.org.

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

Editor: Robert F. Smith

Board of Directors:  
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Joyce Sullivan - Secretary  
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Michelle Aron

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Provided by the Community

westminsternews@gmail.com

## April Deadline

The deadline for the May 2026 Issue of the Westminster Gazette is Wednesday, April 22 Publication Date is Wed. April 29 To Contact the Westminster Gazette E-mail: westminsternews@gmail.com

## WESTMINSTER GAZETTE IS NOW IN COLOR! UPDATED AD RATES

Due to recent changes from our printer, the Keene Sentinel, the Westminster Gazette will now be printed in color. This is exciting news for this 8-page community paper. The Gazette has a distribution of over 1,400 papers mailed to Westminster residents and delivered to businesses throughout Bellows Falls, Westminster, Putney, Springfield and Walpole, NH. This change to color was implemented with an unanticipated increase in the paper's printing cost. If you haven't provided an update to your ad in color, please do so.

We have decided that all advertisers will have the option to be featured as a "Business of the Month." That will be done on a rotation, where we will contact you to provide a photo and brief write up about your business, if you choose. Please note that your renewal will reflect a slight rate increase. Advertising rates are still the lowest around. Thanks for your ongoing support of the Gazette. Donations are also always welcome. New rates are noted below, and ad sizes are approximate.

Page(s)	Ad Size	Rate
2-3	4" x 5"	\$350.00 annual
2-3	4" x 5"	\$50.00 monthly
4-7	4.7" X 6.8"	\$600.00 annual
4-7	4.7" X 6.8"	\$100.00 monthly
8	2.5" X 3.25"	\$230 annual
6	Listing as Underwriter	Minimum donation of \$300

## PUTNEY PUBLIC LIBRARY HOSTS PEEPS DIORAMA CONTEST



It's time again for the Putney Library's Annual Peeps Diorama Contest!

What started as a Covid mud season activity has turned into an incredible annual display of imagination and marshmallow-sculpting talent. Those brightly colored treats are on the shelves and ready to star in a diorama about your favorite book!

Pick up an entry form at the library or print out the Entry Form from at <http://putneylibrary.org/peeps>

-Even if you are not a resident of the town of Putney, you can still enter or join a family team, but only current Putney Library cardholders may vote.

-Diorama must be based on a book or have a literary theme.

-All primary characters must be played by PEEPS candy, but any shaped Peep is allowed.

-All dioramas must be contained in a shoe box or in a box of similar size.

-Contest open to all ages. The categories are Child (0-18), Adult, and Family (at least one child and one adult).

-Please limit the use of food items (be-

sides PEEPS) in your diorama.

-One entry per person.

-All entries must be submitted with an entry form.

-Entries become the property of the library and will be used for public display—you can pick up your diorama April 21st (after Peeps Diorama Party)- April 25th, but any left behind will be disposed of.

-All entries must be in good taste – The Putney Public Library reserves the right to omit any entries it feels are not appropriate for public viewing.

-One ballot per library card.

Dioramas must be brought to the Library during the week of Monday, April 6th–Saturday April 11th during normal library hours (Monday-Friday 10:30am-6pm, Saturdays 10am-1pm).

Voting and display of all entries will take place in person at the library the week of Monday, April 13th-Saturday, April 18th and the winners will be notified by email, then announced publicly and awards given on Tuesday, April 21st at 5 p.m. A winner from each category will receive a \$25 gift certificate to Everyone's Books in Brattleboro!

Introducing the **Bright Futures 5K** fundraiser!

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[ebeaudry@kurnhattin.org](mailto:ebeaudry@kurnhattin.org)  
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**APRIL BUSINESS OF THE MONTH: GREATER FALLS INSURANCE**



Greater Falls Insurance, Inc. has been here in Westminster, Vermont for almost 30 years. We have always prided ourselves on being a small-town agency and customer service driven. We believe in doing business in a modern fashion that values tradition. We service what we sell! We are an independent insurance agency committed to representing insurance carriers that will serve your needs best.

We are proud to represent our community. Our staff are committed to our area and have satisfaction in seeing it grow and thrive.

Owner Bridget Kelly, right, specializes in the Commercial and Farm Insurance, while Gloria Vancor, center, is knowledgeable in all Personal Lines products. Carisa Caron, left, our Customer Service Representative, is the friendly voice you hear when you call in.

Thank you for your continued support of our agency! Think of us the next time you are in need of insurance. www.GreaterFallsInsurance.com

You can reach us at 802-463-1900; Monday – Friday 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

**APRIL BUSINESS HARLOW FARMSTAND**



Harlow Farmstand opens for its 35th season on Friday, May 1.

We have a big transition to announce! Dan Harlow, after 34 years, has retired from running the farmstand. We welcome long-time customer Ananda Fleuriel, top photo, as the stand's new manager.

"I'm happy to be part of my beloved local farmstand," Ananda said.

Come in and say hello to Ananda and her staff: familiar faces Cherie Rice and Andrew Hogan, and new faces JaJa Laughlin and Mary Michaud.

After a cold, snowy winter, we hope you're starting to dream about your garden. We'll have flower, vegetable and herb bedding plants, annuals and perennials, and hanging baskets for Mother's Day, all organically grown, of course.

We'll also offer just about everything else you might need for your springtime table: fruits and veggies—mainly from Harlow Farm, dairy products, cheeses and dips, Harlow Farm eggs, local meat, wine and beer, and preserves such as jams and salsa. We'll have Orchard Hill Breadworks bread and dumplings, hot sauce, kimchi, and pickles from Corvus Ferments.

We're open from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. every day. Michael Lenox will open Cafe Loco as well, serving delicious breakfasts and lunches. Outside dining as soon as the weather warms up! Please note: Cafe Loco will be closed on Tuesdays this season.

You'll find more on our website, www.harlow-farm.com, and please like us on Facebook.

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