



CELEBRATE THE USA's 250TH SAXTONS RIVER FOURTH OF JULY CELEBRATION

The Saxtons River Fourth of July Committee is excited to announce the details of this year's celebration which is scheduled to take place Saturday, July 4 on Main Street in the village of Saxtons River, Vermont. This year marks the 81st Fourth of July Celebration in Saxtons River and the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

The Fourth of July in Saxtons River is so much more than just a parade, it's an experience.

Everyone loves a parade, and this year's theme is Once upon a river! Everyone is invited to enter, and the best parade entry will receive a \$500 prize.

The day starts with the Firecracker 5k run, and new this year, a nine or 14 mile bike ride, called the Tour des Villages with routes towards Grafton.

To commemorate the 250th anniversary of its signing, Mike Peller, head of school for Vermont Academy, and a special guest, will read the Declaration of Independence from the band stand starting at noon.

At 11 a.m., American Legion Post 37 will open the parade with this year's Grand Marshals Denny McArdle and Berta Martin; followed by decorated bikes, vintage cars, a fife and drum corps, emergency vehicles, floats, and so much more.

After the parade there are activities for all ages including the firefighter's water polo contest, cotton candy, a dunk booth, hula hoop contest, egg toss, bounce house and other kid's games, great food, and don't miss live, local musicians up on the bandstand.

The celebration ends with pickup softball and pickleball games at the Saxtons River Rec Area.

Local artist, Whitney Barrett, created this year's collectors t-shirt design, and new for this year, a collectable pin. The designs capture the magic that happens in our beloved village and the theme Once Upon a River.

Whitney is based in Saxtons River, works primarily in 2D media including collage, pen and ink, acrylic



paint, and found text. Whitney teaches full time at Vermont Academy in the Humanities department and shows her work locally at Canal Street Art Gallery in Bellows Falls.

T-shirts are certain to sell out! T-shirts will be available at the street fair on July 4, while supplies last.

The price is \$25 and helps cover expenses associated with this day-long event.

In an effort to keep textiles out of landfills, again this year, Anna Clark and Marcy Cruthirds will hand silk screen a one-color version of this year's t-shirt design on items you already own.

Items could be a t-shirt, tote bag, pillow case, scarf, and more. T-shirts, or other items, can be dropped off at the Saxtons River Village Market anytime before Wednesday, June 24 and then picked up at the Market Saturday, June 26 from 9 a.m. to noon or on the fourth

at the t-shirt booth. A donation of \$10 is suggested and will help support this amazing day.

SCHEDULE HIGHLIGHTS

Saturday, July 4

8:30-9:30 a.m. - Pie contest pie drop off at the Saxtons River Inn, 27 Main Street, Saxtons River.

7:30 a.m. - Firecracker road race registration opens on Main Street

8:30 a.m. - Firecracker road race start time

9:30 a.m. - Tour des Villages bike ride registration opens at The Saxtons River Inn

9:30 a.m. - Parade line-up opens at Vermont Academy, Shepard's Lane

11:00 a.m.-noon |Once Upon a River Parade

Noon - Reading of the Declaration of Independence by Mike Peller, head of school, Vermont Academy and special guests

11: a.m.-4:00 p.m. - Games, food, street fair activities

12:30-3:15 p.m. - Live, local musicians up on the bandstand - featuring,

Andrew & Felix and Shamus Martin

5:00 p.m. - Pick-up softball and pickleball at the Saxtons River Rec Area begins

There are so many ways to participate.

There's still time to enter the parade, local bakers can bake a pie for the contest, runners can run in the Firecracker 5k, cyclists can bike, anyone can compete in the hula hoop contest or egg toss, play games and eat great food at the street fair, or volunteer and lend a helping hand. Learn more at SRVTFourth.org.

The Saxtons River Fourth of July Committee is a small group of creative, enthusiastic individuals from Saxtons River, and nearby, dedicated to continuing the tradition of Saxtons River being a prized destination for Fourth of July fun for kids of all ages!

AFTER 40 YEARS, KURN HATTIN MUSIC DIRECTOR LISA BIANCONI RETIRES

Kurn Hattin Home and School for Children bid farewell this spring to longtime Music Director Lisa Bianconi, who retired after 40 years of service and leadership.

Bianconi joined Kurn Hattin in 1985 shortly after graduating from college and went on to build one of the school's most recognized and enduring programs. Over four decades, she helped generations of students discover confidence, creativity, discipline, and belonging through music.

"Lisa's impact on Kurn Hattin is immeasurable," said Executive Director Sue Kessler. "She has touched the lives of thousands of children, helping them discover talents they didn't know they had and giving them opportunities they never imagined possible. Her legacy will live on in the students she inspired and the program she built."

When Bianconi arrived at Kurn Hattin, most student performances took place off campus, before the construction of the school's auditorium and music wing. Over the years, she helped shape both facilities, working closely with architects to create spaces that would support music education and performance for generations to come.

Under her leadership, Kurn Hattin students performed throughout New England and beyond, including appearances at Lincoln Center, the White House lawn, and Fenway Park. The program grew to include choir, band, jazz ensembles, musicals, and other opportunities that allowed every child to participate and succeed.

"One thing that kept me here all these years was that so much music happens at Kurn Hattin," said Bianconi. "I never had to choose between choir, band, jazz, or theater. We could do it all."

For Bianconi, however, the true measure of success has always been the students.

"Teaching children is a huge gift and responsibility," she said. "Many kids arrive at Kurn Hattin without having experienced positive reinforcement in a school setting. It's been a privilege to work with them and help show them who they can be."

Throughout her career, Bianconi contributed to



many areas of Kurn Hattin in addition to her work as Music Director. She credits her success to the many assistants, volunteers, colleagues, families, and community partners who supported the program over the years.

"I am so grateful to everyone who welcomed me, believed in me, and helped make the program what it became," she said. "You've made me better as a teacher and a person."

Kurn Hattin recognized Bianconi's retirement during Kurn Hattin Day on May 16, where she led her final student performance on campus.

Former Kurn Hattin teacher, Principal, and Executive Director Chris Barry was on hand to pay tribute to Bianconi, saying "At the time [we hired Lisa] I thought, Chris, you better get this right. The Music Director is more important than the Principal. Well, I hit the jackpot."

Bianconi looks forward to spending more time with family, including her new grandchildren, focusing on her health, and traveling. Yet her connection to Kurn Hattin remains strong.

"I went to Kurn Hattin to teach music," she reflected. "I'm leaving with a family."

In photo, Kurn Hattin retiring Music Director Lisa Bianconi.

Our Monthly Community Newspaper July 2026 Vol. 22 No.7

Westminster Gazette

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WCS END OF YEAR CELEBRATION

Westminster Center School (WCS) finished the year in high style, with beautiful community celebrations and academic triumphs. Under the leadership of Principal Liz Harty and Superintendent Andy Haas, WCS continues to flourish.

The Spring Family Event on June 4, which commenced with band performances under the pavilion, included interactive fun with Troy Wunderle, stories under the amphitheater with Board Member Ron BosLun, plant giveaway at the garden, PTO raffle, hotdogs, popcorn, and lemonade. It was a joyful way for the WCS community to celebrate together. Watching parents, grandparents, children, and neighbors mingle was a true delight.

Field Day on June 12 was another smashing success. Many thanks to the staff and volunteers who made it happen, notably the Westminster Fire Department for the gift of a massively celebratory soaking. Speaking of success, here is news from Principal Harty:

“We are celebrating! As part of monitoring the progress of all students, we track the impact of our instruction in multiple ways including the percentage of students who reach grade level proficiency in reading. This year, with your support, our students and staff have worked so hard and WCS saw a 38% increase in reading proficiency from students in grades K-6! As we make progress toward our school-wide goal of 70% reading at grade level, we want to thank you for all you do to support your students in their daily learning.”

Best wishes to all for a safe and healthy summer as the never-ending, joyful work of the staff and faculty of Westminster Center School continues.



AUGUST 2026 PRIMARY INFORMATION

The Vermont Voter Portal vote.vermont.gov, previously the My Voter Page is voters’ primary online resource for all election information unique to them. The site includes registration status, absentee ballot requests and statuses, participation history, polling places, sample ballots, candidate listings for upcoming elections and more.

Voters can log in anytime using their name, town,

date of birth and either their driver’s license number or the last 4 digits of their Social Security Number (SSN).

Absentee ballots can be requested:

- In person, at the town clerk’s office,
- In writing using the absentee ballot request form found online at the Vermont Voter Portal (vote.vermont.gov),
- By phone to the town clerk, or

-Online via the Vermont Voter Portal (vote.vermont.gov)

The Westminster Institute, 3534 US Route 5, will be open 8:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. August 11, 2026 for Primary voting.

For more information contact the Westminster town clerk at 802-722-4091 or clerk@westminstervt.org or asstclerk@westminstervt.org.

NEWS FROM WESTMINSTER CARES

The Westminster Cares Board of Directors met on June 11 at the Westminster Institute with President Lori Larue presiding. The following board members attended: Treasurer Frannie Waldron, Treasurer Doug Oftedahl, Don Dawson, Cindy Moses, and Director, Michelle Aron. The board discussed the upcoming Garden Tour on July 11 and 12 and the Celebration of Aging on Sept. 12.

WESTMINSTER CARES GARDEN TOUR: The 23 rd annual Westminster Cares Garden Tour will be held on July 11 and 12. Over the years this event has become the major fundraiser for Westminster Cares. Look for more information at www.westminstercares.org.

COMMUNITY NURSE PROGRAM: Our Community Nurse, Kathy Shuster, is available for wellness checks

and care coordination. To receive a phone call or schedule an initial home visit with the nurse, please call the office at 802-722-3607.

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.)

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

HONORARY:

- In honor of the BFUHS Class of 2026, from Bill Smidutz
- In honor of Karen Walter, from Elizabeth Haggerty

MEMORIALS:

- In memory of Sally Davis, from Howard Davis
- In memory of Hollis Ryea, from Millie Austin
- In memory of Barbara Kurkul, from Bill Smidutz
- In memory of John Connors, from Don and Donna Dawson
- In memory of Norman Wright, from Lee Stookey
- In memory of Hollis Ryea, from Allison and David Deen
- In memory of Hollis Ryea, from Carolyn Marsh
- In memory of Pat Hass, from Don and Donna Dawson
- In memory of Norman Wright, from Allison and David Deen
- In memory of Hollis Ryea, from Don and Donna Dawson
- In memory of Hollis Ryea, from Don and Sandra Astley
- In memory of Hollis Ryea, from Miriam Lanata



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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

OUR PLACE FOOD DRIVE AT SAXTONS RIVER 4TH CELEBRATION

As a part of the 250th anniversary celebration, Our Place Community Food Center will provide an opportunity to help those in need through a food and funding drive at the street fair held during Saxtons River Fourth of July festivities. This is a joint effort between Our Place and the Saxtons River Little Free Pantry.

“The number of people turning to Our Place for a meal or groceries is growing,” says Our Place Executive Director David Billings. “Giving by the community helps bridge the gap between what folks need and what we have to offer. Making a financial gift is the most helpful thing you can do. We buy in bulk and at a discount, so the dollar you spend on canned or packaged food goes further when combined with other funding.”

Food and cash gifts may be brought to the Our Place van which will be parked on Main Street beside the Saxtons River Community Free Pantry 10am-3pm



on Saturday, July 4th. Monthly or one-time gifts may also be made online at OurPlaceVermont.org or by mailing a check to Our Place, P.O. Box 852, Bellows Falls, VT 05101.

WESTMINSTER CARES ANNUAL GARDEN TOUR JULY 11-12

The Westminster Garden Tour will be held July 11 and 12, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. each day.

Tickets are \$20 for one, or \$35 for two; they are good for both days of the tour. Children under age 16 get free admission.

This is Westminster Cares’ main fundraising event, and it would not be possible without the generosity and incredible talent of Gordon and Mary Hayward.

This year’s Tour takes you through the lush landscape of Westminster Center, the rolling hills of Westminster West, and just over the Putney border. The Hayward’s Westminster West gardens will once again highlight the Tour, which celebrates its 23rd anniversary this year. Gordon and Mary helped start the tour in 2003, after a successful garden tour for the Yellow Barn Music Festival.



In addition to the Haywards’ gardens, Cheryl Charles, The Westminster Center School, Rodbard and Payne-Meyer gardens will be on this year’s tour.

Special program Saturday at 1:30 p.m., Mark Ragonese demonstrating sapling bending, weaving and simple constructions for the garden. On Sunday, don’t miss the Sandglass Theater’s Flea Circus at the Hay-

ward Gardens. Both special programs are included with your ticket. We hope you enjoy our town, meet new friends, and appreciate all of the beautiful gardens on display.

Sincere appreciation goes out to our corporate sponsors for their tremendous support and community involvement: Chroma Technology Corp.; Mascoma Bank; Allen Bros Farms; Savings Bank of Walpole; Silver Forest; 802 Credit Union; Brattleboro Bowl; Bensonwood and Cota & Cota.

Throughout the tour, tickets can be purchased for a raffle with over 12 fabulous prizes.

Lunch and refreshments will be available for purchase in the garden café under tents at the Hayward’s. Morning Star Perennials & Trees will again have an array of unique and Vermont-hardy plants for sale at the Hayward garden.

Tickets are available online until July 6th at www.westminstercares.org. They can also be purchased throughout the tour at the Hayward’s garden or the Westminster Institute.

For more information visit westminstercares.org; call the office at 802-722-3607 or email westminstercaresvt@gmail.com.

KURN HATTIN GRADUATES THE CLASS OF 2026



Kurn Hattin Home and School for Children celebrated the close of the school year with a week of special activities, awards, and traditions culminating in commencement exercises for six eighth-grade graduates on June 6.

Family members, friends, staff, alumni, and supporters gathered on campus to honor the Class of 2026. A highlight of the ceremony came when the graduates performed Beethoven’s Ode to Joy on their instruments, showcasing the musical skills and confidence they developed during their years at Kurn Hattin.

Board Vice President Eric Velto welcomed attendees and encouraged graduates to carry forward the lessons of perseverance, teamwork, and self-expression they learned through music and their experiences at Kurn Hattin.

Student speakers Emmery Dundore and Dezeray Green reflected on their journeys and the friendships, support,

and personal growth they found at Kurn Hattin.

Graduates and other children were recognized through a variety of awards celebrating citizenship, leadership, athletics, music, and personal growth. Among the honorees, Dezeray Green received the Self-Advocacy Award, the Maiola Athletic Award, and the Alumni Association Award. Jocelynn Smith received the Suitcase Award for outstanding progress, while Aria Norway, Issac Billue, Kahlan Riker, and Emmery Dundore also received special honors.

The commencement ceremony served as both a celebration of achievement and a reflection of the values that define the Kurn Hattin experience—perseverance, kindness, personal growth, and community. The Kurn Hattin community wishes the graduates continued success and looks forward to following their future accomplishments.

WHALEN NAMED SBW MANAGER

Savings Bank of Walpole (SBW) welcomes Nicholas Whalen as Branch and Business Development Manager for its Walpole branches. He joined the Bank on May 11, this year.

Whalen brings nearly two decades of banking experience and a strong background in customer service, business development, and community engagement. Since beginning his banking career in 2007 he has held a variety of leadership roles, including Branch Manager positions. These experiences gave him exten-

sive experience in team leadership, marketing, recruiting, and helping customers and businesses achieve their financial goals.

“Nick brings a passion for relationship banking and a strong commitment to helping customers succeed,” said Dominic Perkins, SVP, Senior Retail Banking Officer at SBW. “With his experience, leadership skills, and dedication to the communities he serves, he’s an excellent fit for SBW and for the Walpole community.”

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Nature Notes - My Garage Is a Nursery This Year

by Alma Beals, Vermont Master Gardener and Naturalist



Earlier this spring, I had a Carolina wren almost run into me as I turned the corner of the greenhouse by the garage. The same thing happened the next day. What is going on? Time to investigate.

I discovered not only were wrens nested inside, but also robins were building a nest on a cross beam. I already knew that mourning doves had a nest over the door. Wow, three pairs of birds nesting in one small garage. You probably know that several species can nest fairly close without disputes whereas some birds get into fights. Just observe the fights we see with Canada geese over territories.

I'm leaving the car outside and hoping to watch but not interfere. Carolina wrens, robins, and mourning doves all incubate about 14 days and fledge for about



14 days, but I don't know when the eggs were laid. Therefore, I'm not sure when they will hatch.

Other birds nesting in my yard are catbirds, cardinals, and rose breasted grosbeaks. By watching them I know which side of the yard they are nesting in but I don't ever follow them because I do not want a predator following my tracks and endangering them.

At the swamp, I have enjoyed the geese and duck babies, but the birds I really enjoy are the killdeer. They migrate at the end of February or early March They are the only shorebird with two black neck bands, and it is hard to think of them as shorebirds. They often nest on the side of the road in a small depression, and the nest is so well camouflaged that often we are surprised when a baby appears.



Killdeer are well-known for their broken-wing display. They will lure a predator, including humans, away by faking a broken wing. Once the predator is far enough away, they recover and fly away. Other birds that nest on the ground also use the broken-wing display.

I recently read that the preen oil of killdeer and other ground nesting birds changes during the nesting season so that the smell of the incubating bird is less likely to be found by a predator.

Now back to waiting and watching the nursery in my garage.

In photos, from left, Carolina Wren, Robin and Killdeer.

WESTMINSTER SAMPLER - EXPLORING OUR CEMETERIES

By Jesse Haas

"Exploring Our Cemeteries" is the title of the Historical Society's new exhibit, due to open on July 11.

We're pairing some notable stones with biographies of the people they honor. Though this is the 250th anniversary of the US. Declaration of Independence, for Westminster it's a sort of gap year.

1775 was when the Revolution started here, with the Massacre on March 13, follow by the participation of several Westminster men in the Battle of Bunker Hill. In 1776 the war largely happened elsewhere. The pace picked up for us in 1777 with Vermont's declaration of independence from New York, which happened here in Westminster, and then the Saratoga Campaign, when the Connecticut Valley was directly threatened by Lt. Colonel Baum's troops and Mohawk fighters.

That drew many more Westminster men into the army for a few months, and to participation in the Battle of Saratoga. We'll be commemorating that next year.

This year our focus is broader. We're featuring the graves and bios of a few Revolutionary War soldiers, but also some Civil War soldiers, someone who was born a slave, and other notables from different eras.

We're also hoping to encourage people to take a stroll through our beautiful cemeteries to find unique markers designated on our Cemetery Stroll Challenge.

The first person to complete the challenge will win a copy of *WESTMINSTER, VERMONT; TOWNSHIP NUMBER ONE, 1735-2000*, our comprehensive history of the town. The Challenge will be available at the museum (upstairs at the town hall) and the Bradley Law Office, open Saturdays 2-4 from July 11-September 5.

Speaking of cemeteries, as we do frequently these days, here's an update on the cleaning. Vermont Old Cemeteries Association (VOCA) and Westminster Historical Society (WHS) held a very successful work bee on June 13.



We had at least 40 volunteers who straightened 50 stones and cleaned well over 100. Possibly because of the bright sun that day, the D2 that we used on the stones worked more quickly than it did last year, so the stones at the north end of the Old Cemetery (top of Courthouse Hill) already look great.

Along with cleaning and straightening stones, WHS volunteers trimmed many of the cedar trees that were closely overhanging the gravestones and the Bradley mausoleum. This allows a clear line of sight from the front of the cemetery to the back.

To top it all off, the Vermont Agency of Historic Preservation sent outdoor art conservationist Bob Hanum to clean and preserve the William French Monument. It has been decades since this received attention from the state.

Bob cleaned the surround and most of the column. He plans to return with a tall stepladder or other safe method of cleaning the very top. For the moment it's a little mossy-looking, so provides a before-and-after con-

trast. Bob also burnished the lettering on the monument and it is now highly readable, and looks as if someone cares about it. We were very impressed with Bob's reverence for the cemetery, and the care he uses in his job.

We plan to hold a small demonstration of cleaning and straightening stones at the Westminster West Church Fair in early September, followed by a work bee in that cemetery a few weeks later. Stay tuned!

Meanwhile we've asked Jennifer Bartlau of the Cambridge, Vermont Historical Society, to speak at our annual meeting about the symbols to be found on old gravestones. Date to be determined, but this will take place in early October. Watch this space!

As you stroll through the cemeteries completing the Challenge, make a note of phrases and images to ask her about. As always, check our website, www.westminstervthistory.org, and our Facebook page, Westminster Vt Historical Society, for announcements.

Above, volunteers cleaning cemetery headstones.

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, July 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 meeting July 19th
Number of calls in May: 34
Number of calls through June 25th: 35
Number of calls calendar year to date: 204
Number of calls fiscal year from July 1st: 450

Association Meeting: The Westminster Fire and Rescue Association met for their regular meeting June 2nd with President J.T. Tabolt presiding. There were 24 members present and 3 members excused. Currently there are 44 members of the volunteer fire department. Howard Reed was accepted as a new member under the 6-month probation guidelines

Emergency responses: May turned out to be another busy month with 34 calls for the month. Here is the breakdown for the 34 calls: 17 rescue/medical calls; 4 Mutual Aid 1 to Bellows Falls, 1 to Rockingham, 1 to Westmoreland, 1 to Charlestown; 6 motor vehicle crashes/ inci-

dents; 1 smoke investigations; 3 false alarms; 1 service call; 2 structure/ vehicle fires.

Pavilion: The new pavilion is taking shape. The cement pad was poured last Tuesday. Stop by the fire house on Grout Ave and take a look.

Tips for sunscreen and insect repellent: Apply sunscreen 30 minutes before going outside. Reapply every 2 hours. Unprotected skin starts turning red in 20 minutes. Insect repellent is handy to have and apply before going into buggy areas.

Also bugs and mosquitoes like dusk, so just sitting outside can make you a target. Always read and adhere to label directions and warnings to use products safely.

Be aware of ticks and do a body check for ticks each night if you have been in a possible tick infested area.

Continuing Education: Since 2013 the Westminster Fire Department Association has given out over \$20,000 to deserving students from the senior class of the BFUHS. The income is derived from memorial and honorary donations received by the fire department. The scholarship committee met to review applications for scholarships from 2026 graduates from Bellows Fall Union High School. This year 2 applicants were awarded \$2,000 each. This year's awards went to Alyson Streeter and Tatiana Sharon. To contribute to this account, send memorial donations to Westminster Fire & Rescue Association PO Box 111 Westminster 05158

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.

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 from Bellows Falls Union High School. Send donation to:

Westminster Fire & Rescue Association
PO Box 111 Westminster, 05158
Donations received in May/ June:
Jim and Coleen Grout
George Streeter
Memorial Donations received in May/June:
From Mary Mitchell in memory of Norm Wright
From Catherine Nash in memory of Norm Wright

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.

NEWS AND NOTES FROM THE WESTMINSTER CONSERVATION COMMISSION

By Rachael Shaw

Green Up Day Report
The Westminster Conservation Commission (WCC) coordinates Green Up Day for the Town. Westminster’s participation in Vermont’s Annual Green Up Day on May 2 was enthusiastic, with 311 bags collected, as well as 4-5 pieces of furniture, 17 tires and three 5-gallon buckets of oil. Hundreds of cigarette butts were also picked up; these can contain toxins that contaminate soil, and can also start forest fires during dry spells. Last summer there were brush fires along Route 9 that began with cigarette butts.

Thanks to all Green Up participants for your hard work and dedication! Thanks especially to those stalwart folks on Henwood Hill Road who filled/dragged out 150 bags of trash that had been dumped over the banks. There are several unpopulated stretches of road where a few people throw beer cans everyday, and sometimes these are full of tobacco spit and even dead mice, gross! This makes it hard to separate out recycling when greening up, because some of the cans are so disgusting. We ask that residents take notice of extensive littering while out walking and biking, and make efforts to focus on those areas during Green Up day next year. It can be a challenge, as some of those areas are hilly, overgrown and very difficult to traverse. Stay safe!

One area that could use a green up team (with reflective vests!) next year is the highway on-ramp from Route



donations from residents of the village. If you notice a turtle (or other reptile or amphibian) and would like to play a role as a citizen scientist, you can report your observation to this wonderful organization at www.vther-patlas.org.

Remember to secure garbage and compost from bears and other animals! The other day a bear was seen sitting and eating trash during the day next to the Westminster West Road between Saxtons River and Westminster West Village. Please don’t put garbage out until pick up day unless you have a very secure place to keep it.

The Westminster Conservation Commission meets on the fourth Thursday of the month, alternating between the Westminster Institute and the Westminster West Library, with a Zoom option available. The public is always welcome.

Photo above, group in front of the large wetland. At left, Westminster resident Rob Allembert installing turtle crossing sign. Photos by Rachael Shaw.



5 all the way to Back Westminster Road. Green Up Vermont has an app. We will make efforts to use it next year to coordinate some teams for tough areas.

Spring Ephemeral Walk

The WCC hosted a spring ephemeral walk on May 9. On a cool drizzly morning, three WCC members and four guests wandered some of the trails of Hidden Springs Maple Farm, in search of these fleeting blooms.

Because the spring was cool and gradual, many of the early ephemerals were still blooming. We were able to see the following species: Golden Alexander, Toothwort, Jack in the Pulpit, Trillium, Foamflower, Searsucker Sedge, Conks (shelf fungi), Small flower buttercup, Canada Mayflowers, Yellow violets, Dutchman’s breeches, Trout lily, Maidenhair fern, Blue cohosh, and Princess pine. We were also very heartened to spot some moose droppings.

Mini Grant Received

The WCC recently was awarded a mini grant from the Association of Vermont Conservation Commissions (AVCC). The official title of the grant is the Westminster Town Forest Outreach & Improvement Project. We received \$800 to begin work on planning a revitalized trail network, a small parking lot and a kiosk to make the Westminster Town Forest more inviting and accessible to visitors. It is a wonderful and underutilized resource in the town. We could use volunteers! If you are interested in this or any other projects that the WCC is working on, or in joining the WCC, please contact us at westminster-conservation@gmail.com.

A Visit to the Town Forest

On May 15, the WCC members explored a section of the Westminster Town Forest with invited guests Isabel Bowman (Conservation Specialist for the Windham County Natural Resources Conservation District) and Marie Caduto (regional Watershed Coordinator for the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation.) We were all pleased to see that the wood duck box that we installed in March is likely inhabited, and that there were many bird, plant and wildlife signs and sounds in the beautiful habitat that makes up the this special forest.

Sharing Space with Wildlife

We love turtles! Though not specifically a WCC project, volunteers Tatiana Schreiber, Rachael Shaw and Rob Allembert installed turtle crossing signs to the north and south of Westminster West village after noting significant turtle mortality there this spring. Signs were paid for by

REMEMBRANCES JULY 2026

LILLIAN DARRAH, 85
2/17/1941 - 6/9/2026
WESTMINSTER, VT

RITA HINDS, 97
8/13/1928 - 6/7/2026
BELLOWS FALLS, VT

RACHAEL JAMES, 67
11/10/1958 - 5/30/2026
BELLOWS FALLS, VT

GREG KORGESKI, 72
D. 5/27/2026
SAXTONS RIVER, VT

BARBARA JEAN
“BARBIE” KURKUL, 64
12/16/1961 - 5/28/2026
SAXTONS RIVER, VT

COMMUNITY CLOTHING CLOSET OPENS

The St. Charles Daughters of Mary Community Clothing Closet is open from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Wednesdays and Saturdays.

Bring an item you no longer use and swap if for gently used clothing. A monetary donation is acceptable if you don’t have something to swap.

Located at 31 Cherry Hill Street in Bellows Falls in the St. Charles Social Center. Call 802-463-0729 for more information.

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VERMONT PRIMARY VOTING IS AUG. 11

Below and to the right are the ballots for Westminster’s Aug. 11 Primary Elections, with voting at the Westminster Institute. In the Primary, Vermont voters must choose only one ballot, for the Republican Party, Progressive Party or Democratic Party.

258244
WESTMINSTER
WINDHAM-3

CAUTION: Vote in One Party Only Or Your Ballot Will Be Void

PROGRESSIVE PARTY

OFFICIAL VERMONT PRIMARY ELECTION BALLOT

AUGUST 11, 2026

INSTRUCTIONS TO VOTERS

- Use BLACK Pen to fill in the oval. **DO NOT USE PENCIL.**
- To vote for a person whose name is printed on the ballot, fill in the oval to the right of the name of that person.
- To vote for a person whose name is not printed on the ballot, write the person's name in the blank space provided and fill in the oval to the right of the write-in line. Please use BLOCK letters and stay within the box provided for write-ins.
- Do not vote for more candidates than the "VOTE for NOT MORE THAN #" for an office.
- If you make a mistake, tear, or deface the ballot, return it to an election official and obtain another ballot. DO NOT ERASE.

FOR REPRESENTATIVE TO CONGRESS Vote for not more than ONE (Write-in)	FOR AUDITOR OF ACCOUNTS Vote for not more than ONE (Write-in)	FOR PROBATE JUDGE Vote for not more than ONE (Write-in)
FOR GOVERNOR Vote for not more than ONE (Write-in)	FOR ATTORNEY GENERAL Vote for not more than ONE (Write-in)	FOR ASSISTANT JUDGE Vote for not more than TWO (Write-in)
FOR LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR Vote for not more than ONE (Write-in)	FOR STATE SENATOR Vote for not more than TWO (Write-in)	FOR STATE'S ATTORNEY Vote for not more than ONE (Write-in)
FOR STATE TREASURER Vote for not more than ONE ZACHARY HAMPL RUTLAND TOWN	FOR STATE REPRESENTATIVE Vote for not more than TWO (Write-in)	FOR SHERIFF Vote for not more than ONE (Write-in)
FOR SECRETARY OF STATE Vote for not more than ONE RACHEL SHAW BENNINGTON		FOR HIGH BAILIFF Vote for not more than ONE (Write-in)

258244
WESTMINSTER
WINDHAM-3

CAUTION: Vote in One Party Only Or Your Ballot Will Be Void

REPUBLICAN PARTY

OFFICIAL VERMONT PRIMARY ELECTION BALLOT

AUGUST 11, 2026

INSTRUCTIONS TO VOTERS

- Use BLACK Pen to fill in the oval. **DO NOT USE PENCIL.**
- To vote for a person whose name is printed on the ballot, fill in the oval to the right of the name of that person.
- To vote for a person whose name is not printed on the ballot, write the person's name in the blank space provided and fill in the oval to the right of the write-in line. Please use BLOCK letters and stay within the box provided for write-ins.
- Do not vote for more candidates than the "VOTE for NOT MORE THAN #" for an office.
- If you make a mistake, tear, or deface the ballot, return it to an election official and obtain another ballot. DO NOT ERASE.

FOR REPRESENTATIVE TO CONGRESS Vote for not more than ONE MARK COESTER WESTMINSTER	FOR AUDITOR OF ACCOUNTS Vote for not more than ONE H. BROOKE PAIGE WASHINGTON	FOR PROBATE JUDGE Vote for not more than ONE (Write-in)
GERALD MALLOY WEATHERSFIELD	FOR ATTORNEY GENERAL Vote for not more than ONE H. BROOKE PAIGE WASHINGTON	FOR ASSISTANT JUDGE Vote for not more than TWO (Write-in)
FOR GOVERNOR Vote for not more than ONE PHIL SCOTT BERLIN	FOR STATE SENATOR Vote for not more than TWO DALE L. GASSETT BRATTLEBORO	FOR STATE'S ATTORNEY Vote for not more than ONE (Write-in)
FOR LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR Vote for not more than ONE JOHN S. RODGERS GLOVER	FOR STATE TREASURER Vote for not more than ONE H. BROOKE PAIGE WASHINGTON	FOR SHERIFF Vote for not more than ONE (Write-in)
FOR STATE REPRESENTATIVE Vote for not more than TWO NICOLE AMANDA COTA ROCKINGHAM	FOR SECRETARY OF STATE Vote for not more than ONE H. BROOKE PAIGE WASHINGTON	FOR HIGH BAILIFF Vots for not more than ONE (Write-in)

258244
WESTMINSTER
WINDHAM-3

CAUTION: Vote in One Party Only Or Your Ballot Will Be Void

DEMOCRATIC PARTY

OFFICIAL VERMONT PRIMARY ELECTION BALLOT

AUGUST 11, 2026

INSTRUCTIONS TO VOTERS

- Use BLACK Pen to fill in the oval. **DO NOT USE PENCIL.**
- To vote for a person whose name is printed on the ballot, fill in the oval to the right of the name of that person.
- To vote for a person whose name is not printed on the ballot, write the person's name in the blank space provided and fill in the oval to the right of the write-in line. Please use BLOCK letters and stay within the box provided for write-ins.
- Do not vote for more candidates than the "VOTE for NOT MORE THAN #" for an office.
- If you make a mistake, tear, or deface the ballot, return it to an election official and obtain another ballot. DO NOT ERASE.

FOR REPRESENTATIVE TO CONGRESS Vote for not more than ONE BECCA BALINT BRATTLEBORO	FOR AUDITOR OF ACCOUNTS Vote for not more than ONE TIM ASHE BURLINGTON	FOR PROBATE JUDGE Vote for not more than ONE JODI P. FRENCH NEWFANE
DAN YOWLE HARTINGTON	FOR ATTORNEY GENERAL Vote for not more than ONE CHARITY R. CLARK WILLISTON	FOR ASSISTANT JUDGE Vote for not more than TWO LAMONT BARNETT ROCKINGHAM
FOR GOVERNOR Vote for not more than ONE AMANDA JANOO BURLINGTON	FOR STATE SENATOR Vote for not more than TWO WENDY K. HARRISON BRATTLEBORO	FOR STATE'S ATTORNEY Vote for not more than ONE STEVEN M. BROWN BRATTLEBORO
FOR LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR Vote for not more than ONE ESTHER CHARLESTIN SOUTH BURLINGTON	FOR STATE TREASURER Vote for not more than ONE MIKE PIECIAK WINDSOR	FOR SHERIFF Vote for not more than ONE MARK R. ANDERSON BRATTLEBORO
FOR STATE REPRESENTATIVE Vote for not more than TWO MICHELLE BOS-LUN WESTMINSTER	FOR SECRETARY OF STATE Vote for not more than ONE SARAH COPELAND HANZAS BRADFORD	FOR HIGH BAILIFF Vote for not more than ONE ANGELA LAWRENCE BRATTLEBORO

ROCKINGHAM MEETING HOUSE OPENS FOR 2026 VISITOR SEASON

The Rockingham Meeting House, a National Historic Landmark, opened for the 2026 visitor season over Memorial Day weekend, welcoming visitors through Halloween to experience one of Vermont’s most treasured historic landmarks.

Based on docent availability, the Meeting House will be open for guided tours seven days a week from 11:00 AM to 5:00 PM.

A meeting house has stood on this hilltop since 1774, and the present building—constructed by the community in 1787—is the largest surviving eighteenth-century public building in Vermont still substantially intact in its original as-built form, making it an extraordinary survivor of early American civic architecture.

Visitors this season will have the unique opportunity to see history being actively preserved.

Mind our dust! Important preservation work is underway as the community prepares for major conservation construction scheduled to begin in spring 2027. Work taking place this season includes continued archaeological survey, reconstruction of the west driveway from Meeting House Road, restoration of the historic timber frame, stabilization of the building’s original plaster and windows, and restoration of the historic graveyard picket fence.

This important work is made possible through support from the National Park Service, the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation, the Town of Rockingham, and generous supporters who continue to contribute their time, talent, and treasure to help protect this extraordinary landmark.

The adjacent historic graveyard remains open to visitors daily from dawn to dusk for quiet reflection and respectful exploration.

Whether you are visiting for the first time, returning to a favorite local landmark, or simply looking for a memorable summer and fall destination, the Rockingham Meeting House offers a rare opportunity to step directly into early American history while witnessing preservation in action.

For tour information, special events, or volunteer opportunities, please contact: clg@rockbf.org or visit www.rockbf.org/rmh

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SEYMOUR SISTERS CONCERT
TO BENEFIT THE
CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF
WESTMINSTER WEST

Come support the Congregational Church of Westminster West, and listen to some great music! The Seymour Sisters will be performing Americana Music on Saturday, July 4th, from 5 – 7 p.m., at the home of Betsy and Laura Williams, 1197 Westminster West Rd, Westminster West.

The suggested donation is \$10 - \$25, and all proceeds will benefit the church.

While the church in Westminster West is a spiritual community, the church building is also the one space available in the WW village for larger gatherings: classes, presentations, chorus rehearsals, films, and other community gatherings and celebrations.

This fundraiser will help support the ongoing maintenance of this building that is used for so many events in our community.

The band includes local musicians Beth Spicer on banjo and guitar, Laura Bryant-Williams on vocals and guitar, Kate Wolff on dobro, Amy Moreland on mandolin and Betsy Williams on upright bass. The Seymour Sisters have been playing together for over 10 years after a jam session on Lake Seymour in the NEK and now enjoy a strong following in their community. The Seymour Sisters perform Americana music and are known for their vocal harmonies and rousing as well as sentimental songs.

If you like Nanci Griffith, Rani Arbo, Gillian Welch or Red Molly you’ll like The Seymour Sisters!

They will be joined by special guest Jon Bliss, with his beautiful and melodic guitar picking.

There will be light refreshments available. So, bring a lawn chair, a picnic supper, a beverage of your choice, and enjoy some outdoor music-on-the-lawn.

Can’t make the concert but still want to support the church? Checks made out to, “CCWW” can be mailed to Betsy Williams, 1197 Westminster West Rd, Putney, VT 05346.

Questions? Contact Betsy at: laladust@gmail.com
Rain location: Congregational Church of Westminster West, 44 Church St, Westminster West.

2026 CONCERTS ON THE GREEN
IN WALPOLE LINEUP

Savings Bank of Walpole is pleased to announce the lineup for the 2026 SBW Concerts on the Green Summer Series, continuing a long-standing tradition of bringing live music and community together on the Walpole Town Common.

The series begins on Sunday, June 14 with the Westmoreland Town Band. Concerts will be held rain or shine on Sundays from 6:00–7:30 PM. Attendees are encouraged to bring a picnic basket, blanket or lawn chair and enjoy a relaxing evening of music with family and friends.

Now in its 43rd year, the SBW Concerts on the Green series continues to showcase a variety of talented regional performers, offering something for everyone throughout the summer.

“We’re looking forward to another great season of music on the green,” said Mark Bodin, President of Savings Bank of Walpole. “This series is a wonderful way to bring people together and celebrate the sense of community that makes Walpole such a special place.”

2026 SBW Concerts on the Green Summer Series Schedule
(All shows held rain or shine – now earlier on Sundays from 6:00–7:30 PM.)

JULY

5

River Valley Dance Band

12

Springfield Community Band

19

Tattoo

26

Brattleboro American Legion Band

AUGUST

2

The Temple Band

9

Nelson Town Band

16

East Bay Jazz Ensemble

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