

Thriving During the Pandemic

Traditionally, the September/October Signpost features a theme about which townspeople share their thoughts. Despite all the sadness, difficulty, loss, and frustration of the Covid-19 pandemic, most are coping and even exploring areas outside the normal day-to-day activities. We asked you to share how you have expressed your creativity during the pandemic. What talents have you explored; what skills have you acquired? Who knows? Your ingenuity may inspire others.

Ryan, my younger brother, plays piano. In these struggling times of Covid-19, piano has been a comforting escape for him.

When Ryan was six years old, he received a keyboard for Christmas. Soon after, he began piano instruction with Debra Smoller's Suzuki Piano Studio. Eventually, Ryan upgraded his keyboard to a real upright piano. He loved his lessons, but practicing was often a bit of a struggle.

This past January, Ryan was given a challenge by his piano teacher—100 days of piano practice without missing a day. At first it seemed daunting, but eventually he started practicing every single day to the point when sometimes it would be hard to get him off his piano. This was the time when Covid-19 ruined everything else. Ryan's piano lessons had to be over Zoom, and it felt strange; but Ryan powered through these hard times and played piano every day, listening to it in the car and playing whenever there was free time.

During this pandemic, Ryan has gotten extremely attached to his piano, and it has been keeping him very busy, calm, and comforted during time away from school and friends. He experienced a great milestone, completing Suzuki Piano Book 1 and performing his book concert over Zoom for family, friends, and his piano classmates. Along with his regular piano instruction, Ryan often hears a song that he likes, and suddenly—fingers to keys—he instinctively learns the song.

While Covid-19 has taken so much away from the world, it has had a positive impact on Ryan's piano playing. The more he played, the more his appreciation and love for piano grew, filling our home with music and joy.



Spunqi Young

Ryan Young entertains his family with music during the pandemic.

—Cody Young is an incoming 7th grader. In addition to his love for writing, he enjoys skiing, biking, and running his RC car on sunny days outside. Ryan is now 8 years old and entering 3rd grade.

Fostering 'Community-ism'

This issue inaugurates our thirty-first year of publishing the East Montpelier *Signpost*, even as we move into a future that may well depart radically from the past. Not that the past has been all sunshine and smiles. We tend to have selective amnesia about past crises, most recently the destruction of the twin towers in New York City, streamed live on television, on September 11, 2001. Twenty years ago, we had to start getting used to security checks at airports, beefed up border patrols, and, now, Real-ID driving licenses. Farther back, our parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents weathered the flood of 1927, the Great Depression, and World War II, while many among us lived through the polio epidemic of the 1950s. We need to remember those crises to help us realize that we have faced uncertainty before and that we will get through these times as well.

Despite uncertainty about almost everything, life does go on. How? As the Beatles put it, "I get by with a little help from my friends." Thirty years ago, the first issue of East Montpelier *Signpost* noted that its founders sought to "create a newspaper to foster 'community-ism'...the sense of working together, of caring for each other and for the town." We still are working to foster community-ism today, in this issue highlighting how our friends and neighbors have responded creatively to the current Covid-19 pandemic. These are stories of determination, ingenuity, perseverance, and, yes, hope. Let's carry those traits with us as we move forward into the next thirty years.

—Ann Stanton



Kate Rader

Kate Rader and Ken Hertz had a dinner on June 21 to celebrate the blooming of the peonies. Outdoors, buffet service for ten, couples seated at either end of six-foot-long utility tables, masks before eating, and hand sanitizer on the buffet table. "The first time we had been together since February," says Kate Rader.

EAST
MONTPELIER

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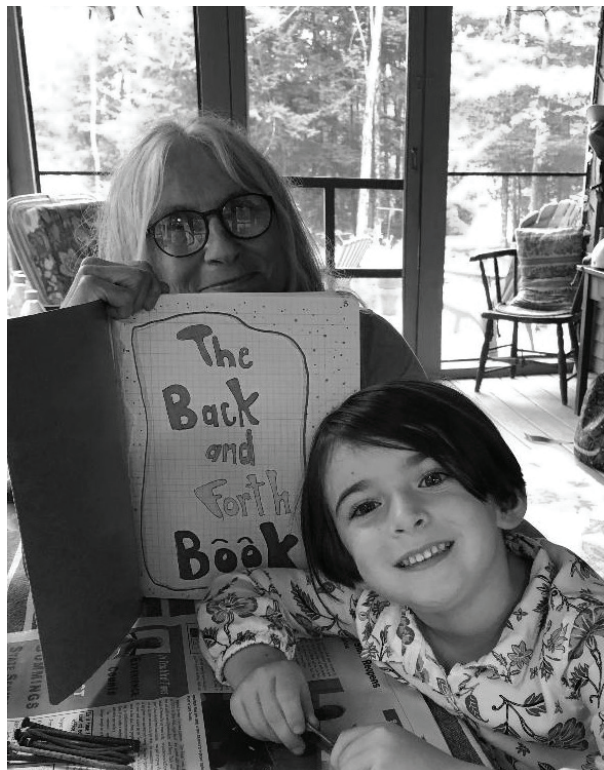
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The Back and Forth Book



Ellen Knoedler and her granddaughter Penelope.

Even though it is a two-minute walk down the road to my granddaughter Penelope's house, and we see each other often to read books, bake cookies, draw, and play games, we also have created a special way to share writings during these Covid-19 times.

We call it "The Back and Forth Book." It operates similarly to the way pen pals do. She and I have a big blank book that we write in. Each page is dated and filled in with whatever we want to put in it. Drawings, questions, and jokes—the sky is the limit. When I am finished writing or drawing on a page, and am ready to send it to her, I put it in her mailbox. She does the same for me (her mom helps her do some of the writing).

Penelope is almost five years old and is raring to go. This gives Penny something special that is just for her. Sometimes a five-year-old girl needs something all her own, other than questions from an inquisitive two-and-a-half-year-old little brother. It also helps her learn to express herself on paper through words and artwork. Often a present, like candy or a colorful band aid, for Penelope and for her brother, James, is enclosed because that is what grandmas like to do. Spoil their grandchildren!

—Ellen Knoedler

My silver lining (and savior!) has been the curbside pick-up service run by the Kellogg Hubbard Library. My entire family of voracious readers has benefitted from continuous access to books, books and more books. One day, I received a phone call from one of the librarians to say that we had (only!) one book to pick up that day. She offered to scan the shelf for us and added a few brand-new books to our pile. Opening that bag of surprise books was such a gift. We are so grateful for the KHL and its stellar staff.

—Megan Cannella

Since March the East Montpelier and Calais Historical Societies have canceled four meetings featuring fun and informative programs. We do not yet know if we will meet indoors this autumn, but we do have programs planned. However, we were game enough to meet on July 20 for our control of the classy croquet trophy that Calais had held for a good long stretch until we won last year's game. It's all in fun, and it was a beautiful evening to be socially distanced outside. Just to let folks know that we are doing our best to accommodate the need for safety above all. Please watch for announcements of potential meetings in September, October and/or November (see calendar).

—Sandal Cate is chair of the EM Historical Society



Jennifer Boyer

Croquet players Dick & Jane Staudt, Candy Jones, Elise Thorsen, Paul & Sandal Cate taking home the trophy!

Fairmont Farm: The Views from the Trails



Amanda Guazzoni, Mandible Photography

The principals of Fairmont Farm.

East Montpelier has lovely views. From the edge of a field, we see long views of fields, hills, forests, rivers, and distant mountains. In East Montpelier, many of the views from our town trails are due to farms, and especially to one enterprise: Fairmont Farm.

In Vermont terms, it's a fairly big farm. Fairmont Farm manages about 3,600 acres of cropland—mostly in East Montpelier, plus some in Craftsbury—with additional acres of managed forests. The farmed portion includes land Fairmont owns and land leased from other landowners. Nearly 1,900 acres of Fairmont's own land are conserved. And several of our town trails cross Fairmont land, with more projects being considered.

Unlike many of the big dairy farms in Addison and Franklin Counties, Fairmont land is not in one large block away from most roads. Fairmont Farm's East Montpelier fields are in many separate plots scattered around town. So, as well as hiking on Fairmont land, we live beside it, drive by it, and see its views all the time. As I drove from my house off County Road to interview Clara Ayer about the farm, I went first to the original farm on Lyle Young Road and then to "The Haven" on Lyle Haven Road. And I realized that almost every beautiful view I saw was because of Fairmont fields. The farm also offers even closer views of its work: in normal times, the farm hosts two kids' camps each summer and welcomes visitors for farm tours. Farm tour groups include local schools, retirement communities, Spanish classes, international groups, and college dairy classes. As Clara Ayer says, "We try to be an open book for neighbors and for the community." (Because of the Covid virus, they

have very regretfully canceled the summer camps and the tours for now.) They have recently opened a market at the Lyle Haven site, selling their locally-raised meat and Cabot Creamery dairy products.

Fairmont Farm generously hosts many sections of East Montpelier trails, plus sections of VAST trails, plus part of the Cross-Vermont Trail. What farm activities are you likely to notice as you hike these trails? Well, you may see planting, manure spreading, herbicide spraying, haying, corn harvesting, and forestry (oh yes—and cows).

What you won't see these days is plowing. Fairmont

"We try to be an open book for neighbors and for the community.

—Clara Ayers

Farm has switched to "no-till farming" for growing their corn. No-till means no plowing. In the no-till system, the farm harvests the corn in the fall, then plants a cover crop—usually winter rye—which grows over late fall, winter, and early spring. In the spring, farm workers plant the corn seeds directly into the cover crop, using special seed-drilling machinery. No plowing. They use "Roundup-ready" corn. Once a year, after the young corn is growing, they spray an herbicide, Roundup (glyphosate), on the fields, which terminates the cover crop, but not the corn. Fairmont contracts with a professional spraying company, Bourdeau Brothers, for the herbicide spraying. Either before planting or after harvest, the farm spreads manure on the corn fields. This

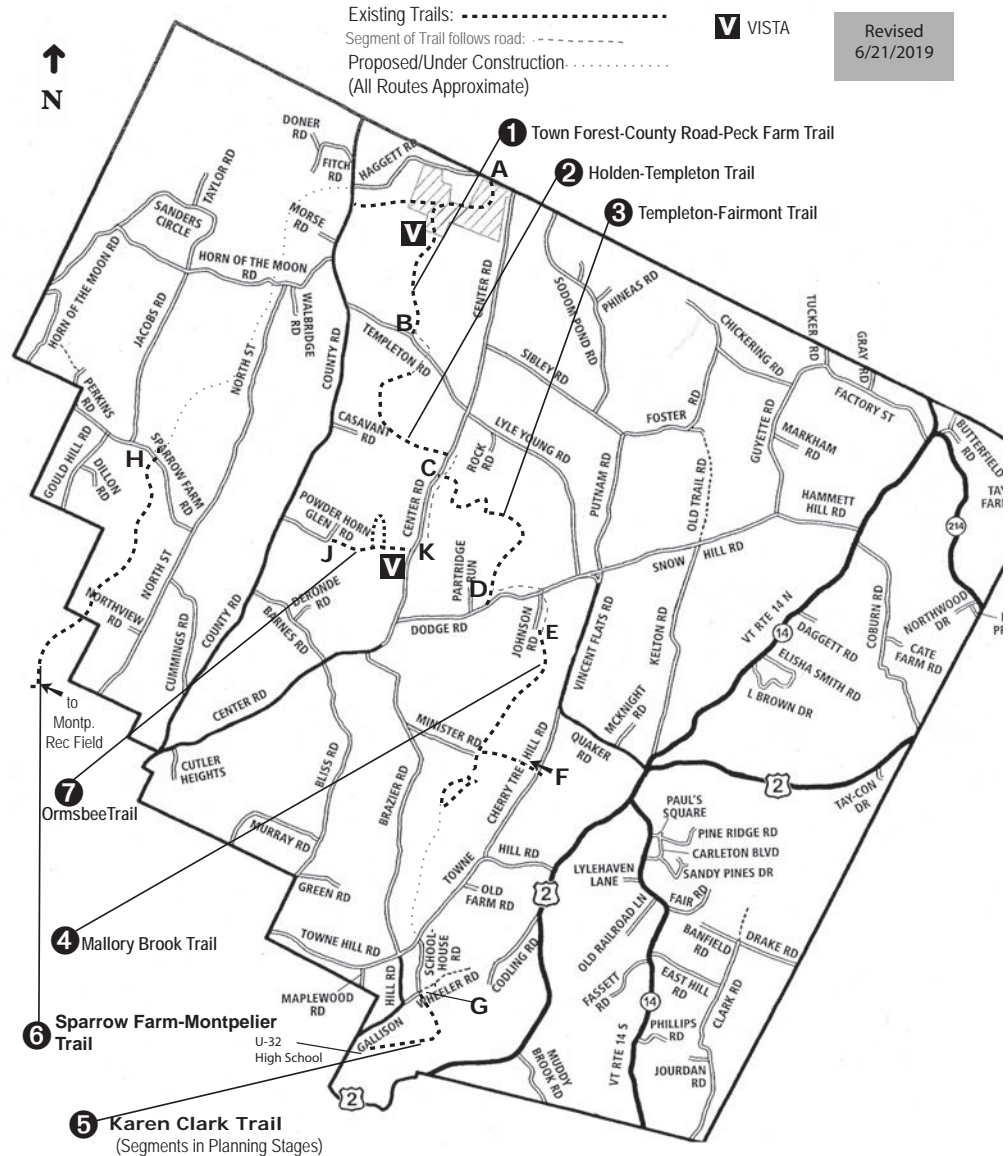
East Montpelier Trails Map

summer, the farm is experimenting with a new manure spreader, which uses injection rather than spraying. Ideally, this will avoid evaporation of nitrogen, and reduce the risk of manure runoff from rain. It may also decrease manure smell. Then in the fall, corn is harvested again. Clara Ayer explained that no-till farming does not disturb the soil like plowing does. It can decrease soil loss due to erosion, and conserves water in the soil by avoiding runoff. It also avoids compacting the soil; and it improves soil structure and soil health.

Haying work includes manure spreading, cutting, and harvesting the hay. Fairmont usually gets three to four cuttings of hay, sometimes even five, and may spread manure after each cut. Fairmont has about 1,500 acres in corn, and 2,000 in hay. And since Fairmont's crop fields are relatively small (many of them as small as ten acres), and scattered, all the farm equipment must travel from field to field during the growing and harvesting season. For the herbicide spraying, which is on a fairly predictable schedule, Fairmont is now working with the Trails Committee on a plan to notify townspeople when spraying will happen, and on a plan to close affected trails as needed when spraying happens. This would probably be for two to three days during the scheduled spraying.

All of the corn and hay goes to feed the cows. Fairmont Farm currently milks about 1,000 cows, mostly Holsteins. The "girls" are milked three times a day, and each cow produces about 90 pounds of milk a day, or about 10.5 gallons. The farm is a member of Cabot Cooperative, so all the milk goes to Cabot Creamery, mostly to be made into cheese. Clara Ayer sees the cows, and thus the farm, as part a great network or cycle of land, manure, recycling resources, milk, and food. We also get our trails, and our beautiful views.

Three East Montpelier farms joined in 1992 to create Fairmont Farm. John and Donna Hall and Austin Cleaves



have stepped down from management, and today, Fairmont is a third-generation farm owned by Richard and Bonnie Hall, Tucker Purchase, Clara Ayer and Ricky Hall. The fourth generation is now growing up on the farm as well.

The Fairmont Farm website is fairmontfarminc.com and the farm is also on Facebook.

—Loring Starr lives on Powder Horn Glen Road, and her family's woodlot adjoins one of the Fairmont fields (the former Ormsbee property). She is a trail steward for the Ormsbee Trail.

A Profound Wildness



Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department

Thanks to the East Montpelier trails, the woods are within easy reach, and once you're walking, it takes only a brief pause in stride for awe to strike. It's as simple as looking up to find a giant, smoke-gray hornet's nest dangling from a tree, or watching a fallen log, year by year, fur with moss and slowly sink to vanishing. To startle a grouse or pick out a neon newt on the path can make a walk memorable. But there is, of course, a limit to the amount of wildness a 21st century citizen can manage.

A bolting deer is a thrill to see, but I wouldn't want to encounter a bear. I'd be certain to panic, and I'm sure I'm the most useless kind of coward. I'm told you're supposed to make yourself big, but I'm sure I'd forget to try. My fear might make me run, and these days I run with the agility of a rickety wheelbarrow. I'd fail every test of courage and cunning. And, foolish human that I am, I'd spot it too late, distracted by a chipmunk.

Walking north one day on the Mallory Brook trail, I came to an old white pine on my left masking all but the rear haunch of a dog. So much for finding chipmunks, here's a dog to interrupt me. The dog had paused going west to east across the trail. I stopped, hoping not to trigger an avalanche of barking. No sound from the dog. That haunch was pretty big, and rather beautifully black, with a lush coat. It was also curved with a grand roundness that made me realize I don't know dog breeds very well at all.

A question flared, faster than thought, and pure curiosity moved me one step forward before I pulled back with sudden reverence. Was it? The animal moved past the tree to stand in the middle of the trail in full profile. The light brown, reassuring muzzle. The bright eyes. The roundness

at every junction, rising to the elegant arc of the back.

Time stops for me, and maybe for the bear as well. I am still. The bear is still. We are as close as people in a living room. We look at each other, sense each other through every channel we have. The world has shrunk to nothing around us; we are the pivot of all. The sense of being in the presence of a great creature feels like a profound privilege.

Finally, the bear moves forward, plunging into the tight underbrush on the other side of the trail. The bear's first sounds are bold and loud, but soon the great dome of its back is swallowed in green and the woods are magically still again. Wildness, the kind that once seemed too big to handle, settles like grace.

—Alex Brown is the theater critic for *Seven Days* who is writing fiction until stages open again.

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NONA ESTRIN, OUR RESIDENT NATURALIST, COMMENTS:

Never have I read such a powerful description of why we keep going back, stepping off road or lawn, into the woods. The animal of the year, surely, is the majestic and sometimes frightening bear. A bumper crop of food sources and cubs last year and a perfect storm of cold spring and drought this year, have kept bears roaming around the clock in search of food and sometimes even water. You can worry about what to do when you see a bear, but when you do, at least if it's in the woods, bear and moment are transformed into wonder! In your chicken coop? On your deck? That's a different matter, so here's to protecting their habitat and cleaning up ours!

Sweet Fall Treat



Deepfried apples dusted with cinnamon sugar? Yes, please.

Just in time for fall, Travis and Chuck Paquet are opening their pop-up, Paquet's Apple Shack, on Towne Hill Road. Apple fries are like French fries—apples cut like fries, lightly coated in cornstarch, and deep-fried—but dusted with cinnamon sugar rather than salt and served with caramel sauce. Fries a la mode are even more scrumptious: fries topped with ice cream, whipped cream, and finished off with your choice of caramel or Vermont maple syrup.

The brothers explain that their family has always had an entrepreneurial streak. The Apple Shack is a side gig, in addition to a landscaping business and working in the East Montpelier and Berlin elementary schools. They got the idea while attending a summer festival in Maine. Back home, Travis started experimenting and came up with the recipe, perfected at family get-togethers and reunions. They built the shack itself atop a trailer base and have been selling at festivals and local events for the past couple of years. When Covid-19 struck and fairs and

festivals began to cancel, Travis's wife Hilary suggested they set up on the road outside their house instead, and that's where you can find them this fall.

The whole family gets into the act: three adults and four kids, all wearing colorful cloth masks and black t-shirts emblazoned with "Paquet's Apple Shack. Serving Apple Fries" in red, on the back. You can't miss them on 3180 Towne Hill Road, right before it intersects with Route 2. Paquet's Apple Shack is open Fridays from 5 to 8 pm throughout September until mid- or late October. —Ann Stanton is EM Eats coordinator

Baking with Rhubarb

When the stay-at-home order began, I realized this could be a time to do more baking. This was obviously not a unique idea, as evidenced by the fact that there were times when the stores were out of flour and yeast. I did start baking bread, but my main experimentation was baking with rhubarb. For years I have kept recipe file folders into which I put recipes given to me by friends, clipped from newspapers and magazines, or saved from my mother's recipe box.

The big glossy leaves of rhubarb followed by beautiful red stems were emerging in the garden. I sorted through my recipes and found rhubarb crisp (two ways), rhubarb betty, rhubarb cake, rhubarb pie, rhubarb squares, rhubarb bread pudding, and my favorite "four-generation rhubarb pie." This last one adds a bit of orange juice and orange zest to the rhubarb, sugar, flour and three eggs. The thing that makes it most special is that the egg whites are beaten until soft peaks form and are folded into the other ingredients creating a fluffy custard. With all these different ways to use rhubarb, we didn't tire of it throughout the rhubarb season.

—Barb Ploof

Garden Surplus?

In times past, we joked about locking cars to prevent folks from sneaking bags of zucchini into the back seat. These days, there are better outlets for those zucchinis, beans, tomatoes, chard, kale, and whatever garden bounty is overwhelming your family's table: donate to a local food shelf. Thanks go to Karen Kane for this terrific idea! It doesn't need to be a lot—every fresh bit helps. If possible, bag produce in portion-size amounts so that the food is handled as little as possible. But no requirements. Just grow and give. Your neighbors thank you!

Montpelier Food Pantry: Tuesday/Thursday/Saturday, 9:30 am-noon, at Trinity Church in Montpelier, next to Kellogg-Hubbard Library.

Onion River Food Shelf: Wednesday, 10 am, Old Schoolhouse Common, Marshfield. You can also drop food on Tuesday afternoon at the Fielders' house, 1595 Center Road, East Montpelier Center, across from the Old Meeting House, phone 223-6548

Old Brick Church Food Shelf: Second and fourth Thursdays of each month, 2-5 pm.

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Carl Etnier Gene Troia
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Flor Diaz Smith, fdiazsmith@u32.org
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Stephen Looke

State Representative

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Voting, Your Way

This year's General Election will be done, in large part, via mail. Ballots will be sent out to all active and verified voters beginning the week of September 20, 2020. **If you have not received a ballot by October 1, 2020**, please contact the town clerk's office to confirm your voter registration information and have one mailed to you.

BY MAIL:

- **BALLOTS CAN BE MAILED BACK** in the postage pre-paid envelope, dropped off at the town clerk's office, or brought to the polls on election day.
- **BE CERTAIN TO SIGN** your name on the voted ballot envelope before mailing it back. Unsigned envelopes will not be counted.
- **FOLLOW THE INSTRUCTIONS** on the ballot.

IN PERSON:

- **POLLS WILL BE OPEN** at EMES on Tuesday, November 3, from 7:00 am to 7:00 pm for those who wish to vote in person or drop off early voting ballots.
- **PLEASE PLAN TO WEAR A MASK** and maintain social distance while at the polls.

PLEASE CONTACT Rosie or Denise with any voting questions you have. We can be reached at clerk@eastmontpeliervt.org or at 802-223-3313 x201 or x202.

NEED A MASK? Free cloth face coverings are available at the town clerk's office. Please call 802-223-3313 x201 or e-mail clerk@eastmontpeliervt.org for details.

Invasive EAB: A Threat to Local Trees

Have you heard that the invasive Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) beetle, a threat to all our ash trees, was detected in Vermont in 2018 and is now resident in East Montpelier? In the past, chestnut blight, Dutch elm disease, and butternut canker decimated entire species of once-common forest trees, and now EAB has that potential as well. Prompt action is required because once the ash trees in our public road rights of way (ROWs) become infested and start dying, they will be a danger to the public and to town road crews. The dead wood is extremely brittle and tends to shatter unpredictably, making dead ash trees difficult and expensive to cut down safely.

East Montpelier's Resilient Roads Committee (RRC) has a plan to stay ahead of this serious new danger. In partnership with regional and state experts, and calling on the experience of other states, the town RRC created a preliminary plan for staged removal of most ash trees along town roads. Local electric companies are already removing hazardous ash trees from their ROWs.

A grant-funded pilot project is currently underway that will result in the removal of ash trees along Gallison Hill, Wheeler, and Schoolhouse Roads, and on the U-32 campus. Tree removal started at the school in June under a contract with Vermont Arborists of Waterbury Center and will be completed in the fall.

The pilot project will also include replacement of several landscape ash trees on the U-32 campus and prophylactic insecticide treatment of a small number of select roadside ash trees across town. The treatments are highly effective but must be repeated at two to three-year intervals. East Montpelier is one of the first Vermont towns doing large-scale ash-tree removal. *continued p. 9*

Town News

My friend Linda Royce has been a crafter for many years, but this spring with the Covid-19 outbreak, she began a new craft. She started by making a mask for her granddaughter, Katie, who works at UVM Medical Center. Since she'd never done it before, she went to her computer and found patterns and directions. Linda says her first masks weren't stitched very well, but they were a hit. Soon Katie asked if Linda would make masks for her boyfriend and several co-workers. She even found patterns for scrub caps and made those too. Of course, her children and other grandchildren wanted masks too. Soon she was making them for friends as well, even mailing them as needed. Linda takes great care in choosing fabrics to suit the recipient: flowers for a gardener, animal prints for kids, or sports teams for the athletes. Several family members and friends brought her special fabrics, since she was self-quarantined. When she ran out of elastic, family members ordered a 70-yard spool and had it shipped. The mask making had to go on! She has

made about 270 masks so far and is on the hunt for some camouflage fabric, as requested by some young friends.

Linda has always liked to stay busy. This project has kept her hands busy and her mind active as she figured out ways to improve on her original patterns. She also had some fun by making masks for two lion statues in her yard. I was lucky enough to receive some masks from Linda and am grateful for her generosity. —*told by Carolyn Pastore*

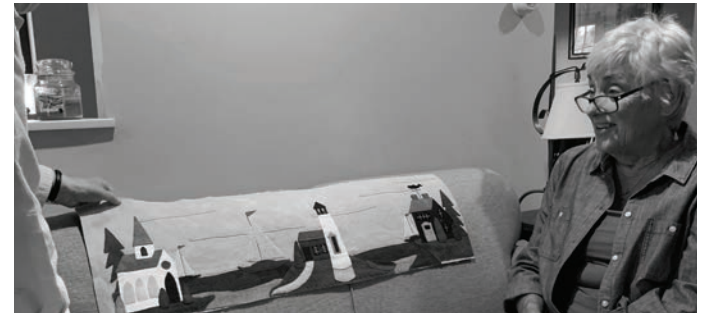


Covid-19 spurred Linda Royce to take up a new type of crafting.

Keeping Busy

In between dreaming of where I would like to be or what I would love to be doing, I have finished three UFQs (unfinished quilts) from several years ago and one for a granddaughter going off to her first year of college. Now this piece of appliqued wool (pictured) is one more challenge on my To Do list. Thanks to suggestions for how to finish this wall hanging, I do believe it will soon be a conquered challenge. Now, does finishing a project give one license to start another?

—*Diana Fielder*



Diana ponders her unfinished work.

Five months ago in March, when Covid-19 was making their Boston neighborhood feel unsafe, our son, Tim Klein, Emily Trono, and two grandsons Max (3) and Theo (14 months) arrived to stay in our bungalow. Emily, a high school teacher and Tim, a counsellor for young adults, were able to make the transition to online work with the help of our grandparent squad which includes Emily's mother, Linda.

The California crew—daughter Jesse and Isaiah Seret with Asa (10) and Indi (7)—arrived from LA to stay in their nearby summer house in early June. We've been blessed to have these families spend summers in Vermont for a number of years now, but in these times, the small pleasures have become more poignant. Everyone has complicated decisions to make, and there are many willing listeners when one of us needs to work something out. We get such pleasure seeing that Jesse and Tim can rely on each other for this kind of support. They have been a continent apart for most of every year, and they now have the benefit of “just stopping over to run something by you.”

And now we can watch 14-month-old Theo grow! He arrived at 10 months old. We've heard his first words—“car car,” “lawnmower,” “cheese”—watched him stand without holding on, helped him with first steps, and saved him from numerous accidents a day as he settles into his personality: he's a climber and a runner. —*Tony Klein and Jennifer Boyer*

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The RRC will share information with the public as we proceed and looks forward to getting additional public input when it updates the plan after the pilot project is completed. More information is available at eastmontpeliervt.org/boards-commission/roadside-vegetation-management/

—*Jeff Cueto, chair of EM's RRC, is a retired civil engineer and hydrologist. He grew up on the family farm on Murray Road and continues to reside there.*

Town Weathervane

SELECTBOARD

June 1, 2020

This and subsequent meetings were conducted remotely using the Zoom conferencing platform. Participation options were provided to the public.

Discussion

Conversation with CVSWMD General Manager Cathleen Gent

Motions Passed

- to amend the selectboard's March 16, 2020 order, to state "[a]ll non-essential, indoor, in-person town committee/commission/board meetings and events are canceled until further notice.

Meetings at public sites outdoors are permitted for gatherings of 25 or fewer, provided that physical distancing and protocols for hygiene consistent with guidance from VDH and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), are observed

- to authorize TA Johnson to sign the Memorandum of Intent to participate in the Restart Vermont Loan and Grant Program, with the understanding that the town is capping its Revolving Loan Fund contribution at \$50,000
- to allow Pat Malone to replace Marc Fontaine as the prospective purchaser of the town-owned Old LaPerle Farm property, subject to the agreed terms and conditions
- to appoint Ginny Callan, Sarah Kinter, Lindy Johnson, Paul Erlbaum, Sue Racanelli, Kate Rader and Jeanne Malachowski to one-year terms on the Funding Request Study Committee

June 16, 2020

Discussion

Update on Cross Vermont Trail easement over Fairmont Farm property (former Lylehaven main farm)

Motions Passed

- to approve the proposed sale of Old LaPerle Farm parcel as set forth in the purchase and sale agreement, to authorize TA Johnson to complete the agreement and authorize Chair Gardner to sign the notice to convey
- to adopt the resolution calling for fair and direct federal emergency aid to

reopen and rebuild local American economies and authorize Chair Gardner to sign certifying the adoption

June 22, 2020

Discussion

Conversation of the annual report on records management and retention with Town Clerk Rosie Laquerre

Motions Passed

- to accept the revised language, to approve the 2020 Warrant to Impound Unlicensed Dogs and to authorize Chair Gardner to sign the warrant on behalf of the full board
- to assign the current FY20 budget surplus: \$5,000 to be added to the funds set aside to cover the future costs of allowable leave reimbursements at the time of employee termination; \$10,000 to be added to the Land Records Restoration Fund to augment the funds available for the ongoing land records digitization project; and, \$50,000 to be added to the Capital Reserve Fund to cover expected capital costs that have not yet been integrated into the capital plan. Further, \$100,000 of the unassigned current fund balance shall be assigned to reduce property taxes in FY21
- to appoint the following officers for terms as specified: Rosie Laquerre as town clerk; term July 1, 2020-June 30, 2021; Don Welch as town treasurer; term July 1, 2020-June 30, 2021; Don Welch as collector of current taxes; term July 1, 2020-June 30, 2021; Denise Sparrow as assistant town clerk; term July 1, 2020-June 30, 2021; Denise Sparrow as assistant town treasurer; term July 1, 2020-June 30, 2021; Bruce Johnson as zoning administrator; term July 1, 2020-June 30, 2021; Bruce Johnson as collector of delinquent taxes; term July 1, 2020-June 30, 2021; Bruce Johnson as road commissioner; term July 1, 2020-June 30, 2021; Gene Troia as acting zoning administrator; term July 1, 2020-June 30, 2021; Seth Gardner as road commissioner; term July 1, 2020-June 30, 2021
- to appoint Jon Jewett to the Capital Improvement Committee for a term through March 2021
- to approve the employee pay rates for FY21 as presented

- to approve the rollover to FY21 of all accrued vacation time for TA Johnson in light of the loss of planned vacations due to the exigencies of the Covid-19 pandemic

July 13, 2020 (unapproved)

Discussion

Conversation with Carolyn Brennan of Kellogg-Hubbard Library
Conversation with selectboard candidates
Town management in the context of Covid-19

Motions Passed

- to approve the WebGIS Support Contract with CAI Technologies and authorize Chair Gardner to sign the agreement on behalf of the board
- to authorize Chair Gardner to sign the treasurer's financial management questionnaire
- to approve Access Permit #20-027 for property at 2005 Brazier Rd, and authorize Chair Gardner to sign the permit on behalf of the board
- to appoint Judith Dillon to the selectboard for a term ending March 2, 2021

PLANNING COMMISSION

June 4, 2020

This and subsequent meetings were conducted remotely using the Zoom conferencing platform.

Discussion regarding EM Village zoning

June 18, 2020

Discussion about the summer meeting schedule and EM Village zoning

July 2, 2020

Discussion about EM Village zoning

July 16, 2020 (Unapproved)

Discussion about EM Village zoning

DEVELOPMENT REVIEW BOARD

June 2, 2020

Motions Passed

- to approve the Application #20-013 as presented, for property located at 4379 and 4423 US2, submitted by Casey and Amanda Northrup

- to approve a large lot survey waiver per Section 6.2(B) for the remainder lot except around the Kathy Donner lot for property at the end of Fitch Rd
- to approve a large lot survey waiver per Section 6.2(B) for the remainder lot, for property located at 1657 and 1307 VT214.

July 7, 2020 (Unapproved)

Motions Passed

- to approve Application #20-020 for the Fitch subdivision as presented, for property located at the end of Fitch Rd.

WCUUSD

June 3, 2020

This and subsequent meetings were held by teleconference.

Discussion

Superintendent transition update
First reading of policy #C21 - Search and Seizure of Students by School Personnel. ESP negotiations

Motions Passed:

- to support our students and staff of color; to reaffirm the statements of VSBA/ VSA/ VPA and also continue to educate ourselves so we can continue to support our communities. We want to be part of the solution; this is a priority
- to approve the blanket authorization as presented
- to approve a number of regular business items/bills/contracts for all schools
- to move the following policies for second reading: B40-Non-Retribution/Retaliation, C2-Student Alcohol & Drugs, C3-Transportation, C5-Weapons/Firearms, C6-Home Study Students, C8-Pupil Privacy Rights, C10 & C10P-Prevention of Harassment, Hazing and Bullying Policy and Procedures, C11-Student Freedom of Expression in School-Sponsored Media, C30-Student Medication, C32-Eighteen year-old Students
- to approve the charter for the Education Quality Committee
- to approve the following hires: Dawn Bates and Meta Bravos
- to accept the following resignation: Peter Arsenault
- to accept the recommendation for the changes in FTE, as presented

September–October 2020

- The board entered executive session at 8:53 p.m. and exited at 9:52 p.m.

June 17, 2020 (Unapproved)

Discussion of board operations

Motions Passed:

- to approve the bid award to Danaher Floor Restoration in an amount not to exceed \$56,000, and to approve the transfer of \$14,000 from the capital fund to complete the funding for this project
- to approve the Teacher Union Contract MOU, as requested
- to approve policies C7-Student Attendance and C21-Search & Seizure of Students by School Personnel
- to extend the approval of all 2019 policies for one year
- to approve the increase in FTE for Julie McInstry, and the retirement of Jamie O'Hare
- to approve addition of two BI positions

The board entered executive session at 8:53 p.m. and exited at 9:52 p.m. to approve the collective bargaining agreement with the ESP union, contingent upon future union ratification

- to approve the administration's recommendation regarding a student matter
- to approve the administration's recommendation for non-union support staff contracts
- to approve the retirement of Lori Bibeau, effective June 30, 2021

July 1, 2020 (Unapproved)

Discussion

Reopening schools in light of Covid-19. Recommendations to Finance Committee. Future agenda items

Motions Passed

- to authorize the superintendent to continue the process of exploring short-term renovations 1, 2, and 3 as delineated in the July 1 memo from Superintendent Olkowski
- to authorize the hiring of a Covid-19 Coordinator, who would be a nurse, to serve for the next school year
- to authorize the hiring of additional school nurse positions as described

July 15, 2020 (Unapproved) Discussion of in-person board meetings and the re-opening of schools

Motions Passed

- to authorize the expenditure of \$2K plus travel, lodging, and food, for Nicholas Fischer to facilitate the board retreat
- to authorize the Finance Committee to award Covid-19-related bids over \$15k per Vermont law up to \$100k per item
- to authorize to expedite orders for unbudgeted items related to Covid-19, up to \$300K
- to spend up to \$26K for the health and safety measures for office renovations, with prompt consideration given to the other buildings across WCUUSD. The Central Office Capital Fund has sufficient funds to cover the cost of renovations if these costs are not eligible for Covid-19 reimbursement
- to decline the offer from Novus and proceed with the plan to hire an energy consultant and develop a comprehensive energy plan for the district
- to approve Policy C47: Student Exchanges, on second reading
- to accept the following retirements (effective June 30, 2021): Susan Pryce (U-32 Special Educator, 1.0 FTE), Sue Anne Mayette (U-32 Speech/Language Pathologist, 1.0 FTE), Jane Badger (East Montpelier Administrative Assistant, 0.20 FTE/Paraeducator, 0.80 FTE), Katherine Stone (East Montpelier Pre-Kindergarten Assistant, 0.40 FTE)

Special Board Meeting, July 22, 2020 (Unapproved)

Went into executive session at 6:44, including superintendent, legal counsel, principals and central office administrators, for the purpose of discussing personnel issues; exited at 8:20 p.m.

Motions Passed

- to establish a subcommittee (Stephen Looke, Chris McVeigh and Dorothy Naylor) to explore leave options beyond what is approved by statute and contract and report back to board no later than July 29
- to approve the hiring of Elizabeth Wirth as Covid-19 Coordinator for the 2020-21 school year

East Montpelier Native Turns 100!

On October 9, 2020, Mabel Marie “Chris” Christiansen Wright will celebrate her 100th birthday. Given the pandemic, she may not have all eight of her children visiting her as planned, but we plan to send her as many celebratory wishes and messages as possible. We hope that some of you who remember her will send her cards and notes as well.

In the November-December 2000 issue of the *Signpost*, which can be accessed in the archives online (emsignpost.com), there is a feature article about Chris’s life until the age of eighty. For any of you who know our mom, lots more has happened since then.

At the age of 91 Chris decided she wanted another big adventure. She packed her belongings and moved to Redding, California, to live in a senior residence near two children, Julie Wright Harmon and Perry Wright and their families. There she continued to play bridge and enjoy travel, music, and family as well as learning more about California. She enjoys warmer winters but often speaks fondly of her views in the EM Center and the beautiful seasons of home.

In 2018, Chris moved from her own apartment to live with son Perry at his home in Redding. As she has gotten older, she has stopped traveling and playing bridge but she continues her interests in politics and current events, women’s rights, her computer and the stock market. After owning a basic cell phone for many years, she acquired a smartphone at the age of 97 and uses it to send and receive text messages, check the weather, and keep in touch with her family.

Recounting her experiences in World War II is very important to her, not only because it was an adventure but also because she doesn’t want us to forget that women played an important part in the war effort. Now she spends many hours happily reading and watching the news on TV but also enjoys short walks daily and the views of the countryside around her home. Chris has three children living in



Chris Wright turns 100 on October 9. Send her a card!

California, two in Utah, and three still living in Vermont.

It is difficult for her to hear a conversation over the phone now, but she would love to hear from you. If you would like to send a card or note, her address is: 7600 Camino del Encina, Redding, CA 96001.

—Sarah Wright

Twin Valley Senior Center Meals Available

TVSC offers Meals on Wheels (MOW) to anyone over age 60 to assist in providing proper nutrition throughout the week. Especially during this time of Covid-19, we want to reassure you that, at all times, our meal preparation involves the highest level of sanitary precautions.

Menus planned and approved by a registered dietician are prepared by a TVSC cook and assistants at the center. Packaged meals are then delivered by MOW volunteer drivers directly to clients’ homes, depositing them in coolers that clients leave outside their doors. Drivers call ahead to be sure clients know when they are coming. Drivers do not enter the center, but pick up meals in special delivery bags left on the porch. Delivery bags are returned to the center and are sanitized each day before further use.

All personnel and volunteers have been trained in state Covid-19 guidelines and have been furnished with gloves, masks, and hand sanitizer. We hope that by understanding the precautions we are taking, everyone you will feel comfortable taking advantage of this service. I encourage you to contact the center if you have any questions about our home-delivered or curbside meals, please call 802-223-3322 or email twinvalleyseniors@myfairpoint.net.

Bearing the Pandemic

Inspired by numerous reports of bear sightings this year, Tom Schmidt wrote this poem, which originally appeared on Front Porch Forum.

A mama bear came out of hibernation
And shook her shaggy coat in sheer frustration,
Because the humans all were staying home
Who normally in daylight tend to roam
To work, or run long errands in the stores,
But now, due to the virus, stay indoors
From whence they turn their lonely gaze outside
Observing bears, who'd much prefer to hide.
The mama told her cubs, "Now here's the thing:
We'll have to strategize a bit this spring.
These humans, lacking notions of decorum,
Describe our every move in Front Porch Forum.
So let us one another's burden bear,
Until the crisis passes have a care,
Lie low in daylight hours and be astute,
If you're observed, keep moving and look cute,
And practice some discretion, my young bruins:
When leaving feeders and trash cans in ruins,
Delay 'til 3 a.m. before you start,
Proceed one at a time, six feet apart;
And when you're done, at once, without a pause
For thirty seconds lick your sticky claws.
For you, of course, a mask is voluntary,
But don't be like some careless bears, unwary,
Who, led by Varmint News to disdain science,
Slurped up some bleach and died of noncompliance.
Bear up for now, dear cubs, we're all desirous
Of life outside our dens after the virus."

In a Good Place

It was, at first, alarming how easily Greg and I adapted to Covid-19 isolation. We are both retired. He sugars, I paint. In March and April we got to do what we love; and we finally got to eat those ancient blueberries and tomatoes that have been lining the bottom of our freezer. I actually started to enjoy cooking again and invented some great meals from the dregs. I started walking with the Murray Road adventure club (i.e. Linda Cueto and Sue Rigger), exploring our beautiful backroads and trails in town and working up to 10 miles. Distancing was easy; if someone was too close, we'd whack them with our hiking poles. After a few weeks we opened our bubble to include our grandkids (outdoors) and spent many freezing days hiking, making fairy houses, catching salamanders, sledding, creating felted animals, and reconnecting with neighbors in person over gardens and with old friends on Zoom. We even had a Covid talent show with a Zoomed awards ceremony. We have been lucky to have our kids nearby, living in relative safety and all still working. Figuring out reliable, safe schooling is our next hurdle, but we are in a good place to help with whatever gets decided. And thank heavens for the Adamant Coop. My favorite activity is biking there to get groceries!

—Wendy Soliday

Mildly Obsessed

Our family became (mildly) obsessed with marble runs during the quarantine. One of our last trips out in March was to the hardware store to get PVC pipe and brackets to plan for a major indoor marble run that we imagined would be a permanent installation. We did a prototype out of toilet paper rolls and duct tape, which the kids say they enjoyed the most. It was not meant to last, however, and collapsed within days. We moved on to the wall-mounted, PVC version for which we had grand visions. But it turned out to be much more challenging and much less grand than we expected (good life lesson). Finally, we found a wooden marble-run kit online that we put together like a Lego set, something we have experience with. I think it's the best of the three. It has a crank, two paths for the marbles to run through, and it fulfilled all our marble-run dreams.

—The Singer Family - Michelle, Josh, Ruby, Jaden & Hazel

Hazel Singer (11) tests the wall-mounted marble run. Jaden (15) fires up the wooden marble run. The final photo is of the toilet paper/towel roll and duct tape model.



Michelle Singer

Back to School

In this time of Covid-19, going back to school has a very different look in our town and state. I interviewed EMES Principal Alicia Lyford recently to learn about plans for the return to school.

Since June, the Washington Central Unified Union School District (WCUUSD), which includes the elementary schools in Berlin, Calais, East Montpelier, Middlesex, and Worcester, and U-32, has been in the process of planning for the return to school on September 8 with over 40 teachers and administrators involved. Five task forces were established to develop the plans. They are as follows: Health and Facilities; Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment; Social, Emotional Learning; Policy, Finance, and Communications; and Logistics. You can learn more about these teams and EMES staff member involvement by reading Alicia's July 20, 2020 family newsletter, which is available on the EMES home page.

Families will be offered two options. They may send their children to school for in-person learning or choose remote learning at home. In a survey included in the July 20 newsletter, 70% of parents preferred in-person learning and 30% chose remote learning. In August parents were asked to commit to one option for the first quarter of the 2020-21 school year.

In her July 27 newsletter, Alicia explained why the district was prioritizing in-person learning with the practices that would be in place to ensure that the physical school is safe. The decision was based on guidance and recommendations from medical organizations, including the American Pediatrics Association. She also stated, "We feel strongly that the best thing for children is for them to be around peers, and they are most likely to make academic progress through in-person learning."

There are too many safety practices being put into place to list here, but they are comprehensive. They include at-home screenings before school, bus riding safety, mask wearing, new arrival procedures, and changes in classroom setups. Each class will function as a "pod" throughout the day and week to minimize exposure. They will also be assigned an outdoor space where they can get some fresh air, take a mask break, and do some outdoor learning activities. Playground equipment will be available on a rotating basis with sanitizing between uses. Alicia was very grateful to our community for its support—from donating canopies to be used by students to making masks.

If your family has chosen remote learning, it will look somewhat different from what was done earlier this year. A learning management system was investigated by the curriculum, instructional, and assessment task force. A system called Canvas was chosen to be used across the district for in-person, hybrid, and remote learning. Staff will be

trained to use Canvas before school begins.

As Alicia and I concluded our interview, I had a couple of final questions. What were the contingency plans for unforeseen situations, such as another surge in Covid-19? She answered with one word—"pivot." She said that during this pandemic, she and the EMES staff have learned to pivot and find another way. She also stated, with great pride, that her staff had found many innovative ways to teach students and keep them motivated.

My final question was whether she had found any "silver linings" in the clouds of Covid-19? She mentioned a couple. First, there will no longer be snow days. Instead, when inclement weather arrives, all students will have a remote learning day. She's also looking forward to welcoming community members into the building to vote in November when students will have a remote day. On a personal note, she said she has noticed more natural beauty and has appreciated spending more time with her family. Even though they missed sports and other activities, they were able to enjoy just being together as a family.

At U-32 seventh and eighth graders will have in-person instruction full time. For grades 9-12, students will alternate one week in-person with one week remote learning. Ninth and 10th graders will alternate with 11th and 12th graders on the in-person weeks to minimize the number of students in the building at once. Students in all grades have the option for fully remote learning. Visit safelearning.u32.org for up-to-date information.

—Carolyn Pastore is a Signpost editor and retired EMES teacher

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CALENDAR

Keep in touch with event sponsors about possible cancellations due to COVID-19 situation.

Mon. Sept. 21, 6 pm, EM & Calais Hist.Soc., E. Calais Rec. Center, optional potluck followed by stories related to our town cemeteries at 7 pm, For information email sandal@sover.net

Mon. Oct. 19, 6 pm, Old Brick Church, optional potluck, with Part 2 of the history of North Montpelier with Nathan Phillips at 7 pm

IMPORTANT DATES

Tues. Sept. 8, first day of school: see safelearning.u32.org for up-to-date information

Thurs. Oct 1, Mail-in ballot for Nov. 3 election should be received. If you have not received one, call town clerk at 223-3313 to confirm your voter registration.

Tues. Nov. 3, 7 am-7 pm, EMES Presidential Election with safety precautions in place

Deadline for contributions for the next *Signpost* issue is Monday, **Oct. 5, 2020.**

COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Conservation Fund Advisory Committee
Development Review Board (DRB)
East Montpelier Fire Department (EMFD)
East Montpelier Historical Society
East Montpelier Senior Living Initiative
Four Corners Schoolhouse Assn
Planning Commission (PC)
Recreation Board
Selectboard
WCUUSD Board Meeting

as needed
1st Tues. 7 pm
every Tues. 7 pm
3rd Mon. 7/6 pm
as needed
2nd Wed. 7 pm
1st & 3rd Thurs. 7 pm
2nd Mon. 7:15 pm.
1st & 3rd Mon. 6:30 pm
3rd Wed. 5:30 pm

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