

EAST MONTPELIER Signpost

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Volume 32 / Number 2

NEWS OF OUR COMMUNITY

November-December 2021

A Short Move for Bob & Lee

By Hilari Farrington

Two of East Montpelier's newest residents, Lee and Bob Light, are no strangers to the area. Adventurers, builders, storytellers, and dreamers all their lives, this remarkable couple owned one of the most beloved farms in Central Vermont, setting an example for succeeding generations on how to live a purposeful life, close to the land.

Lee and Bob's surprising road to Vermont farming began in New Jersey. Lee was a junior in high school, working in an office in a building owned by Bob's family. The young couple fell in love, marrying in 1962, as soon as Lee had graduated from high school.

Bob was working in the family's textile business, and they settled into a middle-class life. They recalled first coming up to Vermont on an antiquing expedition, and some of the items they bought on that expedition are still part of their household.

Despite their comfortable lives in New Jersey, they became politically active in the Civil Rights movement and anti-Vietnam era. Like many at that time, they were drawn to the back-to-the-land movement, reading popular magazines like *Mother Earth News* and dreaming of making a change. They hoped to give their children an alternative education and found a listing for likely schools in the journal *Modern Utopian*. Ultimately, it was the New School in Plainfield that first drew them to the area.

In 1972, Bob and Lee sold off their assets and moved with their children (then five and seven, dog, and cat) to Littlewood Farm in Plainfield. What they bought was a derelict 1797 Cape-style house on five overgrown acres at the end of a dirt road.

It was not an easy transition. That summer their water source went dry so they had to haul water to flush the toilet and wash the dishes. At the time, their goal was simply to start a homestead and grow their own food. At Littlewood, they eventually drilled a well, built a barn, purchased



photo by Terry J. Allen

Lee and Bob - learning to live off the farm.

another twenty acres, added a few pigs and chickens, and bought their first Jersey cow named Stephanie; they soon fell in love with Jersey cows. Eventually they put an addition on their barn and added twenty-five more Jerseys, at which time they were licensed to sell raw milk.

The hardworking young couple also set up an organic pick-your-own strawberry operation from 1973 to 1983. The strawberries were planted and weeded by hand. With help from older generations of strawberry growers, they weathered insect invasions and late frosts to grow a successful operation. The profits from strawberries gave them enough money to buy feed for their cows; and in 1975, their homestead and history drew enough attention to make them a cover story in the *New York Times*.

Bob and Lee, continued on p. 10

Gratitude in the Time of Covid

by Ginny Burley

(With thanks to Gabriel Garcia Marques, author of *Love in the Time of Cholera*)

It's been quite a year. Covid surprised us and packed a wallop. We were overwhelmed by uncertainty about what it was and how we should respond. Advice and reality changed with whiplashing rapidity. We coped, but it wasn't easy. We were tired of limitations, but we kept on doing what we believed was right. And we continue to carry on: I'm proud of Vermont!

Covid has been overwhelming, and there is no end in sight. Changes, yes—but an actual end, no. But Covid is not the only hard thing that has been happening recently. We had a strange election, followed by an insurrection at the Capitol. We have unprecedented erosion of voting rights. We are faced with a national introspection about racial justice. Women's rights. Hunger. Poverty. Climate change with floods, fires, and hurricanes accelerating disappearing species and coastlines.

Suddenly every storm is the hundred-year version. On the other hand, record droughts. Disappearing islands. War. Well, really, wars. Famine. Earthquakes.

No wonder we are overwhelmed! It's enough to make you want to bury your head in the sand—if you could tear yourself away from watching the news to see what new tragedy is besetting the world now.

One thing I have discovered during these days of isolation is that being intentional about things helps. When I joined a diabetes prevention group a year ago, I started out winging it but discovered that did not work. I needed a system and a schedule. That did work, and now I'm 40 pounds lighter! So, when the world is overwhelming, I need a system and a schedule for that too. What did I come up with? I'm counting my blessings instead of sheep, just like the old song tells us to do! EVERY NIGHT before I go to sleep, I take a few minutes to reflect on what I'm grateful for, what brings me joy. And when you look for it, you find it. Everywhere! So tonight, take a few deep breaths and acknowledge the good things that are still happening all the time. Bring them front and center for a few minutes, let them take a bow, and say "Thank you."

—Ginny Burley is a longtime resident, EM Health Officer, Justice of the Peace, and has contributed to East Montpelier as a school board member and in many other capacities.

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Welcome to Fox Market

By Merry Schmidt

And “welcome” is exactly how I felt the first time I walked into Fox Market. I have continued to feel that way ever since.

It’s hard to imagine that a specialty foods store, bakery, cozy bar, community center, and wine shop, could exist in our small town—all in the same building. But Fox Market is all that and more. There you’ll find house-made sandwiches, cookies and pastries; fine wines and cheeses; craft beer; staples, such as bread, butter, and milk; seasonal fresh produce; local crafts and Vermont-themed gifts; and periodic specialty items. If you don’t have an idea of what to have for breakfast, lunch, or dinner, you might find just the right thing at Fox Market.

Business partners Doni Cain and Liv Dunton, pictured here, took time from their only day off for our interview. The smell of Liv’s fresh-baked pumpkin chocolate chip bread met me at the door, followed by Doni’s warm greeting. Ever in search of new and exciting food products and ideas, Liv and Doni had just returned from Expo East, a trade show replete with food vendors, producers, and distributors. Their mutual enthusiasm for anything related to quality foods and beverages was contagious; and their passion for their first joint project was obvious, as well.

Liv grew up in a tourist-driven area on the Maine coast and has been interested in the food industry since her early teens. She has been a dishwasher, done food prep, and worked as a restaurant manager and buyer. Liv knew she wanted to have a food-based business for her “own community” one day. According to Doni, he has done “a little bit of everything,” in and out of the food industry. He helped set up and open the AR Market in Barre last September, but once done, he longed for a “community-oriented mission.”

Last year, Liv and Doni were both working at Hunger Mountain Co-op. With their common interest in the world of food, they became good friends. Their similar dreams became ideas, which eventually became plans, which became Fox Market.

The original building was constructed in three stages, from 1900 to 1999. Various businesses had occupied the space. When Doni and Liv visited the unused building last winter, it was packed full of antiques. “It took 15 minutes to walk from one end to the other.” Though no one could really tour the building, Doni’s vision convinced others that it was the right venue to pursue.

The “business” plan started in mid-January, and Doni signed a one-year lease for the property in mid-April. Doni’s skills cover a broad range—so broad that he did the entire renovation of the building in just two months. He did have some help with cleaning and painting. Having talked with Doni throughout the entire process, Liv signed on at the end of May. With Liv on

board the vision changed. They added morning hours and decided to offer small plates, fresh pastries, and different sandwiches each day—all of which are Liv’s creations.



photo by Terry J. Allen

The partners considered the name for the business, playing with the word “fox,” which they both liked. They thought that a fox is both cute and sly, and the imagery is good. Liv finally said, “Why not just call it Fox Market?”

Naturally there were a few bumps in the road. For one thing, the necessity of a septic system means the building has limited capacity, meaning no large events. Having a bar was an important part of the vision, and liquor licenses are notoriously difficult to process. But they sped up their research, prepared all the paperwork, and made the finish line of that race before the opening in mid-June.

Liv and Doni already have a loyal following. Their “regulars” rarely miss a chance to buy a store favorite, the bao bun, made by Doni’s wife, Sara. “They’re one of the fastest moving things in the bar/lounge. And they’re sometimes in the market, too.” Other bar offerings include tamales, empanadas, salads, and seasonal specialties, such as corn fritters or raspberry galettes. They focus on local sourcing and organic food. It’s their “standard,” and they like it that way. The cozy bar area and corresponding outdoor community space are not to be missed.

Because Fox Market is near the junction of Routes 2 and 14, Doni and Liv see a good bit of morning and evening commuter business. The busiest afternoon is Thursday, the day the fresh raw oysters come in—one of many highlights for their patrons. Both Liv and Doni have received dozens of positive comments from both their regular customers and from people walking in for the first time. One new shopper recently said, “I can’t believe it took me so long to stop in.”

Throughout our conversation, there was one word that kept cropping up; one word was at the heart of everything they’ve planned, done, and will do: *community*. It’s a community market with a community space. Clearly, Doni and Liv have put a sense of community at the heart of Fox Market.

For hours and additional information, check out their website: www.foxmarket.store

—Merry Schmidt is an editor, gardener, outdoor enthusiast, and former teacher.

A Community Rallies

Alexxander (Xxander) Pollard-Allen, EMES 6th grader, describes the results of a July 2 vandalism at his home: “The brand new mountain bike that I’d received for my birthday in February (along with my mom’s new mountain bike, my dad’s road bike, their riding lawn mower, and my new fishing pole) had been vandalized to the point of non-functioning. The spokes, brake cables, gears, chain and cable lock had been cut and were inoperable and unrepairable on all the bikes. The tires had been popped, and the valve stems had been pulled out. The new bike I’d ridden fewer than three times had been unnecessarily destroyed.”

Xxander’s mom, Bonnie Pollard-Allen, described how her son coped with his hurt, anger, and frustration while figuring out how to respond with his usual optimism and faith in human nature. He reached out to the community on Front Porch Forum asking for paid work. Xxander goes on with his story:

“The response from the first posting was overwhelming. Jobs and several donations came in. I was excited and shocked that people responded as they did. I figured I’m a kid, and it was a long shot. I worked hard and earned a good chunk to replace my bike. Work slowed down, and although I was able to schedule weekly work for several neighbors, I wanted more work. I asked my mom to post again asking for more work to try and earn money to help replace her bike and my fishing pole, but nothing more came of it.”

Xxander continued working hard, determined to replace his bike before the end of the summer.

In the meantime, EM Fire Department Chief Ty Rolland, had called Xxander’s mom to hear more about the story. After a while he called again and told Allen that the fire department wanted to replace Xxander’s bike.

Alexxander’s mom, Bonnie, tells us the rest of the story:

“At their meeting on August 10, Chief Rolland and members of EMFD in collaboration with Darren from The Bicycle Shop (in Barre) presented Alexxander with a new BMX bike, helmet, and lock and celebrated his birthday with cake and punch. He was overwhelmed by their thoughtfulness.

We are so pleased to be part of a community that truly cares about its members no matter their age or role in the community.

Thank you to Chief Rolland, EMFD and Rescue, and The Bicycle Shop for replacing his bike and making a small member of this community happy and thankful! His bike, lock, as well as his fishing pole (and Mom’s bike—almost) have been replaced.

Your kindness overwhelms us! I know that there are kind and helpful people in this world, and many of them are right here in East Montpelier.”

—compiled by Edie Miller

photos by Bonnie Pollard-Allen



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Fri 9 AM –12 PM

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Town Treasurer

Don Welch
treasurer@eastmontpeliervt.org

Town/Zoning Administrator

Bruce Johnson,
manager@eastmontpeliervt.org

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EMFD 225-6247

First Constable

Jon Boucher 917-4855

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Assistant: Amber Perry 498-5140

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Chris Racanelli
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Ginny Burley 272-4045

Service Officer

Rachael Grossman 223-3177

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sethbgardner@hotmail.com
Judith Dillon Carl Etnier
Jon Jewett Amy Willis

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jessupkimberly@gmail.com

Our Community: The School Board

By Taggart Schrader

East Montpelier is part of the Washington Central Unified Union School District (WCUUSD), which includes elementary schools in East Montpelier, Calais, Berlin, Middlesex, and Worcester, along with U-32 Middle and High School. The school board oversees the district, and members of the school board are elected by people in the five towns. According to Board Chair Flor Diaz-Smith, “We help remove barriers and allocate resources so that all our kids can have the best educational opportunities to achieve their potential.” An annual budget is proposed by the board, superintendent, leadership team, staff, and community—depending on the current problems and/or needs of each school.

Flor is passionate about the importance of public education and even became a U.S. citizen so she could serve on the school board. She believes education is an inheritance we leave our children, and that “strong public education is the foundation of healthy communities.”

Much of the work the school board has been doing over the past year and a half is related to the COVID-19 pandemic, and WCUUSD was one of only two districts in the state to fully open at the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year. The district also recently received a report on a curriculum review. You can find information about board members, meetings, and other information about the school board at www.wcsu32.org.

—Taggart Schrader is a 10th grader at U-32.

Give Back to Our Town

Small towns like ours are operated largely by volunteer labor—by people who are interested in keeping our community vital and welcoming and are willing to spend the time and apply the creativity to make that happen. Though spring seems far off, it is not too early to think about how you might contribute to maintaining our small part of the world. On March 1, 2022, Town Meeting Day, we will elect the following officers:

Town Moderator: one 1-year term

Selectboard Members: one, 3-year term; one 2-year term

Listers: one 3-year term; one year of a 3-year term

Auditor: one 3-year term

First Constable: one 1-year term

Planning Commissioners: three 3-year terms; one year of a 3-year term

WCUUSD Board: one 3-year term

Petitions for running for office are available just after the first of the new year. Think about how you can contribute your talents and ideas to our town. You will always gain even more than you give.

TOWN WEATHERVANE

BIRTHS

- Sylvie Rose O'Hara, a daughter, was born to Lindsey & Erin O'Hara
- Lucia Lynn Merry, a daughter, was born to Jerica & Casey Merry

MARRIAGES

- Neda Basic & Ramiz Bikic were married in August
- Julia Bochenskia & Dillon Cabe were married in August
- Quinn McDonough & Mark Browning, Jr. were married in August
- Carol Rogstad-Meunier & James Sloan were married in August

DEATHS—survivors living in East Montpelier are listed when known

- Cooleen Parker, mother of Todd Parker, died in September
- Donald Edwards, husband of Elaine Edwards, died in September

LAND TRANSFERS

Transfers relative to estate planning or corrective deeds are not included in this listing. For further info on land transactions, please contact the Town Clerk.

- Janet Allen to Peter & Kristin Wells, an Easement/Right of Way on VT14N
- Estate of Glenn D. Bailey to Hausman Revocable Trust, 15.92 acres of open land on Fitch Rd
- Catherine Buni to Cummings Farm, LLC, 0.01 acre and dwelling on Cummings Rd
- Joseph & Jamie Carroll to Beverly Stinson, 1.40 acres and dwelling on County Rd
- Jeanne M. Casella Estate to Charles Karparis, 3.50 acres and dwelling on Cherry Tree Hill Rd
- Chickering Land Trust Agreement to Susan Chickering & John Ayers, 64.70 acres and dwelling on Chickering Rd
- Cummings Farm, LLC to Susan Ritz & Ethan Atkin, 3.10 acres of open land on Cummings Rd
- Richard Harvie to Daniel & Ann Green, 10.10 acres and dwelling on Partridge Run
- Charles Karparis & Charles Karparis IV to Richard Gramlich, 3.5 acres and dwelling on Cherry Tree Hill Rd
- William Kelly to Keith & Tiffany Cubbon, 10 acres and dwelling on County Rd

- Devon Kerry & Joseph Byer to Deirdre Connelly, 18 acres and dwelling on VT14S
- Nicholas Pantano to Elizabeth Walsh, 10 acres and dwelling on Chickering Rd
- Diane Paulger to the Paquet Living Trust, 7.76 acres of open land on Towne Hill Rd
- Donna Rokes to Sarah Porter, a mobile home on Sandy Pines Rd
- Peter Thurston, Allison Snyder & Elizabeth Canfield to Angela Lawler, 79 acres and dwelling on Barnes Rd

The following are excerpts from minutes of EM's and WCUUSD governing boards. Complete minutes are available on the town and school websites.

All town meetings were held in person at the town office building with a remote participation option using the Zoom conferencing platform.

SELECTBOARD

AUGUST 2, 2021

Discussion

Update from CVFiber regarding current plans and conversation on American Rescue Plan funding usage.

Motions Passed

- to appropriate \$100,000 of town American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to CVFiber contingent on: town receipt of the anticipated ARPA funds; determination of the legality of transferring ARPA funds from the town to CVFiber; and development and acceptance of a memorandum of understanding between the town and CVFiber regarding the transfer and utilization of ARPA funds. And to engage Attorney Rob Halpert to assist the town in this process
- to set the 21/22 property tax rates at 2.4808 for homestead parcels and 2.3709 for non-homestead parcels
- to waive the homestead declaration late filing penalty
- to authorize ACO Etnier to utilize Attorney Jim Barlow for legal assistance in the development of a draft farm animal control ordinance

August 12, 2021 Special Meeting

In-person meeting hosted by EMFD at Emergency Services Facility. Calais

Selectboard also participated.

Discussion

- East Montpelier Fire Department service & budget update
- Proposed contract with respect to fire suppression, ambulance, and other emergency response services

Motions Passed

- to amend the earlier selectboard order regarding municipal operations allowing the Town Office to be open during regular business hours and for town meetings (with some restrictions on distancing and numbers, and masking required in the building)

August 23, 2021

Discussion

- consideration of mask mandate for local businesses
- update on ARPA Funding

Motions Passed

- to approve the 21/22 Nordic season signage plan as amended
- to appoint Mr. Etnier as the town's voting delegate at the VLCT, PACIF, and VERB Annual Meetings
- to accept the Memorandum of Understanding extending the existing EMFD service agreement with the Towns of Calais and East Montpelier through December 1, 2021, and to authorize Chair Gardner to sign the MOU on behalf of the board
- to approve the proposed alterations to the 2021 Grand List to correct the Carr/Stewart parcel listings
- to approve the proposed alteration to the 2021 Grand List to correct the Leendertse parcel listing
- to approve the 9 individual special event permit requests as presented and to authorize Town Clerk Laquerre to complete the approval process
- to appoint Anne Lamere to the Recreation Board for a truncated 3-year term ending March 2024
- to find, in accordance with 1 V.S.A. §313(a)(1), that premature general public knowledge would clearly place the public body or a person involved at substantial disadvantage [re: control of a wandering farm animal]
- to enter executive session with attorney at 8:10 p.m. for confidential attorney-client communications; exited at 8:25 p.m., no action taken.

TOWN WEATHERVANE

August 30, 2021

Motions Passed

- to adopt the resolution encouraging the use of face coverings

September 13, 2020 (U)

Discussion

- Conversation with Funding Request Study Committee
- Conversation on American Rescue Plan funds utilization
- Update on Regional Emergency Management Committee
- Town Treasurer transition

Motions Passed

- to enter executive session at 7:51 p.m. for disclosure of protected personnel information; exited at 8:06 p.m.
- to enter executive session 8:08 p.m. to discuss personnel policy; exited at 8:17 p.m.

September 20, 2021 (U)

Discussion

- Consideration of COVID-19 vaccination mandate for town employees

DEVELOPMENT REVIEW BOARD

September 7, 2021

Motions Passed

- to approve Application #21-047 subdivision as submitted for property located at 505 Quaker Rd, submitted by Robert & Rebekah Brown
- to approve Application #21-052 as presented for property located at 1010 VT14S, submitted by Armand Laquerre
- to grant a variance for Application #21-049 based on criteria in Section 3.6 with conditions, submitted by Cody and Michelle Blake
- to approve the setback variance for Application #21-053 to the conditional use permit #13-043 as presented as the existing building pre-dates the current regulations, for property located at 4583 US2, submitted by Twin Valley Senior Center
- to grant the variance for application #21-054 as amended, for property located at 1226 Bliss Road, submitted by David Contrada
- to continue the hearing for Application #21-032 to the October 2021 DRB meeting [with conditions] for property located at 1528 US2, submitted by R&J East Montpelier, LLC

WCUUSD

AUGUST 11, 2021

Discussion

U-32 student dismissal time

Motions Passed

- to enter executive session at 6:03 p.m. to appoint new board member; exited at 6:17 p.m.
- to appoint Maggie Weiss, board representative from Calais
- to appoint McKalyn Leclerc, board representative from Worcester
- to appoint Ursula Stanley, board representative from Middlesex
- to deny the asserted violation of the Vermont Open Meeting Law, as the board properly posted its agenda for the June 23 meeting in accordance with the requirements of 1 V.S.A. § 312(d), and the posted agenda specifically referenced the School Time Proposal set forth in detail on page 172 of the published Board Packet
- to enter executive session to discuss a student matter; exited at 6:59 p.m.
- to accept the recommendation of the Acting Superintendent in a student matter
- to reserve [ESSER III] fund balance, subject to a reduction in grant funds, for the following one-year counselor positions: U-32 1.0 FTE, Calais 0.60 FTE, Berlin-Estimate 1.0 (to be filled), EMES 0.40 FTE, Doty 0.20 FTE, Rumney 0.20 FTE; total estimated cost \$365,000
- to reserve fund balance, subject to a reduction in grant funds, for the following one-year Math Interventionist position: Calais 0.50 FTE; total estimated cost \$51,000
- to approve the following new teacher hires: Amadeus Dorfman, Special Education Teacher (WCUUSD), Jake Ploof, School Counselor at U-32 (ESSER Funds), Justin Liechty, School Counselor at Calais (ESSER Funds), Amber Larrabee, School Nurse at U-32, Holly Taylor, K/1 Teacher at Calais
- to approve the following changes in FTE: Mary Langevin, School Counselor at EMES, 0.4 FTE to 1.0 FTE (ESSER Funds); Sharon Spector, School Counselor at Rumney, 0.6 FTE to 0.8 FTE (ESSER Funds); Maureen McDermet, School Counselor at Doty, 0.8 FTE to 1.0 FTE (ESSER Funds); Michael Close, Music Teacher at

Rumney, 0.3 to 0.4 FTE; Samantha Mishkin, Music Teacher at Rumney, 0.6 FTE to 1.0 FTE

August 25, 2021

Motions Passed

- to enter executive session at 5:05 p.m. for the purpose of reviewing the employment status of an employee, obtaining advice of legal counsel, and considering appropriate options; exited executive session at 5:40 p.m.
- to authorize the Board Chair to execute an Agreement with Bryan Olkowski as reviewed in executive session which resolves all issues pertaining to his employment with the WCUUSD

September 1, 2021

Motions Passed

- to authorize using the salary of the open driver's education position to offer options as discussed during board retreat including vouchers, until beginning of the 2022-2023 school year
- to accept the resignation of McKensie Curnow, East Montpelier Special Education teacher
- to approve following changes: Mary Carpenter, increase from 0.5 to 1.0 FTE Math Interventionist; Mona Lutz, decrease from 1.0 FTE to 0.45 FTE
- to approve the hiring of Lori Shepard, Athletic Director for the elementary schools in Berlin, Doty, Calais, Middlesex (Rumney)
- to enter executive session at 8:26 p.m. to discuss personnel; exited at 8:58 p.m.
- to designate Jennifer Miller-Arsenault to serve as Interim Superintendent for the 2021-2022 school year

September 22, 2021

Motions Passed

- to delegate authority to Superintendent to establish reasonable, evidence-based safety rules for COVID-19
- to approve the purchase of the 2019 Chrysler Pacifica van currently on lease from Midstate Chrysler, total purchase amount: \$18,917.50
- to appoint My Money/Further as the WCUUSD third-party administrator for HSAs, HRAs and FSAs effective January 1, 2022
- to approve the hire of Karen Chesser, Berlin Guidance

Adding to the Irene Story

by Ann Stanton

I've been reading ten-year-old memories and stories of Hurricane Irene with much interest, enjoying the celebration of ordinary Vermonters springing into action to respond. My husband, David Connor, and my young neighbor, Sarah Waterman, played important roles that no one else seems to know about.

Dave is a night owl who loves listening on the radio. Ten years ago, WDEV ordinarily signed off at midnight, and on the night that Irene hit, they were following that practice. Noting the immensity of the storm, Dave called Lee Kittell and Roger Hill at the station to tell them that it was crucial that they stay on the air; they were a major source of information and were the only radio station that had live disc jockeys who could stay on top of the situation. He urged them to convince WDEV to remain on the air beyond midnight. WDEV did so and was a major help, passing along information about road closings, road washouts, etc.

Sarah, who grew up in East Montpelier, played an even more vital role. At the time she was a twenty-something living in Burlington, working at UVM and taking pre-med classes. Some years earlier, Sarah had withdrawn from SUNY Albany and gone down to Biloxi, MS, as a recovery worker after Hurricane Katrina. That experience gave her a headstart in thinking about such emergencies and what would be needed. As Irene hit Vermont, Sarah called 211 and other agencies to find ways to help her fellow Vermonters, but the system was overwhelmed with the

many people in need of or offering help. After spending many hours connecting a person needing medical care in Rochester (cut off entirely due to washed-out roads) to a medical helicopter, she realized additional avenues for response and recovery were necessary. Using her Twitter account, she started the hashtag #VTResponse and quickly built out a simple webpage by the same name.

There was a great need for such channels. People would try calling 211 for information, but the lines were always busy. Sarah and friends Matt Sisto and Katy Kent manned Twitter, email, and the website around the clock. The first day they had 8,000 responses and questions on email and Twitter. The second day, they had 25,000. The third day they had 45,000. The first week they primarily gathered information; the second, they concentrated on reaching out to the communities in need and the wonderful people of Vermont eager to help. Vermont had been caught flat-footed by such a major storm, but Sarah took up the challenge. At first, Neal Lunderville was handling the state's response. Later, Sue Minter took over as Irene Recovery Officer. Somehow, in all that ensued, the major role that Sarah played was lost in the shuffle.

Although they lacked bulldozers and four-wheelers, Dave and, especially, Sarah also served. We owe them, and all those previously celebrated, a debt of gratitude, both for their service and for the models they provided of how neighbors help neighbors in times of crisis. Thank you!

—Ann Stanton is a longtime Signpost volunteer.

TVSC in Transition



Rita Copeland, outgoing ED

Though undergoing a change in leadership, Twin Valley Senior Center is open Monday, Wednesday, and Friday for lunch, exercise, and social gathering while taking appropriate pandemic precautions.

Our Meals-on-Wheels program delivers around 1,000 meals a month to our neighbors. Poor nutrition and isolation are serious health concerns, and this valuable service helps to address both. If you or someone you know can benefit from this program, please call us.

Rita Copeland, the executive director (ED) of TVSC for 13 years, retired in October and her leadership in expanding services was second to none. Though she will be greatly missed, her vision for the center's services for senior citizens will continue.

The ED position involves program planning, administration, community outreach, fundraising, supervision of paid and volunteer staff, recruitment of volunteers, and overall daily operations of the center. The position is 30 hours per week and salary is negotiable depending on experience. Candidates must be able to pass a background check. Anyone interested in directing their energy, creativity, and passion toward this contribution to our community please contact Denise Wheeler at 802-456-8730 or cockapoo@myfairpoint.net.

For more information about TVSC programs, please call 223-3322 or contact us at twinvalleyseniors@myfairpoint.net.

Highlanders From the Heights of East Montpelier

We are very lucky to have access to meat that is raised locally, as featured in past columns describing Templeton Farm and Heinz Hill Farm. Recently, I discovered another member of this special group—Fertile Acres Farm, under the stewardship of the Fitch family since 1854. For many years, it was a dairy farm. Bruce Fitch’s wife and partner Claudia told me about the transition to raising and selling meat.

Living on the farm with Bruce’s parents, the young couple acquired a dozen Scottish Highlander cows as a way to encourage Bruce’s aging father to remain actively involved. Highlanders were chosen because they are exceptionally hardy and long-lived, excellent foragers, and attentive mothers. However, this breed is also somewhat smaller than other beef cattle and comparatively slow-growing, so the Fitches acquired a Red Angus bull. The beef they sell is a hybrid of Angus and Highlander—born, raised, and finished solely

on the East Montpelier pastures of the Fitch farm.

Fittingly, these Highlanders reside on land that encompasses the highest altitude in East Montpelier. Many years ago, Bruce and Claudia built their log cabin home at the very peak of their land, with a beautiful view of the White Mountains. That home is now occupied by son Robert, his wife Christine, and their baby grandchild, the—fifth and sixth generation of Fitches to live and work there.



Photo by Claudia Fitch

A Google search reveals that Highlander meat is “lean, well-marbled, flesh that ensures tenderness and succulence with a very distinctive flavor.” It also has lower levels of fat and cholesterol and higher levels of protein and iron compared to other breeds. The Fitches sell half and quarter sides, steaks, roasts, stew meat,

and ground hamburger, as well as Italian sausage, mild sausage, and breakfast sausage. To buy, send an email to fertileacresfarm@gmail.com or call 802-279-3033 and leave a message.

—Ann Stanton is a longtime Signpost volunteer.

Paulie’s Recipe Chicken Sweet Potato Soup

INGREDIENTS

- 3 T olive oil
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 onion, peeled and diced
- 2 ribs celery, diced
- 4 carrots, peeled and sliced
- 3 parsnips, peeled and sliced
- 1 ¼ C rice
- 10 C chicken stock
- 4 large sweet potatoes, peel & cut into chunks
- 3 C chopped cooked chicken
- 1 T dry dill
- 1 T balsamic vinegar
- Salt and pepper to taste

DIRECTIONS

Saute garlic, onion, celery, carrots, and parsnips in the olive oil for 5 minutes. Add rice and stock and bring to a boil. Cover pot. Reduce heat to medium and simmer for 25 minutes. Add sweet potatoes and chicken and simmer for 20 minutes longer. Remove from heat and add dill, vinegar, salt, and pepper.

Serves 12 generously

This recipe is gluten-free and dairy-free.

—Contributed by Catherine Cerulli who adapted the recipe from *The New England Soup Factory Cookbook*.



Paulie’s comments: This delicious recipe would be a great way to use up all your holiday leftovers.

Turkey could easily be used as a substitute for the chicken. This recipe comes from the Old Meeting House cookbook called *Gather Round the Table*. It is a wonderful cookbook and would make a great Christmas gift for all the cooks in your life. The cookbook is \$20. You can order one by emailing admin@oldmeetinghouse.org.

Plainfield was a hive of counter-culture and political activity, with Goddard College at its center. The Lights fit comfortably into the scene. However, when their son decided that he wanted to join them in farming, it was obvious that Littlewood was not going to be big enough to support two families. In 1982, Virginia Stranahan was selling her farm on Hollister Hill in Marshfield to the Vermont Land Trust. The Lights then purchased the farm from the Land Trust, and in 1983 they sold Littlewood Farm and moved to Hollister Hill.

With this move, Lee and Bob went from being hippie homesteaders in the Plainfield counter-culture scene to full-time Vermont dairy farmers. Their circle of friends became fellow farmers, and many of the old-timers became their mentors. Their herd of Jerseys grew to 148, and they absolutely loved the work.

When they bought the farm, milk was selling for \$13.10 a hundredweight. Ten years later, milk prices were stagnant, while the cost of production had risen dramatically. All this made it extremely difficult for small dairy farmers to survive. To supplement their farm income, Bob served as Zoning Administrator in Marshfield for many years; and Lee teamed up with Lisa Bradley and ran Hollister Hill Nursery for seven years, growing perennial flowers and herbs. They reluctantly sold their beloved herd of Jersey cows to a farm in Idaho. Lee and Bob sadly escorted each cow onto the transport truck, which would carry them west. Later, they took a cross-country road trip to visit their old herd.

After milking Holstein cows for a few years, the Lights sadly decided to give up on dairy farming. Their son, Greg, moved back to Plainfield and is fire chief there. Determined to make Hollister Hill Farm survive, they began raising pigs, chickens, and beefalo; producing maple syrup, and growing vegetables. They opened a bright, cheerful farm store in which everything they sold was produced on the farm.

With the growing popularity of agritourism, the resourceful pair decided to open a B&B in their beautiful brick farmhouse. They hosted guests from all over the

country and the world. Their goal was to educate guests, and especially children, about small-scale agriculture. People loved it. They ran the B&B for twenty years.

By last year, Bob, who is approaching 80, said that all of their friends had retired except for them. With Hollister Hill Farm sold to the Dunlop family, former guests at the B&B, they decided that it was time to take a well-earned rest. Their friend Dick Hermann was planning to sell his house at the end of a road in East Montpelier, so the timing was right.

Relieved at not having the physical and emotional stress of running a farm, Bob and Lee set about modernizing their new home and opening up the forest land. Plans are underway to clear around the pond below the house next spring, and perhaps add a greenhouse and vegetable garden. Lee remains an avid gardener. The house is already surrounded by a vibrant display of flowers; a healthy crop of vegetables bursts from containers.

Accustomed to working long hours every day, this formidable couple is taking some time to figure out the next stage of their lives in East Montpelier (they noted, with some irony, that they were the only ones of their present neighbors without a tractor). Local history is of particular interest to the Lights. They plan to learn about the history of their area, to find out more about the Hollister family's connection to North Montpelier, and to learn more about the McKnights, for whom their road is named.

In reflecting about farm life, they said that it's important that people not forget the price farmers often pay to maintain the scenic agricultural land we all value. The Lights now go to the Montpelier farmers market weekly to buy raw milk, meat, and produce from local farms and to tell anyone who will listen how important Vermont's small farms are to us all

—Hilari Farrington, former librarian, is now a performer and teacher of Irish music. She and her husband, Benedict Koehler, live near North Montpelier.

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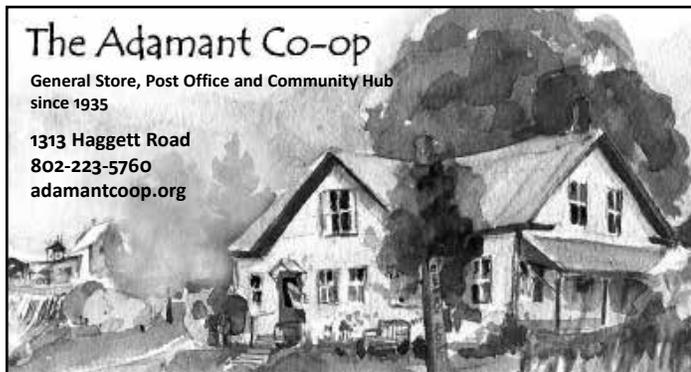
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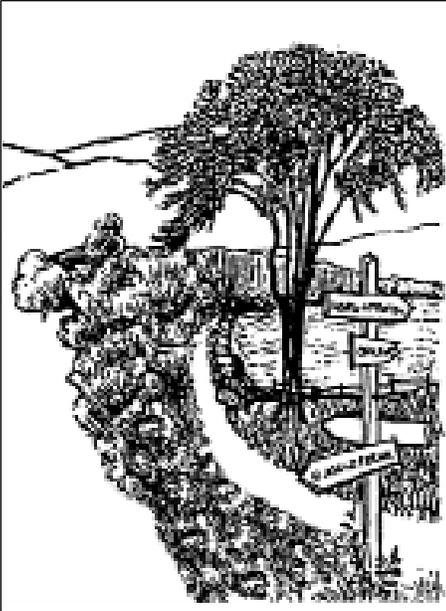


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Thank you to all who commented with your words and with your donations about using color in *Signpost* photos. Taking everything into consideration, *Signpost* volunteers have decided to go forward using color when it seems most appropriate — as it certainly was for our issue celebrating the great trails of East Montpelier.

The other thing we are going to be flexible about is the size of the paper: often we have had to cut out items of interest to maintain our usual 12-page format. But this past year we have experimented with 16 pages a few times when we've had that amount of good copy. Stay tuned as we continue to experiment with making the *Signpost* something you look forward to reading.

CALENDAR

Mon. Nov. 15, 7:00 pm

East Montpelier & Calais Historical Societies

Nathan Phillips presents aerial photos of farms in East Montpelier from the 1960s. Zoom link will be posted on Front Porch Forum and emailed to our active list. Contact sandal@sover.net for more information.

JAN-FEB SIGNPOST SUBMISSION DEADLINE:

November 29, 2021

IMPORTANT DATES

Thurs. Nov. 11, Veterans Day Town Office Open

Mon. Nov. 15, First installment of property taxes due at Town Office by 5 pm

Thurs. Nov. 25 and Fri. Nov. 26 Town Office Closed

Fri. Dec. 24 Christmas Eve Town Office Closed

Fri. Dec. 31 New Years Eve Town Office Closed

Check town website calendar for holiday hours at eastmontpeliervt.org

Mon. Jan. 3, 2022 Petitions for local offices and school board positions available at Town Office; dog licensing begins

COMMITTEE MEETINGS

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

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