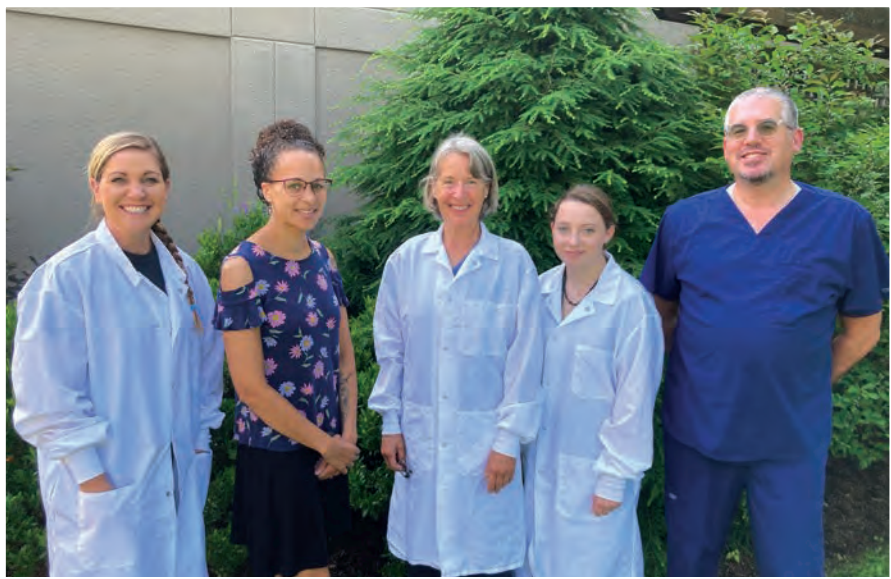




# PROFILES IN COMMUNITY

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### About this issue:

What's in a name? A sense of familiarity, goodwill and trust if you can attach a name to a face at a local company where you do business. Whether you go into a store once a week or once in a while, it is always nice to know the name of the employee who greets you at the door, or the person offering advice on a product or service, or the staffer behind the cash register.

Part of the value of living in a small community is getting to *know* the people around you. We want to help you get to know the people who offer you goods and services right here in Addison County and Brandon. The pages in this four-part "Profiles in Community" section will help introduce you to more of those people so you can feel proud, connected and comfortable with those who provide important products and services in our area.

Community is at the core of what makes Vermont such an extraordinary place to live. Knowing the name or some tidbit of information about your neighbor, shopkeeper, hairdresser, banker or car mechanic is what helps us stick together.

We generally find that it's easier to engage in public conversations and to volunteer your time and efforts for the community good if you know that your voice can actually make a difference; this is what keeps us engaged. And matching the names and faces is part of what makes this community run and makes it an enjoyable place to live.

Over the last couple years we've all seen the importance of supporting one another in our local community. We've seen how each individual and each business, institution and organization has a role to play that's unique and important. And through each of our efforts, we create a vibrant community.

Please take some time to page through this thick special supplement and put names to some of the faces you see around town. Reflect on the importance of working together to make our towns and state a great place to live and work.

For nearly four decades, the *Addison County Independent* has published this special section to help our readers know a little bit more about the people who play such a vital role in our communities. In this year's section, we visited more than 100 area businesses to take their photos, introduce their teams and tell their unique stories. While the details of each story varies, the general theme is the same — hard-working employees and employers make our local businesses a success.

Our community is filled with neighbors and friends who provide crucial services and products; get to know them and patronize their businesses.

— The Editors



# FROM THE PRESS

**F**rom the Addison County Independent’s first issue in 1946 to today our mission has been the same: to report the day-to-day events of the county and serve as a mirror that reflects life as it’s being lived throughout Addison County.

We do that by covering town and school news, sports, social news, events, arts and leisure, business and professional news, letters and commentary — and almost 50 special sections that put a focus on important aspects of our communities.

As we have for the past 77 years, we invite you to join us five days a week to learn about your neighbors, schools and community.

And, yes, that’s FIVE days a week. For those of you who don’t receive our four newsletters (Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday), please go to [addisonindependent.com](http://addisonindependent.com) and sign up for the newsletters at the top of the screen. It not only allows us to be in regular touch with our subscribers (and those of you just browsing), but it’s the source of breaking news. Plus, the newsletters are free!

We work hard at covering as much of the news of Addison County as we possibly can all with the hope that the most complete picture of the county will yield strong, resilient, respectful and fun-loving communities. If you’re not part of that picture, join us today by becoming a subscriber and Addy Indy supporter!

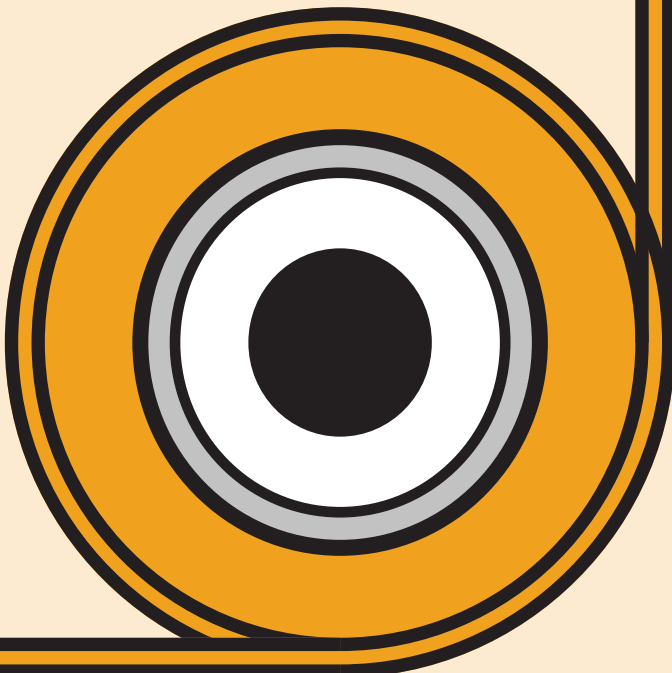


Meet the Addy Indy drivers! Pictured left to right: Gene Delorenzo, Dennis Smith and John Ebert.

# TO YOU



Meet the Addy Indy team! Back row, left to right: John McCright (news), Gene Delorenzo (driver), Vicki Nolette (accounts receivable), Jenna Hunsinger (advertising), Jesse Norford (advertising). Middle row, left to right: Tom Van Sant (advertising), Megan James (digital / MiniBury), Amelia Seepersaud (intern), Sarah Pope (copy editor), Sophia Afsar-Keshmiri (intern), Marin Howell (news), Angelo Lynn (publisher), John Flowers (news). Front row, left to right: Sue Miller (graphics), Andy Kirkaldy (news / sports), Katy Foote (advertising), Sue Leggett (graphics), Sadie Messenger (front desk / circulation), Christy Lynn (advertising / co-publisher), Sequoia (one of our office pups), Elsie Lynn Parini (Arts+Leisure, co-publisher). Not pictured: Katie Hewes (bookkeeper).



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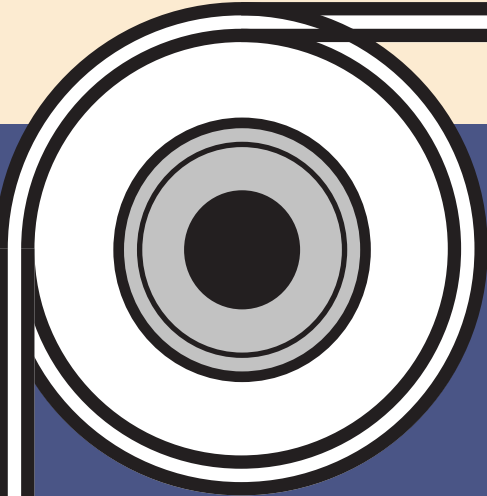
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Left to Right: Amey Ryan, Beth Stanway, Courtney DeBisschop, Sarah Peluso

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# Brandon brewhouse Red Clover Ale builds community

By SOPHIA AFSAR-KESHMIRI  
BRANDON — Pete Brooks, 35, Andrew Gates, 39, and Riker Wikoff, 33, who together founded Brandon's Red Clover Ale Co., are about to make their 250th batch of beer.

Their timing didn't make it easy. The milestone approaches after several years of reconstruction on Route 7 through the downtown followed by a couple years dampened by COVID-19. The trio considers this their first "normal" year since opening the Central Street brewery in 2018.

"The town was under construction for our first year," Brooks said. "Having that be our first year, we were always kind of amazed that people could even get to us."

Things were looking good for the brewery following the completion of construction, but shortly thereafter COVID hit.

At the time, the brewery had just received its second national accolade: It was designated a USA Today top 10 new brewery, which came just two years following a similar award from Hop Culture Magazine.

The good news, then, was that craft beer lovers knew Red Clover was brewing some of the best beer in the nation. The not-so-good news, said Red Clover's owners, was that the pandemic seriously affected the community atmosphere they cherish.

When they were forced to close their doors to the public, they say their sales remained steady, but the sense of community temporarily faded and forced new tactics.

"We just started packaging everything," Wikoff said.

Instead of the conversations and the face-time with customers the owners value, their days were filled with growler fills, curbside pickup and online or over-the-phone orders.

As COVID restrictions eased, Brooks, Gates and Wikoff opened a beer garden across the street in Green Park.

With the pandemic officially over, the trio has been able to reestablish a strong sense of community in their taproom — one of the aspects they love about running Red Clover.

Today, their slate-blue, red clover-covered, farm-inspired space is filled with liveliness.

On Thursdays, a small corner of the taproom becomes a stage for open mic night: "Every Thursday, 6 to 8:30, sometimes nine," Gates said, adding the number of performances can range from five to 20.

"It's a really incredible amount of talent. And that's always a lot of fun, brings out a lot of people," he says.

It's so fun, he says the week night has become their busiest. "Which is kind of crazy," Gates added.

The open-mic night has even been the origin story for some local bands.

"The open mic, sort of house drummer Walter, is like drumming for every band. Anyone who wants to play a show, they're like, hey, will you drum for me," Gates said.

He recalled a recent open mic where somebody performed with unique accompaniment — her baby on her back. This anecdote is testament to the family atmosphere the Red Clover taproom touts. The brewery encourages families with children to come in, and add to the family vibe by bringing their own kids to join the fun.

"We all have young kids," Wikoff said. "We want it to be a space that you can bring your kids to."

Adding to the family atmosphere, Gates's 9-year-old daughter has already been recruited to help out.

"My daughter works with me most Saturdays ... so she'll run the register and do tables," Gates said.

"She makes sure to point out her Tip Jar too," Brooks chimed in.

On Fridays the brewery normally hosts trivia, while Saturday features food, music and beer gardens "as often as ... we can." Meanwhile, Sunday afternoons are for board games — an underrated event.

"We don't really get to talk about it enough ... We signed out a bunch of board games from the library ... so we have tons ... available. And it's kind of like a day just to hang out, play board games, drink some beer... plus we'll have a DJ work on those days," Gates said.

Their small staff is one attribute they feel sets them apart.

"It's just us," said Brooks, adding, "I think people like when they come here that it's one of the three of us that they're chatting with each time."

Other than the three owners, the brewery has one other employee.

"We just hired an employee for Sundays, but she's awesome too," Brooks said.

**GET TO KNOW YOU**  
Gates reiterated the value of getting to talk face-to-face with customers.

"You buy beer on a shelf, you have no idea what it's gonna be like, you have no idea what you're gonna be tasting, what's in it."

"You come here, and we're having that conversation. I think that conversation is a huge thing."

Gates stressed that what the brewery calls the high

**"You buy beer on a shelf, you have no idea what it's gonna be like, you have no idea what you're gonna be tasting, what's in it. You come here, and we're having that conversation. I think that conversation is a huge thing."**

— Andrew Gates



THE THREE RED Clover Ale owners — from left, Andrew Gates, Pete Brooks and Riker Wikoff — make up three quarters of the Brandon brewery's staff. Since opening in 2018 they've tried to create a place where customers can appreciate a relaxing time and get easy accessibility to the three of them.

Independent photo/Sophia Afsar-Keshmiri

"drinkability" of their beer also sets them apart. He says part of this comes from not trying to fit any specific niche.

"A lot of places always strive to go through, like the extremes of a style or like have a flavor. Rather than targeting the extremes, our target is just (producing) the best example of that (a style)."

"We have some very low alcohol beers, we have IPAs, we have PILS ... drinkability is such an important thing. It's great to have that random 12% IPA, but most times, I want a 5.5% beer that I can just drink a couple of."

Gates says the effect of focusing on the beer's "drinkability" is "really awesome."

"It makes it so that even the people that come in on a daily basis, are true regulars, they don't get sick of our beer."

**THOUGHTS OF EXPANSION?**

With the taproom busy and their beers earning national accolades, is the brewery considering expansion? Maybe.

"Trying to figure out the best way to (expand) isn't easy... because we love the model we have set up right now, lifestyle wise, and just not feeling like we

have to make a certain amount of beer," Brooks said.

But expansion could mean a few more places to pick up their product.

"If we increase productivity ... we'll have some additional beer to be able to distribute out. Probably still be limited," said Gates, as he contemplated the prospect.

But, he added, they're not keen to grow out of their current location.

"We would like to keep this Taproom as long as we can. We really love this Taproom."



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From left to right: Andrea Blodgett, Terry LaCava, Tracy Horne, Jodi Eddy, Lisa Perkins, Matt Horne

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Back row, left to right Sarah Ayers, Allison Stetzel, Tara Zirk  
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left to right: Benjamin Wood, Christiana Hodges, Barney Hodges, Pike Ladago, Blake Harrison and Headley Turner

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Back row from left to right: Justin Koontz, Zach Shivers, Leon Smith, Benjamin Weiss, Doug Anderson, Lindsay Pontius, Mary Longey. Front row from left to right: Abbey Plankey-Smith, Lisa Mitchell, Ellie Friml, Erin Jones-Poppe

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Our mission is to **contribute to a thriving community in Addison County** by presenting **a diverse array of high-quality arts programming that educates, entertains, and inspires**. Whether developing our own productions or collaborating with our dozen resident companies and other community partners, **THT is a critical connector of artists, audiences, and students and a maker of creative, accessible experiences.**

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Tricia Allen, Kurt Broderson, Hayley Coble, Lynn Goldsmith, Chris Kirby, Laura Fetterolf, Judy Holler, Royce McGrath

Also Shown: Dana Hart, Brie Patterson, Kathryn Laliberte, & Renee Ursitti

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John, Brenda, Nancy, Diana, Heather, January

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Champlain Valley Properties is comprised of a team of professionals who know and love Addison County and our local region.

**Nancy Foster** who leads the team has been a top producing Broker in Addison County for years. She is a graduate of Middlebury Union High School, UVM and earned a Master's Degree in History. She is the mother to 3 daughters who are all married. Nancy's husband Robert is a dairy farmer and composter who makes MOO DOO Products. Nancy enjoys working with both Buyers and Sellers on all aspects of real estate.

**Diana Berthiaume**, has been assisting home buyers and sellers since 2006 and is well versed in the selling and buying process. She is proud of her ability to make the process a stress free and enjoyable adventure.

**Brenda Jaring** who is the administrative assistant in the office is also the Weybridge Town Clerk. She was born and raised in Vergennes, and loves calling Addison County home. She also loves spending time with her three children and grandchildren.


**John Snyder-White** graduated from the University of Maine with a BA in History and Political Science. John grew up in Middlebury. As Addison County's sole Green

Designated agent, John enjoys helping Buyers looking for energy efficient homes, and Sellers market the unique energy efficient properties.


**Heather Foster-Provencher**, the newest member of our team, has been around the Real Estate industry the majority of her life, as she is the eldest daughter of Nancy Foster. Heather passed the exam to be a Broker this spring. For the last 20 plus years she has helped run Foster Brothers Farm Inc. and Vermont Natural Ag. Products Inc. (Moo® compost products). She is very excited to work with people and help them navigate and accomplish their Real Estate goals.

**January Stearns** offers dedication and compassion in assisting both Sellers and Buyers make their real estate goals a reality. January lives in Cornwall where her family has been for 9 generations. She is a back yard chicken fancier, an avid gardener, helps manage her husband's excavation business, and has a lovely greenhouse business which she runs with other family members.

# Champlain Valley Properties



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The Bristol Suites/Vermont Marketplace team: Seated left to right: Niko Pruesse, Patty Douglas, Sherry Gebeault, Shelly Cota. Back row: Mark Adams, Maria Hoaglund, Carol Wells, Tom Wells, Mary Blacklock, Lily Hinrichsen

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L to R: Kristin Ketcham, Niles Devoid, Virginia Deering, Chris Burpee, Jackie Devoid, Judy Nuceder, George Devoid, Jennifer Devoid & kneeling David "Boots" Hansen. Not pictured: Lisa Bristol, Paul Clement

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Janet P. Shaw,  
Title Counsel  
Practicing law since 1986  
[JPS@americanlandtitle.com](mailto:JPS@americanlandtitle.com)

Jamie L. Warner, Legal  
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**More information online**

Check out [AddisonCountyRecycles.org](https://AddisonCountyRecycles.org) for the District's A-Z Guide to learn how to dispose of hundreds of items.

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Back row: Gary Hobbs, Chad Kimball, Jake Vukas, Gene Pouliot, Brian Sherwin, Don Maglienti  
Front row: Emily Johnston, Chantel Bolduc, Teri Kuczynski, Kim Odell, Patti Johnson, Gabriella Stevens  
Not pictured: Wes Kimball, Ricky Rheame, Melissa Sullivan

District Transfer Station Hours: 7 am to 3 pm Mon. - Fri., and 8 am to 1 pm on Saturdays • HazWaste Center Hours: 8 am to 2 pm Mon. - Fri. and 8 am to 1 pm on Saturdays • Call us: (802) 388-2333 • Email: [acswmd@acswmd.org](mailto:acswmd@acswmd.org)

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From left to right: Ethan Gevry, Gavin Gevry, Ashlie Gevry, Hadlie Gevry, Zeke Clark, Michael Davis, Mitch Clark (missing from photo: Matt Gevry).

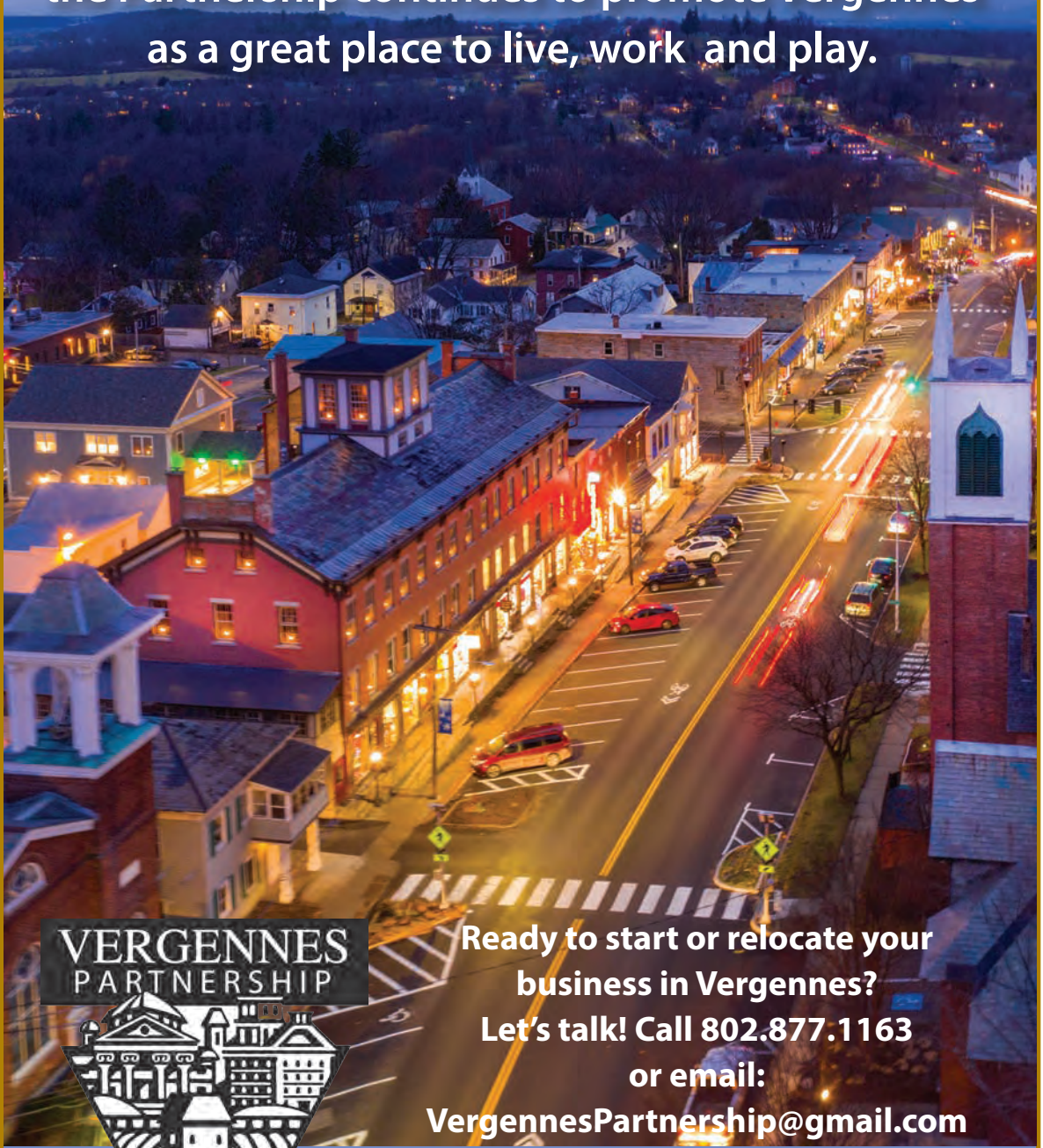
Gevry Firewood (formerly Mountain Rd Firewood) has been serving Addison County since 2012. Upon the passing of owner Roger Gevry, his son and grandson, Matt and Ethan Gevry, took over the business and renamed it Gevry Firewood LLC (est. 2021). We offer premium quality hardwood firewood: green, seasoned, and kiln dried. Our mission is to deliver our friends, neighbors, and community with a quality and reasonably priced product available 365 days a year. Let Gevry Firewood LLC meet your needs, whether it be a summer campfire with your friends or keeping your house warm all winter.



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photo by Caleb Kenna



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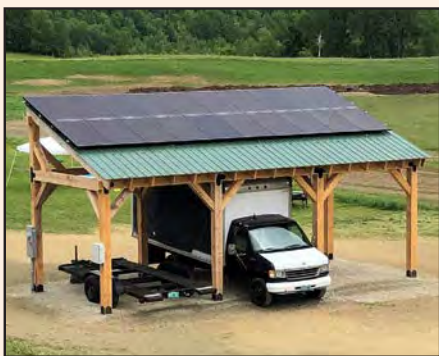




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2023

# PROFILES IN COMMUNITY

SECTION B



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*Becky*  
Owner



**In the Orchard**  
Eliza Minot

...a lovely, lyrical meditation on modern motherhood that captures the divine bonds and mundane demands with equal force



*Amy*  
Manager



**Tom Lake**  
Ann Patchett

...an expertly written tale of youthful passion and mature love, set on a family orchard during Covid lockdown



*Meadow*  
Bookseller

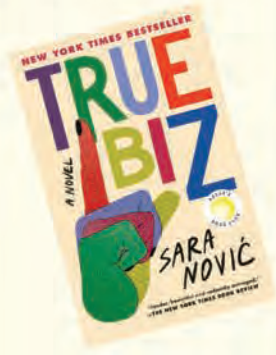


**The Saint of Bright Doors**

Vajra Chandrasekera  
...a beautiful adventure in symbolism and myth, memory and becoming



*Mary*  
Bookseller



**True Biz**  
Sara Novic

... a compelling and relevant book, accessible to older teens as well as adults, set in a school for the Deaf



*Linda*  
Bookseller

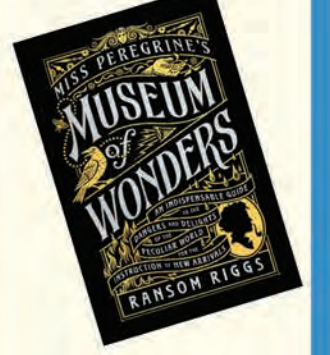


**Dirt Creek**  
Hayley Scrivenor

...a small Australian town, a very hot summer, a girl goes missing. Excellent writing!



*Vivian*  
Bookseller



**Miss Peregrine's Museum of Wonders**  
Ransom Riggs

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Left to Right: Deb, Brian, Drew, Kate, Jake.



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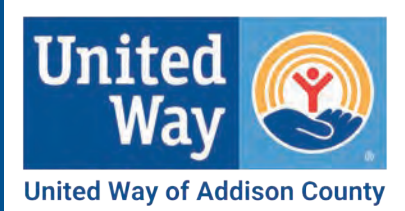
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Back Row, L to R: Gina LeBeau (Youth Coordinator), Amy Hoekstra (Volunteer & Donor Engagement Coordinator), Helena Van Voorst (Executive Director), Steve Williams (Director of Finance), Lee Bilson (Office Manager).

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L-R: John Fitzgerald, Rock D'Avignon, Jim Fitzgerald, Larry Bailey, Jeremy D'Avignon, & William Mitchell.





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Back Row: Savanna M., Jessica M. Middle Row: Heidi L., Annie R., Ellie C., Frankie R.  
Front Row: Candy D., Nellie P., Chelsea D. Also shown: Tammy S., Keelan B., Dave M.

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ROBERT AND MIKAYLA DeGraff said they have considered changing the name of their general store — BJ's Farm Supply — to more closely reflect the wide selection of items at their Panton business but they have tabled the idea because of the history of the original name.

## BJ's Farm Supply in Panton is so much more than a hardware store

**By SOPHIA AFSAR-KESHMIRI**

PANTON — BJ's Farm Supply in Panton is far more than what its name implies, according to owners Mikayla, 26, and Robert, 44, DeGraff.

"Someone has said before, there's not very many places that you can get your pet food, fishing rod, your bait, your grain, your steak and beer, and walk out the door," Mikayla said.

Not only do they offer a diverse smattering of this-and-that, the business is also committed to selling local goods.

"Anything we can get, as far as local goes, we try to get," said Robert.

"A lot of local meat, lamb, rabbit, chicken, pork and beef is all within five miles of here," his wife added.

And they get their quail eggs from even closer than that; They have a coop for their avian employees right out their back door.

The store didn't always offer such a wide array of goods and services it's evolved quite a bit since 1988, when Robert's parents opened the business.

"We used to be a True Value (brand) hardware store," he explained. The store then transitioned to more of a "general store" as the number of local farms diminished and the remaining farms began to opt for supplies to be delivered to their doors, even as those necessary supplies began to change.

Mikayla said the store's present-day offerings often prompt customers to say BJ's is so much more than farm supply, and while the store's name might be confusing to some (and they've considered changing it), their wide selection sets them apart, while keeping a strong, local identity.

Robert said their namesake, which has been around since the store's inception, is a piece of town history the couple wants to preserve.

"We like the history of the farm supply (and what it means to the community), so at this point we're gonna keep it 'Farm Mikayla'."

Robert and Mikayla officially became store owners at the start of 2022. Robert, however, had taken on the bulk of the responsibility of running the business in 2018, and the couple stepped up to run it through the pandemic — a time when area residents preferred to stay as local as possible when shopping.

"Locals didn't want to go anywhere," said Robert, "so they rediscovered the store," added Mikayla.

Mikayla said taking on the store full time and dealing with the pandemic was a hectic time for the couple, but added it only became more-so when their family grew from two to four.

Just inside the front door, there's a bassinet for their two sons, a two-year-old and a six-month-old, who they bring to the store every day.

Mikayla says she's getting to live her dream by having them around.

"That was definitely my dream, growing up was to always be a mom and to always have my kids with me," she said. "Whatever I was doing, I wanted my kids to be able to be with me."

Her customers have enjoyed their presence too. On the day we spoke, she said a customer had come in earlier just to sip some coffee and visit with the baby.

These interactions are the couple's favorite aspect of running the business.

"It's just getting to know everyone. Honestly, I think my favorite part is the fact that they become like family," Mikayla said. "There are all these aunts and uncles that come and hang out and chit chat. And I love that, I get to work next to my husband and have our kiddos with us."

"And there's the opposite side of that," Robert said, "where we have a seasonal group of people — Basin Harbor, Button Bay, all of that little network — some of whom we'll never see again. But (the regulars) still come back every year and grab their necessities. So we have our core locals that keep us open from December to March, and then we have our new people come in every summer."

All-in-all, the couple said, the customer base is a relatively tight local community with an interesting and fun mix of seasonal visitors throughout the summer — a clientele the store tries its best to cater to with its eclectic mix of goods.

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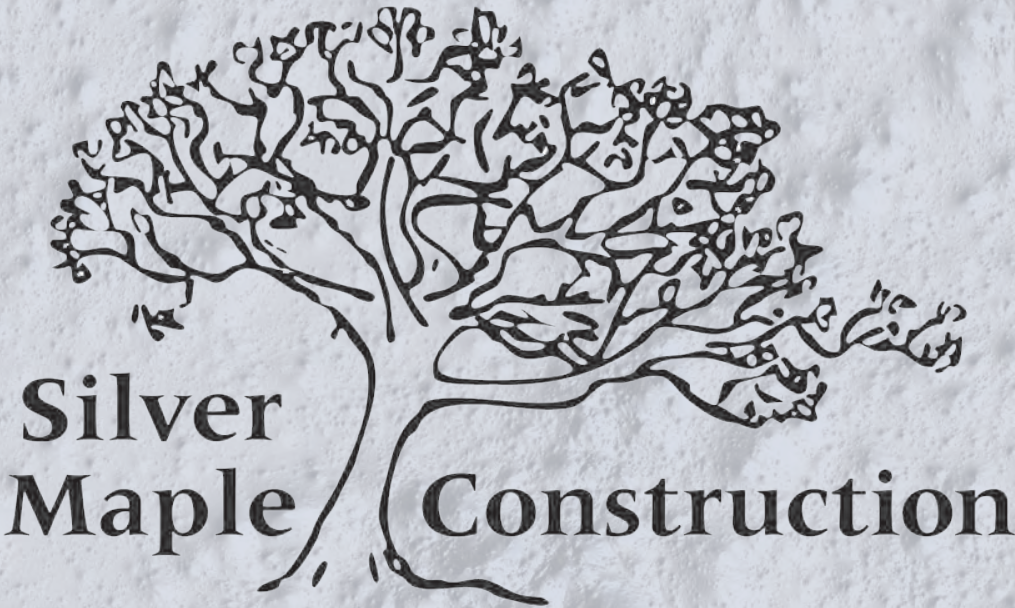
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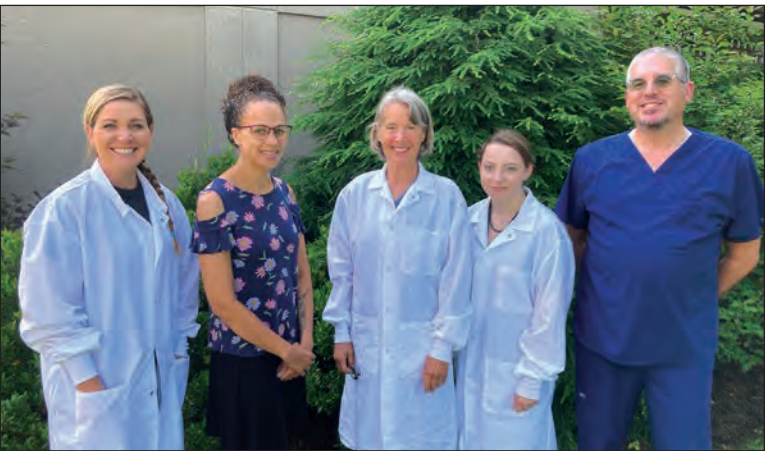
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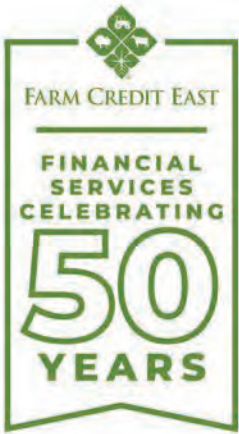


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Pictured left to right: Alison, Jake, Robert, Stuart, Wendy, George, Holly

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From L to R: Zach Roberts, Katie Raycroft-Meyer, Mike Winslow, Andrew L'Roe, Maddison Shropshire, Adam Lougee (Not Pictured: Hannah Andrew and April Clodgo)

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# Experience beauty at Rocky Dale Gardens

By **AMELIA SEEPERSAUD**

BRISTOL — Rocky Dale Gardens is not your average garden center. As owner Ed Burke describes it, the Bristol business is “a specialty nursery that offers an experience, not just plants.”

The immersive experience that Rocky Dale offers is what Burke believes sets his nursery apart.

Located in a beautiful corner of Bristol along Route 116 east of the village near the road up to Lincoln, Rocky Dale serves garden enthusiasts both local to the Bristol area as well as those from the larger New England region. He prides himself on the fact that Rocky Dale provides “an unusual palette of plant material.”

The nursery and garden center sells a wide variety of plants — around 12,000-15,000 flowering plants, trees, shrubs and more sold per year — on 5 acres. The grounds offer paths, barns and greenhouses for customers to wonder among and become enchanted by the plant life.

"We try to offer plants that are more difficult to find in the trade," Burke said. "We really focus on a lot of woody plants and woodland plants that are harder to find."

To keep Rocky Dale Gardens running is a collaborative effort among its 10 staff members.

"It's 'How can I help you?'" Burke said of his team. "We delegate the work, we try to teach people how to do things correctly."

"We hope it's a learning environment and a caring environment. I find that people who are interested in gardening, who want to work in this kind of industry, tend to be really nice people. Everyone is really kind to each other, we all take care of each other. It feels like a family."

Though he has owned and kept Rocky Dale Gardens running for nearly two decades,

Burke was not the business's first owner. Before him were gardeners Holly Weir and Bill Pollard. Weir and Pollard, originally from California, moved to Vermont in 1981 and ended up buying an old hobby farm that became what is now Rocky Dale Gardens.

After 20 years of running the business, Weir and Pollard sold the business to Burke, who had started a landscape architecture studio in Minneapolis in 1985.

In 2004, he had heard about the nursery being for sale in Vermont and thought it was the perfect opportunity for him to be close to his family, which was what he really wanted at the time, while also doing something he's always enjoyed.

"I went to school for plant and soil science and environmental studies and I've always worked with plants my whole life. And so, it was just an attractive idea," Burke said.

Running a plant nursery came with some unanticipated challenges.

"I have to say that running a nursery is very different from running a landscape business," Burke said. "And I probably went into it with a lot of ambition but was quickly humbled by the amount of work it takes and how difficult it is to actually make a living in this business."

Two of the biggest challenges he found were managing the living plants in the face of changing weather and managing the cashflow in the face of downturns in the economy. COVID-19 posed additional challenges for his business.

"You can close your doors two or three days a week but your plants still need to be taken care of," Burke noted. "It's not typical dry goods inventory. You

can't just shut the doors and wait it out."

He said that advising customers on plants has become more difficult due to the increasingly unpredictable climate patterns.

“Plants have hardiness zones,” Burke explained. “Whenever somebody comes in and asks will that grow where I am, we have to ask them where they

winters, so it's very hard to say this plant is very hardy in this zone. Because of the erratic weather, it's made it much more difficult to garden."

over his almost two decades at Rocky Dale, Burke has managed to make a variety of improvements.

"The gardens have needed a lot of work over the years," he said. "I've made a lot of changes in the way things were laid out; we built a solar array, we've put up the arbor, and we've continued to make improvements."

"Though we're not organic, we don't use any pesticides or anything like that. We're very concerned about the environment. We removed invasive plants from our gardens, which the previous owners had planted. So, we keep an eye on that."

Looking forward, Burke hopes to focus his efforts primarily on the gardens.

"I'll probably scale back on bringing in large specimen




ED BURKE, OWNER of Rocky Dale Gardens, welcomes visitors to the shop at the Bristol garden center and to experience the wonder of the place. Burke has owned Rocky Dale Gardens for 20 years and has turned it into an immersive plant experience for patrons.



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Service, however, has always been the heart of their business. With more than 50 years of experience working on boats (Gill started in 1970 at Vergennes Marine and since 1983 out of their home in Salisbury), Gill has seen it all and knows boats and engines inside and out. Marc has also been working on engines — boats, go-carts and snowmobiles — for more than 28 years and has started a companion business setting up and taking down docks and boat lifts and doing dock work via his barge.

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Gill LaRoche, right, has been repairing boat engines and working on boats since first starting at Vergennes Marine in 1970, while son Marc, left, joined the business 28 years ago.

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It's clear we need to create multiple ways to satisfy the needs of Vermonters - both to stay comfortable and to keep our climate cool. Please join us. We've all got a lot of work to do.

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# Sweet Cecily knows what you want

By AMELIA SEEPERSAUD

MIDDLEBURY — “It’s a general gift store and I think of it as the town’s gift shop because everybody shops here,” Nancie Dunn said of the store.

Dunn, the proud owner of Middlebury’s beloved Sweet Cecily, opened the store 36 years ago in 1987. Before opening the store, Dunn worked at the Vermont State Craft Center, formerly located in Frog Hollow Alley, as the gallery director. After working there for years, the building across the street had become available and she decided to open up shop there.

“It was time for me to move on and spread my wings,” she said. “I did not want to have a gallery, I wanted to have a store accessible to everybody.”

Later, in the early 2000s, she moved the store to “the heart of Middlebury,” as the shop website states, at street level on Main Street where it still sits today.

Patrons, both local and visiting, frequent the shop. “I have been incredibly fortunate that the day I opened my store in 1987, it was a busy store. And it has been a busy store ever since,” Dunn said.

The store has a wide range of clientele. “Lots of local people shop here, students shop here, parents of Middlebury College students shop here,” she said. “People that work at the college, hospital workers. So, I think of it as the town’s gift shop for that reason.”

Dunn’s shop is constantly evolving with a wide range of products being sold. Dunn’s goal is for Sweet Cecily to have something for anyone who passes through its doors.

“We have inventory that is accessible, and hopefully wonderful, interesting, unusual for people to choose from,” she said. “You can buy a wedding present here, you can buy a handmade bowl, you can buy a compass for kids. It’s really

a range of gifts. I try to have it be something for almost everybody.”

Everything in the shop is hand selected by Dunn herself. She has an eye for unique, unusual products that appeal to a wide audience of people and interests.

“Sweet Cecily opened about 35 years ago and initially I sold folk art,” she said of the store’s early years. “And that trend had its heyday then. When the trend of primitive work ended in the early ’90s and I moved my store up to Main Street, I took that as a sign to start selling different things.”

As an illustrator, Dunn naturally gravitates towards images that are colorful and unusual. “The prices are very reasonable and the things that I offer are unique, unusual, fun, and lovely.”

Dunn finds objects that appeal to a wide audience of people through a process that sounds deceptively simple —



NANCIE DUNN SHOWS off some of the wares at Sweet Cecily, her gift shop on Middlebury’s Main Street. The shop’s wonder-inspiring array of art and products made in Vermont and further afield is constantly evolving as Dunn hand-picks unique, unusual things that appeal to a wide audience.

Independent photo/Amelia Seepersaud

“by looking” — but that requires a lot of time and intuitive savvy.

“Sometimes people ask for things. Sometimes I see things online, sometimes there are new trends. I’ve spent a lot of time looking for new work,” she said. “Looking around, looking online, looking at catalogs.”

Dunn also strives to make Sweet Cecily an inviting place for everyone. “The warm and friendly ambiance is key,” she said. “I think the location is fantastic, we have a back porch overlooking the waterfall which is unbelievable. And we have

wonderful inventory.”

Owning and running Sweet Cecily has been a source of great joy for Dunn as well as all who frequent the business. She explained that even during the COVID-19 pandemic when the store was closed, she found herself coming in every day anyway because she missed it so much.

“I just want people to know how fun it is to have the store,” she said.

And even as Sweet Cecily has occupied its spot on Main St. for over 30 years, being

one of the oldest shops in the community, Dunn said she intends to keep the store serving the community as long as she can.

“It’s been an incredibly interesting, fun, fulfilling, wonderful life’s work here. [It’s] one of the oldest stores in town at this point. People depend on the store. I still have all the energy I’ve ever had to buy for the store and deal with the store,” she said, adding with her vivacious smile that she’ll be there several more years.



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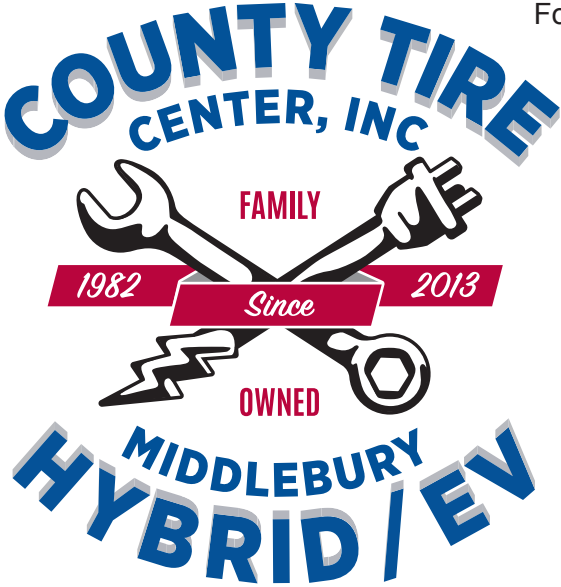


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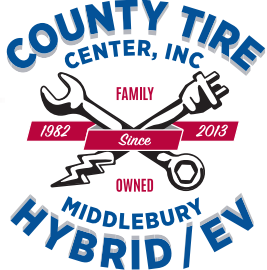
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