

TOP TEN 2023

THE STORIES AND PHOTOS THAT MEANT THE MOST IN THE PAST YEAR



A LARGE SECTION of Route 116 in Middlebury collapsed after swollen Dow Pond near the former plastic plant flowed across the water blew out the underside of the road. The pond, which was silted in Friday afternoon, receded by the weekend, and temporary pipe-closed roadway and to direct drinking water around the water main.

floods didn't spare Addison County
Director of Public Works Planning and Engineering Emmalee Cherington said the town should definitely qualify for FEMA's Public Assistance Program, which extends federal aid for public property impacted by natural disasters.



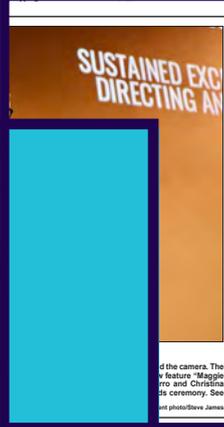
Local farmers are coping with the changing climate
In the face of a year marked by damaging floods and a devastating spring frost, farmers in Addison County and beyond are exploring ways to protect their crops during future growing seasons. Scientists have indicated that severe weather events like those that affected growers this year will likely become more common and more intense due to human-caused climate change, creating additional hurdles for farmers in the years to come.



Halloween inside the barn
WEARING HER HOMEMADE "Claw" costume during the annual Spooktacular celebration. See more photos on Pages 4A and 10A.



Police Chief Tom Hanley was joined by members of his force on stage at Town Hall Thursday morning recognizing his more than 32 years of service to the community. Shown, from left, Hanley, new Chief Jason Covey, Sgt. Vigar Boar, and Sgt. Nathan Hayes. See more photos on Page 10A.



THT nets \$1M gift for its expansion project. See more photos on Page 10A.

THT nets \$1M gift for its expansion project
Middlebury College President and Town Hall Theater confirmed the gift at a ceremony on Wednesday, Aug. 30. The gift will be used to fund the theater's \$7.5 million renovation project.

MUMS dean cites resignation as a factor in resignation
Middlebury Union Middle School's first-ever dean of climate & culture has resigned from her job after only one year. Either Charleston, who is Black, cited two alleged, racially-charged incidents — and what she called an "unwelcoming" environment.



John Graham agency sees demand go up. See more photos on Page 10A.

Fire Chief Breur served 45 years
After 45 years of service, Vergennes' longest-serving fire chief died on Saturday. Breur, who worked for the Vergennes Fire Department for 45 years, died of cancer on Saturday. He was 74 years old. Breur was the longest-serving fire chief in the town's history. He was born in 1949 and joined the Vergennes Fire Department in 1978. He worked as a fire chief for 37 years. Breur was the longest-serving fire chief in the town's history. He was born in 1949 and joined the Vergennes Fire Department in 1978. He worked as a fire chief for 37 years.



CHIEF JIM BREUR

Vt. lawmakers
By JOHN FLOWERS
SHOREHAM lawmakers on Wednesday authorized an update to the Vermont law that authorizes the state to provide more funding for the state's public schools.

College seeks \$600M to enhance experience
Middlebury College has launched the public phase of the largest fundraising campaign in the institution's 223-year history. The "For Every Future" campaign aims to raise \$600 million to support a variety of initiatives intended to enrich students' experiences at the college and help prepare them for the world that awaits them upon graduation.

Teen charged as adult
Middlebury youth was charged as an adult on Wednesday after being charged with the murder of a 17-year-old Shelburne youth in Monday evening. The Shelburne youth was charged with the murder of a 17-year-old Shelburne youth in Monday evening.

Monkton history comes alive
The Monkton Historical Society is celebrating its 100th anniversary. The society is celebrating its 100th anniversary.

John Graham agency sees demand go up
John Graham Housing & Services is making repairs and providing warming kits to serve houseless folks inside and outside of its shelter at 69 North Main St. in Middlebury this winter. Middlebury's Charter Emergency Shelter (see story, Page 1A), JGHS's shelter is currently full.



2023 NCAA Division III Field Hockey National Champion



Monkton history comes alive

College seeks \$600M to enhance experience

John Graham agency sees demand go up

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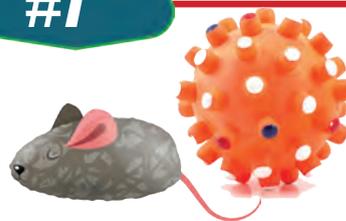
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#2

ONCE AGAIN, HOUSING IS SCARCE

A LACK OF AVAILABLE HOUSING CREATED A LOT OF PROBLEMS IN 2023, NOT ONLY FOR FOLKS TRYING TO SETTLE IN ADDISON COUNTY, BUT FOR VARIOUS BUSINESSES AND INSTITUTIONS TRYING TO FILL VACANCY ROSTERS.

additional stress on emergency shelters run by the Charter House Coalition in Middlebury and John Graham Housing & Services in Vergennes. The shelters were consistently full, and some houseless people elected to camp out along the Otter Creek and under the Cross Street Bridge off Bakery Lane in Middlebury. That Bakery Lane settlement included at least a few folks who ran afoul of the law, keeping Middlebury police busy with complaints of vandalism, harassment, panhandling, theft and assault. One of the occasional campers was linked to a vandalism spree that resulted in tens of thousands of dollars of damage to cars parked in the downtown area.

affordable, “workforce” and market-rate options.

In Bristol, folks celebrated the opening of the Firehouse Apartments, a new affordable housing development off Firehouse Drive. The development consists of 20 mixed-income units just east of the town’s fire station and across the street from Mount Abraham Union High School and the town’s recreation fields. The 20 units include two duplexes and a block of town homes with one- and two-bedroom units.

The Bristol project was financed with \$8,649,000 from a mix of private and public funding sources, including the American Rescue Plan Act, the Vermont Housing & Conservation Board and the Vermont Community Development Program.

In Vergennes came hope for seniors looking for a place to call home. Work began on a \$25 million effort to renovate and expand the former Vergennes Residential Care at 34 North St. and equip it with an interconnected 53-room, four-building care home capable of accommodating up to 82 seniors with modest means. It will also triple the business’s employee count from 18 to an estimated 48. The new facility will be called Vergennes Grand.

Middlebury, Vergennes and Bristol all made changes to their respective (See Housing, Page 5)

Employers — ranging from small carpentry teams to Middlebury College — lamented the lack of applications for longstanding job vacancies. The local jobless rate was around 2% or lower for most of the year, confirming most folks were gainfully employed amid a rapidly aging population.

Recruiting out-of-staters for those jobs proved arduous, as many couldn’t find a home — or at least one that was right-sized and affordable — in our area.

The lack of available housing placed

Police, in concert with mental health advocates and human services officials, organized a system of daily checks on the campers to ensure their safety and to guard against criminal activity. They also restarted the Middlebury Homelessness Task Force.

But there was cause for hope on the housing front amid all these challenges.

The Middlebury Development Review Board in September conducted its first review of a preliminary plan by Summit Properties to build a 218-unit, mixed-income housing project on 35 acres of Middlebury College-owned land off Seminary Street Extension. As proposed, “Stoncrop Meadows” called for a phase-in of rental and for-sale homes, including



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BIG BUILDING PROJECTS GET UNDERWAY

#3

2023 WAS A YEAR DURING WHICH SOME MAJOR BUILDING PROJECTS GOT OFF THE GROUND — OR AT LEAST OFF THE DRAWING BOARD.

Among them was a proposed major renovation and expansion of Middlebury's Ilsley Public Library. The Middlebury selectboard during the fall unanimously endorsed the concept of a two-story renovation/expansion plan for the 100-year-old Main Street library, along with a proposed reconfiguration of the municipal parking lot behind Ilsley to avert a loss of spaces. This followed a busy August, during which library officials picked Wiemann Lamphere Architects and the ReArch Company to create a final design for the Ilsley project, which would afford 24,000 square feet for library services. Ilsley officials are hoping for a spring 2024 vote on the project, which could cost upwards of \$14.8 million.

Just around the corner from the library, at 68 South Pleasant St., workers broke ground in December on a \$7.5 million renovation/expansion project for Middlebury's Town Hall Theater. The

centerpiece of the project: a 7,000-square-foot, three-story addition onto the southwest end of THT building that will host rehearsal studios, performances, receptions and arts education. The project also provides for a new outdoor plaza to host performances, celebrations and to serve as an informal gathering spot for the community.

Meanwhile, in the Little City, demolition and site work got underway for a project known as "Vergennes Grand Senior Living." Once completed, it will transform the existing Vergennes Residential Care senior housing facility at 34 North St. into an interconnected, 53-room, four-building care home capable of accommodating up to 82 elders with modest means. Charlotte residents Dan and Rebecca Hassan are the driving force behind the \$25 million project.

In Bristol, construction continued on a new commercial business park off Firehouse Drive, near the Bristol fire station. The so-called Stoney Hill Business Park's first building is expected to be completed this month and, early this year, will begin housing AllEarth Renewables, a company currently based in Williston that makes solar trackers and other green energy components.

Middlebury College was also part of the miniature building boom. The institution broke ground on a new first-year dorm to replace Battell Hall, which

currently houses 40% of the incoming class. The new 87,000-square-foot, four-story building will have 148 doubles and two singles, all of which will be fully accessible. All of the bathrooms will be gender neutral. Occupancy is planned in 2025.

More construction requires good infrastructure, and Middlebury, Bristol and Vergennes took steps to bolster water and sewer services.

Bristol officials learned they'll need to replace around half of the village's water lines. They got off to a great start with replacement of a significant stretch of water main on Pine Street.

Middlebury began the first phase of a two-year effort to replace the municipal waterline on South Street, which serves Porter Medical Center and Middlebury Regional EMS. Plans for big changes to the Vergennes sewer system proceeded apace in 2023.



HOUSING

(Continued from Page 4)
zoning laws in an effort to promote more housing. Officials in all three

communities were hopeful the changes would serve as a catalyst for investment by developers interested in building homes that young families could afford.

Addy Indy Numbers Quiz

Take this little numbers quiz to test how well you know what we do at the Addison Independent!

1. How many people read *The Addy Indy* each week?
2. How many towns do we regularly cover?
3. How many special sections do we feature throughout each year?
4. How many pages did we print in 2023?
5. How many page views did our website get this year?
6. How many impressions did ads on our website receive this year?
7. How many email newsletter opens did we have this year?

(Answers on page 14D)

ADDISON COUNTY
INDEPENDENT
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Top Ten ways to reduce waste in 2024

- Avoid impulse shopping. Buy only what you need.
- Say no to freebies from events, work, and other gatherings.
- Use reusable containers and bags at stores.
- Repair broken items instead of discarding them.
- Shop secondhand instead of new to extend an item's life.
- Buy items made from recycled content, not raw materials.
- Make your own non-hazardous cleaners.
- Donate usable items instead of throwing them away.
- Before grocery shopping, shop your fridge first.
- Consider online subscriptions and bills; avoid junkmail.

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#4

SHOOTINGS CLAIM LIVES IN, AROUND COUNTY

ACTS OF GUN VIOLENCE SHOOK THE COMMUNITY ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS IN 2023, AS SHOOTINGS CLAIMED THE LIVES OF FOUR IN AND AROUND ADDISON COUNTY.

In June, one man was killed and another critically injured in a double shooting in Leicester. At around 9:55 p.m. on June 4, Vermont State Police were called to a disturbance at 1352 Route 7. When law enforcement officers arrived at the scene, they found one man dead, 35-year-old Scott Lanpher, and his brother, 31-year-old Larry Lanpher Jr., suffering from gunshot injuries. Larry Lanpher was taken to Porter Hospital and then airlifted to University of Vermont Medical Center in Burlington. He was later discharged.

Authorities said the shooting was a targeted event, and that there was no broader threat to the general public. In August, a suspect was arrested on an unrelated federal charge in Maine. Zaquikon Roy, 35, of Brooklyn, N.Y., was

arrested on a federal charge of being a felon in possession of a firearm. Vermont State Police detectives investigating the Leicester shooting believed that Roy initially fled to New York City after the Leicester shooting.

Another county resident was fatally shot in September, when police say a juvenile watching a fight between two women at a Waltham home picked up a gun that had apparently been dropped by one of the women and shot her multiple times. The victim, Michelle Kilbreth, 48, of Waltham, was killed by gunshots to her torso, according to the Chief Medical Examiner's Office in Burlington.

Police reported Kilbreth got into a physical altercation with another woman who lived in the neighborhood at around 7 p.m. on Sept. 15. Kilbreth had a handgun in her possession, but at some point, she lost control of the weapon, and the youth picked up the gun and fired it, striking Kilbreth multiple times.

Residents in and around Waltham grappled with the loss of Kilbreth, who was known by many in the community as a school bus driver for Vergennes-area schools. By year's end, authorities hadn't determined whether they'd charge the juvenile involved in the shooting.

In October, former Addison County resident Honoree Fleming, 77, was shot and killed on a rail trail in Castleton.

Fleming was found dead on the afternoon of Oct. 5 on the Delaware & Hudson Rail Trail, near the Castleton campus of the Vermont State University.

Fleming was a retired dean at the university and had previously served on the faculty of other educational institutions, including Middlebury College. She and Ron Powers raised their two sons in Middlebury. Police reported Fleming died from a gunshot wound to the head, and authorities hadn't identified a suspect in the shooting as of the year's end.

In November, a 14-year-old Burlington youth was released on bail into the custody of his family after pleading innocent in court to charges he'd shot and killed a 14-year-old Shelburne youth in Bristol.

According to authorities, Madden Gouveia and Hussein Mohamed were sitting in a car with two other teenagers outside a North Street home during the evening of Oct. 30. Police reported the teenagers were passing around a handgun, and Mohamed allegedly was fooling around with the weapon when it fired, striking Gouveia in the back, resulting in a fatal injury.

Mohamed appeared in Addison County Superior Court, Criminal Division, in Middlebury the next morning, pleading

innocent to charges of second-degree murder, manslaughter and aggravated assault. The teenager is being charged as an adult. Mohamed was ultimately released on conditional bail, following a two-hour-long hearing on Nov. 1, during which Addison County State's Attorney Eva Vekos withdrew an earlier motion to hold the teenager without bail.

Vekos explained her decision to withdraw the motion was made following testimony provided during the hearing by a Vermont Department of Corrections official, who described the limitations of holding a juvenile without bail in a state that doesn't operate a juvenile detention center.

As 2023 came to a close, the case was still making its way through the court system.

The *Independent* newsroom could not recall a time when Addison County saw so many fatal shootings in a single year.



QUILTERS' CORNER

MIDDLEBURY SEW-N-VAC

Sewing in the News 2023

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A poet's life
Susan Jeffs talks about what goes into poems on the bring-out-a-new-collection. See Arts + Leisure.

Tigers roar
Middlebury boys' soccer had a first start in the Division II tournament. See Page 1B.

Saying 'I do'
We profile nine couples with county ties who got married this year in our Weddings section.

ADDISON COUNTY INDEPENDENT

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Teen charged in fatal shooting

Shelburne youth killed in Bristol; teen suspect charged as adult & released

By MARIN HOWELL
MIDDLEBURY — A 14-year-old Burlington youth was released on bail into the custody of his family on Wednesday after pleading innocent in court to charges that he had shot and killed a 14-year-old Shelburne youth in Bristol on Monday evening.

In Addison County Superior Court Criminal Division on Tuesday, the teen was charged with second-degree murder, manslaughter and aggravated assault. The teenager is being charged as an adult.

Madden Gouveia was sitting in a car outside a home off North Street in Bristol on Monday evening, when he was shot by a handgun.

He died at University of Vermont Medical Center in Burlington.



Halloween inside the box
WEARING HER HOMEMADE "Claw" costume, 8-year-old Hattie Dishaw pauses near the Middlebury Post Office on Sunday afternoon during the annual Spooktacular celebration that attracted hundreds of kids in costume to collect candy from downtown merchants. See more photos on Pages 4A and 10A.

Big projects to bring more childcare slots

Otter Creek, Red Clover set to grow

By JOHN FLOWERS
MIDDLEBURY — The Middlebury area will see a major infusion of much-needed childcare slots during the next two years, thanks to a big expansion of an established center and the launch of a new one.

Assuming a smooth permitting process, construction will begin next spring on a much-anticipated "Community Childcare Expansion Project" at the Otter Creek Child Center (OCC) at 150 Westbridge St., a project designed to create 77 new childcare slots (for a total of 130) and 28 related new jobs in our area.

(See *Childcare*, Page 11A)

Zeno takes a spin on the 'Wheel of Fortune'

Bristol woman tackles TV game show

By MARIN HOWELL
BOSTON — After spending 44 years largely within the boundaries of Addison County, Hannah Zeno found herself this summer looking for an adventure that would take her outside her comfort zone.

The Bristol resident had recently wrapped up a series of moves, but these children were all entering adulthood, and she'd begun to ask herself, "What's next?"

It turned out the answer was a trip to Culver City, Calif., to test her wits on the Wheel of Fortune TV game show.

Zeno was among a handful of contestants to compete in an episode of the popular show that'll air at 7:30 p.m. this Thursday, Nov. 2. She said she's glad the pruned herself to try out for the show and wants to motivate others to pursue their own big adventures.

"That was a once-in-a-lifetime experience," Zeno told the *Independent* on Tuesday.

(See *Zeno*, Page 15A)

Troop of jellyfish shines in Bristol

AROUND A DOZEN luminescent jellyfish took to the streets of Bristol on Tuesday night to dazzle trick-or-treaters and community members with a colorful performance. The group, which calls itself the Bristol Jellyfish, was made up of Bristol residents and a couple from Starkboro.

(See *Artful*, Page 6A)

Students learn as they help others

By ANDY KIRKALDY
VERGENNES — A new, multi-grade Vergennes Union Middle School (VUMS) course asks its students to work in groups on hands-on service learning projects that range from building hot boxes to boosting gender equality.

Other projects created by teacher Nan Guillette's 16 groups of students include:

- **Book Drive:** Collecting books for the library.
- **Hot Boxes:** Building hot boxes for the community.
- **Gender Equality:** Creating posters and signs to promote gender equality.
- **Community Garden:** Planting and tending to a garden.
- **Art Project:** Creating art for the community.

(See *Students*, Page 6A)

Moseley to trade library for museum

By JOHN FLOWERS
MIDDLEBURY — Coo Moseley has always felt comfortable surrounded by books. And as director of the Lawrence Memorial Library, she's had plenty of times of all sizes and genres to keep her company.

But after three-and-a-half years serving as "retail" of Bristol's library hub, Moseley is taking a new turn.

(See *Moseley*, Page 11A)

The A Team

RETIRING MIDDLEBURY POLICE Chief Tom Hanley was joined by members of his force on stage at Town Hall Theater this past Thursday, Oct. 26, for an open house recognizing his more than 32 years of service to the community. Shows, from left, are Sgt. Casey Cowley, Officer Kevin Emillio, Hanley, new Chief Jason Covay, Sgt. Vagar Boe, and Sgt. Nathan Hayes. See more photos on Page 17A.

(See *Police*, Page 17A)

By the way

Honoree Board, Addison County's Humane Society, is looking for foster homes for dogs. Fostering plays a very important role at the Middlebury shelter. It helps Humane Board staff learn more about the dogs and their behavior, can provide stress relief for dogs who are overwhelmed, and provides overall enrichment for dogs who take a while to find their forever homes.

(See *By the way*, Page 15A)

Index

Obituaries 6A-7A
Classifieds 9B-10B
Service Directories 11A-11B
Entertainment Arts + Leisure
Community Calendar 11B
Arts Calendar Arts + Leisure
Sports 11B-11D

GOOD NEWS ON THE CHILDCARE FRONT

#5

THERE WAS GOOD NEWS ON THE CHILDCARE FRONT IN 2023. IN JUNE, THE VERMONT LEGISLATURE PASSED A SWEEPING CHILDCARE BILL THAT WOULD INVEST \$125 MILLION A YEAR OF NEW FUNDING INTO THE STATE'S CHILDCARE SECTOR, MAKING IT ONE OF THE MOST EXPANSIVE SYSTEMS IN THE NATION.

The bill stopped short of offering free, full-day pre-K in public schools for all 4-year-olds — which was the centerpiece of the original legislation — but it does much to improve what many agree is a broken system defined by families struggling to afford childcare and childcare workers struggling to make a living.

The bill expands income eligibility for financial assistance to families earning up to 575% of the federal poverty level, and

it subsidizes programs with state funding so they can offer more childcare slots and pay their workers a more livable wage.

The Middlebury area will see an increase in childcare options next month with the opening of the brand new Red Clover Children's Center in the Congregational Church of Middlebury. The center will offer 24 slots to families with children ages 6 weeks to 3 years.

The program received \$560,000 in donated seed money, including \$200,000 from local nonprofit Table 21 and a \$360,000 donation from an anonymous longtime supporter of the church's community outreach efforts. Naylor & Breen completed renovations on the Red Clover space, which is inside the church, earlier in 2023. And in September, the Red Clover board hired Tessa Dearborn as executive director. She is a childcare veteran who most recently led Kid Logic Learning Center in South Burlington.

Then in December existing Middlebury program Otter Creek Child Center got the OK from the town to begin a \$10 million major expansion and renovation project, which will add 77 new childcare slots. OCCC officials are working toward a fall 2024 groundbreaking on the project, which will create a new 6,900-foot addition on the Weybridge Street building, along with renovations to the existing building and related site improvements.

Officials have so far raised more than half of the money they need to complete the project, thanks to a \$4 million commitment from Middlebury College, a \$3 million federal earmark through Let's Grow Kids and several other sources.

In Ferrisburgh, town officials are considering establishing a childcare center that could serve up to 24 children in the former United Methodist Church, aka the Brown Church, on Route 7. Late last year, the church's congregation, which was no longer large enough to necessitate the use of the building, deeded it to the town.

Last spring, motivated by the results of a survey of town residents, Ferrisburgh officials met with representatives of Let's Grow Kids to assess the feasibility of creating a childcare center in the church's lower level. They determined it would be a great space for children, with good light, three exits and two bathrooms. And because the property is town-owned, Ferrisburgh could bond for renovations.

There's plenty of work to do before the town can establish a timetable on

this project, but we'll be keeping an eye on it.



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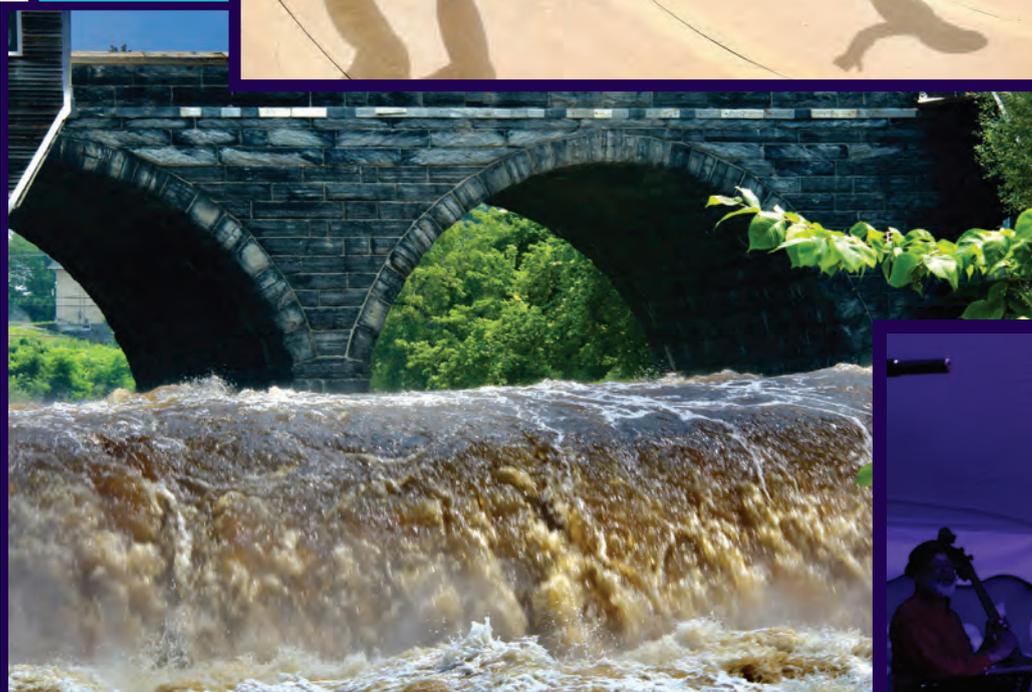
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2023 IN PHOTOS



Eye on the county

Traditionally, words are the stock and trade of a newspaper, but in modern times readers count on images to tell the story, too. Addison Independent staff photographer Steve James told a lot of stories in 2023 with his camera; here are a collection of images that give a taste of what he saw and captured.

On this page, you see (above) re-enactors of a Civil War cavalry troop clip-clopping through Vergennes during the Memorial Day Parade, (top left) new Middlebury Union High School graduate Xander Campanelli looks like he is ready to go out and pound the pavement and look for a job just after the June commencement ceremony; and (left) Carrie Ade Brer of Middlebury and her 8-year-old son, Brer Basson, tune up their skateboarding skills together on a newly opened feature at the developing skate park near Middlebury town pool on the last day of July.

Meanwhile, rainstorms in July gave new meaning to the term “waterfall” (bottom left) as the Otter Creek Falls in Middlebury roared violent and noisy through the shire town. Despite the rains, the 44th annual Festival on the Green came off mostly as planned, and dancer Brendaliz Cepeda (below) whips up the crowd, her bandmates and her red skirt during a performance of the Puerto Rican band Bombajazeando.

Independent photos/Steve James



2023 IN PHOTOS



But wait ...

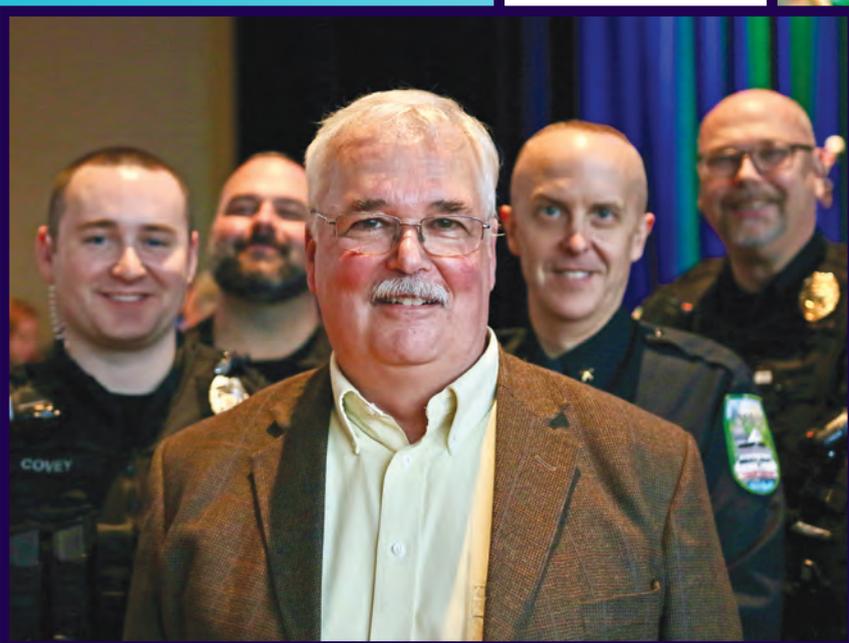
There's more photos from the last five months of this past year. Addison County Fair & Field Days is a signature event in these parts, and the 75th annual edition in August was no exception; above, 12-year-old Colin Chamberlin of Addison shows off his calf Hummer in the show ring. A newer tradition is the Woofstock Walk for Animals in Middlebury, which always ends (top right) with a puppy plunge into the town pool.

Steve James saw a classic vignette play out at Town Hall Theater in early December (right) when 5-year-old twins Charlotte, left, and Penelope "Poppy" Hanson of Middlebury mailed their letters to the North Pole using a convenient box set up near a spot where Santa was visiting with children.

Pupils at Bristol Elementary School in late September found out that education isn't all about book learning when 15 lucky students got to smash a plate of whipped cream in the face of the school's top administrators as a reward for gaining the most points for good behavior; (bottom right) kindergartner Elizabeth Heck clearly loves smashing a paper plate of whipped cream in the face of Principal Aaron Boynton.

Retiring Middlebury Police Chief Tom Hanley was joined by members of his force on stage at Town Hall Theater in late October (below) during an open house recognizing his more than 32 years of service to the community.

Independent photos/Steve James



#6

COUNTY MARKS CHANGING OF THE GUARD

THE TOP OFFICIALS

IN OUR COMMUNITY ARE CALLED "LEADERS" FOR A REASON. THEY AREN'T JUST FIGUREHEADS, BUT HAVE ACTUAL AUTHORITY TO MAKE DECISIONS THAT AFFECT OUR DAILY LIVES.

Sometimes that power is conferred in legal statutes, and sometimes it comes from the moral authority conferred upon them by us — the general public that they serve.

Addison County saw a fair number of changes in its local leadership in 2023. Perhaps the most prominent changes were at the top of the biggest law enforcement agencies in the county.

One of the counties longest-serving law enforcement leaders was Tom Hanley, who came to Middlebury to be police chief in 1991. After serving 32 transformational years leading the local PD, in July Hanley announced he would retire. Two months later, the selectboard unanimously voted to

hire Middlebury Police Sgt. Jason Covey to become the new chief.

The promotion of Interim Vergennes Police Chief Jason Ouellette to the permanent head of the city police department became official on March 14, when the Vergennes City Council formally approved a decision made in mid-January by City Manager Ron Redmond and a council-appointed hiring committee. Ouellette, 39, a highly decorated 15-year veteran of the city force, replaces Chief George Merkel, who retired the previous fall after 13 years of service.

Tom Mozzer was named the new commander of the Vermont State Police's New Haven barracks at the end of June. Now in his 23rd year with the VSP, Lt. Mozzer started at the Rutland barracks, became a detective sergeant with the Narcotics Investigation Unit, and was promoted to lieutenant in 2017.

On Feb. 1, Rose Elmore pinned the Addison County Sheriff's badge on her husband, Michael Elmore, in a ceremony at the Mahady Courthouse in Middlebury. Michael Elmore took the oath of office to become the county's top elected law enforcement officer that day, as did State's Attorney Eva Vekos, though she had started her duties the previous December when the acting state's attorney left for another job.

Law enforcement wasn't the only place we saw new leadership. The citizens

of Vergennes on Town Meeting Day elected as its new mayor Chris Bearor, a Vergennes-Panton Water District Board cochair and city lister. More than a year after long-serving Middlebury Town Clerk Ann Webster announced she would retire, the town appointed Karin Mott would take the job.

On the education front, the Addison Central School District saw some leadership turnover. Superintendent Peter Borrows announced he was looking for a new job, and at the end of June he left to take the helm at the Milton, Mass., school district. The school board selected two finalists to replace him, but ultimately hired an interim superintendent — Tim Williams — to serve for a year while the candidate search continued. Williams, who had been serving as interim head of the Patricia Hannaford Career Center, was relieved of that responsibility when Nicole MacTaggart was hired to fill that role beginning July 1.

Middlebury Union High School Principal Justin Campbell did not give nearly so much warning before he left that job. He announced his resignation on a Monday afternoon in January and made it effective at the end of the day. Assistant Superintendent Caitlin Steele took over as an interim and was later hired as the permanent MUHS principal.

In September, there was another surprise departure of a top local leader when Porter Medical Center's Tom Thompson stepped away from his role as president and chief operating officer of the county's top health care provider in order to focus his time and energy on caring for his ailing wife. The UVM Health Network installed Bob Ortmyer as an interim replacement.



They're back
After a four-year hiatus, Mauden Vermont is returning to Town Hall Theater. See Arts + Leisure.



Tough night
Burr & Barton shregged off an early Tiger TD and rolled to a win on Friday. See Page 1B.



Town clerk
Meet the new official in charge of Solidbury town land records and the like. See Page 2A.

ADDISON COUNTY INDEPENDENT

Vol. 77 No. 37 Middlebury, Vermont • Thursday, September 14, 2023 • 42 Pages \$1.50

\$25M city senior housing plan good to go

Vergennes Grand construction to begin soon
By ANDY KIRKALDY
VERGENNES — Five years and several setbacks after first launching their plans for a major expansion and renovation of Vergennes Residential Care, a 200-year-old property at 24 North St., into an interconnected 23-room, four-building care home capable of accommodating up to 82 seniors with modest means. It will also triple the business's employee count from 18 to an estimated 48.
The Hasans call the project Vergennes Grand Senior Living. It will include roughly 40,000 square feet of new construction and what the Hasans call a "sensitive" renovation of the existing 10,000-square-foot North Street building that fronts the northwest corner of Vergennes' central park.
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CONOR MCMANUS HAS taken over management of Middlebury's Happy Valley Orchard just as the growing season was ended by a late spring frost and summer floods. But McManus has plans to keep the business humming along.

Sparse apple crop won't deter Happy Valley's McManus

By JOHN FLOWERS
MIDDLEBURY — "When life gives you lemons, make lemonade," is American writer Elbert Hubbard's enduring ode to optimism.
Local orchardist Conor McManus has almost cornered the market on optimism.
But apples? Not so much. A cruel spring frost robbed



Puppy plunge!
A HUMAN ORGANIZER of Woolstock Walk for the Animals in Middlebury gushed about how the weather really turned out for Sunday's fundraiser for Homeward Bound, Addison County's Humane Society. But this beagle didn't seem to care whether it was raining or sunny when her turn came to dive into the Middlebury town pool. It was a lot of fun for everyone. See more photos on Page 10A.

MUMS teacher inspired by a Holocaust hero

By JOHN FLOWERS
MIDDLEBURY — Middlebury Union Middle School French teacher Denise Bérubé's summer experience as an inquisitive tourist is about to pay nice educational dividends for her students.
Her recent two-week trip to

Climate group will help homeowners decarbonize

By MARK HOWELL
"ADDISON COUNTY — The Climate Economy Action Center of Addison County is launching a pilot program that will offer free one-on-one support to county residents looking to

Thompson steps down as Porter president

MIDDLEBURY — Tom Thompson, who has been leading Porter Medical Center for around three years, will step away from his role as president and chief operating officer of the Middlebury health care hub as of Sept. 18. He will focus his time and energy on a pressing family health matter.
"We have had opportunities to face many challenges and achieve great success together at Porter," Thompson said in a message to staff. "I leave feeling like my work with you all remains unfinished but know you will continue to serve and care for our patients and residents with the professional, compassionate care you have always shown our community."
As of Monday, Bob Ortmyer will begin serving the UVM.

Covey new Middlebury police chief

By JOHN FLOWERS
MIDDLEBURY — The Middlebury selectboard on Tuesday unanimously selected a new police chief, Jason Covey. Currently a sergeant with the department, Covey joined the MPD 23 years ago as a patrolman.
Covey, 47, will officially begin his new duties on Sept. 18. That's when he'll take over the top spot from longtime Middlebury Police Chief Tom Hanley, who's retiring after having led Addison County's largest municipal police department since 1991.
"It's exciting," Covey said of his new job. "The position is so endless. I'm energetic, I have so many ideas that are racing in



SGT. JASON COVEY, A 23-YEAR veteran of the Middlebury Police Department, has been named its new chief. He begins his duties Sept. 18.

By the way

Middlebury Union High School French teacher Michelle Steele never imagined her fall semester substitute spot in Montpelier would coincide with a natural disaster. But if her Steele and her family are currently in Kabat while she's visiting local public

Index

- Obituaries 6A
- Classifieds 9B-10B
- Service Directory 7B-8B
- Entertainment - Arts + Leisure 10B
- Community Calendar 10B
- Arts Calendar - Arts + Leisure 10B-11B
- Sports 11B-11B

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RACIST INCIDENTS OCCUR AT SCHOOLS

#7

STUDENT BEHAVIORAL PROBLEMS EXPOSED AND EXACERBATED DURING THE PANDEMIC SOFTENED SOMEWHAT IN 2023, THOUGH COUNTY SCHOOLS STILL WRESTLED WITH TROUBLING STUDENT BEHAVIOR.

In particular, local schools grappled with racist incidents directed at both students and educators and considered ways to foster more welcoming and inclusive learning communities moving forward.

At the start of the year, members of the Middlebury Union High School girls'

basketball team announced they'd skip a Jan. 12 game at Enosburg Falls High School, citing a history of racist attacks directed at Tiger athletes at the Franklin County school. Students pointed to three separate incidents during the past three years in which Middlebury athletes had endured racist harassment from Enosburg spectators.

The students' decision followed lengthy discussions between Enosburg officials, team members and district officials, and was made in part due to dissatisfaction with Enosburg administrators' proposals for dealing with Tiger athletes' concerns. The two teams later met for a Feb. 7 match-up, during which members of the Tigers and Enosburg teams took turns reading a prepared statement condemning the racism that Vermont students have endured in recent years. The denouncement came just days after a member of the Milton boys' basketball team allegedly directed a racial slur toward a Tiger player, causing that game in Milton to be suspended in the second half.

Along with students, local educators were also the target of

racist harassment this year. In August, Middlebury Union Middle School's first-ever dean of climate & culture resigned from the position after only one year. Esther Charlestin, who is Black, cited two racially-charged incidents, both involving students targeting her with use of the "N-word," as well as what she claimed was an "underwhelming" response to those events from school administrators, as contributing to her departure.

Following Charlestin's resignation, the Addison Central School District announced new and ongoing efforts to battle racism and intolerance. MUMS Principal Michaela Wisell and ACSD Interim Superintendent Tim Williams sent emails to public schools community, expressing their sorrow for the harassment Charlestin suffered, while and outlining short-term plans and broader efforts to address racism in the district.

In Bristol, a dozen community members stood before the Mount Abraham Unified School Board in April, calling on school officials to take immediate and extensive action in addressing racism throughout the district after a student of color at Bristol Elementary School was twice called a racial slur.

Residents at the meeting asked the board to consider adopting an anti-racism plan for the district, and other community

members took to Front Porch Forum to express their sympathy for the BES student who was racially harassed and to encourage parents to speak with their children about acceptable behavior. Other posts called on district leadership to implement an anti-racist curriculum or take other actions following the incident.

Eight months later, community members once again packed an MAUSD board meeting after another incident in which a student at Bristol Elementary School was called a racial slur. This time, more than three dozen residents stood in front of the board, united in their plea for district officials to instate anti-racist education for teachers and staff, and curriculum for students.

Board members at the Dec. 19 meeting took time to reflect on what they'd heard, discuss next steps and invite community members to be a part of continued conversations about anti-racism work in the district.

In related news, Elias Urang, a nine-year-old fourth-grader at Mary Hogan Elementary School, in December convinced the ACSD board to allow the Middlebury school to fly a Black Lives Matter flag.



Frost reborn
The comic past comes back to life in a performance at the Town Hall Theater. See Arts + Leisure.



Back to lead
Former Tiger all-star field hockey player McKayla Broughton now takes over as coach. See Page 1B.



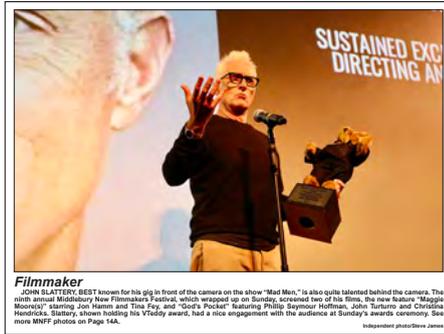
New faces
As the new school year starts, see the new teachers and staff in photos on Pages 8A and 13A.

ADDISON COUNTY INDEPENDENT

Vol. 77 No. 35 Middlebury, Vermont Thursday, August 31, 2023 42 Pages \$1.50

Some flooding losses are attributed to small rivers
By SOPHIA ANAS
ADDISON COUNTY
Although Otter Creek has been the center of attention for preparing for high waters in Middlebury throughout the soggy summer, the brief of Ag 4 High flooding hit weakest

County farms see \$3M in damage
Summer rains also causing feed issues
By MARIAN HOWELL
ADDISON COUNTY — Heavy rains that hit the state in July alone caused over \$3 million worth of damage to Addison County farms, according to a survey conducted by the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets this month. As a result, some farmers are already dipping into their winter



Filmmaker
JOHN SLATTERY, BEST known for his gig in front of the camera on the show "Mad Men," is also quite talented behind the camera. The 20th annual Middlebury New Filmmakers' Festival, which wrapped up on Sunday, showcased best of his films, the new feature "Magpie Mornings" starring Jon Hamm and Tim Fay, and "God's Pocket" featuring Philip Seymour Hoffman, John Turturro and Christine Hendricks. Slattery, shown holding his VHS award, had a nice engagement with the audience at Sunday's awards ceremony. See more MNFF photos on Page 14A.

THT nets \$1M college gift for its expansion
By JOHN FLOWERS
MIDDLEBURY — Another chapter in a roughly 20-year relationship between Middlebury College and Town Hall Theater was written on Wednesday, Aug. 30 at THT that included project banners, their official seal and the educational institution will make a \$1 million donation toward THT's \$7.5 million renovation

MUMS dean cites racism as a factor in resignation
By JOHN FLOWERS
MIDDLEBURY — Middlebury Union Middle School's first-ever dean of climate & culture resigned from her job after only one year, Esther Charlestin, who is Black, cited two "alleged" racially-charged incidents — and what she called an "underwhelming" response to those incidents from Addison Central School District (ACSD) — as reasons for her departure. Charlestin, a former Middlebury

Bristol looks to make town parks accessible
By MARIAN HOWELL
BRISTOL — Bristol exploring ways to make three of its town parks easier for all visitors to enjoy. The effort, largely organized by Bristol resident Peter Knight, is aimed at identifying options for making Memorial, Synagogue and Eagle parks more accessible. In the months ahead, the town

Family can't find a home, buys Ripton's inn
New owners have roots in Texas and Ukraine
By JOHN FLOWERS
RIPTON — In addition to abundant rainfall, this summer has brought numerous housing inquiries from people seeking to relocate to an Addison County that has few available homes to offer. The Guilbeaux family of Austin, Texas, was among those seeking to buy down new roots in

Pewter maker is diversifying into pottery
Danforth adds 'Pizzazz' to its entrepreneurial portfolio
By JOHN FLOWERS
MIDDLEBURY — Danforth Pewter CEO Bram Kieppner sometimes gets asked to describe how the Middlebury company's artisans are able to fashion bowls, mugs and other bathroom out of metal



DANFORTH PEWTER CEO Bram Kieppner stands inside the former railroad warehouse at 63 Seymour St. that will house the company's expanding Pottery. The company's plans include marrying pewter with pottery for a new variety of utilitarian and decorative items.

Index
Obituaries 6A-7A
Classifieds 7B-8B
Service Directories 9B-40
Entertainment Arts + Leisure
Community Calendar 1B
Ann Calendar Arts + Leisure
Sports 1B-2B

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#8 COLLEGE AIMS TO OFFER REAL-WORLD, ACCESSIBLE EDUCATION

HOW DOES AN ESTEEMED EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION CONTINUE TO PREPARE ITS STUDENTS FOR LIFE AFTER GRADUATION IN AN EVER-CHANGING, COMPLEX WORLD? IT EVOLVES.

This year, Middlebury College sought to update its offerings, providing students with more accessible educational opportunities and experiences that would ready them for a 21st-century world and workforce. The institution also in 2023 launched a \$600 million fundraising campaign to support those efforts.

College officials kicked off the public phase of the “For Every Future” campaign in October. The fundraising campaign is the largest in the school’s 223-year history and is aimed at supporting a variety of initiatives intended to enrich students’ experiences

at the institution and help prepare them to navigate the world that awaits them after graduation.

Funds raised through the campaign will support projects in five priority areas: access, academic excellence, experience, annual giving and capital improvements. More than a third of the funds will increase financial aid that could diversify the student body. The campaign also targets an expansion of key academics, particularly interdisciplinary programs and funding of internships and experiential learning (including athletics). Another 20% of the funds will be earmarked for building projects, including at the Snowbowl.

The college launched the campaign in July of 2021 and hopes to reach its \$600 million fundraising goal by June 2028. By the end of the year, the institution was a little more than halfway toward meeting that target, with \$389,088,126 raised.

Included in that total was \$7 million in gifts the institution secured through a partnership with two charitable organizations — Erol, a philanthropic foundation, and Next World Philanthropies — to expand the college’s Climate Action Program. The Climate Action Program, or CAP, supports students in their efforts to tackle climate change through paid fellowships, connections with Middlebury alumni and a variety of other offerings.

During the next 10 years, Erol’s pledge of \$3 million will be used to support current CAP programming and to create additional opportunities for students to pursue climate action work at Middlebury and beyond. For its part, NextWorld pledged \$4 million to endow CAP.

In addition to planning new offerings for students, this year Middlebury College continued its work with the Kathryn Wasserman Davis Collaborative in Conflict Transformation, providing opportunities for members of the college and broader Middlebury community to explore different types of conflict and how they approach that friction.

The various programming was supported by a \$25 million grant the college received from an anonymous donor in March of 2022 to fund the creation of a new conflict transformation initiative. Through the initiative, the college has supported existing institution-wide work in the area of conflict transformation and developed new programming.

This year, the initiative supported students in internships at Addison County social service organizations, events at the Middlebury campus covering topics like restorative justice practices in schools and politics and persuasion in American politics, and opportunities for individuals to explore conflict-related goals through community workshops and other events as part of The Global Body in Conflict: Movement Matters series.

As the year came to a close, college officials encouraged community members to take part in upcoming programs related to the conflict transformation initiative.



‘Rewilding’
Some laws, including at Middlebury College, are being returned to a natural state. Arts + Leisure.



Parks ‘N Rec
Middlebury has a wide variety of offerings for families and adults this winter. See the pullout inside.



Veterans
We celebrate the many who have served their country in a special section inside Arts + Leisure.

ADDISON COUNTY INDEPENDENT

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Prominent leaders changing at Porter

Ortmyer settles in as interim chief
By JOHN FLOWERS — MIDDLEBURY — Bob Ortmyer was content. He was in his 30th year as an administrator with the WellsSpan Health System in York, Pa., a network of eight hospitals serving folks in South-Central Pennsylvania and parts of northern Maryland.

York was where he’d spent his entire adult life and where he and his wife, Toby, had made a home with their three boys. But the allure of Addison County inspired the couple to make this area more than a vacation spot. And they have—in a big way. Bob Ortmyer in September (See Porter, Page 9A)



Long haul
A PORTION OF the throng of nearly 400 runners taking part in this past Sunday’s Middlebury Maple Run trot down South Street in the first mile of the annual race, which includes a half-marathon (13.1 miles), a two-person relay and a 3-mile fun run. See more photos on Page 13A. Independent photo/Steve James

Dr. Benvenuto caps eventful 11-year run

By JOHN FLOWERS — MIDDLEBURY — When Dr. Anna Benvenuto leaves Potter Hospital’s employ later this month, her 11-year tenure will represent only a fraction of the institution’s 98-year history as Addison County’s healthcare hub. But those 11 years, during which Benvenuto held several leadership roles, saw some of the (See Benvenuto, Page 15A)

County arts offerings gathered in one place

THT launches new free website
By JOHN FLOWERS — MIDDLEBURY — Town Hall Theater has taken another step in its emergence as a regional arts organization, with the launch this week of a new website that’ll serve as a comprehensive digital arts calendar for all of Addison County.



MIDDLEBURY’S TOWN HALL Theater has launched a new website called AddisonArts.org, which replaces boxy calendars to serve as a free online venue for Addison County artists and arts organizations to promote upcoming shows, screenings, exhibits and classes. Independent photo/Steve James

events into seven categories, including stage, music, film, visual art, learning, community and kids & family. Visitors can also search for events by Addison County town and venue. As an added convenience, there’s also a “buy tickets” option for THT events listings. The new website has been a couple years in the making. Shivers was part of the influx of urban dwellers who sought the comforting green hills of Vermont during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic in March of 2020. He’d been living in New York City, running a data department for a kitchen appliance company on Wall Street. Shivers had family in Vermont, which allowed him to telecommute to his NYC job. “As I walked through Middlebury and fell in love with the town, nature and the stillness, I started to rethink whether I wanted to return to New York,” he recalled. He concluded that marketing kitchen appliances didn’t dovetail with his ethos of “value-based, purpose-driven work.” Shivers thought he’d take a THT box office job while working out

College seeks \$600M to enhance experience

Intends to bolster aid & academics

By MARIN HOWELL — MIDDLEBURY — Middlebury College has launched the public phase of the largest fundraising campaign in the institution’s 223-year history. The “For Every Future” campaign aims to raise \$600 million to support a variety of initiatives intended to enrich students’ experiences at the institution and help prepare them for the world that awaits them upon graduation. What would all this money buy? More than a third of the funds would increase financial aid that could diversify the student body. The campaign also is targeting an expansion of key academics particularly interdisciplinary programs, and funding of internships and experiential learning (including athletics). About 20% of the funds are aimed at building projects, including at the Snowbowl. “This is an amazing, world-class institution and so for us to be involved with an initiative that will give it the fiscal fortitude to continue onward and upward, to expand its reach and to continue to be a place that generates value and import in American education and the teaching and learning of liberal arts is what this is really about,” Dan Courney, vice president for advancement at the college, said (See College, Page 11A)

Monkton history comes alive thanks to three active residents

By MARIN HOWELL — MONKTON — Around two years ago, Monkton residents Candace Polzella, Lauren Parren and Cindy Walkott embarked on a quest to learn more about the history of the town they call home. Their exploration of Monkton’s past has included hours spent scouring old newspapers, visiting local libraries and interviewing longtime town residents. The trio has compiled some of their findings into informational projects that include a walking tour of the Monkton Ridge and a book on the history of East Monkton. Through these projects and future endeavors, the team is hoping to share stories of Monkton’s past with community members and invite residents to learn more about their local history. “Each one of the people who’s lived here has contributed in one way or another, positively or negatively, to what makes Monkton the way it is today,” Parren said. (See Monkton, Page 12A)

By the way

While her appearance on TV’s “Wheel of Fortune” game show occurred last August, Britain’s Hannah Zeno had quite the rooting section for the long-awaited broadcast of her episode this past Thursday, Nov. 2. Zeno hosted a viewing party that drew more than 60 people, and many more in Addison County and beyond watched from the comfort of their own living rooms. Zeno wasn’t able to disclose how she (See By the way, Page 12A)



Classic cold
DURING MIDDLEBURY UNION High School’s Tuesday evening dress rehearsal of the thespians’ production of “Frozen: The Musical,” Ella Kozak, playing Anna, sings before a crowd in the palace of Arendelle. Anna, her sister Elsa, and the whole Disney crowd will put on a terrific show at the MUHS auditorium this Thursday and Friday evenings and Saturday afternoon. See more photos on Page 10A. Photo by Jason Duquette-Hoffman

Index	
Obituaries.....	6A-7A
Classifieds.....	10B-12B
Service Directory.....	3B-9B
Entertainment.....	Arts + Leisure
Community Calendar.....	5B
Arts Calendar.....	Arts + Leisure
Sports.....	1B-4B

HOW WE FUND OUR SCHOOLS

#9

ADDISON COUNTY RESIDENTS SHOWED STRONG SUPPORT FOR EDUCATION ON TOWN MEETING DAY, WHEN ALL LOCAL SCHOOL BUDGETS PASSED, FOUR OUT OF FIVE BY LARGE MARGINS.

Voter approval for budgets proposed by Addison Central, Mount Abraham Unified and Addison Northwest school districts boards ranged from 63% to 80% in Australian balloting.

Voter approval for budgets proposed by Addison Central, Mount Abraham Unified and Addison Northwest school districts boards ranged from 63% to 80% in Australian balloting.

And 75% of area residents who cast ballots backed a significant increase in Patricia Hannaford Career Center spending — this despite the fact that a yes vote meant a 14% hike in the tuition for students at the career center.

Only voting for proposed Otter Valley Unified Union School District spending was relatively close: About 52% of district voters there supported a budget plan a year after an initial proposal was defeated.

And property taxes continued to rise faster than inflation, in part because of higher school spending.

Vermont lawmakers changed some rules on how state funds are doled out

to pay for education. Some changes rejiggered the way students are counted when calculating funding based on student poverty or familiarity with English. The passage of H.480 (now called Act 68) makes changes to the system of Common Levels of Appraisal, or CLAs, ultimately requiring municipalities to begin to assess their properties every six years, rather than when the CLA falls out of whack. And the CLAs, which are ratios the state tax department uses to compare property tax values in all Vermont towns, are seriously out of whack in Addison County (as well as statewide).

The Vermont Department of Taxes uses CLAs to measure how well communities measure their property values. Then, state officials use CLAs to adjust school tax rates to create equity among towns with varying levels of accuracy in how they assess real estate. CLAs above 100% — a rarity in Vermont right now — result in lower tax rates.

Lower CLAs — which are now widespread in Addison County — result in upward pressure on school tax rates.

In the fall, local school boards were struggling to make this coming year's budgets palatable, with changes in state education tax law in mind. One state-mandated spending rule

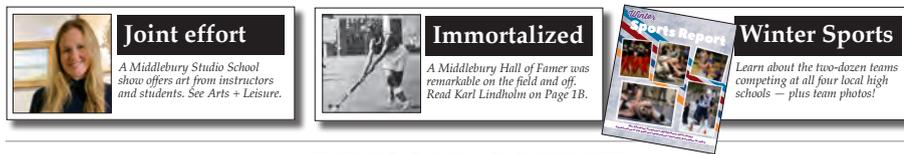
provides that for those districts that raise spending by less than 10%, the state will cap the district's homestead property tax rate increase at 5%. So all districts are trying to keep spending in check.

This won't be easy with health insurance rising for school employees by 16%, most districts hooked into employee contracts that guarantee raises of 11% in some cases, inflation driving other costs higher and COVID-era ESSER funding disappearing.

Much like a math-averse student getting their first dose of calculus, the Addison Central School District board in November got a quick, dizzying tutorial on

the possible budget impacts of Act 173 — a major revamp in the way special education services are funded and delivered at public schools. Board Chair Barb Wilson aptly summed up the board's sentiments after a 70-minute deep-dive.

"It's very complicated," she said, as her colleagues nodded in agreement.



ADDISON COUNTY INDEPENDENT

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MOUNT ABE SENIORS Hannah Gallivan as the Fairy Godmother and Sarah Heath as Little Bo-Peep rehearse a scene from the Addison Repertory Theater production of "Adrian: The Alternative Panto" on Tuesday. The holiday play will be staged Friday and Saturday at the Hannaford Career Center in Middlebury.

ART goes slapstick for the holidays

Pantomime play uses British template
By JOHN FLOWERS
MIDDLEBURY — When one thinks of holiday-themed performances, the mind instantly wanders to "A Christmas Carol" or "It's a Wonderful Life." But folks at the Hannaford Career Center's Addison Repertory Theater, known as ART, are straying from Christmas convention this year. They're thinking outside of the holiday gift box, you might say. As a matter of fact, the young ART actors this weekend are taking their cue from Monty Python, rather than Charles Dickens. The cast and crew will be staging what ART Director Eric Reid-St. John called a "good ol' English panto" — pantomime is short for pantomime — that'll

ANWSD mulls 5% spending hike

Towns' CLAs seen as pushing school taxes higher
By ANDY KIRKALDY
VERGENNES — The Addison Northwest School District Board took a second look at a draft Fiscal Year 2024-25 budget at a Monday Zoom meeting. Despite a confusing set of new state school funding laws, including new ways to count districts' students, ANWSD board almost certainly

City voters to weigh in on fire truck bond

By ANDY KIRKALDY
VERGENNES — Vergennes residents next week weigh in on a proposal to bond for up to \$1.75 million, money that would allow the city's fire department to replace a 21-year-old heavy rescue truck and a 25-year-old ladder truck. Balloting will be held this coming Tuesday, Dec. 19, in the basement of the Vergennes Fire Department from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. The face value of the equipment on the ballot is \$1.125 million for the heavy rescue truck and \$500,000 for a used ladder truck, plus \$125,000 for radios needed for the new trucks. That amount is already about \$600,000 less than a bond (See Fire bond, Page 14A)



Gotta catch 'em all
MIDDLEBURY COLLEGE JUNIOR Irland Melvior explains the process of pollination to kids during the "Pokémon Pop-Up Museum" at Bicentennial Hall this past Saturday. Middlebury students highlighted to community members the real-world inspiration behind popular Pokémon characters through 20 student-designed exhibits. See more photos on Page 19A.

Porter eyes a major makeover for its ER

Doubling of its size is part of the plan
By JOHN FLOWERS
MIDDLEBURY — Porter Medical Center officials are busy planning the institution's top construction priority: A doubling of the size, hopefully within the next two or three years, of the hospital's Emergency Department (ED) in an effort to make it more friendly for patients, their families and those who work there. Porter's ED underwent its last substantial update 30 years ago and is in dire need of a makeover, according to Dr. Amanda Young. (See Porter, Page 20A)

Work begins on senior housing in Little City

Vergennes Grand build starts with bang
By ANDY KIRKALDY
VERGENNES — After a well-attended ceremonial groundbreaking in mid-October, work began in earnest late last month on the roughly \$25 million Vergennes Grand Senior Living project in the heart of the city — and residents can expect its next construction phase, beginning early next week, to be noticeable. That elderly housing complex, when complete in a little over a year, will house up to 82 seniors. (See Vergennes housing, Page 17A)

Index

Obituaries	6A
Classifieds	8B-9B
Service Directory	6B-7B
Entertainment Arts + Leisure	4B
Community Calendar	4B
Arts Calendar	Arts + Leisure
Sports	1B-3B



Digging into the future
TOWN HALL THEATER Executive Director Lisa Mitchell and Middlebury College President Laurie Patton mark the symbolic start to the next phase of the Middlebury arts institution's growth, as they take part in a THT addition groundbreaking on Tuesday. See more photos on Page 11A.

Fourth-grader wins OK to fly the BLM flag at Mary Hogan

By JOHN FLOWERS
MIDDLEBURY — Elias Urang delivered a master class in social justice and the democratic process at Monday's Addison Central School District (ACSD) board meeting. With dinner and bedtime beckoning, Urang appeared before the board to request that the Black Lives Matter flag be flown at Mary Hogan Elementary School, where he's currently a fourth-grader. He presented the ACSD board with a petition bearing the names of more than 100 fellow students who share his convictions and explained his rationale behind his flag pitch. Sometimes, as a Black student at Mary Hogan, I (See BLM, Page 14A)

Student survey explores energy-efficiency efforts

By MARIN HOWELL
ADDISON COUNTY — Several students at Middlebury College spent part of their fall semester out in the community rather than inside the classroom, speaking with the owners and managers of nonresidential properties across Addison County. The students were hoping to hear about the challenges and opportunities those individuals see in decarbonizing their buildings. Through their research, students learned about how factors like costs and building age can hinder nonresidential decarbonization (See Decarbonization, Page 8A)

#10

WE BOAST CHAMPIONS ALL AROUND

THE INDEPENDENT SPORTS SECTION BELIEVES EVERYONE'S EFFORTS COUNT. SURE, WHEN SCORES ARE LOGGED, TIMES ARE KEPT, DISTANCES ARE MEASURED, OR PERFORMANCES ARE JUDGED, WINNERS ARE NAMED. AND HERE WE'LL CELEBRATE OUR MOST SUCCESSFUL ATHLETES.

But not without saying that all our local athletes' contributions mattered, regardless of the outcomes. Sports are about doing one's best and having fun in the process. No one asks or expects more. One example: One of the most dramatic moments the *Independent* saw in 2023 was a duel for fifth place in a midseason cross-country race between Grey Fearon of Vergennes and a Burr & Burton runner.

Both had determination and pain etched on their faces. Fearon earned the higher place by a tiny fraction of a second despite his competitor's desperate dive across the finish line.

Moments like that are as much why we watch and appreciate sports as any trophy hoisted.

But, for the record, whose 2023 efforts did pay off with hardware?

- Coach Katharine DeLorenzo's undefeated Middlebury College field hockey team claimed both the NESCAC and NCAA Division III crowns — for the sixth straight season since 2017 (there were no games in the COVID year of 2020). Junior midfielder Amy Griffin was named the NCAA D-III player of the year.

- Coach Kate Livesay's Panther women's lacrosse team claimed the NESCAC and NCAA D-III titles. The NCAA title was the program's third straight after the Panthers didn't compete in 2020 or 2021 due to the pandemic. Livesay now has four NCAA and four NESCAC titles in her six active coaching years at Middlebury.

- First-year Middlebury College football coach Doug Mandigo led his team to an 8-1 record, good for a first-place tie with Trinity. Middlebury won at Trinity during the season, but NESCAC does not use tiebreakers in football.
- Three local high school wrestlers won

state titles. Eli Brace, a VUHS senior, earned the 132-pound championship, hit 100 wins in the semifinal round, and was named the state meet's Outstanding Wrestler. Eagle senior Devan Hemingway claimed his second straight 120-pound title, and Tiger senior Nick Sheldrick powered his way to the 285-pound crown.

- The MUHS Nordic ski teams blew away the competition at the two-day state meet. Lia Robinson, Ava Schneider, Mary Harrington and Beth McIntosh scored all the points for the Tiger girls and the scorers for the boys were Eliot Schneider, Trey Bosworth and Baxter Harrington on both days, and Matias Citarelli and Haakon Olsen on one day apiece.

- In indoor track last winter, Commodore Calvin Gramling won the D-II boys' 1,000-meter race.

- In D-III outdoor track in the spring Commodore Calder Rakowski won the boys' 800-meter race and also ran on the Commodores' winning four-by-800-meter relay team with Gramling, Fearon and Riley Gagnon.

- In D-II, outdoor track Tiger Jazmyn Hurley was the story, winning both the girls' 200- and 400-meter state meet titles.

- The Mount Abraham softball steamrolled its way through the D-II tournament, defeating No. 5 seed MUHS in the final, 12-2. It was the

program's fourth title since 2017.

- Vergennes Champ and Middlebury Marlin swimmers fared well at the state meet in White River Junction, Champ swimmer Will Clark won four boys' 14-and-under races, while Noah Smits (14U) and Carlyn Rapoport (19U) earned two wins apiece. For the Marlins, 18U boys' swimmer Aidan Chance and 12U boys' swimmer Constantin Bellman each won one state title.

- Middlebury College senior and Middlebury Fire Department volunteer firefighter Emily Jones did one thing none of these other athletes accomplished: set a Guinness world record.

On a cool, sunny Saturday in front of about 120 onlookers, Jones ran a mile wearing 60 pounds of full firefighter gear, breathing through a respirator, in eight minutes and 25 seconds, a full 2:35 faster than the previous record.

Afterward Jones figured her time might be tough to beat.

"I think people are going to have to work pretty hard for it," she said. "I would love to see someone break it so I would have an excuse to come out here and do all this again. It was really fun."

And there you have it.

ANSWERS: Addy Indy Numbers Quiz

- There are **over 30,000 weekly readers** of The *Addy Indy*.
- We routinely cover **23 towns** — every town and city in Addison County.
- We publish **50+ special sections** each year, including the popular Profiles in Community, Health & Well-Being, Sports Reports, Seasonal Guides, and Parks & Recreation Activity Guides.
- We printed **3,130 pages** in 2023.
- Our website received over 2.4 million page views in 2023!
- Web ads on addisonindependent.com had over 8 million impressions this year! Curious about buying a web ad? Email: advertising@addisonindependent.com.
- Our weekly email newsletters received **325,000 opens** in 2023. Interested in getting the news delivered straight to your inbox? Visit bit.ly/3VVIC4M or scan the code below!



Thanks for playing and thanks for reading!

ADDISON COUNTY INDEPENDENT

ADDISON COUNTY INDEPENDENT

SPORTS

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• Legal Notices • Police Logs

Panther women's lacrosse completes historic run

Dominant NCAA final four performance caps undefeated season, nets program's eighth crown

By ANNY KIRKALOV
MIDDLEBURY, Vt. — The NCAA Division III women's lacrosse championship was completed on Sunday as Middlebury College won its eighth national title, a feat that will have been called the greatest in the history of the sport.

The Panthers captured their first title since 2017, a 2-1 win that featured a defensive effort that kept the opponent from scoring a goal. The Panthers' defense was led by senior defender Erica Burr, who made 10 saves in the game, and junior goalkeeper Kaitlyn Larson, who made 12 saves. The Panthers' offense was led by senior midfielder Amy Griffin, who scored two goals and had three assists.

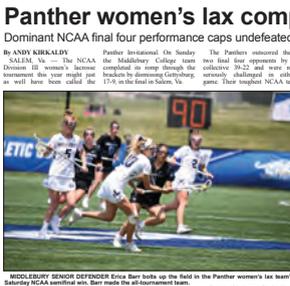
The Panthers' season was capped by a dominant performance in the NCAA final four, where they defeated the top-seeded team, the University of Virginia, 3-0. The Panthers' season record was 18-0, including a 10-0 record in the NESCAC tournament.

Coach Katharine DeLorenzo said the team's success was a result of their hard work and dedication throughout the season. "This is a historic moment for our program, and we are proud of the players who made it happen," she said.

The Panthers' season was also marked by several individual achievements. Senior defender Erica Burr was named the NESCAC Defensive Player of the Year, and junior goalkeeper Kaitlyn Larson was named the NESCAC Goalkeeper of the Year.

The Panthers' success in 2023 is a testament to the program's commitment to excellence and teamwork. "We have a great team, and we are proud to represent Middlebury College," said senior midfielder Amy Griffin.

The Panthers will be crowned national champions on Sunday at the NCAA Division III Women's Lacrosse Championship in Salem, Va.



MIDDLEBURY SENIOR DEFENDER ERICA BURR bolts up the ball in the Panther women's lacrosse team's final game of the season. Burr made 10 saves in the game, and the Panthers won their eighth national title.

Score BOARD

By ANNY KIRKALOV
MIDDLEBURY, Vt. — The Mount Abraham softball team rolled into playoffs on Sunday, defeating the Mount Union team 12-2 in the first round. The team's success was led by senior pitcher Kaitlyn Larson, who pitched a complete game and struck out 10 batters.

The Commodore softball team also had a strong performance, defeating the Middlebury team 12-2 in the first round. The team's success was led by senior pitcher Kaitlyn Larson, who pitched a complete game and struck out 10 batters.

The Mount Abraham team's season was capped by a dominant performance in the NESCAC tournament, where they defeated the top-seeded team, the University of Virginia, 3-0. The team's season record was 18-0, including a 10-0 record in the NESCAC tournament.

Coach Katharine DeLorenzo said the team's success was a result of their hard work and dedication throughout the season. "This is a historic moment for our program, and we are proud of the players who made it happen," she said.

The Commodore team's season was also marked by several individual achievements. Senior pitcher Kaitlyn Larson was named the NESCAC Pitcher of the Year, and senior outfielder Amy Griffin was named the NESCAC Outfielder of the Year.

The Commodore team's success in 2023 is a testament to the program's commitment to excellence and teamwork. "We have a great team, and we are proud to represent Middlebury College," said senior pitcher Kaitlyn Larson.

The Commodore team will be crowned national champions on Sunday at the NCAA Division III Women's Softball Championship in Salem, Va.



COMMODORE KATELYN LASERGE strikes in safety with one of the three runs she scored in the VUHS softball team's final playoff victory on Tuesday.

Local track & field athletes shine at major Essex meet

By ANNY KIRKALOV
MIDDLEBURY, Vt. — A group of local track and field athletes shined at a major meet in Essex, Mass., on Saturday. The athletes, who represented Middlebury College and the Vermont State Track & Field Club, won several medals in various events.

The athletes' success was led by senior runner Kaitlyn Larson, who won the 100-meter race, and senior jumper Amy Griffin, who won the 100-meter high jump. The athletes' success was a result of their hard work and dedication throughout the season.

Coach Katharine DeLorenzo said the athletes' success was a result of their hard work and dedication throughout the season. "This is a historic moment for our program, and we are proud of the athletes who made it happen," she said.

The athletes' success in 2023 is a testament to the program's commitment to excellence and teamwork. "We have a great team, and we are proud to represent Middlebury College," said senior runner Kaitlyn Larson.

The athletes will be crowned national champions on Sunday at the NCAA Division III Track & Field Championship in Salem, Va.



ESSEX — At a major meet held by Essex High School on Saturday, a handful of local track & field athletes performed well enough to compete at the New England meet in Bangor, Maine, on Sunday. The athletes, who represented Middlebury College and the Vermont State Track & Field Club, won several medals in various events.

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The athletes will be crowned national champions on Sunday at the NCAA Division III Track & Field Championship in Salem, Va.

Commodore softball wins D-III opener

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So those were the Top 10 stories that the *Addison Independent* news staff considered the most important of 2023, but readers had their own opinions about what interested them most. One indication of that is what you “clicked” in 2023. We looked at your response to stories on addisonindependent.com and on our Facebook and Instagram pages.

On the *Addy Indy* website, people sometimes wanted the same thing that we thought was most important — news on the floods. Plus, sadly, news on crime was always very click-worthy for our online readers (like web surfers everywhere). And, of course, there were the nice stories about local people doing interesting things that drew a lot of online attention.

Here’s how it stacked up on addisonindependent.com. To see links to the stories, read this list online at our website.

ADDISONINDEPENDENT.COM

1. Middlebury police respond to gunfire near train station (June 3) — 17,101 views
2. Letter to the editor: Middlebury’s downtown businesses are under siege (Oct. 12) — 14,369 views
3. College student dies in dorm room (Sept 21) — 10,431 views
4. Rising waters begin to close area roads (July 10) — 8,712 views
5. Middlebury police looking for missing teen (March 30) — 7,824
6. Woman killed in Waltham, police investigate (Sept. 19) — 6,695 views
7. Couple thinks big on mansion restoration (Oct. 5) — 6,627 views
8. Castleton homicide victim had Middlebury ties (Oct. 7) — 6,559 views
9. College firefighter sets world record in Middlebury (Apr. 10) — 5,761 views
10. Zeno takes a spin on Wheel of Fortune (Nov. 2) — 5,084 views

ON FACEBOOK:

Facebook is a different beast. Consumers clicked on a few of the same feature stories that made the top 10 on our website. But there was definitely a different tone to the Facebook favorites. Here is the top 10 on the *Addy Indy*’s Facebook page:

1. MUHS Principal Justin Campbell abruptly resigns less than three years on the job (Jan. 23) — 125.1k reach
2. Middlebury College student Emily Jones sets world record for running mile in firefighter gear (Apr. 8) — 120.6k reach

ONLINE TOP TEN 2023

3. Shoreham couple to restore Means mansion (Oct. 5) — 95.7k reach
4. “Mom & Pot Shop” opens in Vergennes (Aug. 31) — 56.2k reach
5. Zeno competes on Wheel of Fortune (Nov. 2) — 55.2k reach
6. John Bratko resigns as Bristol Elementary principal (March 23) — 48.7k reach
7. Bristol haunted forest offers scares and fun (Oct. 19) — 47.5 reach
8. Longtime paraeducator Diane Bolduc retires from Mary Hogan (June 15) — 46.9k reach
9. Raging otter creek (video) after the July floods (July 10) — 39.3k reach
10. Barber Joe DeGray retires after decades cutting hair in Middlebury (June 1) — 33k reach

You will notice the metric this platform uses to track reader activity is “reach.” This is not the same as “views” on addisonindependent.com. “Reach,” in Facebook terms, technically means it appeared in that many people’s feeds; whether or not they stopped to read it, or clicked on it is a whole different thing.

ON INSTAGRAM:

We get less traffic on our Instagram page, but there’s definitely a constituency for it. Here is the 2023 top 10 on Instagram:

1. Protestors support trans rights outside anti-trans talk at VUHS (421 likes)
2. Addison County Fair & Field Days photos (334 likes)
3. Video of raging Otter Creek after July deluge (314 likes)
4. Middlebury pedestrian bridge closed to public due to flooding (265 likes)
5. Randall and Kathleen Brisson of Shoreham to restore Means Mansion (252 likes)
6. Tribute to Victor Nuovo (245 likes)
7. Pics from Great Bristol Outhouse Race (241 likes)
8. Juvenile moose spotted around Middlebury (218 likes)
9. Outtakes from high school team photos (217 likes)
10. Otter Creek still rising after deluge, pic of Vergennes (208 likes)

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2023 kept us busy with full-service renovations to **KITCHENS & BATHS** mudrooms, dens and other nooks and crannies that we've turned into useful space! If you're one of the millions of homeowners considering a **kitchen or bath renovation in 2024**, please give your local experts at **Bradford Kitchen & Bath** a call.



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