



*Health +
Well-Being*

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Summer offers opportunities to stay active

Trainers provide tips for exploring exercises

By MARIN HOWELL

ADDISON COUNTY — From exploring a new hiking trail to swimming in Lake Champlain, summer in the Green Mountain State offers numerous opportunities to stay active while enjoying the outdoors.

But, finding an activity that's best suited to your personal goals can be intimidating, let alone finding the time to fit exercise into a busy schedule.

With that in mind, the *Independent* spoke with two personal trainers at Vermont Sun about how people can incorporate more movement into their daily lives during the summer months.

Personal trainer Lauren Woloochian emphasized that it's important to move your body each day, regardless of how you choose to do so.

"I always try to aim for some sort of movement, whether it's 5-30 minutes, at some point in the day or five minutes six times a day," she said. "Setting aside some time to move purposefully is going to be important not just for the short term



THE SUMMER MONTHS offer several opportunities to stay active, from hiking to cycling. Personal trainers Kathleen Copeland, left, and Lauren Woloochian both encourage community members to aim for 30 minutes of movement each day, whether that's all at once or split up throughout the day.

Independent photo/Steve James

but long term as well in terms of (health benefits)."

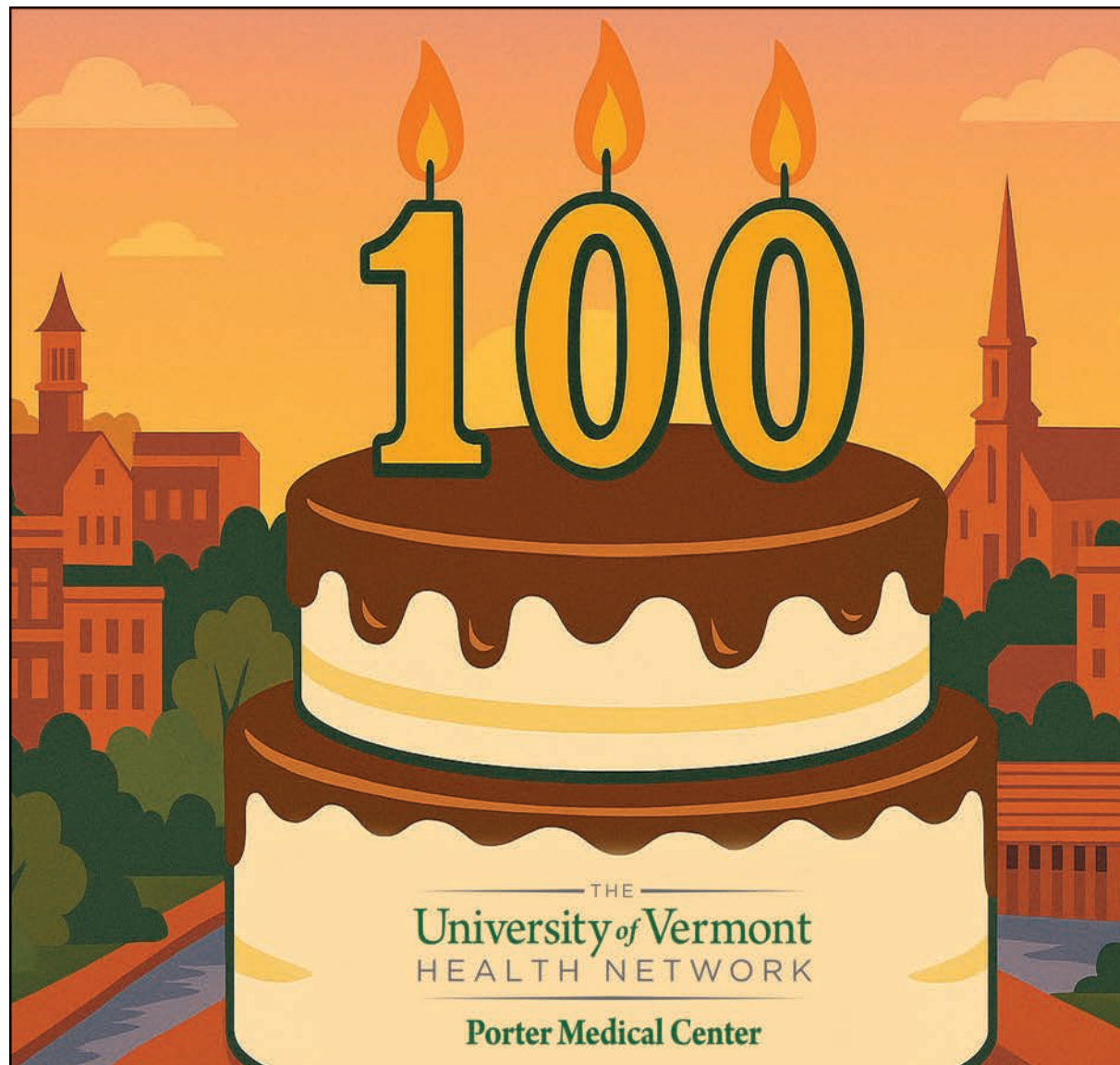
"Especially for young children up to the elderly population, movement is

going to help with longevity, keep us injury free and help us be able to balance ourselves when we're walking up the stairs or carrying groceries," Woloochian

continued.

Figuring out what type of activity you like to do is key, she said.

(See *Stay active*, Page 3)



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KATHLEEN COPELAND AND LAUREN WOLOOHOJIAN

Staying active

(Continued from Page 2)

“Find something you enjoy as far as that movement because then it’s not going to feel like a workout,” she explained. “If somebody prefers to be in the gym, and that’s where they find their enjoyment that’s great, and if someone hates going to the gym and they’d rather be walking outside with their dogs that’s great, too.”

Kathleen Copeland is a personal trainer at Vermont Sun and owner of BYWIT (Because You’re Worth IT) Personal Training. She underscored the importance of finding an activity you enjoy, as well as one that your body is able to do, and getting clearance from your doctor before starting a new activity.

“I know this can seem like a pain because when the mood strikes to start exercising you don’t want to put it off

because you need to wait on a (doctor) to say ‘OK,’ but it is important to make sure you are physically ready to take on the new adventure,” she said.

Copeland often works with groups on things like goal setting and exploring the psychological aspect of fitness. She noted that finding community is another key part of staying active.

“I think one of the biggest things that I would say to anybody wanting to stay with it would just be doing a team approach, like a buddy system,” Copeland said. “Creating a buddy system so that you’re held accountable for those activities is really key, getting some positive peer pressure.”

SUMMERTIME ACTIVITIES

When it comes to staying active during the summer, Woloochojian noted that popular activities amongst her clients are swimming, hiking and cycling. She pointed to some of the benefits those activities offer.

“As far as going out and hiking or biking or even swimming, you’re working on your strength, your muscular endurance, as well as your cardio capabilities,” she said. “Those are three incredibly important things that people need to move every day.”

As for other low-impact exercise options, Copeland recommends walking.

“If people are afraid of walking or tripping you can use the walking poles that have become very popular. Walking poles are really beneficial for those that want the low impact but you still get a little upper body movement,” she said. “You could also walk on the (Middlebury College) track, so you don’t have to worry about tripping on the curb.”

Swimming is another low-impact workout option, Copeland said. She noted the Middlebury Town Pool offers open swim times for local residents throughout the summer.

“Swimming is great for inflammation; it keeps inflammation down when you’re
(See Summertime, Page 6)



KATHLEEN COPELAND

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Deaths from opioid overdose declined significantly in 2024

WATERBURY — New data from the Vermont Department of Health shows a significant decline in opioid overdose deaths last year. According to the newly-released Fatal Opioid Overdoses Among Vermonters Report, 183 Vermonters died from an opioid-related overdose in 2024, a 22% decrease from 2023 when 236 people died. This marks the second consecutive year of a decline in overdose deaths, after a slight drop in 2023.

“We’re grateful to see this decline,” said Health Department Deputy Commissioner Kelly Dougherty, who oversees Vermont’s substance use programs. “At the same time, people are still dying due to opioid overdose, and we must not forget the lasting impact these losses have on families and communities. We must continue strengthening our partnerships and systems of care to respond to these challenges.”

While fatal overdoses involving fentanyl decreased by 25% between 2022 and 2024, fentanyl continues to be the number one substance involved in opioid-related deaths, accounting for 93% of opioid fatalities in 2024. Cocaine involvement in deaths increased significantly — from 60% in 2023 to 70% in 2024 — and remains the second most common drug involved in fatal overdoses. Xylazine was involved in 42% of fatal overdoses in 2024, up from 32% in 2023.

Vermont last saw a significant decrease in opioid fatalities in 2019, when 115 people died, down from 131 in 2018. However, the COVID-19 pandemic increased many risks related to substance use disorder, including isolation, unemployment and health disparities, leading to record numbers of deaths -244 in 2022 alone. The 2024 decrease also aligns with national trends: on May 14, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported a nearly 27% decline in U.S. drug overdose deaths in 2024, the steepest such drop since 2020.

While the factors contributing to this decline are complex, public health efforts that support prevention, treatment and recovery are helping save lives. This includes strategies such as offering fentanyl test strips and the statewide naloxone distribution program, which helps ensure people have access to life-saving medication. The Health Department distributed more than 70,000 doses of naloxone to community partners in 2024.

The Health Department said the new overdose data reflects the work of a vast network of partners across the state to expand access to community-level prevention, recovery and treatment services, including through the hub-and-spoke system of care and its strong foundation among Vermont’s primary



Push forward

PERSONAL TRAINER KATHLEEN Copeland exercises outside on a recent summer day. When it comes to staying active, Copeland recommends finding an activity you enjoy and that your body is able to do, as well as getting clearance from your doctor before starting a new activity.

Independent photo/Steve James

care providers. While there is still more work to be done, Health officials thanked primary care providers, other clinical providers, syringe services providers, recovery resources, public safety and EMS responders and other health care partners for their vital role in this work.

Officials also emphasized that outreach and resources remain critical through campaigns such as KnowOD, and VTHelpLink, a free and confidential support and referral service, available 24/7.

“Vermont’s communities know the

lasting toll the opioid epidemic has taken in our state,” Interim Health Commissioner Julie Arel said. “Seeing this decline in overdose deaths is heartening, but we can’t take our foot off the gas. We must continue to make our systems of prevention, treatment and recovery stronger so that we can meet the needs of people struggling with substance use disorder and build safer, healthier communities for all.”

Read the 2024 Fatal Opioid Overdoses Among Vermonters Report online at tinyurl.com/VtOverdoses2024.



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CSAC programs help clients achieve independence

'This job allows me to blend in family time'

By BEE ECKELS

MIDDLEBURY — For 65 years, the Counseling Service of Addison County (CSAC) has played an integral role in helping preserve and support the social and emotional well-being of the residents of Addison County, with a crowning achievement being the success of the Residential Home Program.

The program was launched after the 1993 closing of the Brandon Training School, which at the time was Vermont's only public institution for individuals with mental and developmental disabilities. The Residential Home Program is a shared living service for people with developmental and intellectual disabilities. Set up by the state as a way to help people transition into their community, CSAC tailored the program to help adults live as

independently as possible in the setting of their choice.

Described as the "backbone of care and system of support for... the individuals we serve" by Beth Tarallo, Development, Outreach & Engagement Officer at CSAC, the initiative provides community and employment support for the adult clients they serve in Addison County.

Home Providers, such as Middlebury resident Kim Porter, are a vital part of the Residential Home Program and witness the impact of their work first-hand. Porter began her career in a community support position in 2018 where she helped adults with disabilities by taking them out in the community to foster engagement, integration, acceptance and independence.

For the past 10 years, Porter has (See CSAC respite, Page 7)

Being a part of the Residential Home Program, Home Providers, such as Middlebury resident Kim Porter, get to witness the impact of their work first-hand.



KIM PORTER

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Summertime

(Continued from Page 3)
swimming because of the water pressure on the joints,” she said.

Rowing, either out on the water or on a machine in the gym, is another activity folks can try out this season.

“It’s one of the best full body exercises that you can do,” Copeland said.

The Lake Champlain Maritime Museum in Ferrisburgh offers opportunities for new and experienced rowers alike to get out on the water during the warmer months. More information can be found at www.lcmm.org/adult-rowing.

Like Woloohojian, Copeland recommends community members aim for 30 minutes of movement each day.

“For some of my clients that seems really overwhelming, like, ‘I can’t walk for 30 minutes,’ and you don’t have to. You could walk three times a day for 10 minutes,” Copeland said. “What will happen sometimes is if you set your goals small and you can be successful at them, then your goals will naturally grow longer.”

Copeland noted that community members might find it easier to skip a workout during the summer months, opting to bask in the sunshine and warm temperatures instead. She recommends

incorporating movement into your day on the way home from work, for example.

“Sitting down on the couch between work and the gym is really like the kiss of death,” she said. “Stop on your way home from work directly ... and get your 20 minutes, do a 20 minute workout, and then go home.”

TIPS FOR STAYING ACTIVE

Woloohojian said she pushes her clients to get outside during the summer months.

“For them to be out in the sun, Vitamin D is incredibly important for our body, and it’s a mood booster,” she said. “There’s not only that physical benefit but also that mental benefit of enjoying being outside.”

What about folks that can’t always set aside time to go for a hike or bike ride? Woloohojian recommends trying out a

(See Staying active tips, Page 8)

“Creating a buddy system so that you’re held accountable for those activities is really key, getting some positive peer pressure.”
— Kathleen Copeland



KATHLEEN COPELAND



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CSAC respite

(Continued from Page 5)

transitioned to be a Respite Provider—a role that provides temporary relief for caregivers, guardians and other Home Providers by taking clients into their homes—and, in recent years, she became a Home Provider—a role that provides a home for an individual, as well as care and assistance with daily activities.

Being a Home Provider allow flexibility in her role as a full-time mom, as well as being able to hold a job. A routine day sees Porter getting her kids up and ready for school or the day's events, while also waking up her client and administering their medication. On school days, she takes her kids to school while her client gets ready to start the day on their own. When Porter returns, her client goes to work for four hours. While she is not technically “off the clock” while her client is at work, CSAC does respond to situations that might arise during the client's time at work.

As a mother of three with a toddler,

elementary schooler and middle schooler to keep her hands full, Porter has been happy to find that housing a client means she can show up for her family while still bringing in an income. While the compensation amount for this position varies based on the needs of the individual that the provider is serving, a home provider can earn, in the form of a tax-free stipend, between \$15,000 to \$60,000 annually, plus payment for room and board and a budget for respite care.

When fully staffed, CSAC has about 320 workers. Out of that 320, 100 work in Community Associates which is the Developmental Services program.

“We have about 45 Developmental homes — these are the homes where we contract with community providers to offer a home for our clients,” said Rachel Lee,

Executive Director at CSAC. “Homes are supported by Service Coordinators who help with case management...

“You have to pass the state of Vermont home inspection, but CSAC helps you prepare for that. They send someone over and do a pre-check and point out things that might get flagged.”

— Kim Porter

CSAC offers varied opportunities

Aside from the residential program, CSAC offers a variety of resources to help improve the lives of individuals and the state of the overall community. The core services provided by CSAC include those focused on emergency and crisis support (including a 24-hour suicide hotline), substance use, adult mental health, developmental services, case management and adult stabilization

programs, employment services and youth and family services.

Anyone interested in being a home provider, contact CSAC at 802-388-4021 or visit CSAC's employment page on their website to see a list of available openings for Shared Living Providers at <https://www.csac-vt.org/careers/shared-living-providers.html>.

and Direct Support Professionals, who work with our clients to be active and engaged in the community or at work.”

While there is no required training to be a Home Provider, the applicant has to know CPR and the home must pass both a state sanctioned water test and home inspection.

“You have to pass the state of Vermont home inspection, but CSAC helps you prepare for that,” Porter said. “They send someone over and do a pre-check and point out things that might get flagged.”

Despite the relatively quick process of inspections, it may take many months to get matched with a client. It may also take several tries to find an individual who meshes well with you, your family, your pets or your living situation.

“It is very normal to not always click with a client and that's OK,” said Porter. Porter herself had a client who

wasn't a comfortable fit, but she tried again and found success. Regardless if you are married, single or in a committed relationship, the qualities of an effective home provider remain the same: compassion, empathy, patience, commitment, problem solving skills and communication are essential to create a supportive home environment.

CSAC emphasizes that through the process of helping one person at a time, you are helping make an entire community stronger. By being a Home Provider, you are “allowing an individual to continue being a part of a community where they have been their whole life,” said Lee.

And it's equally rewarding for home providers. “People don't realize how flexible and rewarding this job is,” said Porter, adding she's grateful she's grown into this role over the past decade.

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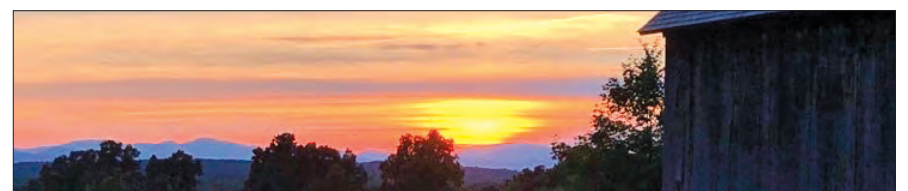
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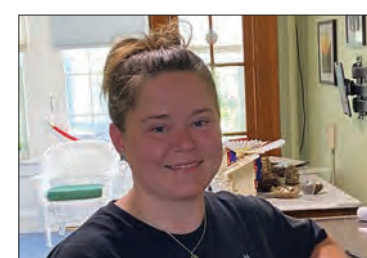
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Tips

(Continued from Page 6)

practice she’s incorporated into her daily life called “exercise snacks,” which are short bouts of activity like jumping jacks or lunges.

“Your body is always going to move, and it doesn’t matter if you’re moving as in hiking or in the gym, movement is movement,” she said. “If you’ve got five minutes of free time that day or you’ve finished lunch and you don’t want to go sit in the office, doing some body weight squats or push-ups or walking up and down the stairs is a great way to put some movement into your day without putting aside a day to hike or to go to the gym.”

For those that plan to incorporate outdoor activities into their summer plans, Woloohojian offered some tips for how to do so safely.

“If it’s something you’re not sure you can do or you have some limitations, always talk with your doctor to make sure what you want to do is safe,” she suggested.

Copeland added that residents should suit up with necessary gear, like a security vest or a helmet when biking. She noted it’s essential to stay hydrated.

“If you are one who doesn’t drink enough water, try drinking with a straw in your water bottle. Also, try drinking a glass of water during your day with an already established habit,” Copeland said. “If your habit is drinking coffee every morning, before you do this, add a glass of water before your coffee. You can do this throughout your day, add a new behavior that you want to make a habit and pair it with an already established behavior.”

Woloohojian also encouraged people to use sunscreen when exercising outdoors and to stay safe while hiking, potentially bringing along a buddy for the trek. She recommends finding a support system for your exercise endeavors, which can provide social benefits and add a



LAUREN WOLOOHOJIAN

layer of safety.

Copeland underscored the benefits of a team approach to staying active, whether through engaging in an activity like pickleball or signing up for one of Vermont Sun’s triathlons as part of a team.

“Team approach is a fantastic way to help you stay on task and motivated,” she said. “Social support, accountability, shared goals (running a race together), positive peer pressure and exercise helps reduce stress ... (don’t we all carry a lot of that lately).”

Copeland offered a couple other recommendations for staying motivated this summer, including listening to music that you only play while exercising and checking out the books “Mini habits for weight loss” by Stephen Guise and “The 5 Second Rule” by Mel Robbins.

Whatever activities folks decided to engage in this summer, it can all make a difference.

“All movement matters, and all movement counts,” Woloohojian said.



KATHLEEN COPELAND



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Gov. Scott signs into law 2 bills to address high health care costs

By HABIB SABET, VtDigger

MONTPELIER — Gov. Phil Scott this week signed two significant pieces of health care legislation into law, both of which seek to rein in health care costs while bolstering state oversight of hospital practices.

One bill, H.266, signed on Wednesday, limits the amount that Vermont health care providers can charge for outpatient prescription drugs — medications administered by injection or IV that are often used to treat cancers and autoimmune diseases.

Another, S.126, signed Thursday, aims at a more comprehensive, long-term transformation of health care regulation in the state. Among other items, the bill requires state health care officials to develop a “statewide health care delivery plan” and present it to the Legislature by 2028. The legislation also directs the Green Mountain Care Board to implement reference-based pricing, a system that tethers the prices that health care providers charge to the equivalent rates that Medicare allows.

Taken together, the two pieces of legislation represent a major effort by Vermont lawmakers and officials to curb health care costs while bolstering oversight of hospitals.

The passage of the bills comes at a time when many health care entities in the state are struggling to stay afloat while patients and employers are facing skyrocketing insurance premiums.

“We have no choice,” Mike Fisher,

Vermont’s chief health care advocate, said Thursday. “There’s a substantial risk that we’re going to lose key providers in communities around the state if we don’t intervene.”

“The most consequential and immediate effort”

Among the main contributors to ballooning health care costs in Vermont are the extreme markups that hospitals charge for certain drugs, lawmakers and officials have said.

Currently, the average price of outpatient pharmaceuticals in the state are more than five times the amount of the manufacturer’s average sales price, by far the highest average markup in the nation, according to data compiled by the research and consulting firm RAND.

H.266 caps the cost of those drugs at 120% of their manufacturers’ average sale price beginning in January 2026, a move that health officials say will go a long way toward immediately lowering Vermont’s rising insurance premiums and health care expenditures.

Under the new cap, outpatient drug prices at Vermont hospitals would be the lowest



“We have no choice. There’s a substantial risk that we’re going to lose key providers in communities around the state if we don’t intervene.”
— Mike Fisher,
Vermont’s chief
health care advocate

in the nation, according to preliminary estimates. Hospitals in the state designated federally as “critical access hospitals” are exempt from the cap if they are not affiliated with a larger hospital network. That group of six hospitals not covered by the cap includes Copley Hospital in Morrisville, Gifford Medical Center in Randolph and North Country Hospital in Newport.

“It is the most consequential and immediate effort I have heard of to reduce health care costs in the state,” Owen Foster, chair of the Green Mountain Care Board, said Thursday.

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Vermont, the state’s largest health insurance provider, has already said the measure would reduce the insurer’s

projected rate of premium increases for next year by an estimated four percentage points for plans offered on Vermont Health Connect, the state’s Affordable Care Act marketplace, and by three percentage points for public school employees.

But advocates for the state’s hospitals argue that the proposal would take away millions of dollars of revenue, requiring some health care providers to drastically tighten their belts and potentially cut staff and services.

“As we do this work, we’ll first ensure we look to administrative and other savings to limit and avoid, to the fullest extent possible, impacts on direct patient care and services,” Devon Green, a lobbyist for the Vermont Association of Hospitals and Health Care Systems, said in a written statement. “We know this will be challenging, but if we work with our state partners, the GMCB and together as hospitals, we are confident we can make meaningful progress.”

“A significant amount of work to do”
Lawmakers and officials are looking to rein in hospital prices in the longer term with S.126, which requires the Green Mountain Care Board to establish a reference-based pricing system for the state’s hospitals by 2027.

Under the proposed model, the Green Mountain Care Board will limit the amount that hospitals charge private insurance companies for patient procedures by pegging those prices to the equivalent rates that Medicare sets for hospitals.

State officials have long trumpeted reference-based pricing as a means of clamping down on rising health care costs.

A 2024 report produced by the care board found that implementing the cost (See Gov. Scott, Page 10)



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WHEN PUTTING TOMATOES and other starter plants in the garden, allow enough space between plants to avoid overcrowding, which may lead to competition for available water, nutrients and light and increase susceptibility to diseases and other problems.

photo / Deborah J. Benoit

Tips for a healthy garden

By Deborah J. Benoit
Extension Master Gardener
University of Vermont

Every gardener wants a healthy, productive garden whether they’re growing vegetables, berries or flowers. While some problems are outside our control, there are a number of things you can do to help keep your garden healthy all summer long.

Start with healthy soil. How do you do that? Have a soil test done. Taking a sample is easy, and the test is inexpensive.

While testing soil before planting is ideal, it can be done at any time. The results can tell you about your soil pH, available

phosphorus (P), potassium (K), calcium (Ca), magnesium (Mg), micronutrients and more. It will recommend nutrients needed to benefit the plants you’re growing so you don’t waste time and money applying unneeded fertilizer.

A soil test will also recommend amendments that can be added to your soil before or after the growing season. For more information, see <https://go.uvm.edu/soiltest>.

The second thing to consider is light. Most edible crops require full sun for at least 6 to 8 hours daily. Low light can (See Healthy garden, Page 11)

Gov. Scott

(Continued from Page 9)
saving system just for state and school employee insurance plans could save the state tens of millions of dollars annually. Doug Hoffer, the state auditor, similarly touted reference-based pricing as a cost-saving measure for the state’s health care system in a 2021 report.

In practice, the measure represents a seismic shift in the way that hospitals price patient care, and it remains unclear exactly how the pricing system would work.

“There’s a significant amount of work to do to come up with a payment methodology for reference-based pricing,” Foster said. “All of these things are going to take a fair amount of time and effort to get it right, and so that’s what we’re initiating.”

S.126 also tasks state officials with transitioning the state’s health care system to a “global budget” payment model by 2030, meaning participating hospitals would receive fixed amounts of money from participating insurers to operate within a given year rather than receiving separate payments for

individual procedures.

Vermont already took steps in the direction of establishing a global budget model when, earlier this year, it signed onto a pilot program run by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services called the AHEAD model. The pilot program, if it moves forward, would allow the state to incorporate federally funded insurers into the payment system.

Additionally, the bill would give state regulators more general oversight of health care providers, allowing the Green Mountain Care Board to collect more data and financial information from hospitals for the sake of standardizing pricing and budgets.

Last week, Scott also signed into law H.482, legislation that gives the Green Mountain Care Board emergency authority to reduce hospital prices in the case of risks of insolvency to insurers.

“It just provides a layer of protection for the entire system,” Foster said. “I see that as a critical step in the situation that we’re in, with financial concerns at our primary insurer.”

“There’s a significant amount of work to do to come up with a payment methodology for reference-based pricing. All of these things are going to take a fair amount of time and effort to get it right, and so that’s what we’re initiating.”
— Owen Foster, chair of the Green Mountain Care Board

ADDISON COUNTY INDEPENDENT 2025 Addy Indy Garden Game



CATEGORIES

- | | |
|---------------------|---------------|
| Asparagus | Melon |
| Beet | Onion |
| Broccoli | Parsnip |
| Cabbage | Pepper |
| Cantaloupe | Potato |
| Carrot | Pumpkin |
| Cauliflower | Radish |
| Corn | Rhubarb |
| Cucumber | Rutabaga |
| Edible Leafy Greens | Summer Squash |
| Eggplant | Sunflower |
| Fennel | Tomato |
| Green Bean | Turnip |
| Kohlrabi | Winter Squash |
| Leek | Zucchini |



Celebrate the joy of growing your own food

Enter the Addy Indy Garden Game – where local green thumbs showcase their giant produce

Gardening isn’t just fun, it’s a great way to stay active, de-stress, and nourish your body from the ground up

We welcome entries from any of the listed categories. Bring your entry into our office between 9am and 4pm, Monday-Friday. We’ll measure it and snap a photo. Each week, we’ll publish new entries and update our frontrunners. At the end of the season, each category winner* will be eligible to receive a gift certificate from our Garden Game sponsor, Middlebury Agway.

Learn more at addisonindependent.com/contests



Stay safe as summer heats up

WATERBURY — We experienced unseasonably hot temperatures early last week, with high temperatures in the upper 80s to mid 90s. High heat can increase the risk for dehydration, muscle cramps, headache, nausea, fainting, or even heat stroke, especially before our bodies are used to the change.

In states with relatively cool climates like Vermont, older adults, people with disabilities and people managing chronic health conditions are often at the highest risk for severe heat illnesses, said Jared Ulmer, Climate and Health Program Manager with the Department of Health.

“It’s a good idea to check in on loved ones and neighbors, especially if they don’t have air conditioning at home, live alone or need help with daily care,” Ulmer said.

TIPS FOR STAYING SAFE AND HEALTHY IN HOT WEATHER:

- “Look Before You Lock!” **Never** leave children, people with disabilities, older adults, or pets in a closed vehicle.
- Drink plenty of water, or non-alcoholic and decaffeinated fluids.
- Seek relief in air-conditioned spaces or other cool and shaded places — Find an interactive cooling sites map at: [HealthVermont.gov/hot-weather](https://www.healthvermont.gov/hot-weather).
- Close window shades during the day. Keep windows closed when it is hotter outside than inside. Avoid using

appliances and lights that generate heat.

- It can take up to 14 days for your body to get used to being active in the heat, so take extra precautions earlier in the summer. Ease into any activities and limit them during the hottest part of the day.

Most heat illness symptoms can be treated by drinking fluids and resting in a cooler place. If symptoms continue or get worse, or someone you are with seems confused or loses consciousness, dial 9-1-1 and get immediate medical help.

Other people at high risk of heat-related illness include those who work or exercise outdoors, people who are unhoused, pregnant people, young children, and people using drugs or alcohol. Consecutive hot days with warm overnight temperatures are particularly dangerous for people without air conditioning, especially if they live alone.

Resources for Vermonters include new Heat Safety Guidance for Caregivers to help reduce the impacts of heat on the people they care for, heat safety tips and information in 12 languages, and an interactive map of cooling site locations.

Vermonters are also encouraged to subscribe to VT Alert at [vem.vermont.gov/VTAlert](https://www.vem.vermont.gov/VTAlert) to be notified by phone, text or email when a heat alert is issued.

Healthy garden

(Continued from Page 10)

result in slower growth and lower yield. If your yard receives insufficient sunlight for the plants you want to grow, consider switching to an elevated bed or containers, which can be set up in the best location for what you are growing.

When purchasing starter plants, it’s easy to underestimate how much space they will eventually need. Plant according to their mature size to allow sufficient room for growth.

Overcrowding in the garden makes plants compete for available water, nutrients, room to grow and light. One plant may block the sun from others. Overcrowding may make plants more susceptible to diseases and other problems and make it difficult to spot them early on.

Be sure to take into account your plants’ need for water. What nature provides may be sufficient for an in-ground garden, but when growing in raised beds or containers, or during dry periods, supplemental watering can make the difference between a healthy garden and a lack of flowers or poor harvest.

When watering, a good, deep soaking is more beneficial to plants than frequent, shallow watering. As an alternative to manual watering, drip irrigation can help conserve water through less evaporation, get water to the roots where it’s needed and help keep the soil’s moisture level more consistent.

Applying a layer of mulch on the surface



WHEN WATERING CROPS such as blueberries, a good, deep soaking is more beneficial to plants than frequent, shallow watering.

photo / Deborah J. Benoit

can help retain moisture in the soil. In addition, mulch can help keep soil and roots cooler during excessive summer heat.

Mulch will also help discourage the growth of weeds and can make those that do appear easier to pull. Weed regularly, before they get large enough to compete with what you’re growing. Never let weeds go to seed.

For those times that you need help identifying or dealing with a problem or just have a question about home gardening, consult the volunteers at the University of Vermont Extension Master Gardener Helpline. Call (802) 656-5421 (Thursdays, 9 a.m. to 12 p.m.) or submit questions online anytime from April to October at <https://go.uvm.edu/gardeninghelp>.



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