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"Lilley's at the rock" PHOTO BY JULIE KEITH



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ON THE WATER ACROSS THE STATE



IMAGES PROVIDED BY VERMONT CANOE AND KAYAK

By Peter Cobb

Have you considered canoeing or kayaking but rejected the urge because you don't own a kayak? Maybe you've just never done it, or you aren't sure if you're able? Think again.

There are dozens of places to rent and try, including many of Vermont's state parks.

Kayaking is fairly simple — an on-water activity you can learn quickly.

"Kayaking is a great way to get outside and enjoy what nature has to offer, to slow down, relax and get some exercise. It's a great way to enjoy quality time with friends, family or much needed self time," said Bronwyn Decker, owner of Vermont Canoe and Kayak, based in Jeffersonville. VCK rents kayaks, canoes and paddle boards and holds guided tours on the Lamoille River. (vtcanoeandkayak.com)

"The section of the Lamoille River that we put paddlers out on is Class One, flat water, so good for all abilities," Decker said. "We put first-time paddlers out frequently."

Emma Brownlee, marketing director for Umiak Outdoor Outfitters, with stores in Richmond and Stowe, agrees Vermont is a great place to paddle. (www.umiak.com)

"Vermont is serene. We have abundant water resources with over 800 lakes and 7,000 miles of river. There are paddling opportunities throughout the entire state, which provides new scenery every time. Paddling is not only a great way to explore the stunning landscape but it also offers you a unique chance to see wildlife while enjoying a fun and healthy outdoor activity," she said.

Blue Ridge Outfitters, located near Chittenden Dam, one of Vermont's

premier flat-water kayaking lakes, also rents kayaks, canoes and paddle boards. (paddlevt.com)

Blue Ridge owner Kim Newton agrees kayaking is the near perfect summer activity. "Kayaking in Vermont is so relaxing and calming. It's a great way to get together with friends. My suggestion to first time paddlers is don't hesitate, try it, and you will fall in love," she said.

Blue Ridge adds an unexpected bonus. Every customer gets a free ice cream cone at Scooby Scoops Ice Cream in Chittenden.

According to Brownlee, lessons make sense for some but are not for everyone.

"We like to say, two-hours of instruction is worth two years of trial and error. However, if an instructional lesson doesn't seem like the right option for someone, I suggest new paddlers start with a rental at Waterbury Reservoir.



PETER COBB PHOTOS

Wildlife at Chittenden Dam

Our staff can help with the basics, and you'll get to try out paddling on a calm lake," she said.

Lessons include instructions on: how to carry your kayak; how to launch; how to get in and out of your boat (which can be a challenging, especially getting out); basic paddling strokes; and how to maneuver your craft.

"For beginner kayakers, I would suggest any calm bodies of water," Newton said.

Same advice from Decker. "I recommend small, flat water bodies for beginners. Avoid windy days because the wind can be frustrating for beginners and cause waves that could make them nervous," Decker said.

One challenge can be lifting the boat onto your vehicle.

"One of the biggest deterrents for those with physical limitations is the transport of boats on land. Getting a boat on and off a vehicle and carrying it to the water can be a struggle with heavier water crafts. Our rental outposts make that a much easier task with the help of our staff," Brownlee said. "All boats are located at the water's edge and rental attendants can help you in and out of the boat. For a long-term solution, I suggest talking to our retail staff about ultra-lightweight



boat options as well as your specific limitations so we can best outfit your watercraft to make paddling as easy as possible."

Ready to go but not sure if a canoe or kayak is the better choice?

"Kayak versus canoe comes down to sitting position, paddling technique, physical circumstances and cargo. Those with lots of items to bring out or a dog, take a canoe. Those who take a canoe also prefer a more upright sitting position versus sitting flat at a slight recline. Canoes are easier to get in and out of if that is an issue for some people. Kayaks sit closer to the water, so feel more stable than a canoe. Solo kayaks are easier to steer and navigate, being a smaller vessel. Tandem kayaks and canoes take teamwork to steer and turn versus a solo kayak, which is all done by the individual paddler, which sometimes alleviates potential issues," Decker said.

The bottom line for kayaking and canoeing is go for it, you'll be glad you did.

"My advice to first-time kayakers is to go slow, wear your life jacket, and go on calm waters. It will be a great experience," Newton said.

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PHOTOS BY DANIELLE MONROE

WONDERFEET

grows in its new location

By Janelle Faignant

Danielle Monroe, executive director of Wonderfeet Kids' Museum, is standing in the main play area of the museum's new space when a small girl rushes up with a mannequin head and offers it to her. "Thank you, Margo," Monroe says. She turns to me with a full laugh and says, "Did you think that in this interview someone was going to show you a disembodied head? Well, that's my every day!"

It had been 10 days since Wonderfeet opened its doors at its new location at 66 Merchants Row, and about 1,000 people had already passed through them.

The new museum is not only more than double the size of the old space, it's an actual scaled-down model of Rutland itself. Every corner holds a recognizable city landmark, like the Vermont State Fair Building, Main Street Gazebo, and the sprawling farm you can see from Route 4 between Castleton and Rutland — but each with a unique Wonderfeet

twist, like the band uniforms hanging in the gazebo.

"Our old space was so small and cozy and, for most of those kids, they felt very at home," Monroe said. "(But) in our new building, they'll recognize things from the old location."

"The locomotive came with us from the old building — that was sort of our signature exhibit," she said. "We thought, we have to add to it, so we've got our caboose now and our little Rutland train terminal. We added a ticket window,



and if you look down from our train station, you actually see downtown Rutland.”

And you can. It’s painted on the wall in striking glossy detail by designer Yoshi Akiyama, a retired Disney imagineer, who has worked with Wonderfeet since its beginning over a decade ago.

It’s a busy and fun place, with endless programs running year-round but during the summer the museum will be teeming with kids for the seven weeks of pre-school day camps that run from 9 a.m. to noon, Monday through Friday.

All the kids will enter full-time, pre-K or kindergarten in the fall, and Monroe says the camps offer a nice transition with their small group size of about a dozen.

Another little girl keeps coming up to Monroe to show her things she’s found in the play space, and Monroe says, “This might be hard to believe, but when Lydia first started coming to the museum, she was so shy she would hide behind her mom’s leg. She is like our best advertisement.”

Mount Holly mom Sonya Corriveau has been bringing Lydia, 5, and her sister Charlotte, 3, to Wonderfeet for years and said, “Between the first week of camp and the second week, (Lydia was a) totally different kid. The first week was so hard with dropping her off and getting her to stay, and the second week, boom, she did amazing.”

“And I’m not even paying her to say that,” Monroe joked.

Although the summer camps already are sold out — “We released the schedule in February and by mid-March we were completely sold out with a wait list,” Monroe said — its doors are still open with lots to do inside and even more planned for the future.

There’s a model Casella recycling truck that kids can drive — or pretend to — with all the great sound effects, a back-up camera and a magnetic map with moveable mini trucks that slide around to determine your next stop on the route.

There’s a farmers market with plush vegetables for kids to play with, a campground area, and an orchard where you can pick play apples off trees. More species of trees are planned to go up, as well as a big treehouse to climb. Next to it is a play construction zone that will soon become a mountain playground, which is being designed with Killington Resort.

“It’s going to have ramps that you can slide down and a climbing wall, tunnels (to) crawl through, some very cool gross motor activities that will tie into when we have physical therapists that come in, things like balance beams and stationary bikes for kids who are working on developing motor skills, to be able to do that through play in this cool space that

they already love coming to,” Monroe said.

The familiar local representation like the Casella truck and farmers market also represent places that the kids might know — “(Places where) their parents work or real places that maybe they could imagine themselves working one day,” Monroe said.

“That’s great for them to be able to grow up imagining, because one of the big challenges facing Vermont is that so many of our young people grow up thinking they have to go someplace else to pursue their dreams,” she said. “And I think they don’t. If they grow up feeling proud and being able to picture themselves being successful here, then maybe we can help turn the tide.”

Everything in the museum was designed locally and built from scratch for Rutland — all made in Vermont. “And this is because of our community,” Monroe said. “It’s one of the things that makes Wonderfeet so great, but that (also) makes Rutland so great, there’s enough care for our own neighbors that we can make something like this happen.”

“What we hear from parents is, (they) feel so lucky that in a tiny town like Rutland we have this place and I am always the first one to say, ‘You have this place because your neighbors built it for you,’” Monroe said. “That’s really the beautiful part about it. We’re not a chain, we’re not here because we bought a franchise. We are a local nonprofit, all of the money we raise is from our neighbors.”

Monroe also has been part of Wonderfeet since the beginning but in the early days, “I was just a mom who came in with my kids,” she said. The experience of being a parent in Rutland and listening to other parents to try to figure out how to meet the needs of the community made her a perfect fit for the job, and her vivacious personality makes everyone who comes through the door feel welcome.

First- and second-graders are the museum’s target audience, but Monroe says she’s really encouraged to see older kids starting to connect to it as well. “We have a great base of junior high school volunteers who’ve become staples of our summer camp program, and their parents will tell us what a meaningful experience that is for them — ‘They talk to us at the dinner table! They tell us what they did during the day! They have a smile on their face!’”

“When you get to come to a place like this and there’s no chores that need to be done, you’re not answering emails, even if you only spend an hour here, it’s spent connecting and that’s what parents need, to make those impactful interactions attainable,” Monroe said.

All of this, not to mention the work that the museum does for new families who have just had babies, including local lactation



consultants, breastfeeding support, addressing issues such as postpartum depression, and building community for new parents. The standing Monday playgroup, It Takes a Village, also is adding a Spanish-language component so Spanish-speaking parents can find each other.

There's also a MINT logo on a glass door at the back of the room marking the arts and craft room, which was designed with The MINT Makerspace. Once a month, the crew from the MINT will offer a different workshop, such as textile, pottery or woodworking.

"Our goal is to expose kids to all different types of projects," Monroe said.

Come fall, you'll find a Halloween display and costume shop where kids can get dressed up and make their own little Halloween parade through town, and a poster on a wall of what looks like the Tin Man from "The Wizard of Oz" marks another preview of a coming attraction.

"This very cool robot that we're designing with Green Mountain Power will go in here," Monroe says. "A floor-to-ceiling robot so kids can learn about power and circuits."

The museum has come a long way from its early days of just doing pop-ups on Center Street, with enough entertainment behind its doors to fill a day. "Our hope now is that we really become a destination for the whole state," Monroe said.

"When I saw the new museum for the first time, I almost cried," Corriveau affirmed. "It's just amazing (the) community effort. I almost cried because Wonderfeet is really important, it's done so much for my kids."

For more information, go to wonderfeetkidsmuseum.org.

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Circus Smirkus

FOR THE SUMMERTIME WIN

By Peter Cobb

Circus Smirkus, Vermont's home-grown circus, opens its 36th season July 1 in Greensboro and includes stops in Waterbury (July 4-6); Milton, (July 11-12); Rutland, (July 15-16); and Hanover, New Hampshire (July 18-19); and closes back in Greensboro on Aug. 18-19.

There also will be several shows throughout New England.

This year's tour continues the tradition of Smirkus' annual theme-based shows with the 2023 Big Top Tour: "A Midsummer Night's Circus" an acrobatic adaptation of Shakespeare's play "A

Midsummer Night's Dream." The show features an array of circus arts, including: aerials, acrobatics, juggling, clowning, a dazzling display of brilliant costumes and more.

"Circus Smirkus brings magic and mayhem, love and chaos to the big top. A cast of 30 talented youth get entangled in the dream-like woods where sprites contort in the trees and fairies fly through the air," said Genevieve Martineau, Smirkus' marketing director.

This season is the first year for Top Show Director Stephanie Abrams. An award-winning mime and director in the theater and circus arts, Abrams

has written and directed more than 25 original productions and served as artistic director for many others.

"I am honored to be working with Circus Smirkus and excited to create an inclusive and theatrical experience that is contemporary, cohesive, and showcases all of the troupers' talents. As a director, I always strive to create the best show possible and ensure that the cast, artistic team, technical team, and audiences all have an incredible and memorable experience," she said.

Circus Smirkus is the only traveling, tented youth circus in the United States. The Circus Smirkus caravan includes



PROVIDED PHOTOS

23-support vehicles and 80 individuals, including performers, coaches, cooks, tech and tent crew, and a live circus band playing an original score written specifically for the show.

The circus company performs across New England to approximately 40,000 patrons each summer.

“We are thrilled to be celebrating our 36th anniversary,” said Joshua Shack, interim co-executive director. “A lot has changed over 36 years. When we started the show, there were 15 local kids, performing alongside a handful of professional circus artists. Now the troupe is made up of 30 talented youth from around the U.S., and the world. We got a new big top from Italy after the first 10 years. We have more trucks and equipment on tour, and more staff, and the skill level of the performers has grown

over the years. But the spirit has remained. We still build the show at our headquarters in Greensboro, The Circus Barn. It’s still a magical life-changing experience for the troupers, staff and audiences.”

The pandemic years were tough on all arts, including Circus Smirkus. On World Circus Day in April 2020, Smirkus performed its first live-streamed show via Zoom. Last year, the first year back on the road after a two-year hiatus, it had a reduced tour schedule.

“We’re excited to have the fully expanded tour schedule this year, including a few new locations, including Rutland,” Shack said. “Smirkus has endured because of our community. This includes passionate and dedicated staff, participants and their families, enthusiastic audiences,

alumni, volunteers and donors. Running a circus is hard, and the last few years have made it harder. But Smirkus leads with its values; we put out the best show we can, and create the best camp experiences we can, and our fans, friends and family show up, in so many ways, to keep the show on the road, to keep the lights on, and to keep the spark of magic kindled.”

Located in Greensboro, Circus Smirkus is a nonprofit arts and education organization whose mission is to promote the skills, culture and traditions of the traveling circus. Since 1987, it has run three principal programs: the Big Top Tour, Smirkus Camp and Smirkus School Residency.

For more information, visit smirkus.org.





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BRING ROADMAPS

The Gormly family takes on the 251 Club



PHOTOS PROVIDED BY ALLISON GORMLY

Will, Winnie and Allison Gormly pose in front of the Brownsville Butcher's sign in Brownsville, Vermont. The Brownsville Butcher has been one of the family's favorite places to stop, especially to try some of the unique creamee flavors!



Entering Windsor town sign.

By Sophia Buckley-Clement

For Rutlanders Allison and Will Gormly, travelling around Vermont is like a scavenger hunt. They aren't looking for anything specific — a general store here, a town sign there. But according to the two, it's the unexpected finds that are some of the most fun; like the giant middle finger in Westford, or the unique creemee flavors at the Brownsville Butcher.

The Gormlys, along with their now-14-month-old daughter Winnie, have visited 109 Vermont cities, towns and villages over the past year as part of their 251 Club journey.

Established in 1954, the 251 Club is an organization for those whose objective is to visit all 251 Vermont cities and towns — now technically 252 with the addition of Essex Junction in 2022.

“We figured this (251 challenge) would be good because we could travel around and see some interesting things. We talked about it for a few years and decided this would be a good opportunity because we could travel, but still be pretty close to home if anything happened. Plus, with an infant, that's a built-in excuse because you have to stop every 30 minutes anyway to feed her or change her diaper,” Will said with a chuckle.

Will, a Chittenden native, is the owner and operator of Mountain Cider Company in North Chittenden. Allison, originally from Pennsylvania, moved to the state after attending the University of Vermont and is now a fifth-grade teacher at Killington Elementary School.

Aside from most people aiming to get a photo of each town hall, the rituals for every 251 Club member are different, according to the pair.

For the Gormly family, an average trip includes a stop at a local general store, a point of interest, a restaurant and the town sign for a picture.

“It's kind of a choose-your-own-adventure. I think when 251 originally started, you had to go mail yourself a postcard from the post office, which weren't always open, making it a lot harder,” Will said. “Sometimes there's not much in a town and so it's, ‘Hey, let's change Winnie's diaper here.’ But we try to do something meaningful.”

Among their adventures have been a visit to the “Beetlejuice” house in East Corinth, a night's stay in a yurt in Troy, a visit to friends in Georgia and a splash in the waters of Jelly Mill Falls in Dummerston.

Winnie was even accidentally smuggled into Canada while passing through Richford, where a short 100-foot section of paved road and an obelisk mark the border.

But above all, Allison and Will's favorite experiences have been the “big Winnie moments,” according to Allison.

“Her first concert (at Shelburne Museum) and being in Jay were really memorable. Jay was her first night away from home and she did good,” Allison said. “I'd love to put together a picture book of all the places we've gone to. Especially because it's like, ‘Winnie, you have been to all these places. I don't know if you even remember, but here you are.’”

Will added that maybe this experience will inspire Winnie to take it on again when she's older.

Fellow 251 Club members and friends Matt and Candice



Bigfoot cutouts at Sudbury Shoppe in Sudbury, Vermont.



Left, Will holds Winnie on the steps of The Vermont Country Store in Rockingham. Right, Allison holds Winnie on the steps of Buxton's Store in Orwell. As a rule of thumb, the Gormlys try to visit a general store, a restaurant, the town sign and a point of interest in each town they visit.

Britt began their journey around the same time as the Gormlys and the couples have even checked off a few towns together.

"It's awesome that Winnie will be a 251er by the time she can talk. I'll be completely honest, because they're a little bit ahead of us, I absolutely check Allison's Facebook page before we plan anything to see if there is something we're missing," Matt said.

Maria Garland, a former coworker of Allison's, said it's been incredible to watch the family's adventures, adding that the Gormly family seem to have an incredible knack for finding the best spots, foods and sights in the state.

"Just seeing Winnie grow and enjoy it has been amazing. I'm really inspired. I'm sure I'm going to convince my husband to do (the 251 Club) sometime," Maria said. "I don't know if we could do it with as much panache as Alli and Will are doing it, because they just seem to find all these wonderful spots."

Though the Gormlys have taken a hiatus from travelling this past spring and winter, they said they plan to do so again going forward. Will said he expects to complete all 252 within the next three to five years.

Over the course of the 109 towns, cities and villages, Allison and Will said there have been plenty of lessons learned about Vermont – and themselves.

Recounting their very first trip, Will said it was pretty disastrous.

As they drove aimlessly to Poultney one May afternoon for a planned lunch, the three got lost and ended up arriving after everything had closed, according to Will.

"We were hungry and grumpy, and we brought the dog with us," Will said. "Winnie was 3 months old, if that. We were new parents. It was a nightmare. And so, we're like, 'Oh, I don't know if this is gonna work.' Just because it was so haphazard. And there were so many things we didn't think about. It was just thrown together."

According to Allison, what they learned from that first trip was that it wasn't always going to be a perfect plan or a perfect execution. Sometimes, she said, you just have to do it and be surprised about what you experience along the way.

"It was just framing our mindset. We are traveling with fairly newborn. We can't plan for everything. And that ends up being the fun stuff," Allison said.

And for anyone else interested in taking on the challenge, Will and Allison said to not try to do too much in one trip, don't plan too heavily and give yourself a chance to be a "tourist in your own state."

"And bring roadmaps," Will said with a chuckle.

For more information, go to vt251.com

Winnie and Will stand next to the obelisk just north of Richford.





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THE CHAFFEE creates a space for kids this summer

By Janelle Faignant

Think outside the box and create something amazing” could be her motto, and Karen Wurster is bringing that philosophy and her contagious enthusiasm for the arts to the many classes she’s teaching at the Chaffee Art Center in Rutland this summer.

“That’s one I’m really excited about,” she says after explaining each one. You can hear the excitement in her voice.

With everything from a Mexican cooking camp to building a robot and drawing in the park, there’s a variety of camps at the Chaffee this summer and a lot of opportunity for kids to discover what they love.

Many are geared for ages 6 to 12, in addition to adult classes that include a free ukulele group on Thursdays, figure drawing with a live model, a monthly book group, a watercolor class and more.

“It’s all about the arts,” said Executive Director Sherri Birkheimer Rooker. “So we (have) theater, music, cooking, gardening, so somebody could do something different and see what they really enjoy.”

“We always have a clay camp,” she said, adding that each year she talks with instructors to come up with new ideas and bring back camps that have been popular.

“Karen’s doing a lot of them (this year),” she said. “She has a long history with the Chaffee and loves (it).”

More than 100 kids sign up every summer and parents have the option to sign them up for a morning camp and an afternoon camp to make it a full day for the kids.

“Some people are working all day and they want their kids to be able to experience the whole week but they can’t keep coming and getting them,” Birkheimer Rooker said.

In between and during camps, the gallery also will have other events like a pet expo, a garden party with the Audubon Society, as well as exhibits inside the mansion, including art by locally tied and

internationally known artists Peter Wallis and Fran Bull.

“They’re so talented and I think the community will really like them,” Birkheimer Rooker said.

In the camps, Wurster says it’s important for parents to know that kids will be in a safe place where they can let their guards down and have fun getting creative. She gave a preview of some of them.

The Art of Science runs from June 26-30 for ages 6-12 and offers paper mâché, wire wrapping art, and paper making. “We’re going to see how different materials react to other materials, (with things like) alcohol ink and shaving cream,” Wurster said. “It’s using different elements and seeing what we can create.”

In Robots! Robots! Robots! (Aug. 7-11) kids ages 6-12 will build a robot from recycled materials, so Wurster saved things like water jugs, pine cones and paper towel rolls to create a female robot watering the gardens.

“I love sculpting,” she said. “I do a lot of painting and sculpting with all different mediums,” including a series of bronze cats she made.

All About the Arts is a weekly class, free for ages 3 to 5. Activities range from art to music to literature, and one free book per student will be given weekly while supplies last, thanks to a partnership with Rutland Free Library.

There’s a mural camp where kids can go big and see their art on a local wall, and a kids Ukulele & Singing class the first week of July with instructor Helen Gassenheimer from Green Mountain Music.

Musical Theater (July 31-Aug. 4) is a full-day camp for ages 6-12, where kids can explore the world of theater through a musical lens to create characters and hone performance skills. This camp ends with a performance for friends and family.

In Drawing Our World (Aug. 14-18), kids can create books, butterflies, sketch



PHOTOS BY KAREN WURSTER



PHOTO BY SHERRI BIRKHEIMER ROOKER

outdoors, go on picnics and really, “whatever the kids want to do,” Wurster said. “We’ll be going over to the gazebo where Art in the Park is and we’ll have our easels to do some drawing.”

In Rutland Through Your Eyes, kids will create art that matches the theme of Rutland at the newly relocated Wonderfeet Kids’ Museum downtown, and their work will be displayed there. At Art in the Garden (Aug. 21-25), campers ages 6-12 will have fun outdoors painting what they see in the gardens and making garden art from found objects. There are more camps with various local instructors, with full information available on the Chaffee’s website at www.chaffeeartcenter.org.

Wurster is teaching the bulk of them, and has lived in the area for decades. She has always been involved in the arts in some way, more recently teaching art enrichment in public schools, and at the Chaffee. She said she believes in the impact the arts can have, especially at a young age, saying, “I think that’s where it starts. They have to have a connection with themselves, they have to look in the mirror and feel good in who they are, and where they excel, and put it out there, understanding while we’re all different, we all have a commonality and love in our hearts.”

“I see some of my most broken students feel good about themselves because art saved their lives,” she added. “That’s how important art is.”

Not to mention, “We’ve got supplies like never before, so anything is possible.”

For more information, go to www.chaffeeartcenter.org.

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PETER COBB PHOTOS

Family friendly HIKING AROUND VERMONT

By Peter Cobb

There are dozens of family friendly hiking trails around Vermont. Some of the best are in the town forests: Pine Hill in Rutland; The Millstone Trails in Barre Town Forest; and the trails in Hubbard Park in Montpelier.

Here is a summary of some of our favorite treks:

Pine Hill Park, Rutland

Pine Hill Park in Rutland offers 17 miles of trails spread over 325 acres of terrain offering some of the very best mountain biking, trail running, hiking, walking, and snowshoeing in the Rutland region.

Millstone Trails, Websterville

The Millstone Trails are a network of

multi-use trails traversing the historic quarry lands of Millstone Hill. The trails wind through northern hardwood and coniferous forests and along exposed granite spines.

The 200-acre Hubbard Park includes more than 7 miles of hiking, two picnic shelters, numerous picnic areas, a soccer and ballfield, a small pond, a sledding hill (for winter, obviously), and a 54-foot stone observation tower.

In addition to the town forests, numerous family friendly trails are accessible on the Long Trail and Appalachian Trail, as well as at the various state parks.

Thundering Brook Falls Trail, Killington

The Thundering Brook Falls Trail to Thundering Falls is a very easy, all-

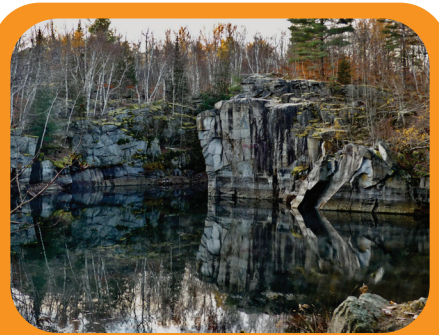
access, quarter-mile trail to the sixth-tallest waterfall in Vermont. Most of the trail is boardwalk, easy for small children and accessible for people who use wheelchairs. The falls is part of Kent Brook, which flows out of Kent Pond just north of where the Appalachian and Long Trail split. The stream tumbles 140 feet through a steep and narrow cascade. The beginning section of the trail winds through wetlands, so bug repellent is advised.

Peacham Bog, Groton State Forest

Peacham Bog is one of the largest bogs in Vermont, covering 748 acres that includes a 125-acre peat bog and one of two raised/doomed bogs in the state. (A doomed bog rises in height over time as a result of peat formation.) Located in Groton State Forest, the trail is a great hike for older children as the hiking time, at slightly more than three hours, is too long for most small children. Due to the fragile nature of the bog environment, it is very important to stay on the trail. Remember, this is a bog, so bug repellent is important, especially in the spring and early summer.

Spruce Mountain, Plainfield

Spruce Mountain (not to be confused with Spruce Peak in Stowe) is a 4.3-mile, out-and-back trail in Plainfield. Generally



View of old quarry from Millstone Trail



North Branch Cascades

considered a moderately challenging hike, it is a good day hike for older children and teenagers. Hiking time is around two-and-a-half hours. The high point on the trail is the fire tower at the top of the mountain. For those with no fear of climbing the tower, the view at the top, a panoramic view of north central Vermont and western New Hampshire, is well worth the trek up to the observation deck. If you are afraid of heights, you should stay on the ground.

North Branch Cascades, Worcester

The North Branch Cascades, just north of Montpelier, is a family friendly walk in the woods for kids of all ages. The 1-mile-long trail through older forest, mossy riverbed, and cascading pools, has seven waterfalls and numerous deep holes for swimming. Much of the trail is wheelchair accessible, although there are multiple stone stairways that wind down the banks to the river. The park is a great place for

bird watching, nature study, hiking, fishing, swimming and picnicking. There are three access points along Route 12, one at the south end, one in the middle, and one at the far northern end of the trail.

— Compiled by Peter Cobb

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Flowers FOR ALL SEASONS



By Peter Cobb

If anyone bleeds flower nectar, it's Emily von Trapp. She has worked in the flower business most of her life. She started working on her parents' 10-acre Waitsfield farm when she was 12, worked there through middle school, high school and college, and now, 32 years later, she operates von Trapp Flowers, which sells flowers wholesale to markets around Vermont.

When von Trapp was in middle school, the flower farm, run by her parents, Tobias and Sally, was a seasonal operation, basically running spring through fall. Emily's parents operated the von Trapp Greenhouse, a retail garden nursery, for 42 years. Their last season was spring 2021.

Now it is a 12-months-a-year business – thanks to tulips.

"I am the third generation to cultivate the land where I sustainably grow over a hundred thousand specialty tulips, in addition to many varieties of annual and perennial cut flowers," Emily said. "I grew up surrounded by my parents' gorgeous gardens and blooms. I have been selling sustainably grown, seasonal flowers in the form of my market bouquets to markets in Central Vermont for over 20 years."

Emily von Trapp

PETER COBB PHOTOS

Emily's grandparents, Werner and Erika von Trapp, purchased the land in 1959 to start a dairy farm (Werner is portrayed as the younger son in the "The Sound of Music"). Her parents were given 10 acres for their farm.

Prior to running the farm full-time, Emily was both a farm hand and a teacher. She juggled the two jobs until her flower business shifted to a year-round operation.

"In 2018, I left my teaching position

as the preschool teacher at Waitsfield Elementary School and put all of my energy and focus into year-round flower farming. I focus on crops that can handle our cooler Zone 4 temperatures and lower winter light levels," she said.

Emily was director at the Waitsfield Children's Center from 2006-2011, and then a preschool teacher from 2011-2018.

"Ten years ago, I realized that I needed to find a way to extend my season, in an effort to provide my markets with year-round blooms.

Naturally, I turned to one of my favorite flowers: tulips. That first season I started with only 3,000 tulip bulbs, and I was hooked," Emily said. She ordered 175,000 specialty tulip bulbs for this fall.

Tulips are a perfect flower for Vermont, Emily said, because they don't need much sunlight and can thrive in fairly cold temperatures inside an unheated greenhouse, if need be.

Von Trapp flowers are sold at 15 markets and shops. Tulips are the main crop, January to June; lilies are grown June through December. She also grows perennial cut flowers and several annuals.

What separates her flowers from most flowers sold around the state is they are fresh (most cut flowers come from South America, Europe and Africa) and



Avery Montgomery.



she never uses pesticides, herbicides or fungicides.

In addition to her flower business, von Trapp and Linda D'Arco run "The Tulip Workshop," an online course geared for flower growers like her.

"We're both proud and excited to be bringing our 15 plus years of experience and experimentation to this platform, where anyone in the world can join us virtually for a workshop and learn how we've made winter our most profitable growing season," she said.

According to von Trapp, she and D'Arco have taught hundreds of fellow flower farmers and tulip lovers the art and science behind coaxing beautiful flowers to bloom in the "off-season."

"We met at one of the first tulip forcing workshops at Emily's farm several years ago, and quickly found that we share a number of uncanny similarities — the same birthday, the same past career in education, the same pet names, the list went on and on." (Forcing refers to tricking bulbs to bloom out of season indoors by providing them with favorable conditions for growing.)

"Our friendship grew over our shared love of

tulips, and the growth of this program as a means for sharing that passion with the world," she said. "Now, we teach fellow growers around the world how to extend their growing season, bringing valuable winter income to their businesses, and provide local, pesticide-free healthy flowers to their communities when the only other option for blooms can be chemical laden products shipped from far away."

"It's really a dream come true," she said.

Von Trapp Flowers is not open to the public. However, her parents open the display garden to visitors several times throughout the summer. The list of dates and details is available at www.vontrappflowers.shop.



HENRY HARTT DRIFTS AWAY

By Paul Heller

Nineteenth-century accounts of boating on Vermont rivers are rare. Despite the fact that Henry David Thoreau’s “A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers” was published in 1849, it seems that the notion of navigating a river as a recreational activity in northern New England (and especially Vermont) was not common until after the Civil War.

Henry L. Hartt’s “Down the Winooski,” published in the *Montpelier Argus* in June 1877, may be the first such Vermont narrative. What makes it even more compelling is his sojourn’s heartbreaking culmination at Lake Champlain.

The Winooski River is a storied waterway, named by its indigenous inhabitants and mentioned by Samuel de Champlain in the account of his 1609 visit to the lake that bears his name. Its headwaters originate in the town of Cabot in the foothills of the Green Mountains, and it makes its way through Montpelier following the river basin to Lake Champlain.

Its fertile flood plain attracted settlement throughout the entire valley.

Hartt was a native of New Orleans. Orphaned at an early age, he had spent much of his life in the North, eventually following his sister and brother-in-law to Montpelier, where he hoped to establish himself as a journalist. The *Argus* noted “he was exceedingly fond of fishing and boating and had been accustomed for years to passing much of his time on the water.” He had developed some boating skills on Michigan lakes and on the Mississippi, but those experiences paled in comparison to his days on the Winooski, “drifting with the current



down this beautiful valley.” His friends described the young man’s ambition to be a newspaper reporter, and he had started writing “political and descriptive articles” for *The Argus* and *Patriot*. He may have perceived his narrative of a voyage on the Winooski as the opening salvo of a career as a travel writer.

One can only speculate on the nature of Hartt’s skiff, which he named *Le Rodeur*. The 23-year-old translated this from the French as “The Rambler.” He describes “a boat eleven feet in length by two in width, put together with screws — the better to endure the hard knocks on rapids.” It was painted black with a white stripe and the name painted on the side.

For propelling the craft, Hartt mentions using a pole, occasionally oars, and, approaching Lake Champlain where “the Winooski is about two hundred yards across at the mouth ... I got out my sails, and, with ‘a short leg and a long one,’ managed to run outside and along

the shore towards Burlington.”

He was describing a gaff-rigged sail which employs a spar as well as a mast. It would be challenging to “step the mast” in such a narrow craft.

After four days on the river, he mailed his travelogue to the *Argus*, and it was published on June 27, 1877, under the headline “Down the Winooski.”

Hartt left Montpelier at 10 a.m. on June 11, following the current and navigating his slender craft with just a stout pole. “The first bit of excitement in store for me was a young mink running along the brink and carrying what appeared to be a dead rat.” Half-way to Middlesex, he encountered a dangerous waterfall but using ropes was able to “line” the craft through pools on one side of the river. Floating leisurely downstream, he reached Middlesex about 4:40 p.m. and arranged for a horse and wagon to carry his boat and kit around a mile-long series of steep rapids. He drifted two and a half

miles beyond Middlesex and found a suitable place to camp.

"On either side a tall cliff enclosed a deep small bit of the river," he wrote.

He went on: "Tin pail in hand I visited three farmers before finding any milk for sale. People thereabouts must be taking summer boarders, or it may be that the cows are all fallow. The milkmaid who finally did discover a spare quart also found a leak in my pail, but with true country ingenuity, patched it with pink chewing gum."

With the break of day, Hartt was again following the current and reached Bolton Falls "just as the farmers' horns were blowing for dinner." ("Dinner" here meant the midday meal.) He again prevailed upon a friendly passerby with a horse and wagon to carry him around the falls.

At Duxbury, Hartt did what many have done since: He left the river to climb Camel's Hump.

He wrote: "Following a road decidedly rough and rugged, I had no difficulty until nearly the summit. Here the road ended in numerous log trails, and each of these in a brush heap. In the thick woods I could not discover the mountain top,

and nothing at all to serve as a guide, so I gave up in despair. A delicious draught from a cold mountain stream, and a plentiful picking of strawberries by the roadside, was the recompense for a long afternoon's walk."

Drifting down the river until sundown, he made camp "just below East Bolton." Sleeping poorly, the next morning he found the two miles of river above Essex "a series of rapids, many of them quite dangerous, but once into them I had no alternative. The bed of the stream was full of huge boulders, many of them sunken but an inch or two under the water. More than once I felt that a smash-up was imminent, but always missed the danger by the width of a piece of chalk. Le Rodeur, my boat and only servant, seemed almost to anticipate every stroke of the pole."

At Essex Junction, he portaged around two dams and a four-mile log jam downriver to the town of Winooski, where he again put in and followed the stream until sunset. Two miles below Winooski, the current lost its momentum, and Hartt used oars to propel himself forward until, finally, he raised the sail.

He made camp on Apple-tree Point, "a shady bluff with a slaty beach," his journal concluded: "Anyone who has a week of leisure, and would employ it at small cost, and with much real gratification, cannot, in my humble opinion, find any finer scenery than this beautiful valley of the Winooski."

Hartt's satisfaction was short-lived. His four-day excursion started on June 11 and concluded on the June 14. His family last heard from the young man by letter on June 15 and, with no further word by June 26. His brother-in-law boarded a train to Burlington to find him. He learned that Hartt had been seen last in his camp at Mallet's Point on June 24, but a strong gale had strewn Hartt's boat, valise and stove near Sandbar Bridge, where all were recovered.

No trace of Hartt was ever found. A notice in the Watchman concluded: "Although Mr. Hartt had not resided in town long, he had, by his quiet and unobtrusive manner, and his intelligence and diligence, won many friends, who will hear with the deepest regret of his probable untimely death."

Paul Heller is a writer and historian who lives in Barre.



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MAKING COMICS

into a living at the Center for Cartoon Studies

By Peter Cobb

When I was a kid in the 1960s, during school recess my friends and I often would huddle in the shadow of the school building to read comics. When the teachers found us, they'd tell us to stop reading: Comics were for lowlifes and losers.

Sixty-plus years later, comics are no longer read in shadows. Movies based on comic book characters dominate the box office (former U.S. senator Patrick Leahy, a Batman fan, has appeared in several of them); comicons (conventions) are attended by thousands of people, including A-list celebrities dressed in costumes (cosplay); and comics and graphic novels are written as much for adults as for children.

The Center for Cartoon Studies, based in White River Junction, has been a leader in the move from the shadows to credibility for the past 18 years. Established in 2005, CCS is a nonprofit, degree-granting college. CCS programs include a two-year Master of Fine Arts degree, one- and two-year certificates in cartooning, and workshops that center on the creation and dissemination of comics, graphic novels and other visual narratives.

"CCS's goal is to continue to attract and nurture young cartooning talent while continuing to contribute to the cultural and economic well-being of Vermont," said operations manager Dave Lloyd.

In its early years, CCS offered just certificates, but later was approved by the Vermont Agency of Education to award master's degrees. To get a master's degree, however, undergraduates need to earn a bachelor's degree.



ABE OLSON PHOTOS

"CCS accepts students at vastly different stages of their cartooning journey. Some have already built a readership, while others have more inspiration than experience. We've had students from Alaska, California, Texas, New England, India, Ireland, Italy, Malaysia. We've had certificate students as young as 18 and MFA students as old as 63," Lloyd said.

CCS alumni have published bestselling books, work as editors and designers in the comics industry, teach at institutions nationwide, and have received major industry awards, he said.





Why White River Junction?

“When CCS co-founders Michelle Ollie and James Sturm arrived in Vermont in the early 2000s, they fell in love with White River Junction. They loved the village’s rich history and believed that the influx of talented young cartoonists could serve as a catalyst for White River Junction’s revitalization,” Lloyd said.

Vermont is home to many well-known cartoonists, many of whom have been working in the field for years, including: Rick Veitch, Stephen Bissette, Alison Bechdel, James Sturm (CCS director), Jason Lutes (CCS Faculty Chair) and, before his recent death, famed New Yorker cartoonist Ed Koren.

Tillie Walden, the state’s newly inaugurated Cartoonist Laureate, teaches at CCS.

In addition to its academic programs, CCS publishes books and graphic guides on big topics.

“In 2017, two thirds of Americans couldn’t name all three branches of government. Democracy itself seemed under attack. Working with a team of educators and grassroots organizations, CCS created ‘This Is What Democracy Looks Like: A Graphic Guide to Governance’ to engage students on this critical topic,” Lloyd said.

More than 50,000 physical copies of the book were distributed to schools and communities in Vermont and nationwide. It remains available online at no cost.

“Outreach is built into the DNA of CCS. We feel strongly about being an active and engaged member of the community in order to promote the creative potential of White River Junction, the Upper Valley, and Vermont. In tandem with our general community-building efforts, we continuously recruit existing and potential artists through a variety of channels, from tours and school presentations to promotions of the school’s programs through targeted media,” Lloyd said.

Support for many of the civics-based projects has been provided by the Vermont Humanities Council, the office of the Secretary of State, Physicians For a National Health Program, Harvard University, Dartmouth College, and University of Washington Center for Educational Leadership.

“There is a pressing need to help beleaguered educators take on critical and complicated topics. For example, ‘Let’s Talk About It’ reduces stigma and builds resilience around mental health issues while offering concrete tips for dealing with stress, depression, substance abuse, and suicidal ideation,” Lloyd said.

To learn more, go to www.cartoonstudies.org

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REGULAR FULL CARD INCLUDES DIRTcar Sportsman Modifieds, DIRTcar Sportsman Coupes, USAC DMA Midgets, Late Models, Dirt Stocks, Ridge Runners

MAY
 Saturday 6th BRS official Car Show Bradford Fair Grounds Bradford VT. 10:00-1:00 - Practice all divisions 2:00-4:00
1st Green Flag 5PM on our 56th season Opening night
REGULAR FULL CARD (DP) Adults/Teens/Seniors \$15
 Presented by: *NAPA of Bradford F.M.S. Auto parts LLC*
 Saturday 13th **VP Racing Fuels DIRTcar Sportsman Modifieds Eastern Series Race**
FULL CARD plus GSMS (Midgets OFF)
 Adults \$15 Teens/Seniors \$15
 Presented by: *Forwards Garage & Plumbing & Heating LLC's*
 Saturday 20th **REGULAR FULL CARD**
 Presented by: *Ron's Fix It Shop*
 FRIDAY 26th **USAC DMA Midgets at Albany Saratoga!**
 Saturday 27th **Remembrance of Lost Friends 4/6 ENDURO**
FULL CARD (Midgets & Late Models OFF) plus 360 Sprints
 Adults \$15 Teens/Seniors \$13
 Presented by: *95.3 & 107.1 The Wolf*

JUNE
 Saturday 3rd **Ridge Runner Madness**
REGULAR FULL CARD
 Presented by: *Woodsville Guaranty Savings Bank*
 Saturday 10th **Vermont Food Bank Benefit**
FULL CARD plus GSMS (Midgets OFF)
 Bring in 2 non perishables get \$2 off 1 GA ticket
 Presented by: *Valley Floors*
 Saturday 17th **Kids Bike RACES**
REGULAR FULL CARD
 Presented by: *JTB Towing and Recovery*
 Saturday 24th **4/6 Cylinder ENDURO**
FULL CARD plus 360 Sprints (Late Models OFF)
 Adults \$15 Teens/Seniors \$13
 Presented by: *Wells River Savings Bank*

JULY
 Saturday 1st **4TH OF JULY Fireworks & Mod Madness**
REGULAR FULL CARD Adults/Teens/Seniors \$15
 Presented by: *Pellerin Auto Parts, Auto Body, & Automotive*
 Saturday 8th **MID Season Championships David's House**
FULL CARD (DP) plus GSMS (Midgets OFF)
 Presented by: *Dennis Preston Builder*
 Saturday 15th **Dirt Stock Madness KIDS RIDES**
FULL CARD (Midgets OFF)
 Presented by: *Kaiser International Protection LLC*
 Saturday 22nd **360 Sprint Cars Special**
REGULAR FULL CARD Adults/Teens/Seniors \$15
 Presented by: *Hoosier Tire East*
 Saturday 29th **VP Racing Fuels DIRTcar Sportsman Modifieds Eastern Series Race 4/6 Cylinder ENDURO**
FULL CARD (Midgets & Late Models OFF)
 Adults/Teens/Seniors \$15
 Presented by: *Montshire Farm*

AUGUST
 Saturday 5th **John Poor Memorial Coupe Madness**
REGULAR FULL CARD plus GSMS
 Presented by: *Walker Motor Sales Inc.*
 Saturday 12th **TOPLESS Night Bradford Bull Dogs Benefit**
REGULAR FULL CARD plus GSMS
 Presented by: *Swenson Insurance Co.*
 Saturday 19th **Old Timers Night with NE Antique Racers-**
REGULAR FULL CARD
 Presented by: *Sabil & Sons*
 Saturday 26th **4/6 Cylinder ENDURO**
FULL CARD plus 360 Sprints (Midgets & Late Models OFF)
 Adults \$15 Teens/Seniors \$13
 Presented by: *Dead River Co*

SEPTEMBER
 Saturday 2nd **Midget & Late Model Madness**
REGULAR FULL CARD
 Presented by: *Held for rain make up*
 Saturday 9th **FULL CARD** plus GSMS (Midgets OFF)
 Presented by: *Key Chevrolet*
 Saturday 16th **REGULAR FULL CARD (DP) Late Model FINALnight**
 twin 15's & Time Trials plus 360 Sprints
 Adults \$15 Teens/Seniors \$13
 Presented by: *Held for rain make up*
 Saturday 23rd **99ROCK NE Dirt Track Championships**
4/6 Cyl ENDURO
FULL CARD Sportsman Mods & Coupes, Midgets, Dirt Stocks, Ridge Runners Time Trials, 110 lap mods S/B 100 lap mods, 50 lap Coupes, "Growlers"-Mods & Coupes LCQ for growlers (non winner race)
 Adults/Teens/Seniors \$20 **SPECIAL 5pm START TIME!!**
 Presented by: *General Auto Salvage*

OCTOBER
 SUNDAY 8th **6th Annual FUNDAY-SUNDAY**
 4/6 Cylinder Enduro, Demolition Derby
 The Homewrecker & MORE
 1:00pm start time Adults/Teens/Seniors \$15
 Presented by: *Dad's 4 By Tool & Supply*

Track phone 802/222-4052
 www.bearridgespeedway.com
 facebook.com/bearridgespeedway

July 1st Bear Ridge Speedway annual 4th of July Extravaganza
Fireworks courtesy of Noise R Us
DIRTcar Sportsman Modified MADNESS
Plus DIRTcar Sportsman Coupes
USAC DMA Midgets
Late Models/Dirt Stockers/Ridge Runners
presented by Pellerin Automotive
 Special Event Pricing:
 Adults/Teens/Seniors \$15.00; Kids 11 & under \$2.00

We are an alcohol free family friendly entertainment spot, where we continue to offer the best source of good inexpensive high quality entertainment for families.
 Remember Bear Ridge Speedway Vermont's Fastest DIRTcar dirt track!
 Take exit 16 off I-91 on to rte 25 west 1 mile to South Rd up the hill to Kidder Rd.
 Take right on to Kidder and follow the traffic!
 The cost of a **regular show** general admission (front gate) ticket: adults \$12 (17 to 61). Kids 11 & under \$2. Seniors 62 & older \$10 Teens 12 to 16 & w/paying adult \$10
 please check our website for **special show admission** prices
 race day phone 802/222-4052 www.bearridgespeedway.com brsdirt@charter.net

2023 Schedule and highlighted special events

Two scheduled appearances!!
DIRTcar Eastern Sportsman Modifieds
Series Event Races!
May 13th & July 29th
 Special Event Pricing:
 Adults/Teens/Seniors \$15.00
 Kids 11 and under \$2.00

Racing starts at our famous 6:00pm(ish) Pit Gates open at 3:00 Grandstands at 4:00
We ask that you stay home if sick, be safe and be kind!

