



## READERS' CHOICE 2024

*Greater Mt. Mansfield Area*

4393 is a special supplement to the Stowe Reporter  
Check out the best of the best online, too! Visit [vtcng.com/4393awards](http://vtcng.com/4393awards).



# WELCOME TO THE 4393 AWARDS

## Readers' Choice 2024

### Hip, hip, hooray!

Here are the results of our seventh annual 4393 Awards.

In the 4393s, readers of the Stowe Reporter and News & Citizen vote for their favorite restaurants, shops, home services, nonprofit organizations and so much more.

In early spring, hundreds of readers nominated all the people, places and things that made it to the final voting ballot. We were a bit

off our contest record of votes in 2019, but we'll get back there. As long as the world doesn't shut down again.

We've listed the top three in each category, along with the top nominees. As for those nominees, we didn't include one-hit wonders, and in most categories cut off the list of nominees if people didn't at least hit a respectable number.

We would have shared some of the real comments left by survey-takers, from the silly and good-humored to the snarky and scandalous, but we forgot to ask for them — again. Remind us next year, please.

If you have suggestions for additional categories, send them, with "4393" in the subject line, to [news@stowereporter.com](mailto:news@stowereporter.com) or [news@newsandcitizen.com](mailto:news@newsandcitizen.com).

In case you're wondering, 4393 corresponds to the elevation of Mt. Mansfield, Vermont's highest peak and home to Stowe Mountain Resort. It's not 4,395 as some allege. The U.S. Geological Survey ([usgs.gov](http://usgs.gov)) uses the 4,393 elevation, and that's definitive enough for us.

The 4393 Awards will live online at [vtcng.com/4393awards](http://vtcng.com/4393awards) until next year's contest, and printed copies will be distributed throughout Stowe and Lamoille County. Congratulations to all the winners and nominees, and remember to support local, and that includes your local newspapers.

Bazinga!



Stowe Derby spectators. GORDON MILLER PHOTO

## 4393 Awards READERS' CHOICE 2024

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## BEST PIZZA

1. **Picasso**
2. **American Flatbread**
3. **Pizza On Main**

**Nominees:** Jimmz Pizza, House of Pizza, Two Sons Bakehouse, Stone's Throw Pizza, The Matterhorn, Hoagie's Pizza & Pasta

See our write-up on page 6.

## BEST BURGER

1. **Doc Ponds**
2. **Burger Barn**
3. **Backyard**

**Nominees:** The Bench, Idletyme Tap & Tavern, The Reservoir, Moogs, Martell's at the Red Fox, The Whip Bar & Grill, Harrison's Restaurant, 10 Railroad Street, Cork, von Trapp Brewing Bierhall, Picasso, The Blue Donkey, Rimrock's Mountain Tavern

We hadn't been to Doc's for a while, and one of us— OK, me — begs for a taste of what everyone else is having because Me Can't Ever pass up a Doc Ponds smash burger. Like most smash burgers, this award-winning recipe is simple: Never too much bread, great-tasting beef, yummy cheddar and secret sauce. Simple is as simple does. And there is always that visitor — AndreaTheGreat of

Queensbury, N.Y. — who summed it up best with her social media review a few years back, "The Burger That Changed My Life." Best. Headline. Ever.

## BEST FRENCH FRIES

1. **Doc Ponds**
2. **Al's French Frys**
3. **The Bench**

**Nominees:** Idletyme Tap & Tavern, Burger Barn, Martell's at the Red Fox, Backyard

The Matterhorn, McDonald's, Moogs, Picasso, Stowe Sandwich Company Pizza On Main, 10 Railroad Street, Grant's, Rimrock's Mountain Tavern

What goes perfectly with that Doc Pond's smash burger? French fries, natch, at Doc Ponds. Oh, and roasted garlic mayo. Good on Al's, a staple of South Burlington's Williston Road for decades and the Champlain Valley Fair wouldn't be right without a box of Al's fries. The Bench rounded out a close race in this category. Rally your fans next year, peeps.

## BEST WINGS

1. **Black Diamond Barbecue**
2. **Doc Ponds**
3. **The Matterhorn**

**Nominees:** The Bench, Moogs, Picasso, Shakedown Street Bar & Grill, Idletyme Tap & Tavern, Sushi Yoshi, Nocturnal Stowe

Just a short piece north of Stowe, just far enough to make it an adventure, Black Diamond is housed in a rehabbed old general store in Morristown Corners, and ah, the food is authentic Vermont barbecue using the finest meats, marinades and rubs, herbs and spices. Then it's wood-fired using local maple, black cherry and apple. And, as the great disco diva Andrea True asked, "How do you like it? How do you like it?" Well at Black Diamond, you can like it just about any way you want: dry rub, barbecue, Asian barbecue, buffalo, maple habanero, gochujang honey — yum — or dragon fire. Your chicken wings, that is, and best around according to our readers. Andrea was singing about something else entirely and you'll have to wait til you get home for some of that. Oh, and they've got all the other good stuff for a great barbecue joint: ribs, cornbread, mac and cheese and some great weekly specials.

## BEST CREEMEE

1. **Zack's Shack**
2. **Red Barn Ice Cream Shop**
3. **Cold Hollow Cider Mill**

**Nominees:** Crossroads Beverage & Deli,

The Cupboard Deli, Red Hen Bakery, Stowe Sweets, Vermont Maple Outlet, Hoagie's Pizza & Pasta, Village Creamery & Sweet Shop

This new kid on the block on the local creemee scene is already sprinkling the crunch! No one here has tried one yet, but local lad Will Sabel Courtney, who must be home taking a break from writing about fast cars, sums it up. "I know, these are fighting words, but I just had their maple creemee in one of their homemade waffle cones and hot damn it was the best one I've ever had. Perfect flavor profile, just right on sweetness (not overpowering, balanced but still maple forward) amazing homemade cone, little maple sugar crunchies on there. All that for \$5. It's killer." We can't top that.

## BEST VEGETARIAN OR VEGAN FOOD

1. **Green Goddess Cafe**
2. **Nepali Cuisine**
3. **Ranch Camp**

**Nominees:** Aladdin, Plate, Raja Restaurant

Goodness, goddess. In a tough category, The Green Goddess comes up a winner once again. While not strictly vegetarian, this little café tucked into a nook at Stoware Common in Stowe's lower vil-

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## Picasso

It's a busy Thursday night in the summer. You've been out all afternoon, you're tired, and you hear one of the kids in the back seat: "I'm hungry."

There's one place you know you can go and likely find a table, even during the dinner rush. It's the same place whose reliably tasty pizza will make the kiddos happy, whether you're dining in or taking out.

That's why Picasso is a perennial winner in our 4393 awards. They've matched scale and quality in a way that's absolutely essential for success in a three-season tourist town while offering experience and quality control that's essential to building a loyal fan base of local customers.

"From the beginning, when we started out in a small location, we always catered toward locals first, which would eventually branch out via word of mouth to tourists," owner Ed Rovetto said.

From its earliest beginnings at a much smaller location in the Gale Farm Center nearly 25 years ago, just across from the Mountain Road building its lived in since 2006, this has been the guiding philosophy that has kept the restaurant thriving all these years.

Rovetto settled in Stowe decades ago, but brought with him a north country pizza pedigree, growing up with Sicilian parents and helping them run their pizza joint in Little Falls, N.Y. When he upgraded to Picasso's

sprawling pizza parlor, he told the Stowe Reporter in 2016 that "there was literally a betting pool to see how quickly we would close."

No one would bet against Rovetto now.

In a town where some legacy restaurants have recently called it quits, and other locations have seen multiple restaurants come and go, Stowe's favorite pizza place has shown that the proof is in the ... sauce.

What's the secret ingredient in that sauce anyway, other than Rovetto's own half-century-old recipe?

Rovetto's not saying, but adds that his employees have been the key to making it all these years, over a hundred of which have passed through the kitchen over the decades.

"My main focus over the past 20 years has really been to treat our employees with respect, and to build a culture where employees really want it to work for us, not just to punch in and punch out, but to buy into the culture of Picasso, so that not only were we selling a consistent product and great food and great pizza, of course, but to really nurture the bonds between management and ownership, and all the rest of employees, so all our employees want to be there," Rovetto said.

"There's a big difference between going to a job that you don't like and going to a job that you do like," he added. "It's evident in the smiles that come across to guests."

— Aaron Calvin



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lage never rests on its chick peas. Using fresh ingredients — always — the preparations are simple yet inspired. Our two faves? Any one of the salads and the gyro with choice of lamb, falafel or grilled chicken with greens, red onion, tomato, feta, cucumber and tzatziki.

**BEST NEW RESTAURANT**

1. The Avocado Pit
2. Marsala Salsa
3. Aladdin

**Nominees:** Nocturnal Stowe, Shakedown Street Bar & Grill, Grant's, Raja Restaurant, MC's Penalty Box, Gerber's Joint

Stowe village needed a lunch pitstop and voila (wait, that's French!), enter Avocado Pit. With "pits" in two spots in southern Vermont that feature a Chipotle-type setup, the process in Stowe is imminently easier. Just choose a vessel — a pit bowl, or burrito bowl, a burrito, flour or corn tortilla tacos — and add your protein. Service, food and prices are muy excelente! Our readers agree.

**BEST CHEF**

1. Aaron Martin
2. Jamie Nelson
3. Dustin Johnson

**Nominees:** Jonathan Nelson, Elliot Carlos Barnard, Steven Truso, Dylan Taylor

Plate's motto is short and apt: California inspired, Vermont made. Chef Martin is both Vermont made, and California inspired. He worked at the first incarnation of Plate under the previous owners, left for a spell to spend time in two of the best kitchens in the world — Hen of the Wood in Waterbury and Chez Panisse in Berkeley, Calif., where Alice Waters practically created the farm-to-table movement. Then he came back with his wife, Jennifer, to take the reins of this chic, cozy, crisp, romantic, sexy spot on Stowe's Main Street, and it always runs like a top. Martin's commitment to working directly with farmers seeps through his ever-changing menu, like an order of his Korean-style chicken wings might seep into your napkin. Less messy, but just as sumptuous: Martins's take on a lobster roll, featured as a special app a while back, fresh lobster on a bed of crisp romaine leaves and not a bun in sight. Hold on, I've got to make a reservation!

**BEST RESTAURANT — STOWE**

1. Harrison's Restaurant
2. Edson Hill
3. Doc Ponds

**Nominees:** Picasso, Plate, Idletyme Tap & Tavern, The Bench, Trattoria La Festa, The Whip Bar & Grill, Sushi Yoshi, The Matterhorn, The Bistro at Ten Acres, Sanfo Chinese Restaurant

Last year when Harrison's won this

award, we wrote: "Call Harrison's on, say, Wednesday. 'I'd like a table for two on Friday at 7 p.m.'" Owner Kathy Kneale or equally efficient person answers, "We could do 9:30, but our next 7 p.m. Friday opening is in 2030." OK, we exaggerate, but please don't let their immense popularity discourage you from trying. Like Plate (see above), Harrison's is locally owned and locally loved. The food is divine. The setting is sublime (and romantic) or fun and boisterous if you're lucky enough to sit at the bar, the best seat in town.

**BEST RESTAURANT — LAMOILLE COUNTY**

1. Hen of the Wood\*
2. Harrison's Restaurant
3. Black Diamond Barbecue

**Nominees:** Michael's on the Hill\*, Martell's at the Red Fox, Marsala Salsa, Moogs, Cork, Plate, 10 Railroad Street, Pizza on Main

(\*Not in Lamoille County)

Parker House rolls. Oh my. Country pate. To share. Hen of the Wood, which opened to great fanfare and instant acclaim in 2005, moved last year from the old grist mill on Stowe Street in Waterbury to an elegant storefront on South Main. Clearly our readers aren't up on which towns are in Lamoille County — Hen of the Wood is in Waterbury and Washington County — but no matter. The accolades are as true today as when New York Times food writer called it, 16 years ago, "among the most beautiful little restaurants I know," in a piece titled "Dazzling fare heats up backwoods Vermont." He could have written the same today.

**BEST RESTAURANT TO TAKE KIDS**

1. Picasso
2. Hoagie's Pizza & Pasta
3. The Bench

**Nominees:** Ranch Camp, Doc Ponds, Skinny Pancake, Rimrock's Mountain Tavern, Charlmont Restaurant

See our write-up

**BEST BREAKFAST/BRUNCH SPOT**

1. Butlers Pantry
2. Maxi's
3. 158 Main

**Nominees:** Two Sons Bakehouse, Deb's Place, Woodland Baking & Coffee, Thompson's Flour Shop, Skinny Pancake, Round Hearth, North Country Donuts, Stowe Bee Bakery & Cafe, Green Goddess Cafe, Café on Main, Charlmont Restaurant

This list reminds us we need to eat out for breakfast more! Holy moly. The

Continued on next page 13

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VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR



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**Amy Touchette**

Some people have the unearthly gift of communicating with animals. For others, it's the ability to connect uniquely with people.

While she may not quite be Dr. Doolittle, Amy Touchette, leader and founder of Justice for Dogs, undeniably has both. Watching Touchette with the stray dogs in her care is seeing someone who's mastered the magic touch of letting animals know they are safe with just a few words.

Seventeen years ago, the desperate need she saw for local strays coalesced with her innate ability to connect with people of all backgrounds, so she created Justice for Dogs. She knew the outlook dogs that didn't make it into a regular shelter was grim, and she believed every dog deserved a chance for a loving home, even harder-to-adopt animals.

And if you know Touchette, it should come as no surprise that she's won this year's 4393 award for Volunteer of the Year.

"We started with three dogs, and it just evolved from there," she said. "I never imagined it would ever get to be something this big or go on this long. It really just evolved into something wonderful for local animals and local people."

She and the roughly two dozen volunteers work together every day to find the perfect human counterpart for their pups — and cats — because it's not just about finding a home but finding the right home. A major part of the work, she said, is pairing

personalities that mesh well.

"Pets just really change people. I like to see that connection," she said. "It gets me a little teary-eyed thinking about it because I've seen so many amazing connections with people, and animals who have really changed their lives."

Whether it's working with families on animal surrenders or working with local dog officers on cruelty cases, Touchette and the crew tends to focus on dealing with the neediest dogs. Once in the care of Justice for Dogs, Touchette focuses heavily on the "re-setting" process where she works with local veterinarians to get them vaccinated and neutered while providing a safe space at Lam-oille Kennels to get to know each animal on a deeper level.

"I like to have dogs stay for a while because they're usually stressed when they come to us, and it takes a while to adjust," she said.

From answering daily phone calls and emails to sifting applications and making connections, the entire effort is a labor of love.

"It's so rewarding to have that connection with the people and have them happy," she said. "To take an animal that nobody wanted or maybe didn't treat well, and see it transform is amazing. When that magic happens, when they meet their new owners for the first time, It's like, 'Wow.'"

— Liberty Darr

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## Stowe Mercantile

In Stowe's bustling retail sector, there's one shop that has set itself apart as being more "Stowe" than the rest.

It's where you go to get the gift that says "Stowe." In fact, most of what's sold at this store says "Stowe" somewhere on it.

Marc Sherman opened Stowe Mercantile in 1987 in a much different Stowe and in a retail landscape as foreign to us now as fax machines and leg warmers.

The Mercantile has weathered it all, from the advent of online shopping to the Great Recession to the lockdown days of the early pandemic. It's done so by offering a unique selection of Stowe-branded, gift-oriented products, the success of which has made it Stowe's favorite gift store and specialty shop.

Not only does Stowe Mercantile make an array of its own products like crackers, mixes and fudge alongside housewares and other gourmet products, it makes them easily available online for people to get a piece of Stowe no matter where they are. Almost everything is either locally designed or locally made, or both.

Sherman has partially guaranteed his store's success by taking an active role in helping to shape Stowe's retail scene through organizations like Stowe Vibrancy and Stowe Area Association. A Starbucks may have recently come to town, but Vermont Country Store never made it.

Part of Stowe Mercantile's success has been advocating for a Stowe business community

made up of similarly locally owned retailers.

But the secret to its success, despite the continuing growth of online shopping, is emphasizing the shopping experience itself, according to longtime general manager Denise Earley.

"Our number one goal has always been to give customers an experience that is unique and feels like authentically stepping back in time with a little modern twist, but always making people feel like family," Earley said. "So many people come back year after year, and we hope that this becomes part of their family's tradition to come and visit us."

Stowe Mercantile creates a certain kind of Vermont magic that keeps people coming

back, particularly around the holidays — there's no place like it at Christmastime — but the folksy aesthetic that charms shoppers is built with real pieces of history in one of the town's most historic structures, the old train depot.

"It's a lot of our family's antiques. We have an antique coffee grinder and antique cream separator and clawfoot bathtub, grandma's hutch, and that rocking chair came from her," Earley said. "We're always looking to acquire — like when we got the gondola years back — real authentic things that would have been in a country store."

At Stowe Mercantile, it's all authentically Stowe.

— Aaron Calvin

choices are endless. First up, though, is our winner cuz it's eggs-a-licious and it's right around the corner from our office, on the corner of School and Main, directly across from our iconic church. (Old timers will know it as the Restaurant Swisspot building, and yes, there will be a quiz at the end.) Chef-owner Zoe Biron, who studied culinary and French cooking techniques at New England Culinary Institute, raises the temperature on classic breakfast options. Biscuits and gravy, natch. A French toast fan? Don't pass on the toast sticks. Her eggs benedict features the perfect hollandaise on a freshly baked, grilled biscuit, tomato and a choice of homemade sausage, bacon, ham or spinach. We've tried them all.

### BEST TAKEOUT

1. Picasso
2. The Avocado Pit
3. Edelweiss Mountain Deli

**Nominees:** Sushi Yoshi, Siam Valley Thai Restaurant, Stowe Sandwich Company, Ranch Camp, Raja Restaurant, New Fu Lins, Hoagie's Pizza & Pasta, Arandas Mexican Cuisine, Aladdin, Sanfo Chinese Restaurant, Thai in the Mountain

See our write-up on page 6.

### BEST OUTDOOR DINING

1. Idletyme Tap & Tavern
2. von Trapp Brewery & Bierhall
3. Lost Nation Brewing

**Nominees:** Ranch Camp, The Matterhorn, Sushi Yoshi, Picasso, Moogs

On a late-afternoon Sunday this summer, right before a glorious Stowe Performing Arts concert in the Trapp meadow — Catherine Russell was amazing by the way; thank you Lynn Paparella! — it means idle tyme, er Idletyme, where on a night such as this, it's all about the patio. Good food, good drink, good vibes, under the trees, next to the recreation path. So, if you haven't already, get yourself to Idletyme before this very short thing we call summer abruptly ends.

### BEST BREWERY

1. The Alchemist Brewery
2. Stowe Cider
3. Ten Bends Beer

**Nominees:** Lawson's Finest Liquids, von Trapp Brewing, Lost Nation Brewing, Rock Art Brewery, Idletyme Tap & Tavern, Freak Folk Bier

In Kehena Beach last January, hanging ten in the neighborhood, a couple walks by. We get to talking story, as folks in Hawai'i are wont to do. "Where you from," we ask. "Kaua'i, and you?" "Stowe, Vermont," we say in harmony. "Ah! Heady Topper!" they chime back. It really is a small world. Congrats, Jen and John Kim-mich, for your alchemy and all-around

mensch-ness. And, for your support of the Vermont community, your foundation, and your humor and humility.

### BEST LOCAL SPIRITS OR CIDER MAKER

1. Stowe Cider
2. Barr Hill
3. Green Mountain Distillers

**Nominees:** Cold Hollow Cider Mill, Citizen Cider

As we were putting the finishing touches on 4393, a press release arrived from Stowe Cider welcoming back a fan favorite, Cider Donut, "a cult-followed hard cider that is quintessential Vermont, harvest season, and autumn all blended together. It's infused with cinnamon and nutmeg, blended with fresh-pressed apple cider, and finished with a touch of vanilla and brown sugar." Who comes up with this? Fortunately for we cider lovers, Stowe Cider does.

### BEST COCKTAILS

1. Après
2. Doc Ponds
3. Plate

**Nominees:** Lower Bar, Martell's at the Red Fox, The Bench

### BEST BARTENDER

1. Brian Krux
2. Tori Lockhart
3. Sam Sheldon

**Nominees:** Kaylee Booth, Jessica Allen, Jonathan Weiss, Analina (Annie) Aitken, Kalee Neville, Kelby Furrer, Rachael Dixon

Brian Krux does it again. He's the guy behind the bar at Plate on Main Street in Stowe and to him life behind the pine is more art form than a job. He approaches his craft with skill, passion and a deep knowledge of mixology. Brian's been pouring drinks behind the bar at several local establishments in the area for nearly a decade, and Plate owner Aaron Martin says, "He takes his job really seriously. He puts a lot of time and research into what he does, plus he's got quite a large group of friends in the area.

Continued on next page 15



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GORDON MILLER PHOTO

### Dr. Kimberly Bruno

For most, a trip to the doctor's office isn't an ideal way to spend an afternoon.

But for patients of Kimberly Bruno at Tamarack Family Medicine in Morrisville, a trip to the local doctor spurs an entirely different feeling. Bruno has been bringing the community back to health for well over two decades, making her and her practice a staple in the Lamoille County community.

And somehow, she hasn't grown even a little tired of it yet.

But, when the passion for your profession starts in childhood, waking up every day and heading to the office feels more like fulfilling one's lifelong destiny. For this Vermont-born, Hawai'i-raised doctor, that is certainly the case.

In fact, while recently sifting through her old elementary report cards and worksheets, she stumbled across something she wrote as a 6-year-old: "When I grow up, I want to be... a doctor!"

Her office is decorated not only with subtle hints of Hawai'i but also memorabilia that pays homage to her grandfather, a general surgeon in his own community. The sign for his office is proudly displayed and reminds her daily of where she came from and who she is. Even more, it reminds her what an "incredible gift" it is to be a family doctor.

"I take care of newborns in the hospital and all the way up to people in the nursing home. The people I helped to deliver are now having kids and I'm taking care of their kids," she

said. "It's kind of the old-fashioned model of caring for a community."

The work is long and hard, she said, but putting in nearly a quarter of a century in one community deliver giant rewards.

"You start to really understand the complexity of families," she said. "You understand when your communities are being flooded, when there are tragedies, when there are problems."

Three of her colleagues at Tamarack Family Medicine have been in the game alongside her for the past 25 years. One of them, Phil Kiely, described Bruno as a practitioner who doesn't take a back-seat approach to her patient's problems. "She doesn't sit back. She is like a dog with a bone when it comes to her patients, trying to make sure that she knows what's going on and that she's getting them everything they need."

While she has been a faithful servant to her community for most of her adult life, she said her community has wrapped its arms of support around her during the difficult moments in her life. When her son, Jackson Seivwright, died in a ski accident in February last year, the support from friends, colleagues and patients kept her going in more ways than one.

When she isn't tending to patients, you'll most likely find her on the slopes or finding some other way to get and enjoy the outdoors. After all, she said, the local doctor must practice what she preaches. "Get some exercise!"

— *Liberty Darr*

Thanks for All of Your Support!

Gordon Miller

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Continued on next page 8

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## BEST LOCAL CATERER

1. **Black Diamond Barbecue**
2. **Susanna's Catering**
3. **Stowe Sandwich Company**

**Nominees:** Wild Thyme Catering, Green Goddess Cafe, Sweet & Savory

All that good stuff – ribs, wings, corn-bread, mac and cheese and much more – noted above in the best wings category – is available to save you from manning the grill or cooktop at that next big party, graduation, bachelor party, Super Bowl ... what are we missing? Not cooking!

## BEST WINE SHOP/SELECTION

1. **Cork Market**
2. **Dedalus**
3. **Fine Wine Cellars**

**Nominees:** The Wine Vault

Cork Market says perusing its collection of natural wines is like a “sensory roller-coaster!” From citrusy whites to earthy reds, Cork’s selection comes from – their words! – “rad vineyards all over, showing off their roots and the mad skills of the winemakers.” Cork Market just came on the scene, opening in the refurbished Moscow General Store, but its sister location, Cork Restaurant in the village, has long featured organic, biodynamic, no-additive, unfiltered and wild fermented wines. Wines are grown, not made. Wine should come from unique places and people, not corporations. Believe in natural wine. That’s Cork, uncorked.

## BEST COFFEE SHOP

1. **Black Cap Coffee & Bakery**
2. **Woodland Baking & Coffee**
3. **Jenna's Coffee House**

**Nominees:** The Roastery, Deb's Place, Starbucks, Café on Main

Big bad Starbucks opened right across the street, but we local yokels, we're a funny bunch. The Seattle-based behemoth will do just fine here in little Stowe, Vermont, but so will its venerable competitor across the street – and our perennial winner in this category – where the vibe is a bit funky, college coffeehouse, part Central Perk, and definitely a magnet for the ski bum and yoga set. Black please, large.

## BEST DATE/NIGHT OUT

1. **Harrison's Restaurant**
2. **Edson Hill**
3. **Michael's on the Hill**

**Nominees:** Plate, Martell's at the Red Fox, Cork, Alfie's Wild Ride, The Matterhorn, Moogs, Après

Wanna take your boo out for a romantic dinner? Don't want to break the bank? Go somewhere that, if you are a regular, everyone will know your name? Then reserve a high-backed booth at Harrison's

where it will seem as if you're the only people in the place. Gaze into her (his, their) eyes. Glasses clink, silly laughter ensues, coo ... we love date night.

## BEST PLACE TO PUT UP OUT OF TOWN GUESTS

1. **Green Mountain Inn**
2. **Topnotch Resort**
3. **Tälta Lodge**

**Nominees:** The Lodge at Spruce Peak, The Stowe Village Inn, Brass Lantern Inn, Sun & Ski Inn and Suites, Commodores Inn

There are so many fine choices to stay in Stowe, from venerable lodges like Topnotch and Spruce Peak, to the all the new kids on the block – Outbound, Tälta. But the historic, red brick beauty on Stowe's Main Street remains a mainstay for your out-of-town guests, and not just as a place to stow your cranky brother-in-law. It's comfy, the rooms range from modest to high-end, The Whip Restaurant offers delectable meals – don't forget to try the famous corn chowder – and the lobby and common areas contain the most extensive collection of artist Walton Blodgett's watercolors known to man. It's venerable. It's welcoming. It's de-lovely. Oh, and that outdoor heated pool always makes a welcome splash.

## BEST MUSIC VENUE (INDOOR OR OUTDOOR)

1. **The Meadow at Trapp Family Lodge**
2. **Zenbarn**
3. **Stowe Cider/Shakedown Street Bar & Grill**

**Nominees:** Spruce Peak Performing Arts Center, Moogs, The Alchemist Brewery

Stowe Performing Arts' concerts started in a field on Mountain Road in 1976 but moved to the Trapp Family Lodge in the early 1980s at the suggestion of Johannes von Trapp. They have since been known as Music in the Meadow concerts, and always offer a taste of the Vermont Symphony – backed by the Greens, on a rolling meadow, the stage set, and a visit, perhaps, from one or more of the von Trapp family's Highland cattle. And, of course, the glorious sound of music (sorry!) This year, blues singer Catherine Russell and Ozomatli, a fusion band from LA, joined the orchestra in song.

## BEST WEDDING VENUE

1. **Edson Hill**
2. **Trapp Family Lodge**
3. **The Barn at Smugglers' Notch**

**Nominees:** Topnotch Resort, Sterling Ridge Resort, The Lodge at Spruce Peak, Green Mountain Inn

Continued on next page 17

Our team would like to thank everyone who participated in this year's 4393 Awards. We are grateful to be part of such a supportive community.



Ryan Bent Photography



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## BEST PLACE TO TAKE OUT OF TOWN GUESTS



GORDON MILLER PHOTO

## Stowe Farmers' Market

If you're in Stowe for a long weekend over the summer — the way many people experience this mountain town — or maybe your friends from Boston popped in for a visit, where's the first place you think of to take them?

For many, it's the Stowe Farmers Market.

Whether it's an onion fresh from the field, a pastry fresh from someone's oven, self-labeled ramp salt, a scoop of ice cream or a home-hewn cutting board, the farmers market is brimming over with a diverse selection of small-batch food, vegetables and products. Even the live music is often, in a sense, farm-to-table.

Many of Vermont's excellent farmers markets could be described this way, but Stowe's is different. This is the market where the people are, vendors know, and that's where they

want to be.

All farmers markets are, in a certain sense, business incubators, a place where you can catch people at the beginning of growing their passion project into a full-time job or simply looking to put their passion project out to the masses.

The reason Stowe Farmers Market is the best place to take visitors is because the best of the surrounding area — maybe even Vermont — is assembled there.

"We really strive to bring the very best of Vermont to the field each and every Sunday," market manager Samantha Kennedy said. "It's truly our pleasure to create a space for the community here in Stowe to connect their family and friends visiting from out of town,

to the local growers, makers and musicians who make this place so special."

Where else can you grab a bouquet from Olivia Scribner and her Peak Season Flower farm in Hyde Park, or vegetables from Crafts-bury's no-till Breadseed Farm or Stephanie Grace's handmade Mad River Valley ceramics all in one place while picking up a plate from Morristown's Black Diamond Barbecue and a box of homemade pasta from the legendary Trenchers Farmhouse, straight out of Lyndonville?

Nowhere but the Stowe Farmers Market.

"You're not driving from town to town on a brewery tour. You're coming to one spot to spend a few hours," Kennedy said. "I think, now more than ever, it's just so important to

think about where your money is going and supporting small businesses and farmers especially is really important, so we really appreciate that the community is not just doing that with their own hard-earned money, but it's also encouraging communities beyond the locality to do that as well."

It's not an easy event to organize, either, but a devoted market board, volunteers and vendors remain committed to putting on one of the state's premier markets.

— Aaron Calvin

*The Stowe Farmers Market is held at the Topnotch Field, 3420 Mountain Road, 10:30 a.m. - 3 p.m. every Sunday through the end of October.*

We profiled Edson Hill's restaurant and inn in last summer's Stowe magazine and my mouth watered, my senses tingled, my taste buds danced ... and I still haven't been! I even picked out my menu — smoked octopus with pea puree, citrus creme fraiche (wish I'd thought of that), shaved fennel, pickled radish. Next, a classic wedge salad with a few twists: house bacon, buttermilk dressing, blistered tomato, Bayley Hazen blue cheese and fried shallot. Entrees presented a challenge, but finally settled on the seared day boat scallops with sweet corn succotash, black garlic and citrus, followed by vanilla panna cotta with lime mar-ma-lad. Drat. The consolation? If none of that is still on the menu, something equally amazing will be. I'm not even going to look. Dialing ... 802-253-7371.

### BEST SPA

1. Topnotch Resort
2. The Spa at Spruce Peak
3. The Elmore Spa

**Nominees:** Stowe Village Massage, Salon Salon

As I've never set foot in a spa — still — I've re-invited a guest to blurb. April W., a kind and positive internet reviewer — don't you hate those negative Nancys (sorry, Nancy, but imagine how Karen feels) who write hostile, unpleasant re-

views. As mother used to say, "If you don't have anything nice to say ..." and "don't trust online reviews." Except for April, who says, simply, "Beautiful experience. It was both mine and my wife's first time and it was the most relaxing time we'd ever spent at a resort." Might be time to hit a spa.

### BEST MASSAGE THERAPIST

1. Jessica Lantos
2. Kate Graves
3. Jenna Kelly

**Nominees:** Laura Mara, Mia Albrektsson, Samantha Mills, Maureen Slayton, Katie Zettek, Lisa Messier

Hands down, it's Jessica Santos this year.

### BEST SALON

1. Salon Salon
2. Mirror Mirror
3. Studio 15 Salon & Day Spa

**Nominees:** Artistic Roots Salon, Salon4Men, Hair Republic, Styles Hair Salon, Shear Image Salon, Harmoni Hair Styling

Like your favorite massage therapist, loyalty runs deep for the salon — and stylist — who cuts your hair. Lots of high vote getters in the category, and once again, Stowe's longest-lived salon, started in the

1980s by the late Glenn Sautter, and whose legacy is carried forward by his daughter, granddaughter and daughter-in-law. Beautifully, we might add.

### BEST CANNABIS RETAILER

1. Zenbarn Farms
2. Higher Elevation
3. 31° North Dispensary

**Nominees:** Cambridge Cannabis Company, Craft Cannabis of Vermont, Vermont GoodFire Cannabis

Since the legalization of cannabis, pot shops have proliferated across the region, with more than a dozen firing up from Cambridge to Waterbury, where last year's winner, Zenbarn Farms, operates. Their deli-style operation helps budtenders match customers with the right smoke. Online reviews point to Zenbarn's "smart and educated team," its social equity mission, and "affordable prices" for why they light it up.

### BEST JEWELRY STORE

1. Von Bargaen's Jewelry Stowe
2. Ferro Estate & Custom Jewelers
3. Remarkable Things at Stowe Craft

**Nominees:** Bella Lusso Jewelers

It's always a choker in this category as mere votes separate these three top-

drawer jewelry stores in the battle for the top carat. They're all diamonds in our book, but Von Bargaen's once again wears the tiara. (Sorry, we so stole this from the 2023 write-up)

### BEST WOMEN'S CLOTHING STORE

1. Forget Me-Not Shop
2. The Boutique
3. In Company

**Nominees:** Archery Close, Bun-yaBunya, Coco Goose/Green Envy, Well Heeled

Our voters didn't forget this venerable store offering famous label, off-price clothing for men, women and teens.

### BEST GIFT STORE/SPECIALTY SHOP

1. Stowe Mercantile
2. Moss Home Goods
3. Bear Pond Books

**Nominees:** Shaw's General Store, Remarkable Things at Stowe Craft, The Country Store on Main, Stowe Living, The Body Lounge, Studio Store, Tangerine & Olive

Two words: Penny candy. Oh, be quiet, who cares if it's a nickel now! Or 10 cents! This is, simply, a great store. Need a quick gift? Bachelorette party favors? A gift for

Continued on next page 21

# PLATE

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MR. LAMOILLE



GORDON MILLER PHOTO

**Shap Smith**

For a moment about 15 years ago, Shap Smith might as well have been Mr. Vermont. He's happy these days to be voted Mr. Lamoille.

"I have to admit I'm surprised people remember who I am," he said with a laugh.

In 2009, as Vermont's Speaker of the House, Smith successfully led an override of then-Gov. Jim Douglas's veto of a same-sex marriage bill, at a time when veto overrides weren't a ho-hum regularity like they are now.

These days, his gavel pounding is heard less frequently and by far smaller audiences, as town moderator for Morristown, a post he has held since 2019.

For Smith, being involved in the community is just part of the way he was brought up.

"I grew up being taught by my stepfather and mom, and dad and stepmom, that it was important to contribute to the community," he said. "I'm just trying to do it in different ways now."

Even though the role of moderator in Morristown has been significantly reduced after voters last year opted to do away with floor votes for budgets, elections and other business, Smith is still summoned for annual informational meetings for the town and school as well as special occasions where a gathering of the townspeople is in order.

"I think it's important to have someone there who people believe will be fair in moderating a discussion," he said. "I think that people generally feel like I'm fair and that I will try to keep the meeting efficient."

A little humor goes a long way with tense talks, too, he said.

Smith is an attorney and managing partner and president of Dinse, one of the

graduate — bonus points for knowing the lyrics to the school song, "Dear Old P.A."

Outside of work and officialdom, though, Smith is more often likely to be spotted in running shorts or cross-country skiing apparel or walking barefoot around the lawn at Oxbow Park during concerts or around the PA track during the annual walk-a-thon fundraiser for the Lamoille Area Cancer Network.

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the village bypass that many feared would tear the heart out of the downtown. Smith said he's happy that the opposite has happened.

"It is a different town, but I think, in many ways, it's even more vibrant than it was before the bypass opened," he said.

Although he's seven years removed from his job as Speaker of the House, Smith still finds chit-chatting about local politics irresistible, whether it's over a pint at a local watering hole, post-run on the rail trail or during set-break at an Oxbow concert.

"Politics. Is. In. My. Blood," he said, enunciating every word. "It really is the way that we can make our communities better. That's how I think of the decisions that we make at the local level, it's how I hope we are doing it at the state level. It's what I wish we were doing at the federal level."

— Tommy Gardner

"I GREW UP BEING TAUGHT BY MY STEPFATHER AND MOM, AND DAD AND STEPMOM, THAT IT WAS IMPORTANT TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE COMMUNITY,"

largest law firms in Vermont. There, he specializes in intellectual property and insurance coverage cases.

As a legislator and a lawyer, Smith has been most frequently spotted wearing a suit and tie, along with a pair of thin-framed eyeglasses. He brings that professorial look to his moderator job, too, although he often favors a green and gold bowtie as a reminder of his status as a proud Peoples Academy

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## Jed Lipsky

The logger has been voted Mr. Stowe in this year's 4393 awards — not to be confused with Rusty DeWees, a thespian who performs under the moniker, The Logger.

This one's the real deal. In fact, Rep. Jed Lipsky, I-Stowe, didn't notice the phone call informing him about his win until he put down his chainsaw, or whatever loud and dangerous bit of equipment he was wielding, and came out of the woods to a spot with better cellphone reception.

It was a hot day, the kind of weather where it's important to stay hydrated, perhaps with a cold jug of switchel — the very Vermonty libation that Lipsky invoked to display his backwoods cred during a 2022 debate with a 20-something opponent who moved to Stowe two years earlier and who moved away shortly after losing to gravelly-voice, mischievous but modest backwoods septuagenarian.

"I get a lot of thank-yous from Democrats, Republicans, Progressives, independents. I just don't think in those terms," he said. "But I feel that whatever time it takes to serve — and it takes a lot of time — I feel it's greatly appreciated, and that's a humbling honor for me."

He's all but certain to go back to Montpelier for a second two-year term come January, since no one chose to run against the popular first-term incumbent.

Lipsky, who has been logging for 60 years — first in the Berkshires region of Massachusetts where he grew up — said his community service in Vermont started in 1968 when he was 21 years old, helping the town of Whitehall in its early efforts at environmental and conservation planning.

Then, as now, he split his time between splitting logs into boards and logging hours in boardrooms.

He's served at one time or another on Stowe's conservation commission, its school board and the Stowe Land Trust board of directors. Still a semi-regular hockey player well into his 70s, he was also a founding member of the Friends of Jackson Arena.

He said the time he put in on those boards, as well as in the Statehouse, has provided welcome doses of humanity to complement the solitary, quiet-loud-quiet life of actively shaping and re-shaping Vermont's forests.

"As a logger, there isn't a lot of social or community interaction," he said. "In my case, it's come from serving on boards."

Lipsky also garnered quite a few votes for Mr. Lamoille in this year's 4933 Awards, placing in the top three. He said while his direct constituency may be the people of Stowe, in his work on the House Committee on Agriculture, Food Resiliency, and Forestry and through his votes in the House chamber, he represents all of Vermont. And some of the organizations he is involved — Jenna's Promise, the Lamoille Community House — serve a county-wide role.

### MR. STOWE



GORDON MILLER PHOTO

"Serving on the forestry, food resiliency and ag committee, I get this all the time, that my voice is needed desperately in the Statehouse," he said. "So, when you feel valued, and when you feel appreciated, that's all the motivation you need."

He noted that Lamoille County is the second least populous

county in the nation's second-least populous state, where there is rarely more than a couple of degrees of separation from everyone.

"To me," he said, "Vermont is one medium-sized community."

With that, he headed back into the woods, remarking how important it is to stay hydrated.

— Tommy Gardner

BEST TRAINER/FITNESS INSTRUCTOR • BEST FITNESS VENUE/GYM



GORDON MILLER PHOTO

Joanna Graves, front right, and her crew are always a popular sight at Stowe's annual 4th of July parade. Graves won this year's best trainer/fitness instructor and her gym, RIDE, took best fitness venue or gym.

grandma? There are jams and jellies, T-shirts, birdhouses, tchotchkes for all occasions, maple syrup and maple candy and maple — well, you get the idea. A true, old-fashioned mercantile, Stowe-style.

#### BEST OVERALL SHOPPING EXPERIENCE

1. Stowe Mercantile
2. Pinnacle Ski and Sports

#### 3. Moss Home Goods

**Nominees:** Shaw's General Store, Stowe Living, The Country Store on Main, Remarkable Things at Stowe Craft, The Body Lounge, Yellow Turtle, Studio Store, In Company

See our write-up on page 12.

#### BEST FLORIST

1. Peck's Flower Shop

#### 2. Uncle George's Flowers 3. Bramble + Bloom

"From unusual greens to novelty flowers, our aim is to create a floral experience that uplifts, comforts and pays tribute to the people of our community," the about us page at Peck's Flower Shop reads. The small, local floral shop can provide the right flowers for any occasion, from a wedding to a holiday celebration and everything in between. Peck's always delivers. Oh, and they deliver. Literally.

#### BEST REAL ESTATE AGENT

1. Pall Spera
2. Jill Anne
3. Denise Trombly
3. Maggie Macdonald

**Nominees:** Dody Day, Grant Wieler, Steve Foster, McKee Macdonald, Pete Kelly, KC Chambers, Gayle Oberg, Sheila Lord, Kelley King

Continued on next page 22

Like your stylist and masseuse, everyone has a favorite agent of real estate, and this year, everyone's favorite real estate agent is Pall Spera — a literal legend on the home-buying scene in Stowe and beyond for at least four decades. It is way past time, IMHO, that Mr. Spera came out on top. Mr. Stowe understands real estate, he understands buyers and sellers, he understands Stowe and, best of all, he understands you. And for someone who often tries to get out more often but regularly fails, when this writer does turn up at a social or business engagement, most always there is Mr. Spera with unstretched hand, a ready smile and a "It's good to see you (insert name.)" He never forgets your name, and even if he did, you'd never know it! Class.

## BEST LOCAL FARM PRODUCT/PRODUCER

1. Mansfield Dairy
2. Foote Brook Farm
3. Sage Farm Goat Dairy

**Nominees:** Long Winter Farm, Knee Deep Farm, Stowe Maple Products, Naked Acre Farm, North Hollow Berry Farm

The Mansfield Dairy logo, a cow on skis, embodies quintessential Vermont. It's an iconic and instantly recognizable symbol in the Stowe and greater Mt. Mansfield area. The dairy sits atop a group of eclectic local farm producers, from cheesemak-

ers to produce growers and from maple syrup producers to berry growers and more. It's heartening to see Stowe still today embracing its farming past.

## BEST BUILDER

1. Donald P. Blake Jr.
2. Sisler Builders
3. Beacon Hill Builders

**Nominees:** Tim Meehan, Patterson and Smith Construction, Gordon Dixon, Gyllenborg Construction

The nail guns of Donnie Blake and crew are all over Stowe and environs, from building super high-end homes to renovations, restorations and energy enhancements to existing residences, and from commercial buildings like Manufacturing Solutions Inc., to the rebuild of the historic Stone Hut on Mount Mansfield and a beach house at Elmore State Park. They're also heavily involved in good works in the communities around these parts.

## BEST ARCHITECT/ARCHITECTURAL DESIGNER

1. Volansky Studio/Andrew Volansky
2. Cushman Design Group/Milford Cushman
3. Sam Scofield

When we profiled Andrew Volansky for a Scottish-style cottage that he helped

design in Eden for Stowe magazine, his client had high praise for his ability to listen, his attention to detail and his guidance. "When Andrew saw that I had proposed a mudroom the size of small closet, he just laughed," remembers Anne Ford. "He called me and said, 'You must not have a mudroom in California.' I told him we didn't have mud! He said we'd need a mudroom about three times bigger. He was so right." Nailed it!

## BEST INTERIOR DESIGNER

1. Brenna B Interiors
2. Cushman Design Group
3. Galen Arnot
3. Linda Post

**Nominees:** Kathy Dever, Brenna Connor

Sophisticated. Fanciful. Thoughtful. Respect. Custom. Personal. Collaboration. Home. Brenna B's designs are all that. And Brenna B — short for Brochhausen — is also a force of nature.

## BEST BIKE SHOP

1. Chucks Bikes
2. Ranch Camp
3. Hitchhiker Bike Shop

**Nominees:** AJ's Ski & Sports, Pinnacle Ski And Sports, Power Play Sports, Bicycle Express, Mountain Ops

Everyone loves Hank. Hank Glowiak,

that is, the brain and brawn behind this legendary Morrisville bike shop. He pedals away with yet another win.

## BEST SKI/SNOWBOARD SHOP

1. Pinnacle Ski And Sports
2. AJ's Ski & Sports
3. Mountain Ops

**Nominees:** Power Play Sports, Neon Wave

Once again, fierce competition, but Pinnacle rode the lift right back to the top.

## BEST BIKE TRAIL(S)

1. Lamoille Valley Rail Trail
2. Cady Hill Forest
3. Stowe Recreation Path

**Nominees:** Adams Camp, Flo

This 93-mile route from Swanton to St. Johnsbury along an old rail bed sure has taken a beating of late. The Flood of July 2023 closed large portions of it for months. Crews worked tirelessly to get the very popular biking, walking, snowmobiling, multi-use trail reopened but the Flood of December 2023 delayed a complete relaunch. Then, another flood event hit the Lamoille Valley and closed portions of the trail once again in July. (A few sections remain closed.) Phew! All that drama, clearly, didn't douse enthusiasm for this gem.

Continued on next page 25

Est. 2016

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MS. LAMOILLE



GORDON MILLER PHOTO

## Amy Olsen

Amy Olsen is always asking her social circles for reading recommendations, whether it's so she can go devour another tome or whether she can put it on her shelves.

As the director of the Lanpher Memorial Library in Hyde Park, though, she knows these storied, august institutions are no longer simply book repositories of quiet solemnity.

Rather, libraries are what whatever the people who use them want them to be.

"I think libraries are really cool because we adapt to meet the needs of our communities," Olsen said. "We can say, 'What does our community need in this moment?' And we can create a service or a program or, really, anything."

Here are just a few things that the Lanpher Library features that are not books: cake pans, a ghost hunting kit, snowshoes, a wish tree on the front lawn and a wind phone out back.

The wind phone is inspired by an illustrated book that Olsen read, "The Phone Booth in Mr. Hirota's Garden," a fictional account about an actual phone booth erected in Japan in the aftermath of the Tohoku earthquake and tsunami that, in 2011, killed nearly 20,000 people. The idea is that anyone can go into the booth and have a one-way talk with a loved one who is no longer there.

"People do come into libraries to share their challenges and their joys, and they see librarians as community leaders, but also as trusted community members," Olsen said. "So, especially during Covid, when people were so disconnected and couldn't reach out and connect with their community, it felt like the right time to pursue it."

Olsen has been at Lanpher Memorial Library since 2004, and she jokes it was predes-

tined that she would take the vocation on as a career. When she was a child, her mother and mother's friend did Olsen's horoscope and, according to her chart, one of her careers worth pursuing was librarian.

"I stomped my foot and stuck out my chin and said, 'I will never be a librarian,'" Olsen said. "Now, my joke is that it was written in the stars."

Olsen started in Hyde Park — her hometown — in an era when libraries still did mean mostly books and magazines. At the time, though, e-books were just becoming a thing, and more people were requesting DVDs. Many people predicted that libraries would become obsolete.

She took that to heart, and began thinking "beyond books," and more about libraries as a place to be, and not just an in-and-out lending institution. Libraries, public ones particularly, are also a place where people come just to be out of the elements — air conditioning in the summer, a cozy fireplace during the winter.

"Libraries are a third place for a lot of people," she said. "There's home and there's work and libraries are another place where people can just go and be themselves and explore and learn and gain access to knowledge."

Twenty years into the job, Olsen said she feels like she is just gaining her momentum. She's always brainstorming with folks about other ideas, and said she approaches her job from a specific reference point.

"I try to approach the service with love, all the time," she said. "I do believe that libraries are for everyone, and I want everybody to feel welcome in the library."

— Tommy Gardner



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**Heidi Scheuermann**

Former Vermont House Rep. Heidi Scheuermann said that, when she decided in 2022 against seeking re-election to a ninth term, she received a word of warning from a fellow retired lawmaker: “You go from a who’s who to a ‘Who’s he?’ in 30 seconds flat.”

Two years later, the Stowe native is still a somebody. She’s been voted Ms. Stowe for the third consecutive time — she won last year and in 2019, and let’s just try and forget what happened for three years starting in 2020 — and has been in the top three for that category every year but one since the 4393 Awards’ inception in 2015.

Scheuermann said she was honored — again — for the recognition, but a little sheepish, noting she has stepped back a little from community work in the past year or so for months at a time to be closer to family in North Carolina.

That’s where she was last week when informed over the phone.

“It’s special, being from Stowe and having that recognition. There are a lot of people who are really deserving of it, though, people who volunteer a lot, who continue to do a lot for the town,” she said. “But it’s nice that people still remember me.”

Scheuermann grew up in Stowe, graduated from the high school and served on the town selectboard before running in 2006 to replace long-serving Stowe Rep. Dick Marron, maintaining a Republican streak in Stowe that continued even as Stowe voters consistently voted Democrat each year in other races, but not for the sole House seat.

Scheuermann, as a Republican who was never shy about expressing her frustration with the Democratic supermajority in Montpelier, was rarely rewarded by that party’s leadership, instead getting re-assigned term after term to different committees, never as a chairperson or even vice-chair.

But her politics were always meat and potatoes old-school conservative stuff that she felt reflected the people of Stowe — she was a leader on economic development issues and a fierce opponent to education funding formulas.

Even two years removed from politics, it doesn’t take much to get Scheuermann revved up about things, especially Act 127, the much-maligned tweak to Act 60 that many blame for school budgets across the state getting shot down by voters.

“Here we are, kicking the can down the road again,” she said, noting with exasperation that leadership is talking about “doing another study” about education funding, even though she said the first 37 studies didn’t stop



a budgetary bloodbath this year.

She said the next generation of Stoweites will pick up the baton and move forward — maybe there’s even a future Ms. Stowe in the mix — but she worries there won’t be a next generation of people living, working and raising families in Stowe.

“We have people stepping up, but a lot of these people are from young families who may not be able to afford to stay here,” she said. “We could see what we’ve always feared, which is the very rich and the very poor, rather than a middle class. That’s just not the way to have a community, the community that

we’ve strived to create and maintain throughout the years and decades.”

And that’s your perennial Ms. Stowe: You can take the Heidi out of the Statehouse fight, but you can’t take the fight out of Heidi.

— Tommy Gardner



AT TOP: GLENN CALLAHAN PHOTO; GORDON MILLER

“YOU GO FROM A WHO’S WHO  
TO A ‘WHO’S HE?’  
IN 30 SECONDS FLAT.”

## BEST SKI TRAIL

1. Nose Dive
2. Perry Merrill
3. Goat

**Nominees:** Hayride, Jake's

Wanna know why Nose Dive remains Stowe's favorite trail 70 years after it was cut. Go here — [bit.ly/3YuEngi](http://bit.ly/3YuEngi) — grasshopper. And yes, it's Nose Dive, not Nosedive.

## BEST CROSS-COUNTRY/ BACKCOUNTRY SKIING

1. Trapp Family Lodge
2. Craftsbury Outdoor Center
3. Sterling Forest

**Nominees:** Wiessner Woods, Beaver Meadow Trail

First cross-country center in the U.S. And they have a cabin. And soup. And Kaiserschmarrn. And views for days. And the von Trapps. OK, they might not have Kaiserschmarrn.

## BEST PLACE TO HIKE

1. Stowe Pinnacle
2. Mt. Mansfield
3. Elmore State Park/Elmore Mountain

**Nominees:** Sterling Pond Trail, The Long Trail, The Notch, Smugglers' Notch State Park

In a state where stunning views abound all around, this perennial winner reaches a special pinnacle.

## BEST PLACE TO PADDLE

1. Green River Reservoir
2. Waterbury Reservoir
3. Lake Elmore

**Nominees:** Caspian Lake, Lamoille River, Lake Mansfield (Trout Club)

The solitude of the Green River Reservoir glided past Waterbury Reservoir again. And, why are so many smart people unable to come up with a solution to NOT drain this stunning recreational and ecological resource, destroying it forever? Oh sorry, this is supposed to be fun.

## BEST PLACE TO PLAY GOLF

1. Ryder Brook Golf Club/Course
2. Stowe Country Club
3. Copley Country Club

**Nominees:** Country Club of Vermont, Stowe Golf Park

With everyone going private these days — Stowe Country Club will soon be members-only — it's great to have a few local greens still in play, both in nearby Morrisville. Nine-hole Ryder Brook is rated medium difficulty with rolling terrain and a links-style layout. Fore! Or in this case, First!

## BEST DISC GOLF COURSE

1. Trapp Family Lodge
2. Brewster Ridge & Fox Run Meadows (Smugglers' Notch Resort)
3. Center Chains

A friend who works at a private school in Lugano, Switzerland, visiting family this summer, just had to golf at Brewster Ridge. "I've got to try it out. I've heard it's great!" as he abandoned his wife and 2-year-old with his in-laws. "What about Trapps?" he was asked. "Oh, I didn't want to push my luck. Definitely, next time. Or after we move here."

## BEST LOCAL RACE OR SPORTING EVENT

1. Stowe Derby
2. Heady Trotter
3. Ski Bum Races

**Nominees:** Race to the Top of Vermont, Gravel Grinder, Hyde Cup Tournament, Vermont 10-Miler

If the Derby is really more popular than the bums, why does participation seem to be dipping every year. Come on people. Step it up in 2025. Make Erling Strom and Sepp Ruschp proud. Goggle it, newbies.

## BEST PLACE TO TAKE OUT OF TOWN GUESTS

1. Stowe Farmers' Market

2. Lake Willoughby
3. Ben & Jerry's

**Nominees:** Cold Hollow Cider Mill, Mt. Mansfield, Moss Glen Falls, Lake Elmore

See our write-up.

## BEST DAY TRIP FOR THE KIDS

1. ECHO, Leahy Center for Lake Champlain
2. Pump House Indoor Waterpark (Jay Peak)
3. Lake Elmore

**Nominees:** Waterbury Reservoir, Ben & Jerry's, Smugglers' Notch Resort/Fun-Zone, The Swimming Hole

ECHO, Leahy Center for Lake Champlain on Burlington's waterfront is about to get a whole lot better, 4393 voters. The "Into the Lake" exhibit gallery will undergo a \$3.3 million renovation to enhance public education about native wildlife and stewardship of the Lake Champlain Basin ecosystem. The upgraded gallery will feature an even larger, expanded aquarium — from 7,000 to 15,000 gallons — updated exhibits and more. The new aquarium will feature the lake's most iconic and mysterious species, the lake sturgeon, and other large fish native to Champlain, a new home for the center's beloved snapping turtle, an invasive species exhibit, and updated habitats for the American eel, land-

Continued on next page 27

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## BEST LOCAL PERFORMANCE ARTS GROUP/THEATER



GORDON MILLER PHOTO

## Lamoille County Players

Lamoille County Players have been keeping the people entertained for more than 70 years. The nonprofit is dedicated to promoting arts through quality, affordable theater and providing a supportive and educational atmosphere for cast and crew members. The crew runs the entire show out of the historic Hyde Park Opera House, which was built in 1912 following a disastrous 1910 fire that destroyed most of the village. It has been home to the Lamoille County Players since 1952, when the Rev. John Knight from the church across the street first uttered the words, “Hey, let’s put on a show!”

For Patricia Jacob, the current treasurer of the organization, the group has been a regular part of her life since she moved here in 1979.

“I took a job at Peoples Academy as a music teacher, and some of the students said, ‘There’s a theater over in Hyde Park, why don’t you come over and be in a musical. My first show was in 1981,” she said, adding that she’s worn multiple hats in the organization over the decades.

Throughout the annual season, the group puts on a handful of shows from straight plays to musicals. The group also instills the love of theater into kids in the area through its children’s theater workshop, a two-week day camp that ends with a dazzling performance from the participating kiddos.

While the whole endeavor might not be Broadway, the group brings the community together in a unique way, Jacob explained, not

just for those attending the performances, but also for those who make up the ensembles. While Hyde Park may be small, it sure is mighty, she said, and it’s rare to stumble across a town that still has its own functional opera house.

“They kind of look to us like, ‘Oh, what are the players doing next season?’ or ‘Who’s in the show?’ It’s always a friend or a neighbor, or your neighbor’s kid,” she said. “It’s very local and personal. Many people have participated over the years. It’s just special, and it sticks with you.”

For newcomer Cindy Stoudt, chair of the marketing committee, joining the group in 2022 after nearly 10 years in Vermont felt like she finally had a place to call home. While

jumping back into acting wasn’t the easiest feat, the Players have become a life-changing support system for her to continue doing what she loves.

“The people at the Opera House and the group itself and the things that we do, that’s what actually made me feel a part of the community here in Vermont,” she said. “It’s just such an amazing organization with so many people that volunteer so much time and energy to make it happen. To be a part of it, it’s just fantastic.”

— Liberty Darr

*The Players will put on “The Mel Brooks Musical: Young Frankenstein” in early October and “Inherit the Wind” in December.*

locked Atlantic salmon and lake trout. (Note: ECHO will be closed on weekdays in September for the renovations.)

### BEST TRAINER/ FITNESS INSTRUCTOR

1. Joanna Graves
2. Kyle Smith
3. Melissa Senesac

**Nominees:** Chad Couto, Genevieve Thompson, Ernie Roick, Charlotte Brynn, Julie Roick, Natalie Doehla, Jeremy Bradley, Sean Hunt

Joanna graves rides off with another win as best trainer and fitness instructor. She also runs RIDE, the indoor cycling studio in Stowe. The town's former high school athletic director, Joanna started RIDE as JoMotion, a boot-camp-style training program she ran out of the back of her car. She calls her business — see category that follows — “a party on the bike.” Just ask Rusty DeWees.

### BEST FITNESS VENUE/GYM

1. RIDE Indoor Cycling
2. The Forge Gym
3. The Swimming Hole

**Nominees:** Deep Roots Fitness, Snap fitness, PHIT Performance, Lamoille Valley Dance Academy

### BEST DOCTOR/SPECIALIST

1. Kimberly Bruno
2. Melissa Volansky
3. Philip Kiely

**Nominees:** David Bisbee, Katie Marvin, Allison Christie, Steven Soriano

See our write-up.

### BEST PHYSICAL THERAPIST

1. Heidi Noonan
2. Summit Physical Therapy
3. Mary Chudzik

**Nominees:** Heather Gardner, Michelle Mannino, Kathleen Doehla, Mila Deych

Has Heidi Noonan fixed more sore shoulders, bad backs, achy feet than anyone else in Stowe — in history? She closed her popular Sports and Rehab Clinic in Stowe last December after 21 years, but she quickly got back to work at Stowe Physical Therapy and Pilates with Kat Dwyer, who once worked at Heidi's clinic. What goes around comes around. Heidi's many, many devoted clients are just glad she didn't go far. While she enjoyed owning her own business for two decades, “I am excited to step away from this role and do what I love best — treat patients,” she told the Stowe Reporter.

### BEST ALTERNATIVE WELLNESS PROVIDER

1. Kate Graves
2. Kirsten Alexander
3. Laura Mara

**Nominees:** Jenna Kelly, Katie Chivington, Samantha Mills, Joshua Corn, Angela Robens, Lara Nargoizian, Morgan DeVoe, Kristina Dahl, Victoria Battin, Timothy Farrell

“No, a little bit to the right. Down, down, to the left a hair. Yes, that's the spot.” But there's no need to direct our top vote-getter. From yoga to relaxation massage to LaStone therapy, Thai-Yoga bodywork and acupressure, Kate Graves has expertly therap-ized folks in these parts for 30 years. A Stowe-area institution, over three decades or more, Kate's hands and healing touch have helped countless folks sleep better, manage pain, relieve stress, improve general health and well-being, move around better. So, relax, you're in good hands.

### BEST VET

1. Gregg Goodson (Stowe Veterinary Clinic)
2. Waterbury Veterinary Hospital
3. Lamoille Valley Veterinary Services

**Nominees:** Emily Bond (Sequist Animal Hospital), Stowe Veterinary Clinic, Sequist

Animal Hospital, Paula Yankauskas (Lamoille Valley Veterinary Services)

Speaking of institutions, Gregg Goodson is the stethoscope and kind manner behind Stowe Veterinary Clinic. A Tufts University veterinary school grad, he opened the clinic on Route 100 just north of Stowe village in the 1990s. He, along with his fellow docs and loyal team of techs and office staff, live by the motion, “We care for your companion animals (fur children) as though they were our own.”

### BEST LOCAL MUSICIAN OR BAND

1. Seth Yacovone
2. Beg, Steal or Borrow
3. Eames Brothers Band

**Nominees:** Deadbeats of Stowe, George Walker Petit, Taryn Noelle, The Barn Rats

In these here parts, Mr. Yacovone sings the blues, and he rocks. And, in an informal office poll, he's also the hardest working musician in Vermont. He seems to play everywhere — or has he slowed down a bit? He plays solo, with Dead Sessions, and with various other musicians. It's never the same, but it always rocks. (Best bet: Catch him at Montgomery Sessions in July next year. Cuz, it's Montgomery, like Stowe of yore, and it's outside in the sun.)

Continued on next page 28



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**BEST PLACE TO HIKE**



LEE KROHN PHOTO

Stowe Pinnacle is tops for our readers as the best place to hike in the Stowe area.

**BEST LOCAL PERFORMANCE ARTS GROUP/THEATER**

1. Lamoille County Players
2. Spruce Peak Performing Arts Center
3. Stowe Performing Arts

Nominees: TRIP Dance Company, Lamoille Valley Dance Academy, Stowe Theatre Guild

See our write-up on page 26.

**BEST LOCAL ARTIST**

1. Craig Mooney
2. Eric Tobin
3. Jen Hubbard Danahy

Nominees: Adele Taplin, Natasha Bogar, KAT (Katerina Hrdlicka Werth), Peggy Smith, Michael Mahnke, Sally Stetson, Chris Curtis, Seb Sweatman

Craig Mooney is the best. We put him on the cover of Stowe magazine this summer and he thanked us! What? No, thank you, Mr. Mooney. You're the bomb. Plus, he donated a canvas to the live auction at The Current gala and it raised a boatload of money. He paints the canvasses and then supports the vital places that make art accessible to all. Class.

**BEST LOCAL PHOTOGRAPHER**

1. Jesse Schloff
2. Amber Osgood
3. Caitlin Kelly

Nominees: Gordon Miller, Chris Diegel, Mark Vandenberg, Scott Braaten, Jack Morris, Sarah Peet, Paul Rogers, Larry Asam, Heather Glenn

Who hasn't met Jesse, worked with Jesse, skied with Jesse, who doesn't love Jesse. Free ad alert. Check it: jesse.schloffphotography.com. (To No. 2, No. 3 and all the rest, you are all pretty freaking good too. We know, we've seen your work.)

**BEST MOUNTAIN AMBASSADOR (SKI INSTRUCTOR, PATROLLER, HOST, ETC.)**

1. Jimmy O'Donnell
2. Ed Cinque

3. Abigail Leighty
3. Andre Blais

Congratulations Jimmy. Since Covid, no one in the office has time to ski or snowboard. That's no joke, folks. We're putting out your local newspaper. I hope you appreciate it. From social media, it looks like Jimbo is/was an EMT at Waterbury Ambulance Services, president of Waterscapes, A Clear Difference, or maybe president of Eastern James Mechanical, a Stowe ski patroller and lives in New York — no, Philadelphia. Good grief, we hope you're the right Jimmy. See that's the problem, folks, with The Internets. Is it ever right? If this is you, Jimmy, that's one awesome vid on Instagram, crashing into the snow fence during the Derby. Also, a 4393 winner, in case you've read this whole thing.

**MS. STOWE (PERSON WHO EMBODIES COMMUNITY)**

1. Heidi Scheuermann
2. Monique Duckworth
3. Allie Ruschp
3. Kristi Lovell

Nominees: Caitlin Kelly, Maggie Macdonald, Lisa Hagerty, Beth Gadbois, Leigh Pelletier, Leslie Anderson

See our write-up on page 24.

**MR. STOWE (PERSON WHO EMBODIES COMMUNITY)**

1. Jed Lipsky
2. Ed Rovetto
3. Nick Donza
3. Dave Sautter

Nominees: Adam Ogden, Chris Worth, Bob Legere

See our write-up on page 20.

**MS. LAMOILLE (PERSON WHO EMBODIES COMMUNITY)**

1. Amy Olsen
2. Heidi Scheuermann
3. Kyle Nuse

Nominees: Monique Duckworth, Lisa Hagerty, Jen Hubbard Danahy, Nancy Ka-

Continued on next page 30

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BEST ANNUAL EVENT — STOWE



GORDON MILLER PHOTO

For a long weekend in September, the Brits invade and bring along their classic cars – much to the delight of 4393 voters.

plan, Bailey Evans, Stephanie Drews-Sheldon

See our write-up on page 23.

**MR. LAMOILLE (PERSON WHO EMBODIES COMMUNITY)**

1. Shap Smith
2. Jed Lipsky
3. Dan Noyes

**Nominees:** Caleb Magoon, Donald Blake, Tommy Gardner, Ken Kaplan

See our write-up on page 18.

**ENTREPRENEUR OF THE YEAR**

1. The Alchemist Brewery

2. Acer Tree Co.
3. Jen Hubbard Danahy

**Nominees:** Mark Ray, Josh Wolfgang, Ethan Carlson, David Wolfgang, Laura Vitalta, Front Four Gallery, Bailey Evans

Who else?

**VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR (LOCAL WHO GIVES BACK)**

1. Amy Touchette
2. Heidi Scheuermann
3. Kyle Nuse

**Nominees:** Beth Gadbois, Lisa Hagerty, Shelley Nolan, Billy Adams, Bailey Evans

See our write-up on page 10.

**BEST ANNUAL EVENT — STOWE**

1. British Invasion
2. 4th of July
3. Stowe Jazz Festival

**Nominees:** Vermont Pumpkin Chuckin' Festival, Stowe Foliage Arts Festival, Stowe Derby, Stowe Winter Carnival, The Current Gala,

Pass the wine.

**BEST ANNUAL EVENT — LAMOILLE COUNTY**

1. 4th of July
2. British Invasion
3. LACiNg Up for Cancer

**Nominees:** Tuesday Night Live, Oxbow

Music Festival, Rocktoberfest, Lamoille County Field Days

We have no idea what town you're talking about, folks. Rockets shooting up into the sky. Check. Silly parades. Check. Parents letting kids pick up candy of the street to eat it. Check. Music by fill in the blank. Check. Laughs, hugs, friends, neighbors, family and fun. Double check.

**BEST NONPROFIT/COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION — STOWE**

1. North Country Animal League
2. Stowe Mountain Rescue
3. Green Mountain Adaptive Sports

Continued on next page

**Nominees:** Stowe Land Trust, Stowe Trails Partnership, The Current, Jewish Community of Greater Stowe, The Swimming Hole, Stowe Performing Arts, Stowe Community Fund, Stowe Vibrancy

**BEST NONPROFIT/COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION — LAMOILLE COUNTY**

1. Justice for Dogs
2. North Country Animal League
3. Jenna's House/Jenna's Promise

**Nominees:** Clarina Howard Nichols Center, River Arts, Meals on Wheels, Lamoille Area Cancer Network, Lamoille Community Food Share, Capstone Community Action, Lamoille Family Center, Lamoille Home Health and Hospice, Lamoille Community House, Salvation Farms, Green Mountain Support Services, Lamoille Housing Partnership

One vote separated the top three in this category. Helping animals — one and two — and helping to rebuild shattered lives. Good choices!

**Thank you for participating in the 4393 Readers' Choice Awards!**



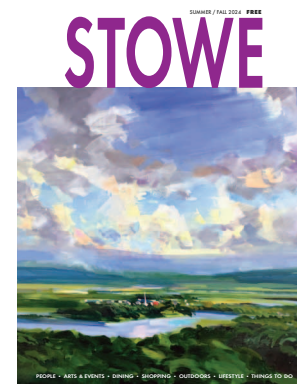
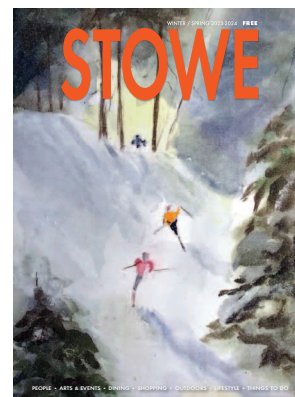
**BEST OUTDOOR DINING**



GORDON MILLER PHOTO

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