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READERS' CHOICE 2026

Greater Mt. Mansfield Area

4393 is a special supplement to the Stowe Reporter
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HIGH PRAISE

It's an even-numbered year, which means folks around here are well-accustomed to casting ballots. There's the annual Town Meeting Day in March. As I type this, we're readying for the August primary. In a few months, on the first Tuesday of November, people will go to the polls again. Vermonters do like their democracy.

This special supplement you're reading now is also a product of the local democratic process. In late spring, we asked the readers of the Stowe Reporter and News & Citizen to nominate their favorite people, places and things in the region. Hundreds of you answered the call.

Those receiving at least three write-ins made it to the final voting ballot, which voters filled out during the month of June. We've listed the top three vote-getters in each category — more if there were ties — along with the rest of the nominees who made it to the voting ballot (in alphabetical order).

This year, there are 78 categories (fun fact: that's the total number of medals the U.S. won in the 1904 Summer Olympics). They are broken down into four main categories:

- Food & Drink, for those looking for a great pizza or burger or for someone they can trust to mix them a refreshing cocktail.

- Business & Service, which shows the best places to stay the night or see a show, purchase the perfect gift, and buy or sell a house — and where to find the experts to fix it when it breaks.

- Health & Activities, because if nothing else, this region has some of the best places to play, whether in the great outdoors or in a room full of people, in all six of Vermont's seasons.

- People & Events, where voters chose who they think makes the area a better place to be, and all the special happenings that make living or visiting here, well, special.

If you have suggestions for additional categories, send them, with "4393" in the subject line, to news@stowereporter.com or news@newsandcitizen.com. For instance, this year we had a voter who suggested we add a category for Best Yoga Studio. Is that a stretch? Maybe! Congratulations to all the winners and nominees, and remember to support local — and that includes your local newspapers.

— Tommy Gardner, editor



Sophia Balunek photo



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There are a lot of places to grab some grub or dine fine, sample a flight or raise a pink, as the sheer number of restaurants and bars among the following nominees attests. However, as long-time readers of the 4393 awards might notice, it's tough to knock a champion off their perch. More than half the category winners are repeats or comebacks — and at least one of them has been there from the beginning.

There's good eatin' in them hills, from the top on down.

BEST PIZZA

- 1. Picasso
- 2. Pizza on Main
- 3. American Flatbread

Nominees: The Bench, Full Send Pizza and Provisions, Hoagie's Pizza & Pasta, House of Pizza, Jimmz Pizza, The Matterhorn, Rusty's Pizza & Pie

The Rovetto family recently celebrated 25 years welcoming folks to one of Stowe's most popular restaurants of the 21st century. The pizza wins them the award — Picasso has snagged the biggest slice every year we've had this contest.

BEST BURGER

- 1. Doc Ponds
- 2. Burger Barn
- 3. Gondolas

Nominees: 10 Railroad Street, Backyard Tavern, The Bench, Cork, Grant's, Idletyme, The Matterhorn, The Whip Bar & Grill

Always the bridesmaid, never the bride, Jeffersonville's Burger Barn is the place you go to when you want to have a different burger every day for a month. But what keeps the simple, straightforward Doc Ponds burger perennially atop this list? Is it the bun, brioche and buttered? Is it the beef, locally sourced and griddled to order? Maybe it's the secret sauce, which contains....

BEST FRIES

- 1. Doc Ponds
- 2. The Bench
- 3. Gondolas

Nominees: Burger Barn, Cork, G Willikers Catering, Picasso, Rimrock's Mountain Tavern, The Whip Bar & Grill

Jordan had Pippen. Brady had Gronk. Kobe had Shaq. Doc Ponds' burgers and fries have each other — and four straight titles.

BEST WINGS

- 1. Black Diamond BBQ
- 2. The Matterhorn
- 3. Doc Ponds

Nominees: 10 Railroad Street, Backyard Tavern, Grant's, Hoagie's Pizza & Pasta, Picasso, Shakedown Street BBQ & Grill, Sushi Yoshi, The Whip Bar & Grill

Black Diamond wings are a three-step process: a special spice rub, a three-hour smoke session, followed by a dip in hot oil, served plain for you to sauce how you see fit. A smoke and a rubdown served naked may sound like someone's dream Vermont spa day, but it's also to BD's perennial dominance in this category.

BEST ICE CREAM

- 1. Ben & Jerry's
- 2. Red Barn Ice Cream
- 3. Zach's Shack

Nominees: Gondolas, Stowe Sweets

All due respect to Noah Kahan but voting for Ben & Jerry's is the dairy equivalent to naming a more popular band than Phish. Heck, the jam band kings still have one of the most famous B&J's flavors named after them — as does Kahan, with his limited edition "Northern Latte-tude."

BEST COFFEE

- 1. Black Cap Coffee & Bakery
- 2. The Roastery/Movement Coffee Roasters
- 3. Woodland Baking and Coffee
- 3. Vermont Artisan Coffee & Tea

Nominees: Front Seat Coffee, G Willikers Catering, GiraKofi, Goldfinch Gourmet, Jenna's Promise Roasting Company, The Round Hearth Café & Marketplace, Stowe Bee Bakery & Café

Black Cap has spots in Stowe, Morrisville and Waterbury and once again has the top spot in this contest. So when I want to nurse a cup while going through emails while I'm in either town, I'm all set. The big news in this category, though, might be the Roastery's ascension to second place — slow drip, fast rise.

BEST COCKTAILS

- 1. Lower Bar
- 2. Après (2038 Mountain Road)
- 3. Harrison's Restaurant

Nominees: 10 Railroad Street, Après Only (433 Mountain Road), Blackbird Bistro, Burt's Irish Pub, Cork, Grant's, Green Mountain Distillers, Plate, Ranch Camp, Salute, Trattoria La Festa, The Whip Bar & Grill

We'll just give credit for the drinks where credit is due when we get to the best bartender on this list, and acknowledge that, for this word nerd, Lower Bar and the attendant logo on its sign — a person on a chairlift holding a beer — might also qualify it for cleverest name.

Continued on next page

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BEST HOTEL/INN; BEST WEDDING VENUE; BEST DATE/NIGHT OUT SPOT



Jesse Schloff photo

Edson Hill

A triple whammy, Edson Hill was named the best hotel, wedding venue and date night. The luxury inn offers opportunities from a weekend getaway to a whole property wedding buyout of the 38-acre estate.

Edson Hill is located up the self-same road off the well-beat Mountain Road path. There, mountain views can be seen all year, and ski runs are just around the corner. With 22 guest rooms in charming manor inn style, Edson Hill offers luxury comfort and a hint of nostalgia for

a retreat where time stops and the present moment prevails. There are trail networks for the adventurous as well as a pool and spa packages for those needing to rest.

The property was settled nearly 250 years ago as the farmland of Freedom Edson. The French Canadian-inspired manor was built in 1938 with materials that still hold these pieces of Vermont history. Opened to guests in the 1950s, it was marketed as a ski retreat.

In addition to a simple hotel stay, betrothed

couples can celebrate their cherished moment inside or outside all year round with up to 200 guests for the ceremony and space for up to 59 to stay in the charming historical guest houses overnight. An intimate experience, the exclusive weekend buyout includes all ceremonies, custom reception dinner, an engagement photo session and more.

The on-site restaurant offers hotel guests and dinner guests a seasonal menu with flavorful and savory meats and vegetables

from New England farms. Right now, this menu features lamb, duck and halibut as well as small summery vegetable plates.

Edson Hill can be rented out for a variety of other events that are better when imbued with mountain views and serenity. The property's aesthetic is rustic yet modern with sleek details and storied architecture. Whatever your occasion, Edson Hill can take care of you.

—Sophia Balunek

BEST VEGETARIAN OR VEGAN FOOD

1. The Avocado Pit
2. Green Goddess Café
3. Aladdin

Nominees: The Bench, Cork, Ranch Camp, Saffron by Dodo's Kitchen, The Whip, Wolfpeach

It can be frustrating for veg-heads to get in on a group restaurant order when meatless is heavy on the "less." But when tortillas, beans and rice are your foundations, everything else is adornment, whether or not it once walked around. At Avocado Pit, you can have your veggies wrapped up snug as a burrito, or "decon-

structed" in a bowl with even more veggies.

BEST RESTAURANT — STOWE

1. Harrison's Restaurant
2. Edson Hill
3. Picasso

Nominees: The Avocado Pit, The Bench, Butler's Pantry, Cork, Doc Ponds, G Willickers Catering, Grant's, Plate, Ranch Camp, The Round Hearth Café & Marketplace, Salute, Sushi Yoshi, Trattoria La Festa, The Whip Bar & Grill

The people have again spoken, when it

comes to Stowe's best restaurant. Those people put their money where their mouths are, too. Head into Harrison's on a weekday night, and you'll feel like you're at someone's home for dinner. Andy Kneale, the consummate host, welcomes you, and his mom Kathy will send you off with some of Stowe's tastiest desserts.

**BEST RESTAURANT —
LAMOILLE COUNTY+**

- 1. Hen of the Wood
- 2. Black Diamond BBQ
- 3. Harrison's Restaurant

Nominees: 10 Railroad Street, The Avocado Pit, Cork, Edson Hill, G Willikers Catering, Gallus Handcrafted Pasta, Marsala Salsa, Martell's at the Red Fox, Plate, The Round Hearth Café & Marketplace, Trattoria La Festa, The Whip Bar & Grill

The Hen has flown its coop on Stowe Street, Waterbury, moving to a more centralized downtown location — and has a second spot in downtown Burlington — but the game's the same: local ingredients, talented chefs, rotating surprises.

(Editor's note: Stowe landed eight nominations in this category, even though it has its own, something we will rectify next year).

**BEST NEW RESTAURANT
(OPENED IN 2025-2026)**

- 1. Goldfinch Gourmet
- 2. Gallus Handcrafted Pasta
- 3. Gondolas Downtown

Nominees: Déjà Vu Cafe, G Willikers Catering, Saffron by Dodo's Kitchen, Wolfpeach

Goldfinch was brand new when this list went out last year, when voters applauded it as entrepreneur of the year — perhaps out of excitement for what it brought to a modest Morrisville strip mall where the only other food option was McDonald's. Now, it's simply the best. As just one of the many examples, it'll make you never want to make a quiche at home again.

**BEST RESTAURANT TO TAKE
THE KIDS**

- 1. Picasso
- 2. Hoagie's Pizza & Pasta
- 3. American Flatbread

Nominees: The Avocado Pit, The Bench, G Willikers Catering, Ranch Camp, Rimrock's Mountain Tavern, The Round Hearth Café & Marketplace, Shakedown Street BBQ & Grill, Sushi Yoshi

Video games and coloring sheets help keep the kids occupied, but the young

Continued on next page

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ones also know there only one five-letters when it comes to parents asking what they want for dinner: P-I-Z-Z-A.

BEST CHEF

1. Aaron Martin (Plate)
2. Matt Hiebsch (Edson Hill)
3. Lou Grove (The Avocado Pit)

Nominees: Daniel Mims (Grant's), Emma Fitzgerald (G Willikers Catering), Jan Chotalal (Marsala Salsa), Jason Gelineau (Trattoria La Festa), Miguel Godinez (10 Railroad Street), Neil Richardson (G Willikers Catering), Sean Blomgren (Spruce Peak/Tipsy Trout), Steven Truso (The Whip Bar & Grill), Weston Nicoll (Cork)

Martin has run his own kitchen at Plate so long now that some may forget the masters from whom he drew inspiration for the Stowe Main Street mainstay. Martin took two pilgrimages to the world-famous Berkley restaurant, Chez Panisse. His journal notes from those trips are the culinary version of a boy falling in love with a girl.

BEST BARTENDER/SERVER

1. Tori Lockhart (Lower Bar)
2. Ray Knight (Burt's Irish Pub)
3. Jonathan Weiss (Grant's)

Nominees: Bri Wilson (American Flatbread), Dave Taylor (G Willikers Catering), Desiree Simpson (G Willikers Catering), Heather Grimet (The Whip Bar & Grill), Ian Budd (Cork), Kalee Neville (Piecasso), Mike Andres (Black Diamond BBQ), Mike Brailey (10 Railroad Street)

The great thing about a town that has, per capita, more liquor licenses than anywhere in Vermont, is there are more friendly faces to serve you that drink than anywhere else. And ever since we rebooted these awards, post-pandemic, this category has had more diversity of nominations than any other. This time around, it's Tori's time. The amiable bartender at the liveliest watering hole in the village is a huge reason why there's life after 10 p.m.

BEST BREAKFAST/BRUNCH SPOT OR BAKERY

1. Butler's Pantry
2. Two Sons Bakehouse
3. The Round Hearth Café & Marketplace



Tori Westphal photo

The Stuffed French Toast from G. Willikers is a perfect example of comfort food elevated. By using fresh brioche bread, sweetened cream cheese filling, and macerated berries, they have created a subtly sweet, beautifully balanced and unique plate. Simply delicious.

Nominees: 18 Main at Green Mountain Inn, The Bagel, Charlmont Restaurant, Déjà Vu Café, Front Seat Coffee, G Willikers Catering, Goldfinch Gourmet, Maxi's, North Country Donuts, Stowe Bee Bakery, Woodland Baking and Coffee

This house springs to life each summer with some new improvement. One year, there are some bocce lanes, the next, a whole new outdoor dining area, now all but surrounding the façade. If you could give a person nothing but Butler's home fries and biscuits, that person could be living

well. And that's literally just the beginning.

BEST TAKEOUT OR FOOD TRUCK

1. The Avocado Pit
2. Edelweiss Mountain Deli
3. Burger Barn

Nominees: Aladdin, Gondolas, Piecasso, Sanfo Chinese Restaurant, Warren's Kitchen & Catering

Online ordering is old hat now, even in Vermont. But there's something about the online experience at the Avocado Pit

that can very easily be the deciding factor in answering the question, "Where should I get takeout?" The Sharpie personalized to-go bags are a nice touch. Bonus digital points: give yourself a start, then a chuckle, and seek out the Pit's April 1 Instagram post.

BEST CATERER

1. Black Diamond BBQ
2. Susanna's Catering
3. G Willikers Catering

Nominees: Aladdin, The Avocado Pit, Bear & Bean Kitchen, Sweet & Savory, Warren's Kitchen & Catering

Whether you want to serve a whole hog for a wedding reception, or a universe of side dishes — which some say are the true stars of good BBQ — Black Diamond are the experts. It's their origin story, bringing the flavor to the party long before the owners hung their own shingle.

BEST OUTDOOR DINING

1. Idletyme
2. von Trapp Brewing & Bierhall
3. Grant's

Nominees: American Flatbread, Cork, Ranch Camp, The Round Hearth Café & Marketplace, The Whip Bar & Grill

BEST BREWERY

1. The Alchemist Brewery
2. Hill Farmstead Brewery
3. von Trapp Brewing

Nominees: Idletyme, Lost Nation Brewing, Rock Art Brewery, Ten Bends Beer

It may be hard to remember, but there was a time when the only way to get a Heady Topper was to follow the Alchemist truck and follow the driver into the store — some places even implemented a strict "one four-pack per customer" rule. And that's if you were fortunate enough to live in Vermont. Out-of-staters would make the pilgrimage to mule hundreds of dollars of Headies home. It's still that good, and now, it's far from the Alchemist's only offering.

BEST SPIRITS, CIDER OR WINE PRODUCER

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

Nominees: Cold Hollow Cider Mill, Ellison Estate Vineyard, Smugglers' Notch Distillery

You can spell Barr Hill without the B that goes into it. The distillery's roots go back to apiaries, where its founder originally used his own honeybees to make mead — at the time, a novel beverage in a state awash with IPA. Now, life is even sweeter.

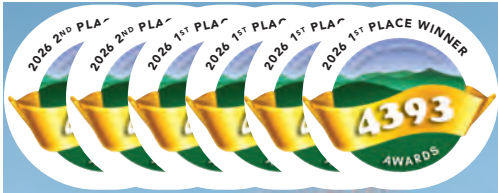


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Local merchants and hospitality hosts are the heartbeat of the local economy. So maybe skip Prime Day this year and give some of these folks your money? From knickknack to essentials, or just a good time, you can find it in the shadows of Mount Mansfield. There are also plenty of pros around here to help you sell your house or fix your stuff — your bike, your pipes, your split ends. Someone once observed that the most important tool in their toolbox was their wallet, and it just might be true. Why try it yourself when you can get someone else to?

BEST HOTEL/INN

- 1. Edson Hill
- 2. Green Mountain Inn
- 3. The Lodge at Spruce Peak

Nominees: Outbound Stowe, Stone Hill Inn, The Stowe Village Inn, Sun & Ski Inn and Suites, Tälta Lodge, Topnotch Resort

(See write-up on page 4)

BEST MUSIC VENUE

- 1. The Meadow at von Trapp Family Lodge & Resort
- 2. Moogs Place
- 3. The Alchemist

Nominees: Alfie’s Wild Ride, Lost Nation Brewing, Shakedown Street BBQ & Grill/Stowe Cider, Spruce Peak Arts, Strawberry Hill Farm, WhistlePig Pavilion at Spruce Peak

This summer, Stowe Performing Arts handed the reins for its long-running Music in the Meadow series to Spruce Peak Arts — whose own 4393-nominated venue is pretty snazzy itself — proving that no matter who books the musicians, the key is location, location, location.

BEST WEDDING VENUE

- 1. Edson Hill
- 2. von Trapp Family Lodge & Resort
- 3. The Barn at Smugglers’ Notch

Nominees: Green Mountain Inn, The Lodge at Spruce Peak, The Stowe Village Inn, Topnotch Resort

(See write-up on page 4)

BEST SPA

- 1. Topnotch Resort
- 2. The Lodge at Spruce Peak
- 3. Stowe Village Massage

Nominees: The Elmore Spa

Topnotch fans know the key to a good spa day is to make it a spa day. That means getting whatever treatment you want — the resort boasts 100 different kinds, from massages to manicures, facials to reiki — but then lingering around the grounds to take a dip one of the pools, soak in a hot tub, bake in a steam room, rinse and repeat until you’re ready to, reluctantly, leave.

BEST LOCAL FARM PRODUCT/PRODUCER



Rowan McClain photo

Elmore Mountain Bread

A humble loaf from Elmore Mountain Bread is more than a delicious vessel for butter or jam or practically anything else imaginable — it’s a celebration of tradition, a reenactment of an era when bread was borne from local soil, crushed and molded by hands its consumer may have shaken and thrown at a flame before selling to neighbors.

For Blair Marvin and Andrew Heyn, the husband-and-wife duo that owns the business, baking fresh bread has been a daily vocation since 2004.

The couple worked in the Seattle culinary scene before moving back to Marvin’s home state — she is originally from Johnson — and opening the bakery. They sell baguettes; country French loaves; a cross of focaccia and hoagies known as foagies; sweet grains like cinnamon raisin; savory like rye and seven grains; and the sandwich staple Vermont Redeemer, a loaf made with stoneground Vermont wheat flower.

Elmore Mountain Bread products are featured on restaurant tables throughout Lamoille County and in grocery store bread sections, where customers gravitate on days when Wonder simply won’t make the cut.

Unlike pulling bread from a bag like a stack of cards, cutting into an Elmore Mountain Bread loaf is a demonstration of mastery — examine the crunchy exterior shell and soft waves of grain inside. There is no wonder or deception involved, just bread as it was always has been.

Naming a loaf Redeemer is seemingly a nod to Elmore Mountain Bread’s commitment to using local ingredients and old-world techniques. Some companies can fake this claim with phony packaging of a riverside mill or wheat blowing in the wind, but Elmore Mountain Bread has invested time and money into protecting and sharing the art of bread making.

Not only does the bakery source local

grains that they mill into flour and immediately transform into loaves of bread, but Marvin and Heyn have a side gig crafting 2,500-pound granite millstones for other bread makers. The 40-inch millstones are also locally sourced, from Barre.

With the side gig, Marvin and Heyne prove they aren’t gatekeepers, but rather disciples of a bygone era who preach a better way of consuming bread. Their message is about community-based industry in an increasingly commercial, spread-out world, learning about and appreciating an ancient technique, or simply indulging in a timeless type of food.

Society has progressed far from the days when every small town had a local famer, baker and miller, Marvin remarked at a 2019 TEDx Talk in Stowe, but when it comes to bread, her business makes a convincingly delicious argument that not all progress was worthwhile.

—Patrick Bilow

BEST MASSAGE

- 1. Stowe Village Massage
- 2. The Lodge at Spruce Peak
- 3. Topnotch Resort

Nominees: Jenna Kelly, Kate Graves, Lisa Messier, Sage Collective, Samantha Mills

When it comes to a straight-up rub-down, voters choose to stick to Stowe Village, where more than a dozen therapists ply their trade with nearly as many different type of treatments, from gentle reiki and shiatsu to more robust deep tissue and Thai techniques, with plenty of cupping and hot stones in between.

BEST SALON

- 1. Salon Salon
- 2. Hair Republic
- 3. Salon Ruelle

Nominees: The Lodge at Spruce Peak, R.G.'s Turning Heads Salon, Studio 15 Salon & Day Spa, Styles Hair Salon

The coiffurists win again. In fact, if the majority of voters had their way over nine years of the 4393s, there would be two of them in town. Instead of a sequel, they get a place so good at what it does, they named it twice.

BEST CANNABIS RETAILER

- 1. Higher Elevation
- 2. Zenbarn Farms
- 3. Best Buds

Nominees: 31° North Dispensary, Craftsbury Cannabis, Vveeds, Wild Legacy Cannabis

Stowe's weed resistance has been Morrisville's gain. The northern neighbor has just over 5,000 people and has five cannabis shops. But the one atop the heap is, once again, the one that's been there the longest. It's worth noting that Waterbury also has places that rank high.

BEST ART GALLERY

- 1. River Arts
- 2. Front Four Gallery
- 3. The Current

Nominees: The Bryan Fine Art Gallery, Northwood Gallery

(See write-up on page 18)

BEST JEWELRY STORE

- 1. Von Bargaen's Jewelry
- 2. Ferro Estate & Custom Jewelers
- 3. MOSS Home Goods

Nominees: The Boutique, Remarkable Things at Stowe Craft

The wares here are all multi-faceted, but the crown jewel once again goes

to the family-owned mainstay that specializes in the "something borrowed" part — taking old jewelry and making it something new. As the owners have noted, people rarely mine new metal. Which means you can get your green and your gold at the same spot.

BEST WOMEN'S CLOTHING STORE

- 1. She Who Rules
- 2. The Forget Me-Not Shop
- 3. Archery Close

Nominees: The Boutique, Coco Goose, In Company Clothing, Johnson Hardware & Rental, Well Heeled

(See write-up on page 10)

BEST MEN'S CLOTHING STORE

- 1. Johnson Hardware & Rental
- 2. AJ's Ski & Sports
- 3. Archery Close

Nominee: MountainOps

(See write-up on page 10)

BEST GIFT STORE/SPECIALTY SHOP

- 1. MOSS Home Goods
- 2. Bear Pond Books
- 3. Stowe Mercantile

Nominees: The Body Lounge, The Country Store on Main, Once Upon A Time Toys, Remarkable Things at Stowe Craft, The Round Hearth Café & Marketplace, Shaw's General Store, Simon Pearce, Stowe Living, Tangerine & Olive, Yellow Turtle

Morrisville merchant Jennifer Hubbard gained much renown among art galleries as a painter in the years before she took the leap and opened Moss Home Goods in a village starving for retail. At Moss, she uses a curator's eye to her approach, selecting things she thinks folks might like, listening to suggestions, and arranging it all so the experience itself is an eyeful.

BEST SKI/SNOWBOARD SHOP

- 1. Ski Essentials
- 2. AJ's Ski & Sports
- 3. Power Play Sports

Nominees: MountainOps, Neon Wave, Stio Mountain Studio

Ski Essentials once again sits on top among ski shops. In an outdoor recreation destination where there's plenty of skis and boards to satisfy all renters and buyers, Pinnacle was also long ahead of the curve with its robust on-line store.

Continued on page 11

Black Cap Coffee & Bakery of Vermont



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BEST WOMEN'S CLOTHING STORE



Courtesy photo

**She Who Rules,
Johnson Hardware
and Rental**

Not to get too heteronormative here, but this is the second straight year we split the sexes in the clothing category, and, for the second straight year, folks voted for a female-forward, female-owned business where the apparel is the attraction.

Shauna Nichols may fast be on her way to creating a garment district in Morrisville. Last year, she opened She Who Rules, a clothing boutique with a “budget-conscious version of luxe style” where the name alone gives one the idea what to expect. This summer, she added a second store in town, Kid Wise Clothing — bet you can guess what it sells.

Nichols is a Morrisville native who spent 17 years as part of the high-end fashion retail scenes in Stowe and Boston, so she knows what women are seeking.

“I love helping women find clothes that make them feel really good inside and out,” Nichols said last year.

That means offering personalized attention for would-be wearers and a curator’s approach to what’s in stock — including hand-picked, consigned designer pieces.

Nichols even offers “closet consultations,” for people who want to re-think their entire wardrobe.

Meanwhile, when it comes to their sartorial splendor, men this year seemed to be thinking: Where can I get Carhartts and chainsaw parts?

Following last year’s 4393 clothing voting, which saw a Stowe sporting goods store double as the top place for men’s duds, we might be seeing a trend here — multi-tasking.

Alan and Lynn Lehouillier have turned the Johnson mainstay into arguably Lamoille County’s best-stocked one-stop shopping experience. And they did it family style.

Nearly 30 years ago, Alan helped his parents, Claude and Patty Lehouillier, turn their 1,600-square-foot dairy barn into a small store, selling grain and gardening supplies, along with corn and hay from their fields — fields that also played host to huge events like the national mud bog race and the Vermont Reggae Festival.

Gradually adding to it the same way one adds to their own home over the years, the store is a sprawling 25,000 square feet, with plenty of room for the skid-steers, jackhammers and lifts that folks can rent.

Either way, if the only way you’re first hearing about Johnson Hardware & Rental is because of its popularity among clothes-buyers then at least you’ve got your foot in the door. Oh, and if you need a new pair of boots or Birkenstocks, the footwear section’s on the right.

—Tommy Gardner

BEST MEN'S CLOTHING STORE



Gordon Miller photo

BEST BIKE SHOP

- 1. Chuck's Bikes
- 2. Ranch Camp
- 3. Ski Essentials

Nominees: AJ's Ski & Sports, Hitchhiker Bike Shop, MountainOps, Power Play Sports

For a shop named after a late local legend among cyclists, it might take folks who don't know the current owner that it's really Hank's hangout. Proprietor Hank Glowiak has a singular vision — get people to ride bikes. And he'll do whatever he can, for whatever budget you may have, to make it happen.

BEST OVERALL SHOPPING EXPERIENCE

- 1. Stowe Mercantile
- 2. Commodities Natural Market
- 3. The Country Store on Main

Nominees: AJ's Ski & Sports, Archery Close, The Body Lounge, Once Upon A Time Toys, The Round Hearth Café & Marketplace, Tangerine & Olive, Yellow Turtle

“Overall” really describes the offerings at the Mercantile. Need the perfect holiday ornament? You'll find it. Scented candles? Check. That folksy sign that you can put over your bathroom, pool house, camp door or garage? There are all kinds. The Mercantile also has its own line of food-stuffs, much of which you can sample, because shopping makes you hungry.

BEST FLORIST

- 1. Peck's Flower Shop
- 2. Uncle George's Flowers
- 3. Bramble + Bloom

Nominees: A Clover and One Bee, Mooring Hill Farm

Some people like to have flowers all around them, in all seasons. Others go to Peck's for those special moments that we all experience, from the very beginning to the very end, and all the birthdays and Mothers' Days, first dates and anniversaries, “I love you's” and “I'm sorries” in between.

BEST REAL ESTATE AGENT (INDIVIDUAL)

- 1. Grant Wieler
- 2. Meg Kauffman
- 3. Pall Spera

Nominees: Ann Hennard-Ruth, Bobby Roberts, Dody Day, Gayle Oberg, KC Chambers, Maggie Macdonald, McKee Macdonald, Pete Kelly, Shauna Larson

As someone who spends much of his time playing outdoors, Grant Wieler has

the knack for helping clients find their shelters from the storm, while making sure the woods, rivers and slopes are within striking distance.

BEST LOCAL FARM PRODUCT/PRODUCER

- 1. Elmore Mountain Bread
- 2. Mansfield Dairy
- 3. Foote Brook Farm

Nominees: Knee Deep Farm, Long Winter Farm, Percy Farm, Sage Farm Goat Dairy, Snug Valley Farm

(See write-up on page 8)

BEST BUILDER

- 1. DBI (Donald P. Blake Jr., Inc.)
- 2. Sisler Builders
- 3. Gristmill Builders

Nominee: Patterson & Smith Construction

The namesake behind the best builder around is synonymous with community — Donnie serves as a justice of the peace in Morristown — shows that quality construction isn't the only key to a good building. So is building community.

BEST ARCHITECT/ARCHITECTURAL DESIGNER

- 1. Andrew Volansky (Volansky Studio)
- 2. Milford Cushman (Cushman Design Group)
- 3. Sam Scofield

Andrew Volansky wins again, making it four straight. And he continues to not only work with folks on making sure their dream homes become a reality, he handles the often-tortuous permitting process, appearing on behalf of clients before local zoning boards to help unravel the red tape.

BEST LANDSCAPE AND GARDEN DESIGN

- 1. Honey Bee Gardens
- 2. Volansky Studio
- 3. Cushman Design Group

Nominees: Ambler Design, Loomis Property Services, SiteForm Studio Landscape Architecture, Sprout Gardening & Landscaping

A newcomer in one of our new categories, Stowe's Honey Bee Gardens, as the name suggests, offers folks plenty of options to create pollinator gardens at their homes. But they also will work you on more modest container designs or help you with your veggie garden — time to plant the perfect salad.

Continued on page 14

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



59 Old Creamery Road | Morristown, VT
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BEST SWIMMING HOLE



Gordon Miller photo

Foster's hole

Foster's is not a dip-in, dip-out kind of swimming hole. It has many rocks for sitting or perching if the water is too cold or the sun is calling for basking. It has levels of depth where people of all heights can comfortably cool off; and where jumpers and waders can convene.

Located off Route 108 before the road really starts climbing toward the mountains, Foster's swimming hole is just a couple of seconds' drive up Notchbrook Road on the left side.

Nothing beats it a post-bike ride dunk in a cold river. Feeling the water chill sore muscles and invigorate the cardiovascular system is the best pick-me-up.

The tiny waterfalls are serene — their burbling calms a busy mind. The water, when lit up by the sun's rays, is a cozy dark aquamarine that reflects beautifully the evergreens that surround the spot, which let out a classic Green Mountain pine scent if the wind is right. If you spend enough time peering into the nooks and crannies of the rocks, you may find some life forms — minnows and such.

It's big enough to explore by rock-hopping up or downstream. A crowd doesn't make it stuffy and it's easily accessible — just a short, not-too-steep walk off the road. The rocks are large, fairly easy to grip and not very wobbly — important these things must be taken into consideration at swimming holes. The sun hits bathers on the rocks enough to warm up but not get toasted. Families are welcome and common.

And sometimes, on a day that's not too hot, you can find yourself all alone at this spot. And it will always be ice cold.

—Sophia Balunek

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BEST INTERIOR DESIGNER

1. Volansky Studio

2. Stowe Living

3. Cushman Design Group

Nominees:

Galen Arnot Interiors, Michelle Cote (Seldom Scene Interiors)

After Volansky helps you get your home approved and once it's built, why not call his company and figure out what the inside looks like? Readers trust him with that part, too.

BEST LAWYER

1. Jesse Goldfine

2. Julia Compagna

3. Tim Sargent

Nominees:

Harold "Hal" Stevens, Russell Barr

For the second straight year, Goldfine strikes gold with readers. In a town where transacting real estate is a cottage industry, it's important to have a lawyer who specializes in getting everything in order so all you have to do is sign here...and here...and here...

BEST MECHANIC

1. Willie's Village Auto

2. Larson's Auto

3. 253-AUTO

Nominees:

Driveline Auto Services

Willie Noyes has helped plenty a driver out of a pickle, and he's done it for folks who treat their cars like their pets and for folks who just need their vehicles to get from point A to point B to make a living. And when you shake his hand and look at it, you can tell it's one that has turned a lot of wrenches.

BEST PLUMBER

1. County Plumbing & Heating

2. The Bearded Plumber

3. John Compagna (Plumbing Solutions)

Nominees:

Don Clark (Clark's Plumbing & Heating), Josh Grondin, Stoneridge Plumbing & Heating

Sometimes, the big ones get voted the best ones. The fact that County can fix a leak and fix your heat makes the outfit something of a Swiss Army Knife in an area with a lot of small-shop specialists.

BEST ELECTRICIAN

1. Local Electric

2. Peak Electric

3. Gould Corp

Nominees:

802 Electric, Dougherty Electric, Ingersoll Electric, Jordan Electric, Keith Locke Electric

Over the decade, daily commuters between Morrisville and Stowe will have seen the black and white Local Electric vans multiply from one to two to a whole fleet in a short span. And for a company started by a graduate of Lamoille's own Green Mountain Tech, there's always a new crop of electricians ready to make it grow.

BEST SNOW REMOVAL/PLOWING

1. Paine's Property Maintenance

2. Stowe Home Care Maintenance

3. ARFA Property Management

Nominees:

Country Cut Lawns, R.C. Landscapes, Sam Stancliff, Yankee Home Solutions

Paine's doesn't have much of a web presence, minus a phone number. But clearly enough people have called that number to vote Paine's the best in plowing. No snow? Get them to mow your lawn.

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14

4393 Awards



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Photo: Jim Westphalen



Photo: Ryan Bent

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Thank YOU

A heartfelt thank you to everyone who nominated and voted for The Stowe Village Inn and Grant's Restaurant in the 4393 Awards. We are honored by your support and grateful to be part of such an incredible community. We look forward to welcoming you again soon!

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Do you ever get that out-of-town visitor from a large metropolitan area who complains that there's just nothing to do around here? Well, just tell them to get out (but make sure they have a water bottle and a granola bar). This area is chockful of ways to play and exercise — and, ideally, do both — inside and in the great outdoors. There are also plenty of people around here to keep you healthy so you can stay active.

BEST BIKE TRAIL(S)

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

Nominees: Cadys Falls, von Trapp Family Lodge & Resort

The 93-mile Rail Trail has become such a fixture between St. Johnsbury and Swanton that the folks pedaling along it — or letting their e-bike motors do the work — that towns located along it have seen visible bumps in local economies. Anyone hoping to open a business could do well by finding a spot near the trail.

BEST SKI TRAIL(S)

- 1. Nosedive
- 2. Jake's Ride
- 3. Hayride

Nominees: Bruce, Lifeline, Starr, Sterling

The fabled Front Four may have fallen out of the Top Three, but skiers and riders still favor Vermont's highest peak — and its highest-in-Vermont elevation that lent this whole annual contest its name. Every nominated trail is another way down the slopes at Stowe Mountain Resort.

BEST PLACE TO HIKE/
MOUNTAIN TRAIL(S)

- 1. Mount Mansfield
- 2. Stowe Pinnacle
- 3. Elmore Mountain

Nominees: Cadys Falls, Smugglers Notch, Sterling Pond Trail, Wiessner Woods

There are more ski trails descending Mansfield than there are hiking trails, but not that much more. From Hazelton to Hell Brook, Sunset Ridge to Profanity, to the state-spanning Long Trail, Vermont's biggest peak has plenty of variety.

Continued on page 18

BEST NONPROFIT/COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION, LAMOILLE COUNTY+



Gordon Miller photo

Clarina Howard Nichols Center

Over the last 45 years, the Clarina Howard Nichols Center has regularly helped more than 400 survivors of domestic and sexual violence a year. It's for good reason that the center has been voted the best non-profit in Lamoille County in 2026 — it helps people find safety and stability as they leave behind dangerous situations.

While the location of Clarina's shelter, which can house up to seven households, isn't public information — this helps keep survivors safe from their abusers — it is common to see the nonprofit out in the community

Just this past April, the center teamed up with other groups to host its annual "Take Back the Night" march in Morrisville. More than 50 people showed to protest the prevalence of sexual assault and the fear some feel about walking in public at night.

The organization has also been active with local schools. Two years ago, it began a program with Peoples Academy under a Rape Prevention and Education grant, working to create a safer and healthier school environment.

A lot of the Clarina Howard Nichols Center's work is quieter. Its hotline receives calls day and night, any day of the week. In

past years, the organization has reported talking to more than 1,000 people annually, providing, as described in the News & Citizen two years ago, "a gentle, helpful voice on the other end of a sometimes-desperate phone call."

Along with emergency assistance and shelter, Clarina also provides survivors with court advocacy — in 2023, the center reported assisting more 150 people in court.

While the work hasn't slowed, there have been some headwinds. Last year, the center lost \$11,000 in funding when President Trump's administration made cuts to nonprofit spending and grants.

The community, however, continues to show up for the work it is doing. Five hundred people attended last year's pride event. In the fall, it hosts the popular Pumpkin Chuckin' Festival fundraiser in which participants use trebuchets to launch pumpkins across the Stowe Events field.

"We aren't going anywhere," executive director Becky Gonyea told the News & Citizen last year.

— Briana Brady



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BEST ART GALLERY



Gordon Miller photo

River Arts

The arts have a way of bringing us all together. Not only do studies show that having art centers or access to creative outlets add to the social cohesion of a given community, but these places also act as rare third spaces in the world where people can come together and create something truly magical.

River Arts, based out of historic schoolhouse in downtown Morrisville, has been that place for over 25 years. But it's been far more than a studio for art classes — it has been a driving force in weaving together the fabric of community, from garden party events to dance classes and beyond.

Launched in 1999 as the result of a community forum

process that envisioned an intergenerational community arts center, River Arts would go on to become one of the most vital resources for the arts in Lamoille County.

According to its website, River Arts began operating from a donated space in downtown Morrisville, first offering outreach arts programs. But the game changed in 2005, with help from Preservation Trust of Vermont, when the organization purchased its current building. A campaign to raise enough funds to renovate the historic space and open the River Arts Center garnered over nearly \$1 million in support.

That community support is still alive and well, so it

should be no surprise that it was voted best art gallery.

More than 5,000 guests walk through the doors annually to visit the galleries, participate in the wide array of youth and adult classes or send their kids to summer camp. The nonprofit arts organization is also responsible for many of the public art installations around the Morrisville and Lamoille County area with a core mission that “art is for everyone.”

And the future for the organization is just beginning. “We are proud to build on a rich heritage, and evolve to best serve the community for generations to come,” leaders wrote in 2022.

—Liberty Darr

BEST PLACE TO PADDLE

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

Nominees: Caspian Lake, Cotton Brook, Lake Eden

The Green River Reservoir may well have once claimed the title of Vermont's best-kept secret. Those days are long gone, but with the state's Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation has done the best it can to keep up with the popularity, increasing and improving the parking situation. Still, the best advice for getting on the water: get there early in the morning.

BEST SWIMMING HOLE

- 1. Foster's Hole
- 2. Moss Glen Falls
- 3. Bingham Falls

(See write-up on page 12)

BEST PLACE TO PLAY GOLF

- 1. Ryder Brook Golf Club
- 2. Stowe Country Club
- 3. Copley Country Club

Nominees: Blush Hill Country Club, Country Club of Vermont

Stowe Country Club might take the

crown for the area's most-improved golf course, but it's multi-year overhaul — combined with its switch to a members-only experience — just might have sent golfers a few miles north on Route 100 to Ryder Brook. The charming, well-manicured course is the epitome of accessible.

BEST DISC GOLF COURSE

- 1. Smugglers' Notch Disc Golf Center
- 2. von Trapp Family Lodge & Resort

When you regularly host the world Pro Disc Golf Association championships, it's probably a good bet that's going help

land you a hole in one. Somewhat surprising is the short list of nominees in this category. With a good dozen more modest courses within a short driving distance Stowe, we predict this category to really tee off in the future

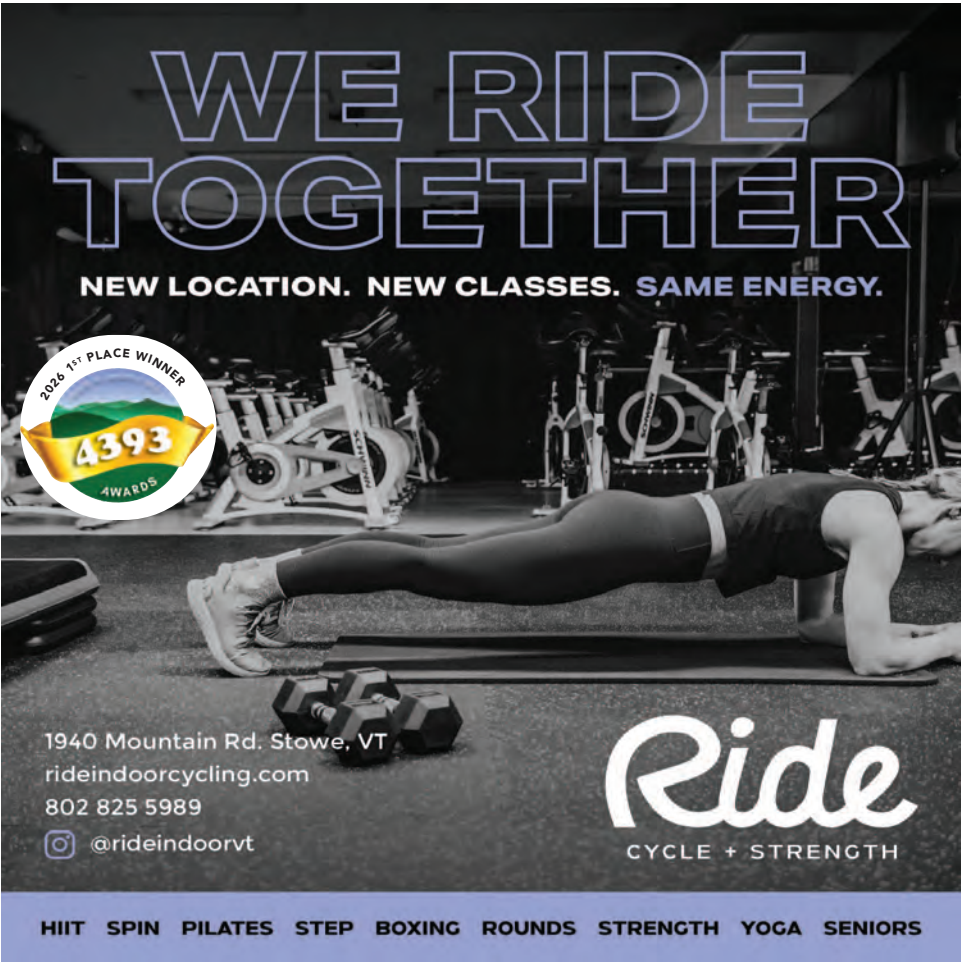
BEST LOCAL RACE OR SPORTING EVENT

- 1. Stowe Derby
- 2. Heady Trotter
- 3. Ski Bum Series

Nominees: Leaf Blower Fall Classic, Vermont 10 Miler

Continued on page 20

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It started in the final Days of World War II, a one-on-one battle between two titans of skiing based on a singular proposition: who could make it from the top of Mount Mansfield all the way to the village of Stowe on a single pair of skis? Eighty-one years later, hundreds of people are still answering that question.

BEST PLACE TO TAKE OUT OF TOWN GUESTS

- 1. von Trapp Brewing & Bierhall
 - 2. Stowe Farmers Market
 - 3. The Alchemist Brewery
- Nominees:** Burt’s Irish Pub, Cold Hollow Cider Mill, Elmore State Park, Grant’s, Moss Glen Falls, Once Upon a Time Toys, The Round Hearth Café & Marketplace, Smugglers Notch, Stowe Cider, Stowe Mountain Resort, von Trapp Family Lodge & Resort

Stowe’s most famous family — thanks to this little 1965 movie in which “the first three notes just happen to be do-re-mi” — settled in the foothills of Mansfield and the rest is history. The Bierhall is just the most recent addition to the sprawling von Trapp estate, serving as an appetizer for your visit, or a palate cleanser.

BEST DATE/NIGHT OUT SPOT

- 1. Edson Hill
 - 2. Harrison’s Restaurant
 - 3. Hen of the Wood
- Nominees:** The Bijou Theater, Burt’s Irish Pub, Cork, Grant’s, Plate, Salute, Stowe Bowl, Trattoria La Festa, The Whip Bar & Grill

(See write-up on page 4)

BEST TRAINER/FITNESS INSTRUCTOR

- 1. Joanna Graves
 - 2. Hector Ortiz
 - 3. Kaarin Shipitko
- Nominees:** Chad Couto, Charlotte Brynn, Ernie Roick, Jeremy Bradley, Julie Roick

Joanna Graves has been touting physical fitness for most of this century, whether as the athletic director Stowe High School, coaching both the boys’ and girls’ tennis teams to state championships, or through her own Ride gym, which gets people spinning their way to health. Now, she specializes in keeping peri- and menopausal women in fighting shape, proving that fitness is for life.

BEST FITNESS VENUE/GYM

- 1. The Swimming Hole
 - 2. The Forge Gym
 - 3. PHIT Performance
- Nominee:** Curated Pilates + Movement
- It has a pool, for starts. But what sets The Swimming Hole apart is the people in



Tom Rogers photo

The Green River Reservoir is best – i.e., slightly less busy – when the sun is low in the sky, either in the morning or evening.

the pool. The place boasts two English Channel crosses, after all. But the instructors there are at their best teaching new swimmers the strokes and watching them improve and thrive in competitions.

BEST DOCTOR/SPECIALIST

- 1. Kim Bruno, MD
 - 2. Melissa Volansky, MD
 - 3. Kirsten Alexander, DC
 - 3. Joseph McLaughlin, MD
- Nominees:** Katherine Marvin, MD

When Dr. Bruno isn’t tending to patients, she’s probably 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!”

BEST PHYSICAL THERAPIST

- 1. Summit Physical Therapy & Performance
 - 2. Kat Dwyer (Stowe Physical Therapy and Pilates)
 - 3. Heidi Noonan (PT On the Go)
- Nominees:** Heather Gardner (Pinnacle

Physical Therapy), Jane Eliasson (Pinnacle Physical Therapy), Kathleen Doehla (Points North Sports & Regenerative PT), Mary Chudzik (Pinnacle Physical Therapy)

When your car starts to break down from overuse, you visit a mechanic. Likewise, when you yourself need a little body work, you might benefit from one of these kinesiological experts. For the second straight year, Summit is on top, and its therapists will make sure you stay on top, too.

BEST WELLNESS PROVIDER/STUDIO

- 1. Ride Cycle + Strength
 - 2. SALT + GROVE
 - 3. The Elmore Spa
- Nominee:** Curated Pilates + Movement

Joanna Graves started a revolution with RIDE, and the gym has kept people spinning since Kristen Ely hopped in the saddle last year. Members continue to be gym-goers having perhaps the most fun, grunting and cheering each other on, and spinning through town atop a flatbed trailer in the annual July 4 parade.

BEST DENTIST

- 1. John Hirce, DMD (Stowe Family Dentistry)
- 2. Christopher Altadonna, DDS (Stowe Dental Associates)
- 3. Matthew Ebert, DMD (Brigham Dental Care)

Top tooth tapper Hirce started with Stowe Family Dentistry in 2012, and folks have opened wide and said ahhh for him ever since.

BEST VET

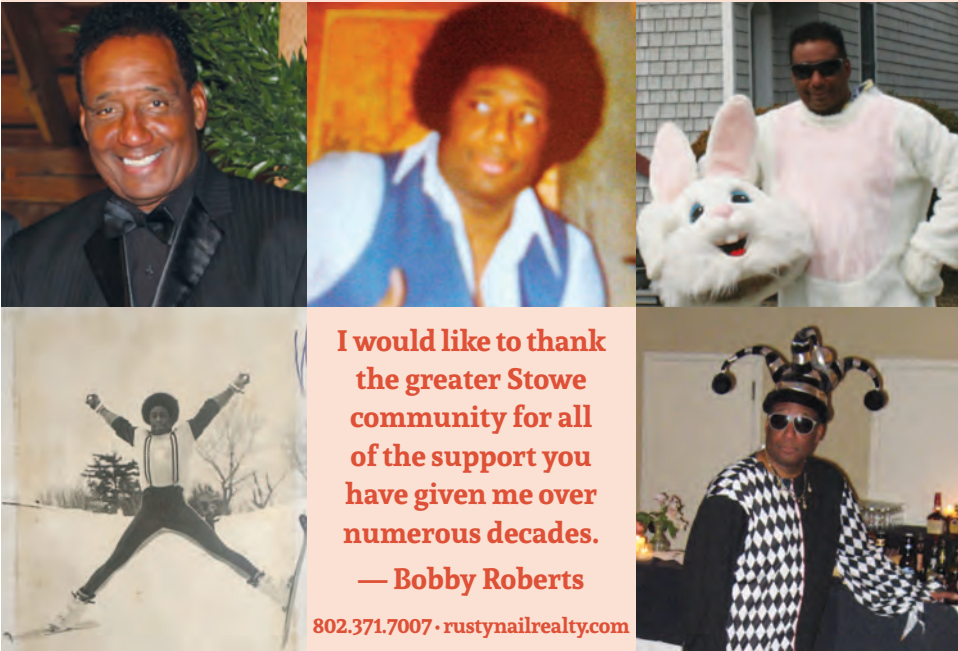
- 1. Gregg Goodson (Stowe Veterinary Clinic)
- 2. Emily Bond (Sequist Animal Hospital)
- 3. Lamoille Valley Veterinary Services

Nominees: Hardwick Veterinary Clinic, Ryan Flannery (Stowe Veterinary Clinic)

“Our pets now are part of the family,” the perennial top pet whisperer once said. Goodson has been a trusted name in furry friend care for years, and the secret may be how Stowe Veterinary Clinic makes sure the humans are well-served, by making sure their four-legged family members stay tip-top.




Congratulations Bobby Roberts, Mr. Stowe!



I would like to thank the greater Stowe community for all of the support you have given me over numerous decades.

— Bobby Roberts

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— Ms. Stowe



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A saying attributed to Ralph Waldo Emerson goes, “A house is made with walls and beams; a home is built with love and dreams.”

Sure, this area would already be pretty swell if it was only known for its picturesque vistas, its agrarian and recreational sensibilities, its food and drink, its quietude. But all that would be rather hollow without the people. These are the movers and shakers — the artists, the philanthropists, the entrepreneurs and the volunteers — who help make this place home.

BEST MUSICIAN, BAND OR ENTERTAINER

- 1. Seth Yacovone
 - 2. Eames Brothers Band
 - 3. Rusty DeWees
- Nominees:** Christine Malcolm, Deadbeats of Stowe, Emoji Nightmare, George Walker Petit, The Lost Faculty, Rhythm on 90

Seth Yacovone has been playing live for audiences since the 1990s, when he was a teenage guitar prodigy. What do guitar prodigies grow up to be? Shredders. Yacovone has gigged with or opened for legends like B.B. King and Ray Charles, but he’s also the Where’s Waldo of musicians for local bands, popping up for a song or a set, his tone immediately as familiar as his long straggly beard and gravelly, blues-soaked voice.

BEST PERFORMANCE ARTS GROUP/THEATER

- 1. Spruce Peak Arts
 - 2. Bread & Puppet Theater
 - 3. Lamoille County Players
 - 3. TRIP Dance Company
- Nominees:** Lamoille Valley Dance Academy

Ever since Seth Soloway took over as executive director at Spruce Peak Arts a few years ago, he’s worked to diversify the offerings and has brought many performances out of the organization’s stellar arts center and into the open air. Spruce Peak Arts took it to a new level this summer by receiving the Music in the Meadow torch from Stowe Performing Arts.

BEST VISUAL ARTIST

- 1. Caitlin Kelly
 - 2. Katerina “KAT” Hrdlicka Werth
 - 3. Jess Graham
- Nominees:** Jen Hubbard Danahy, Natasha Bogar, Olivia George, Sally Stetson, Trevor Corp

Readers focused on photography this year when honoring the area’s best visual artist — Caitlin Kelly was also a nominee for best shutterbug. Kelly is sought out for her wedding photography, but she’s also adept at capturing outdoor recreationists knee deep in powder. Special



Gordon Miller photo

Stowe’s best block party of the year is when the British Invasion rolls into town in September. America may be celebrating its 250th year of putting King George III on blast, but classic cars and classic rock still remain timeless attractions.

shout-out to second-place vote-getter KAT, who oversaw the design on this very 4393 supplement.

BEST PHOTOGRAPHER

- 1. Jesse Schloff
 - 2. Caitlin Kelly
 - 3. Heather Glenn
- Nominees:** Amber Osgood, Mark Vandenberg, Paul Rogers

A Stowe Reporter alum, Jesse Schloff has trained his keen eye all throughout the area, shooting sports contests, concerts and weddings, whenever the call comes. No stranger to the top of this cat-

egory, Schloff finds himself part of a pretty cool posse of people patrolling places for picture-perfect memories.

MS. STOWE (PERSON WHO EMBODIES COMMUNITY)

- 1. Beth Gadbois
 - 2. Chelsea Turley
 - 3. Devon Heath Williams
- Nominees:** Alli Ruschp, Caitlin Kelly, Emma Fitzgerald, Janet Martinez, Kate Carpenter, Leslie Anderson, Lucie Laporte-Keene, Maggie Macdonald, Merry Vigneau, Michy Lemay, Molly Nesselrodt, Nancy Teed
- Beth Gadbois brought her wit and wis-

dom to community-minded initiatives — whether food drives for people experiencing life setbacks or spearheading a simple puzzle exchange in the early days of the pandemic — long before she decided to run for the town selectboard. She’s since experienced the ups and downs of public opinion as part of a five-person body tasked with crafting town policy. Apparently, readers appreciate the work.

MR. STOWE (PERSON WHO EMBODIES COMMUNITY)

- 1. Bobby Roberts
- 2. Andrew Volansky
- 3. Ted Thorndike

Nominees: Adam Ogden, Bob St. Pierre, Charles Safford, Chris Vigneau, Dave Taylor, John Neville, John Walsh

If Bobby Roberts did nothing other than run northern Vermont's premier nightclub — the Rusty Nail for you unfortunate newbies out there — that might be enough to make him the perennial Mr. Stowe. Now a busy realtor, Roberts is still visible around town, driving the vehicle with the STOWE license plate.

MS. LAMOILLE (PERSON WHO EMBODIES COMMUNITY)

- 1. Amy Olsen
- 2. Jo Sabel Courtney
- 3. Becky Gonyea

Nominees: Chelsea Turley, Deborah Papineau, Jen Hubbard Danahy

Librarians are often the very center of a community, and the librarians are right in the middle. Such is the case with Amy Olsen, director of Hyde Park's Lanpher Memorial Library. The shire town is lucky enough to have her, and the county is a little richer for the programs she brings to town.

MR. LAMOILLE (PERSON WHO EMBODIES COMMUNITY)

- 1. Rusty DeWees
- 2. Dave Yacovone
- 3. Hank Glowiak

Nominees: Andrew Volansky, Donald P. Blake Jr., John Walsh

Oi' Russ has let his beard go white, but The Logger hasn't lost a step. DeWees cuts a familiar figure wherever he goes, but his venture into podcasting has showcased his keen ear as much as his winking wit. "Good n' You?" is the catchall Vermont reply to every greeting, and it's no wonder DeWees chose that as the name for his pod.

ENTREPRENEUR OF THE YEAR

- 1. Andrew Volansky
- 2. Emma Fitzgerald
- 3. Shauna Nichols

Nominees: Bailey Evans, Dan Snyder, Jeff Nicholson, Jen Hubbard Danahy, Joshua Wolfgang

There's a housing crisis in Vermont, and some say the only way out of it is to build more housing. As mentioned in other categories in this year's contest, Volansky has been busy helping people do just that.

VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR (LOCAL WHO GIVES BACK)

- 1. Andrew Volansky
- 2. Devon Heath Williams
- 3. Shelley Nolan

Nominees: Leslie Anderson, Nina Teed

Really, what else is there to say? Simply see above. Volansky is having a moment.

BEST ANNUAL EVENT — STOWE

- 1. British Invasion
- 2. Stowe Balloon Festival
- 3. Fourth of July

Nominees: Exposed, Stowe Jazz Festival

The Stowe Balloon Festival may be slowly ascending back to its former glory, but for our readers, the top event involves cars with steering wheels on the wrong side and the year's best block party, shutting down Main Street in a celebration of chrome and steel, and rock and roll.

BEST ANNUAL EVENT — LAMOILLE COUNTY+

- 1. Stowe Jazz Festival
- 2. Lamoille County Field Days
- 3. Vermont Pumpkin Chuckin' Festival

Nominees: Oxbow Music Festival, Rocktoberfest

A jazz band in full steam is a flurry of limbs and fingers and beads of sweat. The same can be said for George Petit, the conductor of Stowe's most beloved annual event. The Stowe Jazz Festival fills the entire town with tunes, with jam sessions breaking out around every corner, not to mention the stellar acts on the main stage, from midday to the wee hours. And it's all free.

BEST NONPROFIT/COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION — STOWE

- 1. Stowe Mountain Rescue
- 2. Stowe Land Trust
- 3. Stowe Trails Partnership

Nominees: Jewish Community of Greater Stowe, Stowe Vibrancy, Wish Upon a Family

Stowe Mountain Rescue is the A-Team of backcountry bad-asses. You hope to never need them, but you're immensely glad they're there when you do. The crew faces its share of tragedy, when the wilderness claims a life, and it deals with plenty of injuries, both gruesome and routine. And the folks do it with grace, following excursions with humanistic Facebook posts that never shame, but always inform.

BEST NONPROFIT/COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION — LAMOILLE COUNTY+

- 1. Clarina Howard Nichols Center
- 2. North Country Animal League
- 3. Stowe Land Trust

Nominees: 100 Women Who Care, Salvation Farms

(See write-up on Page 16)



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BEST INDIVIDUAL REALTOR



In a field where the talent and caliber of professionals is extremely high and competitive, I'm a bit humbled and truly honored to be named Best Individual Realtor. Thank you to everyone who took the time to vote, and to the families who have trusted me with one of the biggest decisions to assist in moving their lives forward over the past six years.

This recognition also comes at a meaningful time as I continue building Green Peak Properties, a brand rooted in the same values that brought me into this work: respect for the communities we live in, a love for Vermont's outdoors, and a commitment to doing things the right way.

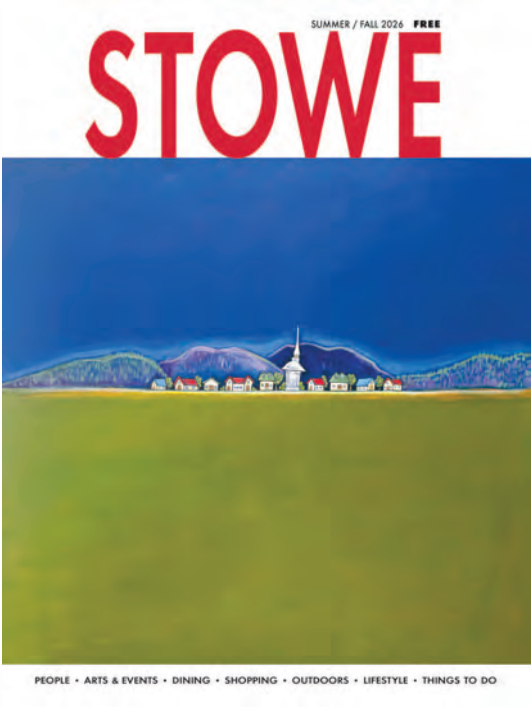
I'm grateful for the support, and I look forward to serving our region with the same care and attention that earned this honor.

— Grant Wieler



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