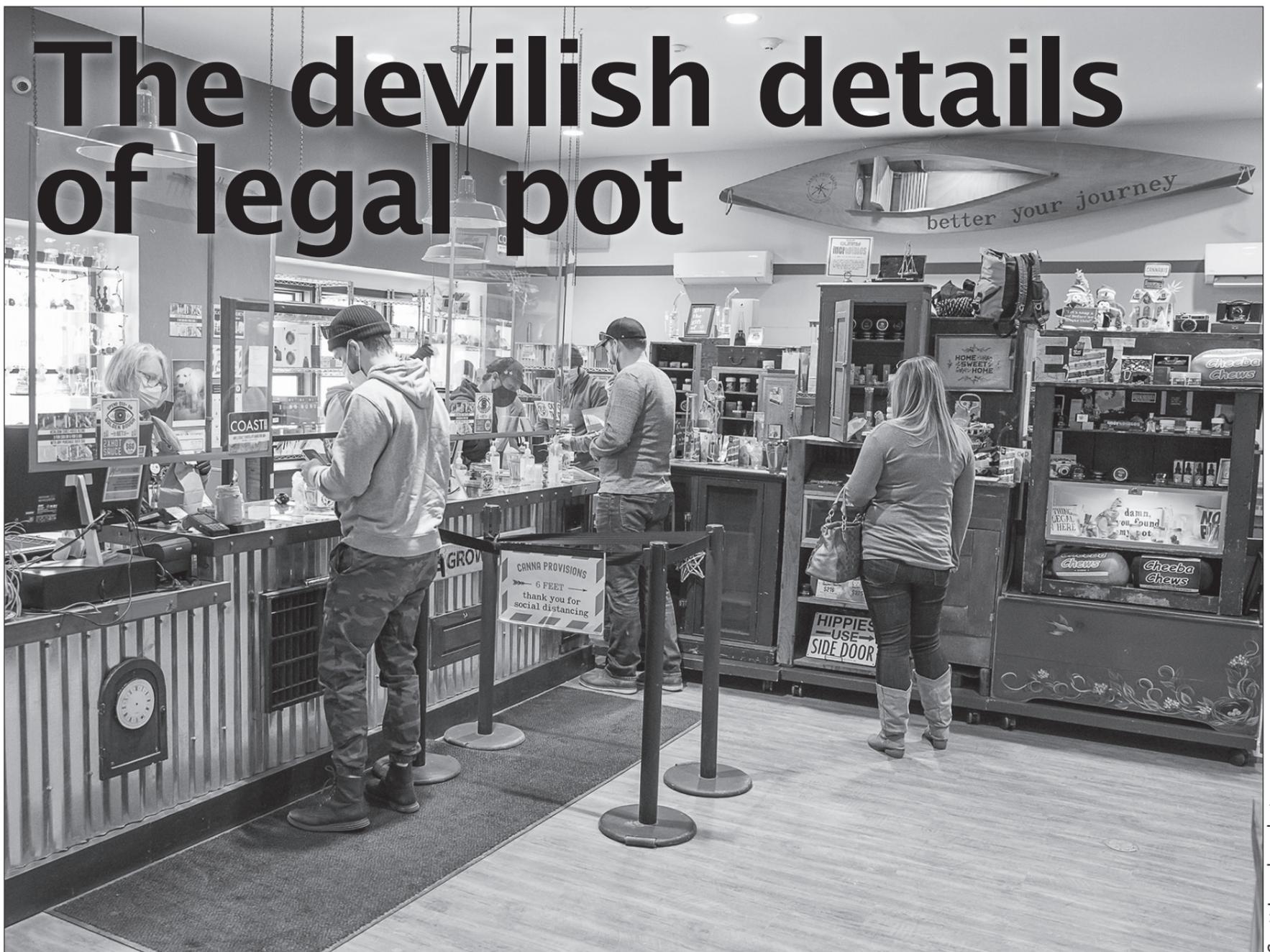


# observer

The independent newspaper of eastern New York, southwestern Vermont and the Berkshires

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## The devilish details of legal pot

### As New York moves toward legalization, is Massachusetts a model?

Story on Page 4

### Plus

A Vermont general store is reborn

Page 3

Farm's quest: Healthy soil, healthy planet

Page 8

A leader who talked less but said more

Page 15

For creating at home: Fiber arts

Page 16

Arts, culture for a region gone virtual

Pages 20-23

Scott Langley photo

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# HILL COUNTRY observer

FEBRUARY - MARCH 2021

The independent newspaper of eastern New York, southwestern Vermont and the Berkshires



### The devilish details of legal pot

With New York facing a pandemic-driven budget gap of nearly \$15 billion, some say this is the year the state will finally commit to legalizing marijuana for recreational use. The state Department of Health estimated in 2018 that New York's marijuana market was worth up to \$3.5 billion annually, and Gov. Andrew Cuomo predicts that by regulating and taxing that market, the state could bring in about \$300 million a year. But just across the state line in Massachusetts, where voters overwhelmingly backed legalization in a 2016 referendum, people involved in the state's new cannabis industry warn that visions of a quick flood of revenue may be unrealistic. The details of New York's regulatory scheme, they say, will make all the difference. .... Page 4



### Finding the future in health soil

Jim Schultz runs a small-scale farm demonstrating how better agriculture practices can help to solve the climate crisis. Raising healthy food is a central goal at Schultz's Red Shirt Farm in Lanesborough, Mass. But so is restoring and enhancing the health of the soil. And it's a healthy soil microbiome, Schultz and others say, that's key to putting carbon back into the soil and retaining it there -- rather than releasing into the air, where it contributes to planetary warming. .... Page 8



### In a homebound season, region's fiber arts thrive

Andrea Myklebust came to Vermont two years ago to be part of the region's growing fiber arts scene. The sculptor and weaver, who will teach virtual workshops in weaving this winter through the Southern Vermont Arts Center, spins and weaves the wool from a flock of 25 sheep. In the region where Massachusetts, New York and Vermont meet, knitters and weavers create their work with fibers from area farms that have been spun and processed locally. .... Page 16

**Editorial/Letters** ..... Page 14

**Maury Thompson:** A politician who talked less and said more ..... Page 15

**Arts & Culture calendar** ..... Pages 20-22

**Visual arts exhibition listings** ..... Page 23

Cover photo by Scott Langley: Customers shop inside Canna Provisions, a recreational marijuana store in Lee, Mass.

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Gib Mach, the owner of Mach's Market, stands inside the revamped store, which reopened last spring after being shuttered for five years. The landmark building in the center of Pawlet, above, was originally built as a hotel in 1804.



Joan K. Lentini photos

# Restoring the hub of Pawlet

## Historic general store finds new life, new vision after five-year hiatus

By **STACEY MORRIS**  
Contributing writer

PAWLET, Vt.

On a busy Saturday afternoon at Mach's Market, a physically distanced line of people forms at the cash register.

Most are buying edible delights such as crab cakes, orzo pasta salads, smoked BLT's, and pizzas from the brick oven. Some cradle armloads of kale and kohlrabi from the produce section – or loaves of house-baked organic sourdough.

The scene is quite a contrast from the many decades when Mach's functioned as the all-purpose local general store – a place where people stopped in to pick up quarts of milk, loaves of sandwich bread, hardware and other supplies. That version of the store shut down in 2015, and its landmark 200-year-old building in the center of the village stood mostly empty for five years.

Now, after a lengthy renovation, Mach's Market has been reborn, thanks to the vision of owner Gib Mach.

The store's retail history dates back 71 years. Gib's uncle, John Mach, bought the former hotel in 1945 after serving in the Marine Corps. He too spent several years renovating a dormant building, ultimately reopening it as Mach's General Store.

Back then, there were no shopping malls or

big-box stores, and most people didn't venture too far from home to shop. Gib Mach remembers how the inventory reflected the store's mission in the post-war era, with selections of paint, hardware and glass as well as groceries. There was even a toy department upstairs.

His uncle was a graduate of a national butchering school in Toledo, Ohio, and customers came from well beyond the town limits for his cuts of farm-raised beef, handmade sausage and his signature baked beans.

John Mach ran the business for nearly 30 years before turning it over to his daughter Jennifer. When she wanted to sell in 1979, Gib bought the business and the real estate, which sits at the edge of the Flower Brook. He ran the store until 2001, when he decided he could no longer operate a general store in addition to his drilling and blasting business.

"My other job meant working 15-hour days," he recalled. "I've always said that at a mom-and-pop store, mom and pop need to be there. And my wife didn't want to run the store alone."

After Gib sold the store, it went through several owners before closing in 2015.

"It was sad to see it close," Mach recalled. "The community tried to get together to keep it open, but it didn't happen."

He decided he had to save the landmark property that was so entwined with his family history.

"I knew it would need a lot of work," he said. "But I never thought it would take five years."

The no-detail-spared renovation involved bringing the building up to current fire safety code, a time-consuming asbestos removal and lead-paint abatement.

"The place was gutted," Mach said. "And in the process, we discovered beautiful brick walls from 1804, when the hotel was built."

The renovation was self-financed, he said, and included a few unexpected twists, including damage from the 2011 flooding caused by Hurricane Irene – and a lightning strike of a tree behind the building that ignited an explosion in the propane line.

The project took nearly a village to complete, with architects, plumbers, insulation specialists, contractors, and structural engineers all contributing to the outcome.

### Adapting to a new era

But Mach had more than just a structural makeover in mind. He also envisioned a streamlined inventory – with prepared food as the centerpiece.

"I knew I wanted to hire a chef," he explained. "Times were different, and I couldn't compete with Home Depot and Tractor Supply Company. But if the food was good enough, we could be-

*continued on page 12*

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# The devilish details of legal pot

As New York advances toward legalization, is Massachusetts a model?

By EVAN LAWRENCE  
Contributing writer

With New York facing a pandemic-driven budget gap of nearly \$15 billion, some say this is the year the state will finally commit to legalizing marijuana for recreational use.

The state Department of Health estimated in 2018 that New York's marijuana market was worth up to \$3.5 billion, which industry observers say is the largest on the East Coast.

By regulating and taxing that market, Gov. Andrew Cuomo estimates the state could bring in about \$300 million a year. The governor called for legalization last month in his State of the State address, and many legislators already support the idea. Polls show strong public support.

But just across the state line in Massachusetts, where voters overwhelmingly backed legalization in a 2016 referendum, people involved in the state's new cannabis industry warn that visions of a quick flood of revenue are unrealistic.

"Cannabis ventures are not simple, cheap or easily profitable," Erik Williams wrote in an opinion column in the January issue of *Berkshire Trade & Commerce*.

Williams, who is co-owner of the Canna Provisions store in the Berkshires town of Lee, said in an interview that despite the demand for its products, the recreational marijuana industry faces many financial hurdles, including discriminatory treatment in the federal tax code and a lack of access to basic financial tools such as credit card processing.

Setting up a safe and viable recreational market will take careful planning and well-crafted regulations, he cautioned.

Success will depend on how New York decides to handle issues such as local control, licensing and whether entrepreneurs are restricted in the size and types of their operations.

Farmers who currently are permitted to grow hemp, marijuana's non-intoxicating variant, want to know if they'll be allowed to expand into the recreational market. Other questions to be resolved include whether production and sale of medical marijuana, which is already allowed in New York,



Scott Langley photo

A display case shows off the wares at the Canna Provisions store in Lee, Mass. The store is one of several that opened in the Berkshires after the state's voters backed marijuana legalization in 2016.

would be kept separate from the recreational market, and whether marijuana businesses will be allowed to vertically integrate – such as by having growing and retail operations – or whether these activities will require separate licenses.

## Neighboring states push ahead

Although Massachusetts currently is the only state in the region offering retail marijuana sales, New York might soon trail all of its neighbors except Pennsylvania in moving toward a legal recreational marketplace.

Vermont, which legalized recreational use in 2018, approved a new law in October that provides for a legal system of taxable sales by next year. New Jersey voters approved recreational sales in a November referendum, and enabling legislation is awaiting the signature of Gov. Phil Murphy. And Connecticut legislators give that state a 50-50 likelihood of following suit this year. Retail pot sales are already legal in Canada.

New York has allowed sales of medical marijuana since 2015. But the state's program, overseen by the Department of Health, is widely criticized as difficult to access. Only 10 medical marijuana suppliers serve the entire state and are

limited to a maximum of four locations each. They aren't allowed to offer marijuana in any form that can be smoked, which is how most users consume it, and medical marijuana patients are prohibited from growing their own supply at home.

New York's previous attempts to legalize sales of recreational pot have foundered over concerns about what the state would do with tax revenue – and how it would ensure justice for minority communities that have been disproportionately harmed by marijuana prohibition. Some opponents continue to raise public safety concerns.

After Congress acted in 2018 to legalize the production of hemp, the non-intoxicating variant of marijuana, some farmers in eastern New York began growing the crop, chiefly to produce the popular cannabidiol or CBD oil. But the state's new hemp growers have been buffeted by a combination of oversupply and sometimes contradictory regulations. Now they're wary of how the state's move toward full marijuana legalization might affect them.

Cuomo has said he wants legalization considered as part of the state's budget for the 2022 fiscal year, which begins April 1. The broad outlines of the governor's legalization proposal

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are included in the state's 2022 budget briefing book, but many details remain to be worked out and reconciled with bills already in the Legislature.

### Repealing prohibition

State Sen. Liz Krueger, D-Manhattan, has been introducing bills since 2013 to allow regulated, taxable sales of marijuana products. She and the current bill's 19 co-sponsors hold that marijuana prohibition "is a failed policy that disproportionately affects communities of color and wastes valuable law enforcement resources."

Krueger's bill, like a companion version in the Assembly, would remove legal liabilities for adult use and possession, and it would direct funds and assistance to communities that have been most harmed by prohibition policies.

In New York, bills can advance either through the Legislature or the budget process.

"Either approach is a reasonable one," said Brad Usher, Krueger's chief of staff.

He said Krueger's bill draws on the experience of other states with legal markets.

"It's a moving target" as more states open markets, he added. "Each time a new state does it, there are improvements."

Krueger's bill emphasizes social equity, which was not part of early legalization bills, Usher said.

Now, "a lot of states are starting to move down the road of social equity," he said, citing Massachusetts, Illinois, and Colorado. New York legislators are talking with other states about what has worked and what hasn't.

"Not going first is sometimes an advantage," Usher said.

Both Krueger's legislation and the governor's proposal would create a state Cannabis Control Board, which would set up an Office of Cannabis Management. The office would bring recreational marijuana, non-psychoactive cannabis products and industrial hemp under one agency, which will issue licenses for regulated parts of the market.

A limited number of recreational licenses would go to existing medical marijuana providers, Usher said.

"If medical marijuana can't play at all in retail, they won't be viable," Usher added.

Krueger and her allies want people with medical conditions to have access to products recommended by their doctors, rather than having to go to a retail shop and guessing which products might be helpful, he said.

"But we don't want medical marijuana dominating the industry to the exclusion of everyone else," Usher added.

### Licensing and testing

For the most part, vertical integration would be discouraged under New York's current legislative proposals. Except for micro-businesses and medical providers, entrepreneurs would only be able to hold a license for one part of the industry, such as growing, processing, testing, transportation or retail.

The control board would determine the number of licenses in each sector based on demand. That would help prevent takeover by a few large companies and keep retail markets independent.

"We want to make sure small players have a space," Usher said.

The Senate bill would allow individuals to have up to two pounds of dried material, 4.5 ounces

of concentrate, or six live plants, and they could share those amounts with other adults.

Testing to ensure potency and purity is an important feature of both proposals.

"It's clear that a well-regulated market will give consumers a much better sense of what they're consuming," Usher said.

Cuomo's proposal would impose an excise tax at the wholesale level as well as taxes based on the product's potency. With state and local taxes included, the tax to consumers could total about 30 percent.

The rate in Krueger's proposal is significantly lower, at 22 percent, which Usher said is in the range of what other states have imposed.

"The tax rate is critical to reduce the illegal market," he added.

The social equity aspect of the Senate bill encourages people in minority communities with a historically high rate of marijuana-related arrests and convictions to start legal businesses. For example, people with established black-market customers could become licensed retailers and possibly expand their businesses. That would bring revenue into their communities, Usher said.

As with alcohol, towns that don't want to be part of the industry can opt out. The governor's bill makes that easier, Usher said.

He predicted most "dry towns" would have second thoughts when they see revenue going elsewhere.

Unlike Cuomo, Krueger and her colleagues aren't predicting how much revenue a legal marijuana market would generate.

"We're just saying there will be a significant increase in revenues," Usher said.

Some of it will support the regulatory system and to help develop new marijuana-related businesses, especially in communities that suffered under prohibition. Other funds will go to improving drug enforcement, including hiring and training law enforcement officers who are able to recognize and document drug-impaired driving.

But Usher stressed the legal marijuana sales may not necessarily result in more consumption.

"People are driving stoned right now," he said.

In some cases, he suggested, public safety risks would be reduced if people are able to buy marijuana legally near their homes rather than having to drive long distances to obtain it.

Some revenue from legal marijuana could also pay for drug treatment and education.

"We could offer more treatment for opioid addiction," Usher said. "The danger of death from other drugs is much higher."

The chances of legalization appeared good last year until the pandemic upended everyone's priorities.

"The longer New York delays, the more New York loses out," Usher said.

Massachusetts is convenient to a relatively small number of upstate residents, he said. But New Jersey is "just a couple of subway stops away" from millions of New York City residents.

Usher said he's "cautiously optimistic" that legalization will happen this year. It has many supporters and not many opponents, he said.

But it will take time to set up a regulatory system and build enough inventory to supply businesses. Usher said he doesn't expect sales could start until late next year at the soonest.

### Agricultural opportunity?

One issue for New York's legalization push is how it will affect the state's farmers, particularly those who are already growing hemp as a cash crop for fiber and CBD oil.

The Farm Bureau of New York, an advocacy group for farmers, takes no position on legalizing recreational marijuana, but spokesman Steve Ammerman said "farmers should have a seat at the table" when the state sets rules for growing and regulating the crop. Marijuana would "provide some diversification" for the state's farmers and expand their markets, he said.

Although hemp and its intoxicating cousin are botanically the same, marijuana is "a completely different crop" that would come with "new regulations and security measures," Ammerman said.

The state's medical marijuana program bypassed farmers, Ammerman said, with contracts going to a few nonfarm companies. He said the Farm Bureau supports vertical integration, which would allow farmers to market their products directly to consumers. That's not part of the current legislative proposals.

"That needs to be part of the discussion," Ammerman said. "There could be some advantages for a New York crop grown by New York farmers. Nobody does it better."

Seth Jacobs and his family started growing hemp in 2019 at their farm in the Washington County town of Argyle, after changes to federal and state laws cleared the once-prohibited crop. Jacobs' Slack Hollow Farm markets its own line of CBD products, aimed at the natural remedies market. The farm is a member of the New York Cannabis Growers and Processors Association.

Because it's still illegal at the federal level, any marijuana sold in New York under a state legalization effort would have to be grown in the state.

"I would dearly love to get into it," Jacobs said. "There's a big change around the corner, and I'd like to be part of it."

The recreational industry "wants to be regulated with good quality controls," Jacobs said.

But how the state approaches regulation is crucial to whether legalization succeeds, he said, adding that imposing high taxes will just drive customers to the black market.

The state's handling of the CBD industry doesn't leave Jacobs hopeful. He pointed to a recent ban on marketing the CBD flower, which can be smoked.

"We can sell anywhere else, but not in New York," Jacobs said. "It borders on the absurd."

*continued on next page*



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**Small farms vs. big business**

Jacobs said he fears Cuomo's proposal would benefit mostly big businesses, keeping farmers from selling their own products and prohibiting homegrown marijuana.

In some states, existing medical marijuana producers have had priority when recreational markets open.

"We have no clue on what terms they'll let us in on, if they let in small growers at all," Jacobs said.

Micro-licenses for small growers and producers "would be really nice," Jacobs said. "With the buy local movement, who wouldn't want to buy their products locally?"

What happens at the federal level matters to local farmers too. Jacobs pointed to a final rule published by the U.S. Department of Agriculture on Jan. 19, the last full day of the Trump administration, sharply lowering legal limits of THC in hemp. The change, he warned, would be "very damaging to the CBD industry." The rule change was set to take effect March 22 but was frozen along with other new federal rules by the incoming Biden administration.

Another possibility is that Congress will reconsider federal prohibition of marijuana. In December, the House passed a bill to end criminal penalties under federal law and allow cannabis

businesses access to banking services and normal business deductions. The bill had been expected to die in the Senate, but after control of that chamber flipped in January, Majority Leader Charles Schumer, D-N.Y., and other Democratic senators issued a statement Feb. 1 pledging to take up "comprehensive cannabis reform legislation."

DeVaughn Ward, senior legislative counsel for the Marijuana Policy Project, a national advocacy group, called Cuomo's proposal "a starting negotiation point" for talks with the Legislature. He called Krueger's bill "more progressive."

Marijuana enforcement "has largely been on communities of color," Ward said. "A large part of the revenues should be directed to their needs. The communities most harmed should reap the benefits."

Although a number of states are looking to marijuana for revenues and job growth, crafting cannabis legislation is "a complicated undertaking with competing interests," Ward said. "It has to be transparent and thoughtful."

New York needs to avoid New Jersey's situation, Ward said. There, despite overwhelming support for legalizing marijuana, legislation to create a regulated marketplace is bogged down in disputes over details.

In the meantime, "people are still being arrested for cannabis violations," he said.

**A focus on local control**

Williams and Meg Sanders co-own Canna Provisions in Lee and two other recreational marijuana retail stores in Massachusetts. They've also built cannabis businesses in Colorado and Illinois, and they consult nationally and internationally on the cannabis industry.

Their Lee store opened in July 2019. "It took longer than expected," Williams said. "There were delays across the board" as the state set up its regulatory system and as Williams and Sanders worked out agreements with the town.

But the regulatory system developed in Massachusetts could be a model for New York, Sanders said.

"Massachusetts did local control right," she said. "When you have the diversity of communities that you have in New York, having strong local control makes sense."

For many reasons, she added, "the worst thing for New York is to let a bunch of wealthy white men run the whole cannabis industry."

She said limiting the number of licenses is a bad idea.

"That makes it tough for equity and social justice empowerment," Sanders said. "It keeps some people with talent and a great work ethic out."

Canna Provisions sells only to the recreational market in Massachusetts, as the rules for medical marijuana dispensaries are very different, she said. A medical license could increase their market, Sanders explained, but it also would require them to grow their own supply, which they don't want to do.

"We support making sure customers and patients can get the products they want at the same location," she said. "People with a medical card should be able to get what they need anywhere."

The Lee shop is just off the Mass Pike, only 10 miles from the New York line. Although a significant number of their customers have New York plates, Williams and Sanders said they aren't



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worried about competition from across the state line.

"We're a known and trusted source," Williams said.

Sanders said many of their out-of state customers are attending an event or spending a weekend in the Berkshires. They shop locally for their cannabis just as they do for food or wine. That won't necessarily change, she said.

Williams said they'd consider expanding to New York, depending how the state sets up its system.

He predicted New York's market will take time to grow and develop, with prices going down as production becomes more efficient and supply increases. The key is keeping the door open to small innovators, he added.

"In a true competitive market, you can get one small business with one product," Williams said. "A lot of us really have a passion about manufacturing. If New York doesn't do that, it will never compete with Massachusetts."

**'Listen to your voters'**

Another marijuana store in the Berkshires,

Silver Therapeutics in Williamstown, opened in April 2019 with a medical license, which allows the company to grow and make its own products. But Brendan McKee, a partner in the business, said it has only sold as a retail outlet.

"Our products are medical grade," McKee said. "Regardless of whether you have a medical card, everyone is treated like a patient."

Because of the rules and stigma around getting a medical marijuana card, some people can't or choose not to get one, he said.

In its first nine months, almost 40 percent of the store's customers were from Massachusetts, 30 percent from New York, and 20 percent from Vermont, according to a January 2020 story in The Berkshire Eagle. Silver Therapeutics paid Williamstown \$207,000 in sales taxes and host community fees from April through November 2019.

Sales halted in March 2020 when the Covid-19 pandemic began. Gov. Charlie Baker declared retail marijuana a "non-essential business" and ordered stores shut for several months. Liquor stores were allowed to remain open.

Cannabis products are perishable and

proprietors had to destroy thousands of dollars worth of inventory.

Since then, "business has come back," McKee said.

"The response has been overwhelmingly positive," he said. "We're grateful to have the team and community we serve."

Before a New York market opens, "there's a tremendous amount that has to happen at the state and local level," McKee said.

One of the partners in the business, Joshua Silver, lives in Saratoga Springs.

"We would love nothing more than to bring our expertise to New York," McKee said.

But if there's no vertical integration, "that's a tough one," he added.

New York legislators need to "just keep an open mind and listen to your voters," McKee said, citing polls that show support for legalization and sales.

"Understand that the sky won't fall if a cannabis facility opens in your area," he said. "We've done nothing but help people. Having a medicinal plant in these times is helpful. It's better than turning to alcohol or opioids."

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# Finding the future in healthy soil

In the Berkshires, a small farm shows the benefits of no-till agriculture

By **TRACY FRISCH**  
Contributing writer

LANESBOROUGH, Mass.

Jim Schultz runs a small-scale farm that's demonstrating how agriculture can contribute to solving the climate crisis.

Raising healthy food is a central goal at Schultz's Red Shirt Farm. But so is restoring and enhancing the health of the soil. And it's a healthy soil microbiome, Schultz and others say, that's key to putting carbon back into the soil and keeping it there – rather than releasing it into the air, where it contributes to planetary warming.

In his quest for healthier soil, Schultz has gradually converted Red Shirt Farm over the past decade into a no-till operation – one that aims to keep disruption of the soil to a minimum, thereby helping it to retain and increase its organic content.

The results of his work were on display in late 2019, when more than 50 people toured the farm on a soil health field day sponsored by the Northeast Organic Farming Association of Massachusetts. The event was part of the group's soil carbon initiative, which aims to highlight how land management practices can help to boost the health of the soil and the planet.

Red Shirt Farm operates on 13 acres of hilly land on the east side of U.S. Route 7 in the Berkshires, not quite halfway from Pittsfield to Williamstown. Schultz grows vegetables on just 1.8 acres, yet he has ample production to supply the farm's booths at two busy farmers markets – and to feed the hundred households in the farm's community-supported agriculture, or CSA, program, in which customers pay in advance for shares of each year's harvest.

Schultz strives to produce nutrient-dense vegetables and fruits. He abstains from using insecticides, fungicides, herbicides and synthetic fertilizers. Although the farm adheres to organic principles and practices, Schultz has chosen not to pursue formal organic certification.

In addition to growing vegetables, he also has installed a small orchard on a hill that's too steep for vegetable production. And the farm also raises a small number of pastured pigs and keeps flocks of heritage-breed turkeys, laying hens and



Courtesy photo by Annie Schultz

Jim Schultz retired early from a career in public education to pursue his dream of farming full time. At Red Shirt Farm in the Berkshires, he follows the principles of organic and regenerative agriculture.

chickens for meat.

### From pre-med to farming

Although Schultz is a second-career farmer, he does have a long history in agriculture. In his late teens and 20s, he immersed himself in organic agriculture before turning his attention to making a living and raising his family.

In early 2015, Schultz retired at 53, and he and his wife, Annie Smith, who works full time as a registered nurse, launched Red Shirt Farm as a full-fledged business. This year will be their seventh of commercial production.

The farm's name is a somewhat obscure reference to Schultz's long hiatus from farming. Schultz, who has a background coaching sports, explained that "red shirt" is used as a verb that refers to the sidelining of an athlete with lots of potential so that he or she can learn more and make a bigger impact upon returning to the field.

"We red-shirted for 20 years," he explained. "The kids were growing. We were paying off the land, and reading and learning."

Schultz became interested in farming after high school, but he started at Williams College as a pre-med major. His life took a turn when he answered an ad to housesit and care for livestock for Sam and Elizabeth Smith, the founders of Caretaker Farm. The Williamstown farm is one of the longest-running organic operations in the state.

The Smiths were leading a college study trip to Sri Lanka. Their daughter Annie was home on winter break, and a romance ensued.

Schultz soon took a leave from Williams to learn to farm. At Sterling College in Vermont, he studied sustainable agriculture and worked with draft horses. He also did apprenticeships on several small farms in New England and enrolled in the New Alchemy Institute on Cape Cod to study renewable energy systems, sustainable agriculture and bioshelter technologies.

Schultz and Smith then went west to complete

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their undergraduate degrees at The Evergreen State College in Washington, where he managed the student organic farm and double-majored in education and ecological agriculture.

The couple returned to Massachusetts for graduate school. After earning a master's degree in education at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, Schultz worked for 26 years as a public school teacher, coach and administrator.

In 2000, the couple bought the open land in Lanesborough on which they would build their home and later their farm. Schultz continued his agricultural education, attending two or three organic and eco-agriculture conferences annually, and reading voraciously, while keeping alive his dream of farming.

In the early 2010s, Schultz and Smith started a very small community-supported agriculture operation to test the waters. Interest was strong, and initially their CSA doubled in size every year. In the years leading up to launching Red Shirt Farm, Schultz had been slowly working and restoring the land and opening up more and more garden beds.

"We were farming before work and after work and on weekends," Schultz recalled.

By the middle of the decade, he decided it was worth sacrificing his pension to pursue his passion full time.

"I retired early because I wanted to farm before it was too late," Schultz explained. "This is what I really wanted to do all my life."

Although Schultz is the principal farmer, Smith fills various roles on the farm. Often she is the farm's public face, greeting CSA members on Tuesdays and Saturdays when they come for their vegetables, and helping to orient new members. She also does the farm's bookkeeping, runs the household and comes up with the annual

growing plan for herbs and flowers, which Schultz implements.

**Beyond the status quo**

Red Shirt Farm practices regenerative agriculture. That's the new buzzword for farming systems that go beyond merely sustaining the status quo of soil health.

In regenerative agriculture, farmers use practices that restore and enhance soil health and the diversity of the soil microbiome. The goal is to encourage beneficial fungi and bacteria and other microbial life forms, and to support beneficial insects including pollinators.

Critics of industrial-scale conventional agriculture say its methods effectively strip-mine the soil by burning up its organic matter with mechanical tillage, chemical fertilizers and microbe-killing herbicides and fungicides. These practices rob soil of its organic matter and destroy its soil aggregates, disrupting essential ecological functions such as allowing water to infiltrate the soil and be retained and made available over time.

The destruction of soil organic matter also diminishes the nutrient-holding capacity of the soil and thus its fertility. To counteract this deteriorated condition, farmers have to put their crops and their livestock on life supports, with costly inputs of fertilizers and biocides.

In contrast, regenerative agriculture aims to work with nature and to avoid extractive processes.

Last year marked 11 years since Red Shirt Farm began its transition to no-till agriculture. Schultz said he made the change gradually, a few garden beds at a time. He no longer plows the soil, nor does he use other methods to turn it over. Rather, he only uses shallow tillage in the top 2

inches of the soil to mix in soil amendments and prepare a fine seed bed for planting.

Gardeners and farmers like Schultz are moving to no-till because of its practical benefits for growing crops. By not churning up the soil, no-till practitioners help to prevent erosion, but the approach has other important benefits, especially when it is used without chemical fertilizers, pesticides or herbicides. Soil that hasn't been tilled retains more organic matter – carbon – and acts as a sponge, retaining more moisture. This makes it more resilient in drought but also helps it to withstand extreme precipitation events without flooding.

"We saw for ourselves how bad tillage was for the soil and how much better it was where we didn't till," Schultz said, explaining why he made the change at Red Shirt Farm.

The farm, he said, now has fewer problems with insect pests and weeds, while the population of earthworms, which boost soil health, has increased dramatically.

Agriculture is one of the top drivers of climate change globally, and that's not primarily because of the fossil fuels used to power tractors and machinery or to make chemical fertilizers and pesticides, though those are factors. Rather, agriculture contributes most to global warming and climate disruption by releasing the carbon in soil organic matter into the atmosphere.

Soil stripped of its organic material becomes dead dirt that doesn't retain moisture, is more prone to flooding and erodes easily when it rains or the wind blows. And dirt, as opposed to healthy soil, is inhospitable to microbial life and a poor medium for growing plants. Its temperature fluctuates rapidly between extreme heat and

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cold, and its moisture levels are unstable.

In the fight against climate change, green plants are the most efficient way to draw down atmospheric carbon. In the photosynthetic process, plants take in carbon dioxide from the air and use its carbon atoms to make sugars, which serve as the building blocks for plant life. And they put atmospheric carbon back into the soil by excreting sugars through their roots to feed fungi and microbial life. And plants transpire, releasing water vapor into the air, which has a cooling effect on the climate and promotes precipitation.

**Protecting the soil**

Besides moving away from tilling, Red Shirt Farm uses a number of other regenerative agriculture practices, such as mulching and cover cropping.

To protect the soil, Schultz doesn't like to leave any bare ground, even between beds. To prevent weeds from taking hold and soil quality from deteriorating, walkways get heavily mulched with old hay or composted wood chips. When the garden beds are not producing crops for the CSA and farmers markets, he grows cover crops to revitalize the soil, puts down straw or hay as mulch, or temporarily covers the soil with plastic silage tarps, which he reuses.

Schultz sees the use of tarps as a less disruptive way to convert a field from grass to vegetables than making multiple passes with a plow, disk and other heavy equipment that kills fungal life, earthworms and other beneficial organisms. Using tarps also requires a lot less labor than tilling, and tilling also has the unintended effect of stimulating weed seed germination.

Red Shirt Farm shies away from disturbing the soil except when there is no alternative, such as for harvesting carrots and other root vegetables.

When other crops are ready for harvest, Schultz and his crew generally mow down or cut off the tops, leaving the roots in the ground as food for the microbes. A single pass of the flail mower is enough to chop up the residues of the crop into mulch, and often they plant directly into this mulch. In other cases, they will use hand tools to prepare the bed for planting. Or if winter is coming, they might mulch the bed with hay



Courtesy photo by Jim Schultz

Despite its small land area, animals are central to the mission of Red Shirt Farm.

until spring.

Another strategy the farm uses to break down residues from past crops, particularly if the growing season is under way, is to harness solar heat by spreading a clear plastic tarp over an area. Called solarization, this process, at 75 degrees, only takes 24 hours to kill nascent weeds and accelerate the breakdown of the residue.

At other times, Schultz will use a piece of tractor-powered equipment called a power harrow to make a bed for mechanical seeding. The power harrow stirs the soil but does not invert it like a rototiller would. Schultz sets his harrow to go down to a soil depth of only 2 inches.

Most of Red Shirt Farm's production goes directly to customers without intermediary – through its CSA program and at farmers markets. The Covid-19 pandemic actually has opened up opportunities for the farm.

Until last year, Schultz was reluctant to add a second farmers market. Because the best area markets take place on Saturday afternoons, the farm would have needed another truck, more canopies and additional employees to take

part in a second market.

But as farmers market customers shifted to online transactions during the pandemic, those obstacles disappeared, and Red Shirt Farm easily added another market, substantially increasing its sales.

"You don't have to stand there for four hours," Schultz explained. "Nothing's wasted, because everything is pre-ordered."

**Livestock and pasture**

Relatively few vegetable growers integrate livestock into their operations. But for Red Shirt Farm, despite its small land area, the animals it raises on pasture are central to its mission of regenerative agriculture.

"One of our main goals is animal welfare," Schultz said. "We breed and hatch our own birds and process them here."

The farm also raises feeder pigs, which likewise are slaughtered on the farm.

For the last six years, Red Shirt Farm has also been doing its part to preserve several heritage poultry breeds. Rather than ordering newly

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hatched chicks as replacements for their layers and for the next round of meat birds, the farm maintains year-round populations of two breeds of chicken and one turkey breed.

Each year, the farm raises about 100 turkeys and keeps another 15 or 20 as breeding stock. It also typically raises 700 or 800 meat chickens and keeps a flock of 100 to 200 laying hens.

Farmers market customers and CSA members count on being able to get their eggs from Red Shirt Farm, but eggs are not one of the farm's "main profit centers," Schultz said.

In the winter, he and Smith use a kind of temporary plastic greenhouse, called a caterpillar tunnel, to house their flock.

"In the winter we bring the birds up closer to the house, where we have electricity," he said. "The chickens have a day-run in the caterpillars. We compost their manure."

Red Shirt Farm is licensed by the state to slaughter poultry on the farm. It works with a custom butcher to get pigs killed and processed, and it sells its homegrown pork by the half and whole pig.

Thanks to a combination of grazing livestock and mowing, the lower fields at Red Shirt Farm have been transformed from weedy brambles into pasture. Often the farm uses an early cutting from those fields to use as mulch, because poultry do better on 8-inch pasture than on taller grass.

**A quest for compost**

Red Shirt Farm buys about 45 cubic yards of commercial compost annually from area farms. The compost available for purchase is usually made from municipal leaves, wastes from commercial landscapers, and other plant materials, as well as food waste, smaller amounts of animal manure and sometimes offal from on-farm poultry processing.

But Schultz said he is not fully satisfied with the quality of locally available compost. He also worries that the purchased compost could contain persistent herbicides, such as glyphosate, the weed killer in Roundup.

"It's hard to find good compost," he said.

He gets around the shortcomings of purchased compost by reserving it for certain situations, such as mulching, where "it's less important that it's coarse and unfinished."

Long term, Schultz said he would like to set up an aerated static pile composting system. Such a system uses a fan and perforated pipes to blow air throughout compost windrows in lieu of mechanical turning.

For now, he makes some compost of his own from a mixture of animal bedding and vegetable scraps laid down in a large windrow, with new materials always added at one end. He refrains from turning his compost because "we don't want to disrupt the fungal hyphae."

In the quest for better compost, Red Shirt Farm

also moved in 2018 to assemble a "bioreactor" that creates compost using what's known as the Johnson-Su system. The system produces fungal-dominant compost with a much wider diversity of microorganisms than conventional, quick-turnaround compost. It also requires far less labor and is odor-free.

The Johnson-Su system is named for its developers, David Johnson, a molecular microbiologist at New Mexico State University, and his wife, Hui-Chu Su. In the desert Southwest, where they designed and tested it, regular irrigation is required to support fungal activity.

Schultz imagined that the temperate Northeast would have adequate rainfall to keep the composting material moist, and he was right. Most of the Johnson-Su bioreactor compost is a very fine, pasty material that turns into slurry when mixed with water. Schultz makes it into a spray that serves to inoculate the soil.

**Planting an orchard**

Schultz was looking for ecologically sound uses for all of the land at Red Shirt Farm when he decided to terrace a hillside that is too steep for vegetable production and plant a small orchard.

Trees don't like to be planted smack in the middle of a field, Schultz said. They prefer what's known as a fungal-dominant soil, like that found in a forest. So he set out to create their favored

*continued on page 19*

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# Store continued from page 3

come a destination.”

What he couldn't have foreseen was that the Covid-19 pandemic would arrive just as he was preparing to reopen the market.

As it turned out, the pandemic meant that most of the region's second-home owners morphed into full-time Vermont residents. The moment was perfect for a culinary rewrite in Pawlet.

To recreate the store as a food-oriented destination, Gib Mach recruited a team of key players, starting with daughter DeAnna Mach, whom he calls the “organic guru” in charge of the produce section and the pizza-making operation. The team also includes executive chef Zachary Baker; head baker, extended family member, and town treasurer Julie Mach; and Billy Jamieson, who runs the deli counter and also heads the market's craft beer and wine sections.

DeAnna Mach's history with the market runs deep, dating back to her days running checkout while standing on a milk crate. She began making pizzas in the store's brick oven in 1999. When she began her new role at the market last year, sustainability and supporting local farmers were her top priorities.

“I've always used organic grain from the Champlain Valley Milling Corp. for our pizza and wanted the rest of the menu as well as the produce section to be sourced from local purveyors,” she said. “Having partnerships with local farm-

ers for the past 20 years has allowed me to bring more in for the market.”

### Spotlight on food

Mach's Market officially reopened last Memorial Day weekend, with a sparkling new interior and a menu of handcrafted and locally sourced foods.

Depending on the season, the shelves abound with carrots, field greens, spinach, turnips and tomatoes, with handwritten nutritional notes beside each one.

“The produce we sell informs our dining,” DeAnna Mach said. “We have an incredible pizza with an olive-oil-based crust topped with fresh beets, chevre, garlic, and kale, which crisps like a chip when it's done.”

All of the pizza toppings, from cheese to pepperoni, are from local purveyors.

“When we reopened, we decided we wanted to make a difference in the community by not only creating jobs at the market but by supporting local farms and food makers,” she explained.

Baker, the executive chef, said that in the months since Mach's Market reopened, its menu has grown to include house specialties that people clamor for: hand-cut french fries made from local potatoes, house-smoked brisket sandwiches, hand-pounded chicken cutlets topped with broccoli rabe, and breakfast burritos and sandwiches.

“Gib gave me a blank canvas to set my own style with the menu,” Baker said. “It's been crazy busy here, because takeout is the predominant style with Covid protocol.”

Baker, who previously was sous-chef at The Copper Grouse in Manchester, said the starting point for his menu was the market's smokehouse. From there, he relied on a mix of inspiration and customer feedback. The result is an eclectic menu ranging from “Mach and cheese” and in-house cured salmon to slow-roasted turkey clubs and cheeseburgers on brioche buns.

Most of the specials are gluten-free, he said, and everything baked or fried is dredged in rice flour.

The response from customers has been gratifying, Baker said, and the biggest thing he's been missing amid the pandemic is the ability to plate a meal with his usual flair – something he looks forward to doing when dining in is an option again.

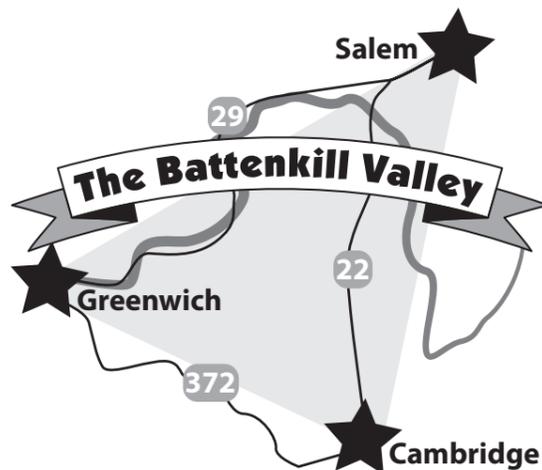
In the meantime, he channels his penchant for presentation while stocking the store's deli case.

“Each morning we spend at least an hour plating the meats and salads so they look full and well-presented,” Baker said.

Judy Lake, whose Lake's Lampshades is two doors down from the market, said she was delighted when the store reopened and now visits nearly every day for takeout.

“Their spring rolls are my favorite, and their breakfast sandwiches are top-notch,” she said. “And I had a piece of almond nut cake the other day that was incredible.”

Mach's Market also boasts its own craft beer cave with an entire wall dedicated to sour, stout, dark, and Double IPA craft beers from across the



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*See map on page 15*

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state.

“Most people are surprised, at first, how big our inventory is,” Jamieson said.

**Carrying on a tradition**

Although the fare has a more upscale flavor than in the past, the revived Mach’s Market once again fills one of the time-honored roles of the local general store – as an unofficial community hub.

The store participates in the Vermont Everyone Eats program, a state-backed food relief effort that engages local restaurants to provide meals to anyone affected by the economic upheaval of the Covid-19 crisis. (More details of the program, including a list of meal distribution locations and times in Rutland County, is available on the website of the Vermont Farmers Food Center, at [www.vermontfarmersfoodcenter.org/](http://www.vermontfarmersfoodcenter.org/)

everyone\_eats .)

“We make the time for it, and make it work,” Gib Mach said.

One day in late January, his wife, Doreen, who does the store’s bookkeeping, was busy in the kitchen helping to wash and cut 150 pounds of local potatoes for the weekly project.

Floyd Caruth, the proprietor of Vermont Barrel Aged LLC, a hot sauce line, makes his locally sourced sauces at Mach’s commercial kitchen and also pitches in once or twice a week to help with meal preparation for Everyone Eats.

“There’s a real community here at the market,” he said. “Using their kitchen keeps my overhead down, but being here means being a part of something bigger.”

Other traditions from the Mach’s Market of old have been revived. Gib still makes his uncle’s baked bean recipe and carries on the sausage-

making tradition using the family recipe.

Someday in a post-Covid future, he said, he hopes to offer table service in the spacious dining room overlooking the Flower Brook – with a tavern and piano bar.

When he’s not working behind the counter, Gib relishes his role as Pop, chatting with customers and fielding compliments on the tenderness of the brisket or the unexpected pizzazz in the slightly peppery french-fry aioli.

“When I was developing the new business plan, people said no one would come past a 15-mile radius,” he said. “But I knew we could draw from Burlington to Albany, N.Y. My goal was to make Mach’s Market a destination, and we have.”

*Mach’s Market is open from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m. daily at 18 School St. in Pawlet. Visit [www.machsmarket.com](http://www.machsmarket.com) or call (802) 325-3405 for more information.*

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# EDITORIAL

## For democracy's sake, stick to what's real

Daniel Patrick Moynihan, the longtime U.S. senator from New York, was fond of saying in various iterations that people are entitled to their own opinions, but not to their own facts.

Moynihan, who died in 2003, wasn't the first person to use that line, but it neatly encapsulated the standard of political discourse in the United States of the 20th century.

Yes, there were politicians, including Moynihan himself, who chose to highlight constellations of facts that supported the policies they favored – and to dismiss or gloss over the facts that didn't. But for most of the U.S. history, our ideal of democratic self-government has been based on the expectation that we could make rational decisions based on widely agreed-upon facts.

That concept reached its apex in the last century, when most people gleaned their information from daily newspapers and a handful of broadcast networks whose journalists saw their mission as ferreting out the facts, delivering them without bias and sorting through the competing claims of our political leaders.

Many of those legacy news organizations are still with us, and their standards are just as high, even if their budgets for reporting and editing have shrunk. But the past three decades have seen the rise of cable channels that blur the lines between opinion and fact and shape their news coverage to cater to their viewers' politics. And of course, anyone today can set up a website or Facebook page and begin spreading "information" from their living room.

So now we have large numbers of people who believe that Covid-19 isn't real, that Donald Trump won re-election in a landslide, that school shootings were really staged by gun-control advocates, and so on.

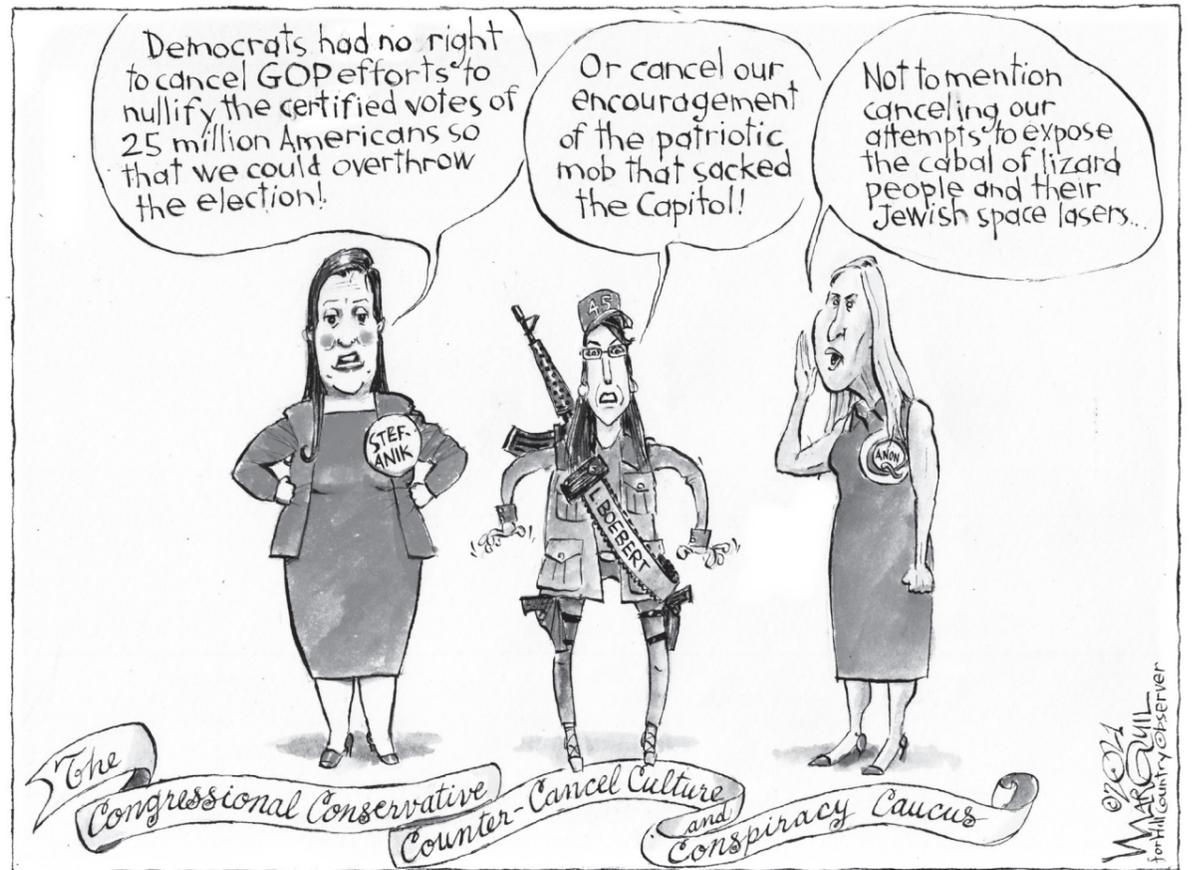
And we have politicians like our own Elise Stefanik, the northern New York congresswoman who spent weeks feeding the baseless notion that massive election fraud had cost Trump his re-election. Stefanik, R-Schuylerville, rarely deigns to return calls from newspapers in her district, but from Election Day onward she found time to appear on conservative cable channels like Newsmax, where she talked up election irregularities while refusing to say who'd won the presidential election – long after it became clear that Joe Biden had.

Even after a mob of Trump supporters stormed the Capitol on Jan. 6, enraged by the fiction that the election had been stolen from him, Stefanik went ahead with her previously announced plans to object to the slates of electors from some states Biden had won. Stefanik insisted she had "serious questions" about the election results.

By then, the votes had been counted, recounted and certified by state election officials of both parties. And the questions raised by Stefanik had already been taken to court in some of the five dozen legal challenges brought by the Trump campaign. Judges, whose actions have to be based on facts and evidence, rejected all of those claims.

In the debate over certifying the electoral vote, some of Trump's allies called for a congressional audit of the election results. An audit, they said, would show respect for the many voters who were upset by the election results. Sen. Mitt Romney, R-Utah, had a better idea: The best way to show respect for those voters, he said, was to tell them the truth – that Biden had won, and Trump had lost.

If we are to preserve our democratic self-government in the years ahead, we need to restore our political discourse to one that's based on what we know as fact, not what we wish were true.



## Letters to the editor

### Donald Trump moves on, and pain and anger fade

To the editor:

It is such a relief to get rid of Donald Trump, arguably the worst president ever.

It's like when your dentist pulls out that painful abscessed rotten tooth or when your doctor tells you that you are cancer free. Oh, what a relief it is!

Donald's greatest accomplishment was to tell more lies than all of our previous presidents and legislators put together. We got used to his everyday lying, but then came the *big lie*: that he actually won the election and lost only because of massive voter fraud.

Never mind that there was no evidence of this, each state certified the election results, and numerous courts found that the election was fair, lawful and accurate. He persisted in the lie and whipped his supporters into a frenzy, which led to the violent insurrection inside the Capitol.

We can't be certain whether Donald's thinking is delusional (a symptom of psychosis) or intentional (hoping to disrupt our democracy for personal gain). In either case, it has been a dangerous, exhausting, wild ride. He is no longer our president, and he leaves in disgrace.

G. Richard Dundas  
Bennington, Vt.

### Learn more about LEDs before changing lights

To the editor:

Despite extensive research documenting the severe damaging effects of LED light pollution on both human health and the environment, numerous cities and towns are switching to public LED lighting as part of a statewide initiative.

The numerous injurious effects of LEDs cancel out their perceived environmental benefits.

Light pollution in any form is a scourge on the natural world, but LEDs with their extensive light trespass, blue-white color content, and flicker both visible and invisible are among the most damaging.

LED exposure decimates insect and amphibian populations and profoundly disrupts the vital hunting, foraging and reproductive activities of nocturnal wildlife. LED streetlights are also a greater stress on street trees, reducing these trees' wholly positive role in mitigating climate change.

For humans, inescapable exposure to LED light is harmful in even relatively small amounts. Damaged eyes, difficult sleep, disordered circadian rhythms and endocrine function, increased cancer and diabetes risk, epileptic seizures and neurological disturbances are among the results.

People with photosensitive conditions like epilepsy, migraines, lupus and autism can suffer immediate, devastating consequences and can find their entire community suddenly and dangerously uninhabitable. Their safety and civil rights are being forfeited for a lighting initiative.

In the past few years, reports of photosensitive reactions have surged in numbers, to the point that the National Epilepsy Foundation of America has formed a photosensitivity task force.

The nonprofit organization Light Aware is engaged in an urgent effort to alert and educate about the severe problems modern lighting can introduce. Their website ([lightaware.org](http://lightaware.org)) has reports, case studies, research references and policy statements that every municipality or branch of government should carefully review before forcing LEDs on the public.

There are simple, easy ways to reduce costs and pollution associated with community lighting. Driving wild things closer to extinction and causing life-destroying health problems for people, however, will be vastly harder and more complicated to undo.

Sylvana Maione  
Cambridge, N.Y.

# A politician who said more with fewer words

U.S. Rep. John Davis Long built his career as a politician and statesman in the late 19th century on his way with words.

The Massachusetts Republican was among those who talk less but say more, to paraphrase the words of an old Vermont proverb that became the title of a 1986 book by the University of Vermont professor Wolfgang Mieder.

“He was one of the most polished debaters in Congress, his speeches being noted for their literary excellence, and a dry humor which made him popular as a dinner speaker,” the Associated Press reported at the time of Long’s death on Aug. 28, 1915.

Long’s skill with words earned him a reputation beyond his native New England and, some said, distinguished him from many of his peers.

“The most anxious moment for a new member of Congress is just before he is to make a speech,” the *Granville Sentinel* of Granville, N.Y., wrote on April 30, 1886. “Some members are anxious at all times to get in the record, but these men generally do not make speeches. They simply interrupt others to ask questions — sometimes very silly ones.”

When Long spoke on the House floor, his two “ardent admirers” often listened from the gallery.

“They are his pretty daughters, one about twenty-two and the other sixteen,” the *Sentinel* reported on May 21, 1886. “The elder is a typical Boston girl, dressed in exquisite taste,

intellectual looking and wearing eyeglasses. The younger is a bright-eyed, red-cheeked young miss, who keeps up a constant chatter with her stately sister.”

A third young woman was expected to join the admirers in the gallery soon. Long, a widower, was engaged to marry Agnes Peirce, a 21-year-old schoolteacher from North Attleboro, Mass.

“Though Mr. Long is forty-seven years old, he looks rather younger,” the *Sentinel* wrote in an editorial. “Indeed, if it were not for that perpetual bane of public men, baldness, he would pass for thirty-five. The match is all for love, too.”

Long, who served three terms in Congress, from 1883 to 1889, and was governor of Massachusetts before that, was skilled as a writer as well as an orator. His friends continued to call him “Governor” throughout the rest of his life.

Long is perhaps best known today for his stint as secretary of the Navy during the Spanish American War, a role in which he clashed at times with his assistant secretary, Theodore Roosevelt.

It was Long who dispatched the message on April 25, 1898, to Commodore George Dewey, who was awaiting orders at Hong Kong: “War has commenced between Spain and the United States. Proceed at once to the Philippine Islands. Capture or destroy the Spanish ships. Use the utmost endeavor.”

Long was a poet, a playwright, an author

and editor of books about military and political history. He also translated Virgil’s “Aeneid” into blank verse.

“In his speeches, Mr. Long has the literary gift of grace and poetic feeling, but still he has the power to comprehend and express the popular sentiment, not with effort, but from true understanding,” Mary E. Robbins wrote in a biographical essay published in 1915 in “A History of Buckfield, Oxford County, Maine.”

Although Long was born in Maine, it was Massachusetts that claimed him as one of its distinguished orators.

“Boston ... gets her great politicians and lawyers, Daniel Webster, Jeremiah Mason, Benjamin F. Butler, Henry W. Paine, the Hon. John Davis Long, Eben F. Pillsbury, from New Hampshire and Maine,” *The Sun* of New York City wrote on Jan. 31, 1886.

Long left Maine at age 14 to attend Harvard University, and he set up a legal practice in Massachusetts after graduating Harvard Law School.

Long retained a devotion to his birthplace of Buckfield, Maine, however. In 1900, he established a public library at Buckfield in memory of his father, Zadoc Long.

“We can see, though Buckfield was too small to long hold a man of his caliber, how his roots are there, how his heart ever returns thither,” Robbins wrote.

*Maury Thompson was a reporter for The Post-Star of Glens Falls for 21 years before retiring in 2017. He now is a freelance writer focusing on the history of politics, labor, and media in the region.*

## Maury Thompson

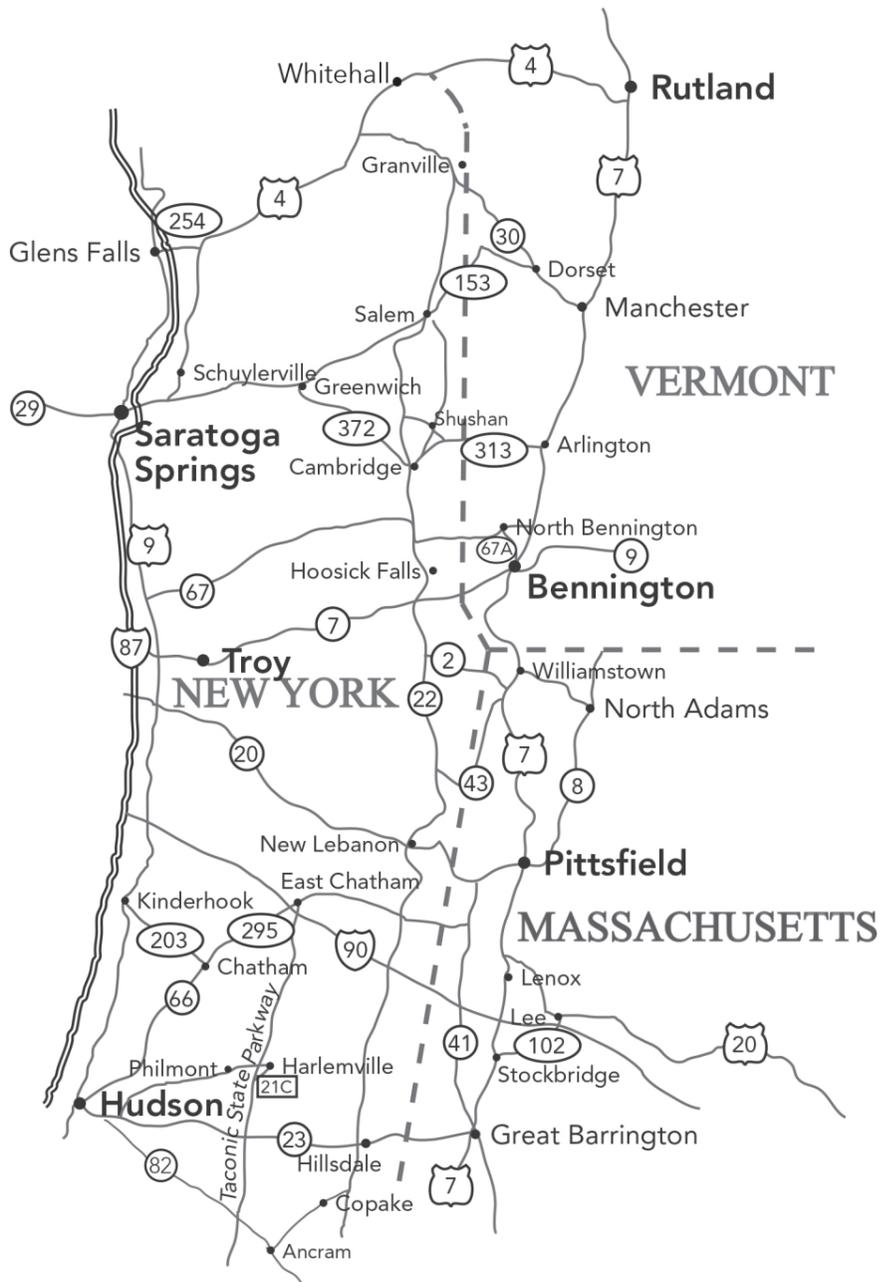
### News that’s slow-brewed for a high-speed age

We’re told we live in an information age, yet the traditional gathering of news is in decline.

Conventional news organizations are scaling back their efforts to ferret out the facts, even as they spread each factoid ever more widely via 24-hour broadcasts and the Internet. Is this the best way to keep you informed?

At the *Hill Country Observer*, we still take time to connect the dots, to put the news and issues of our region into a broader perspective. We only publish once a month, but we shine a light on stories and trends that aren’t getting much attention elsewhere.

Judging from our growing circulation, readers like the results. Tell us what you think.



# ARTS & CULTURE



Andrea Myklebust looks up from her work on a loom in her studio in Danby, Vt. Myklebust, who spins and weaves wool from a flock of 25 sheep, will teach virtual workshops in weaving this winter through the Southern Vermont Arts Center.

Joan K. Lentini photo

## Knitting, weaving through a dark season

### Region's fiber arts scene extends from farms to finished products

By **KATE ABBOTT**  
Contributing writer

It's a quiet movement, sliding the yarn over the needle, pulling the loop through and repeating.

The feel of wool can be warm and earthy in your hands. It's soothing on a winter day, in these dark evenings after dinner.

"Knitting is a journey," says Beth Phelps, owner of the Spin-Off Yarn Shop in North Adams.

You associate what you're making, she explained, with the events in your life while

you're making it.

Phelps is tapping into a growing regional fiber scene where Massachusetts meets Vermont and New York – a region where generations of farmers have come together with skilled workers from textile mills, artists and local people who like the feel of making things and a connection with the land.

Sculptor, weaver and fiber artist Andrea Myklebust has come here to be part of it. She will teach virtual workshops in weaving this winter through the Southern Vermont Arts Center.

Myklebust and her husband, Stanton Sears, create public art, often influenced by fiber and by natural shapes, like a spiraling sea snail called a quilted melania. They are monumental sculptors, and they have often worked with colors and patterns and images inspired by textiles and by the cultural traditions of the place where the art will live. They have created public works

across the country – in the Midwest, California, Florida, Alaska. They hold the feel of cloth in stone and steel.

Myklebust and Sears moved from western Wisconsin to southern Vermont two years ago, after he retired as an art professor from Macalester College in St. Paul, Minn.

Fiber art has always had an influence in their work, Myklebust said. It echoes in her husband's solo woodwork too: He carves interlaced forms in wood, like the fibers in a skein of yarn.

She spins and weaves the wool from their flock of 25 sheep.

On a winter day, the Shetlands and their Icelandic cousins stand out with their spiral horns and dark faces. The Jacobs are mottled black and white, with double horns – even the ewes. The Cotswolds have long, light, curling wool falling into their eyes.

And the Dorsets, with their thick straight fleeces, are named for the county in England and aptly for a farm on Dorset Mountain in Vermont.

Myklebust and her husband are restoring an old farmhouse in Danby, building a studio and founding the new Mountain Heart School of Craft.

She has rented space in an old building in

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Danby village, and she weaves scarves, towels and textiles on three floor looms, one an antique from the 1870s, the kind many Scandinavian immigrants used. The largest is a draw loom, with controls for detailed pictorial work. Working with it can be improvisational, she said.

“Weaving is usually controlled,” Myklebust said. “You have to plan ahead, and you know everything about the cloth you will make before you begin. The draw loom is like a piano keyboard. You can let the pattern ebb and flow, emerge and dissipate ... and you can play with it.”

**From sheep to shop**

For people who don't grow their own, finding locally grown yarns or fleeces can be a challenge. Over the border in New York, the Hudson Valley Textile Project has emerged to help.

Gail Parrinello, owner of the Cornwall Yarn Shop in Orange County, has joined Mary Jeanne Packer, the owner of Battenkill Fibers Carding & Spinning Mill in Greenwich, N.Y., in an effort to link makers – spinners and weavers, knitters and artists – to the area farmers who are raising sheep and goats and alpacas.

Packer said the project is mapping a growing regional fiber scene.

She spins yarn at Battenkill Fibers for customers around the country and across the world. She once walked into a yarn shop in Norway and found a whole wall of yarns Battenkill had made. In late January, she said that within the last week she had talked with a farmer near Buffalo, N.Y., as well as makers and producers in North Carolina, Oregon and Washington state – as well as comparatively local locations such as Burlington, Vt.

“Starting a mill was a life dream,” Packer said. “I have a degree in engineering, and I'm a lifelong knitter. I owned a yarn store, and I noticed a disconnect in the local economy between farmers with materials and knitters who wanted them.”

She believed she could create jobs for local people with the skills she needed. She got a loan for used textile equipment and got her mill up and running in 2009. Local people have made it possible, she said.

Not every community could support her. Packer works with an electrician retired from a paper mill and an engineer retired from working in the labs at Perdue University. Her neighbor retired from a machine shop in the 1970s. One of her partner's friends is a stainless steel welder.

Most of her equipment dates from the 1980s and '90s, she said, and some pieces are nearly 60 years old. The oldest, the pin drafters (part of the process of preparing combed wool for spinning), are completely rebuilt.

She has a spinner made in Italy in the 1980s and a second from the same manufacturer that shipped from Portugal. It was an adventure getting it here, she said. It came in many pieces. A shipping container wound up in the yard, and she called another neighbor with a forklift tractor to help her move it.

Within a year after her mill started operating, fire gutted her building in June 2010. She still had wool stored, she said, but the new mill was a

complete loss. Local friends volunteered to sort the wool, encouraged her to keep going and even invested in rebuilding.

Packer moved to a new space in August 2010, and she was making fabric there by Christmas Eve.

Now she has national accounts, such as Bare Naked Wools, Knitspot and Quince & Co. Packer said those accounts have helped to make her business more secure and allow her to focus on the small farms she started the business to serve.

Some of those farms have grown with her, she said. Wing and a Prayer Farm in Shaftsbury, Vt., for example, has an Instagram account with more than 30,000 followers. The farm raises alpacas, Angora and Cashmere goats, and a variety of sheep, including merino, Wensleydale, Teeswater and Vermont's first Valais Blacknose. And it hand-dyes its yarns in shades from the red of an heirloom tomato to a deep choreopsis gold.

But for knitters, spinners and weavers, finding local fleeces and yarns is still a challenge, Packer said. And for farmers, the more steps they take toward consumers, the more time and cost they take on.

This is where the Hudson Valley Textile Project steps in to support a local market for people looking for raw materials. Spinners will want fleeces. Weavers and knitters will want local and natural yarns.

Some are artists and artisans making a living at the craft. And some are local people who like working with their hands – or who want a brilliantly colorful pair of socks and like the idea of knowing where they came from.

**Weaving from the roots**

For people who are curious to try a new skill, Myklebust will lead classes this winter with the Southern Vermont Arts Center.

In late January and February, she begins with twined weaving. It is an ancient technique, she said. Every culture on earth has a form of it. Looms have a mechanism to raise and lower groups of warp threads, but here the warp threads, the longwise threads, keep still, and the weaver moves the weft threads, the crosswise threads, around them by hand.

She has seen many kinds, from the Maori to Scandinavia, all of them beautiful – skirts and dancing robes, baskets and blankets.

The Tlingit in the Pacific Northwest have

their own vividly bright Chilkat weaving patterns, she said. In Somalia, women weave bags and containers – and even the walls of portable shelters, which are bright with woven scenes.

Twined weaving can be easy to carry, Myklebust said. She works on a wooden frame loom that she can hold in her lap. And twining lends itself to teaching virtually in this odd time.

She and her students can work with different materials, cotton and hemp and wool. In this class they will use threads made in Vermont, from Three Loose Ladies yarn shop in Chester. They can adapt the color and pattern and improvise in a way she rarely can when she is weaving on a loom.

“It takes time,” Myklebust said. “That can be an appeal in a pandemic winter. What's your hurry? It's meditative.”

She feels its lure especially now, in an anxious time, and she sees other people finding comfort in it too. Amid Covid, as local shops and craft festivals have paused or closed, teaching has remained most steady for her. She taught her first online classes last May, she said.

Teaching virtually is different in many ways from working with a group of people together, when she can walk through the room and see their work, when she can talk with them, and they can talk together. But it has its own power.

“I was wrapping up a flax-to-linen class,” she said, “and I realized I was stalling because I didn't want to say goodbye. It's a difficult world, teaching art, but you make genuine connections to people.”

Later in the winter, Myklebust will teach spinning on a hand spindle and tapestry weaving. She said she also does some dye-work, and in the past two or three years she has been exploring natural dyes and partnering with Smokey House Center in Danby, Vt., to lead natural dye workshops.

Her daughter, Tansy Sears, has led her in this

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exploration. They harvest dye plants from the land around them – black walnuts, daylilies, marigolds, goldenrod. From buckthorn, an invasive woody plant, they can use bark, berries and leaves. Tansy also has done longer-term dye work with lichens that give a bright pink-purple dye.

“It’s very slow process,” Myklebust said. “You have to steep the wool or fabric in the dye for months.”

They also grow classic European dye plants, like woad and madder, in their garden.

“You have a different appreciation for color when you have to harvest it,” she said.

**Color in the cold**

A local yarn shop can glow with color on a winter afternoon.

Spin-Off, at the Norad Mill in North Adams, is bright with natural light that shows the hues as they will look out in the sun.

Beth Phelps carries yarns from many kinds of fibers, most of them natural. And she has sent her own fiber to Battenkill in the past.

She began at Sweet Brook Farm in Williamstown with maple syrup, a farm shop and a herd of alpacas. The agile and amiable creatures are native to South America, with soft curling hair.

“I was intrigued by fiber,” Phelps said.

She had learned to knit as a girl from her grandmother, and as an adult she came to fiber arts gradually. She tried quilting, took a class on knitting and carefully made a sweater. She knitted casually on and off, as children came.

Running the farm store at Sweet Brook



Myklebust sets up the fiber on a loom in her Danby studio.

Joan K. Lentini photo

revived her interest, she said. She wanted to raise her own fiber, and alpacas are known to be healthy and sturdy.

She too weathered changes in her life. Two years ago, a fire destroyed her barn and sugarhouse. As she rebuilt, she moved her yarn store, first to downtown Williamstown and then into the newly renovated Norad Mill, where she’s alongside local businesses from computer repair to vintage records and vinyl, mead and berry wines, artist studios and the Tunnel City coffee roastery.

Phelps still has 15 alpacas, and a llama, and they are gentle, she said. They don’t like to be handled, but as long as they can keep their

balance, they will keep calm. They can have strong opinions too.

One of her hembras (females), Mimi, was friendly when she was young, and since she has had crias (babies), she has become more spirited.

They can live to be 20 years old, Phelps said, and she still has all of her herd from Sweet Brook Farm, though she is no longer breeding them. She has no room for more.

She shears once a year, and she carries some wools from her alpacas in the shop, blended with longwool from sheep, because yarn made entirely from alpaca wool tends to stretch.

She carries yarns made from cashmere and mohair, cotton, linen and silk. She carries wools from around the world – and hand-dyed yarns in gradations of color from Freia Fine Handpaints, just downstairs in the Norad Mill.

And she teaches. People will come in with a pattern and ask questions. Before Covid, Phelps ran an afternoon knitting group, and a few people still come in informally to talk.

For people who want more help and time, she offers lessons. She finds it easier to teach one-on-one, she said. People can set their own times. Beginners can start with simpler projects and move gradually through new skills: a scarf, a hat, a pair of socks, a pattern of colors or stitches.

“Some people are adventurous, and they’ll try anything,” Phelps said. “Some learn knit and perl and go off on their own.”

She has learned from her visitors too. Prompted by their questions, she took classes to learn lace knitting, textures and color work, dye work and spinning, and the math to adapt a pattern to fit different sizes. As a final project, she designed a sweater.

She was working on a sketch for it, she said, and she became fascinated by the Fibonacci sequence. This is a set of numbers starting from 0 and 1, in which each number equals the sum of the two numbers before it – 0, 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8 and so on.

She wanted to play with that sequence, and she designed cloth in stripes of color, with the knitted rows in Fibonacci numbers. They follow a pattern that occurs over and over again in the natural world. The numerical sequence can map the branching of limbs, the set of leaves on a stem, the bracts (scales) on a pine cone – or the spiral of a nautilus shell.

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## Farm *continued from page 11*

growing environment using a system called “hugelkultur” that was popularized Sepp Holzer, an Austrian practitioner of permaculture, a system of land management that relies on ecological design of long-term plantings.

Hugelkultur involves burying woody material. Fungi colonize the buried wood, and the decomposing wood acts as a sponge, retaining moisture and slowly releasing nutrients for tree growth.

With many trees and limbs downed by storms and a need to quickly improve the land, Schultz said hugelkultur seemed like an obvious strategy for Red Shirt Farm.

For this project, he brought in an excavator to dig trenches 3 to 4 feet deep on the contour of the land. Though the soil itself is not stony, there were huge rocks to remove. They filled the trenches with dead trees and limbs and piled the excavated soil on top of each trench to build a berm. The berms provide a flat space to plant the trees in. Then above the berm, they dug a trench 2 feet deep to create a swale that would capture runoff.

“We want to catch every drop of water that falls,” Schultz stressed.

They planted the orchard with heirloom varieties of apple, peach and pear trees, as well as Asian pears and chestnuts. All of the fruit trees are grafted onto standard-size seedling rootstocks, so it will take 20 years for them to reach maturity.

Standard trees live longer and are more resilient to climate stresses like drought. Full-size trees are also more compatible with grazing animals.

Schultz, who foresees living at the homestead with his wife even after they retire from farming, sees the trees as a longer-term project.

“When we’re done with commercial farming,

we’ll still be harvesting our orchard,” he explained.

Schultz started the orchard with 50 trees. Many of the trees have started to bear, providing Red Shirt Farm with several new products for its farmers markets.

### Ever an educator

Schultz spent half his life teaching and coaching students in public schools, and as a farmer he has been able to continue to educate young people.

Every year, Red Shirt Farm selects four apprentices, who normally start work in April and stay on through November. They generally live on the farm unless they are from the local area. Few are currently enrolled in college, as college calendars tend not to be compatible with the farm’s needs.

Apprentices receive room and board plus \$900 per month and access to food grown on the farm. The Red Shirt Farm apprenticeship program focuses on education, as the apprentices learn much more than how to do their daily tasks.

Schultz said he strives to expose his apprentices to the knowledge and skills they would need to start their own farm or to work as a farm manager or another non-entry-level position. One former apprentice, a chef with no prior farming experience who spent two years on the farm, is now running a farm on Martha’s Vineyard.

Red Shirt Farm also partners with Roots Rising, a Pittsfield nonprofit with a mission of empowering high-school-age youth while building community through food and farming. Many of the program’s participants are high-risk kids. Roots Rising employs young people on farm crews and to run the Pittsfield farmers market. This year, it plans to launch a youth-run food truck program.

A Roots Rising crew of a dozen young people

comes to Red Shirt Farm one day a week in the summer and one afternoon weekly after school in the spring and fall.

“It’s nice for us to have 12 willing hands for big weeding, composting and tarping projects,” Schultz said.

Roots Rising pays an hourly wage to the young people it employs. They spend a half-day working on a farm, and for the rest of the day they take part in programming that emphasizes self-development, group development, and interpersonal and life skills. The curriculum includes educational workshops and culinary and financial literacy.

Schultz spoke with excitement about the culture that Roots Rising is building. He described how an educator with the organization teaches young people traditional and indigenous songs, and they then create their own songs. Through feedback circles called “group talk,” the young people participating in Roots Rising receive feedback from their peers and adult mentors, and they also evaluate the adults.

“This is how I wanted school to be when I was a teacher,” Schultz commented.

As a biology teacher, he said he would have loved to have a farm as a learning lab.

In addition to apprentices and the Roots Rising crew, the farm employs four to six part-time hourly workers. Two of these workers are Roots Rising graduates, so they already were familiar with the farm and its practices. That’s been a significant advantage.

“Regenerative agriculture holds the key to resolving our health crisis and our planetary crisis,” Schultz said. “To share this is so rewarding and essential, for there are so few resources to train young people.”

Visit [www.redshirtfarm.com](http://www.redshirtfarm.com) for more information about Red Shirt Farm and its community-supported agriculture program.

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## Arts &amp; Culture

## THE CALENDAR FEBRUARY 2021

Sun

Mon

Tues

Wed

7



**Caffelena.org** • School of Music: \$40 each  
• Practice Smarter, Play Better - All ages • 2-3:30 pm  
• Right Hand Drills for Clawhammer Banjo - All levels • 4-5:30 pm

**hamparts.org** • Live stream Silver Chord Bowl 2021 • 2 pm



**Imagescinema.org** • Streaming titles on Feb. 1



**berkshirebotanical.org** • Landscapes in Time & Space • 1-2 pm • Reg. req'd

**Sara. Jew. Comm. Arts** • Discuss: "I Am Not Your Negro" (pre-watch film req'd) • 7 pm • Reg. req'd at sjca-sjcf@gmail.com

misc.

**LakeGeorgeWinterfest.org** • See Feb. 4  
• Painting with Patrice • 1-3 pm • \$20 • Res. req'd 518-696-3399

**Ventfort Hall** • Guided Tour w/Res • See Feb. 4

14



**fournations.org** • When Love Goes Wrong, A Valentine's Day Concert • YouTube



**Imagescinema.org** • Streaming titles on Feb. 12

misc.

**Fish Creek Rod & Gun** • Monthly Breakfast • 8-11 am • Call for location 518-695-3917

**LakeGeorgeWinterfest.org** • See Feb. 4  
• Painting with Patrice • 1-3 pm • \$20 • Res. req'd 518-696-3399

**HancockShakerVillage.org** • The Big Chill • 10 am-4 pm

**Ventfort Hall** • See Feb. 4

21



**Imagescinema.org** • Pina Q&A - Live w/director Wim Wenders • 2 pm  
• Dance on Screen Film Fest: "Pina" • 7 pm



**Matthew M. Neugroschel Annual Jewish Storytelling Project** • 7 pm • Pre-reg. req'd by email to sjca.sjcf@gmail.com •

www.saratogajewishcultural-festival.org

misc.

**LakeGeorgeWinterfest.org** • See Feb. 4  
• Painting with Patrice • 1-3 pm • \$20 • Res. req'd 518-696-3399

**Ventfort Hall** • See Feb. 4

28



**Mahaiwe.org** • Bach Cello Suites: Yehuda Hanani • 7:30 pm • cewm.org

misc.

**LakeGeorgeWinterfest.org** • See Feb. 4  
• Painting with Patrice • 1-3 pm • \$20 • Res. req'd 518-696-3399

1



**Imagescinema.org** • "Acasa, My Home;" "Love Sarah;" "Psycho Goreman"



**Northshire.com** at home  
• Convo w/ Samantha Power ("Education of an Idealist") & Laura Dern • 6 pm

2



**Imagescinema.org** • Streaming titles on Feb. 1



**Northshire.com** at home  
• Live Ellen Ecker Ogden "The New Heirloom Garden" • 6 pm

**Oblongbooks.com** • "In Case You Get Hit By A Bus" • 7 pm • RSVP req'd

misc.

**Ventfort Hall** • Drop in Yoga • 5-6 pm • gildedage.org

8



**Caffelena.org** • Melanie Watch Party • 7 pm



**Imagescinema.org** • Streaming titles Feb. 1

misc.

**Ventfort Hall** • Guided Tour w/Res • See Feb. 4

9



**Caffelena.org** • JAZZ Watch Party: Chuck Lamb w/ Chico Freeman • 7 pm



**Imagescinema.org** • Streaming titles on Feb. 1

misc.

**Ventfort Hall** • gilded-age.org  
• See Feb. 4  
• Drop in Yoga • 5-6 pm

**massaudubon.org/pleasantvalley** • Full Moon Forest Walk • 6:30-8 pm • Pre-reg. req'd

10 Wed



**Caffelena.org** • Kruger Brothers Watch Party • 7 pm



**Imagescinema.org** • Streaming titles on Feb. 1



**Northshire.com** at home  
• Live Ariel Lahon ("Code-name Helene") • 6 pm

**Oblongbooks.com** • Steven P. Garabedian ("A Sound History: Lawrence Gellert,

3



**Imagescinema.org** • Streaming titles on Feb. 1



**Caffelena.org** • Poetry Night: Lucyna Prosko, Kathleen McCoy & David Graham • 7 pm

misc.

**cornell.edu** • Ice Fishing Webinar • 2:30 pm • Reg. req'd: mem467@cornell.edu

Black Musical Protest, & White Denial") • 7 pm • RSVP req'd

misc.

**warren.cce.cornell.edu** • Treats for Furry Friends • 12 pm • Reg. req'd: mem467@cornell.edu

**svac.org** • Virtual Class: Paint & Sip w/ Anharad Llewelyn • 6-8 pm • Reg. req'd

15



**Imagescinema.org** • Streaming titles on Feb. 12

misc.

**Ventfort Hall** • See Feb. 4

16



**Bennington.edu** • The 24 Hour Plays 2021: Tribute to Nicky Martin & Spencer Cox '90 virtual benefit • 8 pm



**Imagescinema.org** • Streaming titles on Feb. 12



**Northshire.com** • Live: Emily Layden ("All Girls") in convo w/ Ellie Eaton ("The Divines") • 6 pm

misc.

**Ventfort Hall** • gildedage.org  
• Guided Tour w/Res • See Feb. 4  
• Drop in Yoga • 5-6 pm

17



**Imagescinema.org** • Streaming titles on Feb. 12



**Oblongbooks.com** • Elizabeth Kolbert ("Under a White Sky") • 7 pm • RSVP req'd

22



**Ventfort Hall** • See Feb. 4

misc.

**claveracklibrary.org** • Cure Your Winter Blues w/ Citrus w/ Local 111 Chef Josephine Proul • 6 pm • Pre-reg.

23



**Northshire.com** • Live: Ali Benjamin ("The Smashup") in convo w/ Steve Sheinkin • 6 pm

**Oblongbooks.com** • Barbara McHugh ("Bride of the Buddha") • 7 pm • RSVP req'd

misc.

**massaudubon.org/pleasantvalley** • Tracking Wkshop: Weasels & Rodents • 10 am-12 pm • Pre-reg. req'd

**Ventfort Hall** • gilded-age.org  
• See Feb. 4  
• Drop in Yoga • 5-6 pm

24



**warren.cce.cornell.edu** • "Combating Loneliness: Intergenerational Experiential Education" • 12:40 pm via Zoom • Pre-reg. req'd • Marybeth at 518-668-4881

**Ventfort Hall** • See Feb. 4

**berkshirebotanical.org** • Reg. req'd  
--Postpartum Cooking: Plant-Based Foods for Supporting New Families • 11 am-2 pm  
--Maximizing Space in the Garden: Creating More of a Good Thing • 2-3 pm

# Arts & Culture

## THE CALENDAR FEBRUARY 2021

Thurs

4

 **Saratoga-Arts.org** • 18 Strings of Trouble • 5:30-6:30 pm • Dress warm

 **Imagescinema.org** • Streaming titles on Feb. 1

**BrattleboroMuseum.org** • "Remembering the Artist, Robert De Niro, Sr." • 7 pm • Adv. reg. req'd

 **Northshire.com** • Live Susan Conley ("Landslide") in Convo w/Sarah Blake • 6 pm

**Oblongbooks.com** • Local Authors: Mark Wunderlich & Tessa Kale • 7 pm • RSVP req'd

**Collarworks.org** • Performance + Talk w/ Opal Essence, moderated by Ale Campos • 7 pm IG LIVE

**misc.**

**LakeGeorgeWinterfest.org** • Activities & wristband at website

**Ventfort Hall** • Guided Tour w/Res • 11 am, 12:30 or 2 pm • 413-637-3206 • gildedage.org

11

 **CaffeLena.org** • Darling-side: 'Live Stream Live' • Early Show 3 pm; Late Show 8 pm

 **Imagescinema.org** • Streaming titles on Feb. 1

 **Oblongbooks.com** • Janet Skeslien Charles ("The Paris Library") • 5 pm • RSVP req'd

**Northshire.com** • Saratoga Book Fest On-line: Michael Ian Black • 6 pm

**Collarworks.org** • Studio Tour + Talk w/ Alyssa McClenaghan, moderated by Madison LaVallee • 7 pm IG LIVE

**misc.**

**LakeGeorgeWinterfest.org** • See Feb. 4

**Ventfort Hall** • Guided Tour w/Res • See Feb. 4

18

 **Imagescinema.org** • Streaming titles on Feb. 12

 **Northshire.com** • "Being Ram Dass" w/co-author Rameshwar Dass & Mirabai Bush • 6 pm

**friendsofchambermu-**

**sic.org** • Performance in Context: Musicambia w/ Nathan Schram • 7:30 pm • Reg. req'd

**misc.**

**LakeGeorgeWinterfest.org** • See Feb. 4

**Ventfort Hall** • See Feb. 4

25

 **Northshire.com** • Live: Theo Padnos ("Blindfold: A Memoir of Capture, Torture, & Enlightenment") • 6 pm

**Collarworks.org/live** • Artist Talk w/ writer, poet, performer Shanekia McIntosh 7 pm • IG LIVE

**Oblongbooks.com** • Julia Turshen ("Simply Julia") • 7 pm • RSVP req'd

**misc.**

**LakeGeorgeWinterfest.org** • See Feb. 4

**Ventfort Hall** • See Feb. 4

**berkshirebotanical.org** • The New Heirloom Garden • 6:30-7:30 pm • Reg. req'd

Fri

5

 **Imagescinema.org** • Streaming titles on Feb. 1

**misc.**

**LakeGeorgeWinterfest.org** • See Feb. 4

**Ventfort Hall** • Details on Feb. 4

**Fish Creek Rod & Gun** • Fish Fry Friday • 4-7 pm • Call for location & takeout 518-695-3917

12

 **Imagescinema.org** • "A Glitch in the Matrix;" "Two of Us"

 **MurderCafe.ny@gmail.com** • Live-stream variety show: "Love in the Time of Corona" • 7 pm • Request Zoom invite at email

 **brooksidemuseum.org** • "A Virtual Chocolate House" w/ Paul Supley • 7 pm • Pre-reg. & prep req'd

**misc.**

**LakeGeorgeWinterfest.org** • See Feb. 4

**Ventfort Hall** • See Feb. 4

**massaudubon.org/pleasantvalley** • Starlight Owl & Wildlife Prowl at Canoe Meadows Wildlife Sanctuary, Pittsfield • 6:30-8 pm • Pre-reg. req'd

19

 **Imagescinema.org** • Dance on Screen Film Fest: "Pina" • 7 pm

 **Oblongbooks.com** • Masuma Ahuja ("Girlhood") • 5 pm • RSVP req'd

**misc.**

**LakeGeorgeWinterfest.org** • See Feb. 4

**Ventfort Hall** • See Feb. 4

26

 **BEMF.org** • Stile Antico singers • 8 pm • youtube.com/bostonearly/

**misc.**

**LakeGeorgeWinterfest.org** • See Feb. 4

**Ventfort Hall** • See Feb. 4

Sat

6

 **Constructinc.org** • Warm Up the Winter: Wanda Houston Band • 7 pm • Free, donations accepted

**Caffelena.org** • Delvon Lamarr Organ Trio Watch Party • 8 pm

**BEMF.org** • Quicksilver ensemble • 8 pm • youtube.com/bostonearly/

 **Imagescinema.org** • Streaming titles on Feb. 1

**misc.**

**LakeGeorgeWinterfest.org** • See Feb. 4

**massaudubon.org/pleasantvalley** • How to Get Started Birding • 9 am-12 pm • Pre-reg. req'd

**Ventfort Hall** • gildedage.org • Drop in Yoga • 9-10 am • Guided Tour w/Res • Details on Feb. 4

**Olana.org** • Free First Weekend Wandering • 12-1 pm • Adv. reg. req'd • 518-751-6938

13

 **Deweyhall.org** • Steve Katz (of Blood Sweat & Tears) Live Stream • 7-8 pm

**uusaratoga.breeze-chms.com** • Wine & Chocolate Coffee House • 7-9 pm • Tix at URL

**helsinkihudson.com** • Wish You Were Hear w/ Tommy Stinson • 8 pm

 **Imagescinema.org** • Streaming titles on Feb. 12

**misc.**

**LakeGeorgeWinterfest.org** • See Feb. 4

**Ventfort Hall** • gildedage.org • Drop in Yoga • 9-10 am • Guided Tour w/Res • See Feb. 4

**Berkshirebotanical.org** • Galentine's Day Flower Workshop • 6-7 pm • Reg. req'd

20

 **Imagescinema.org** • Dance on Screen Film Fest: "Pina" • 7 pm

 **berkshirebotanical.org** • "Make Visible, Instill Value & Engage the Public in Our Shared Landscape Heritage" • 2-3:30 pm • Reg. req'd

**misc.**

**LakeGeorgeWinterfest.org** • See Feb. 4

**Ventfort Hall** • gildedage.org • See Feb. 4 • Drop in Yoga • 9-10 am

**shakermuseum.us** • Snowshoe Adventure at Mount Lebanon Historic Site • 10 am-12 pm • Pre-reg. req'd

**massaudubon.org/pleasantvalley** • Birding Wkshp: Winter Raptors at Lime Kiln Farm Wildlife Sanctuary, Sheffield • 4-7 pm • Pre-reg. req'd

27

 **Berkshiremusicsschool.org** • Intro to Voiceover - Online • 2-5 pm

 **Friendsofcermont.org** • History Story Hour • 2 pm • Reg. req'd

**misc.**

**LakeGeorgeWinterfest.org** • See Feb. 4

**Ventfort Hall** • gildedage.org • See Feb. 4 • Drop in Yoga • 9-10 am • gildedage.org

**massaudubon.org/pleasantvalley** • Winter Ecology: Beavers & other Mammals • 10 am-12 pm • Pre-reg. req'd

# Arts & Culture

## THE CALENDAR MARCH 2021

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
	<p><b>1</b></p> <p> misc.</p> <p><b>berkshirebotanical.org</b> • The Bulb Show • 9 am-4 pm • timed tix req'd</p>	<p><b>2</b></p> <p> misc.</p> <p><b>berkshirebotanical.org</b> --See Mar. 1 --No Till Garden • 6-7 pm • Reg. req'd</p>	<p><b>3</b></p> <p> <b>Saratoga-arts.org</b> • Artist Talk on current exhibit • 7-8 pm • Reg. for Zoom</p> <p> misc.</p> <p><b>berkshirebotanical.org</b> --See Mar. 1 --Stewardship in Your Gardens &amp; Land • 2-5 pm • Reg. req'd</p>	<p><b>4</b></p> <p> misc.</p> <p><b>berkshirebotanical.org</b> • See Mar. 1</p>	<p><b>5</b></p> <p> misc.</p> <p><b>berkshirebotanical.org</b> • See Mar. 1</p>	<p><b>6</b></p> <p> <b>CaffeLena.org</b> • Professor Louie &amp; The Crowmatix • 8 pm</p> <p> misc.</p> <p><b>berkshirebotanical.org</b> • See Mar. 1</p> <p><b>Olana.org</b> • Free First Weekend Wandering • 12-1 pm • Adv. reg. req'd • 518-751-6938</p>
<p><b>7</b></p> <p> <b>CaffeLena.org</b> • Curious Comet • 7 pm</p> <p> misc.</p> <p><b>berkshirebotanical.org</b> --See Mar. 1 --Landscaping Your Historic Home • 1-3 pm • Reg. req'd</p>	<p><b>8</b></p> <p> misc.</p> <p><b>berkshirebotanical.org</b> • See Mar. 1</p>	<p><b>9</b></p> <p> misc.</p> <p><b>berkshirebotanical.org</b> • See Mar. 1</p>	<p><b>10</b></p> <p> misc.</p> <p><b>berkshirebotanical.org</b> • See Mar. 1</p>	<p><b>11</b></p> <p> <b>brooksidemuseum.org</b> • "Craft Cocktails" w/ Hamlet &amp; Ghost • 7 pm • Pre-reg. &amp; prep req'd</p> <p><b>Collarworks.org</b> • Artist Talk w/ Ale Campos, moderated by Yiyi Mendoza • 7 pm IG LIVE</p> <p> misc.</p> <p><b>berkshirebotanical.org</b> • See Mar. 1</p>	<p><b>12</b></p> <p> <b>artomi.org</b> • Denman Maroney • 7 pm • Benenson Center</p> <p><b>CaffeLena.org</b> • Jim Gaudet &amp; Railroad Boys w/Ripton Coffee House • 8 pm</p> <p> <b>Imagescinema.org</b> • Dance on Screen Film Fest: "The Unseen Sequence"</p> <p> misc.</p> <p><b>berkshirebotanical.org</b> --See Mar. 1 --Extending the Harvest: Growing Early Spring Veggies • 6-7 pm (&amp; on site 3/13, 1-3 pm) • Reg. req'd</p> <p><b>massaudubon.org/pleasantvalley</b> • Starlight Owl &amp; Wildlife Prowl at Post Farm Marsh, Lenox • 7-8:30 pm • Pre-reg. req'd</p>	<p><b>13</b></p> <p> <b>Imagescinema.org</b> • Dance on Screen Film Fest: "The Unseen Sequence"</p> <p><b>Spencertown-academy.org</b> • The Magdalens Unplugged (and streaming) • 7:30 pm • link at URL</p> <p> misc.</p> <p><b>berkshirebotanical.org</b> • See Mar. 1</p>
<p><b>14</b></p> <p> <b>Imagescinema.org</b> • Dance on Screen Film Fest: "The Unseen Sequence"</p> <p> misc.</p> <p><b>berkshirebotanical.org</b> • See Mar. 1</p>	<p><b>15</b></p>	<p><b>16</b></p>	<p><b>17</b></p> <p> misc.</p> <p><b>berkshirebotanical.org</b> • Turning Lawns into Meadows • 5-7 pm (&amp; on site 3/20, 1-3 pm) • Reg. req'd</p> <p><b>massaudubon.org/pleasantvalley</b> • Sky Dance of the American Woodcock at Lime Kiln Farm Wildlife Sanctuary, Sheffield • 7-8 pm • Pre-reg. req'd</p>	<p><b>18</b></p>	<p><b>19</b></p> <p> misc.</p> <p><b>massaudubon.org/pleasantvalley</b> • Sky Dance of the American Woodcock at Post Farm Marsh, Lenox • 7-8 pm • Pre-reg. req'd</p>	<p><b>20</b></p> <p> <b>helsinkihudson.com</b> • Wish You Were Hear: Beware the Ides of March w/ Lorkin O'Reilly • 8 pm</p> <p> misc.</p> <p><b>massaudubon.org/pleasantvalley</b> • Winter Finches at Canoe Meadows Wildlife Sanctuary, Pittsfield • 9 am-12 pm • Pre-reg. req'd</p>
<p><b>21</b></p>	<p><b>22</b></p> <p> misc.</p> <p><b>claveracklibrary.org</b> • Omusubi rice balls w/ husband &amp; wife team Atelier Ku-ki • 6 pm • Pre-reg.</p>	<p><b>23</b></p>	<p><b>24</b></p> <p> misc.</p> <p><b>massaudubon.org/pleasantvalley</b> • Sky Dance of the American Woodcock at Canoe Meadows Wildlife Sanctuary, Pittsfield • 7-8 pm • Pre-reg. req'd</p>	<p><b>25</b></p>	<p><b>26</b></p> <p> misc.</p> <p><b>massaudubon.org/pleasantvalley</b> • Sky Dance of the American Woodcock at Greylock Glen, Adams • 7-8 pm • Pre-reg. req'd</p>	<p><b>27</b></p> <p> misc.</p> <p><b>massaudubon.org/pleasantvalley</b> • Winter Ecology: Twigs, Buds, &amp; Emerging Plants • 10 am-12 pm • Pre-reg. req'd</p>
<p><b>28</b></p>	<p><b>29</b></p>	<p><b>30</b></p>	<p><b>31</b></p>			

 Music  Dance  Theater  Film  Speech  Misc.

Go to hillcountryobserver.com, @hillcountryobserver on Instagram, and the websites of our regular contributors for more artistic and cultural events TBA in the month of March.

# Arts & Culture

## AREA EXHIBITIONS

MANY VENUES ARE CLOSED. VISIT ONLINE. CALL BEFORE YOU GO.

**Art Omi International Arts Center** • 518-392-4747 • www.artomi.org  
• Sculpture & Architecture Park • outdoor, self-guided tour, download from website

**Arts Center Gallery at Saratoga Arts** • www.saratoga-arts.org • 518-584-4132  
• through Feb. 28: Virtual High School All Stars Exhibition  
• Feb. 25-Apr. 3: Feat.: H.C. Tiffany Lo, Tom Ryan, Gary Larsen, and Juliana Haliti

**Bennington Museum** • 802-447-1571 • benningtonmuseum.org  
• "Across the Street: Historic Bennington" • Feat. 20 historic photographic images • Walking tour around Putnam Sq. • Virtual exhibit compares historic and modern views of same locations

**(SCHS at) Brookside Museum** • 6 Charlton St., Ballston Spa, NY • brooksidemuseum.org  
• Ongoing online: "IndusTREE"  
• Ongoing online: "#518RainbowHunt, Coping with Crisis"

**Carrie Haddad Gallery** • 622 Warren St., Hudson, NY • 518-828-1915 • carriehaddadgallery.com • Open daily 11-5, exc. Tues by appt. only; preview online  
• Feb. 17 – Apr. 11: Selections from the 2020 Open Call in Celebration of the Gallery's 30th Anniversary

**Clark Art Institute** • 413-458-2303 • www.clarkart.edu/museum/clarkconnects • Adv. timed tickets req'd  
• Feb. 13 – May 16: "A Change in the Light: The Cliché-verre in Nineteenth Century France"  
• through Oct. 17: Ground/Work  
• through Jan 2022: Erin Shirreff: "Remainders"

**Collar Works** • 621 River St., Troy, NY • www.collarworks.org • info@collarworks.org  
• through Mar. 14: PROJECTxPROJECTxPROJECT (Ale Campos; Shanekia McIntosh; Alyssa McClenaghan)

**Courthouse Gallery Virtually** • 518-668-2616 • www.lakegeorgearts.org/courthouse-gallery/  
• through Feb. 19: Susan Hoffer  
• Mar. 6 – Apr. 9: Scott Brodie

**The Hyde Collection VIRTUALLY** • https://hydecollection.org • 518-792-1761  
• through Apr. 30: Images of the People: Russian Lacquer Painting  
• through Apr. 30: J.S. Wooley, Adirondack Photographer  
• ongoing: Hyde House and the Permanent Collection

**Image Photos Gallery** • 413-298-5500  
• photography of Clemens Kalischer

**The Laffer Gallery** • 96 Broad St., Schuylerville, NY • 518-695-3181 • www.thelaffergallery.com  
• through Mar. 14: Winter Inventory Sale (purchase online and in gallery)

**LARAC** • 7 Lapham Pl., Glens Falls, NY • 518-798-1144 • In person or virtually at https://larac.org/lapham-gallery  
• through Feb. 17: Valeria Orozco: "Passage"  
• Feb. 26-Mar. 31: North Country Arts Presents: Expressions

**National Museum of Dance VIRTUALLY** • 518-584-2225 • www.dancemuseum.org  
• "Posters from Hollywood's Golden Age"  
• "On Being Still: Portraits by Joanne Savio"  
• "Dancers After Dark" photos by Jordan Matter  
• A Tribute to 2019 Hall of Fame Inductees Carmen de Lavallade & Frederick Ashton

**Norman Rockwell Museum** • 9 Glendale Rd, Stockbridge, MA • nrm.org • 413-298-4100 • Adv. timed tix REQ'D  
Feb. 4 – May 21: Imagining Freedom: Freedom's Legacy--Virtual Exhibitions:  
• Norman Rockwell in the Age of the Civil Rights Movement  
• Burton Silverman: In Search of the Constitution  
• Norman Rockwell: Presidential Elections Illustrated  
• Presidents, Politics, and the Pen: The Influential Art of Thomas Nast

**Olana State Historic Site** • 518-828-0135 • www.olana.org • Free; daily 8 am-sunset  
• Historic Landscape Video Tour • https://www.olana.org/tour-category/virtual/  
• Olana Outdoor Tours (Tix req'd. for all)

**Pamela Salisbury Gallery** • 361 ½ Warren St., Hudson, NY • www.pamelasalisburygallery.com  
• through Feb. 28: Liv Aanrud: "Double Down"  
• Mar. 6-Apr. 4: Elliott Green: "AutoRevisionism"  
• Mar. 6-Apr. 4: Gregory Amenoff: "Solid State: Woodblock Prints (editions & variations)"

**Hart Cluett Museum** • 57 2nd St., Troy, NY • 518-272-7232 • hartcluett.org  
• through Jun. 26: Rensselaer County's Black History  
• through Dec. 18: The Way We Work(ed)

**Salem Art Works** • 19 Cary Lane, Salem, NY • 518-854-7674 • salemartworks.org  
Cary Hill Sculpture Park and Trails • Open dawn to dusk

**Salmon Falls Gallery** • 413-625-9833 • salmonfallsgallery.com • VIRTUALLY & in-person  
• Mar. 1-Apr. 25: Micro-Local Exhibits:  
-- Becky Ashenden: "Vavstuga Weaving & Fabric of Life," Shelburne, MA  
-- Lillian Jackman: "Wilder Hill Gardens," Conway, MA Printmaking

**Schantz Galleries** • virtually at schantzgalleries.com or @schantz\_galleries  
• A Visual Symphony: Works of Optimism by Lino Tagliapietra

**The Sembrich** • www.TheSembrich.org  
• ongoing: The Thatcher Photos

**SEPTEMBER** • 449 Warren St., #3, Hudson, NY • septemberegallery.com • By appt. only  
• Feb. 20-Mar. 28: Lukaza Branfman-Verissimo

**Shaker Museum | Mount Lebanon** • shakermuseum.org  
• Online: "Fringe Selects: An exhibition of Shaker objects curated by Katie Stout"  
• Fifteen past years' exhibits viewable online

**Sohn Fine Art** • 69 Church St., Lenox, MA • 413-551-7353 • www.sohnfineart.com  
• through Apr. 12: "Perspective" feat. photographic artists Richard Alan Cohen, Marcy Juran, Ana Leal, Ralph Mercer, Bruce Panock, Julia Smith, JP Terlizzi  
• through Apr. 12: "iMotif" feat. more than 40 artists with iPhone photography

**Southern Vermont Arts Center** • www.svac.org • Manchester, VT • 802-362-1405  
• through Feb. 21: Out of the Vault: Selections from SVAC's Collection  
• through Mar. 28: Unmasked: Artful Responses to the Pandemic

**Stone Valley Arts at Fox Hill** • 145 E. Main St., Poultney, VT • stonevalleyarts.org • 802-325-2603  
• through Mar. 31: Virtual Tour of "Painters Choose Painters" with Joan Curtis, Joan Harris, Ruth Hamilton, Chris Medina, Gabi Moore, and Phil Whitman

**Susan Lemberg Usdan Gallery** • One College Drive, Bennington, VT • usdangallery.bennington.edu  
• Senior Show 2020 "A Hole to Climb Into"  
• Lisa Anne Auerbach "Cooped-up Knitting" Zoom gatherings in anticipation of Fall 2021 exhibition

**Tang Teaching Museum and Gallery** • 518-580-8080 • http://tang.skidmore.edu • ONLINE  
• through Feb. 28: "Hyde Cabinet #10 Online: Framing a Feeling" with Malick Sidibe, Checkna Toure  
• through Jun. 6: "Never Done: 100 Years of Women in Politics and Beyond" & "We've Only Just Begun: 100 Years of Skidmore Women in Politics"  
• through Jun. 13: "Energy in All Directions"  
• through Sep. 11: Nicole Cherubini: "Shaking the Trees"

**Thompson Giroux Gallery** • 57 Main St., Chatham, NY • 518-392-3336 • thompsongirouxgallery.com  
• through Mar. 7 (closed Feb. 1-28): Spencer Hall: "The Stone in the Snowball"

**Ventfort Hall** • 104 Walker St, Lenox, MA • 413-637-3206 • gildedage.org • Res. req'd  
• Feb. 1-28: "Tables for Two: Famous Couples Celebrate Valentine's Day"

**World Awareness Children's Museum** • 518-793-2773 • www.worldchildrensmuseum.org  
• Child-friendly activities with multi-cultural flavor

# Destination: MANCHESTER, VT & VICINITY



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## THE SHIRES OF VERMONT BENNINGTON - MANCHESTER

### GETTING TO MANCHESTER & DORSET

- from Bennington: 30 min (Dorset, 40 min)
- from Cambridge: 45 min (Dorset, 40 min)
- from Glens Falls: 1 hour, 20 min (Dorset, 1:10)
- from Great Barrington: 1 hour, 50 min (Dorset, 2 hours)
- from Hudson: 2 hours (Dorset, 2:10)
- from Pittsfield: 1 hr, 20 min (Dorset, 1:30)
- from Saratoga Springs: 1 hour, 20 min (Dorset, 1:10)
- from Williamstown: 50 min (Dorset, 1 hour)

See map on page 15



Maple sugaring at Dutton Farm

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See our Dorset Farmers Market website and facebook page for updates to keep you posted.

**www.DorsetFarmersMarket.com**

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